

12. Ebenda, S. 515/16.
13. Zeitgenössische Rezensionen und Urteile über Goethes *Götz und Werther*. Hg. von Dr. Hermann Blumenthal. Berlin 1935 (Literarhistorische Bibliothek, Bd. 14), S. 76.
14. Goethe an Schiller vom 23. Dez. 1797. In: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe. Hg. von Hans Gerhard Gräf und Albert Leitzmann. 1. Band 1794-1797, Leipzig 1912, S. 452.
15. Goethe an Schiller vom 23. Dez. 1797, a.a.O. S. 452.
16. Ludwig Tieck's Schriften. 6. Band. William Lovell. Erster Theil. Berlin 1828, S. 349.
17. Ebenda, S. 147.
18. Ebenda, S. 350.
19. The Notebooks of Henry James. Ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. 1947, pp. 11/12.
20. Franz Stanzel, a.a.O. S. 94.
21. W.A. I, 27, S. 23.

---

## THE FOX, THE APE, THE HUMBLE-BEE AND THE GOOSE

Shakespeare's plays, for all their universality and timelessness, contain a number of topical allusions, many of which are still obscure. Two such allusions concern four creatures used with obviously allegorical significance: the fox, ape, humble-bee<sup>1</sup> and goose, who appear together in *Love's Labour's Lost*, III, i, ll.83ff., while the last two reappear in the closing lines of *Troilus and Cressida* (V, x, ll.41ff.)<sup>2</sup>. It is the main object of this article to endeavour to show that the two passages allude to the contemporary political situation, and that the creatures can be satisfactorily identified, by a combination of external evidence and context, as follows: the fox, Lord Burghley (William Cecil); the ape, Robert Cecil; the humble-bee, the Earl of Essex; and the goose, Walter Raleigh.

The nicknaming of courtiers was a very common practice in the Elizabethan period, the most usual form applied being that of a beast, bird or insect which could be closely associated with the nobleman in question, often being derived from his coat of arms, crest or some distinctive personal characteristic. Queen Elizabeth seems to have been largely responsible for this fashion, since she bestowed a pet name on nearly all her chief ministers and favourites, but the practice was widespread, and provided a particularly useful weapon for political and religious satirists who could veil their satire in beast allegories such as are found in the works of Spenser and Thomas Nashe.

Although these allegories were transparent enough at the time, as normally happens with topicalities, they quickly lost their significance. The difficulty of identification is increased by the fact that a prominent figure often possessed more than one nickname, varying according to whether it was devised by the Queen, his friends or his adversaries; in addition, a particular beast did not always denote the same person. Among the few

identities which are fairly well established and appear to have been unvarying are the bear, representing the Earl of Leicester; the boar, the Earl of Oxford; the sheep, Christopher Hatton; the dromedary, Thomas Egerton; and the frog, Elizabeth's suitor, the Duke of Alençon.

Naturally enough, because of his dominant position in Elizabethan politics as Secretary of State and later as Lord Treasurer, Burghley had his share of names. In the latter part of his life he was known to the Queen as "the Leviathan"<sup>3</sup> or the "disconsolate and retired sprite"<sup>4</sup>, but to the Court and the population at large, with neither of whom did he achieve popularity, he was the fox, the wily old schemer who plotted to gain control of the country for himself and his cubs. The title was particularly apt in view of the natural shrewdness and cunning of his mind, which always proved more than a match for his political opponents, and of certain facial characteristics, particularly the nose, which became more pronounced as he grew older.

One of the earliest references to Burghley by this name occurs in 1570 in a letter of a Spanish agent in London, Guerau de Spes, who remarks that he is "a crafty fox . . . and it is necessary to watch his designs very carefully"<sup>5</sup>. Similar allusions become very frequent in the 1590s. The panegyrist, Walter Quin, terms him an avaricious creature constantly striving "to aggrandize his little Reynards"<sup>6</sup>, and Anthony Bacon rejoices that Essex has caused "the old fox to crouch and whine"<sup>7</sup>.

Burghley also figures as this animal in one of the most telling satires against him, Spenser's *Mother Hubberds Tale*, published in 1591, in which the two main characters are the fox and his "gossip" the ape (Robert Cecil) who attempt to usurp the power of the sovereign, the lion. What little doubt there might be that the fox represents Burghley can be quickly dispelled by three references from the writings of Richard Verstegan, an English Catholic exile who acted as an intelligencer at Antwerp for many prominent Catholic exiles from about 1588 until at least 1606. He received weekly despatches for forwarding from highly placed and well informed correspondents in London, whose news was amazingly accurate<sup>8</sup>, and he also regularly obtained copies of the latest political and religious pamphlets published in England.

In his reply to the proclamation of October–November 1591, *A Declaration of the True Causes*, 1592<sup>9</sup>, Verstegan states (p. 68) that there are many charges he could level against Burghley and his sons, and would not have to resort to allegory to do so:

. . . yf any will vndertake to iustifie his [Burghley's] actions in his course of gouernment, let him know, that there is sufficiēt matter of reply reserued for him, which is not extracted out of *Mother Hubberds tale*, of the false fox and his crooked cubbes, but is to be vtred in plaine prose . . .

Verstegan also notes in a letter to Fr. Robert Persons, 1 April 1593, that Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell* (1592) satirizes Burghley, but not to same extent as Spenser's poem:

The late pamphlets written against him are greedely desyred of the courtiers and others, and any thing written against him is easely believed. In a late pamphlet entytuled *A Suplication to the Divill* he is girded at, thoughe not somuch as in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* <sup>10</sup>.

In an earlier despatch to Persons, 3 August 1592, Verstegan appears to be alluding to the bestial rôles in Spenser's satire when he mentions that the rivalry of Burghley, notwithstanding his old age, and his "crooked sonne" for the affections of a certain "Lady Hobby" had "caused a great breach betwene the fox and his cubbe" <sup>11</sup>.

Burghley's second son, Robert Cecil, being as unpopular as his father, and in addition deformed and of meagre stature, probably received more opprobrious names than any other Elizabethan or Jacobean courtier. Elizabeth called him "the little man", "pygmy", "elf"; James I also termed him "pygmy" and "little beagle"; while his enemies used a much larger range of names: "hunchback", "crouchback", "Monsieur de Bos-su", "St. Gobbo", "Hobbinol", "Robert the Devil", "toad" and countless others <sup>12</sup>. It was mainly because of his lameness, small build, hump-back and the elaborate practice of court flattery of which he was often accused, that one of the favourite beast names attached to him was "the ape", and he was satirised under this title in *Mother Hubberds Tale* <sup>13</sup> at a time when there was every indication that his father was preparing him as a worthy successor to his dominant position in the Elizabethan government. After the death of Walsingham in 1590, Robert Cecil began to exercise unofficially the office of Secretary of State; in May 1591 he was knighted, and the following August was made a member of the Privy Council. There were even rumours from 1593 onwards, if not earlier, that he was going to marry Lady Arbella Stuart, to foster Burghley's hopes of a "King Cecil the first" <sup>14</sup>. Cecil is again satirised as the ape in Richard Niccols's *Beggars Ape*, a poem closely modelled on *Mother Hubberds Tale* and a type of sequel to it, which was written about 1607, although it was not published until 1627 <sup>15</sup>.

The chief political rival of the Cecils in the 1590s, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, seems to have been known mainly as the humble-bee, a title which, in all likelihood, the Queen bestowed on him, and was possibly derived from his amorous nature, the awkwardness of his movements (he was a poor dancer) and from the fact that, as appears from a number of his portraits, he frequently dressed in black, the only touches of colour being his ruff and yellow beard. Essex seems to have accepted the name, and used it in one of his poems, an elaborate beast allegory of fourteen six-line stanzas entitled "The Buzzeinge Bee's Complaynt" written about 1598 during his discontentment and first absence from Court <sup>16</sup>. He makes his complaint as a bee who has served the King Bee <sup>17</sup> (Queen Elizabeth) faithfully for "ffiuve years twice tould" but has received no favour, and has been neglected:

It was a time when sely bees coulde speake,  
 And in that time, I was a sely bee,  
 Who suckt on time, vntill my hart did breake,  
 Yet neuer found the time would faouure me:  
 Of all the swarme I only could not thriue,  
 Yett brought I wax and honye to the hyue.

While he declines, all the other creatures thrive: "Foule beasts", the Cecillian party, browse "vpon the lyllys fayer"; the drone, the wasp, the worm, the gnat, the butterfly and many more, no matter how insignificant or stupid, parasitical or destructive, succeed, where he, who has toiled so hard, fails. The bee also complains in an obvious reference to Raleigh, another of his rivals, that it "was but Tabacco stupyfied my brayne".

Raleigh, who, like Essex, was one of the Queen's favourites, was called a number of animal names, most of them highly derogatory. Essex, when on trial for his life in 1601, exclaimed that Raleigh was a fox<sup>18</sup>, but it is very doubtful whether this was the usual name for him, even though the Old Fox, Burghley, had left the rôle vacant by his death in 1598. He is more aptly termed the "silly sheepe", as he is satirised in Niccols's *Beggars Ape*<sup>19</sup>; but the most appropriate bestial name for him and, I suggest, the one most frequently applied to him was "the goose". Practically all the meanings of this word in the Elizabethan period, as noted in the *N.E.D.*, suit him very well. First of all, geese appear to figure in the sixth quartering of his coat of arms<sup>20</sup>. Then, his personal appearance reflected certain characteristics of the bird, for he had a longish neck, and a predilection for white or silver and for feathers<sup>21</sup>. Another meaning of goose, "a tailor's smoothing iron", would be suggested by the magnificence of his garments, particularly the uniform of Captain of the Queen's Guard, to which office he was appointed in 1587, and by the great pains he took in his grooming. Raleigh could also be called "a silly goose" – a fool – because of his many indiscretions, both in his political career and in his private life, and he was certainly no match for the Cecils, who successfully played the game of fox and geese with him. One of his indiscretions related to the sexual connotations of goose, for he had an intrigue with Elizabeth Throgmorton, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, which, when discovered by mid-1592, led to his temporary fall from favour and to a short imprisonment in the Tower, from which he was released under escort in September 1592, not being fully set at liberty until the end of the year<sup>22</sup>.

It is, I believe, to Raleigh's release that the passage cited in *Love's Labour's Lost* alludes amongst other things, and this being the case, the passage, if not the bulk of the play, must be dated no earlier than September 1592, and not much later than mid-1593, for it would then lose its topicality.

The passage in question (III, i, ll.83ff.), which is mainly concerned with political rivalry, occurs in one of the numerous exchanges of wit between Armado, whom some critics of the play, including Muriel Brad-

brook <sup>23</sup>, have justifiably considered to be in some measure a caricature of Raleigh, and Moth, his page, who is generally identified, though with less justification, as Thomas Nashe. Armado states that he will provide an example of “some obscure precedence that hath tofore been sain”, and thereupon expounds it:

The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,  
Were still at odds, being but three.  
There’s the moral: now the l’envoy.

Moth promises to provide the “l’envoy”, asks Armado to repeat the “moral”, and caps it with a couplet, which hits at Raleigh through Armado; then he lays a verbal trap for his master, into which Armado easily falls:

*Moth.* I will add the l’envoy. Say the moral again.  
*Arm.* The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,  
Were still at odds, being but three.  
*Moth.* Until the goose came out of door,  
And stayed the odds by adding four.  
Now will I begin your moral, and do you follow with my l’envoy.  
The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee,  
Were still at odds, being but three.  
*Arm.* Until the goose came out of door,  
Staying the odds by adding four.  
*Moth.* A good l’envoy, ending in the goose: would you desire more?

In the light of the identities already proposed, the beast allegory can be interpreted as follows: Burghley and Robert Cecil were at variance with Essex (also an odd number, three) in the struggle for political supremacy, until Walter Raleigh came out of prison (“out of door”) and made the odd number an even one by adding a fourth contestant in the political struggle <sup>24</sup>. The last line, containing a pun on goose meaning venereal disease, is probably an indirect reference to Raleigh’s affair with Elizabeth Throgmorton.

The succeeding lines alluding to the goose as an envoy may relate to one of Raleigh’s missions or expeditions, either that concerning his being sent from the Tower in September 1592 to join the commission appointed to survey the treasures taken in the carrack, *Madre de Dios* <sup>25</sup>; or possibly the Guiana voyage, which although not undertaken until 1595, seems to have been first contemplated by Raleigh early in 1593 <sup>26</sup>. The emphasis placed on the fatness of the goose is a likely jibe at the corpulence which seems to have come upon Raleigh at this time <sup>27</sup>, perhaps accelerated by the inactivity of his imprisonment in the Tower as a ‘caged goose’.

Another reference to the goose is made a few lines further on by Costard, the uncomprehending clown (l.120) “O! marry me to one Frances – I smell some l’envoy, some goose in this”. I very tentatively suggest that the line may contain an allusion to Essex’s secret marriage

with Frances, the daughter of Walsingham and widow of Philip Sidney, in 1590, which caused the Earl's temporary loss of favour, just as Raleigh's affair with Elizabeth Throgmorton two years later was mainly responsible for his.

Essex and Raleigh reappear in their respective rôles of humble-bee and goose in the closing lines of *Troilus and Cressida*, which form a type of epilogue (ll.32-55) added to the play, I suggest, in late September 1603, at a time when Essex was dead, having been executed for high treason in 1601, and Raleigh, who had been instrumental in his downfall, was in danger of suffering the same fate: he had just been indicted at Staines (21 September), and his trial was to take place at Wolvesey Castle, Winchester, two months later, 17 November 1603.

Pandarus when left to himself (ll.35ff.) laments that his services, like those of traitors<sup>28</sup>, and bawds in general, have been so ill-requited. "Why", he asks, "should our endeavour be so desired and the performance so loathed?" He quotes the following verses as an "instance":

Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing  
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;  
And being once subdued in arméd tail,  
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.

In the mouth of Pandarus the humble-bee has, of course, sexual significance, but the lines bear a striking reference to the end of Essex's career, and in fact are more intelligible when viewed in this light: the Earl held sway while he maintained his influence over the Queen, and had a powerful following, but when his rebellion (the arméd tail) failed, his influence and his life were swiftly terminated<sup>29</sup>. The verses of Pandarus can also be regarded as a type of tragi-comic fulfilment of the prophetic fear Essex expressed in "The Buzzeinge Bee's Complaynt" that those who were envious of the bees might prevail upon the Queen to ordain that "so\_e must be still, and some must haue no sting".

Pandarus then laments his own downfall and resolves to make his will:

Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,  
Some two months hence my will shall here be made,  
It should be now, but that my fear is this,  
Some galléd goose of Winchester would hiss.

As in the case of the bee, the goose has sexual connotations, and "Winchester goose" was a term for a particular type of venereal disease<sup>30</sup>, but the reference fits Raleigh's circumstances perfectly. It would be necessary for him, like Pandarus, to make his will in two months time at Winchester when he faced trial (perhaps his last opportunity to hiss) and received the inevitable condemnation. He might have had to draw up his will two months earlier, in September, at Staines, but he was only indicted there. A respite was afforded him, mainly because of the plague, which was raging at the time in and around London, causing the adjournment

of the Term from London to Winchester. Although duly sentenced to death, Raleigh was reprieved on the scaffold, but was destined to be executed fifteen years later, in 1618.

The allusions I have dealt with in this article are only a few of the numerous topicalities in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Troilus and Cressida*, which, if satisfactorily explained, would provide the key to most of the problems in these two plays.

London.

ANTHONY G. PETTI.

#### Notes

1. The humble-bee is defined in the *N.E.D.* as "a large wild bee of the genus *Bombus*, which makes a loud humming sound; a bumble-bee".

2. The texts used in this article are derived from Richard David's edition of *Love's Labour's Lost*, The Arden Shakespeare, 1951, and Alice Walker's edition of *Troilus and Cressida*, Cambridge University Press, 1957.

3. In a letter to the Earl of Essex, 17 November 1596, Lord Henry Howard alludes to Burghley and Robert Cecil as "the old Leviathan and his Cub" whom he hopes Essex can succeed in dragging from their "den of mischievous Device" (B.M. Additional MSS 4, 122, 155, f. 78). Howard also refers to Burghley as "a toothless dog" in another letter to Essex, 30 December 1597 (Harleian 286, f. 268). Non-bestial names for Burghley include "the Scrivener" and "Lord Treacherer", as he is termed in some of the Catholic replies to the proclamation of October-November 1591.

4. G. B. Harrison, *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth*, 1935, p. 207.

5. *Cal. Spanish 1568-79*, p. 265.

6. *Vid. E. A. Strathmann, Modern Language Notes*, LI, p. 56.

7. E. A. Abbott, *Francis Bacon*, 1885, p. 8.

8. *Vid. A. G. Petti, The Letters and Despatches of Richard Verstegan, Catholic Record Society*, vol. LII, 1959. I shall shortly be publishing a literary biography of this interesting figure based on my M. A. thesis (London, 1957).

9. This pamphlet was published anonymously, but there is ample evidence that Verstegan was the author. The S.T.C. erroneously lists it among the works of Robert Persons.

10. *Catholic Record Society*, LII, Letter no. 27. The fact that *Pierce Penilesse* contains satire of Burghley has not so far been recognized, and I intend to publish a brief article on this point in a later issue of *Neophilologus*. It is interesting to note that Nashe's pamphlet includes an allegory of a fox and a camelion which assumes the form of an ape. D. J. McGinn, in *P.M.L.A.*, LXI, pp. 431-53, has identified these beasts, though not, I think, convincingly, as the Puritans Thomas Cartwright and John Penry respectively. The allegory may require re-interpretation.

11. *C.R.S.*, LII, Letter no. 7. The lady in question was possibly Mary, the daughter of Henry Carey, who married Sir Edward Hoby in 1582 (*D.N.B.*, vol. 27, p. 52). This intrigue may be alluded to in the verbal combat between Armado and Moth over the word "hobby-horse" in *Love's Labour's Lost*, III, i, ll. 28-30. Spenser could have had a Lady Hoby in mind when naming his satire *Mother Hubberds Tale*, since Hubberd was a possible form of Hoby, and it may well be that Burghley's aged sister-in-law, Elizabeth Russell, whose first husband had been Sir Thomas Hoby, was derisively known as "Old Mother Hubberd".

12. Most of these names are listed by Brice Harris in the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, IV, p. 202.

13. In the past, a number of identities have been suggested for the ape, including the Duke of Alençon, his agent Simier, James VI of Scotland and the Earl of Oxford. The first to propose Robert Cecil was Brice Harris, in the article mentioned in the previous note, and he provided reasonably sound evidence for doing so, though A. C. Judson, in *M.L.N.*, March 1948, pp. 145-9, rejects his arguments in favour of an earlier suggestion by E. A. Greenlaw for the joint candidature of Alençon and Simier. The Verstegan quotations strongly support Harris's case, and it should be added that readers of the poem when it was published in 1591 would have associated it not with the proposed Alençon

marriage of eleven or twelve years previously, but with the contemporary situation which the poem very clearly reflects, when Burghley and his son "ruled the roost" (cf. C.R.S., LII, Letter no. 12); the details of the description and progress of the ape fit Cecil perfectly, and certainly better than they do any other candidate. It is true that Spenser states in the dedication of *Mother Hubberds Tale* that it had been composed in the "raw conceit" of his youth, but as Harold Stein has pointed out (*Studies in Spenser's Complaints*, 1934, p. 88), the statement cannot be taken at its face value: Spenser was forced to speak lightly of the poem because it was so dangerous, and had to call it an early work.

14. Concerning these rumours vid. *Hatfield House MSS.*, IV, p. 335; P. M. Handover, *Arbella Stuart*, 1957, pp. 100-1, 128, 133, 152, 162. Earlier, in 1592, Burghley was suspected of trying to marry another member of his family to Arbella, his grandson, William, eldest son of Thomas Cecil (vid. *Declaration*, pp. 55, 70; C.R.S., LII, Letters nos. 3a, 3c); but young William disgraced himself in his grandfather's eyes by secretly marrying Elizabeth Drury (vid. C.R.S., LII, Letter no. 31).

15. Vid. B. Harris's edition of *The Beggars Ape*, "Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints", 1936.

16. W. Devereux, *Lives of the Devereux, Earls of Essex*, 1853, II, p. 194. The poem was printed from a collation of manuscripts in A. B. Grosart's *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies' Library*, 1872-6, IV, pt. 2, pp. 85-91; it was set to music by John Dowland.

17. The Elizabethans, like the Ancients, thought that the Queen Bee was male.

18. W. Devereux, *op. cit.*, II, p. 157.

19. Vid. the appendix of Harris's edition already cited.

20. I say "appear to" because although in the representation of his coat of arms in Harleian 1080, ff. 360v. and 361 (reproduced in E. Edwards, *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1868, i, facing p. 8) the creatures look like geese, in another manuscript copy of the coat, Stow 693, f. 7, they seem to be much smaller birds and, unlike geese, have very short necks. Neither manuscript mentions the family from which the quartering is derived.

21. A good idea of Raleigh's appearance can be gathered from the well-illustrated article by Lionel Cust, "The portraits of Sir Walter Raleigh", *Walpole Society*, VIII, 1919-20, pp. 1-15.

22. See further E. Edwards, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 135ff.

23. *The School of Night*, 1936, pp. 154ff. One marked similarity between the two is that Armado finds himself in the same predicament over Jaquenetta as Raleigh was because of Elizabeth Throgmorton.

24. Raleigh was only a poor fourth after 1592, the main contest being between the Cecilians and the Essex party. For new details of this conflict in the early 1590s vid. C.R.S., LII, introduction and text.

25. *Cal. Dom. Eliz.* 1591-4, pp. 271, 273.

26. Edwards, *op. cit.*, i, p. 159.

27. Vid. L. Cust, *op. cit.*

28. ll. 37-8. 1st Folio reading: "Oh traitours and bawdes; how earnestly are you set aworke, and how ill requited?" The emendation of "traitours" (F. 1, 2) or "traitors" (Q, F. 3, 4) to "traders", proposed by W. J. Craig and adopted by most modern editors, including Alice Walker, is I think, unjustified, for Pandarus proceeds to speak allegorically of Essex and Raleigh, one of whom had been executed, and the other indicted for treason, awaiting trial and sentence. By some members of the Court at least, they would have been considered bawds as well.

29. In view of the fact that some critics of the play consider Hector to represent Essex, it is interesting to observe that the lament of Troilus on the death of Hector occurs almost immediately before Pandarus' verses.

30. Cf. Henry VI, pt. 1, I, iii, 53. Alice Walker notes in the glossary of her edition of *Troilus and Cressida* that "Winchester goose" derived its name from the Southwark stews which had once been under the direction of the Bishop of Winchester. It should be noted that Wolvesey Castle, in which Raleigh was tried, had been the palace of former Bishops of Winchester.