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David McInnis, ed. *Old Fortunatus by Thomas Dekker*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, The Revels Plays, 2020. Pp 253. Hardback £80. ISBN: 9780719089435.

Emma Smith
Hertford College, University of Oxford

During November and December 1599, Philip Henslowe recorded a series of transactions with Thomas Dekker related to a play called 'the hole historye of ffortunatus'. There were additional production and script expenses for performances 'for the corte' during the holiday season. A play so concerned with money and its ability to pay for fancy costumes appropriately provided such an expensive spectacle at Richmond Palace: as David McInnis points out, the entry in the Stationers' Register for 'A commedie called old Fortunatus in his newe liverie' could refer either literally — to the gallantly-attired character — or metaphorically, to a revised play-text. The title page of the only early quarto (1600) boasts that it 'was plaied before the Queenes Maiestie this Christmas', and both the play's prologue and epilogue address this royal occasion directly. The play opens with two old men travelling to the 'temple of Eliza' who are dazzled by the 'beams' of their sovereign, who is charmingly dubbed 'great landlady of hearts'. The seniors return in conclusion some three thousand lines later, marking the queen's forty-second regnal year and hoping for many more to come. This is a long, episodic play with almost no modern stage history but with, as McInnis explores in rich detail, a series of prior- and after-lives across European culture. Its central motif was once so well-known that Marx could use it in *Capital* to describe the spending power of mid-nineteenth century Britain: 'it is as if this period had found Fortunatus' purse' (53).

Although only a single copytext exists, there are nevertheless considerable challenges in editing a play which has had no scholarly edition since Fredson Bowers's collected works of Dekker more than half a century ago. There is evidence of a prior play. Henslowe's accounts indicate that *1 Fortunatus* was a reasonably profitable title in the repertoire earlier in the 1590s. Whether the extant play is a continuation or a reworking of this predecessor is unknown. The payment of forty shillings to Dekker only days after he had apparently completed work on the script, for revisions for court performance makes *Old Fortunatus* an important exhibit in discussions about the relationship between public stage and court drama. The play's structural and thematic parallels with *Doctor Faustus* and its place in the ranks of post-Marlowe and Marlovian drama raise questions about

how best to contextualize its combination of moralism and spectacle in narratives of theatre history. And finally, why? What questions should we be asking of this resolutely non-canonical drama in the twenty-first century?

David McInnis's introduction to his edition of *Old Fortunatus* for the Revels series meets these challenges with scholarly clarity and impartiality. He spends time on the Henslowe payments and their implications, emphasizing the limits of the evidence. He explores the Marlowe influence but concludes that it may have been overstated. He sets out competing views of the play's structure, given its choric sections do not (as in the contemporaneous *Henry V*) suggest division into acts. This edition divides it into fifteen scenes, which fall most naturally into three narrative parts. McInnis has collated a larger number of copies than previously identified and can thus add to the bibliographic understanding of the play's unique cancelled leaf, with a speech apparently referring, or taken as referring, to Essex. His work on the German Fortunatii plays and burlesques in the seventeenth century is detailed and situates Dekker's work diachronically on a spectrum of adaptations and interventions. Other aspects of the reception of the play, especially some previously unpublished notes by Anthony Trollope held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, and an alternative prologue written by an appreciative Swinburne, add colour to an otherwise patchy literary and theatrical history.

Throughout, the play-text is smartly annotated and clearly presented, with particular attention to stage directions to help readers imagine its spectacular choreography. Fortune's first entrance treading on prostrate kings 'chained in silver gyves', flanked by crowned artisans and attended by nymphs bearing globes, is an early example of the way the play steps up its theatricality as it turns attention from the offstage spectacle of Elizabeth to Fortune, and ultimately Virtue, as her onstage rivals.

Some of the most interesting material in this edition juxtaposes the play's fantasy of inexhaustible riches with Dekker's own chronic impecunity, and with larger economic patterns of liberality, debt, and exchange. Fortune's gift to Fortunatus is a supply of gold, and, as McInnis notes, the play echoes a prominent contemporary trope and 'censures the spendthrift or prodigal' (56). It is, however, less critical than many contemporary texts about the morality of travel. 'Carry Fortunatus on the wings / Of active thought many a thousand miles', the Chorus instructs, as the play dots between Cyprus, Babylon, London, and beyond. Fortunatus's wishing-hat conveys him around the world as the play offers vicarious or imaginative travelling opportunities for its London audiences.

A sequence in which two characters pretend to be Irish costermongers must, as McInnis notes, have seemed uneasily topical at the end of 1599 as the failure

of Essex's gallant expedition to crush Tyrone's uprising was known: more on why and how Irishness was available for courtly comedy would be interesting. Perhaps something further on the ways that fantasy and wish-fulfilment intersect with contemporary politics, or a more sustained comparison with *Henry V* as a different dramaturgical take on some similar issues, might have helped to draw out some of the play's situatedness. Different parts of the edition offer snippets of material — allusive, bibliographic, theatrical — to reconstruct a more uncomfortable fin de siècle Tudor play. Just as recent reinterpretations of Dekker's other prominent Elizabethan work *The Shoemakers' Holiday* have found its jolly civic romp underscored with a fretwork of anxieties about labour, class, and the consequences of war, so too *Old Fortunatus* is ripe for further contextualization.

This new edition of *Old Fortunatus* is a valuable intervention. It brings the play into focus for advanced teaching and research. It suggests some of the ways Dekker's dramaturgy embodies the possessive imagination that structures English travel writing and proto-colonial fantasy in the period. Only one suggestion: the structure of the Revels introduction, beginning with quite technical questions of authorship, date, and textual transmission, now looks a bit old-fashioned. McInnis opens his Acknowledgements by describing the play as 'wonderful': it takes a while to hear again that note of justifiable enthusiasm amid the formal scholarly weight of the edition.