

Notes

G. H. LEWES READS *CYMBELINE*: HIS ANNOTATIONS IN KNIGHT'S *SHAKSPERE*

George Henry Lewes's (1817–1878) reading of *Cymbeline* in his extensively annotated copy of Charles Knight's 12 volume edition of *Shakspeare*, the second edition of which was published between 1842 and 1844 and is now at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., is of considerable interest.¹ *Cymbeline* is among the eleven plays in the *First Folio* described as 'Tragedies', although today it is characterized as a 'romance', and was extremely popular on the nineteenth-century stage. For Hazlitt, 'of all Shakespeare's women she [Innogen] is perhaps the most tender and the most artless', and for Anna Jameson, Innogen is 'the most perfect'.² Knight's eighth volume contains the text annotated by Lewes. His marginal observations are representative of his close reading of Shakespeare's text, revealing amongst other elements, intertextuality, a concern with metrics that Lewes subsequently uses in his 'Shakspeare and his Editors', *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 43 (1845), 21–41, and an awareness of editorial commentary.

Lewes doesn't annotate the opening act. At the conclusion of the second scene of the second act, Iachimo's soliloquy whilst Innogen sleeps (ll.35–51), and 'On her left breast / A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops / In the bottom of a cowslip' (ll.37–39), receives Lewes's marginal comparison with Boccaccio: 'ma niuno segnale da

potere rapportare le vide, fuori che [uno che] ella n'avea sotto la sinistra poppa; ciò era un neo d'intorno al quale erano alquanti peluzzi biondi come oro.' Decamerone II. 9' (Knight 232).³

The opening of the next scene the Song 'Hark! Hark the lark at heaven's gate sings' (l.20) is glossed by Knight: 'this apparently false concord is in truth a touch of our antique idiom, which adds to the beauty of this exquisite song', to which Lewes comments 'How so? It seems on the contrary to be a mere necessity of the rhyme' (II: iii: Knight 233). Lewes's attention is drawn to the concluding four lines of Innogen's speech in the second scene of the third act: 'Why should excuse be born or e'er begot? | We'll talk of that hereafter. Prithee, speak, | How many score of miles may we well ride | 'Twixt hour and hour?' (ll 65–68). Lewes observes: 'Note the dramatic interruptions & changes & returns of thought in this speech' (Knight 254).

In the third scene of act three, issues of scansion coupled with aesthetic praise are found in Lewes's marginalia. In Belarius's soliloquy (ll.79–107) by 'Nor Cymbeline dreams that they are alive' (l.81), Lewes comments 'What a line!' Lewes then in his margin indicates numerically that he is counting the number of metrical stresses in the lines that follow:

'They think they are ...meanly?' (l.82): '12'; 'I' the cave, wherein they bow...do hit' (l.83): '11'- also similarly with lines 84, 86, 88- an '11'. Then ll.90, 91, 92 - 'The warlike feats I have done...fly out' (l.90), 'Into my story: say...fell' (l.91), 'And thus I set my foot ... even then' (l.92) each have a number '12'. Lewes places '11' by lines 94 and 95 'Strains

¹ Lewes's copy of Knight's edition was Lot 558 of books sold at Sotheby's on Wednesday, 27 June 1923. It was purchased by the London bookseller Maggs for £20 and subsequently went to the Folger Library; see William Baker, *The George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Library: An Annotated Catalogue of Their Books at Dr. Williams's Library London*, (New York, 1977), 232. We would like to thank for their co-operation in the publication of hitherto unpublished George Henry Lewes materials Jonathan G. Ouvry, the great-grandson of George Henry Lewes, the staff of the Folger Library and also Dr Maxwell Hoover.

² Cited in Valerie Wayne (ed.), *Cymbeline. The Arden Shakespeare* (London, 2017), 115 and see 'Afterlives,' 109–24 and Jackson, below. Also for 'Innogen or Imogen' see Wayne, 391–98. The Arden text has been used here for line references as Knight's edition lacks these. | has been used to indicate line divisions and Lewes's underlining retained. We have kept too Lewes's and Knight's spellings of 'Shakspeare' / 'Shakspeare'.

³ Lewes's marked copy Boccaccio's *Opere volgare* (5 vols, Firenze 1827–1828) is now at the Dr Williams's Library, see *Catalogue*, 351, 23. The citation is I: 237. Translation: 'But her body contained no unusual mark of any description except for the fact that below her left breast there was a mole, surrounded by a few strands of fine gold hair.' Boccaccio, *The Decameron*. Translated with an introduction by G. H. McWilliam (London, 1972), 212. Vincenzo Martinelli's 1766 edition of *Il Decamerone* published in Italian in London indicated that Shakespeare drew on Boccaccio's Novella IX from Day Two in *Cymbeline* for plot. In his marginalia, Lewes appears to be pointing out a close correspondence in details between the two works, as indicated by his underlining in the quotation and in the text of *Cymbeline*. Lewes in his transcription omits the words 'uno che'. See also Wayne, 5–6.

his young nerves. . . posture | That acts my words. . . Cadwal' (Knight 259).

In his 'Shakespeare and his Editors', Lewes puts into published form his marginal comments, with some slight verbal changes, made in his copy of Knight concerning the question of Shakespeare's pronunciation of the word 'Posthumus' and metrical stresses (see 31–32, 35). In his article Lewes anticipates subsequent twentieth and early twenty-first century concerns amongst some Shakespeare scholars and critics with Shakespeare as a writer for the theatre. Interest however in how Shakespeare's verse was pronounced at the time he was writing, or with his use of metrics, and versification was not until recently a particularly pronounced area of study.⁴

Another instance of Lewes's close reading of *Cymbeline* is found at the conclusion of the brief seventh scene set in Rome ending the third act. For Lewes: 'Never did act end with a more purposeless or weaker scene!' (275). In the second scene of act four, the text of the lyrical melancholic funeral lament is spoken rather than sung by Guiderius and Arviragus when placing Fidele's body where they buried Euriphile, whom they thought was their mother. The lament emphasizes the consolation that death can bring, with its relief from suffering. Lewes reacts to the first verse of 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun | Nor the furious winter's rages'; observing 'If this song be Shaksper's it is unworthy of him. It has neither music, imagery and sense' (Knight 291: ll.257–62). Such an observation places him at odds with many other reactions to this passage. These 'lines are some of the best known of the entire play and continue to be used in funeral services.' Furthermore 'although no sign of any original

⁴ There are exceptions including in the middle of the last century Helge Kökertz's *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (New Haven, 1953). See also Michael Taylor, *Shakespeare Criticism in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, 2001 and Jonathan F. S. Post (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry* (Oxford, 2013). Marina Tarlinskaja in her *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama, 1561-1642* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT, 2014) gives a detailed account of Shakespeare's Versification: for *Cymbeline*, see 129–30, 133–34, 157, 178, 180, 261 and cf. the essays in Lynne Magnusson with David Schalkwyk (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Language* (Cambridge, 2019) in which curiously no instances are given from *Cymbeline*. Magnusson and Schalkwyk in their 'Preface' give a succinct account of recent directions in Shakespearian study (ix–xii).

music exists, many musical compositions have subsequently been written to its lyrics'.⁵

Shortly after, in the same scene, Innogen in a half-awakened state lies, in the words of George Bernard Shaw, 'down to sleep again, and in doing so touch[es] the body of Cloten, whose head (or no head) is presumably muffled in a cloak'.⁶ Then Innogen, half asleep, speaks powerful lines beginning 'These flowers are like the pleasures of the world.' Five lines in particular in her speech attract Lewes's marginalia

A headless man!—The garments of Posthumus!
I know the shape of his leg; this is his hand;
His foot Mercurial; his Martial thigh;
The brawn of Hercules; but his Jovial face
—
Murther in heaven? – How?—'Tis gone –
Pisanio' (ll.307–11).

For Lewes these lines are 'An instance of Shaksper's irony. Here is Love magnifying the common into the beautiful. From the garments she believes the body to be Posthumus and consequently sees nothing but beauty and the brawn of Hercules in the murdered fool. So true it is that "Love sees not with the eyes but with the mind"' (Knight 292). Lewes is misquoting Helena's line in her soliloquy at the end of the first scene of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, writing 'sees' for 'looks' (l. 234).

As previously indicated, Lewes is very critical of passages in *Cymbeline*. He is particularly scathing of Posthumus's speech in the fourth scene of its final act in Knight's text (307). The 'Gaolers' exit and Posthumus, before falling asleep, has a twenty-seven line soliloquy beginning 'Most welcome, bondage! For thou art a way,' and concluding 'If you will take this audit, take this life, | And cancel these cold bonds. O Innogen! | I'll speak to thee in silence' (V. iv: ll. 2–29). By the final three lines, Lewes observes 'I think, all things considered, this is one of the worst speeches I ever read' (307). In her edition, Wayne notes that 'This

⁵ Wayne, 302 and see 131–2 and for musical compositions, 404–06: Knight, 291 has no comment on the lines.

⁶ Cited from *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence* (New York, 1949), 45–46, in Roger Warren (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare Cymbeline* (Oxford, 1998), 46 and cf. Warren's 'Innogen by Cloten's corpse' (46–51).

dream sequence was gradually restored to the play as authorial in the 1980s following centuries of being cut in performance and dismissed as a non-Shakespearean interpolation' (335).

Lewes objects also to Jupiter's speech 'No more, you petty spirits of region low', concluding 'Mount eagle to my palace crystalline' and Sicilius' 'Let us with care perform his great behest [*Ghosts vanish.*]' (V. iv: 63–92). For Lewes, 'All this very bad' (Knight 309). Another passage receiving Lewes's disapproval occurs in the fifth scene of the final act following Iachimo's 'Your daughter's chastity—there it begins' and concluding 'Methinks I see him now' with Posthumus's response 'Coming forward'—'Ay, so thou dost, | Italian fiend!' (V. v: 179–210). By the last line of Iachimo's speech and Posthumus's reply (ll.209–211), Lewes writes 'Tedious repetition of what the audience knew' (Knight 318).

Lewes's annotations in Knight's text show him paying close attention to *Cymbeline*. He uses a

few instances from the text in his 1845 *Foreign Quarterly Review* article to instance scansion issues, but his attitude towards the play in his *Shakspeare* marginalia is largely critical. In spite of some great performances by such contemporaries as, for instance, Helena Faucit between 1837 and 1867, he doesn't seem to have returned subsequently to *Cymbeline*. There is no mention of it in his *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (London, 1875)⁷ and references to *Cymbeline* in the work of his partner George Eliot with whom he read and discussed Shakespeare at length are noticeably absent, too.⁸

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⁷ Helena Faucit (1814–1898) was the wife of Lewes's close friend Theodore Martin (1816–1909). For her noted performances as Innogen, see Russell Jackson, 'Cymbeline in the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished MA thesis University of Birmingham, 1971), 25–37, 238–45, and see Carol J. Carlisle, 'Faucit, Helen [*real name* Helena Faucit Saville or Savill; *married name* Helena Martin, Lady Martin](1814–1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9200>> accessed 13 September 2020.

⁸ Cf. Gordon S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, 9 vols (New Haven and London, 1954–1978), IX, 512 and David Leon Higdon, 'George Eliot and the Art of the Epigraph', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 25, ii (1970), 127–51.