

**THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO, "WILY
BEGUILED", A
DISSERTATION, PP. 206-237**

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BALDWIN MAXWELL

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The University of Chicago

"WILY BEGUILLED"

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND LITERATURE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

BALDWIN MAXWELL

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PREFACE

This reprint from *Studies in Philology* represents a section of a dissertation submitted in the Graduate School of the University of Chicago in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It was originally planned that the study should include the text of *Wily Beguiled* with an introduction and notes. Because of the increased cost of printing, however, it was thought unnecessary to print the text, there being already two excellent texts of the play easily accessible, and the printing requirement was reduced to what were considered the most interesting and most important sections of the dissertation. The sections which are not here reprinted were entitled (a) "Personal Satire," (b) "Parallel Passages," and (c) "Robin Goodfellow." The personal satire of *Wily* consists apparently of unconnected thrusts, like the thrusts at Ben Jonson noted on pages 208 ff. and 218 n.; certainly there is no such complete and extended satire as Fleay pictured in his *Shakespeare Manual* (pp. 272-79) and his *Biographical Chronicle* (II, 158-62). Of the parallel passages noted the most interesting were in *A Knight of the Burning Pestle*, where the similarities are so close as to convince me that Beaumont made use of *Wily* in the construction of his play. (These parallels are printed in *Modern Language Notes*, XXXV, 503-4.) In the section devoted to Robin Goodfellow I attempted to study his development and to trace his appearances through Elizabethan literature.

It is with real pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank those who have guided me through my studies. To Professor Edwin Greenlaw I owe my first interest in Elizabethan drama. To Professor John M. Manly, to Professor Tom Peete Cross, and especially to Professor Charles R. Baskervill I am indebted for suggestions and corrections more than I can enumerate. With the remembrance of association with men such as these, one may even today enter the teaching profession, repeating with St. Bernard,

Deus Bone! quanta pauperibus procuras solatia.

*WILY BEGUILLED*¹

BY BALDWIN MAXWELL

Although *Wily Beguiled* has long been acknowledged one of the sprightliest and merriest of the anonymous Elizabethan comedies, there seems never to have been a serious study of its date or of its authorship. The play merits more attention not only because of its excellence but also because of (1) its possible connection with the *Wylie Beguylis* performed at Merton College, Oxford, in 1566/7, (2) its suggested relation to the group of Parnassus plays performed at Cambridge around 1600, (3) its imitations and reflections of other plays of the period, and (4) the personal satire which Fleay recognized in it.

¹ Under 12 November, (1606), there appears in the Register of the Stationers' Company the following entry:

Entered for his Copie vnder thandes of master Hartwell and Clement knights bothe the wardens A booke called Wylie beguilde. &c . vjd/
 (Arber's Transcript, III, 333.)

In accordance with this entry an edition—presumably the first edition—appeared in this year with the title-page: A/ PLEASANT/ COMEDIE,/ Called/ WILY BEGVILDE./ *The Chiefe Actors be these:/ A poore Scholler, a rich Foole, and a/ Knave at a shifte./ AT LONDON./ Printed by H. L. for CLEMENT KNIGHT:/ and are to be solde at his Shop, in Paules/ Church-yard, at the signe of the Holy Lambe./ 1606./ Two further editions were printed for Clement Knight, one by W. W., (William White), at an unknown date, one by Thomas Purfoot in 1623. A fourth and a fifth edition were printed in 1630 and 1655; and a sixth edition was printed for Thomas Alcorn in 1638. Copies of the 1606 edition are preserved in the Bodleian Library, the Dyce Collection and the collection of the Duke of Devonshire; while the British Museum contains copies of all the other editions. "Of that printed by W. White only the one copy is now known. In this the date, which apparently was given, has been torn away. White is not known as a printer after about 1617, and internal evidence also shows his edition to be earlier than Purfoot's, that is than 1623. Doubt might even exist as to the priority of the edition of 1606 were it not that the device upon the undated title-page is known to be pretty certainly not earlier than 1611." (Greg, *Malone Society Reprint*, v-vi.) The play has been reprinted in Hawkins, *Origins*, III, in Hazlitt, *Dodley's Old English Plays*, IX, in the *Malone Society Reprints*, 1912, and in the *Tudor Facsimile Texts*, 1912.*

I

Modern critics have generally agreed that the play is several years older than the earliest known edition, that of 1606. Malone was the first, I think, to suggest the date 1596, which the majority of modern writers have continued to accept. He thought that *Wily Beguiled* must have been written in that year, for there then appeared the following passage in Nash's *Have with you to Saffron Walden*:

But this was our *Gabriel Hagels* trickes of *Wily Beguily* herein, that whereas he could get no man of worth to cry *Placet* to his workes, or meeter it in his commendation, those worthless Whippets and Jack Straws hee could get he would seeme to enoble and compare with the highest.*

The only way in which this passage suggests the play is in the mention of the "tricke of *Wily Beguily*." But as Hales pointed out, the expression *Wily Beguily* was known before 1590. Hales quoted a passage from Dr. John Harvey's *Discoursius Problem Concerning Prophecies*, 1588, in which the expression is found. But it must have been common before that. It appears, of course, as the title of the Oxford play of 1586/7; Florio used it in his translation of Montaigne's essay on "The Art of Conferring";² and it is to be found in Latimer's letters.³

The majority of critics have continued to accept 1596 as the probable date, though the evidence which has been introduced has been only of such nature as to fix 1596 as the earliest possible date. Fleay observes: "That the original date of this play is 1596/7 I have no doubt. It contains passages distinctly parodying *Romeo and Juliet* . . . and *The Merchant of Venice* . . . , but no allusion to any later play of Shakespeare."⁴ Ward says: "*Wily Beguiled*, although not printed till 1606, was clearly written at a considerably earlier date. It must have been composed after the production of both *The Merchant of Venice*, a famous passage in which it adopts and parodies, and *Romeo and Juliet*." Ward also accepts the suggestion in the foot-notes of Hazlitt's *Dodsley* that

* Quoted by Hales, "*Wily Beguiled and The Merchant of Venice*," *Essays and Notes on Shakespeares*, pp. 212-213.

² Book III, Chap. VIII.

³ Letter of May 15, 1555. Strype, *Eccles. Mem.*, vi, 307.

⁴ *Biog. Chron.*, II, 159.

the mention of Churns' having been "a souldier at Cales" refers to the expedition of the Earl of Essex to Cadiz in 1596.⁶ Though we admit the truth of these observations, we can say only that *Wily Beguiled* was not written before 1596.

Professor J. W. Hales and Dr. Brinsley Nicholson place the play "in or after 1601," but, so far as I know, their reasons have never been printed. After discussing the parodies of Shakspeare and Malone's dating of the play, Professor Hales closes with: "What is the real date there is no space now to discuss. I will only say that Dr. Brinsley Nicholson has kindly placed at my free disposal certain notes of his on the subject, in which he concludes, on the whole, that the play was written 'in or after 1601.'" That the correct date of the play in the form in which we have it is late 1601 or early 1602 I shall attempt to show by connecting certain references in *Wily Beguiled* with the quarrel then at its height between Ben Jonson and his fellow dramatists.

In *Satiromastix* Tucca upbraids Horace for having brought him upon the stage as a juggler:

He teach thee to turne me into Bankes his horse, and to tell gentlemen I am a juggler, and can shew tricks.⁷

The latest editor of this play in a note on this passage apparently accepts Fleay's interpretation, quoting approvingly from Fleay to the effect that "In the Prologue [to *Wily Beguiled*] a juggler enters and offers to show tricks. Now in the second scene of Dekker's *Satiromastix*, Captain Tucca says to Horace, *i. e.*, Jonson, 'I'll teach thee . . . to tell gentlemen I am a juggler, and can show tricks.' I have searched in vain for any passage either in Jonson's works, or in any play in which he could possibly have had a hand, corresponding to this description, except this Prologue, which must therefore, I think, be assigned to Jonson. . . ."⁸

Neither Fleay nor Penniman seems to have noticed the similarity between another passage in *Wily Beguiled* and a speech of Tucca almost immediately following the above speech. When Blunt tells

⁶ *History of English Dramatic Literature*, II, 612.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁸ Act I, scene 2, 368-370.

⁹ Fleay, *Biog. Chron.*, II, 159; quoted by Penniman in his edition of *Postaster and Satiromastix*, *Belles Lettres Series*, 408.

Tucca that he must shake hands with Horace, Tucca interrupts him with:

Not hands with great Hunkes there, not hands, but Ile shake the gull-proper out of his tan'd skinne.²⁰

As Jonson is here clearly called *Hunkes* and as there is abundant evidence of his slowness and painstaking in composition, there can be no doubt that it is to Jonson that Will Cricket in *Wily Beguiled* refers when he says:

For (do you marke) I am none of these sneaking fellows that will stand thrumming of Caps, and studying vppon a matter, as long as *Hunkes* with the great head has bene about to show his little wit in the second part of his paultrie poetrie.²¹

The "second part of his paultrie poetrie" is, I think, *Poetaster, Cynthia's Revels* being understood as the first. The "second part" as here used does not, of course, mean the second piece of composition; nor does it mean the second of his pieces connected with the stage quarrel. *Second* is here used in the sense of a continuation or of something promised. That *Poetaster* was considered a continuation of the attacks of *Cynthia's Revels*, that it was long promised and awaited, is evident from the speech of Envy, prefacing its Prologue:

What's here? THE ARRAIGNMENT! ay; this, this is it,
That our sunk eyes have waked for all this while:

these fifteen weeks,

So long as since the plot was but an embrion,
Have I, with burning lights mixt vigilant thoughts,
In expectation of this hated play.²²

If Jonson had a hand in the Induction to *Wily Beguiled* as Fleay supposed, either this Induction was written for an entirely different play and later used by one of his enemies, or Jonson wrote an induction to a play in which he himself was satirized.

²⁰ Act I, scene 2, ll. 387-389.

²¹ *Malone Society Reprint*, ll. 1613-1617. (The line references throughout are to this edition.) The suggestion is made in a footnote in Harlitt's *Dodsley* that this passage alludes to some real circumstance and person (ix, 292). No identification, however, is hazarded.

²² Lines 3-4; 14-17.

It is much more plausible that Jonson had no hand whatever in *Wily Beguiled*.

Nor is it necessary, I think, to seek elsewhere than in Jonson's known works for an explanation of Tucca's resentment. It may, of course, be argued that as the passage in *Satiromastix* unites the references to Banks' horse and the juggler, the resentment was due to a passage in one of Jonson's plays in which both the juggler and the horse appear. As I have said, however, it is clear that *Postaster* was considered a continuation of *Cynthia's Revels*, and the authors of *Satiromastix*, in replying to the two plays, would regard them as a unit. In none of his extant plays does Jonson turn anyone into "Bankes his horse"; but if the passage be taken figuratively, Penniman may be right in thinking that "the reference here is probably to *Postaster*, III, 4, a scene in which Tucca causes the Pyrgi to perform as Banks caused his horse to show tricks."¹³ If Penniman be correct in his identification of the first part of the accusation, it is quite probable that the second part—that Tucca had been turned into a juggler and made to show tricks—is to be found in *Cynthia's Revels*. In the Induction to this play, Jonson, in satirizing those that give advice in the theatre, makes the Second Child say:

A third great-bellied juggler talks of twenty years since, and when Monsieur was here, and would enforce all wits to be of that fashion, because his doublet is still so.¹⁴

True, the juggler is not here literally brought upon the stage and made to do tricks, but it is evident from the other speeches of the Induction that the Children did mimic the censors as they spoke their lines, and from such mimicking it would have been easy for the spectators to have recognized in the person aped by the Second Child such a well-known character as Captain Hannam must have been.

However, the identification in Jonson's plays of the passages referred to by Tucca lies outside the present problem. Regardless of whether we accept the references I have suggested or of whether we prefer to believe that the references were to passages in a lost play by Jonson, we can, if I am correct in believing that the

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 408.

¹⁴ *Works*, ed. Gifford, 1858, p. 168.