

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

**Chapman's
The Conspiracy and
Tragedy of Charles,
Duke of Byron**

Volume I

Edited by
George Ray



Routledge Revivals

Chapman's
THE CONSPIRACY AND TRAGEDY
OF CHARLES, DUKE OF BYRON



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THE CONSPIRACY AND TRAGEDY
OF CHARLES, DUKE OF BYRON

GEORGE RAY

in two volumes

Vol. I



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Taylor & Francis Group

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A COLLECTION OF
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STEPHEN ORGEL
The Johns Hopkins University

THE
CONSPIRACIE,

And

CLP
7
TRAGEDIE

OF

CHARLES Duke of BYRON,
Marshall of France.

Acted lately in two playes, at the
Black-Friers.

written by GEORGE CHAPMAN.

Printed by G. Eld for Thomas Thorppe, and are to be sold at
the Tygers head in Pauls Church-yard.

1608.

Chapman's
THE CONSPIRACY AND TRAGEDY
OF CHARLES, DUKE OF BYRON



GEORGE RAY

in two volumes
Vol. I



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Preparation of this edition of Chapman's double-play has had a double life of its own; therefore, I wish next to acknowledge those groups and individuals who primarily contributed to the making of Volume I, essentially a revised version of my doctoral thesis, a critical edition of The Conspiracy of Byron. My thanks go to the Faculty Research Committee at the University of Virginia and to the Advisory Committee at Washington and Lee University for grants-in-aid to support the project. I wish also to thank Fredson Bowers and Lester Beaurline for advice on editorial procedure, and Professors Robert Hinman and Frederick Locke for their careful reading of the typescript in its thesis state.

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Finally, I have the happy task of thanking my family for their support and forbearance, especially my wife, Pree, who cheerfully served in a variety of ad hoc capacities, from research assistant to discriminating critic. The project has truly become a collaborative effort, and for her steadfast commitment to this "labor of love" I shall be ever grateful.



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PREFACE

This two-volume modern spelling edition of George Chapman's The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron divides naturally into two parts: a critical introduction and commentary, and the texts of the double-play, the Conspiracy (contained in Volume I) and the Tragedy (Volume II).

The Critical Introduction comprises five chapters treating the date, sources, scholarly tradition, interpretation, and unity of The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron. (There is no known stage history: although "Biron's Conspiracy" was one of four Chapman plays allotted to D'Avenant's company on August 20, 1668 [The London Stage, I, p. 315], we have no record of any performance of the Byron plays after the notorious performances at the Blackfriars in 1608.)

The first three chapters of the Introduction are preliminaries necessary before critical confrontation of the double-play. Chapter One summarizes the evidence for fixing the composition of the Byron plays as sometime after the publication of Edward Grimeston's General Inventory of the History of France in 1607. Because Chapman was never one to wear his learning lightly, Chapter Two attempts to sort out the sources for the Byron plays and to shed light on Chapman's methodology as an historical dramatist. The evidence indicates that Chapman drew liberally from a wide variety of native, continental, and classical sources; that his greatest debts were to Plutarch's Moralia and

especially to Grimeston's General Inventory; and that he adapted his disparate materials to suit his artistic and thematic purposes.

Chapter Three then traces the historical course of Chapman criticism from the belletristic and impressionistic studies of the nineteenth century to later twentieth-century scholarship which has approached Byron less as a sterile political, moral, or philosophical tract and more as an exploratory drama which reflects the penchants of the author and his age. Nevertheless, the historical evidence indicates that the tragedies in general and the Byron plays in particular have attracted most attention from critics who maintain that Chapman's dramatic instincts were betrayed by his didactic intentions.

Chapter Four argues that the insensitivity of schematic and polemical criticism to the richness of Chapman's language and dramatic imagery has resulted in misunderstanding of the crucial matter of tone, a neglect of the play's social and psychological concerns, and a distorted assessment of Chapman's dramatic talent. This central chapter seeks to demonstrate the theatrical qualities of the Byron plays through a scene-by-scene analysis which centers on Byron's psychic evolution and stresses the functional interplay of the poetic and stage imagery in the double play. In the Byron plays where Chapman's poetic gifts and his obsession with titanism combine to create a minor classic in the literature of man's conflict with his self and society, Chapman has left us his finest dramatic legacy.

The Introduction concludes with a short chapter summarizing the external and internal evidence for the unity of the Conspiracy

and Tragedy. Though the Byron plays are sufficiently self-contained to be intelligible when played separately, the two parts form a coherent and interdependent ten act drama in which the Conspiracy prepares the audience for Byron's increasing self-delusion and eventual disintegration in the Tragedy.

The remainder of the edition consists largely of the modern spelling texts of the Conspiracy (Volume I) and Tragedy (Volume II), edited according to modern standards of bibliographical criticism. In addition to the texts with the requisite textual and explanatory notes, each play is supplied with a brief textual introduction and with three supporting appendices: Appendix A shows the close relationship between the Byron plays and Chapman's major source, the 1607 edition of Edward Grimeston's General Inventory of the History of France; Appendix B indicates the magnitude of Chapman's debt to Xylander's translation of Plutarch's Moralia; and Appendix C lists the press-variants in all copies of the 1608 quarto, the copy-text for this edition. In addition, the Conspiracy has a fourth appendix which discusses staging of a troublesome scene (I.ii) at the Second Blackfriars Theatre where the Byron plays were first (and apparently last) mounted.



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CHAPMAN'S CONSPIRACY AND TRAGEDY OF CHARLES, DUKE OF BYRON:

edited, with a

Commentary and Notes, from the Text of the 1608 Quarto
in two volumes

by

George Ray

1966



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CHAPTER ONE

DATE

As a necessary prelude to the confrontation of the play itself, one must first settle the vexed matter of its date of composition. In this chapter the details will be numerous and the prose consequently naked, but the facts must speak for themselves since the established figures have been severely challenged in recent studies, notably those of Elias Schwartz and Allardyce Nicoll.¹ Nevertheless, we may confidently assert that the Byron plays were written before March 1608 and after mid-1606, more probably sometime during 1607. Given the limitations of available data, we can not at present fix the date any more accurately than this. The following pages summarize the evidence which supports this conventional dating.

To fix the latest date of composition as early 1608 is possible because extant documents prove that the play, although an altered version of Chapman's manuscript, was on the boards as early as the spring of 1608.² Antoine Lefevre de La Boderie, the French ambassador at the court of James I, wrote to the Secretary of State, Pierre Brulart de Puisieux, Marquis de Sillery on April 8:

Environ la micaresme ces certains comédiens à qui j'avois fait deffendre de [ne] jouer l'histoire du feu mareschal de Biron, voyant toute la cour dehors, ne laisserent de le faire, et non seulement cela, mais y introduisirent la Roynes et Madame de Verneuill la premiere traitant celle-cy fort mal de paroles, et luy donnant un soufflet. En ayant eu advis de-là à quelques jours, aussi-tost je m'en allay trouver le Comte de Salsbury et luy fis plainte de ce que non seulement ces compaignons-là contrevenoient à la deffense qui leur avoit esté faicte, mais y adjoustoient des choses non seulement plus importantes, mais qui n'avoient que faire avec le mareschal de Biron, et au partir de-là estoient toutes faulses, dont en verite il se montra fort courroucé. Et dès l'heure mesme envoya pour les prendre. Toutteffois il ne s'en trouva que trois, qui aussi-tost furent menez en la prison où ilz sont encore; mais le principal qui est le compositeur eschapa³

In 1608 Mid-Lent ("la micaresme") occurred on March 6th, so the Byron plays must have been in existence by this date for La Boderie to have prohibited their presentation. Undoubtedly the letter refers to Chapman's double play even though the slapping scene does not appear in the printed version. The masque which occurs in the "dis-membered" second act of the Tragedy, however, alludes to the quarrel between the Queen and Henry's mistress. Cupid's speech (Tragedy. II. 1. 3-60) on the union of Chastity and Liberality apparently prefigures the reconciliation of Henry's wife and his mistress, so we can concur with Parrott that "the scene was struck out of the copy by the censor before the play was allowed to be printed."⁴

*I adopt Gabel's interpolation: "On the basis of an examination of a microfilm copy of the original . . . I have inserted 'ne' before 'jouer' in the first sentence." ("The Original Version of Chapman's Tragedy of Byron," JEGP, LXIII (1964), p. 434.)

This traditional date of 1607-8 has been attacked in recent years by Elias Schwartz who first dated the Byron plays in 1601 or 1602 and then after second thought, in a later article changed the date to 1605.⁵ His earlier dates are manifestly absurd and can be quickly discredited simply by noting the basic and incontrovertible facts that (1) the historical Biron was not beheaded until July 31, 1602,⁶ and (2) the earliest editions of Cayet and Matthieu which cover the events of Biron's conspiracy were not published in Paris until 1605.⁷ It is to Schwartz's credit, however, that he ultimately rejected these impossible dates in favor of 1605, but here too he is clearly wrong.

It is important to see why this date is premature. Schwartz bases his position on (1) the Bellamont-Chapman identification in Dekker and Webster's Northward Ho, in production in 1605, on (2) Chapman's access to the manuscript of Grimeston's General Inventory, and (3) by Schwartz's own admission, on the "tenuous" collateral evidence from a letter addressed from Chapman to Sir George Buck, the Deputy Master of the Revels. Granted, Chapman could possibly have perused Grimeston's manuscript before its publication in 1607, but it is extremely doubtful that Grimeston had translated the portions of the French history relating to the Duke of Biron in 1605 since, as we have observed, these materials were not

themselves publicly available until 1605.

The other two pillars of Schwartz's argument render even more shaky support when subjected to close scrutiny. Let us look first at Chapman's indignant letter to Buck, who had assumed authority for the licensing of plays in 1606 and had refused to grant permission for the printing of the Byron plays.⁸ Chapman complained bitterly of Buck's action:

Sr -- I have not deserv'd what I suffer by your austerities; if the two or three lynes you crost were spoken; my uttermost to suppress them was enough for my discharge; To more then which no promysse can be rackt by reason; I see not myne owne Plaies; nor carrie the Actors Tongues in my mouthe; the action of the mynde is performance sufficient of any dewtie, before the greatest authoritie, wherein I have quitted all your former favors, And made them more worthie then any you bestowe on outward observers; if the thrice allowance of the Counsaile for the Presentment gave not weight enoughe to drawe yours after for the presse, my Breath is a hopeless addition; if you say (for your Reason) you know not if more then was spoken be now written, no, no; nor can you know that, if you had bothe the Copies, not seeing the first at all: Or if you had seene it presented your Memorie could hardly confer with it so strictly in the Revisall to discerne the Addition; My short reason therefore can not sound your severitie; Whosoever it were that first plaied the bitter Informer before the frenche Ambassador for a matter so far from offence; and of so much honor for his maister as those two partes containe, perform'd it with the Gall of a Wulff, and not of a man I desier not you should drenche your hand in the least daunger for mee: And therefore (with entreatie of my Papers returne) I cease ever to trouble you.⁹

From the text of this letter we may infer only that Buck is refusing to license what the Privy Council has already thrice allowed. To go further than this, as Schwartz has done, to hold that "the three allowances of the Council were . . . for three separate occasions-- probably for three different years" is to misuse evidence and force a weak hypothesis.¹⁰ The three allowances might just as well have come on three different days, weeks, or months. To claim that there were performances in 1606, 1607, and 1608 and that this fanciful stage history adds credence to 1605 as a probable date of composition is wishful thinking on Schwartz's part.

Schwartz's third and most plausible bit of evidence for his strained argument is the apparent reference to The Tragedy of Byron in Dekker and Webster's Northward Ho. Admittedly there has been widespread scholarly support for the identification of Bellamont in Dekker and Webster's Northward Ho with Chapman, though Robert Ornstein has effectively called into question the grounds for this comparison.¹¹ Skirting the problem of this questionable identity, let us look at the lines in Northward Ho which seemingly refer to The Tragedy of Byron. At this point in the action Bellamont is talking to a Welshman, Captain Jenkins, about a tragedy of young Astyanax that he is writing for presentation at the French court:

Bell. As I was saying the stage hung all with black velvet, and while tis acted, my self wil stand behind the Duke of Biron, or some other cheefe minion or so, --who shall, I they shall take some occasion about the musick of the fourth Act, to step to the French King, and say, Sire, voyla il et votre treshumble seruiteur, le plu sage, e diuine esprit, monsieur Bellamont, all in French thus poynting at me, or yon is the learned old English Gentleman Maister Bellamont, a very worthie man, to bee one of your priuy Chamber, or Poet Lawreat.

Capt. But are you sure Duke Pepper-noone wil glue you such good vrdes, behind your back to your face.

Bell. Oh I, I, I man, he's the onely courtier that I know there: but what do you thinke that I may come to by this.

Capt. God vdge mee, all France may hap die in your debt for this.

Bell. I am now wryting the description of his death.

Capt. Did he die in his ped.

Bell. You shall heare; suspition is the Myinion of great hearts, no: I will not begin there; Imagine a great man were to be executed about the seuenth houre in a gloomy morning. (IV, 1, 52-70)¹²

This excerpt from Bellamont's pre-dramatization of his play and particularly the proposed execution of the "great man" certainly do parallel the final scene of The Tragedy of Byron. But are we to conclude from this one inconclusive dialogue in the face of all the foregoing evidence for the established date that the Byron plays were "written in or before 1605?"¹³ I think not. The justification for so thinking depends upon Jenkin's

puzzling "Duke-Pepper-noone" which suggests that the text originally read Epernon for Biron in line 54. Besides keeping the pun Epernon would be completely consistent in this context where Chapman-Bellamont is being ridiculed for his French fixation. After all, as E. E. Stoll pointed out in his monograph on Webster, eight of Chapman's plays are set in France, and Epernon, "The only courtier I know there," appears in four of them.¹⁴ In his edition of Dekker, Fredson Bowers agrees that this emendation, first made by Hazlitt, is "very plausible" but cautions that "the difficulty is, we cannot be sure of the direction of the revision, and whether Biron was substituted for Epernon (leaving Pepper-noone as the fossil), or the other way around."¹⁵ So we must finally conclude that the Epernon-to-Biron shift has just as much probability as the contemplated, but uncompleted Biron-to-Epernon revision.

Next, we may legitimately ask why the authors of Northward Ho would want to lose the pun for the Biron insertion. The case for substitution at the time of Northward Ho's publication in 1607 seems most likely. Stoll has suggested that the authors "found it profitable before August 6, 1607, the date of registering, to spoil the joke Epernon-Peppernoone for the sake of inserting the new drama, then town-talk Perhaps too, the passage relating to the execution of a 'great man' was

inserted at this time."¹⁶ If not by the time of entry in the Stationers' Register, the authors would have made the substitution before subsequent publication of the play.¹⁷ If this hypothesis is correct, it follows that Byron was already onstage in the latter part of 1607. Since this substitution theory is as plausible as any other, I note parenthetically that the Northward Ho passage does not weaken but actually could strengthen my case for the later date of composition. What is finally definite, however, is that the Northward Ho reference can not cast serious doubt on a post-1605 date for the Byron plays since its effectiveness is neutralized by its own weak textual authority.

Now, if Schwartz's 1605 dating lacks substantive proof, what does seem to be the most plausible anterior date for the composition of the Byron plays? Clearly, any attempt to date the play before 1607 must come to terms with the widely accepted fact that Byron is based on the 1607 edition of Edward Grimeston's General Inventorie of the History of France. F. S. Boas was the first to note Chapman's dependence on Grimeston's English translation rather than the French originals, and his findings have since been corroborated by other scholars.¹⁸ To posit, therefore, that Chapman was at work on the Byron plays before the publication of Grimeston's Inventory is to assume that Chapman had

access to Grimeston's manuscript.

Though this assumption at first glance seems absurd, it does gain some credence when we recall that Chapman was related through his grandmother, Margaret Grimeston, to the translator.¹⁹ Furthermore, that their relationship was more than casual seems assured by one of Chapman's commendatory verses (1621), dedicated to "his long lou'd and worthy friend, Mr. Edward Grimeston, Sergeant at Armes."²⁰ Because it was common practice for the Elizabethan gentleman to circulate his latest literary achievement among his friends, Chapman might have read Grimeston's translation in manuscript as early as March, 1606. I choose this date because an entry in the Stationers' Register for March 3, 1606 to the effect that George Eld will publish "A booke called The French Inventory" could point to the existence of Grimeston's manuscript by this date.²¹

Thus, to sum up, it finally seems most logical that Chapman began his play after the 1607 publication of Grimeston's compilation and translation unless Chapman had access to his relative's manuscript before the publication date, a draft of which possibly was finished by the time of Eld's entry in March 1606. Until new evidence is available, the most conservative date for the writing of the Byron plays remains sometime in 1607, although there is an outside possibility that Chapman began to

compose in mid-1606.²²

NOTES

1 Elias Schwartz, "The Dates and Order of Chapman's Tragedies," MP, LVII (November 1959), 80-2; Elias Schwartz, "The Date of Chapman's Byron Plays," MP, LVIII (February 1961), 201-2; Allardyce Nicoll, "The Dramatic Portrait of George Chapman," PQ, XLI (January 1962), 215-228, and Marion Jones and Glynne Wickham, "The Stage Furnishings of George Chapman's The Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Biron," Theatre Notebook, XVI (Summer, 1962), 113-117. This last article argues that the performances at Blackfriars in 1608 were a revival of The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron which had first been mounted by Henslowe in late October, 1602. Jones and Wickham point to one ambiguous entry in Henslowe's Diary dated October 2, 1602 as proof: "Layd out at the apoyntmente of the Companye to macke A scafwld & bare for the playe of Berowne & Carpenters wages--xiijs." Because The Tragedy of Byron calls for a scaffold and bar, then this "Berowne" must be Chapman's play, or at least the first version of it. The authors weakly explain away Chapman's reliance on Grimeston's 1607 edition of The General Inventory by assuming that "Chapman had leisure in his 1608 retirement after the suppression of the Biron Plays at Blackfriars to revise and ornament his text for publication." Despite the ingenuity of their argument, until more convincing evidence is found, it remains only an interesting speculation which can not cast serious doubt on the more conservative and probable hypothesis advanced here.

2 Perhaps Byron was acted even earlier since La Boderie's original protest and the resultant prohibition might have occurred well before the date of his letter to the Marquis de Sillery, April 8, 1608.

3 E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford, 1923), III, 257-8. Chambers reprinted the version of the letter found in J. J. Jusserand's article, "Ambassador La Boderie and the 'Compositeur' of the Byron Plays," MLR, VI (1911), 204. Cf. T. M. Parrott, "The Text of Chapman's Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron," MLR, IV, (October 1908), 41-2, which gives Raumer's early 18th-Century "free and condensed" English translation of the pertinent parts of this letter:

I caused certain players to be forbid from acting the history of Duke of Byron; when however, they saw that the whole court had left the town, they persisted in acting it; nay, they brought upon the stage the Queen of France and Mademoiselle de Verneuil. The former, having first accosted the latter with very hard words,

gave her a box on the ear. At my suit three of them (i.e. the players) were arrested, but the principal person, the author, escaped

Parrott comments, "This despatch, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale (MSS. fr. 15984, p. 240 sqq), was first printed by F. von Raumer (Briefe aus Paris zur Erläuterung der Geschichte des sechszehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhunderts, Leipzig, 1831, Vol. II, p. 276) under the date April 5, 1608. The English translation of these letters (History of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries illustrated by Original Documents, by F. von Raumer, London, 1835, Vol. II, p. 219) misprinted the date April 5, 1605, a mistake which has found its way into the account of Chapman's life, prefixed to the reprint of his plays (Pearson, 1873, Vol. I, p. xxi, footnote) and into the article in the Dictionary of National Biography (Vol. X, p. 51), where, as a result, the Byron plays are said to have been produced in the year 1605."

4 Parrott, 41. See also Evelyn M. Albright, Dramatic Publication in England, 1580-1640, (New York, 1927), 163. Miss Albright writes,

Naturally, the scene in which the jealous queen of France boxed the ears of her rival, Madame de Verneuil, had to be left out. The effect of the cut remains in that a masque later on has Cupid being together with two women who have been at odds for the love of the King and are now to be reconciled for love of him. The point is blunted when the women have not been shown as at odds.

Cf. John B. Gabel, "The Original Version of Chapman's Tragedy of Byron," JEGP, LXIII (1964), 433-440. Gabel argues that the scandalous slapping scene and the masque were interpolations in Chapman's original five-act manuscript made by the players "determined to secure audiences by sensational means and emboldened by the departure of the court from the city." (436) Gabel concludes that "there is not sufficient evidence to determine who wrote the interpolated scenes," but, "Whoever wrote the interpolation, it is unfortunate that Chapman did not finally reject the whole of it and send to the printer the first version of the Tragedy."

5 Schwartz, "The Dates and Order of Chapman's Tragedies," 82, and Schwartz, "The Date of Chapman's Byron Plays," 201.

6 M. Prevost and Roman D'Amot (ed.), Dictionnaire de Biographie Francaise, VI (Paris, 1954), 520-522.

7 Pierre Matthiew, Histoire de France des Choses memorables advenues aux Provinces etrangeres durant Sept Annees de Paix du Regne de Henri IV, (Paris, Jamet Metayer, 1605). (Catalogue General Des Livres Imprimees de la Bibliotheque Nationale, 1931, CIX, 1077 and British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, 1962, 155, p. 702.) Victor Palma Cayet, Chronologie Septennaire de l'histoire de commencement de l'an 1598 Jusques a la fin de l'an 1604, (Paris, Jean Richer, 1605). (Cat. Biblio. Nat., XXV, 326 and Brit. Mus. Cat., 175, p. 20.)

8 For a full discussion of press licensing see W. W. Greg, Some Aspects and Problems of London Publishing between 1550 and 1650 (Oxford, 1956), especially chapters III and VI. See also E. K. Chambers, III, 169-170; W. W. Greg, "Entrance, License, and Publication," The Library, Fourth Series, XXV (June-September 1944), 11-13; and Elias Schwartz, "Sir George Buc's Authority as Licenser for the Press," Shakespeare Quarterly, XII (Autumn, 1961), 468. Since there was a series of orders of varying authority which gave official sanction for licensing in England from 1538 to 1637, the whole question of authority remains obscure. Although the Master of the Revels apparently never had any legal licensing powers, he, in fact, began to assume authority, tentatively in 1606 and then regularly from 1607 until 1637 when a Star Chamber decree, which merely reaffirmed the provisions of the 1586 decree, returned formal power for all licensing to the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London. During this thirty year period, then, the Master of the Revels possessed sufficient de facto power for the Wardens of the Stationers' Company to allow copies to be entered under his hand.

9 Bertram Dobell, "Newly Discovered Documents of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods. III. Letters and Documents by George Chapman," The Athenaeum, 3832 (April 6, 1901), 433.

10 Schwartz, "The Date of Chapman's Byron Plays," 202.

11 See F. G. Fleay, A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, II (London, 1891), 270; E. E. Stoll, John Webster (Boston, 1905), 65-66; E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, III, 296; and Allardyce Nicoll, "The Dramatic Portrait of George Chapman," 215-228. The core of the evidence is presented by Stoll:

Bellamont is a poet, a dramatic poet associated with one of the companies. He is old, and is repeatedly called white and hoary. He has classical tastes and acquirements, is the author of a Caesar and Pompey, and also is fond of laying his scene in the modern court of France. He writes both comedies and tragedies. He is a respectable and dignified person, with a leaning toward high-flown diction. All this fits Chapman and no one else. (66)

Cf. Robert Ornstein, "The Dates of Chapman's Tragedies, Once More," MP, LIX (August, 1961), 61-4; where the satiric identity of Bellamont with Chapman is challenged on the grounds that Caesar and Pompey appear as characters in a number of Elizabethan plays, that Bellamont may just as well be associated with Drayton, and that the allusion is generally vague. "Such subtlety, indirection, and opaqueness," Ornstein says, "are hardly what one expects in a Renaissance satiric portrait--and certainly not in a satiric portrait by the author of Satiromastix."

12 Thomas Dekker, The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker. ed. by Fredson Bowers, II (Cambridge, 1955), 449.

13 Schwartz, "The Date of Chapman's Byron Plays," 201. See also Nicoll, 224, who dates Byron in 1605 but inadvertently errs in placing publication of Northward Ho in 1605: ". . . although the French ambassador's complaint about the play did not come until April 8, 1608, it seems certain that Byron was in process of composition, if not actually produced on the stage, before Northward Ho was published in 1605." The play was first printed in 1607. See note 17, below.

14 Stoll, 66-7.

15 Dekker, II, 483.

16 Stoll, 67n. See also Ennis Rees, The Tragedies of George Chapman (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 212n.

17 Dekker, II, 407. "Northward Ho was entered by George Eld in the Stationers' Register on 6 August 1607 Since Eld's edition, the first and only quarto, is dated 1607, we may assume that publication followed shortly after the entry."

18 F. S. Boas, "The Source of Chapman's The Conspiracie and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron and The Revenge of Eussy d'Ambois," The Athenæum, I (January 10, 1903), 51-2. See also Chapter Two, pages 19-22

for fuller discussion of Chapman's dependence on Grimeston's chronicle.

19 Mark Eccles, "Chapman's Early Years," SP, XLIII (April 1946), 190-3. See also Jean Robertson, "The Early Life of George Chapman," MLR, XL (July 1945), 165; F. S. Boas, "Edward Grimeston, Translator and Sergeant-at-Arms," MP, III (April 1906), 406-7; and G. N. Clark, "Edward Grimeston, the Translator," English Historical Review, XLIII (October, 1928), 585-90. It has been further suggested (Schwartz, 201) that Chapman "appears . . . to have been abroad--probably in France--around the time Grimeston was there." Such a possibility exists (one of the Chancery documents in Chapman vs. Wolfall refers to Chapman's absence "by yonde the seas"), but the whereabouts of Chapman's travels remain speculative. That Grimeston spent "eight years . . . for the publique service . . . in France" is certain, but the problem of determining when is compounded by the existence of several Edward Grimestons. Eccles presents the problem of identification: "An Edward Grimeston was secretary to the English ambassador in Paris from 1582 to 1590, and in 1590 and 1591 was the Queen's agent, negotiating with Henry IV and Biron. Chapman's friend, brother of another Edward" (192)

20 George Chapman, The Poems of George Chapman ed. Phyllis B. Bartlett (New York, 1941), 368.

21 Edward Arber (ed.), A Transcript of the Registers of the Company Stationers of London: 1554-1640 A.D. (New York, 1950), III, 315.

22 See John B. Gabel, "The Date of Chapman's Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron," MP, LXVI (1968), 330-332, for further support of 1607 as the most likely date of composition for the Byron plays:

For the remainder of 1606 and some part of the following year Eld would have been occupied by printing this twelve-hundred-page folio [of Grimeston's translation]. Close upon its publication in 1607 Chapman must have secured a copy and conceived of the idea of dramatizing the Byron account there. The Conspiracy and Tragedy would thus have been ready for presentation in mid-winter, 1607/8. (p. 331.)

Gabel believes the Northward Ho allusions refer to the earlier "playe of burone" cited by Henslowe in 1602; therefore, "the necessity for supposing that Chapman worked from Grimeston's manuscript is done away with." (p. 331.)

CHAPTER TWO

SOURCES

We next turn to the problem of determining the sources for the Byron plays since Chapman was a deeply-committed traditional writer who drew on his classical background and wide reading experience for much of his dramatic material. For Byron Chapman borrowed primarily from Edward Grimeston's General Inventory of the History of France and from his own classical reading. After discussing these two major source elements in greater detail, we should, as an interesting byproduct, have a clearer picture of the extent of Chapman's reliance upon second-hand materials and of his methodology as an historical dramatist.

Before beginning, however, it may be well to sound a warning against overzealous source-hunting, a warning which, as we shall see, is plainly warranted by the history of Chapman source studies. The problem of ascertaining the exact sources for particular passages and general areas of the Byron plays is a thoroughly vexing and speculative one for several reasons. First of all, it is almost impossible to establish beyond a doubt that Chapman

utilized a particular book. For example, did Chapman get his knowledge of Semele's immolation (Conspiracy. I. ii. 37-8) from Ovid's Metamorphoses or indirectly through Natalis Comes' equally popular Mythologiae? And if he did use the Mythologiae, which one of upwards of a dozen available editions did he have open in front of him?¹ Many a source-hunter's house-of-cards has come tumbling ignominiously down when a more plausible indebtedness has been clearly proved.

Secondly, even if a definite source is discovered, one must be careful not to overestimate its influence in shaping the internal design of a particular drama or the philosophic position of its author. Examples of such "hobby-horse" riding abound in Renaissance studies, indeed in any period or discipline. In the case of Chapman, perhaps the classic example of a thesis-ridden book is Ennis Rees's study of the tragedies in which he derives Chapman's supposedly Christian Humanist posture from his nondramatic works, most of which post-date the Byron plays, and then proceeds to read all the tragedies in the light of this philosophy.² Thus the plays are erroneously reduced to mere moral exempla written by a man who had fully evolved a code of ethics before he began to write. The dangers of this kind of oversimplification are, I hope, self-evident.

Thirdly, there is another type of source attri-

bution for which we can hold no brief. I refer to the loosely-perceived parallel of either theme or design between play and alleged source when such "evidence" is used as impeccable proof of the playwright's reliance upon the work in question "especially when firmer links (such as unmistakable verbal echoes) are missing."³ In his introduction to the New Arden Richard II Peter Ure discusses, in terms of Shakespeare, the weaknesses of such scholarly practices:

Parallels which proceed from editorial acumen or ingenuity may have little to do with Shakespeare's way of seeing his subject. Especially is this so when we are offered "hints," "germs," and "suggestions" (the terms are various and obscure) in the supposed source and informed that what we see in Shakespeare's play evolved from these. The theory on which such methods flourish is boldly stated by H. N. Paul:

' . . . the mind of William Shakespeare was subject to a notable idiosyncrasy. His creative mind could have created the characters and events of his plays solely from his imagination, but it was his inveterate habit to seek from suggestions from other minds on which to build. So highly developed was this trait that at every point it is well to look for, and if possible find, the external suggestions which started the building process.'⁴

Ure has here clearly and effectively pointed the moral: beware of gambling with critics or editors who have loaded the dice before the game has begun. For at least the three foregoing reasons, then, we must proceed cautiously in matters of source ascription. In the following discussion the sources will be treated in

decreasing order of importance: first Grimeston's translation, then the probable classical influences, and finally I shall mention other influences and traditions which probably had some impact upon Byron but which are less marked and central.

GRIMESTON

For the story line of the Byron plays Chapman obviously relied upon the 1607 edition of Edward Grimeston's General Inventory, fully entitled, "A General Inventorie of the Historie of France, from the beginning of that Monarchie, unto the Treatie of Vervins, in the Yeare 1598. Written by Jhon de Serres. And continued unto these Times, out of the Best Authors which have written of that Subject. Translated out of French into English, by Edward Grimeston, Gentleman."⁵ As the independent investigations of several researchers have shown, there is no doubt that Chapman utilized Grimeston rather than the French originals, de Serres' chronicle and the continuations of the Inventaire Général by Pierre Matthieu and P. V. Cayet. We know that for the 1607 edition Grimeston followed de Serres until 1598; beyond that point he selected and combined materials from several writers, principally Matthieu and to a lesser degree, Cayet. So finally, the historical matter for the Byron plays is largely Matthieu out of Grimeston.

F. S. Boas' comparison of Grimeston with the text