

University Press, Bloomington 1987). Among these parallels I mention no fewer than thirteen from the Book of Job, which I find echoed no fewer than fifty times in the play as a whole (28–31).

As for parallels from the spiritual writings of the time, special mention may be made of Robert Southwell's writings as also examined by John Klause in his recent book on *Shakespeare, the Earl and the Jesuit* (New Jersey, 2008), where he says, 'One can in fact construct most of the soliloquy from the vocabulary of Southwell's chapters' in the *Epistle of Comfort*, before proceeding to detail the echoes, while adding further examples from the poems (168–70).

As for the particular case of the 'sea of troubles', I find parallels in the Prayer-Book ceremony for Baptism, 'the waves of this troublesome world' and in the homily on Matrimony, 'the troublous sea of this world', and Klause draws attention to 'this dangerous sea' in the *Epistle of Comfort*.

PETER MILWARD

Sophia University, Tokyo

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HAMLET'S CALF ALLUSION—A CORRECTION

IN his recent article on Hamlet's reference to killing a calf whilst speaking to Polonius (*Hamlet*, III.ii.99–101), Steven Doloff suggests an interpretation that he says has been 'hitherto overlooked'.¹ It ought to be noted that Doloff's article either overlooks or fails to acknowledge much prior scholarship—some of it quite recent—on this subject.

Citing a recent edition of the play, Doloff notes that editors have glossed Shakespeare's

punning wordplay on *Brutus/brute*, *Capitol/capital*, and *part* (action)/*part* (actor's role) in the scene.² It might be noted here that in quoting the relevant excerpt, Doloff erroneously transposes 'Capitol' and 'capital':

Pol.: I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i' th'
Capitol [*sic*].

Brutus killed me.

Ham.: It was a brute part of him to kill so capitol [*sic*] a
calf . . .

He adds that the allusion to calf killing had been noted in an earlier edition of the play, which had further acknowledged some prior scholarship on the subject.³ Critics had recognized, in Doloff's words, that 'killing a calf' seems to have been 'a common bit of itinerant street entertainer business' and 'a lowly and grisly form of street entertainment'. Moving on to the point of his article, Doloff then purports to reveal that 'this somewhat crude form of entertainment may have been traditionally performed as shadow-play behind a curtain.' As evidence, he quotes a passage from Chambers' footnotes which refer to the accounts of the Royal household for Christmas 1521, which mention a payment made 'to a man at Wyndesore, for kyling of aaffe, before my ladys grace *behynde a clothe*'. The italicizing of the last three words here are Doloff's, supposedly indicating what he believes to be his discovery.

We might first note Doloff's apparent misapprehension that the entertainment referred to has hitherto been thought to involve the actual killing of a real calf. This canard, arising from a reference in Aubrey and the consequent supposition that the young Shakespeare may have been apprenticed to a butcher, has long since been recognized as a baseless misunderstanding. As early as the mid-nineteenth century, even tourist guidebooks to Stratford upon Avon have dismissed the likelihood of any actual slaughter being referred to, and have noted that 'Killing the Calf' was 'one of those vernacular, traditional pastimes' and 'an old semi-dramatic entertainment . . . played by

¹ Steven Doloff, 'Killed Behind the Curtain: More on Hamlet's Calf Allusion', *N&Q*, lvi (4) (December 2009), 583.

² Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (eds), William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (London, 2006), 3rd Series, 304. Doloff's apparent implication here is that by failing to gloss the reference to killing the calf, Thompson and Taylor have failed to recognize its importance.

³ Harold Jenkins (ed.), William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (London, 1982), 2nd Series, 294; and E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1930), I, 17.

a person concealed by a curtain from the spectators'.⁴

More recently, this reference in *Hamlet* (and the form of popular entertainment to which it refers) has already been thoroughly researched in the academic press, and recognized as an allusion to a traditional 'Christmas mumming play' or 'piece of contemporary folk theatre', involving play-acting, concealment behind a curtain, ventriloquism, crude sound effects, and props such as a pair of horns, a knife, and sometimes a bowl of fake blood.⁵

CHRISTOPHER GOULDING
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle upon
Tyne

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⁴ *Nelson's Hand-Books for Tourists: Shakespeare and his Birth-Place* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1859), 26, 81–2.

⁵ Elizabeth Thompson Oakes, "'Killing the Calf' in *Hamlet*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, xxxiv (2) (Summer 1983), 215–16; and Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Did the Boy Shakespeare Kill Calves?', *RES*, lv (219) (April 2004), 183–95.

AN ALLUSION TO PURGATORY IN *HAMLET*

AN apparently overlooked allusion to Purgatory is found in the fourth act of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Hamlet is brought before Claudius to divulge where he has hidden the body of the slain Polonius (IV.iii.16–36).¹ 'Now Hamlet, where's Polonius', the king demands. The situation of being summoned for interrogation before a king bears a definite and thus possibly deliberate similarity to Martin Luther's before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the 1521 Diet of Worms, to which Hamlet proceeds to

allude in his bewildering reply to the king's question.² The allusion is clearly anti-Catholic in import, implicitly denouncing the Diet as a 'convocation of politic worms', presided over by the worm who is the 'only emperor for diet'. At the same time, Hamlet's words seem to reflect Protestant satire of the Catholic Eucharist, in which the 'king' was liable to undergo precisely such 'progress through the guts of a beggar' as that of which the prince speaks, or worse.³ Claudius—much to the amusement, one presumes, of the wiser sort—gets none of it: 'Alas, alas', 'What dost thou mean by this?' He repeats the question: 'Where's Polonius?' 'In heaven', answers Hamlet: 'send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i'th'other place yourself. But if indeed you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby'. The literal meaning is perfectly clear, but surely here also more is meant than meets the king's ear: if Polonius is neither in Heaven nor in Hell, there is still, in Catholic doctrine, one remaining option—the 'lobby' of Purgatory.

No allusion is recognized in this 'lobby' in the critical editions, nor in Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory*, the most extensive study of this aspect of the play, yet such an allusion undeniably fits the logic of Hamlet's reply, while the appropriateness of referring to Purgatory as a lobby is self-evident and the double entendre wholly in line with the preceding wordplay on 'worms' and 'diet'. The requisite meaning is attested: in fact, some of the earliest examples cited in the *OED* for 'lobby' in this sense of 'waiting-place or ante-room' (sense 2a) are Shakespearean: *2 Henry VI*, *Hamlet*, and *Timon of Athens*. As for parallels and analogues, here is the patron of the King's Men in his 1609 *Premonition*, inverting

¹ Citations are from William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Philip Edwards, updated edn (Cambridge, 2003).

² As suggested by Raymond B. Waddington, 'Lutheran Hamlet', *English Language Notes*, xxvii (1989), 27–42. The allusion to the Diet of Worms was first recognized by Samuel Weller Singer, *The Text of Shakespeare Vindicated from the Interpolations and Corruptions Advocated by John Payne Collier Esq. in His Notes and Emendations* (London, 1853), 266.

³ Waddington was apparently the first to interpret this as a 'grotesque literalization' of the Eucharistic sacrament, but believed that the allusion was to the Lutheran doctrine of Real Presence: see Waddington, 'Lutheran Hamlet', 28–30. Stephen Greenblatt more plausibly reads it as a 'grotesquely materialist reimagining' of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, adducing similar examples from Protestant satirists: see Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2001), 136–62, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2002), 240–4.