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## JAQUES' SEVEN AGES

BY JOSEPHINE W. BENNETT

SINCE criticism can be sound only when it is based on and supported by sound scholarship, Professor O. J. Campbell's re-interpretation of the character of Jaques, in his study of *Shakspeare's Satire*,<sup>1</sup> makes timely a reconsideration of the whole question of the source of Jaques' most famous speech. Professor Campbell rejects the common opinion that Jaques voices Shakspeare's own dissatisfaction with life, and argues that "Jaques is a malcontent traveller anatomized according to the approved psychology of Shakespeare's day;" and that he is treated by the poet, not sympathetically, but satirically.

It has long been known that Jaques' account of the seven ages of man followed a popular pattern of thought; but no close verbal parallel has been established, and it is customary to regard the account as derived from pictorial rather than from verbal sources.<sup>2</sup> Recently the subject was reopened by Professor J. W. Draper, who advanced the argument that the enumeration of *seven* ages was not common, and that a passage in Bartholomaeus Anglicus was Shakspeare's direct source.<sup>3</sup> The parallel lies chiefly in the fact that both enumerate *seven* ages, and Professor Allan H. Gilbert very justly pointed out the fallacy of the contention that seven was an unusual number.<sup>4</sup> He cites Censorinus *De die Natali liber*, which describes divisions of man's life into five, seven, four and ten ages. Professor Don Cameron Allen has added a reference to the *Silva de varia leçon* of Pedro Mexia<sup>5</sup> which he quotes in a French translation, but which Shakspeare could have seen in the English version of Thomas Fortescue.<sup>6</sup> Mexia says that Pythagoras divided man's life into four parts, according to the seasons of the year; M. Varro names five parts of fifteen years each, Hippocrates names seven, Solon ten, Isidore and some others made only six; Horace like Pythagoras, names four, Aristotle considers only three, and most of the Arabs follow him, but Avicenna has 4, Servius Tullius (in A. Gellius) has only three, but Mexia himself described seven. He says:

By the common division of Astrologians, as well *Arabies, Caldees, Greekes,* and *Latines*: as also by the particular opinion of *Proclus*,

*Ptolomie*, and *La Rasellus*, the life of Man is devided in seven Ages, over every one of which ruleth and governeth one of the seven Planetes.

Infancy, he goes on to explain, is governed by the Moon, childhood by Mercury, adolescence by Venus, young manhood by the Sun, maturity (*Aetas virilis*) by Mars, age by Jupiter, and old age by Saturn.

Here we have the basis for what was, unquestionably, a very popular division into *seven ages*.<sup>7</sup> The other widely mentioned account of the seven ages is attributed to Hippocrates.<sup>8</sup> It is largely concerned with fixing the age limits of the various periods, but says that the first age, of seven years, is characterized by the shedding of teeth, the second by puberty, the third by the development of the beard. The fourth extends to the twenty-eighth year, the fifth to the forty-ninth, the sixth to the age of fifty-six, after which old age begins. The authority of this ancient physician is particularly important because the Elizabethans believed firmly in the "climacteric." The year of change from one age to another was a critical one, and the ages were so divided as to bring the change on some multiple of seven. Solon's ten ages were allotted seven years each.<sup>9</sup> Astrology, medicine, and numerology combined to make the seven ages by far the most popular division of human life. although both in literature and in art divisions into any number of ages from three twelve may be found.<sup>10</sup>

But, except for the use of the number seven, Shakspeare's account has little in common with either the medical or the astrological convention. He is concerned with appearance and behavior, and his point of view is satiric. It is not surprising, therefore, that critics have assumed that his lines were inspired rather by a picture of the seven ages than by a verbal account.<sup>11</sup>

But there were verbal accounts of the ages of man which have been overlooked, but which are much closer to Shakspeare's lines than any so far noticed. Shakspeare was not original in combining his description of the ages of man's life with the notion that "all the world's a stage." Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, in his *Zodiacus Vitae*, begins his

account of the ages of man's life with the statement that life is a pageant; Barnabe Googe, in his translation, adds the gloss, "The world a stage play."<sup>12</sup> This whole book of the *Zodiacus* is devoted to the subject of the folly and futility of human life. It is much in the spirit of Jaques' remarks, and since the *Zodiacus* was widely known and even used as a schoolbook, it is not improbable that in writing Jaques' speech Shakspeare intended to recall this passage to his hearers' minds. Palingenius describes the infant as crying, the child was disciplined by masters and parents, the youth as rash, amorous, and ready for brawls. Manhood brings care, labor, and ambition, as well as honor. Old age is marked by grey hair, failing senses, loss of teeth, and dotage.

Some lines, once attributed to Raleigh, seem to be based on this passage in Palingenius. They are headed "De Morte."

Man's life's a tragedy: his mother's womb,  
From which he enters, is his tiring-room;  
This spacious earth the theatre; and the stage  
That country which he lives in: passions, rage,  
Folly, and vice are actors: the first cry  
The prologue to the ensuing tragedy.  
The former act consisteth of dumb-shows;  
The second, he to more perfection grows;  
I'th' third he is a man, and doth begin  
To nurture vice, and act the deeds of sin:  
I'th' fourth declines; i'th' fifth diseases clog  
And trouble him; then death's his epilogue.<sup>13</sup>

Here we have the moralizing spirit of Jaques and the combination of the idea that "all the world's a stage" with the account of the ages of man.<sup>14</sup> But Palingenius describes only five ages.

The *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux, a Greek grammarian of the second century A.D., has an account of "the seven ages according to Hippocrates" which includes many striking parallels to Shakspeare's lines.<sup>15</sup> The text of the *Onomasticon* was recovered by Filelfo and printed in Greek, with a Latin index, by Aldus in 1502. There were several editions, including one by A. F. Varchiese (1520) dedicated to Thomas Linacre. In 1536 Grynaeus edited it at Basel where, in 1541, the first Latin translation, by R. Gualther, was published. This was the only translation available in the

sixteenth century, and is the one, therefore, which I shall quote.

The *Onomasticon* is a thesaurus, arranged topically rather than alphabetically, and the second book opens with the account of the seven ages of man (pp. 74-78). The paragraphs are numbered, and the first is devoted to Hippocrates' account. The second is "De Hominis Partibus," and the third supplies words for conception, abortion, and parturition. The fourth supplies words descriptive "De Infantibus." These are mostly nouns and noun phrases, but the section ends, "lacentis sugens, mamillis uniuens, nuper a fœmina semotus, nuper ablactatus." The construction, as well as the words, are suggestive of Shakspeare's infant "Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms." Paragraph V, "De puerulis" has only two lines, but Pollux returns to the second puer age later, as we shall see. Paragraph VI, "De iuuenibus" which "Adolescentem uocauerunt" is also treated at greater length in a later paragraph. But the fourth age, "De Vivis" corresponds to Shakspeare's soldier, "Bearded like a pard." Pollux devotes almost the whole paragraph to the beard and its development in "Iuenum" and "Uirum."

Paragraph VIII is headed "De Adolescentibus" and should, logically, have formed a part of VI. It begins,

ADolescentulus, Adulescens. Iuuenus uero licet dicatur, Comicum tamen magis est. Iuenum uero coetus, neolaila dicitur [the lover]. Deinde Vir est, qui militarem aetatem assecutus est [Shakspeare's soldier comes next after his lover], aetatem censui obnoxiam habens, uegetus, feruens, bellicosae aetatis existens, . . .

Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth . . .

Paragraph IX takes up early middle age, "De Mediae Aetatis: Iuuenibus." It begins, "Concionibus aptam aetatem habens." Shakspeare makes him a justice. Pollux supplies words for degrees of grey hair, calls him Senex, and in Greek, Presbyter, and ends, "Nihil est uetustius, pro eo quod est, nihil est nobilius." Shakspeare's justice is far more graphic and picturesque,

In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances.

Paragraph X, "De Senibus," is uninteresting for our purpose, but XI, "De Vetystate," has some interesting parallels to Shakspeare's last two ages. Pollux quotes Hyperides as saying,

In senectutis limine, in occasu uitae, ut iam balbutiat  
lingua, ut uox obscura et intricata existat, ut uox erret, . . .

and his big manly voice,

Turning again toward childish treble, pipes

And whistles in his sound.

ut senectus imbecillem reddiderit ["second childishness"],  
ut pedes tremant & labentur, ut sint obliqui, inconstantes, . . .  
& his similia.

The old man may be described as

Senior Saturno, edentulus [sans teeth], Senex capularis, decipiens,  
clamosus, desipiens, insulsus [sans taste], attritus, silicernium,  
inuersus propter aeternem, immutatus ceruos, aut cornices aetate  
superans aut Nymphis coetaneus, & similia [sans everything].

Pollux next devotes a paragraph to women, but paragraph XIII returns to the subject "De Formatis ab aetatibus uerbis," and runs through some further descriptions of each age. Here we find the schoolboy:

Ephelis exire, instituere, tum etiam puerascere, educatio. Et Puerilis  
disciplina, apud Platonem inuenitur, . . .

Youth is characterized by rashness or hastiness.

Lysias Iuueniliter audaces nominauit, & audaces Iuuenes. Viriliter  
autem agere . . . unde Viriliter, et fortiter, ut Plato dixit, unde etiam  
Coetus uirilil, secundum Iseum . . .

But when youth passes old age comes on, and we have another collection of words to describe its infirmities. Only one phrase is especially suggestive of Shakspeare. Pollux includes what Gualther translates as "extendi membra." A later translator renders the phrase "membra emarcida"<sup>16</sup> which might have suggested "his shrunk shank."

Though Shakspeare was a keen observer of life at first hand, it does not seem probable that independent observation would have produced so many parallels of phraseology. He follows Pollux rather than either the astrological or the medical tradition in the general characteristic of each age, since Hippocrates puts the development of the beard in the third age, Shakspeare and Pollux put it in the fourth. Mexia assigns the fifth age to Mars. Shakspeare and Pollux put soldiering in the fourth; Shakspeare's fifth age is nearer Mexia's sixth. Hippocrates gives no descriptive details about the sixth and seventh ages. Mexia gives some, but

those of his sixth age do not correspond to Shakspeare's, and Pollux has many and better parallels for the seventh age.<sup>17</sup>

Altogether there are so many more verbal parallels between Pollux and Shakspeare than between any other author and the poet that, unless further evidence can be discovered, we must assume that Shakspeare's was drawing, either directly or indirectly, on the *Onomasticon*. It is tempting to conjecture that the country youth, coming up to town and finding himself in competition with university men in the business of playwriting, made an effort to improve his education and his vocabulary and so became acquainted with this famous thesaurus.

Unfortunately, we cannot be sure that he did not make the acquaintance of Pollux either in the schoolroom at Stratford, or indirectly through some lost or unidentified English rhetoric or wordbook. What we can be reasonably sure of is that he was following a verbal rather than, or in addition to, a pictorial tradition, and that he was putting into Jaques' mouth, as Professor Campbell believes, not an expression of personal disillusion, but a set of rhetorical commonplaces such as a conventional malcontent of no great intellectual stature might utter.

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<sup>1</sup>Oxford Press, 1943, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>See the collections in Boswell's Malone ed. (1821), VI, 519-21; J. W. Jones, "Observations on the Origin of the Division of Man's Life Into Stages," *Archaeologia*, XXXV (1853), 167-89; J. G. Waller, "Christian Iconography and Legendary Art: The Wheel of Human Life, or the Seven Ages," *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXIX (1853), 494-502; John Martin (ed.), *The Seven Ages of Shakespeare* (London, 1840), an elaborate but unimportant study; Henry Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (1870), 405-10, which follows Jones and adds little; and the editions of *As You Like It* in the New Variorum Shakespeare, ed. H. H. Furness, VIII (1890), 122-24; The Arden Shakespeare, ed. J. W. Holme (1914); and G. L. Kittredge's edition (Boston, n.d.), p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup>"Jaques' 'Seven Ages' and Bartholomaeus Anglicus," *MLN*, LIV (1939), 273-76.

<sup>4</sup>"Jaques' 'Seven Ages' and Censorinus," *MLN*, LV (1940), 103-51.

<sup>5</sup>"Jaques' 'Seven Ages' and Pedro Mexia," *MLN*, LVI (1941), 601-3.

<sup>6</sup>This is an abridged translation of Mexia, but it gives the passage in question in full. It appeared in 1571 under the title, *The Foreste or Collection of Histories*, and is from the French of Claude Gruet (1552) rather than from Mexia's Spanish (1543). See Bk. I, ch. 17, pp. 45-49.

<sup>7</sup>Sir Walter Raleigh follows Mexia in his account of the seven ages in his *History of the World*, I, 2, sec. 5; see Works (Oxford, 1829), II, 60.

<sup>8</sup>It does not appear in the extant works of Hippocrates, and is known only through the report of Philo Judaeus, in his *Liber de mundi opificio*; see *Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson and G. T. Whitaker (Loeb Classics, 1929), I, 83-87. Philo also describes Solon's ten ages.

<sup>9</sup>Macrobius describes an elaborate division and sub-division of man's life into periods of seven years, months, and days; see *In Somnium Scipionis*. Bk. I, ch. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Professor S. C. Chew, in a lecture at the Pierpont Morgan Library, has recently presented a very interesting collection of illustrations of pictorial representations of the ages showing every number from three to twelve.

<sup>11</sup>It seems not to have been recorded in this connection that there was a tapestry of the "Seven Ages of Man" hanging in the royal palace at Greenwich about the time of Queen Mary, and no doubt still there in Shakspeare's day; see E. Hasted, *Kent* (1778), I, 60, from MS. Harl. 1419, fol. 37.

<sup>12</sup>Edition of 1588, pp. 99-100, under "Virgo."

<sup>13</sup>Raleigh's *Works*, VIII, 704-5. The lines may post-date Shakspeare's, but they are in spirit and substance a summary of Palingenius.

<sup>14</sup>I am indebted to Miss Rosamond Tuve for calling my attention to this passage.

<sup>15</sup>The accounts of the seven ages in both Censorinus and Pollux were first mentioned in this connection by J. W. Jones, *op. cit.*, but not described or discussed.

<sup>16</sup>Ed. Amsterdam, 1706, pp. 153-63.

<sup>17</sup>*Notes and Queries*, III, xii, 123, notes that Florio's Montaigne has the phrases "sans tongues, sans eyes, and sans ears" in the "Apologie for Raymond Seybound." It also notes (I, xii, 7) that the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* describes the successive miseries of human life. But the division is into five ages; see the facsimile reprint of the translation attributed to Spenser by F. M. Padelford (Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), pp. 46-48.