

‘The False Marke of the Shadow of Honour’:

The significance of honour in late Elizabethan political culture.

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This article explores the potential, latent within late sixteenth-century discourses of honour, for political and moral dissidence. In a letter to the earl of Essex, urging the latter’s reconciliation with the Queen, Lord Keeper Egerton displays an understanding of honour as the monarch’s esteem for a subject in return for loyal service. Conversely, for Essex, honour does not consist simply in obedience, but is the more general reward and recognition of virtue. In notoriously asking, ‘cannot Princes erre’, the earl suggests that care for one’s honour might dictate refusal to comply with a sovereign’s wishes. The extremes to which Essex’s position might hypothetically lead are demonstrated by Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, in which the senators justify their assassination of Caesar in terms of honour.

If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honour in one eye, and death i’t’h’ other,
And I will look on both indifferently.
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.¹

Few in late-sixteenth-century England, with any experience of aristocratic culture, would have been surprised by the premium that Shakespeare’s Brutus places on the attainment of honour. The ‘reward of virtue’, honour marked out an individual as excellent in his or her particular vocation.²

¹ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1998), I.2.85-89.

² In 1586, Sir John Ferne deemed any man, whose occupation was ‘laudable’, capable of acquiring honour - ranging from farmers and merchants to those who practised ‘the art and skill of plays’: John Ferne, *The Blazon of Gentry* (London, 1586), pp. 7-8, 69. For Francis Bacon, friend and adviser to the earl of Essex in the 1590s, ‘The winning of Honour is but the revealing of a man’s virtue’: Francis Bacon, ‘Of Honour and Reputation’, in *The Major Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.86. Traditionally, noble lineage had been of equal importance, but,

The routes to honour were many, varied and often conflicting.³ Despite this, honour was not a subjective condition, akin to an emotional state, but was always bestowed on an individual by another or others.⁴ Broadly speaking, it tended to reward service to ‘the general good’ rather than purely personal accomplishments or private kindness between individuals. Consequently, the greatest honour tended to be open only to men of standing, who participated in the defence or governance of the realm.⁵ Within these broad parameters an individual received honour less for the nature or goal of his activities, but rather for the manner in which he went about them. Central to the maintenance of honour were such moral attributes as faithfulness, honesty and courage. Hence, the system of values associated with honour cannot be described as ideological – it did not specify the creation or preservation of any particular political, religious or social configuration. This allowance for moral autonomy, combined with the ardent ambition that honour inspired and the punctilious standards it demanded, meant that honour had often provided a conducive framework for political resistance. By the late sixteenth century, honour’s oppositional potential was clearly still alive. However, in the highly moralised, increasingly ideological climate of post-reformation politics, honour’s moral autonomy might now prove a liability. Without a unifying moral project, the culture of honour risked becoming toothless against the *status quo* and vulnerable to the competing aspirations of its keenest devotees.

In the estimation of William Camden, ‘No man was more ambitious of glory by vertue’ than Robert Devereux, 2nd earl of Essex – yet, ‘no man more careless of all things else’.⁶ Combining military enthusiasm with political ambition, Essex proved a highly disruptive presence on the Privy Council in the 1590s. Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* clearly reflects the intensifying acrimony and factionalism of fin-de-siècle politics, in which ambitious courtiers continually jostled for position, power and honour.⁷ Written in 1599 – ‘the climacteric year in Essex’s life’⁸ – the play has been read convincingly as a

by the late sixteenth century, virtue tended to be considered superior. See Makku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp.19-53. For women’s honour, see Garthine Walker, ‘Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), pp. 235-245.

³ See Richard Cust, ‘Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: the Case of Beaumont v. Hastings’, *Past and Present*, 149 (1995), 57-94.

⁴ According to Aristotle, whose *Nichomachean Ethics* was hugely influential after its translation in 1547, ‘honour is felt to depend more on those who confer than on him who receives it’: Aristotle, *Ethics (The Nichomachean Ethic)*, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), p.68.

⁵ Traditionally, martial prowess had been the chief ‘virtue’ for which honour was conferred, but early sixteenth-century Humanist influences resulted in the equal recognition of learning and peaceable governance. See, Mervyn James, ‘English politics and the concept of honour, 1485-1642’, in idem *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and, R. Malcolm Smuts, *Culture and Power in England, 1585-1685* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.8.

⁶ William Camden, *Annales, or, The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth Late Queen of England. Contayning all the Important and Remarkable Passages of State, both at Home and Abroad during her Long and Prosperous Reigne*, trans. R. N. Gent (London: Benjamin Fisher, 1635), p.553.

⁷ See Wayne Rebhorn, ‘The Crisis of the Aristocracy in Julius Caesar’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43.1 (1990), 75-111.

⁸ Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.8.

direct warning to the earl of the dangers of his mounting hubris.⁹ Patronised by Essex's friend, the earl of Southampton, and a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who regularly performed at court, Shakespeare would very likely have been far better versed in court news and gossip than the average Elizabethan. However, the focus of this study is less the quotidian and contingent aspects of politics in the 1590s, but more the decade's wider political culture – in particular, what we can learn about the political significance of honour from both Shakespeare's imaginative text and a set of letters from an early crisis in Essex's career.

Both *Julius Caesar* and the epistolary exchange from 1598 between the earl of Essex and Lord Keeper Egerton afford an insight into how an aristocrat's care for his personal honour might fuel hostility towards authority.¹⁰ In *Julius Caesar* members of the Roman senatorial class resent Caesar's domination of politics as a monopolisation of the means to attain honour in service to the state. According to Cassius, Caesar:

doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.¹¹

Similarly, exclusion from the political process was the prompt for the earl of Essex's anger that sparked his 'great quarrel' with the Queen. During discussions with the Queen in 1598 about whom should be appointed the next Lord Deputy of Ireland, Essex, according to Camden, 'obstinately perswaded her that Sir George Carew was rather to be sent, that so he might ridde him from the Court, yet could not by perswasions draw her unto it'.¹² The Queen's intransigence provoked Essex, who 'uncivilly turneth his backe, as it were in contempt, with a scornfull looke'.¹³ From here the situation soon escalated, the Queen cuffing Essex's ear and Essex laying his hand on his sword before sweeping from Court.

Essex's 'contempt', incurred simply by the disregard of his opinion on one matter, gives an early glimpse of the crisis that would ensue from permanently preventing the earl from exercising his will freely and honourably in the political realm. Whilst in his letter to Egerton he deems himself to have suffered 'the vilest of all indignities' at the Queen's hand, Essex reserves his greatest outrage for

⁹ Most recently in Peter Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Play* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹⁰ Copies of both Egerton's letter and Essex's response have survived in various early seventeenth-century miscellanies and letter-books. Their first printing was in John Speed's *History of Great Britaine* (1611). The texts of both letters are included as appendices to this article, taken from the 1614 edition of Speed's *History*. All references for quotations from the letters are to the appendices. For discussion of the letters' textual and bibliographical history, see Joel Swann, 'The second earl of Essex's "Great Quarrel" and its letters', *Lives and Letters*, 4.1 (2012), 133-51.

¹¹ *Julius Caesar*, I.2.134-37.

¹² Camden, p.493.

¹³ Camden, p.493.

Egerton's own expectation that, irrespective of whom is to blame for the 'great quarrel', Essex should still 'sue, yeelde, and submit, to your soveraigne'.¹⁴ This would, apparently, be to 'serve her as a villaine, as a slave'.¹⁵ Just as for Cassius, self-abasement would have been the ultimate dishonour for Essex. Cassius cannot bear that he 'must bend his body / If Caesar carelessly but nod on him', while, for Essex, returning to Court would necessitate 'wearing the false marke of the shadow of honour'.¹⁶

Rather than simply dismissing these sentiments as the petulant tantrums of haughty men, unaccustomed to submission, we should try to understand the precise reasons for these reactions. To have cynically abased himself before authority would have been dishonest for Essex, just as it is for Cassius: the latter believes himself and Brutus to be Caesar's equal ('I was born free as Caesar, so were you / We have both fed as well, and we can both / Endure the winter's cold as well as he');¹⁷ and Essex maintains that in his quarrel with Elizabeth 'my cause is good I know it'.¹⁸ After an expression of such conviction, a volte-face would have entailed immediate dishonour, branding Essex as a self-serving sycophant. Unable to convince anyone of his genuine commitment to the good of his country, he would never have been able to attain honour through politics again.

The magnetic appeal of the pursuit of honour is apparent from both Essex's and Brutus's rejection of the idea, conceived in adversity, of removing themselves from the political centre. Despite his refusal to return at Edgerton's behest, Essex was back at Court within two months of his departure. And, whilst Brutus considers abandoning Rome to become 'a villager', he remains and assassinates Caesar.¹⁹ Brutus presents his actions as motivated by 'pity for the general wrong of Rome',²⁰ but his soliloquy in II.1 makes evident that it is opportunities to attain honour that figure most highly in his conception of the 'general good'. Unable to list any existing examples of Caesar's 'abuse of greatness', Brutus suggests that future injustices are likely, yet still only mentions one, namely that, having 'attain[ed] the utmost round' of 'young ambition's ladder', Caesar might now 'unto the ladder turn [...] his back'.²¹ Brutus's chief (possibly only) motive for killing Caesar is to advance the political careers of young, honour-hungry men of senatorial class - among whom, of course, Brutus, himself, must be counted.

The earl of Essex had never previously allowed himself to be curtailed by Elizabeth's displeasure. In 1589, despite having been forbidden by the Queen, he joined Drake's expedition to

¹⁴ Appendix 2, 1.39; Appendix 1, 1.34.

¹⁵ Appendix 2, 1.32.

¹⁶ *Julius Caesar*, I.2.117-18; Appendix 2, 1.19.

¹⁷ *Julius Caesar*, I.2.97-99.

¹⁸ Appendix 2, 1.44.

¹⁹ *Julius Caesar*, I.2.171.

²⁰ *Julius Caesar*, 3.1.170.

²¹ *Julius Caesar*, II.1.18, 24, 22, 25.

Portugal, on which he distinguished himself.²² Even in his letter to Egerton, in which he insists on his continued absence from court, he hints at his plans for his own return. Defending himself from Egerton's accusation that 'you forsake your country, when it hath most neede of your counsel or helpe', Essex maintains that 'no occasion of performance [of his private duty to his country] shall offer it selfe, but I will meete it halfeway'.²³ The question now, though, was whether the magnitude of Essex's aspirations would be met with resistance from Elizabeth and the Cecils. The Queen's refusal to listen to Essex regarding one appointment could not have boded well – especially when viewed in the light of Shakespeare's presentation of the extreme defiance of authority to which young aristocrats might be driven by their consuming hunger for honour.

The play, in fact, presents one scenario very much akin to that of Essex and Elizabeth's 'great quarrel'. In III.1 various senators plead with Caesar 'For the repealing of [Metellus'] banished brother'.²⁴ Implacable, Caesar responds that he remains 'as constant as the Northern star'.²⁵ By this point in Act III, the alternative prospects of self-imposed exile from the political centre and dishonourable subservience have both been rejected; the imperative for honour can only be discharged by violent resistance to authority. Caesar's refusal to recall Publius Cimber is met with the conspirators' knives. The similarity between Essex's impulses in his letter to Lord Egerton and those of Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar* now suggests a conclusion to Essex's story akin to theirs, thus foreshadowing the events of February 1601. Then, denied the honour of political involvement, military service, and access to the Queen, Essex took action in an effort to repeal his own banishment. Given the destructive potential of the intense will to honour in late-Tudor aristocratic culture, it is surely noteworthy that neither Essex, nor the fictional Brutus and Cassius, finally secured for themselves a lasting, honourable involvement in the leadership of their respective states.

Peter Lake has recently argued that in *Julius Caesar* the conspirators' failure to hold on to power is fundamentally due to their false assumption that the Roman people value honour as much as they do.²⁶ The conspirators' justification of Caesar's murder rests on their identification of him as a tyrant. Immediately on Caesar's death, Cinna proclaims 'Liberty, Freedom, Tyranny is dead!' and requests that someone 'cry it about the streets'.²⁷ In response to Brutus's speech in the forum, in which the people are informed that if 'Caesar were living', they would 'die all slaves', a member of the crowd

²² In Lisbon, while the rest of the English forces withdrew, 'the noble Essex in the courage of his martiall bloud, ranne his spear and brake it against the Gates of that City: demanding allowed if any Spaniard mewed therein durst adventure forth in favour of his Mistresse to break a staffe with him': John Speed, p.865.

²³ Appendix 1, l.19; Appendix 2, l.29.

²⁴ *Julius Caesar*, III.1.51.

²⁵ *Julius Caesar*, III.1.60.

²⁶ Peter Lake, pp.465-75, especially p.474.

²⁷ *Julius Caesar*, III.1.78-79.

concludes that ‘This Caesar was a tyrant’.²⁸ Yet, it is obvious that the substance of Caesar’s alleged tyranny impinges only on the senatorial classes, not on the mass of people. Their low status precludes them from ever gaining the honour attendant on climbing ‘young ambition’s ladder’ and so they have no reason to care whether Caesar ‘turns his back unto it’. Mark Antony reveals this to them, his famous repetition that ‘Brutus is an honourable man’ effectively devaluing the term.²⁹ Rather than honour, what is of direct concern and relevance to the lives of the plebs is material gain and Anthony shows how, especially by the terms of his will, Caesar’s material generosity demands the people’s love and their retribution of his murder. It is the resulting disorder that forces the conspirators to flee, and which allows Mark Anthony and Octavius to gain a foothold from which they eventually vanquish Brutus’s and Cassius’s forces.

A similar narrative is apparent in the earl of Essex’s actions three years after his ‘great quarrel’. On 8th February 1601, the earl took to the streets of London, appealing for Londoners to join him and march to the court ‘for ayde to defend the queene, Religion and his life’.³⁰ It was widely known that the earl was popular in London and that his honour was admired and promoted there. In *Henry V* (1599), Shakespeare imagined how Essex might have been met later that year, had he returned victoriously from Ireland:

Were now the general of our gracious empress,
As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit
To welcome him! ³¹

Even in 1600, after Essex’s disgrace and house imprisonment, prints of a portrait of the earl circulated the capital, in which he was pictured in military dress, on horseback, and identified by the annotation as ‘vertues honour’.³² Yet, in 1601 no-one rallied to the earl’s side. Like the plebs of Rome, Londoners had little reason to risk themselves to preserve the honour of an aristocrat, especially when Essex, unlike Brutus, did not even try to present his grievances as part of a wider threat to honour in general. Essex and his supporters seem to have been mistaken in assuming that popularity would function in a similar way to the honourable ties of fealty between lord and vassal, where, if the former rebelled

²⁸ *Julius Caesar*, III.1.22-23, 70.

²⁹ *Julius Caesar*, III.1.83, 88, 95, 100.

³⁰ Cited in Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.30.

³¹ William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995), V.0.30-34.

³² Thomas Cockson, *Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, mounted on a horse*, c.1599-1600, engraving, 33 × 26 cm, British Museum, London.

against the crown, the latter would follow suit, regardless of any personal grievance. By the late sixteenth century, London was no longer feudal, obligations of legal contract trumping those of fealty.

Whilst there was little incentive for Londoners to join the earl, there were considerable deterrents. Various reports express incredulity that Essex could have been so foolish to have defied the Queen's authority and to have expected much of London to have done so, too.³³ Whilst fear of punishment was likely to have been the chief reason for siding with the *status quo*, the possibility has to be considered of mass, internalised commitment to the value and importance of obedience rather than resistance. The majority of the country would have heard the 'homily on obedience' at least once a year, which threatened 'no less pain than everlasting damnation to all disobedient persons, to all resisters against [...] general and common authority'.³⁴ Obedience, even to the most corrupt ruler, was necessary, as belief in providence meant that his or her rule must have been decreed by God.³⁵ The Reformation's union of Church and state had rendered England's a sacral kingship, where there could be little distinction between treason and heresy. In such a context, it became almost impossible for honour to wield the same potency as a language of opposition when looking down the double barrel shotgun of both monarch and God. Rather than the people's acquisitiveness as in *Julius Caesar*, it was, as Mervyn James has shown, the overwhelming exigency of obedience that in 1601 quashed the pretensions of embattled honour.³⁶

Egerton's letter to Essex in 1598 made starkly apparent this opposition between honour and obedience. Despite his friendly concern for Essex, Egerton pulls no punches in stipulating the gravity of Essex's refusal to 'humbly [...] yeelde and submit':³⁷

You faile in that indissoluble duty which you owe to your most gracious soveraigne. A duty imposed upon you, not by nature or policy onely, but by that religious and sacred band, wherein the divine Majesty of almighty God hath by the rule of Christianitie obliged you.³⁸

Specifically, Egerton denies the understanding, critical in honour culture, that the relationship between lord and vassal is reciprocal and, thus, that continued loyalty and service to a lord is only justifiable for as long as the latter upholds the ways of good lordship. For Egerton, 'betweene [your soveraigne] and

³³ *Calendar of state papers, domestic series, of the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth [and James I] 1547-1625 : preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office, Volume 6 (1601-03)*, ed. by Robert Lemon (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts), pp.109-10.

³⁴ 'An exhortation concerning good order and obedience to rulers and magistrates', in *The Two Books of Homilies appointed to be read in churches*, ed. by John Griffiths (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), p.108.

³⁵ 'good order and obedience', p.109.

³⁶ Mervyn James, 'At a crossroads of the political culture: the Essex revolt, 1601', in *idem Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.308-415.

³⁷ Appendix 1, 1.32.

³⁸ Appendix 1, ll.19-22.

you there can bee no proportion of duty'.³⁹ Whilst Essex accepts his allegiance to the Queen as an 'indissoluble duety', he does not see the 'duety of attendance' as such, suggesting that Elizabeth has somehow forfeited her right to expect it of Essex.⁴⁰ Indeed, Essex makes clear his reciprocal conception of his relationship with the Queen in his notorious string of questions:

When this scandall was given mee, nay when the vilest of all indignities are done unto mee, doth *Religion* enforce me to serve? doth God require it? is it impiety not to doe it? why? cannot princes erre? cannot subjects receive wrong? is an earthly power or authority infinite? ⁴¹

Refusing to 'subscribe to these principles', Essex implies that princes can err;⁴² that through unjust treatment of their subjects they can nullify their subjects' duty of service; and that their authority falls only within the remit of what is just and right.

Essex's efforts to deploy the language of honour in defiance of monarchical authority are, however, seriously hamstrung by the fact that, through the course of the sixteenth century, the language of honour was 'nationalised' and incorporated into Tudor doctrines of absolute obedience to the monarch.⁴³ Henry VIII had vigorously promoted a fresh conception of the monarch as the 'fount of honour', whereby honour could be bestowed only by the monarch or his officials and was awarded purely for service to the crown. Hence, in his letter, Egerton can confidently stress, without concern for the earl's honesty, that 'there can bee no dishonour or hurt to yeelde'.⁴⁴ Essex, by contrast, espouses an older brand of honour. Rooted in mediaeval notions of Fortune as unpredictable, this prized a man's ability to stand steadfast against the vicissitudes of life and remain faithful to the people and causes, to which he had committed himself. Thus, Essex not only boasts of his 'strength and constancy [...] in suffering, whatever shall be imposed upon me', but presents the source of his misery, the Queen, as 'fortune [who] is blind', bombarding the earl with 'violent and unseasonable stormes'.⁴⁵ The classic example of the differences between these two conflicting systems of honour is found in the Pilgrimage of Grace. The earl of Norfolk had no qualms in turning on the rebels, despite previously having promised them an amnesty: 'I shall observe no part [in] what other might call honour distained', for, 'none oath nor promise, made for policy to serve [...] mine only master and sovereign, can distain me'.⁴⁶ Diametrically opposed to this was the position of Lord Darcy, a prominent noble amongst the

³⁹ Appendix 1, ll.34-35.

⁴⁰ Appendix 2, ll.30, 31.

⁴¹ Appendix 2, ll.38-40.

⁴² Appendix 2, l.41.

⁴³ For an account of this process, see Mervyn James, 'English politics and the concept of honour'.

⁴⁴ Appendix 1, l.37.

⁴⁵ Appendix 2, ll.45-46, 34, 9.

⁴⁶ Cited in Ruth and Madeleine Hope Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536-1537, and the Exeter Conspiracy, 1538*, Volume I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), pp.259-60.

rebels. When asked by the King's herald to capture the Pilgrimage's leader, Robert Aske, and send him to London, Darcy refused. Significantly, though, he informed the herald that such an act would be 'lawful for yow'; it was 'not for me' simply because Darcy had previously sworn allegiance to Aske.⁴⁷ Such relativism clearly allowed room for resistance to monarchical authority by isolated individuals, but it also deprived rebels of any moral absolutes with which to rally mass support for rebellion. The subjectivity of Essex's justification of his refusal to heed Egerton's advice – 'I [...] feele more then you' - presages his appeal in 1601 for Londoners to march with him in order to protect his own life:⁴⁸ Essex's reasons for rebellion were too personal to convince the wider community that it might be worth their while to join him and risk punishment, damnation, and dishonour, too. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare's only play, in which honour stimulates a successful defiance of authority, is one set in a pagan, republican world - where no overarching, moral framework is obviously apparent, nor any entrenched culture of absolute obedience to the *status quo*.

Both these artefacts – a fictionalised, dramatic account of Roman history and a single epistolary exchange from a momentous political career – give testament to the extraordinary importance attached to honour in late sixteenth-century England. In isolation, these texts can only hint at the dangerous extremes to which honour might drive individuals. However, considered in the context of the politics of the 1590s and their tumultuous climax in February 1601, they shine a much-needed light on what to modern historians can seem the incomprehensibly archaic motivations that drove these events and animated so many at the time. Simultaneously, though, the insistent permeation of honour throughout both texts perhaps hints at its approaching crisis. For it to underpin a disagreement between the Lord Keeper and the Earl Marshal shows it to have been a live political topic, and its thematic centrality in a London stage hit suggests a wider public concern. Analysis of both honour's contested status in Elizabethan culture and its internal inconsistencies suggest that, even at its most dynamic, it was already in decline. In the wake of the Reformation and a century of Tudor stability, the language of honour was far less potent than in its mediaeval heyday. In the 1590s it was already losing ground to Puritanism as the prime vocabulary for political opposition. And, by the mid-seventeenth-century, the latter commanded both the mass appeal and moral authority to launch a far more comprehensive and thorough-going resistance to monarchical rule than considerations of honour ever could have stimulated.

⁴⁷ Dodds, p.304.

⁴⁸ Appendix 2, 1.49.

APPENDIX 1 ⁴⁹

The Lord Keeper to the Earle of Essex Julie 18. An. 1598

My very good Lord. It is often seene, that a stander by seeth more than hee that playeth the game; and for the most part everyman in his owne cause, standeth in his owne light, and seeth not so cleerely as hee should. Your Lordshippe hath dealt in other men's causes, and in greate and weighty affaires with great wisdome and judgement; now your owne is in hand, you are not to contemne or refuse the advise of any that loveth you, how simple soever. In this order I range myselfe; of those that love you none more simple, and none that loveth you with more true and honest affection: which shall pleade mine excuse, if you shall either mistake, or misconfer, my words or meaning; But in your Lordships honorable wisdome I neither doubt nor suspect the one or other. I will not presume to advise you, but I will shoot my bolt, and tell you what I thinke. The beginning and too-long continuing of this unseasonable discontent you have seene and proved, by which you may aime at the end. If you hold still this course (which hitherto you finde to bee worse and worse, and the longer you goe, the father out of the way) there is little hope or likelihood that the end will bee better. You are not yet so farre gone, but you may well returne; the returne is safe, the progresse dangerous and desperate.

In this course you hold, if you have any enemies, you doe that for them which they could never doe for themselves. Your friends you leave open to scorne and contempt; you forsake yourselfe, and overthrow your fortunes, and ruinate your honour and reputation. You give that courage and comfort to the forreine enemies, as greater they cannot have. For what can be more welcome, or may pleasing newes unto them, then to heare that her Majesty and the Realme are maymed of so worthy a member, who hath so often and so valiantly quailed and daunted them. You forsake your countrey, when it hath most neede of your counsell or helpe. And lastly, you faile in that indissoluble duty which you owe to your most gracious soveraigne. A duty imposed upon you, not by nature or policy onely, but by that religious and sacred band, wherein the divine Majesty of almighty God hath by the rule of Christianitie obliged you.

For the foure first, your constant resolution may perhaps moovee you to esteeme them as light; but beeing well weighed they are not light, nor lightly to bee regarded. And for the two last, it may bee that the cleerenesse of

⁴⁹ Cited in Speed, John, *The history of Great Britaine under the conquests of ye Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans Their originals, manners, warres, coines & seales: with ye successions, lives, acts & issues of the English monarchs from Iulius Caesar, to our most gracious soueraigne King Iames* (London: William Hall and John Beale, 1614), p.877.

25 your inward conscience, may seeme to content your selfe. But that is not enough; these duties stand not onely in contemplation, or in inward meditation: their effects bee externall action, and when that faileth, the substance faileth.

This beeing your present state and condition, what is to bee done? what is the remedy? My good Lord I lacke wisdom and judgement to advise you; but I will never lacke an honest true heart to wish well, nor (beeing warranted by a good conscience) will feare to speake what I thinke.

30 I have begonne plainely, bee not offended if I proceede so. *Bene cadit, qui cadit tempori.* Seneca saith well, *Lex si nocentem punit, cadendum est iustitiae, si inocentum, cadendum est fortunae.* The medicine and remedie is, not to contend and strive, but humbly to yeelde and submit. Have you given a cause, and yet take a scandall unto you? then all you can doe, is too little to make satisfaction. Is cause of scandall given unto you? yet policy, duty, and religion, enforce you to sue, yeelde, and submit, to your soveraigne, betweene whom and you there can bee no
35 proportion of duty. When God requires it as a principall duty and service to himselfe; and when it is evident, that great good may ensue of it to your friends, your selfe, your Country, and your soveraigne, and extreame harmy by the contrary: there can be no dishonour or hurt to yeelde, but in not doing of it, is dishonour and impiety.

The difficulty (my good Lord) is to conquere your selfe, which is the height of true valour and fortitude; whereunto all your honorable actions have intended. Doe it in this, and God will bee pleased, her Majestie (I doubt
40 not) well satisfied: your Country will take good, and your friends take comfort by it and your selfe (I mention you last, for I know that of all these, you esteeme yourselfe least) shall receive honour, and your enemies (if you have any) shall be disappointed of their bitter-sweete hopes.

I have delivered what I thinke, simply and truly; and leave you to determine according to your wisdom. If I have erred, it is *error amoris*, not, *amor erroris*. Construe and accept it (I beseech you) as I meene it; not as an
45 advise, but as an opinion, to bee allowed or cancelled at your pleasure. If I might conveniently have conferred with your selfe in person, I would not have troubled you with so many idle blots. Whatsoever your judge of this mine opinion, yet bee assured my desire is to further all good meanes that may tend to your good, and so wishing you all honourable happinesse, I rest your Lordshippes most ready and faithful, though unable, poore friende.

APPENDIX 2 ⁵⁰

The Earles Answere.

My very good Lord. Though there is not the man this day living, whom I would sooner make a Judge of any question that did concerne mee, then your selfe: yet you must give me leave to tell you, that in some cases I must appeale from all earthly Judges; and if in any, then surely in this, when the highest Judge on earth hath imposed
5 upon mee the heaviest punishment, without trial or hearing. Since then I must either answere your Lordships arguments, or forsake mine owne just defence, I will force mine aking head to doe mee service for an houre.

I must first deny my discouragement, which was forced, to be an humorous discontentment, and in that it was unseasonable, and is too long continuing, your Lordshippe should rather condole with me then expostulate. Naturall seasons are expected here below, but violent and unseasonable stormes come from above: there is no
10 tempest to the passionate indignation of a Prince, nor that at any time so unseasonable, as when it lighteth on those that might expect an harvest of their painefull and careful labours. Hee that is once wounded must feele smart til his hurt is cured, or the part senselesse; but cure I expect none, her Majesties heart being obdurate; and bee without sense I cannot. But then (you say) I may aime at the end. I doe more then aime, for I see an end of all my fortunes, and have set an end to all my desires. In this course doe I anything for mine enemies? when I was present, I found
15 them absolute, and therefore I had rather triumph alone, then have mee attendant upon their Chariot. Or doe I leave my friends? when I was a Courtier, I could yeeld them no fruit of my love to them; now I am an Heremite, they shall beare no envie for their love to me. Or doe I forsake my selfe, because I doe enjoy my selfe? Or doe I overthrow my fortunes, because I build not a fortune of paper walles, which every puffe of winde blowes downe? Or doe I ruienate mine honor because I leave following the pursuit or wearing the false marke of the shadow of honour? Doe
20 I give courage or comfort to the forraine enemies, because I reserve my selfe to encounter them, or because I keepe mine heart from basenesse, thogh I cannot keepe my fortune from declining? No, no, I give every one of these considerations his due right, and the more I weigh them, the more I finde my selfe justified from offending in any of them. As for the two last objections, that I forsake my Country when it hath most need of me, and faile in that indissoluble duty which I owe to my soveraigne: I answere, that if my Country had at this time needed publike
25 service, her majestie that governes it would not have driven me to a private life.

I am tied to my Country by two bands; one publike, to discharge carefully, faithfully, and industriously, that trust that is committed unto me; and the other private, to sacrifice for it my life and carcase which have beene

⁵⁰ Cited in Speed, pp.877-78.

nourished in it. Of the first I am free, being dismissed or disabled by her Majesty. Of the other, nothing can free me from death, and therefore no occasion of performance shall offer itselfe, but I will meete it halfway. The
30 indissoluble duety which I owe to her Majesty is the duetie of allegiance which I will never, nor can faile in; the duetie of attendance is no indissoluble duety. I owe Majesty service of an Earle, and of a Marshall of Engand. I have beene contented to doe her the service of a Clerke, but can never serve her as a villaine, as a slave. But yet (you say) I must give way to time: so I doe, for now I see the storme come, I have put my selfe into the harbour. Seneca saith, wee must give way to fortune. I know that fortune is blind and strong, and therefore I goe as farre out
35 of the way as I can. You say the remedie is not to strive, I neither strive nor seeke for remedy, but I must yeeld and submit: I can never yeeld truth to be falshood, or falsehood to be truth. Have I given cause (you aske) and take a scandall? No, I gave not cause to take up so much as *Fimbrius* his complaint, for I did *totum tellum corpore accipere*. I patiently beare all, and sensibly feele all that I then received. When this scandall was given mee, nay, when the vilest of all indignities are done unto mee, doth *Religion* enforce me to serve, doth God require it? is it impiety not
40 to do it? why cannot Princes erre? cannot subjects receive wrong? is an earthly power and authority infinite? Pardon me, pardon mee my Lord, I can never subscribe to these principles: but *Salomons* foole laughes when he is stricken: Let these that mean to make their profite by Princes faults, shew to have no feare of Princes injuries. Let them acknowledge an infinite absoluteness in erath, that doe not believe in an absolute infiniteness in heaven. As for me, I have received wrong, I feele it, my cause is good I know it. And whatsoever come, all the powers on earth can
45 never shew more strength and constancy in oppressing, then I can shew in suffering, whatsoever shall be imposed upon me.

Your Lordship in the beginning of your letter made your selfe a looker on, and mee a player of mine owne game; so you may see more then I: but you must give me leave to tell you in the ned of mine, that since yiu but see ad I suffer, I must of necessity feele more than you. I must crave your Lordships patience, to give him that hath a
50 creabbed fortune leave to use a carbbed stile. But whatsoever my stile is, there is no heart more humble, nor more affected towards your Lordship, then that of your Lordships poore friend.

R. Essex

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