Prologue

Ford was of the first order of poets. He sought for sublimity, not by parcels in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds. There is a grandeur of the soul above mountains, seas, and the elements.

– Charles Lamb

Charles Lamb described himself as ‘the first to draw the Public attention to the old English Dramatists in a work called “Specimens of English Dramatic Writers who lived about the time of Shakespeare.”’ Some modern scholars, however, refute this ‘sketchy description’ by arguing that most of the plays selected in the Specimens were not unknown to the Romantic age at all – they had been acted, reprinted, and studied throughout the eighteenth century. As we will see later, it is true that Lamb was by no means the first or the only critic who annotated and appreciated the Elizabethan dramatists, and that by laying such a claim Lamb seemed to overlook the efforts made by his predecessors. His argument is not entirely misleading, however, at least, not in the case of John Ford.

It is important that a distinction be made between reproduction and revival. An artist may still be neglected even though his works are reproduced or reprinted; a revival, on the other hand, is not necessarily caused by a reproduction or reprint. Ford’s Perkin Warbeck was republished and acted in 1714 and 1745 respectively; Charles Macklin, the most acclaimed Shylock in the eighteenth century, performed The Lover’s Melancholy in 1748 for the benefit of his wife. These productions were, however, not successful. Nor should we conclude that Robert Dodsley’s esteemed A Select Collection of Old English Plays (1744) – regarded as the best collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in the eighteenth century, ‘as no man knew how to select with more judgment’ – revived Ford’s ’Tis Pity She’s a Whore or his reputation as a poet. Before Lamb’s Specimens, in fact, critical commentary or discussion of Ford

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was scarce; I could find nothing more than some biographical sketches, plot summaries, and one or two commentaries such as ‘it is an admirable play’ or ‘too beautiful for the subject’. By contrast, three years after Lamb’s *Specimens* was published in 1808, not only did Henry Weber’s first edition of the collected works of Ford appear (1811), anticipating Gifford’s (1827) and the Harper edition (1831), but also several critical articles and reviews of Ford’s works written by scholars such as Francis Jeffrey, William Hazlitt, and William Gifford. It is of great interest, furthermore, that all of these articles and commentaries, with the exception of Jeffrey’s, concern the *Specimens*. Lamb’s criticism of Ford, it should be added, remained greatly appreciated by successive generations of critics. For example, James Russell Lowell suggests that ‘Charles Lamb’s comment on its [The Broken Heart’s] closing scene is worth more than all Ford ever wrote.’ In his criticism of Ford, A. C. Swinburne claims that ‘whenever the name of the poet Ford comes back to us, it comes back splendid with the light of another man’s genius. The fiery panegyric of Charles Lamb is as an aureole behind it. That high-pitched note of critical and spiritual enthusiasm exalts even to disturbance our own sense of admiration.’ ‘By publishing these selections [in the *Specimens*],’ writes T. S. Eliot, ‘Lamb set in motion the enthusiasm for poetic drama which still persists.’ Havelock Ellis’s Mermaid edition of Ford, published in 1888, opens with Lamb’s eulogy.

Lamb’s contribution to Ford’s revival was emphatic; nevertheless, with regard to the restoration of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama in the Romantic period in general, there is good reason to believe that it was rather Shakespeare, as the title of Lamb’s work connotes, that invigorated the revival. ‘My leading design has been,’ writes Lamb in the preface to the *Specimens*, ‘to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors… how much of Shakespeare shines in the great men his

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contemporaries, and how far in his divine mind and manner he surpassed them and all mankind. ¹² Weber opens his edition of Ford with these lines: ‘when Shakespeare had once directed the exertions of English genius to the stage, such a profusion of dramatic talent burst forth at once, that some poets, who highly deserved the applause of their countrymen, have suffered a degree of neglect, which can only be accounted for by the superior brilliancy of the genius of their great contemporary.’ ¹³ The exaltation of Shakespeare in the Romantic period is indubitable.

Perceived as a universal genius, Shakespeare was a common subject of criticism, and his works were deemed exemplary of dramatic and poetic art. His contemporaries and successors, in turn, were regarded as ‘ornaments of our ancient drama,’ ¹⁴ the beauty of which, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s words, ‘consists in its Compactness & power of support.’ ¹⁵ They are ornaments, it is found, not so much because of their poetical inferiority to Shakespeare, as because their revival services the study, or rather the veneration, of Shakespeare. Coleridge’s lectures, being another driving force of the revival, were assigned

to a critical Comparison of SHAKESPEARE, in respect of Diction, Imagery, management of the Passions, Judgment in the construction of his Dramas, in short, of all that belongs to him as a Poet, and as a dramatic Poet, with his contemporaries, or immediate successors, JONSON, BEAUMONT and FLETCHER, FORD, MASSINGER, &c. in the endeavour to determine what of SHAKESPEARE’s Merits and Defects are common to him with other Writers of the same age, and what remain peculiar to his own Genius. ¹⁶

William Hazlitt likewise states in the preface to his Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1818) that

If we allowed, for argument’s sake (or for truth’s, which is better), that he [Shakespeare] was in himself equal to all his competitors put together; yet there was more dramatic excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their united strength, would hardly make one Shakespear, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one…. They are indeed the scale by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of

¹² Lamb, Specimens, p. xii.
¹⁴ Thomas Campbell, Specimens of the British Poetry; with biographical and critical notices, and an essay on English poetry, 7 vols (London: John Murray: 1819), i, p. 224.
¹⁶ Coleridge, Collected Works, v, p.179.
him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him; but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it.\textsuperscript{17}

Reviewing Henry Weber’s edition of Ford, John Herman Merivale says that

In speaking of the latter [Shakespeare’s contemporaries], it is not too much to aver that not one of them, in the very happiest effort of his genius, can really sustain a moment’s comparison with that great and surprizing poet … and could it be admitted for a moment by any man of just feeling that Shakespeare has an equal or even a rival in each of them, still the union of all in one sets him at an incalculable distance above the heads of those dramatists, and renders all thought of general comparison as absurd as the vain swelling of the Frog in Aesop.\textsuperscript{18}

At first glance, Romantic scholars were mainly concerned with the poetic genius and aesthetic excellence of Shakespeare and it was for this reason that Ford was revived. Having said this, we will find that the revival was not really as ‘pure’ as it first seems. Bearing in mind William Gifford’s view that ‘it is almost impossible to sit down to the perusal of an early dramatic author without an involuntary retrospect to Shakespeare’,\textsuperscript{19} we shall begin with an account of the revival of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century before turning to a discussion of the criticism of Ford in the Romantic period.

\textsuperscript{17} William Hazlitt, \textit{Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, and Characters of Shakespear’s plays} [1817-1818] (London: Bell, 1884), pp. 10-1.
Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century

My eyes, till then, no sights like this will see,
Unless we meet at Shakespeare’s Jubilee!
On Avon’s Banks, where flowers eternal blow!
Like its full Stream our Gratitude shall flow!
There let us revel, show our fond regard,
On that lov’d Spot, first breath’d our matchless Bard;
To him all Honour, Gratitude is due,
To him we owe our all – to Him and You.

—David Garrick

On Wednesday, 6 September 1769, a three-day jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon in honour of ‘the sweetest bard that ever sung’ began. Partly because of the Jubilee Steward David Garrick’s publicity and effort, and partly because of Shakespeare’s already established fame, it attracted the participation of at least one thousand five hundred ‘gentlemen,’ Dukes, Earls, and Countesses – the ‘select few of the fashionable world.’ Intended activities for the jubilee included fireworks, sumptuous dinners, country dances, a masquerade, a pageant, a horse race, and other entertainments. These did not result in quite the ‘gratitude’ Garrick had fancied, however; apart from the problems that arose in its preparation, it was criticized as a folly and a show of vanity consisted of ‘dinners without victuals and lodgings without beds; a masquerade where half the people appeared bare-faced, a horse race up to the knees in water; fireworks extinguished as soon as they were lighted, and a gingerbread amphitheatre, which like a house of cards, tumbled to pieces as soon as it was finished.’ Furthermore, the intended spectacular highlight of the festival – the pageant – was cancelled because of heavy rain. Notwithstanding these imperfections, the ultimate aims of the jubilee – to dedicate the new Town Hall to the bard and to erect his statue ‘donated’ by Garrick – were accomplished with these lines:

Now swell at once the choral song,
Roll the full tide of harmony along;
Let Rapture sweep the trembling strings,

22 Deelman, *Jubilee*, p. 73.
And Fame expanding all her wings,
With all her trumpet-tongues proclaim,
The lov’d, rever’d, immortal name!
SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! 24

The festival exploded the publicity of both Shakespeare and Garrick, and indeed it could even be said to have marked the apex of idolatry of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century. The jubilee, first of all, not only attracted ‘the select few,’ but also focused the attention of the general public around the Continent. After Garrick’s announcement of the jubilee appeared in the media on 6 May, reports, poems, and satirical comments dominated the pages for months. 25 For months after the festival, too, plays, masques, prologues, and pantomimes performed in theatres were congested with spectators. 26 Most of them, however, were not favourable to Garrick. As manager of the Drury Lane Company, he was recompensed for both pride and money lost in the event by the resulting production The Jubilee. First performed on 14 October 1769, the afterpiece was chiefly a representation of the pageant that was cancelled in the festival, in which two hundred and seventeen people marched, among whom one hundred and seventy dressed as Shakespeare’s characters. 27 The show achieved an all-time record: performed ninety-one times that season. It is said, moreover, that the revenue of the show reached eight thousand pounds. 28

Shakespeare, by then, did not need any reproduction of his plays to make him popular and recognised. No longer merely a dramatist or poet, he was a figure for worship. His statues and temples were raised, items ascribed to him or touched by him were divine. No example, perhaps, could better serve to illustrate this cult than the story of the mulberry tree, which is believed to have been planted by Shakespeare in New Place in 1609. Annoyed by the number of visitors, Francis Gastrell, the proprietor of New Place at that time, cut down the ‘sacred’ tree with the help of a John Ange in 1756. ‘After the first moments of Astonishment were over,’ recalled a Stratfordian who was among the angry crowd, ‘a general Fury seized them all, and Vengeance was the Word! They gathered together, surrounded the House, reviewed with Tears the fallen

25 Deelman, Jubilee, p.74.
26 Deelman, Jubilee, p. 273.
27 Deelman, Jubilee, pp. 211-2.
Tree, and vowed to sacrifice the Offender, to the immortal Memory of the Planter!’ Fortunately, the clergyman Gastrell, now a ‘sinner,’ was not hurt; only the windows of his house were smashed. As for the mulberry tree, it was purchased by a Thomas Sharp, ‘a small tradesman of various talents,’ who earned a fortune afterwards by selling handiworks made of its wood, including cups and goblets, punch-ladles, card-cases, cribbage boards, tobacco-stoppers, tooth-pick cases, writing standishes, pen-cases, nutmeg-graters, and the like.29

The demand for those products was, not surprisingly, excessive; excessive, too, was their symbolic power. The Freedom of Stratford granted by the Stratford Corporation to David Garrick, first of all, was enclosed in an ‘inestimable box’ made from the mulberry tree; in the opening ceremony of the new Town Hall, furthermore, the ‘flattered’ Garrick was presented with a wand and medallion, made also from the same tree, as insignia of his authority as the Steward.30 The mulberry tree, therefore, was a symbol of honour, dignity, and power.

In the eighteenth century Shakespeare was applauded not only in auditoriums as a dramatist but also in the closet as a poet. Between the years 1623 and 1708, four Shakespearian collected works were published; between 1708 and 1808, by contrast, there were sixty-five, with each successive twenty-year period producing more such editions than its predecessor.31 This revival of Shakespeare in print was, from a literary point of view, invigorated by two entangled factors: a rise in Shakespearian scholarship and, more importantly, a ‘revolution’ in taste and criticism in the eighteenth century. These factors were, as we will see, also paralleled in the revival of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama.

The Rules

He [Shakespeare] was a savage [...] who had some imagination. He has written many happy lines; but his pieces can please only at London and in Canada.

–Voltaire

The Restoration was a historical landmark for both England and the theatre. Suppressed for eighteen years, this favourite ‘sport’ of the royalists, as well as of the House of Stuart, was restored by Charles II, who grew up and was educated in France. The King brought back not only the triumph of the Monarchy, but also a French taste to the British Isles. The artistic principles of the neoclassical school were those subscribed to by Louis XIV. Regularity, probability, unity, and order were essential. They insisted that the end of art was to instruct by pleasing, but that it was only through rules that an artwork may please. Ancients such as Aristotle, Virgil, Cicero, Horace, and Ovid were at once models and authorities for composition. The rules must be obeyed and the morality of art must be sustained. No individual style was to be promoted; instead, a universal taste was necessary. It is not difficult to infer, therefore, that the role of a critic was to identify the faults or transgressions committed in an artwork with reference to these ‘standards’. ‘Poets would grow negligent,’ wrote Thomas Rymer, ‘if the Criticks had not a strict eye over their miscarriages.’ That is to say, critics were concerned not so much with the aesthetic beauty of an artwork, as with its ethical good.

Aristotle’s authority in these matters could be compared with that of Louis XIV in the French court; the former in theatrical criticism, the latter in Europe. It is of great interest to note, however, that the neoclassical critics did not refer so much to the original text of Aristotle, as to the ‘authentic interpretations’ of his works: Rymer did not translate Aristotle from the Greek but rather from the French critic René Rapin’s Reflexions sur la Poétique d'Aristote et sur les ouvrages des poètes anciens & modernes (1674). The Reflections itself is, furthermore, not so much concerned with the meaning of Aristotle, as with its interpretation by Horace. Elaborating on the rules regarding plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song, Rapin suggested that ‘In effect, Poetry, being an Art, ought to be profitable by the quality of its own nature,

and by the essential subordination that all Arts should have to Polity, whose end in general is Publick good. This is the judgment of Aristotle, and of Horace, his chief interpreter. The Frenchman continued: 'there remains one [rule] mention’d by Horace, to which all the other Rules must be subject, as to the most essential, which is the Decorum. Without which the other Rules of Poetry are false; it being the most solid Foundation of that probability so essential to this Art.' This ‘supreme’ rule of appropriateness and order, expressed in drama by the rules of the three unities – time, place, and action – was adopted not only by French but also by many English critics.

‘Poetry has no life,’ Rymer insisted, ‘nor can have any operation without probability.’ Of the fable of Othello, which Rymer called ‘the tragedy of the handkerchief,’ he wrote sarcastically: ‘First, This may be a caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents consent, they run away with Blackmoors…. Secondly, This may be a warning to all good Wives that they look well to their Linnen. Thirdly, This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical the proofs may be Mathematical.’ From Rymer’s use of the words ‘caution,’ ‘warning,’ and ‘lesson,’ we can immediately deduce the fundamental purpose of an artwork is its moral. According to Rymer, the marriage between Othello and Desdemona is ‘absurd,’ since Othello is black and Desdemona white; the representation of soldiers, particularly in the case of Iago, is improper and ‘intolerable,’ for soldiers must be ‘open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing.’ Of Desdemona, he wrote, she is ‘a Woman [who] never loses her Tongue, even though after she is stifled’ and she is foolish since she ran away with a black soldier and on occasion utters ‘Cassio, Cassio’. The ‘notorious’ critic, moreover, believed that the handkerchief is too trivial for a tragedy and that the plot of Othello violates the rule of the unity of time.

Most of Rymer’s contemporaries, it is true, disapproved of his criticisms of Shakespeare; they protested, however, not so much against his arguments, as against

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34 Rapin, Reflections, p. 10.
35 Rapin, Reflections, p. 69.
his temperament. ‘Almost all the Faults which he has discover’d,’ Dryden responded to Rymer’s *Short View*, ‘are truly there… I reverence Mr. Rymer’s Learning, but I detest his Ill-Nature and his arrogance.’ Shakespeare was, Dryden observed, by no means a perfect author: ‘yet it must be allow’d to the present Age, that the tongue [of the English] in general is so much refin’d since Shakespeare’s time, that many of his words, and more of his Phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole stile is so pester’d with Figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.’ The irregularity and absurdity in his works, moreover, undeniably trespassed against the rules developed by the ancients, which ‘are founded upon good Sence, and Sound Reason, rather than on Authority; for, though Aristotle and Horace are produc’d, yet no man must argue, that what they write is true, because they writ it.’

The influence of Aristotle and the French critics on Dryden is adequately shown in the preface to his adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida*. In the section ‘The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,’ Dryden not only repeatedly echoes Rapin’s and Le Bossu’s thoughts – the former a ‘judicious critic’ and the latter ‘the best of modern critics’ to him – but he also insists upon the importance of Aristotle’s rules. Dryden observes, firstly, that the action of a play *ought* to be single, to have order in it; secondly, that it ought to consist of great persons, to distinguish it from comedy; thirdly, that every character *must* be apparent and consistent. Dryden ends the section with the words of Rapin: ‘if the Rules be well consider’d: we shall find them to be made only to reduce Nature into Method, to trace her step by step, and not to suffer the least mark of her to escape us: ’tis only by these, that probability in Fiction is maintain’d, which is the Soul of Poetry.’

Shakespeare’s ‘small Latine, and lesse Greeke’ concerned John Dennis. Although Dennis never questioned the genius of Shakespeare, he repeatedly emphasized that Shakespeare’s lack of classical learning was his main disadvantage in terms of *Poetic Justice*, the essence of poetry. Dennis conceived that every tragedy

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42 Dryden, ‘Preface to his adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida*’, *Heritage*, i, p. 250.
ought to be ‘a very solemn Lecture,’ in which ‘the Good must never fail to prosper, and
the Bad must be always punish’d.’ In view of this, most of Shakespeare’s tragedies
were ‘immoral’. For the same reason, moreover, Dennis preferred Sophocles’s Oedipus
to Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar. ‘How can he,’ Dennis added, ‘be esteem’d equal by
Nature or superior to the Ancients when he falls so far short of them in Art, though he
had the Advantage of knowing all that they did before him?’ Classical learning, for
Dennis, therefore, was the only method through which a poet may obtain approbation.

Longinus and the Rise of Romanticism

In 1674 two influential books were published, Boileau’s translation of
Dionysius Longinus’s Peri Hupsous, widely known as On the Sublime, and the twelve-
book edition of Milton’s Paradise Lost. The former analyses the feeling of sublimity,
the latter exhibits it. Longinus’s work, though several translations and editions had
already been released by that time, immediately became a major subject of speculation
in English scholarly circles; by the end of the seventeenth century two English
translations based on Boileau’s translation were published; in the eighteenth century,
apart from two editions of the Greek text, it was printed in 1710, 1712, 1718, 1724,
1730, 1732, 1733, 1739, 1743, 1751, 1752, 1762, 1763, 1773, 1778, 1789. The rise of
Longinus facilitated the rise of two other phenomena: Shakespeare and Romanticism.

That one should judge an artwork by the impression it makes, rather than its
defects, is the most influential dictum asserted by Longinus. That particular
impression, which Longinus terms sublimity, consists of either a boldness and
grandeur of imagination, or a power of raising emotion to an enthusiastic and even
violent degree, or of both. Beauty, according to Longinus, is a product of
craftsmanship and can be achieved through learning; sublimity, on the other hand, is a
product of nature and thus Genius is its essence. In short, beauty is to be reflected on,

x, and ‘An Essay upon the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare: with Some Letters of Criticism to the
Spectator (1712)’, Heritage, ii, p. 284.
48 Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (University of
49 Dionysius Longinus, On the Sublime: Translated from the Greek with Notes and Observations, and
Some Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Author, trans. William Smith [1739] (London,
1819), pp. 66-7.
sublimity to be felt; beauty betokens calmness and regularity, sublimity loftiness and deformity. Taking all these into account, it is not hard to see that Longinus is the perfect ‘authority’ for Shakespeare’s supporters. In the eighteenth century, in fact, most editors of Shakespeare mentioned and referred to the work of the ancient Greek rhetorician, and brought Shakespeare’s management of imagination and passion into discussion.

Dryden, as mentioned, was not ignorant of the faults of Shakespeare. In spite of this, if art or nature were to be chosen, Dryden preferred the latter to the former. That is why he admired Ben Jonson, whose works had widely been approved of for their regularity and thought, but loved Shakespeare, the genius. Longinus is not mentioned in his 1668 Essay of Dramatick Poesie; however, in his preface to Troilus and Cressida which we discussed above, Dryden says that Longinus is also one of the ‘authors to whom I owe my lights.’ Apart from adopting the neoclassical rules of criticism, Dryden, for the first time, also insists that it is Shakespeare’s ‘understanding the nature of the Passions’ that is what makes his characters distinct. Comparing Shakespeare with Fletcher, Dryden concludes that ‘Shakespeare taught Fletcher, to write love; and Juliet, and Desdemona, are Originals… Shakespeare had an Universal mind, which comprehended all Characters and Passions; Fletcher a more confin’d and limited…. To conclude all; he was a Limb of Shakespeare.’

Dryden’s practice, it has already been shown, deserves to be called dualistic.

It is plausible to suggest that Joseph Addison was the first Longinian critic in England; that he was one of a few critics who disregarded artistic rules and emphasized Taste and the pleasure of imagination:

although in poetry it be absolutely necessary that the unities of time, place, and action, with other points of the same nature, should be thoroughly explained and understood, there is still something more essential to the art, something that elevates and astonishes the fancy, and gives a greatness of mind to the reader, which few of the critics beside Longinus have considered.

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50 Longinus, pp. 180-206.
54 Dryden, ‘Preface’, Heritage, i, p. 266.
According to Longinus and his followers, the end of art is to please and to delight – art is a means and an end per se. In order to perceive such pleasure, a sense of beauty – taste – is required. To Addison, taste is a ‘faculty of the soul which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike.’ Addison deduces that there are two kinds of pleasure of imagination (taste), the primary and the secondary; the former arises from the actual view of great, uncommon (novel), and beautiful objects, whereas the latter flows from ‘ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious,’ and therefore it is ‘nothing else but the action of the mind, which compares the ideas that arise from words with the ideas that arise from the objects themselves.’ In other words, Addison suggests that poetry, being a secondary pleasure of imagination, pleases by its imagery, and that the greater the subject matter expressed or described, the deeper the work strikes. We can thus infer, firstly, that Addison’s idea anticipated the ideas of heroism, of magnanimity, and of the picturesque that appeared later in the eighteenth century. His stress on the imagination, moreover, led him to claim that ‘amongst the English Shakespeare has incomparably excelled all others.’

Interestingly, the dualistic nature of Dryden’s character is also exhibited in the writings of his contemporary Dennis. In defending Poetic Justice – the ‘doctrine of modern criticism’ – against Addison, Dennis suggests that Rymer opened ‘the Eyes of the Blind that they [the poetasters of the Times] may see their Errors, will always pass with impartial Posterity for a most learned, a most judicious, and a most useful Critick.’ In 1693, on the other hand, he denounced Rymer’s Short View as: ‘instead of reforming [it] would ruine the English Drama.’

As discussed above, Dennis deemed the moral of an artwork to be its most important component. In The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry (1701), however, he stresses that passion is the chief thing in poetry, defining it as ‘an imitation

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56 Addison, Spectator, 409, p. 238.
57 Addison, Spectator, 409, p. 243.
58 Addison, Spectator, 418 (June 30, 1712), p. 274.
59 Addison, Spectator, 419 (July 1, 1712), p. 281.
61 Dennis, ‘The Impartial Critick: Or, Some Observations Upon A Late Book, Entitled a Short View of Tragedy, Written by Mr. Rymer’ [1693], Heritage, ii, p. 60.
of Nature by a Pathetick and numerous Speech." Poetry, he argues, is different from Prose, in the sense that the essence of poetry is passion, of prose harmony; passion the nature and character of poetry, harmony its ‘instrument.’ Based on these arguments, Dennis arrives at the conviction that in a poem passion ‘must be every where, so Harmony is usually diffus’d throughout it. But Passion answers the two ends of Poetry better than Harmony can do, and upon that account is preferable to it." In other words, apart from classical learning, the capacity to evoke pathetic effects – genius – is to Dennis another essence of poetry. He adds that: ‘there must be Passion then, that must be distinct from ordinary Passion, and that must be Enthusiasm. I call that ordinary Passion, whose cause is clearly comprehended by him who feels it, whether it be Admiration, Terror or Joy; and I call the very same Passions Enthusiasms, when their cause is not clearly comprehended by him who feels them.’

As Samuel H. Monk points out, the above passage is not completely intelligible when it stands alone. It is necessary to refer, therefore, as Monk has done in his book, to a passage which Dennis writes in his *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704) in order to ‘comprehend’ its grounds: ‘Enthusiastick Passion, or Enthusiasm, is a Passion which is moved by Ideas in Contemplation, or the Meditation of things that belong not to common life. Most of our Thoughts in Meditation are naturally attended with some sort and some degree of Passion; and this Passion, if it is strong, I call Enthusiasm.’ By contrast, a ‘Vulgar Passion’ is defined by the critic as ‘that which is moved by the Objects themselves, or by the Ideas in the ordinary Course of life.’ Despite their disagreement on other matters, Dennis and Addison shared the idea that the pleasure evoked by a poem is of a formal kind; that imagination – action of the mind – is essential.

We will return to Dennis’s elaboration on enthusiasm, and terror in particular, in the later part of this paper. Firstly, it is apparent that Dennis’s theory of passion is a direct reference to Longinus’s work. He says ‘Genius in a Poet, is the power of expressing such Passion worthily… Longinus, I must confess, has not told us what the sublime is… yet in the first six or seven Chapters of his Book, he takes a great deal of

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pains to set before us, the effects which it produces in the minds of Men; as, for example, that it causes in them admiration and surprize; a noble Pride, and a noble Vigour, an invincible force transporting the Soul from its ordinary Situation, and a Transport, and a fulness of Joy mingled with Astonishment.'

Dennis’s interpretation of Longinus, furthermore, was strongly based on religious ideas. For that reason, passages of Milton, rather than of Shakespeare, are used as the basis for his analysis of the sublime in his *Advancement*.

We may perhaps conclude that the controversy, or rather the dilemma, of Dryden and Dennis represents the ideology of their age. Reason and passion were in conflict in Dryden and Dennis – their blood was English, their ‘body’ French, and in the criticism of both, Aristotle and Longinus shared a part.

Apart from praising Longinus as being ‘himself the great Sublime he draws,’ in his *An Essay on Criticism* Alexander Pope writes:

Great Wits sometimes may gloriously offend,  
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;  
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part  
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,  
Which, without passing thro’ the judgment, gains  
The heart, and all its ends at once attains.

Under French principles, Shakespeare was not able to pass ‘through the judgment’ of the critics. In spite of this, his ‘brave disorder’ – sublimity – is able to touch ‘the heart’ of the audience and thus be admired. As Longinus stresses, ‘what is correct and faultless, comes off barely without censure; but the grand and the lofty command admiration.’ It was the work of Longinus, possibly, that aspired Pope to edit and promote Shakespeare’s works. In the preface of his edition (1725), Pope not only emphasizes Shakespeare’s pathetic power, but also exalts his irregularity as sublime: ‘I will conclude by saying of Shakespeare that, with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his *Drama*, one may look upon his works, in comparison of those that are more finish’d and regular, as upon an ancient majestick piece of *Gothick* Architecture compar’d with a neat Modern building; the latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former is more strong and more solemn.’

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69 Longinus, p. 192.  
Theobald, likewise maintains in his edition of Shakespeare (1733) that ‘his [Shakespeare’s] fire, Spirit, and Exuberance of Imagination gave an impetuosity to his Pen…. He used the Helps of his Function in forming himself to create and express that Sublime which other Actors can only copy and throw out in Action and graceful Attitude.’\(^7\) That one should judge by the beauty of his works, not by any rules, was the attitude adopted by almost all of Shakespeare’s editors in the eighteenth century.

No method, perhaps, could exhibit and explain the sublimity of Shakespeare more effectively than consideration of his text in the light of the work of Longinus. Leonard Welsted attached an essay to his translation of A Treatise on the Sublime in 1712 which throughout illustrates Longinian precepts with lines from Shakespeare.\(^2\) In like manner, William Smith, whose translation of On the Sublime (1739) is still being used by some modern scholars, illustrates Longinus’s dicta through passages from the older English poets, including Shakespeare and Milton.\(^3\) It should be pointed out that Smith repeatedly regards the effects of horror and terror as sublime. For instance, in speaking of King Lear, Smith writes: ‘in reading it one sees the piteous Condition of those who are exposed to it in open Air; one almost hears the Wind and Thunder, and beholds the Flashes of Lighting…. There [Act 3, sc. ii, line 49 onwards] the Poet has laid new Incidents, to stamp fresh Terror on the Imagination, by lodging Edgar in it before them…. The Miseries and Disorders of Lear and Edgar are then painted with such judicious Horror that every Imagination must be strongly affected by such Tempests in Reason and Nature.’ He asserts, in addition, that ‘the Genius of the Poet [Shakespeare] will appear more surprising if we consider how the Horror is continually worked up by the Method in which the Perpetration of the Murder [Macbeth’s] is represented.’\(^4\)

In his A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England, Monk asserts that Smith’s translation is significant in several ways. Firstly, Smith’s practice of elaborating Longinus’s ideas with poetic passages have been influential in shaping the taste of the age and in connecting the sublime with poetry that did not fulfil the

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\(^7\) Lewis Theobald, ‘Preface to The Works of Shakespeare, Collated with the Oldest Copies, and Corrected, with Notes, Explanatory and Critical’ [1733], Heritage, ii, pp. 476-7.

\(^2\) Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare, p. 90.


neoclassical rules; secondly, his emphasis on the effects of terror and horror anticipates Edmund Burke’s theory of the sublime; and, thirdly, most of his explanations imply that all agreeable sensations, including the prevalence of terrible emotion in the ‘graveyard and ruin poetry,’ could be considered as sublimity. Monk’s observations, as we will see in our discussion of Ford later, are tenable. Smith’s translation, it should be added, reached its fourth edition in 1770.

‘SHAKESPEARE is the first considerable author [sic] of sublime or familiar dialogue in our language,’ wrote Samuel Johnson in 1756. Johnson’s labour, as we will see later, contributed not only to the revision of Shakespeare’s original text, but also to fortification against the criticism of the neoclassists. As mentioned above, in neoclassical criticism nothing was more important than the criteria of ‘probability,’ decorum and the three ‘unities.’ It happened that if a neoclassical critic found any event or character in a work that was irrational, illogical, or ‘unreal’ for him, the work would be regarded as ‘unnatural,’ ‘absurd,’ ‘improper,’ ‘immoral,’ and, thus, a failure, notwithstanding the fact that Aristotle actually preferred the impossible probable to the possible improbable.

Dr. Johnson did not altogether disregard the rules, but he succeeded in approving Shakespeare’s works with a more accurate and thorough understanding of Aristotle and history. For instance, in Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, Johnson’s debut as a Shakespearian scholar, he verifies that witchcraft or ‘enchantment’ was by no means unfamiliar to previous ages; in fact, there was a law regulating the practice in the reign of James I. The scenes of enchantment in Macbeth, therefore, ‘however they may now be ridicule [sic], were both by himself [Shakespeare] and his Audience thought awful and affecting.’ With respect to the three unities, Johnson insists that only the unity of action (structure) – a beginning, a middle, and an end – is necessary, regarding which Shakespeare’s works did not altogether fail. The unities of time and space, on the other hand, ‘arise evidently from

75 Monk, The Sublime, pp. 67-68.
false assumptions. They are false, since a drama is not an imitation of reality but a representation; the former is apprehended through the senses, whereas the latter is apprehended through imagination. Johnson thus arrives at the conviction that

Imitations produce pain or pleasure not because they are mistaken for realities but because they bring realities to mind. A play read affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident that the action is not supposed to be real, and it follows that between the acts a longer or a shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero or the revolutions of an empire.

That is to say, dramatic art, like other kinds of poetry, evokes the imagination through reading. We can immediately perceive his influence on his successors.

Speaking of the highest possible aesthetic pleasure evoked by Shakespeare, Lamb asserts that his works are not to be acted but to be read:

the reading of tragedy is a fine abstraction. It presents to the fancy just so much of external appearances as to make us feel that we are among flesh and blood, while by far the greater and better part of our imagination is employed upon the thoughts and internal machinery of the character. But in acting, scenery, dress, the most contemptible things, call upon us to judge of their naturalness.

Acting, scenery and dress are objects which appeal to the eye – mere appearance – and the spectacle of stage performance is likewise solely grounded upon sensuous apprehension and confined in time and space, colour and shade. The aesthetic pleasure of reading, on the other hand, is formal rather than sensual, since it generates the reader’s reflection and imagination. While reading the works of Shakespeare, the reader is required to think, to move and thus to arrive at feeling the ‘high passion’ of the characters. For this reason, Lamb ascertains that Shakespeare’s plays affect us not by their physical action but by the impulses and ‘inner mind’ of the characters. Othello is sublime because the love of Desdemona is ‘the perfect triumph of virtue over accidents, of the imagination over the senses.’ The greatness of Lear, moreover, is ‘not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual;’ ‘while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear, – we are in his mind.’ The necessity of imagination in apprehending Shakespeare is confirmed by William Hazlitt’s famous claim: ‘it is we who are

81 Lamb, Prose, p. 129.
82 Lamb, Prose, p. 124.
Hamlet.’ ‘We are more than spectators,’ Hazlitt explains, since ‘we have not only “the outward pageants and the signs of grief;” but “we have that within which passes show.” We read the thoughts of the heart, we catch the passions living as they rise.’

Shakespeare was to be felt and imagined.

Adaptation and Rise of Historicism

Under French rules, Shakespeare was found to be ‘guilty’; on the other hand, under the influence of Longinus, he was worth reviving. In order to restore or ‘improve’ the eloquence of Shakespeare and to maximize the profit from stage productions, it was necessary for the ‘pedant theorists’ and stage managers to adapt and alter his works in accordance with the ‘rules’ and the taste of the Augustans. Dryden’s All for Love, for instance, was an alteration of Anthony and Cleopatra; and along with his adaptation of Troilus and Cressida, his operatic version of The Tempest, adapted in conjunction with William Davenant, was more popular than Shakespeare’s original composition by the middle of the eighteenth century. Dennis, in like manner, turned The Merry Wives of Windsor into the comedy The Comical Gallant, and his The Invader of his Country was modelled on Coriolanus. The practice of adaptation and alteration, in fact, was ubiquitous after the Restoration, either in print or in theatre. So far as the latter is concerned, there were no fewer than one hundred and twenty-three adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays being acted between the years 1660 and 1820; in the first half of the eighteenth century, furthermore, The Tempest (Dryden and Davenant, Shadwell), Troilus and Cressida (Dryden), Richard III (Cibber), King Lear (Tate), Timon of Athens (Shadwell), Titus Andronicus (Ravenscroft), The Taming of the Shrew (several versions), and A Midsummer Night’s Dream (several versions) were acted only in adapted versions. Apart from the neoclassical influence, high efficiency in producing Shakespeare’s works – low cost and less time in preparation – as well as the opportunity to eliminate obscurities in the text and vulgar phrases also favoured this phenomenon. Shakespeare’s original style was blotted and had been contaminated, but the impurity of the Shakespearean text enhanced not only Shakespearean scholarship,

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83 Hazlitt, Lectures, pp. 74-6.
85 Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare, p. 28.
but also, more momentously for our purposes, the rediscovery of Elizabethan and
Jacobean Drama as a whole.

Edited by the Whig, Nicolas Rowe, the first edition of the collected works of
Shakespeare in the eighteenth century was published in 1709. Including a biography of
Shakespeare criticized for its lack of authenticity, Rowe’s edition is believed not to
have contributed much to Shakespearean scholarship. There are not many critical notes
and, more importantly, the text relies solely on the 1685 collected edition of
Shakespeare, which is regarded as the most corrupt and apparently represented the
stage performances of the Restoration. 87 Sixteen years later, Alexander Pope’s edition
appeared. Even though Pope collected and studied twenty-four early quarto editions of
Shakespeare’s plays and succeeded in pointing out many errors that had accumulated
since Shakespeare's death, his text was by no means accurate. ‘It is impossible to repair
the Injuries already done him;’ Pope writes in the preface, ‘too much time has elaps’d,
and the materials are too few…. I have discharg’d the dull duty of an Editor to my best
judgment, with more labour than I expect thanks, with a religious abhorrence of all
Innovation, and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture.’ 88 It is
found, nevertheless, that the Tory Pope threw out the seven plays added to the edition
in 1664 and ‘degraded’ more than one thousand five hundred lines to the bottom of the
page ‘which seem Interpolations by being so inserted that one can intirely omit them
without any chasm or deficience in the context.’ 89 It was not until the editions of
Lewis Theobald and Samuel Johnson that the editing and study of Shakespeare turned
on to the right track.

To Theobald, Shakespeare was to be regarded a classic; and since he was a
‘corrupted’ classic, ‘the method of Cure was likewise to bear a Resemblance.’ 90 Not
only was the editor expected to emend corrupt passages, to explain obscure and
difficult ones and to inquire into the beauties and defects of the work, but he should
also, more importantly, ‘be well vers’d in the History and Manners of his Author’s
Age, if he aims at doing him a Service in this Respect.’ 91 The reason for this is that
‘there are Obscurities in him [Shakespeare] which are common to him with all Poets of

87 Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare, pp. 82-3.
89 Pope, ‘Preface’, Heritage, ii, p. 414. See also Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare, p. 82.
the same Species; there are Others the Issue of the Times he liv’d in; and there are others, again, peculiar to himself.\textsuperscript{92} The preface, appearing in 1733, was arguably the beginning of the revival of the works of neglected Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights: Dodsley’s \textit{Old Plays} was published in 1744 – the year, coincidently, of the death of Lewis Theobald.

If Samuel Johnson is not to be deemed the father of cultural materialism or New Historicism, he can be considered at least as a forerunner of both. Like Theobald and Warburton, Dr. Johnson believed that critics were required to examine the general practices and culture of an author’s age in order to make a true estimate of his abilities and merit, as well as to correct and explain the corrupted and obscure text.\textsuperscript{93} The reason is that every age has its mode of speech and its cast of thought, particularly in the Elizabethan period, when the ‘poetical language was yet unformed, when the meaning of our phrases was yet in fluctuation, when words were adopted at pleasure from the neighbouring languages, and while the Saxon was still visibly mingled in our diction.'\textsuperscript{94} Besides the diction, it is also necessary to take into account the customs and cultural practices of the age, as we have seen in his discussion of witchcraft. Johnson, therefore, proposed that in preparing his edition of Shakespeare he would ‘endeavour to read the books which the authour [sic] read, to trace his knowledge to its source and compare his copies with their originals’ and, ‘by comparing the works of SHAKESPEARE with those of writers who lived at the same time, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him he shall be able to ascertain his ambiguities, disentangle his intricacies, and recover the meaning of words now lost in the darkness of antiquity.’\textsuperscript{95}

‘Shakespeare has been transmitted down to us with successive Glories,’ contended George Colman, ‘but have you not [Garrick], like other Commentators, contracted a narrow, exclusive, Veneration of your Author? Has not the Contemplation of Shakespeare’s Excellencies almost dazzled and extinguished your Judgment, when

\textsuperscript{94} Johnson, ‘Proposals’, \textit{Heritage}, iv, p. 270.
directed to other Objects, and made you blind to the Merit of his Contemporaries?"  

Under the influence of Theobald and Johnson, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama was not ‘in the darkness’ anymore. In 1750 and 1761 respectively, editions of Beaumont and Fletcher (Thomas Seward) and of Massinger (Thomas Coxeter) were published. In 1764, furthermore, David Erskine Baker published his *Companion to the Play-House*, in which the plays of Kyd, Marlowe, Dekker, Heywood, Middleton, Marston, Ford, and Chapman are commented upon favourably. The neglected age was revitalized and its triumph came in the Romantic period.

**Romanticism**

Enough of science and of art;  
Close up these barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

– William Wordsworth

In the Romantic period no one would dare criticize Shakespeare, just as no one had applied French principles as enthusiastically as the Augustans, although we will find that Tories like William Gifford and J. H. Merivale repeatedly criticized Ford’s works for their immorality. The Romantics, in general, strove not to be confined by any rules – of the French in particular – other than to those they felt and chose; they loved to be free and natural, preferring particularity to universality, originality to the imitative. ‘If I am not better, at least I am different,’ as Rousseau declared. The creation of Art, perhaps, should be like going a journey, the soul of which is at ‘liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases…. It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy,’ as Hazlitt suggested.

To enjoy the beauty of nature, which speaks through Shakespeare,

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100 Pope, ‘Preface’, *Heritage*, ii, p. 403-4. The passage reads: ‘The Poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed: he is not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of Nature; and ’tis not so just to say that he speaks from her as that she speaks thro’ him.’
promises nothing but liberty, is the peculiar sentiment of the English Romantics. ‘It is not the voice of prejudice,’ J. H. Merivale insisted, ‘but the voice of nature herself, that has elevated Shakespeare to a height which it would be the excess of vain and presumptuous folly to claim for any dramatic writer before or after him, or any of his contemporaries.’ It is found that this romantic attitude, however, expressed not only a pure aesthetic judgment of taste, but also a radical political prejudice.

Like her art, the political power of France dominated the whole of Europe in the reign of the Bourbons; and among European countries, Great Britain was evidently her ‘closest’ and most ‘devoted’ enemy, in both military and ideological terms. This is not to mention major wars – such as the Hundred Years War, the seven years war, and the Napoleonic War – in which the two giant countries were in direct conflict. Most civil wars in England also arose and were encouraged by the influence of the French. The Stuarts were restored to the throne in 1660, sponsored by Louis XIV and James II, beaten by William of Orange in the Glorious Revolution, and eventually received by Louis XIV who afterwards offered them a palace and a pension in France. In addition, the French also supported the two Jacobite Risings in 1715 and 1745.

During the reign of Louis XIV, absolutism and centralization were necessities; Catholicism, art, as well as his throne, must remain secure; he was himself the prime minister in the parlements; he controlled even the pettiest detail of the ceremonial rites of royalty, and built the magnificent palace Versailles. By contrast, the English, like Shakespeare, were relatively natural and open. For instance, the constitution of her parliament consisted of different competing interests.

The revival of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, therefore, had an important polemical role to play in restoring English independence – indeed, ‘Englishness’ itself – after the incursions of French culture, the talent of which was but ‘to prescribe Fashions, not Words,’ as the ‘dualist’ Dryden had said more than a century before the Romantics. It is plausible to suggest, furthermore, that among Romantic literary critics, Francis Jeffrey and William Hazlitt were the most radical ones who

endeavoured to reinforce a lost Englishness by exalting Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama.

We have already seen that the Augustans were strongly influenced by the French; there was no reason, most certainly, for the Romantics to approve of them. On the other hand, they recognised, on the whole, that the works of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, like Shakespeare’s, were irregular and ‘natural’ and that they were not only great in quality, but also in quantity. ‘Much has been said of the dramatic poets of Elizabeth and James’s days,’ wrote Gifford, ‘full justice has never yet been rendered to their independence on one another… they stand insulated and alone, and draw, each in his station, from their own stores… or that some other fruitful cause of originality was in secret and powerful operation; so it is, that every writer had his peculiar style, and was content with it.’

Besides Shakespeare, there were also Kyd, Peele, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, Middleton, Tourneur, Marston, Massinger, Jonson, Ford, Chapman, Shirley, Webster, Dekker, Field and Rowley; each of them, moreover, possessed a genius which distinguished him from the others. For instance, Massinger was excellent in heaviness and indecency; Ben Jonson in ‘strong colouring’ and regularity; Beaumont and Fletcher in ‘smooth and flexible diction, the wandering fancy and romantic sweetness;’ Marlowe in the ‘fervour and brilliancy of his imagination;’ Dekker in descriptions of domestic and vulgar circumstances; Marston in ‘satirical humour;’ and Ford, as we will see later, in the pathetic and in horror. There is good reason indeed to believe that the period of Elizabeth was the golden age of England, both in history and in literature. ‘The whole period,’ Charles Lamb believed, ‘from the middle of Elizabeth’s reign to the close of the reign of Charles I, comprises a space of little more than half a century, within which time nearly all that we have of excellence in serious dramatic composition was produced, if we except the Samson Agonistes of Milton’

While Voltaire insists in his The Age of Louis XIV that humanity had passed through four great ages of blossoming: the Athens of Pericles, the Rome of Augustus, the Rome of Leo X, and the Paris of Louis XIV, in his review of Ford Jeffrey deliberately asserts that ‘in point of real force and originality of genius, neither the age

104 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xlii.
107 Lamb, Specimens, p. xii.
108 Wellek, Criticism, p. 32.
of Pericles, nor the age of Augustus, nor the times of Leo X, nor of Louis XIV, can come at all into comparison: for, in that short period [from the middle of Elizabeth’s reign to the period of the Restoration], we shall find the names of almost all the very great men that this nation has ever produced.' To Jeffrey, the Elizabethans and Jacobeans were giants of ‘one nation and family’ sharing the same characteristics of great force, boldness and originality. These characteristics are, the editor of The Edinburgh Review insists, the marks of genius. He points out that in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, classical learning was not an exclusive study; that is to say, the dramatists were not confined to any ‘standards’ and thus did not ‘at all restrain their freedom, or impair their originality.’ Rather, they composed only with their imagination, an inborn and natural faculty. Their appearance was, therefore, comparable to what happens upon the ‘breaking up of a virgin soil,– where all indigenous plants spring up at once with a rank and irrepressible fertility and display whatever is peculiar or excellent in their nature, on a scale the most conspicuous and magnificent.’ Their works were ‘grand and sublime,’ since they were the products of nature and appealed not to the intellect but to the soul of the audience. Thus, even though they were by no means ‘clean crops,’ Jeffrey asserts that ‘to those whose chief object of admiration is the living power and energy of vegetation, and who take delight in contemplating the various forms of her unforced and natural perfection, no spectacle can be more rich, splendid, or attractive.’

In the reign of Charles II, on the other hand, English literature was sunk into a ‘very low and feeble state,’ in which period the artists were forced to conform to the ‘gay and heartless gallantry of French manners.’ Although the classical and neoclassical art is regular and ‘polite,’ it is ‘artificial’ and cold. For artworks created by rules or theories are but imitations, they require understanding and skill, rather than imagination and passion. Taking all these into account, Jeffrey arrives at the conviction that:

Let any one compare the prodigious variety, and wide-ranging freedom of Shakespeare, with the narrow round of flames, tempests, treasons, victims, and tyrants, that scantily adorn the sententious pomp of the French Drama, and he will not fail to recognise the vast superiority of the former, in the excitement of the imagination, and all the diversities of poetical delight. That very mixture of styles,

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of which the French critics have so fastidiously complained, forms, when not
carried to any height of extravagance, one of the greatest charms of our antient
dramatists.  

For the same reason, Jeffrey asserts that if John Dryden had lived in the country, at a
distance far away from the ‘pollutions of courts, factions and playhouses,’ he might
have built up a pure and original school of English literature. The truth was, however,
that Dryden ‘has not written one line that is pathetic, and very few that can be
considered as sublime.’

William Hazlitt starts his Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth with the claim that
‘The age of Elizabeth was distinguished beyond, perhaps, any other in our history by a
number of great men… the genius of Great Britain… never shone out fuller or brighter,
or looked more like itself, than at this period.’ The reason is not only because of the
eloquence of its artists, but also, most importantly, because its artists had something in
them which ‘savoured of the soil from which they grew: they were not French; they
were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not
look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and
found it in themselves.’ Had Hazlitt written the passage intentionally, he would have
said that among these nationalities the French were the most contentious with the
English; otherwise, nothing could be clearer than the fact that he most disdained the
French. The true English, in stark contrast to the Augustans, did not conform to
doctrines of other countries – particularly of France – but only to their own ‘strong
heads’ and ‘sound heart;’ ‘the mind of their country was great in them, and it
prevailed.’ The Elizabethans were at once ‘natural,’ ‘bold,’ ‘vigorous,’ and
‘independent,’ because they were ‘islanders.’ Speaking as a true Englishman himself,
Hazlitt declares that ‘we cannot help it [being islanders], nor mend ourselves if we
would…. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have
fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to
be wished we had in no instance departed from it…. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded
into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent.’ It is exactly because of this
liberty and independence, Hazlitt argued, that England produced those admirable poets

and philosophers, and, for the same reason, that Charles II was to be denounced by the English: not only did he demolish the Drama and the ‘natural’ taste of England, but by doing so he also destroyed the Englishness of the country.

During the reign of Charles II, the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights ‘went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights, or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away everything in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gewgaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II.’

That is to say, to Hazlitt, French art was but ornamental, superfluous, and artificial; Charles II’s taste for such an art, moreover, corrupted the taste as well as the temperament of the native English. Charles II’s destructive influence, Hazlitt adds, was not only found in theatres and the court, but also, more unfortunately, in academic institutions. After the Restoration the Greek and Roman classics had been exclusive, ‘a sort of privileged text-books;’ and as a result, fewer and fewer people would read and appreciate the English classics, which would in turn be ‘suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form’s sake, and to save the national character.’

Hence, Hazlitt asserts in another article that ‘to master the Old English Dramatic Writers, the most esteemed novelists, the good old comedies and periodical works alone, would occupy the leisure of a life devoted to taste and study.’

Hazlitt examines the causes of that blossoming of English literature and concludes that it was strongly influenced, firstly by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism. The Reformation allowed not only Henry VIII’s divorce from his wife Katherine of Aragon, but also the break of England with Rome. Both Henry VIII and England were in liberty at this point; the former remarried and then fathered an heir, Edward VI, the latter had her independent church. According to Hazlitt, liberty is the essence of art, the greatest enemy of which, thus, is slavery and constraint; it is not hard, therefore, to follow Hazlitt’s argument that the Reformation contributed much to Elizabethan literature, since it ‘toppled down the full-grown,

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116 Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 2.
117 Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 8.
intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigoted faith and slavish obedience.  

The Reformation, furthermore, enabled the translation of the Bible in 1535, which was another ‘engine’ of the Enlightenment. With its accessibility, the Bible not only provided a common object for the general mass of the community to contemplate, but it also inspired artists – Milton in particular – to compose. The teaching of Jesus Christ, most importantly, was indeed the essence of Romanticism: ‘His [Christ’s] religion was the religion of the heart…. He was the first true teacher of morality; for He alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity… and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will.’ The religious faith of the Elizabethans, Hazlitt continues, was at once represented and influential ‘in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope, and the abyss of despair it lays open to us.’

Hence, according to the radical and Whig critics, it is passion, the feeling of the soul, rather than reason and understanding, that bears universality and the truth; it is liberty, rather than confinement, that is the essence of art. Now since passion and liberty are amorphous and oblique, English literature,

in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed, or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others.

Therefore, the Elizabethans’ lack of classical learning, as Jeffrey and Hazlitt pointed out, was at once a strength as well as a shortcoming for them. The Tory Gifford, consistently, affirmed that the faults committed by the Elizabethan playwrights – Ford in particular – were ‘pardonable’ since they had no model to work from: ‘the elements

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119 Hazlitt, *Lectures*, p. 11.
121 Hazlitt, *Lectures*, p. 28.
of composition, as far as regards taste and judgment, far from being established, were not even arranged; and with the exception of Sir Philip Sidney’s Essays, nothing can be more jejune and unsatisfactory than the few attempts at poetic criticism then before the public.\textsuperscript{122}

From the arguments of Jeffrey and Hazlitt, we can also perceive some reasons why Longinus was popular with the English, apart from the correspondences between his analysis of the ‘objective’ quality of the sublime and the works of Shakespeare. Firstly, Longinus insists upon the judgment of the heart. It is, to a certain extent, relevant to the religion of Jesus Christ, whose character is to Hazlitt ‘of a sublime humanity, such as never seen on earth before nor since.’\textsuperscript{123} Secondly, it is clear that the Romantics strove for liberty and political independence; similarly, Longinus ends his On the Sublime with a section in which political liberty is taken into account. ‘Liberty,’ a friend with whom Longinus was debating says, ‘produces fine sentiments in men of genius; it invigorates their hopes, excites an honourable emulation, and inspires an ambition and thirst of excelling.’ However, his friend asserts, the age in which they were living was corrupt and in subjection: ‘we have never tasted liberty, that copious and fertile source of all that is beautiful and of all that is great, and hence are we nothing but pompous flatterers.’ In response to this, Longinus insists that it was rather the corruption of humanity – the soul – that discouraged genius: “A corrupt and dishonest judge is incapable of making unbiased and solid decisions by the rules of equity and honour... an insensibility to whatever is truly great has been the bane of every rising genius of the present age. Hence life in general... is thrown away in indolence and sloth.”\textsuperscript{124} Both Longinus’s and his friend’s arguments perfectly represent the situation of England before the Romantic period: the Augustans, according to Jeffrey and Hazlitt, were indeed insensible to whatever was ‘truly great,’ since they were obsessed with ‘foreign frippery.’

It should be clear that the triumph of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period was also a political, cultural, and ideological one. Under the rule of Elizabeth I and James I, the artists were at perfect liberty and were – like Hazlitt in the country – able to laugh, to run, to leap, and to sing for joy. After the Restoration, however, true Englishness was

\textsuperscript{122} Gifford, Ford, i, p. xlvi.
\textsuperscript{123} Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{124} Longinus, pp. 215-22.
lost. Freedom was robbed by the French, their enemy. In order to reinforce the national character, particularly at the time of the Napoleonic War, it was necessary for the Romantics to revive Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, to recover ‘the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true Fame,’ and to ‘draw the curtain of time and show the picture of Genius.’ ¹²⁵ ‘Towards the commencement of the ensuing century,’ the anonymous reviewer in The Monthly Review suggests, ‘the genuine feelings of nature regained their influence:—Shakespeare was restored to his supremacy on the stage, and his works thrown into general circulation. Such good food naturally increased the appetite it gratified; and the growth of a healthy dramatic taste, is henceforth to be traced with accuracy.’ ¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 3.
The Case of John Ford

Interestingly, the three fundamental causes of the revival of Shakespeare – that is, the rise in historical criticism, the influence of Longinus, and the endeavour to reinforce Englishness – were echoed in the revival and reception of Ford in the Romantic period.

Historical Recurrence: the editions of John Ford

The first edition of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century was published by the Whig Nicholas Rowe in 1709. Sixteen years later, the Tory Pope’s edition appeared (1725). The first collected works of John Ford, coincidentally, was published by the ‘violent Jacobin’ 127 Henry Weber in 1811, exactly sixteen years earlier than the second edition of the confessed Tory William Gifford (1827), the editor of the Anti-Jacobin (1797-8) and of The Quarterly Review (1809-1824). Apart from these coincidences, there was also a common subject on which the Whigs and the Tories debated in their editions – the personality of Ben Jonson.

Ben Jonson claims in the prefix to The Northern Lass, written by his old servant Richard Brome, that

Now you are got into a nearer room
Of fellowship, professing my old arts,
And you do do them well, with good applause;
Which you have justly gained from the stage,
By observation of those comick laws
Which I, your master, first did teach the age. 128

According to Edmond Malone, from Shakespeare’s death in the year 1616 until the year 1625, Ben Jonson and John Fletcher were in fact better received than Shakespeare; Fletcher produced nearly thirty plays. Jonson was well-received and patronized in the courts of James I and Charles I and extravagantly extolled by scholars

of the time.\textsuperscript{129} Although the appointment of poet laureate was not yet formally established at that time, Jonson’s literary prestige and influence, together with the Kings’ patronage, made him the ‘law giver’ of dramatic art. Perhaps because of his authority and learning, it had been argued by some scholars – the Whigs in particular – that Jonson was arrogant and jealous of Shakespeare. Rowe, for instance, in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare contends that Jonson was ‘naturally Proud and Insolent, and in the Days of his Reputation did so far take upon him the Supremacy in Wit that he could not but look with an evil Eye upon any one that seem’d to stand in Competition with him.’ The editor then infers that Jonson might not accept the fact that another man – Shakespeare – could be able to ‘strike out the greatest Thoughts in the finest Expression and to reach those Excellencies of Poetry with the Ease of a first Imagination which himself with infinite Labour and Study could but hardly attain to.’\textsuperscript{130} In Rowe’s opinion, therefore, Jonson’s ‘infinite labour and study’ could never be comparable to Shakespeare’s genius, which enabled him to compose with ‘ease’ by a ‘first’ imagination.

Alexander Pope, on the contrary, believed that Shakespeare and Jonson were friends, arguing that such a belief was merely the result of the enthusiasm of the partisans of the two dramatists. The fact was, Pope observed, that it was Shakespeare who introduced Ben Jonson to the stage and encouraged his first work to be acted. In several of his poems, moreover, Jonson exhibits his fondness for Shakespeare. ‘I would fain believe they were Friends,’ Pope writes in the preface, ‘tho’ the violence and ill-breeding of their Followers and Flatterers were enough to give rise to the contrary report. I Would hope that it may be with Parties, both in Wit and State, as with those Monsters described by the Poets, and that their Heads at least may have something humane tho’ their Bodies and Tails are wild beasts and serpents.’\textsuperscript{131}

In his edition of Ford, Weber particularly discusses Ford’s \textit{The Lover’s Melancholy} in detail. The discussion, however, focuses not on its quality and achievement, but on a forgery, which was created by Charles Macklin in 1748 and brought forward by George Steevens in his edition of Shakespeare and which,

\textsuperscript{130} Nicholas Rowe, ‘Some Account of the Life of Mr. William Shakespeare’, \textit{Heritage}, ii, p. 193.
controversially, states that Jonson was jealous not only of Shakespeare but also of Ford.

It was the 1745 production of Perkin Warbeck, most likely, that brought Ford’s works to Macklin’s attention and inspired him to produce The Lover's Melancholy. The play was intended to be performed at Drury Lane on 22 April 1748. However, it was postponed for a week because of a lack in public interest, even though an advertisement had been published in the General Advertiser. In response to this, Macklin sent another letter to the General Advertiser few days later, in which he refers to a pamphlet ‘Old Ben’s Light Heart made heavy, by Young John’s Melancholy Lover,’ which was claimed to be written in the reign of Charles I and lost in Ireland, with the hope that the reputation of Shakespeare and Jonson could raise the interest of the public. Macklin suggests that Jonson was ‘by nature splenetic and sour; with a share of envy… more than was warrantable in society: by education rather critically than politely learned; which swelled his mind into an ostentatious pride of his own works, and an overbearing inexorable judgment of his contemporaries.’ On this ground, Macklin believes that the ‘rigid’ Jonson envied and was ‘wounded’ not only by the fame of the ‘lowly’ Shakespeare, but also by the ‘uncommon applause’ of Ford’s The Lover’s Melancholy, which was acted in the same week at the same theatre as Jonson’s New Inn, or Light Heart in 1628. Jonson’s epigram To Playwright, Macklin insists, was addressed to Ford, an ‘intimate and professed admirer of Shakespeare’:

Playwright, by chance, hearing some toys I had writ,  
Cry’d to my face, they were the elixir of wit;  
And I must now believe him, for to-day  
Five of my jests, then stol’n, pass’d him a play.  

Furthermore, according to the second letter of Macklin, Ford was accused by Jonson, firstly, of having stolen a character in the Ladies Trial from his work; and secondly, of purloining The Lover’s Melancholy from Shakespeare’s papers, by the connivance of Condell and Heminge, who, in conjunction with Ford, had the revisions of them.

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The forgery, as well as Macklin’s arguments, were refuted by Edmond Malone. Firstly, Malone argues, there was no evidence that Ford was an ‘intimate’ friend of the Bard. Ben Jonson in his own time was generally called the ‘judicious Ben,’ the ‘learned Ben,’ the ‘immortal Ben,’ but never the ‘Old Ben’. In the year of 1631, moreover, when the pamphlet was supposed to have been published, Jonson would have been fifty-seven years of age, Ford forty-five. Jonson was not to be accounted old and Ford young. Although it is true that both *The Lover’s Melancholy* and the *New Inn* were represented at Black-friars, they were not performed in the same week but with a two-month interval between the two productions. It was impossible for Jonson to accuse Ford of having stolen a character in the latter’s *Ladies Trial*, for the play was acted after the death of the former. Finally, Malone asserts that the epigram *To Playwright* was aimed at Dekker, rather than Ford.\(^{136}\)

Macklin tried to encourage the public awareness of Ford by exploiting the fame of Shakespeare and Jonson. Henry Weber, likewise, adopted the same practice in his edition of Ford, even though he decried Macklin and his forgery. Weber believes that ‘there can be no doubt’ about the jealousy Jonson held towards his contemporaries and successors, and that, according to ‘some indisputable documents,’ Ford was ‘frequently pitted against him [Jonson] as the champion of his antagonists.’\(^{137}\) In addition, the editor contends that the verses of Shirley prefixed to Ford’s *Love’s Sacrifice*, and Ford’s prologue to *The Lover’s Melancholy*, both express the authors’ distaste for Jonson’s pride and attitude:

\begin{quote}
To tell ye gentlemen, in what true sense
The writer, actor, and the audience
Should mould their judgments for a play, might draw
Truth into rules; but we have no such law.
Our writer for himself, would have ye know,
That in his following scenes, he doth not owe
To others’ fancies; nor hath lain in wait
For any stol’n invention, from whose height
He might commend his own, more than the right
A scholar claims may warrant for delight.\(^{138}\)
\end{quote}

‘I do not conceive,’ Weber claims, ‘that any one can deny that these lines refer to the angry Laureate [Jonson], who was at the time giving laws to the writers, actors, and

audience of the time, and abusing all who did not conform to his despotic rules.'

This reveals that the ‘violent Jacobin’ disparaged neoclassical rules in the first place and Jonson, as a consequence, was not his favourite poet, especially when he was compared with the ‘lawless’ Shakespeare.

Many of Weber’s commentaries on Ford are allusions to Shakespeare. To the editor, the plot of Love’s Sacrifice is an imitation of that of Othello; Bianca of the same play, an imitation of Desdemona; Rossetti of the ‘admirable character of Edgar in King Lear’ and the line of Mauruccio that ‘She is mine.... Advance the glass... that I may practise as I pass’ strongly reminds Weber of Richard III’s: ‘Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, that I may see my shadow as I pass.’

The death of Bergetto in 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore, in addition, bears ‘a striking resemblance to that of Roderigo in Othello’; Annabella’s last speech is a direct reference to Desdemona’s; the Friar of the same play and that of The Broken Heart are ‘nigh kindred to the Friar Lawrence of Shakespeare’. In The Broken Heart, Ithocles’s first speech in Act II, sc. ii, is an allusion to the ‘celebrated passage’ in Macbeth; the melancholy and madness of Penthea is ‘almost as finely drawn to the life as the madness of Ophelia’; and the dialogue between the Duke and D’Avolos in Act III, sc. iii, is ‘no bad imitation of the celebrated one between Othello and Iago.’

Apart from its uncritical introduction and commentaries, Weber’s edition is to be criticized for its inaccurate explanations of obscure words and phrases. Sentences such as ‘so the old quarto/play reads’ and ‘the word is singular’ frequently appear in the footnotes; most of the explanatory notes, furthermore, are not necessary. In such a ‘critical age,’ it is not difficult to predict that the edition would have been an object of criticism. In view of manner and argument, no reviews could be harsher and more offensive than those written by the Tories Gifford and Merivale. It was plausible to suggest, moreover, that it was because of the drawbacks of Weber’s edition, rather than the value of Ford’s works, that Gifford endeavoured to publish his own edition of Ford.

139 Weber, Ford, i, p. xxxi.
140 Weber, Ford, i, p. xxxiv.
142 Weber, Ford, i, p. 375.
143 Weber, Ford, i, p. 67.
144 Weber, Ford, i, pp. 100-1.
147 Weber, Ford, i, p. 411.
Regarding this, Francis Jeffrey’s assertion is relevant: ‘the notice which they [the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists] have recently attracted proceeded from any thing but that indiscriminate rage for editing and annotating by which the present times are so happily distinguished, we should be disposed to hail it as the most unequivocal symptom of improvement in public taste that has yet occurred to reward and animate our labours.’\textsuperscript{148} That is to say, the Whig believed that some critics and editors of the Elizabethan dramatists did not aim at promoting the eloquence of their ancestors; rather, they aimed at inveighing against others, particularly their rivals. Jeffrey’s opinion, most probably, was aimed at the Tory Gifford, the editor not only of Ford, but also of Philip Massinger (1805) and of Ben Jonson (1816). These incidents prove criticism and literature in the Romantic period, in general, were highly political.

Not long after the publication of Weber’s edition, Gifford published an article in his \textit{Quarterly Review}, half of which is concerned with Weber’s errors and his incapacities in editing. With regard to Weber’s explanatory notes, Gifford suggests sarcastically that they are unnecessary since the words explained are those ‘a girl of six years old would blush to ask the meaning.’\textsuperscript{149} This may imply that Gifford was attentively concerned with the commentaries of Weber rather than with the compositions of John Ford. Gifford denounced Weber’s notes, moreover, since some of them directly refer to The Variorum Edition of Shakespeare (1778) edited by Steevens, who was, Gifford believed, ‘a dangerous guide… his errors are specious; for he was a man of ingenuity: but he was often wantonly mischievous, and delighted to stumble for the mere gratification of dragging unsuspecting innocents into the mire with him. He was, in short, the very Puck of commentators.’\textsuperscript{150}

The review of Weber’s edition written by J. H. Merivale was published in 1812 in \textit{The Monthly Review}. Its tone, as well as its arguments, are surprisingly consistent with that of Gifford’s article. The author not only focuses on the faults which he had censured in Weber, but also, most importantly, decries him mercilessly. To quote a passage which can justify both arguments at once: ‘Mr. Weber… threatens a new edition of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher; which, if executed with any resemblance, in taste and spirit, to the present performance, will (we conceive) be so serious an injury to this branch of our

national literature… we must… pray for a perpetual junction from the court of Parnassus to restrain him from interfering with the works of any antient author who has ever met with an editor, whether that editor be Steevens or Monch Mason [the editor of Massinger’s works (1778)]. There is sound reason to believe that if Gifford and Merivale were not the same person, they were certainly politically aligned.

Gifford did not miss any chance to attack some of his predecessors, particularly Weber, Steevens, and Mason – editors of the dramatists whose works he also edited. In the preface to his edition of Ford, once more, Gifford condemns the first editor of Ford because he ‘had never read an old play in his life; he was but imperfectly acquainted with the language; and of the manners, customs, habits – of what was and what was not familiar to us as a nation – he possessed no knowledge whatever; but, secure in ignorance, he entertained a comfortable opinion of himself, and never doubted that he was qualified to instruct and enliven the public.’ With respect to Weber’s edition of Beaumont and Fletcher (1812), Gifford arrives at the conviction (which resembles Merivale’s) that ‘his [Weber’s] notes are of the most contemptible kind; yet he has the hardihood to speak of Mr. Monck Mason as if he had never advanced a step beyond his Massinger…. Assuredly, Simpson and Seward [editors of Beaumont and Fletcher (1750)] were no great champions in the field of criticism; compared with Mr. Weber, however, they were giants.

Weber’s edition is undeniably far from perfect; however, whether or not it had to be the focus of criticism is debatable. ‘It has been said,’ writes an anonymous scholar in The Monthly Review in 1827, ‘that Mr. Weber is but an alias for Mr. W. Scott, now Sir Walter; and that much of the bitterness which falls from Gifford’s pen on this occasion, was produced by personal feelings of hostility.’ The writer, most likely a liberal, continues: ‘it is impossible to defend Mr. Weber from the innumerable charges of negligence and of ignorance… but it seems to us, that they might have been stated and proved in terms less objectionable, than those which Mr. Gifford uniformly delights in using.’ Jeffrey, likewise, pointed out that although Weber was by no means the best of the editors of the Elizabethan dramatists, ‘we cannot resist the opportunity which this

152 Gifford, Ford, i, p. lv.
153 Gifford, Ford, i, pp. lxiii-iv.
publication seems to afford, of saying a word or two of a class of writers, whom we have long worshipped in secret with a sort of idolatrous veneration, and now find once more brought forward as candidates for public applause.\textsuperscript{155} In other words, Jeffrey suggests that the most important issue, or the responsibility of a critic, is to refine the taste of the age by promoting the works of the neglected English dramatists, rather than to censure the capacity of their editors.

Hazlitt’s criticism of Gifford, perhaps, is not irrelevant to our discussion. In his \textit{The Spirit of the Age} Hazlitt condemns Gifford as ‘prouder of a court-livery than of a laurel-wreath.’ ‘He has,’ Hazlitt points out, ‘all his life been a follower in the train of wealth and power – strives to back his pretensions on Parnassus by a place at court, and to gild his reputation as a man of letters by the smile of greatness…. He believes that modern literature should wear the fetters of classical antiquity… that genius is dependent on rules; that taste and refinement of language consist in \textit{word-catching}.\textsuperscript{156} It is plausible that Hazlitt was not ignorant of Gifford’s criticism of Weber and Ford. He adds that ‘in studying an old author, he [Gifford] has no notion of anything beyond adjusting a point, proposing a different reading, or correcting, by the collation of various copies, an error of the press.’\textsuperscript{157} Hazlitt’s description of the Tory Gifford surprisingly echoes his predecessor, David Hume’s, opinions about the political parties of England.

Speaking of the differences between Court-party and Country-party, Hume asserts that the participants of the former are ‘of mild tempers, who love peace and order, and detest sedition and civil wars, will always entertain more favourable sentiments of monarchy’; whereas that the latter is formed by ‘men of bold and generous spirits, who are passionate lovers of liberty, and think no evil comparable to subjection and slavery.’\textsuperscript{158} If we make the assumption that the Tory was analogous to the Court-Party, and the Whig to the Country-Party, we can infer that so far as art criticism is concerned, Tories were in practice and in theory much confined to authority, rules, and morality; it is exactly for the same reason, most certainly, that they extolled Ben Jonson – not only because his works are comparatively regular and ‘learned,’ but also because he was well-received in court and was the law giver of the theatre.

\textsuperscript{158} David Hume, ‘Of the Parties of Great Britain’, \textit{Essays Literary, Moral and Political} (London and New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1870, p. 41.)
The lengths that Gifford goes to in the preface to his edition to discuss Jonson can be compared with Weber’s. The latter’s is, as we have seen, a denunciation, the former’s a praise. Gifford did not, in fact, respond directly to the charge that the relationship between Jonson and his contemporaries was generally discordant. Nevertheless, Gifford stresses that his ‘poetickall friend master Benjamin Johnson’ was an ‘eminent’ poet, thus criticizing Weber for his unsound and unproved criticisms of him. To Gifford, Jonson was a playwright to be respected since he was the first one who ‘sought from early life to enlist the stage on the side of learning and virtue’. Sympathetically, ‘he found few supporters, and no followers; and the stage went on as before; attended, but not honoured; popular, but not influential.’ It is no hard task, thus, to deduce that one of the groundings of Gifford’s personal hatred of Steevens, besides his politics, is that he reprinted Macklin’s forgery. Taking this further, we can also deduce that he hated Weber even more since Weber reprinted the forgery with the knowledge that it was a fake. ‘He saw,’ Gifford expresses, ‘how little was required to insult a man of integrity, learning, and genius, and he aspired to the honour of adding his name to the long list of Jonson’s persecutors, and fabricating new charges against him.’

It was possible that Gifford attacked Weber because he did not include in his edition a poem by John Ford titled ‘On the Best of English Poets’ (1637), a dedication to Jonson who died in the same year. Controversially, Weber, referring to Malone, believed that Ford wrote it because this was a general practice of the age, rather than because of a genuine affection for the poet. This argument was based upon the fact that a poem by Owen Feltham, an old antagonist of Ben Jonson, was also found in the Jonsonus Virbius (1638). Gifford, in turn, not only selected the poem for the second edition of Ford, but also acclaimed it to be ‘composed under better auspices and in a far better taste [than the Fame’s Memorial].’

Be this as it may, Weber’s ‘insult’ to the personality of Jonson touched the nerves of the Tories; not only of Gifford and Merivale, but also of a friend of Gifford’s,

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Octavius Gilchrist, who published pamphlets criticizing Weber’s edition and defending Jonson against Weber's charges.\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{Perkin Warbeck: Whig and Tory}

It is unquestionably Ford’s highest achievement, and is one of the very best historical plays outside of the works of Shakespeare in the whole of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

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– T. S. Eliot\textsuperscript{165}
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An historical play based on Lord Bacon’s \textit{History of Henry VII}, Ford’s \textit{Perkin Warbeck} depicts the rise and fall of Perkin Warbeck, impostor of Richard, the Duke of York and the second son of Edward IV who had disappeared in 1483 together with his elder brother, Edward V. The play, interestingly, appealed to the Romantics not so much for its artistic value, as for its political currency.

Two rebellions, known as the Jacobite Revolutions, arose in 1715 and 1745 respectively as a result of the House of Hanover’s accession to the throne of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1714. The first rebellion was attempted by James Francis Edward Stuart, known as the old pretender, and the second was raised by his eldest son, Charles Edward Stuart, the young pretender. Both rebellions were failures. Because of the analogy between the intentions of Perkin Warbeck and that of the two Jacobites, and the influence of the Whigs in Hanover’s government, Ford’s historical play was reprinted in 1714 and acted at Goodman’s Field Theatre in 1745 as antidotes to the rebellions. A summary of the chronicle of Warbeck prefixed to the 1714 edition concludes with these lines: ‘Thus this famous Impostor fell, after he had tormented King Henry by Intervals for about the space of six Years… and [it] might perhaps have had a different Period, if He had not met a King extraordinary [sic] wise, valiant and fortunate.’\textsuperscript{166} The intention of the Whigs to preclude revolution by having the play reprinted and acted turned out,ironically, to be an embarrassment.

In the reign of Charles II two political parties arose – Whig and Tory. To determine the nature of Whig and Tory is, David Hume asserted, ‘perhaps one of the most difficult problems that can be met with, and is a proof that history may contain

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\textsuperscript{165} T. S. Eliot, Essays, p. 200.
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In spite of this, Hume defined a Tory as ‘a lover of monarchy, though without abandoning liberty; and a partisan of the family of Stuart’ and a Whig to be ‘a lover of liberty, though without renouncing monarchy: and a friend to the settlement in the Protestant line.’ In view of this, it was believed that the Tories would not appreciate *Perkin Warbeck* since it represented the failure of a rebellion, and that the Whigs, for the same reason, would have praised it. Ironically, however, as J. H. Merivale revealed, ‘one of the most remarkable circumstances attending the play is, that, on reading it, we can scarcely help imagining that the author was secretly persuaded of the justice of Warbeck’s pretensions. His character, from first to last, is that which would have become the real Duke of York:—not a moment of weakness or despondency occurs, in which, even to himself, he acknowledges the guilt of imposture. On the other hand, Henry is (at least in all his conduct towards this unfortunate young man) nothing but the cold, wary, and relentless tyrant, for whom the most devoted loyalist can feel no attachment, and from whom every ardent or independent spirit must turn with disgust and hatred. This singularity is not remarked by the editor [Henry Weber]’. This comment is accurate; Ford’s Henry VII is by no means as extraordinarily wise, valiant, and fortunate as the 1714 editor fancied.

Weber, the ‘violent Jacobin,’ was certainly not ignorant of this fact. His criticism of the play ran thus: ‘It must be confessed, that Ford mistook his talent when he attempted to cultivate this species of dramatic composition, which nothing short of the gigantic genius of Shakespeare could render interesting…. But instead of finding those flashes and outbreaks of a fiery mind, which more than compensate for the defects in Shakespeare’s compositions of a similar nature, we have frequently very declamatory dialogue, and, in general, no very accurate delineation of character.’ The confessed Whig, therefore, believes that Ford depicts the pretender inaccurately: Warbeck is to be a villain and the King an ‘extraordinarily wise’ hero. Jeffrey’s remark on the play is also noteworthy: ‘In *Perkin Warbeck*, there is a more uniform and sustained elevation of style.’ No further discussion and citation of the play is found in the article.

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168 Hume, *Essays*, p. 44.
In contrast to the Whigs’ ‘declamatory’ commentaries, the play was enthusiastically extolled by the Tories to such an extent that its quality was compared to that of Shakespeare’s historical plays. To Merivale, the play is ‘so admirably conducted, so adorned with poetic sentiment and expression, so full of fine discrimination of character and affecting incidents, that we cannot help regarding that audience as greatly disgraced which, having once witnessed its representation, did not ensure its perpetuity on the English stage. If any play in the language can induce us to admit the lawfulness of a comparison with Shakespeare, it is this.’

Surprisingly, there can scarcely be found a single discrepancy between Gifford’s article in The Quarterly Review regarding Weber’s edition and the introduction to his own edition of Ford, with only one exception – his opinion of Perkin Warbeck. In the review he simply writes that ‘accordingly, in Perkin Warbeck… we have a chronicle, and nothing more; a chronicle, too, in its most exceptionable shape; for while we hesitate to allow it the merit of truth, it comes recommended by none of the graces of fiction, and for the mere purposes of entertainment, the narrative deserves the preference.’ It is evident that Gifford was not sensible of the ‘virtue’ of Warbeck at this stage. Contradictorily, in the introduction he cites the passage of Merivale just mentioned, claiming that ‘there is little to add to this commendation, and I am not aware that much can be taken away from it.’ In other words, it implies either that the play has ‘something’ more than a chronicle and ‘some’ graces of fiction, since the play is of the quality of Shakespeare’s works, or that Shakespeare’s historical plays are nothing more than chronicles and destitute of any grace of fiction. Moreover, like Merivale, Gifford characterized Henry VII as ‘cold, calculating, stern, shrewd and avaricious.’

Towards a Genuine Style: John Ford and the Pathetic

We have already discussed the Longinian fault-and-beauty attitude to art and the role of the sublime in the revival of Shakespeare. There are, however, two other important aspects of Longinus’s treatise which need to be elaborated upon – the psychological effect of the sublime and the sublime style of expression, since both are

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174 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xxxvi.
crucial not only to substantiate the unique artistic achievement of Ford, but also, most importantly, crucial to our understanding of the Romantic criticism of Ford, Charles Lamb’s in particular.

It was from nature and the natural environment, Longinus argues, that Man first experienced the feeling of the sublime, which is described as ‘grand and lofty, which the more we consider, the greater ideas we conceive of it; whose force we cannot possibly withstand; which immediately sinks deep, and makes such impressions on the mind as cannot be easily worn out or effaced.’\(^{176}\) It is lofty, because the subject is ‘transported’ to a state beyond the sensuous world through the animation of the imagination; it sinks deep, since the soul of the beholder is touched. Not every natural object, however, is capable of evoking the sublime; it must be grand and great: ‘the impulse of nature inclines us to admire, not a little clear transparent rivulet that ministers to our necessities, but the Nile, the Ister, the Rhine, or still much more, the Ocean.’\(^ {177}\)

Mankind is not limited to being a mere part of and an admirer of nature; people have the capacity to create art. Despite this, the greatness of nature can never be forgotten, and thus it is to be the model of art. Physically speaking, it is almost impossible for a man to create an object that can be larger than that of nature; art, therefore, can only imitate the representation – the feeling – of grand natural objects. Aiming at this, oration and poetry require ‘something extraordinary, something more than humanly great.’\(^ {178}\) Longinus not only proposes this to be the aim of art, but also, more importantly, believes that the representation of the sublime in art could be even more striking and great than the ‘real’ sublimity of nature. This is exactly the import of Lamb’s passage ‘There is a grandeur of the soul above mountains, seas, and the elements,’ which suggests furthermore that, as far as psychological effect is concerned, Ford’s compositions are superior to objects of nature because of the representation of human pathos, the feelings of the soul.

It is plausible to maintain that Robert Burton’s *The Anatomie of Melancholie* (1621) not only inspired John Ford to write his *The Lover’s Melancholy*, but it also, symbolically speaking, was that which occupied him for his whole life. In his first

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\(^ {176}\) Longinus, pp. 65-66.  
\(^ {177}\) Longinus, p. 190.  
\(^ {178}\) Longinus, p. 194.
appearance before the reading public, *Fame’s Memorial* (1606), a poem dedicated to
the Lady Penelope, Countess of Devonshire, Ford says that he was involved in an
unhappy affair of love with the ‘cruel subtle Lycia’.¹⁷⁹

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\begin{align*}
\text{Flint-hearted Lycia may with mild aspect} \\
\text{Cast up the sigh of some forematched scorn,} \\
\text{And in the mixture of disdain’s neglect} \\
\text{My death-bewailing scope of grief adorn,} \\
\text{Reviving dulness of a wit forlorn:} \\
\text{Amongst the fancies of her rival lover,} \\
\text{Some groan with this dear noble’s funeral cover.}^{180}
\end{align*}
\]

This loss apparently had made Ford a melancholy and a lonely man, for this aspect of
his temperament is repeatedly represented in his art. Almost all of Ford’s writings are
gloomy and filled with a melancholy air; most of his protagonists, moreover, live in the
loneliest and most hopeless situations. In *The Lover’s Melancholy*, for instance, Palador
suffers from the disappearance of his beloved Eroclea, who was exiled from Cyprus
disguised as a boy in an attempt to escape a rape organized by Palador’s father. Eroclea,
in turn, like Viola in *Twelfth Night*, was admired by another character of the same sex
and not able to speak the truth. In *The Broken Heart*, Orgilus’s lover, Penthea, was
forced to marry a jealous husband; and Orgilus was, similar to Hamlet, lost in the
course of the play. In *Love’s Sacrifice*, Bianca’s fascination for Fernando is
unspeakable, since she is unfaithful to her husband. This is not to mention the love
between Giovanni and Annabella in *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, for within the play who
could understand and pardon their incestuous relationship but themselves?

To the Romantic critics, in fact, the most distinctive quality of Ford was his
capacity to achieve certain pathetic effects. Weber suggested that Ford ‘may perhaps
challenge a superiority over them all [his contemporaries] in point of pathetic effect.
This peculiar and truly tragic talent is so much his own that he sometimes pains the
mind of his reader by stimulating his feelings to an excess of passion.’¹⁸¹ Despite
Gifford’s harsh denunciation of Weber, Gifford had a similar opinion of Ford that he
was ‘sufficiently elevated for the most pathetic tones of that passion on whose romantic
energies he chiefly delighted to dwell.’¹⁸²

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Ford was but one of the ornaments of English drama, he did not fail to observe ‘a particular depth and delicacy of romantic feeling’ aroused by Ford.\textsuperscript{183} This ‘romantic feeling,’ perhaps, could be described as the expression of tender emotions of the soul.\textsuperscript{184} With reference to the peculiar genius of Ford, Jeffrey claimed that ‘in the tender and afflicting pathetic, he appears to us occasionally to be second only to him who has never yet had an equal.’\textsuperscript{185} In Romantic criticism, first of all, Ford was deemed to be superior to his contemporaries – ‘except Shakespeare’ – in expressing the sufferings of his characters, particularly those of the females.

Penthea of \textit{The Broken Heart} was to the Romantics one of Ford’s finest creations. Before the play takes place, Ithocles, Penthea’s brother, has forced her to marry the jealous Bassanes for the sake of fortune. Penthea, who was once betrothed to Orgilus, is torn between the unimpeachable sanctity of marriage on the one hand, and her aversion to the unremitting jealousy of her husband on the other.

\begin{verbatim}
\textit{Penthea.} Pray kill me,
Rid me from living with a jealous husband;
Then we will join in friendship, be again
Brother and sister.– Kill me, pray; nay, will ye?
\textit{Ithocles.} How does thy lord esteem thee?
\textit{Penthea.} Such an one
As only you have made me; a faith-breaker,
A spotted whore:– forgive me, I am one –
In act, not in desires, the gods must witness.
\textit{Ithocles.} Thou dost belie thy friend.
\textit{Penthea.} I do not, Ithocles;
For she that’s wife to Orgilus, and lives
In known adultery with Bassanes,
Is at the best a whore. Wilt kill me now?
The ashes of our parents will assume
Some dreadful figure, and appear to charge
Thy bloody guilt, that hast betrayed their name
To infamy in this reproachful match.\textsuperscript{186} (III, ii)
\end{verbatim}

The scene was to Jeffrey ‘one of the most striking in the whole compass of dramatic composition.’\textsuperscript{187} Penthea, however, not only forgives Ithocles’ having ruined her life, but also persuades the Duchess Calantha to entertain her brother’s suit:

\begin{flushright}
183 Campbell, \textit{Specimens}, i, p. 244.
\end{flushright}
Penthea. I have left me
But three poor jewels to bequeath. The first is
My youth; for though I am much old in griefs,
In years I am a child.
Calantha. To whom that jewel?
Penthea. To virgin-wives, such as abuse not wedlock
By freedom of desires, but covet chiefly
The pledges of chaste beds for ties of love,
Rather than ranging of their blood; and next
To married maids, such as prefer the number
Of honourable issue in their virtues
Before the flattery of delights by marriage:
May those be ever young! (III, v)

After her ‘duty’ is performed, Penthea goes mad and dies of starvation. ‘On Penthea’s character,’ the anonymous editor of the Harper edition of Ford urged, ‘all the powers of Ford’s pathetic pen are lavished. With a high sense of moral indignation at the condition to which she sees herself reduced… a few complaints could not but escape the wretched wife of Bassanes… Penthea exhibits such a fixed and hopeless misery, such a sense of loneliness and desolation, that the icy coldness of her heart gradually communicates itself to the reader.’\textsuperscript{188} She is, the anonymous reviewer in \textit{The Monthly Review} believed, ‘hardly to be surpassed in truth of feeling, beauty of expression, discriminative of delineation of character, and delicacy and chaste of tone…. In female perfection, where are we to look, except in Shakespeare, for the equal of Penthea, that lovely personification of patience, meekness, resignation, and broken heartedness?’\textsuperscript{189} Gifford, however, did not agree with this. He suggested, on the whole, that the ‘lovely and interesting’ Penthea ‘has a spice of selfishness in her grief, and approaches somewhat too nearly to Orgilus in the unforgiving part of his character. Even her last words are expressive of resentment.’ Moreover, the transition of Penthea from insanity to her last expression of melancholy in Act IV, sc. ii was to him too sudden and illogical.\textsuperscript{190}

In the character Katherine Gordon in \textit{Perkin Warbeck}, Ford’s talent in expressing feminine sentiments is also shown. Notwithstanding the historical fact that she remarried three times after Warbeck’s death, her speech for Warbeck’s execution totally manifests her meekness and her devotion to the pretender:

\textsuperscript{190} Gifford, \textit{Ford}, i, p. 293.
Oxford. Remember, lady, who you are; come from
That impudent impostor.
Katherine. You abuse us:
For when the holy churchman joined our hands,
Our vows were real then; the ceremony
Was not in apparition, but in act.–
Be what these people term thee, I am certain
Thou art my husband, no divorce in Heaven
Has been sued-out between us; ’tis injustice
For any earthly power to divide us:
Or we will live or let us die together.
There is a cruel mercy. (V, iii)

Ford’s excellence in expressing the tenderness of the soul is also displayed in *The Lover’s Melancholy*, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, *The Broken Heart* and *Love’s Sacrifice*. When Ford’s pathetic power was recognised and exalted by the Romantics, it also became a useful indicator for literary historians in determining the authorship of a play or its parts. With respect to *The Witch of Edmonton*, a play written by Rowley, Dekker, Ford and several others, Weber suggested that ‘the scenes between Frank, Susan, and Winnifred are much in the pathetic style of our author… they contain great poetical beauties, and few passages in the old plays affect the feelings more forcibly than the tender ebullitions of Susan’s attachment.’\(^{191}\) Gifford, likewise, not only observed that ‘Susan is delineated in Ford’s happiest manner; pure, affectionate, confiding, faithful, and forgiving; anxious as a wife to prove her love, but fearful to offend, there is a mixture of warmth and pudency in her language… which cannot fail to please the most fastidious reader,’ but he also, in the light of the peculiar style of these dramatists, assumed that Rowley did not actually take part in composing the play. His name was attached simply because it was deservedly marketable.\(^{192}\) Susan, the second wife of Frank who had privately married Winnifrede, asks her newly wedded husband the cause of his change of countenance:

Susan. In you, sir.
Awake, you seem to dream, and in your sleep
You utter sudden and distracted accents,
Like one at enmity with peace. Dear loving husband,
If I
May dare to challenge any interest in you,
Give me the reason fully; you may trust
My breast as safely as your own.
[…]
Frank. Wherefore dost weep now?

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**Sus.** You, sweet, have the power
To make me passionate as an April-day.
Now smile, then weep; now pale, then crimson red:
You are the powerful moon of my blood’s sea,
To make it ebb or flow into my face,
As your looks change. (II, ii)

Frank, being 'witched' by a devil appearing in the form of a black dog, stabs Susan with a pen-knife:

**Sus.** Why then I thank you more;
You have done lovingly, leaving yourself,
That you would thus bestow me on another.
Thou art my husband, Death, and I embrace thee
With all the love I have. Forget the stain
Of my unwitting sin; and then I come
A crystal virgin to thee: my soul’s purity
Shall with bold wings ascend the doors of Mercy;
For Innocence is ever her companion.

**Frank.** Not yet mortal? I would not linger you,
Or leave you a tongue to blab. [Stabs her again.
**Sus.** Now heaven reward you ne’er the worse for me!
I did not think that death had been so sweet,
Nor I so apt to love him. I could ne’er die better,
Had I stay’d forty years for preparation;
For I’m in charity with all the world.
Let me for once be thine example, Heaven;
Do to this man as I him free forgive,
And may he better die and better live. 193 [Dies. (III, iii)

‘The picture that it affords of unassuming innocence and singleness of heart,’ Jeffrey insisted, ‘is drawn with great truth, and even elegance… how much beauty of diction and natural expression of character may be combined with the most revolting and degrading absurdities.’ 194 With reference to the above scenes, an anonymous contributor to the *Blackwood Magazine* observed that ‘there is much beautiful writing in all that passes between them; and the sweet, simple, and innocent and affectionate character of Susannah is drawn with the most delicate touches.’ 195

Penthea, Katherine Gordon, Susan and Winnifrede are sympathetic, not so much because of their tenderness or sufferings, though for these they are far from disqualified, but because of the form that their expressions take. In Lamb’s words, there are not many superfluous parcels of metaphors or visual images – gestures – to be

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found. Instead, the speakers only say what needs to be said, what is directly related to their state of mind, in the most concise and precise manner. In some cases, like that of Penthea, silence is the best expression. Regarding this, Longinus deemed the silence of Ajax in Homer’s *Odyssey* to be sublime and ‘far above expression,’ for the reason that the sublime is ‘an image reflected from the inward greatness of the soul. Hence it comes to pass, that a naked thought without words challenges admiration, and strikes by its grandeur.’

‘Nothing so much raises discourse,’ the ancient rhetorician claims in the treatise, ‘as a fine pathos seasonably applied. It animates a whole performance with uncommon life and spirit, and gives mere words the force (as it were) of inspiration.’ It is of great importance, however, to be reminded that there is a difference between pathetic and ‘bombastic’ expressions; the former is natural and genuine, whereas the latter is described as ‘ill-timed emotion.’ ‘It is an unnecessary attempt,’ explains Longinus, ‘to work upon the passions, where there is no need of a Pathos; or some excess, where moderation is requisite. For several authors, of no sober understandings, are excessively fond of passionate expressions, which bear no relation at all to their subject, but are whims of their own, or borrowed from the schools… they meet with nothing but contempt and derision from their unaffected audience. And it is what they deserve, since they force themselves into transport and emotion, whilst their audience is calm, sedate, and unmoved.’ To be persuasive and pathetic, that is to say, is to be genuine and natural – no art or ornament is required: ‘Grandeur requires room… too much contraction lays a restraint upon the sense, but Conciseness strengthens and adjusts it.’ The importance of a genuine and natural style of expression in the description of passion is affirmed by Jeffrey, who suggested that although every scene of the neoclassical drama is ‘visibly studied and digested beforehand… very obviously and ostentatiously set forth in the most advantageous light, and with all the decorations of the most elaborate rhetoric,’ yet still ‘we are not very likely to be moved with any very lively sympathy in the emotions of those very rhetorical interlocutors.’

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196 Longinus, pp. 71-2.
197 Longinus, p. 70.
198 Longinus, p. 56.
Terror as the Sublime

Apart from his pathetic power, Ford was deemed by the Romantic critics superior to other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists in respect of the effects of terror and horror. ‘The admirers of Ford had… apparently supped full of horrors,’ Gifford remarks in his introduction.201 In an earlier part of this dissertation, we saw how Joseph Addison and John Dennis interpreted the Longinian sublime – the emphasis being on imagination and passion – and how their writings enlightened the transition of aesthetics from neoclassical to Romantic in England. It is found, as Monk suggests, that the sublimity of terror interested the eighteenth-century Englishman the most, and it is exactly for this interest that they departed from French neoclassical.202 The common emotion of terror, according to Dennis, is

>a Disturbance of Mind, proceeding from an Apprehension of an approaching Evil, threatening Destruction or very great Trouble either to us or ours. And when the Disturbance comes suddenly with surprize, let us call it Terror; and when gradually, Fear. Things then that are powerful, and likely to hurt, are the Causes of Common Terror, and the more they are powerful, and likely to hurt, the more they become the cause of Terror; which Terror, the greater it is, the more it is joined with Wonder, and the nearer it comes to Astonishment: Thus we have shewn what Objects of the Mind are the Causes of Enthusiastick Terror.203

The passage is by no means a clear explanation, philosophically and psychologically speaking, of the sublimity of terror and horror. It indicates, however, an all-important idea of the sublime, that it is a negative pleasure. Terror, Fear, Wonder, and Astonishment are but the feelings of pain, and they differ from each other not in type, but in degree. Despite its disagreeableness, the sublime delights the subject. In other words, the sublime of terror is an aesthetic of the ugly, a pleasure at once agreeable and disagreeable.204 This delight, David Hume proposes in an essay, is particularly found in the representation of a tragedy: ‘it seems an unaccountable pleasure, which the spectators of a well-written tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions that are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy.’205 The author of A Treatise of Human Nature, taking this unaccountable feeling further, claims that ‘objects of the greatest terror and distress please in painting, and please more than the most beautiful

201 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xxxv.
204 Monk, The Sublime, p. 52.
205 Hume, Essays, p.127.
objects, that appear calm and indifferent. Hume suggests here is that, although sorrow, terror, anxiety, and the like are disagreeable, they can still evoke pleasure through art. In this case, they are not only able to please, but they please even more than the beautiful. That is to say, in the reign of art nothing is in itself beautiful or ugly, and that beauty is not an objective quality but a subjective feeling. This inference is perfectly consistent with Hume’s famous assertion in Of The Standard of Taste that ‘beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.’

There is good reason to believe that Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) was one of the most influential books in the study of the sublime in the eighteenth century. Not only had Richard Payne Knight, Samuel Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, David Hume, Hugh Blair, Richard Stack read it, but they also praised it. Of the Sublime, the Irish politician says that

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Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.
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Dennis, it will be recalled, had taken the degree of pain into account, ranking the feelings of Terror, Fear, Wonder, and Astonishment. Burke, in like manner, suggests that astonishment, a state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror, is to be the most impressive form of sublimity among admiration, reverence, and respect.

Taking all the above conceptions of the sublime in the eighteenth century into account, we arrive at the conclusion that Ford ‘sought for sublimity.’ In Act II, sc. iv, of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore, the Friar depicts hell to Annabella:

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Friar. Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
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Almost condemned alive. There is a place,—
List, daughter!—in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires,
A lightless sulphur, choked with smoky fogs
Of an infected darkness: in this place
Dwell many thousand thousand sundry sorts
Of never-dying deaths: there damned souls
Roar without pity; there are gluttons fed
With toads and adders; there is burning oil
Poured down the drunkard’s throat; the usurer
Is forced to sup whole draughts of molten gold;
There is the murderer for ever stabbed,
Yet can he never die; there lies the wanton
Of racks of burning steel, whiles in his soul
He feels the torment of his raging lust. (III, vi)

‘It is a passage worthy of Dante,’ urged the anonymous contributor to The Monthly Review, ‘and of which any author might be justly proud.’\textsuperscript{211} Weber thought it ‘as sublime as any ever attempted of the infernal punishments.’\textsuperscript{212} Gifford, despite his claim that Ford has no imaginative poetry, remarkably suggested that the passage is ‘marked with traits of peculiar feeling and energy.’\textsuperscript{213} This peculiar feeling and energy, we deduce, is provoked by the terrifying and horrible images of Hell – a purely imaginative subject matter. An image, Longinus insists in On the Sublime, ‘is generally given to any idea, however represented in the mind, which is communicable to others by discourse’\textsuperscript{214} and in poetry, it is ‘pushed to a fabulous excess, quite surpassing the bounds of probability.’\textsuperscript{215} Probability and possibility are but scientific laws of nature and moral confinement; they not only have nothing to do with imagination, they even restrain it: ‘grandeur requires room, and when under too much confinement, cannot move so freely as it ought.’\textsuperscript{216}

Hugh Blair, whose conceptions of the sublime largely derived from Longinus, says in his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) that ‘almost all the descriptions given us of the appearances of supernatural Beings, carry some Sublimity, though the conceptions which they afford us be confused and indistinct. Their sublimity arises from the ideas, which they always convey, of superior power and might, joined

\textsuperscript{212} Weber, Ford, i, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{214} Longinus, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{215} Longinus, p. 125.
with an awful obscurity.’ 217 One point should be added here, that despite Gifford repeatedly stressed that Ford was ‘never sublime,’ the Tory discovered that John Milton – the patently sublime poet – borrowed an expression from Ford. In The Broken Heart, Act IV, sc. ii, Orgilus says:

Behold a patience!  
Lay-by thy whining gray dissimulation…

The passage in the Paradise Regained reads:

He ended here; and Satan, bowing low  
His gray dissimulation…

On the strength of this, Gifford described Milton as ‘the great plunderer of the poetical hive of our old dramatists’. 218

Most of the plots and the main characters of Ford’s tragedies are no less ‘terrible’ than his imaginative poetry. Ford was indeed interested in representing the moral degradations of human life and able to evoke the sublimity of terror.

The plot of Love’s Sacrifice, for instance, is based on an at once mutual and forbidden love between Fernando and the Duchess Bianca. Fernando, the Duke’s favourite and devoted friend, is fascinated by Bianca and repeatedly pleads his love to her; Bianca, in turn, perpetually rejects and condemns him with dignity. One night, however, while Fernando is sleeping in his chamber, he finds the Duchess, with her hair loose and in her night-mantle, sitting next to him, declaring that ‘since first mine eyes beheld you, in my heart you have been only king.’ She is willing, therefore, to sacrifice both her honour and her life in exchange for his love:

To give my body up to thy embraces,  
A pleasure that I never wished to thrive in  
Before this fatal minute. Mark me now;  
If thou dost spoil me of this robe of shame,  
By my best comforts, here I vow again,  
To thee, to Heaven, to the world, to time,  
Ere yet the morning shall new-christen day,  
I’ll kill myself!  
(II, iv)

They do not, however, act upon this, and in the course of the play engage rather in a Platonic relationship. Unfortunately, the Duke, with the help of his servant D’Avolos,

217 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres [1783], sixth edition (Edinburgh, 1796), p. 57.  
218 Gifford, Ford, i, p. 291.
discovers their affair and afterwards stabs Bianca dead. Against the reader’s expectation, too, at Bianca’s funeral, when the Duke approaches her tomb, Fernando, in a winding-sheet, suddenly jumps out of the grave forbidding him to proceed. Because of his grief at losing Bianca, and a desire to suicide in front of his lover, Fernando drinks off a phial of poison and dies. In his turn, the Duke stabs himself and dies at Bianca’s grave as well.

Thomas Campbell once observed that Ford had ‘interested us in no other passion except that of love.’ This argument is to be refuted by the character Frank Thorney in *The Witch of Edmonton*, given that he is a creation of Ford. Frank’s crime is not driven by love or lust, but rather by the want of money and the ‘devil,’ the latter represented by a black dog. At the very beginning of the play, the poet presents to the reader the true affection and devotion of Winnifrede to Frank, to whom she is secretly married. The play proceeds with ‘honest’ Frank, for the want of his inheritance from his father, who dislikes the lowborn Winnifrede, obeying his father’s will and marrying Susan. Before killing Susan, a pathetic and terrifying scene we have seen earlier, Frank insults her as a whore:

Yes, I’ll prove it,
And you shall confess it. You are my whore,
No wife of mine; the word admits no second.
I was before wedded to another; have her still.
I do not lay the sin unto your charge,
’Tis all mine own: your marriage was my theft;
For I espous’d your dowry, and I have it:
I did not purpose to have added murder.
The devil did not prompt me till this minute:
You might have safe return’d; now you cannot.
You have dogg’d your own death.  

Frank is a representation of the ‘terrible,’ not only because of his dishonesty and cruelty to the meek Winnifrede and to the innocent Susan, but also, most importantly, because he is not ashamed of his wrong doings. His character is, in a word, decadent. Compared with Frank, Othello is not ‘terrible,’ in the sense that the moor is deceived and remorseful about his killing; Iago is not altogether worse, since, although he is evil, he has nowhere insulted Desdemona – an innocent female character – which is not the case of Frank. To Gifford, the character Frank is even more damnable than Giovanni; the latter ‘is a villain of a gigantic stamp, but he has an accomplice in his crime, and is at

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once seducing and seduced.’ Frank, by contrast, is a ‘cold, calculating wretch, an agent of evil upon principle.’ Based on this, Gifford deduced that Frank must have planned the seduction of Winnifrede with the full knowledge of his engagement to marry Susan.220

Negative Pleasure: 'Tis Pity She's a Whore

The glory of human pathos, or we may say, the degradation of human beings, is irrefutably manifested in 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore, of which the author hoped ‘the gravity of the subject may easily excuse the lightness of the title.’221 The tragedy begins with the confession of a young scholar, Giovanni, to a Friar:

Shall, then, for that I am her brother born,
My joys be ever banished from her bed?
No, father; in your eyes I see the change
Of pity and compassion; from your age,
As from a sacred oracle, distils
The life of counsel: tell me, holy man,
What cure shall give me ease in these extremes? (I, i)

Giovanni falls in love with his sister Annabella. However, he knows that it is an ‘extremity’ – morally wrong – and thus yearns for a resolution. Consequently, he follows the instruction of the Friar to repent and to restrain his blind passion. And again, like other characters of Ford, he suffers from ‘lover’s melancholy’. It is ‘fortunate,’ for Giovanni at least, that Annabella is attracted by his appearance:

Annabella. But see, Putana, see! what blessèd shape
Of some celestial creature now appears!–
What man is he, that with such sad aspéct
Walks careless of himself?
[...]
Putana. O, ’tis your brother, sweet. (I, ii)

Following this, the brother and the sister find no remedy for their mutual love other than to obey their ‘fate’. This results, physically, in Annabella’s pregnancy and, morally, in her guilt. Aspiring to preserve her honour on one hand, and to repent of her unpardonable

220 Gifford, Ford, iii, p. 194.
sin on the other, Annabella reluctantly marries her suitor Soranzo. Having realized the truth with the help of his instrument Vasques as the play proceeds, Soranzo decides to hold a solemn banquet in which Giovanni is to be murdered and the incestuous intercourse revealed. Giovanni accepts the invitation and attends the banquet of his death without hesitation, stabs his ‘beloved’ sister in her chamber before the banquet commences, and walks with pride into the banquet hall displaying the heart of Annabella to the hosts and the guests, including his father. After killing Soranzo, Giovanni is in turn wounded and killed by Vasques.

Lamb’s comment on the play reads:

in the poor perverted reason of Giovanni and Annabella... we discern traces of that fiery particle, which in the irregular starting from out of the road of beaten action, discovers something of a right line even in obliquity, and shows hints of an improveable greatness in the lowest descents and degradations of our nature.\(^\text{222}\)

The sin committed by Giovanni and Annabella is symbolic, rather than literal, and is a philosophical representation of a subject driven by a subtle passion so strong that moral reason is sidelined – to the extent of the deformity and degradation of human nature. Human passion is ‘irregular’ and ‘in obliquity,’ since it has no ground; nevertheless, in the character Annabella, we can discern a ‘right line’ of the soul and action out of this irregularity and obliquity: she feels guilty over her actions, and in the end she repents. Regarding this, Merivale affirmed that ‘Ford had no other “design” than that... of painting a mind naturally good and noble, but rendered corrupt by the long indulgence of a criminal passion, out-braving the vehemence of angry reproof and cruel treatment by an affected and overstrained assurance, but subdued in an instant and touched with the acutest sense of guilt by the change from furious vehemence to gentleness and mildness.’\(^\text{223}\)

In spite of their unpardonable sin and its impossibility, under Ford’s pen the play is able to strike the soul as a ‘fiery particle’. Sublimity, as we have discussed above, is not confined to empirical and artistic rules. This implies that the sublime possesses an implicit power to conquer all obstacles created by the cognitive faculties; and it is by this power that the soul of the subject is ‘elevated’ and affected. Hence, the magnitude of its obstacle also indicates the degree of its effect. In the character of

\(^{222}\) Lamb, *Specimens*, p. 217.

Annabella and Giovanni, pathos overpowers an otherwise powerful and universal law – moral law. It is, therefore, sublime. Hugh Blair in his *Lectures* analyses a feeling that may be
called the moral, or sentimental Sublime; arising from certain exertions of the human mind; from certain affections, and actions, of our-fellow-creatures…which comes under the names of Magnanimity or Heroism; and they produce an effect extremely familiar to what is produced by the view of grand objects in nature; filling the mind with admiration, and elevating it above itself…. Wherever, in some critical and high situation, we behold a man uncommonly intrepid, and resting upon himself; superior to passion and fear; animated by some great principle to the contempt of popular opinion, of selfish interest, of dangers, or of death; there we are struck with a sense of the Sublime.

High virtue is the most natural and fertile source of this moral Sublimity. However, on some occasions, where Virtue either has no place, or is but imperfectly displayed, yet if extraordinary vigour and force of mind be discovered, we are not insensible to a degree of grandeur in the character; and from the splendid conqueror, or the daring conspirator, whom we are far from approving, we cannot with-hold our admiration.224

The sublime feeling of terror is an ‘unaccountable,’ negative pleasure. If we examine Romantic critics’ comments on *'Tis Pity She’s a Whore* attentively, we should find that their *expressions* are but enacting the sublime feeling just mentioned.

‘The vivid glow of passion with which the incestuous intercourse of Giovanni and Annabella is delineated,’ Weber observed, ‘has justly been termed by Langbaine “too beautiful” for the subject, and the utter wreck and degradation of two characters which are held up to our admiration in the commencement… [the play] assails our feelings too powerfully, and renders the perusal of one of the finest plays, in point of pathetic effect, even *painful*.’225 With regard to the subject matter, however, Weber was of the opinion that ‘it is to be wished the poet’s eloquence had been bestowed, in the same degree, upon some of his other pieces, where the plot is not so extravagantly horrible.’226 That is to say, the subject matter of the work is disagreeable; however, by its fusing into form the ‘vivid glow of passion,’ the play as a whole produces a unique pleasure that makes it admirable. Weber’s explanation of this form, interestingly, strongly resembles what Lamb said of the fiery particle: ‘the faithful picture which our author gives of the gradual progress of the mind of Giovanni, from utter detestation of

his lust to a more moderate view of it, and from that to a complete exculpation of his guilt by “school points” and “nice philosophy,” is admirable."\(^{227}\)

Gifford, not surprisingly, suggested that the beauty of the poetry in the play could not ‘have long supported, in any age, a representation so pregnant with horror.’\(^{228}\) On the other hand, Gifford’s expression of his feeling of reading Ford is strongly consistent with the negative pleasure of the sublime: ‘I know few things more difficult to account for than the deep and lasting impression made by the more tragic portions of Ford’s poetry… it is hardly possible to peruse his passionate scenes without the most painful interest, the most heart-thrilling delight.’\(^{229}\) Regarding Gifford’s ‘unaccountable’ interest and delight, there is a passage of Longinus that is noteworthy: the ‘force’ of the true sublime, ‘we cannot possibly withstand; which immediately sinks deep, and makes such impressions on the mind as cannot be easily worn out or effaced.’\(^{230}\)

As mentioned, Thomas Campbell observed that Ford ‘displays a peculiar depth and delicacy of romantic feeling.’\(^{231}\) Of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore, the poet said that there is ‘one dreadfully beautiful specimen of his affecting powers, in the tragedy of the Brother and Sister. Better that poetry should cease, than have to do with such subjects.’\(^{232}\) That ‘dreadfully beautiful specimen’ is most likely the scene in which Giovanni stabs Annabella:

\begin{verbatim}
Annabella. Brother, dear brother, know what I have been,  
And know that now there’s but a dining-time  
 ‘Twixt us and our confusion: let’s not waste  
These precious hours in vain and useless speech.  
Alas, these gay attires were not put on  
But to some end; this sudden solemn feast  
Was not ordained to riot in expense;  
I, that have now been chambered here alone,  
Barred of my guardian or of any else,  
Am not for nothing at an instant freed  
To fresh access. Be not deceived, my brother;  
This banquet is an harbinger of death  
To you and me; resolve yourself it is,  
And be prepared to welcome it.  
Giovanni. Well, then;  
The schoolmen teach that all this globe of earth
\end{verbatim}

\(^{229}\) Gifford, \textit{Ford}, i, p. xlv.  
\(^{230}\) Longinus, p. 65-66.  
\(^{231}\) Campbell, \textit{Specimens}, i, p. 224.  
\(^{232}\) Campbell, \textit{Specimens}, iii, pp. 234-5.
Shall be consumed to ashes in a minute.

_Annabella._ So I have read too.

_Giovanni._ But ’twere somewhat strange
To see the waters burn: could I believe
This might be true, I could believe as well
There might be hell or Heaven.

_Annabella._ That’s most certain.

_Giovanni._ A dream, a dream! else in this other world
We should know one another.

_Annabella._ So we shall.

_Giovanni._ Have you heard so?

_Annabella._ For certain.

_Giovanni._ But d’ye think
That I shall see you there?– You look on me.–
May we kiss one another, prate or laugh,
Or do as we do here?

_Annabella._ I know not that.

But, brother, for the present, what d’ye mean
To free yourself from danger? some way think
How to escape; I’m sure the guests are come.

[...]

_Giovanni._ Farewell!

_Annabella._ Will you be gone?

_Giovanni._ Be dark, bright sun,
And make this mid-day night, that thy gilt rays
May not behold a deed will turn their splendour
More sooty than the poets feign their Styx!–
One other kiss, my sister.

_Annabella._ What means this?

_Giovanni._ To save thy fame, and kill thee in a kiss.

_[Stabs her. (V, v)]_

‘There are few things finer than this in Shakespeare,’ Jeffrey wrote. ‘It bears an obvious resemblance indeed to the death of Desdemona; and, taking it as a detached scene, we think it rather the more beautiful of the two. The sweetness of the diction – the natural tone of tenderness and passion – the strange perversion of kind and magnanimous natures, and the horrid catastrophe by which their guilt is at once consummated and avenged, have not often been rivalled in the pages either of the modern or the ancient drama.’


234 Longinus, p. 47.
such general applause.'\textsuperscript{235} It is true, as has been shown, that most of the Romantic commentators on Ford consistently referred to the uniqueness of the emotional impact of his works. Even though Hazlitt seemed not to favour Ford, claiming that ‘I do not find much other power in the author (generally speaking) than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons,’\textsuperscript{236} he expresses in a review of Lord Byron that ‘“one touch of nature makes the whole world kin:”– one line of Webster, Decker, or Ford (to say nothing of Shakspeare), is worth all the didactic and descriptive paraphrases of what would neither be seen nor felt by men in a state of strong agitation as they occur in this play [Marino Faliero].’\textsuperscript{237} Be this as it may, everyone is capable of feeling the sublime, and it could also be said that the sublime carries an irresistible power.

The play, indeed, is a useful tool for testifying to the ‘morality,’ not of the artist, but of the literary critics themselves, in the sense that the role of a critic is to introduce artwork to the public. No Romantic critics denied its poetic power and beauty; whether or not it should be printed or discussed, however, was an important issue in the Romantic period. ‘The plot of “ ’Tis Pity,” &c., is so absolutely repulsive,’ the anonymous writer of \textit{The Monthly Review} claimed, ‘that, in spite of all the beauties of the composition, the play is scarcely to be tolerated even in the closet.’\textsuperscript{238} ‘It has been lamented,’ Hazlitt suggested, ‘that the play… had not a less exceptionable subject.’\textsuperscript{239} Charles Dibdin remarks in his \textit{A Complete History of the Stage} (1800) that the play ‘is in many parts, strong and poetical, for nothing can be more revolting than the subject… all we can say in favour of FORD is, to wish be [he] had employed his beautiful writing to a more laudable purpose.’\textsuperscript{240} Furthermore, Campbell printed \textit{The Lover’s Melancholy} in his \textit{Specimens of the British Poets} (1819) rather than this ‘dreadfully beautiful scene’ from \textit{’Tis Pity She’s a Whore}, because of its disgraceful subject matter.\textsuperscript{241}

Gifford, similar to Campbell, selected Act III, sc. iv – the scene in which Annabella repents to the Friar – of the play in his review, claiming that its selection was

\begin{itemize}
\item Longinus, p. 66.
\item Hazlitt, \textit{Lectures}, p. 137.
\item Hazlitt, ‘Lord Byron’s Tragedy of Marino Faliero’, \textit{Works}, xix, p. 45. It should be noticed that Hazlitt spells Shakespeare as ‘Shakspeare’ here, whereas in his \textit{Lectures} it is spelt ‘Shakespear’.
\item Hazlitt, \textit{Lectures}, p. 136.
\item Charles Dibdin, \textit{A Complete History of the English Stage} [1800], 5 vols (New York: Garland, 1970), iii, pp. 279-80.
\item Campbell, \textit{Specimens}, iii, p. 234.
\end{itemize}
not the result of its being ‘the most favourable specimen of Ford’s dramatic powers, but
as one of the very few which we could venture to extract with safety.’ For moral reasons,
he stated that ‘a play founded upon the incestuous and adulterous intercourse of a brother
and sister, carries with it insuperable obstacles to its appearance upon a modern stage.’

The moral consideration obstructed its appearance not only upon the stage, according to
Gifford, but also upon the paper. Even though Gifford printed 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore in
his edition of Ford, he noted that:

This tragedy was selected for publication by Mr. Dodsley. The choice was not very
judicious; for, though the language of it is eminently beautiful, the plot is
repulsive.... It owes little to the taste, and nothing to the judgment, of the former
editors.

And that:

It is observed by Langbaine that the loves of Giovanni and Annabella are painted
in too beautiful colours: this, though it may impeach the writer’s taste in selecting
such a subject, is yet complimentary to his judgment in treating it. What but the
most glowing diction, the most exquisite harmony of versification, could hope to
allure the reader through the dreadful display of vice and misery which lay before
him!

It is of great interest to note, furthermore, that most critics were inclined not to
mention the name of the play in their reviews, not even Jeffrey, who could be regarded as
Ford’s most enthusiastic admirer – after Lamb – among his contemporaries. ’Tis Pity
She’s a Whore, eventually and unfortunately, was omitted from the Harper edition of
Ford (1831), published in New York, basically a reprint of Gifford’s edition with
introductory notes written by another scholar. What is apparent here is, firstly, that the
sublime is indeed a negative pleasure – ‘the aesthetic of the ugly’ – and that the morality
of an artwork was in general more important than its beauty in the criticism of the
Romantic period.

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243 Gifford, Ford, i, p.108.
244 Gifford, Ford, i, p.116.
Unnecessary Terror: Ford’s Faults

Although, as we have seen, imagination and the pathetic are the essence of the sublime, Longinus insists that the sublime is not ‘altogether lawless, but delights in a proper regulation.’ The Greek adds that: ‘method is able to point out in the clearest manner the peculiar tendencies of each, and to mark the proper seasons in which they ought to be enforced and applied… that flights of grandeur are then in the utmost danger, when left at random to themselves, having no ballast properly to poise, no helm to guide their course, but cumbered with their own weight, and bold without discretion. Genius may sometimes want the spur, but it stands as frequently in need of the curb.’

John Ford, in fact, exhibited his imagination by inventing certain dramatic events and devices which were regarded by most Romantic critics as the most serious and ‘horrible’ faults which Ford committed.

First of all, the mechanical chair by which Orgilus traps and kills Ithocles in The Broken Heart was condemned by most Romantic commentators on Ford. In Act IV, sc. iv, having been informed of Penthea’s death, Orgilus, her lover, and Ithocles, her brother, go to her chamber:

\begin{verbatim}
Orgilus.  Take that chair;  
I’ll seat me here in this: between us sits 
The object of our sorrows; some few tears 
We’ll part among us: I perhaps can mix 
One lamentable story to prepare ‘em.– 
There, there; sit there, my lord. 
Ithocles.  Yes, as you please. 
[Sits down, the chair closes upon him.]
\end{verbatim}

In this condition, Ithocles is stabbed and killed by Orgilus. ‘We are almost ashamed to say,’ the editor of the Edinburgh Review expressed, ‘Mr Ford has made her [Penthea’s] lover prepare a sort of man-trap in an adjoining chair, in order to place his oppressor altogether at his mercy. This childish, needless, and paltry contrivance, gives a mean and ludicrous air to the whole scene.’ ‘When Orgilus was to consummate his vengeance on Ithocles,’ the reviewer in The Monthly Review decried, ‘Ford did not think it worth his while to task his invention for an noble or dignified revenge, but

\begin{footnotes}
245 Longinus, pp. 49-50.  
246 Longinus, p. 50.  
\end{footnotes}
adopted the clumsy and grotesque expedient, common to the then meanly furnished stage, namely, “a chair with an engine,” as it is proudly called. By the assistance of a bit of packthread, the two moveable arms of the chair closed over the breast of the person who sat down in it; and thus is Ithocles, like a rat in a trap, caught, and afterwards barbarously put to death.\textsuperscript{248} To Merivale, the chair is a ‘detestable machinery.’\textsuperscript{249} Although Weber noted that there was a mechanical chair called \textit{The Virgin} which was similar to Ford’s invention, he, too, alleged that it was ludicrous to have it represented on the stage.\textsuperscript{250}

Nor is the death of Orgilus in the same play – he opens his vein and then bleeds to death – tolerable to the Romantics. To Weber, the bleeding scene, together with the mechanical chair, destroyed what could have been one of the most pathetic and beautiful scenes in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama.\textsuperscript{251} The scene was to the anonymous reviewer ‘a disgusting butchery, that but for the extraordinary powers exerted by the author, it must have proved intolerable.’\textsuperscript{252} In his \textit{Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830} (1832), John Genest suggests that ‘this is a very bad contrivance, as it is impossible to represent such a scene in the sight of an audience, with any degree of probability.’\textsuperscript{253} Orgilus’s death and the banquet scene of Calantha’s wedding were, to Jeffrey, ‘marked with the same painful strength of colouring, and rather more than the same extravagancies.’\textsuperscript{254} Therefore, we can conclude that there is a difference between terror and the loathsome; or, referring to Hugh Blair, that not all the effects of terror are sublime:

\begin{quote}
the proper sensation of Sublimity appears to be distinguishable from the sensation of either of these [danger and pain]…. In many grand objects, there is no coincidence with terror at all… and in many painful and terrible objects also, it is clear, there is no sort of grandeur. The amputation of a limb, or the bite of a snake, are exceedingly terrible; but are destitute of all claim whatever to Sublimity.\textsuperscript{255}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{250} Weber, \textit{Ford}, i, p. 316.
\textsuperscript{251} Weber, \textit{Ford}, i, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{253} John Genest, \textit{Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830} [1832], 10 vols (New York: Burt Franklin, 1965), viii, p.265.
\textsuperscript{254} Jeffrey, ‘Review of Ford’, p. 299.
\textsuperscript{255} Blair, \textit{Lectures}, pp. 62-3.
In other words, the sublime feeling must be provoked by imagination, rather than sensuous apprehension; likewise, although Ford’s inventions were produced by imagination, they are not sublime in the sense that they do not *provoke* imagination, nor are they relevant to the pathos of the characters. They are thus artificial and unnecessary.

**Beauty and Sublimity as the Body and Soul of an Artwork**

John Ford’s version of a story in Strada’s *Prolusions*, adapted in *The Lover’s Melancholy*, is another specimen of his imaginative poetry extolled in the Romantic period, and deservedly so. Telling his own traveller’s tale to Amethus, Menaphon says:

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A nightingale,
Nature’s best skilled musician, undertakes
The challenge, and for every several strain
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sung her own;
He could not run division with more art
Upon his quaking instrument than she,
The nightingale, did with her various notes
Reply to: for a voice and for a sound,
Amethus, ’tis much easier to believe
That such they were than hope to hear again.
  Amethus. How did the rivals part?
  Menaphon. You term them rightly;
For they were rivals, and their mistress, harmony.
Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last
Into a pretty anger, that a bird,
Whom art had never taught cliffs, moods, or notes,
Should vie with him for mastery, whose study
Had busied many hours to perfect practice:
To end the controversy, in a rapture
Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly.
So many voluntaries and so quick,
That there was curiosity and cunning,
Concord in discord, lines of differing method
Meeting in one full centre of delight.
  Amethus. Now for the bird.
  Menaphon. The bird, ordained to be
Music’s first martyr, strove to imitate
These several sounds; which when her warbling throat
Failed in, for grief down dropped she on his lute,
And brake her heart. It was the quaintest sadness,
To see the conqueror upon her hearse
To weep a funeral elegy of tears;
That, trust me, my Amethus, I could chide
Mine own unmanly weakness, that made me
A fellow-mourner with him.  (I, i)
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The passage represents not only the idea of *concordia discors* which was commonplace in the Renaissance, but also, most importantly, the harmony of Ford’s verse. ‘This story,’ Lamb remarks in his *Specimens*, ‘has been paraphrased in rhyme by Crashaw, Ambrose Phillips, and others: but none of those versions can at all compare for harmony and grace with this blank verse of Ford’s: it is as fine as anything in Beaumont and Fletcher; and almost equals the strife which it celebrates.’

Lamb’s commentary was approved by Gifford, who in turn paraphrased this commentary in a footnote. ‘The tale of the Nightingale,’ Merivale maintained, ‘has received, and justly merits, a high share of commendation, on account of the beautiful and harmonious language in which it is clothed.’ These arguments were affirmed by Hazlitt: ‘Crashaw’s translation of Strada’s description… is elaborate and spirited, but not equal to Ford’s version of the same story in his *The Lover’s Melancholy*.’

Nothing is clearer than that the Romantics had a taste for natural and harmonious expressions, rather than artificial ones. Given that the different versions of the tale possess the same subject matter, it must be the execution – the form – that distinguishes them from each other. It should be noticed that Ford’s version is in the form of blank verse, whereas all others are in rhyme; the former is free, the latter restricted and required ‘learning’. If we take this into account, we can infer immediately that blank verse is favourable to sublime writing.

Harmony in composition, on the other hand, is to Longinus an important quality for pleasing and persuasion. ‘Does it not,’ the great rhetorician says, ‘by an elegant structure and marshalling of sounds, convey the passions of the speaker into the breasts of his audience? Then, does it not seize their attention, and, by framing an edifice of words to suit the sublimity of thoughts, delight, and transport, and raise those ideas of dignity and grandeur, which it shares itself, and was designed, by the ascendant it gains upon the mind, to excite in others?’ Even though Ford’s passage is descriptive, and its tone calm, it is able to evoke the reader’s imagination and sympathy for the ‘impossible’ contention and the death of the nightingale – ‘music’s first martyr’.

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260 Longinus, p. 204.
The message of the story, too, must be taken into account. Superficially, it is that human art – the skill of the musician – which is ‘taught’ and ‘practiced,’ conquers the beauty of nature; however, without the right subject matter (in this case the ‘love’s melancholy’ of the musician) art is not as powerful as it might otherwise be. Human passion, as mentioned before, is a natural product. A supreme artwork, the story reveals, is a combination of nature and art, or an expression of passion by means of art, in which ‘harmony’ – ‘the mistress’ – is essential. This assertion, once again, not only echoes Longinus’s notion, but also affirms the sublimity of John Ford.

As we have seen earlier, beauty, objectively speaking, is a product of craftsmanship. In literary art, dexterity of invention, good order and economy in composition, and the like, are the rules by which beauty may be determined. This implies, most crucially, that the judgment of the ‘beautiful’ is rational and logical; sublimity, on the contrary, signifies a state of mind in which the soul is transported and elevated; the judgment of which, therefore, is aesthetic. A truly ‘sublime’ work, ideally speaking, should be a combination of sublimity and beauty, nature and art: ‘it is the business of art to avoid defect and blemish, and almost an impossibility in the Sublime, always to preserve the same majestic air, the same exalted tone, art and nature should join hands, and mutually assist one another.’

In practice, as we have seen in Shakespeare and Ford, this cannot always be achieved. Considering this, Longinus holds that ‘those other inferior beauties shew their authors to be men; but the sublime makes near approaches to the height of God. What is correct and faultless, comes off barely without censure; but the grand and the lofty command admiration.… One exalted and sublime sentiment in those noble authors makes ample amends for all their defects.’ In spite of the fact that the sublime is ephemeral, always appearing in short and concise passages, and that, in contrast with art, it is ‘deformed,’ sublimity is to Longinus the principal object for appreciation and criticism. If we take this conception of part and whole, aesthetic and cognitive judgments into account, we can arrive at the conclusion that Ford’s characters and plays are sublime, but seldom ‘beautiful’.

Readers of Ford would not be insensible to the general characteristics of most of his tragedies, including plots and characters that are often irregular and unpredictable.

261 Longinus, p. 194.
262 Longinus, p. 192.
In 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore readers can scarcely follow the rationale of how Bassanes, the jealous husband, could change into a noble man so suddenly; nor can we perceive the necessity for Giovanni plucking out the heart of Annabella. In Romantic criticism, the plot and characters of Love’s Sacrifice are the most problematic. That the Duchess Bianca, for instance, who has been perpetually and indignantly rejecting the suit of Fernando, should find herself in his chamber declaring her love to him unpredictably. ‘The plot is,’ Gifford remarks, ‘altogether defective; and the characters proceed from error to error, and from crime to crime, till they exhaust their own interest, and finally expire without care or pity. In the last exquisite drama, the lighter characters, though ill calculated to please, may yet be tolerated; but in this they are gratuitously odious and repellent.’ The character Roseilli in the same play, who is in love with Fioramanda, is regarded as neither of relevance to the main plot nor of credit: ‘for what reason could he have been degraded in the guise of a slavering idiot, and made to dangle in attendance on his mistress in the garb of folly, senselessly jabbering, “Can speak; de e e e.”? “Dud – a clap cheek for nowne sake gaffer: hee e e e e ?” No single end of the play is answered, or forwarded, by the metamorphosis!’ Weber, likewise, urges that ‘it was a bold undertaking of our poet’s, and which, it must be own’d, he has not executed with his usual skill, to point a counterfeit fool after Shakespeare’s admirable character of Edgar in King Lear.’ It is even more surprisingly that Roseilli is pronounced to be the Duke at the end of the play. The imperfections of Love’s Sacrifice are not singular; they are found in most of Ford’s plays.

These inconsistencies and irregularities are characteristics of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama that in part at least result from the artists’ lack of learning. I am inclined also to add that the ‘imperfections’ of Ford represent, more importantly, the nature of the subject matter and his aim in composing. Plot in dramatic art, first of all, is a product of rational judgment; it is the means through which a playwright presents action(s) or the course of events in a logical or probable manner. Its perfection, therefore, can only justify the ‘conduct’ and the weight of that work. If we examine Ford’s plays attentively, however, we should not fail to see that Ford’s main concern is not to represent actions at all, but rather the pathos of his characters. Pathos, as passion,

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263 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xxxiv.
is irrational, irregular and disordered. It is clear, then, that his characters strive not for ‘justice’ or honour – instead, they are all driven by a dark, mysterious force of passion. Their ‘actions,’ that is to say, are incomprehensible even to themselves. Or, we can say that the ‘action’ of Ford, in the true sense of the word, is where the pathos of the characters is manifested. In composing his works, Ford was like his characters – not concerned with rational aspects, nor the probability of the events and his inventions; he aimed instead at presenting his peculiar artistic temperament, and at evoking the sublimity of terror. Regarding these, I agree with Georg Lukács’s saying that ‘Ford is an artistic poet, perhaps an unconscious follower of l’art pour l’art.’ Ford indeed bore a resemblance to the musician in Strada’s story; he suffered from lover’s melancholy and expressed it through his art.

It is true, then, certainly insofar as the three unities and decorum are concerned, that Ford is far from being a first-rate playwright; with respect to the strong impression made by fragments of his works, however, he is without doubt ‘of the first order of poets’. ‘I can conceive nothing else,’ Gifford remarked, ‘adequate to the excitement of such sensations – from the overwhelming efficacy of intense thought devoted to the embodying of conceptions adapted to the awful situations in which he has, imperceptibly and with matchless felicity, placed his principal characters.’ Jeffrey suggested, likewise, that Ford’s characters were ‘drawn rather with occasional felicity, than with general sagacity and judgment.’ ‘Delineation of character,’ the anonymous reviewer in The Monthly Review said, ‘is one of the excellences that distinguish Ford. By few dramatists is he surpassed in the variety, strength, beauty, and individuality of the personages whom he embodied.’ That is to say, Ford’s characters shine suddenly and ephemerally; in spite of this, their impact on the subject is so strong as to be admired. Therefore, notwithstanding the general imperfections of Ford, the particular impression made by Ford’s works adequately justified the Romantics in their revival and extolment of him. ‘Nobody,’ Jeffrey concluded his article, ‘doubts of the existence of such faults: but there are many who doubt of the existence of any counterbalancing beauties: and therefore it seemed worth while to say a word or two in their

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267 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xlv.
Regarding Ford’s poetry, Gifford insisted that ‘its excellencies, however, far outweigh its defects; but they are rather felt than understood.’ This fault-and-beauty attitude not only favoured the revival of Shakespeare, then, but also of Ford.

*The Broken Heart: Heroism and Magnanimity*

‘In our author’s best manner,’272 ‘a noble effort of genius,’273 and ‘the highest of all its author’s productions’274 were all claims made about *The Broken Heart*. Penthea, as we have seen, earns most credit for her tenderness and meekness. By contrast, Calantha, a female character with masculine heroism, did not suit the taste of most Romantic critics. While dancing at her wedding banquet happily, Calantha, the princess, is informed of the death of her father, of Penthea and of the bridegroom Ithocles subsequently. She is surprisingly indifferent to the deaths of her beloved ones and keeps on dancing:

*Calantha.* How dull this music sounds! Strike up more sprightly;
Our footings are not active like our hearts,
Which treads the nimbler measure. (V, ii)

In the final scene, the coronation of Calantha and the funeral of Ithocles, the Queen eventually dies of a broken heart:

*Calantha.* Forgive me;– now I turn to thee, thou shadow
Of my contracted lord! Bear witness all,
I put my mother’s wedding-ring upon
His finger; ’twas my father’s last bequest.
[Places a ring on the finger of Ithocles.
Thus I new-marry him whose wife I am;
Death shall not separate us, O, my lords,
I but deceived your eyes with antic gesture,
When one news straight came huddling on another
Of death! and death! and death! still I danced forward;
But it struck home, and here, and in an instant.
Be such mere women, who with shrieks and outcries
Can vow a present end to all their sorrows,
Yet live to court new pleasures, and outlive them:

They are the silent griefs which cut the heart-strings; 
Let me die smiling.

_Nearchus._ 'Tis a truth too ominous.

_Calantha._ One kiss on these cold lips, my last! [Kisses
_Ithocles._]—Crack, crack!—

_Argos now’s Sparta’s king._—Command the voices
Which wait at the altar now to sing the song
I fitted for my end.  (V, iii)

Lamb’s famous eulogium reads:

I do not know where to find in any play a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as this. This is indeed, according to Milton, to ‘describe high passions and high actions’. The fortitude of the Spartan boy who let a beast gnaw out his bowels till he died without expressing a groan, is a faint bodily image of this dilaceration of the spirit and exenteration of the inmost mind, which Calantha with a holy violence against her nature keeps closely covered, till the last duties of a wife and a queen are fulfilled. Stories of martyrdom are but of chains and the stake; a little bodily suffering; these torments

On the purest spirits prey
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense.

What a noble thing is the soul in its strengths and its weaknesses! who would be less weak than Calantha? who can be so strong? the expression of this transcendent scene almost bears me in imagination to Calvary and the Cross; and I seem to perceive some analogy between the scencial sufferings which I am here contemplating, and the real agonies of that final completion to which I dare no more than hint a reference.275

The traditional Greek story to which Lamb refers concerns a Spartan boy who, having stolen a fox, hides it under his cloak. Because of its brutal nature and its desire to escape, the fox perpetually gnaws his belly until he dies. The boy, in turn, expresses nothing of the pain in order to conceal his crime. The suffering of this strong willed boy is, to Lamb, merely biological. Calantha’s agony, however, is of the soul, the intensity of which is described as ‘dilaceration’ and ‘exenteration.’ Notwithstanding this, Calantha’s firm and masculine will overpowers the grief of ‘death! and death! and death!’ and leads her to dance forward. The scene is at once sublime and ‘transcendental,’ since Calantha’s pathos is represented in such a powerful and admirable way.

Lamb’s passage drew the attention of his contemporaries, who in turn discussed or referred to it in their criticisms and editions of John Ford. Weber, in his edition, cites the whole passage of Lamb, and observes that the passage might ‘be thought too

275 Lamb, _Specimens_, p. 216.
extravagant, and to betray an unwarrantable enthusiasm for the author. The merit of the tragedy is, however, such that no encomium on it can be too high.

In response to this, the Tory Merivale, Weber’s rival, said that ‘it is quite in the common-place cant of editorship to say… that ‘the merit of the tragedy is such that no encomium on it can be too high.’ Merivale, moreover, observed of Lamb’s passage that ‘the very scene… as the object of an eulogium which outrages common sense as much as common decency, affords perhaps a stronger instance of high poetical talent applied to the most wanton violation of nature and probability, than the whole circle of our antient drama can any where else produce.’

In fact, not many Romantic critics appreciated the sentimental sublimity represented by Calantha. Hazlitt and Gifford, putting their hatred of each other aside, consistently attacked the banquet scene as unnatural and impossible. To Hazlitt, the scene ‘is the true false gallop of sentiment: any thing more artificial and mechanical I cannot conceive.’ He continues:

That a woman should call for music, and dance on in spite of the death of her husband whom she hates, without regard to common decency, is but too possible: that she should dance on with the same heroic perseverance in spite of the death of her husband, of her father, and of every one else whom she loves, from regard to common courtesy or appearance, is not surely natural. The passions may silence the voice of humanity, but it is, I think, equally against probability and decorum to make both the passions and the voice of humanity give way (as in the example of Calantha) to a mere form of outward behaviour. Such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontrollable feelings can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose, which is not the case in Ford’s plays; or it must be done for the effect and éclat of the thing, which is not fortitude, but affectation. Mr. Lamb in his impressive eulogy on this passage in the Broken Heart has failed (as far as I can judge) in establishing the parallel between this uncalled-for exhibition of stoicism, and the story of the Spartan Boy.

We would perhaps perceive the influence of the Augustans on Hazlitt from his arguments that the scene is ‘equally against probability and decorum’ and that ‘such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontrollable feelings can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose.’ The passage resembles not only the arguments, but also the tone, of the neoclassical critics. Hazlitt believes that by no means could Calantha suppress ‘the strongest and most uncontrollable feelings’ by dancing, which is

276 Weber, Ford, i, p. 335.
278 Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 140.
279 Hazlitt, Lectures, pp. 141-2.
an ‘outward behaviour’ justified not by necessity or by great purpose. The scene is ‘affectation’ and artificial, since no genuine feelings are represented. The difference between Calantha and the Spartan Boy is that the former articulately transforms her grief, whereas the latter expresses nothing of his pain. This discrepancy between Lamb and Hazlitt, most certainly, lies in the fact that the former believes that Calantha suppresses her grief for the fulfilsments of the duty of a wife and a queen, whereas the latter understands that she keeps dancing merely for joy. Hazlitt, however, despite this criticism, admitted that the last scene of the play is ‘extravagant – others may think it sublime, and be right’.  

Gifford, once more, was ‘embarrassed’ to express his opinion of the scene. On the one hand, the critic claimed not only that ‘there are few situations on the stage so dramatically striking as this, or wrought up with such heart-rending pathos,’ but also that ‘it must, after all, be admitted that the story derives its main claim on our affections from the poetic powers of the author himself… with respect to the diction, and the deep inherent feeling of the more solemn and tragic scenes, many superior to it will not be found.’ For these reasons, he arrived at the conviction that it was impossible not to place Ford in a ‘very honourable rank’ among his contemporaries. On the other hand, the Tory, as with his treatment of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, discouraged any reproduction of the play, holding that the beauty of the play was ‘purchased at the expense of nature and probability, which are wantonly violated in the preparatory scene.’ Gifford, moreover, not only inferred that no audience in the Romantic period would ‘support a sight so dreadfully fantastic’ as the dancing scene, he also, most interestingly, explained that ‘those of the poet’s age, however, had firmer nerves,— and they needed them: the caterers for their amusements were mighty in their profession, and cared little how highly the passions of the spectators were wound up by the tremendous exhibitions to which they accustomed them, as they had ever some powerful stroke of nature or of art at command to compose or justify them.

From the reception of John Ford in the Romantic period in general, we can perceive the influence of neoclassical school on the romantics, the Tories in particular.

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280 Hazlitt, Lectures, p. 137.
281 Gifford, Ford, i, p. 319.
282 Gifford, Ford, i, p. xxxiii.
283 Gifford, Ford, i, p. 319.
Gifford’s dualistic criticism should remind us of Dennis and Dryden, whose feelings and reason were always in conflict. If beauty or morality is to be chosen, Gifford must choose the latter. This attitude was also found in Gifford’s associate, J. H. Merivale. Apart from the commentaries discussed above, Merivale, like Gifford, argued against *Love’s Sacrifice* going public, insisting that the play was not moral. The ‘taste of the present age,’ in addition, ‘can never endure the barbarous and unnatural plot of *The Witch of Edmonton*.’ To Merivale, it was important to ‘respect’ the taste of the age, so much so that it did not matter if ‘the merits of some affecting and beautifully written scenes [of *The Witch*] will be for ever lost to the generality of readers.’

Conclusion

Because of the cult of Shakespeare, the influence of Longinus, and the rise of English nationalism, John Ford, together with his contemporaries, were revived in the Romantic period. We have seen, surprisingly, that criticism in the period was concerned not so much with artistic value, as with political and ethical implications. The notion of a pure judgment of taste, or of sentiment, could hardly be found in John Ford’s commentators, with the exception of Charles Lamb.

The revival of Ford was also, we should add, a tribute to Lamb’s *Specimens*. This can be proved by the fact that all of Ford’s commentators in the Romantic period – except Jeffrey – referred to and discussed Lamb’s eulogiums, and the fact that before the publication of the *Specimens* there was no collected edition of John Ford. After it was published, by contrast, five editions were published by the year 1869. With regard to the first phenomenon, none of Lamb’s contemporaries failed to show respect for him, in argument or in tone. Even the most ‘critical’ commentator Gifford nowhere objected to Lamb’s criticism, and even included Lamb’s commentaries in his edition of Ford. These facts now lead us to examine why Lamb’s work was popular and admirable in his age.

If we examine the history of aesthetics and art attentively, in this case of the eighteenth century, we should be able to see that the ‘revolutions’ of art were but battles between sensibility and reason, between subjectivity and objectivity. It was exactly in this fashion that Aristotle, and to a certain extent Longinus, were misinterpreted or ‘blotted,’ intentionally or unintentionally, by men of letters.

The neoclassical school, as we have seen, attempted to find out the laws or rules of Art by reasoning, and developed the ideas which were laid down by Aristotle. Aristotle defined tragedy as ‘an imitation of an action that is admirable,’ that it should be able to arouse the effects of pity and horror in the audience. Taking these ends into account, it can hardly be denied that the plot and the unities are essential. Sympathy, as an emotion, is not an impulsive and sensuous one; rather, it has to be developed by the progression of time and events. In order to ‘pity’ a character, the audience is required to understand the truth and the course of his suffering clearly; in other words, the feeling of ‘pity’ is of a moral kind, for which understanding and

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reasoning are necessary. The more audiences understand the ongoing events and the more they love the sufferer, the greater the emotional impact the tragedy makes on them. In this sense, the plot, as the execution of the story, is the essence of the play. With regard to this, the credibility and authenticity of *The Poetics* is not to be questioned.

However, we may be able to see that if the aim of tragedy is merely to arouse pity and horror, then the artwork is but a means. It is true that Aristotle insisted upon the mimesis of art; however, he did not, as the neoclassists did, strictly limit the imitated objects to the empirical and the ‘possible’; they can be products of imagination as well. Regarding this, Aristotle clearly laid down that there is a difference between an historian and a poet; the former says what *has* happened, the latter the kind of thing that *would* happen.\(^{286}\)

What is revealed above is that the Augustans were apt to emphasize the objectivity and moral of art, and to restrict art to being a mere means of instruction. Regarding neoclassical rules and Shakespeare, Coleridge contended that:

> Critics are too apt to forget that *rules* are but means to an end; consequently where the ends are different the rules must be likewise so. We must have ascertained what the end *is*, before we can determine what the rules *ought* to be. Judging under this impression, I did not hesitate to declare my full conviction that the consummate judgment of Shakespeare, not only in the general construction but in all the detail of his dramas, impressed me with greater wonder than even the might of his genius or the depth of his philosophy.\(^{287}\)

Coleridge, most crucially, suggests that to instruct, be it proper or not, is not the only end of art. Now since it is possible for art to have different ends, a generalized theory of art seems not only inappropriate, but also impossible. Art is a creation of a ‘free,’ unique individual artistic temperament; any rule could only disturb the freedom of the artist and thus the advancement of art. The passage reveals, furthermore, that Coleridge is indeed adopting the Longinian fault-and-beauty method in his criticism of Shakespeare, and claiming that Shakespeare ‘impressed’ him with ‘great wonder’ – the sublime. One may ask, however, whether the Longinian notion that ‘art is but to please and move’ is not a prescription for the creation of art, and thus a generalized criterion for its judgment? Or does the emphasis on imagination and passion not restrain art?

\(^{286}\) Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.16.
This reasoning, in fact, explains the characteristic and the ‘myth’ of Longinian theory, or perhaps of Romanticism as a whole. It is impossible, it is true, for a critic to judge an artwork without any principle. Not all principles, however, are confinements, particularly the principle of ‘feeling’. Human passion, as exhibited in Ford’s works, is subtle, inexplicable and blind; in short, it is formless and free. Regarding this, we can immediately perceive the reason why Longinus’s idea of the sublime has been ‘adapted’ to so many forms – namely, horror, terror, admiration, astonishment, joy, divine, respect, et cetera. In short, feeling is hardly to be conceptualized. As for imagination, it is also a subtle ‘concept,’ or a boundless faculty of the mind. In spite of this, it is by no means absolutely lawless. That is to say, without a subject, no comprehension and reasoning is possible; without an object, be it art or otherwise, no ‘pleasure’ of imagination is possible.

Longinus was influential not only because he analysed and examined the feeling of sublimity, but also, most importantly, because he was himself a sublime writer. As a critic he judged artworks by feeling not by reasoning; as a writer he expressed his impression of the work genuinely to the readers. Without a feeling or impression, therefore, no expression is possible. As genuine expression, furthermore, it needs to be short and concise. The more the critic ‘thinks’ and ‘analyses,’ the less the sincerity of his expression. To be simple and genuine is the secret of sublime writing: ‘Let there be light, and there was light. Let the earth be, and the earth was.’

Regarding these characteristics, then, we can conclude that Charles Lamb, like Ford, ‘sought for sublimity’. Lamb’s style of writing is similar to Longinus’s: to express the feelings of delight – appreciations – evoked by artworks. With respect to this, I believe that Lamb’s two eulogies of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore and The Broken Heart are the most appropriate samples. Lamb’s Specimens gained much approbation, perhaps, not only because his ‘annotations’ are sublime, but also because no one can deny others’ feelings, nor can one prove others’ feelings to be wrong. As Leigh Hunt said: ‘whatever touches us, whatever moves us, does touch and does move us…. What we have to do is not to deny their effect, because we do not feel in the same proportion, or whether we even feel it at all; but to see whether our neighbours may not be moved. If they are, there

288 Longinus, p. 85.
is, to all intents and purposes, a moving cause.' ²⁸⁹  In his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge deems the *Specimens* to be ‘a work of various interest from the nature of the selections themselves… and deriving a high additional value from the notes, which are full of just and original criticism, expressed with all the freshness of originality.’²⁹⁰ So they are.

There is no better way to conclude this dissertation than to summarize Kant’s aesthetic. Not only does the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* coordinate and synthesize the aesthetic concepts we have discussed above, but it also explains the feeling of the sublime in the most critical way. In the third Critique, Kant suggests that Beautiful art is the art of Genius. He states that

For every art presupposes rules which first lay the foundation by means of which a product that is to be called artistic is first represented as possible. The concept of beautiful art, however, does not allow the judgment concerning the beauty of its product to be derived from any sort of rule that has a concept for its determining ground, and thus has as its ground a concept of how it is possible. Thus beautiful art cannot itself think up the rule in accordance with which it is to bring its product into being. Yet since without a preceding rule a product can never be called art, nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art, i.e., beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius.²⁹¹

What Kant suggests here is that the artist creates his art with his own rule, that is, according to an *a priori* ‘concept,’ which cannot be learned from experience but is given by nature. He continues:

Since the gift of nature must give the rule to art (as beautiful art), what sort of rule is this? It cannot be couched in a formula to serve as a precept, for then the judgment about the beautiful would be determinable in accordance with concepts; rather, the rule must be abstracted from the deed, i.e. from the product, against which others may test their own talent, letting it serve them as a model not for *copying* but for *imitation.*²⁹²

Like Longinus and the Romantics, Kant here insists that beautiful art – the apprehension of which provokes a formal pleasure – is an original product of genius, thus of nature. The word ‘nature,’ we may infer, signifies nothing other than a

²⁹² Kant, *Judgment*, p. 188.
'supernatural’ or ‘unknown’ substance. An inspiration, be it a special feeling or an idea, comes to the mind of Genius on a sudden, without grounds. On the other hand, since the judgment of art is aesthetic, the critic ought not to apply any rules or concepts in the act of judgment, but rather to feel it. It is true that the critic can analyse an artwork, and evolve a set of evaluative criteria from those aspects of the artwork from which he derives aesthetic pleasure. There is a great difference between a ‘rule’ thus inferred from an artwork, however, and a rule applied mechanically to an artwork. Under this impressionistic method, no rules are ultimately possible, since the pleasure evoked by the ‘stroke’ of genius cannot be conceptualised.

In addition, Kant also claims that ‘since there can also be original nonsense, its [genius’s] products must at the same time be models, i.e., as a standard or a rule for judging.’\textsuperscript{293} At first glance, Kant’s argument contradicts what we have seen, that the pure aesthetic judgment must be without any \textit{a posteriori} concept. However, we should not misunderstand this ‘standard’ or rule as a logical or scientific one; it refers to a standard of taste, the guidance of which is but the formal pleasure that a work provokes. Kant does not, furthermore, state that there should be only one genius or model of art; in other words, so long as a work of art is able to produce such pleasure, its creator is to be called genius (though varied in degree); and the second rate artist is he who imitates the work of genius.

These arguments are helpful for us to illustrate the way Romantic criticism approached Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama through the lens of Shakespeare. Holding that Shakespeare’s works possessed the same objective imperfections as his contemporaries’ – transgressions of the unities – he could therefore excel others only by the pleasure his works evoked. The critic, thus, must have in the first place felt the ‘beauty’ of Shakespeare, taken it to be the model, and then compared it with others. This implies that a comparison of the intensity of ‘impression’ or feeling was necessary. The claim that Shakespeare is a genius and the king of Elizabethan drama would be valid as long as the critic apprehended his and others’ works without reasoning or prejudice; the claim would be invalid, if the critic said it without having felt the beauty, but only ‘believing’ that it was but so. According to our observations of the reception of Ford in the Romantic period, we may conclude that the latter was most likely the case.

\textsuperscript{293} Kant, \textit{Judgment}, p. 186.
In our discussion of 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore, we see that the sublimity of terror is a negative, ‘unaccountable’ feeling. On the one hand, readers of the play would be averse to its ‘uneasy’ subject matter; on the other hand, they would perceive an agreeable pleasure evoked by the eloquence of Ford’s execution and poetry. If we consider the judgment of its subject matter to be moral, and that of its form aesthetic, we can conclude that the feeling evoked by the play is in Kant’s words sublime.

According to Kant’s aesthetic, the formal pleasure of beauty is provoked by a free play of the imagination and the understanding, whereas the feeling of the sublime is related to the imagination and reason. Reason, as the faculty of ideas, is subject to moral feeling.294 The imagination, on the other hand, involves the actions of apprehension and comprehension, and in an aesthetic judgment the former is required. Objectively speaking, beauty is represented by the form of an object, whereas the sublime is to be found in a formless object in which limitlessness is represented.295 The feeling of sublimity, therefore, is a

feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason, and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason, insofar as striving for them is nevertheless a law for us.…

The mind feels itself moved in the representation of the sublime in nature, while in the aesthetic judgment on the beautiful in nature it is in calm contemplation.296

Most important, this implies that the sublime could not be a sensuous form but only be a state of mind, for what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, for which no presentation is adequate.297 We may thus perceive the reason why the pathetic, as human passion, is the essence of sublimity: it is formless and ‘infinite,’ and, as shown, cannot be conceptualised adequately. For the same reason, Ford’s works, which represent human pathos and heroism, are capable of arousing a unique feeling of sublimity. Moreover, the subject matter of ‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore — incest — is not in itself ugly or immoral; its ugliness lies only in the moral judgment of the subject. It is terrible because the subject imagines it so. ‘In fact,’ Kant adds, ‘without the development of moral ideas, that

294 Kant, Judgment, p. 149.
295 Kant, Judgment, p. 128.
296 Kant, Judgment, p. 141.
297 Kant, Judgment, p. 129.
which we, prepared by culture, call sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person.\textsuperscript{298} This implies, most likely, that the sublime strikes deeper for the refined. We are thus able to understand why Gifford was, among his contemporaries, the most ‘embarrassed’ commentator on Ford. Based on the aesthetic theories of the sublime we discussed, we should credit, not ‘lament,’ the ‘exceptional subject’ of \textit{Tis Pity She’s a Whore}: the contrast between its beautiful form and its ‘terrible’ subject makes it one of the most sublime Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic pieces.

\textsuperscript{298} Kant, \textit{Judgment}, p. 148.
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