The scholarly self under threat: language of vice in British scholarship (1870-1910)

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Frederick James Furnivall

and social vice

Introduction

In April 1881, a large group of reputed Shakespearean scholars announced that they had resigned their membership of the New Shakspere Society[1], due to the deplorable conduct of its founder, Frederick James Furnivall.[2] Their exodus heralded the end of the society: publications became fewer and fewer over the next years and its T*ransactions* ceased in 1892.[3] Why did they leave? And, what could the founder and president of the society's committee, Frederick James Furnivall, possibly have done to cause this exodus?

The exodus of members was the result of Furnivall's quarrel with the antiquarian Shakespearean scholar James Halliwell-Phillipps (1820-1889), who had been a productive member of the society since its inception in 1873.[4] From 1880 onwards, Halliwell-Phillipps and Furnivall engaged in a dispute that not only embroiled many other members, but that was so

1 The spelling 'Shakspere' was based on two known autographs by Shakespeare and Furnivall adopted it as a means to underline the accurate ambitions of the society.

2 'The New Shakspere Society', *Athenaeum* (30 April 1881) 593.

3 William Benzie, *Dr. F.J. Furnivall. Victorian Scholar Adventurer* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983) 208.

4 Marvin Spevack coined the term 'philological antiquary' to describe Halliwell-Phillipps as a scholar and offers a short description of his life: Marvin Spevack, 'James Orchard Halliwell: Outlines of a Life', *Anglia – Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 114:1 (2009) 24-56, 44.

acrimonious that many members felt uncomfortable being associated with Furnivall. I will discuss their dispute and its origins in more detail later, but a few examples may suffice here to illustrate how heated the dispute became and how accusations of vice played a central role in it.

In one rather insulting pamphlet, Furnivall deplored Halliwell-Phillipps' 'mortified vanity' and proneness to 'injudicious flattery', and called him 'as learned as a turnip-top'.[5] Furnivall's insults at Halliwell-Phillipps' address prompted the latter to defend himself. As we have come to expect, Halliwell-Phillipps also drew on the powerful discourse of vice to denunciate his attacker: he deemed him 'dictatorial', and argued that his alleged 'want of temper'[6] and 'ungentlemanly manner'[7] had 'thrown ridicule on Shakespearean criticism'.[8] Moreover, Halliwell-Phillipps organised resistance to the founder of the Society, his goal being to elicit an apology.

Many members answered that call. They tried to pressure Furnivall into apologising, which failed, and then saw no other option but to resign: 'after another but unfortunately unsuccessful attempt to obtain from Mr. Furnivall some slight expression of regret . . . they have left the Society and drawn up a protest.'[9] Moreover, the members complained about the passivity of the Society's committee by claiming that 'if the Society has no organisation capable of putting a stop to the use of such language by its Director, it is not a society to which a gentleman can belong.'[10] In

5 Frederick James Furnivall, *The "Co" of Pigsbrook & Co.* (London: privately published, 1881) 3-5.

6 Halliwell-Phillipps to Ingleby, 3 December 1879, printed in: William Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter: The Correspondence of Robert Browning and Frederick J. Furnivall, 1872-1889* (Washington D.C.: Decatur House Press, 1979) 168

7 Halliwell-Phillipps to Robert Browning, 26 January 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 169-171.

8 Halliwell-Phillipps to Robert Browning, 31 January 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 172-174, 172.

9 'The New Shakspere Society', *Athenaeum* (30 April 1881) 593. The resignation was announced earlier (on the 17th of April), but the *Athenaeum* reported only on the 30th of April.

10 Benzie, *Furnivall*, 207.

other words, Furnivall's anti-social behaviour, his vicious language and his breaking of gentlemanly codes of conduct led to an end of scholarly cooperation.

This was a great shame, because the New Shakspere Society had published a vast amount of decent scholarly work on the life and works of Britain's greatest bard. Furnivall's biographer has described the output of the New Shakspere Society as 'far from insignificant' and its members as a 'well-disciplined team of workers [who] did a great deal for the study and appreciation of Shakespeare'.[11] The meetings of the society were especially marked by quality. It was 'matched by only the very best analytical German scholarship, and throughout the period of the society's existence, a large gathering of distinguished scholars regularly presented and discussed the papers.'[12] Thus, it was Furnivall's vicious conduct in his controversy with Halliwell-Phillipps that ended the society's scholarly successes.

Now, let me zoom out a little to show what issues were at stake in this debate. A first observation is that personal attacks, in the form of accusations of vice, play a central role in the debate between Halliwell-Phillipps and Furnivall. This should not be surprising in light of the previous chapter, in which we have seen Tait and his opponents exchange personal attacks and accuse each other of vice. As I have argued in the previous three chapters, the centrality of vices in Victorian debates over scholarship pointed to an agreement on the moral nature of scholarship (vices threatened the pursuit of knowledge and had to be kept at bay), and, simultaneously, to a disagreement about what good scholarship actually constituted. Personal vice charges were therefore common strategies to neutralise adversaries, as we have seen in chapter three. Many other histories of Victorian knowledge have pointed to the often very bitter and

11 Ibid. 210.
12 Ibid. 211.

ad hominem attacks between scholars holding opposing views.[13]

A second observation is that Furnivall was primarily attacked for his vicious *social* behaviour, and that he himself predominantly charged others with such vices too. These *social* vices, as I will call them, – being 'dictatorial' and 'ungentlemanly' – had dire *epistemic* consequences – the breaking down of scholarly cooperation within a literary society. It was not so much epistemic vices in the *strong* sense of the word (*strong* here signifying the reading that epistemic vices are exclusively aimed at epistemic goods) that were at the centre of this debate, but rather epistemic vices in a *weaker* definition of the adjective: violations of scholarly and

13 There are a lot of examples. A very important one is James Secord's detailed history of the 'Cambrian-Silurian' controversy – the quarrel of thirty years between geologists Sedgwick and Murchison-, which shows how even seemingly uncontroversial objects like geological maps could be carriers of personal attacks and markers of controversy. Secord marvellously brings scientific controversy and a social history of science to the centre stage and argues that debate and disagreement were not pathology of science, but a creative force: Secord, *Controversy in Victorian Geology,* especially 312-318. Melinda Baldwin also sheds light on such discussions about what it took to pursue knowledge, and, moreover, shows how scientific discussions in the columns of *Nature* could get very personal indeed: Baldwin, *Making "Nature"*, especially chapters 1, 3 and 4. For *ad hominem* attacks as a rhetorical literary strategy in the hands of geologist Hugh Miller, see: Michael Shortland, 'Hugh Miller's Contribution to the *Witness*: 1840-56', in: Michael Shortland (ed.), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 287-300, 291. Also within the humanities, such personal attacks were commonplace. Examples showing this are: Ian Hesketh, 'Diagnosing Froude's Disease'; and: Trev Broughton. 'The Froude-Carlyle Embroilment: Married Life as a Literary Problem', *Victorian Studies* 38:4 (1995) 551-585. A final example of how heated Victorian controversies could become, and how central matters of character, vice and gentlemanliness were to such controversies, is the drawn out rivalry between Charles Dickens and William Thackeray: Michael John Flynn, 'The Book of Snobs: Thackeray, Dickens, and the Class Polemics of Victorian Fiction' (PhD-dissertation, Washington University, 2006), especially 16-33; and: Michael John Flynn, '*Pendennis, Copperfield*, and the Debate on the "Dignity of Literature", *Dickens Studies Annual* 41 (2010) 151-189.

gentlemanly codes of conduct and vicious behaviour in controversy.[14] Such vices also threatened standards of communicability, not because it pitted private epistemic desires against common goals and standards, but because it thwarted the process of scholarly cooperation. As such, the example of Furnivall deviates from Tait's controversies, where a narrower version of epistemic vice charges can be distinguished.

Recent scholarship has argued that *strong* readings of epistemic vice are often historically anachronistic, in the sense that nineteenth-century learned men did not distinguish between different sets of vice. In my introduction, I already drew attention to Christiaan Engberts and Herman Paul's article on nineteenth-century orientalist scholars in which they forward the more inclusive epithet of 'scholarly vices' rather than 'epistemic vices' to draw attention to the often overlapping meanings of 'vice'.[15] I also mentioned another article published by Engberts on how the German orientalist Heinrich Ewald emerged as a negative ideal-type of scholarly conduct, especially because of his anti-social behaviour: he was said to lack humility and was deemed arrogant and dogmatic.[16] In Ewald's case, as in the case of Furnivall, transgressions of social norms were envisioned to threaten a collective epistemic project. Despite these explorations however, *social* vice, as a distinctive part of the more inclusive

14 Focusing on the *weak* reading of epistemic vice and virtue 'allows for multiple, overlapping and/or contrasting aims, including epistemic ones, which makes it possible to understand a virtue such as impartiality as moral, epistemic and political at the same time': Creyghton, Huistra, Keymeulen, and Paul, 'Virtue language in historical scholarship', 935.

15 Christiaan Engberts and Herman Paul, 'Scholarly Vices: Boundary Work in Nineteenth-Century Orientalism', in: Jeroen van Dongen and Herman Paul (eds.), *Epistemic Virtues in the Sciences and the Humanities*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy and History of Science 321 (Cham: Springer, 2017) 79-90, 86.

16 Christiaan Engberts, 'Gossiping about the Buddha of Göttingen'. Philosophers in virtue epistemology, moreover, have also drawn attention to the social contexts of knowledge production, in which social virtue is indispensable: Adam Green, *The Social Contexts of Intellectual Virtue: Knowledge as a Team Achievement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). For a reading of epistemic vices as inherently social, see: Alessandra Tanesini, 'Epistemic Vice and Motivation', *Metaphilosophy* 49:3 (2018) 350-367.

group of *scholarly* vices, remains an understudied subject in the history of scholarship, especially in the Victorian context.[17] Compared with the other cases that I have outlined in this dissertation, moreover, Furnivall's case shows a remarkable emphasis on the *social* components of scholarly vice and therefore merits a closer look.

There is another related imbalance in scholarship: much of the work done on scholarly virtues and vices focuses on *well-established* academic disciplines, such as history or physics. In these cases, the language of vice often functioned as a means of boundary work: scholars used the language of vice to exclude what they called amateurs from their communities and boycott scholars whom they deemed unfit to take up professorial positions.[18] The previous chapter on the controversies of Peter Guthrie Tait illustrates this mechanism of boundary work in a structured institutional environment: Tait actively sought to limit the academic influence of scientific naturalists such as Tyndall and Spencer by attributing epistemic vices to them.[19] Charging someone with vice, in these cases, was a means to protect academic communities, standards and ideals, and to exclude vicious influences from power.

However, not all Victorian learning was organised in academic disciplines, with professorial chairs and support networks well in place. In many fields of scholarship, there was no such thing as an academic discipline in the first place; there was no disciplinary space to demarcate and there were no boundaries to police. Victorian literary scholars, for example, did not organise as an academic discipline until 1894, upon the establishment

17 I do have to mention Ian Hesketh's account of the embroilment between Froude and Freeman here though, which touches upon the language of character and moral boundary-work, but does not systematically analyse the language of vice itself. There is work on early modern conceptions of scholarly vice too, as mentioned in the introduction. See: Goldgar, *Impolite* Learning; Kivistö, *The Vices of Learning*; and: Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*.

18 The Freeman-Froude controversy that Ian Hesketh describes is a case in point: Froude and Freeman fought over professorial chairs and academic influence. See also: Léjon Saarloos, 'Virtue and Vice in Academic Memory'.

19 See chapter 3, and: Saarloos, 'Virtues of Courage and Virtues of Restraint'.

of the Oxford English School, and in the later decades of the nineteenth century, there was no consensus at all about the future, object, method, or goals of literary studies.[20] Instead, the period was marked by 'passionate and confused debates about what was proper to the academic study of English literature', and scholars were often 'caught between enthusiasm and scholarship, between the work of philology and criticism.'[21]

The field of Shakespearean scholarship in particular had no clear boundaries: there was no settled method of analysis, no institutional embedment, nor was there a coherent idea about what Shakespearean scholars should be like. Of course, scholars had engaged with Shakespeare for centuries, but unlike in Germany, where Shakespeare came to be studied philologically at universities in the nineteenth century, there was no Victorian tendency to form an academic discipline or institutionalise

20 See: D.J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Palmer traces the 'rise of English studies' and describes some of the developments that led to this rise: the professorial seats of English at King's College and University College, the discussions in Oxford during the 1870s and 1880s between philologists, historians and classical scholars, and, ultimately, the debates that led to the establishment of the Oxford English School as a truly academic discipline. Other accounts have shown how English became studiable *outside* of the academy in the nineteenth century: Charlotte C. Morse, 'Popularizing Chaucer in the Nineteenth Century', *The Chaucer Review* 38:2 (2003) 99-125; Noelle Phillips, '"Texts with Trowsers": Editing and the Elite Chaucer', *The Review of English Studies* New Series 61: 250 (2009) 331-359.

21 Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) 159, 178. Richard Utz makes a similar point: Utz, 'Enthusiast or Philologist?'. For Furnivall's position in the establishment of modern philology, see also: James Turner, *Philology: The forgotten origins of the modern humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014) 262-265.

Shakespearean scholarship through professorial chairs or curriculums.[22] Instead, a very diverse group of people engaged in the study of Shakespeare: playwrights, poets, critics, antiquarians, quantitative scholars and philologists all engaged in reading and analysing Shakespeare's plays and determining, by all kinds of methods, which plays were authentically his.[23] This also meant that the boundaries between scholarship and ambient society were porous and rather poorly defined.

One of the first serious efforts at organised cooperative Shakespeare scholarship was Frederick James Furnivall's New Shakspere Society, which was founded in 1873.[24] From the very start, the New Shakspere Society incorporated a heterogeneous group of scholars with a diverse array of methods: antiquarians like James Halliwell-Phillipps, quantitative

22 Mark Hollingsworth has shown that the many different and competing views of Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century were rooted in diverse ideological and methodological agendas: Mark Hollingsworth, 'Nineteenth-century Shakespeares: nationalism and moralism' (PhD-thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007) 11-14. For German Shakespearean scholarship, see: John A. McCarthy (ed.), *Shakespeare as German Author*: *Reception, Translation Theory, and Cultural Transfer* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), especially chapter one, 'The "Great Shapespere." An Introduction', 1-75; and Rüdiger Ahrens, 'The Critical Reception of Shakespeare's Tragedies in Twentieth-Century Germany', in: Ronald L. Dotterer (ed.), *Shakespeare: Text, Subtext, and Context* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1989) 97-106, 98-99. For the Victorian context and the influence of German philology, see: Charles Laporte, 'The Bard, the Bible, and the Victorian Shakespeare Question', *ELH* 74:3 (2007) 609-628.

23 For an overview of this heterogeneous engagement with Shakespeare in Victorian Britain, see: Gail Marshall (ed.), *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); for the debates on Shakespeare's authorship, see: Emma Smith, 'The Shakespeare Authorship Debate Revisited', *Literature Compass* 5:3 (2008) 618-632. Although Shakespeare was engaged with theatrically and in performance, most of the engagement with Shakespeare was through texts. See: Hollingsworth, 'Nineteenth-century Shakespeares', 5-6.

24 The New Shakspere Society had one precedent, the Shakespeare Society, which existed between 1840 and 1853, but was far less significant in scope, ambition and output. Its main practice was the antiquarian illustration and emendation of Shakespearean texts. The Society's founder, J.P. Collier, moreover, was implicated in the forgery of a Shakespearean folio and scholarly fraud. See: Benzie, *Furnivall*, 180; and: Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 245-265.

scholars like Frederick Gard Fleay (1831-1909), literary critics like James Spedding (1808-1881), and philologists like Alexander Ellis (1814-1890).[25] So instead of being defined by boundaries, the New Shakspere Society was characterised by diversity and lack of structure in terms of method and the types of scholars involved. Before discussions of boundary-work could arise that would set the society apart from other forms of organised scholarship, the very centre of the new society had to be defined: what were the preferred methods of Shakespeare scholarship? What type of scholar did it take to analyse Shakespeare's texts? Should Shakespeare scholarship be (academically) institutionalised in the first place?

In such a loose institutional context, with such a diverse membership, and with so much at stake, scholarly cooperation was a very fragile process. Consequently, the function of the discourse of virtue and vice in a largely unstructured institutional environment was not primarily that of boundary work. Rather, talk of virtue and vice functioned in the first place as a marker of successful or unsuccessful scholarly cooperation. Virtuous behaviour guaranteed the success of a collective epistemic project, whereas social behaviour that was considered 'vicious' – like Furnivall's 'dictatorial' and 'ungentlemanly' conduct in his dispute with Halliwell-Phillipps – thwarted scholarly cooperation and risked the fragile process of defining the centre of the new society. Socially virtuous behaviour was crucial to communicability.

In the case of the New Shakspere Society, there were three main controversies that offer insight into such mechanisms and the role of vice: Furnivall's clash with Halliwell-Phillipps, which led to the end of scholarly cooperation, Furnivall's falling out with Frederick Gard Fleay, a prominent member of the society who was increasingly marginalised, and Furnivall's well-known quarrel with Algernon Swinburne, a poet who criticised the New Shakspere Society for its disciplining effect on Shakespeare

25 Frederick James Furnivall, *Revised Prospectus of The New Shakspere Society* (London: Clay and Taylor, 1873).

scholarship.[26] This chapter will explore these three main controversies with the view to analysing the function of social vices in unstructured institutional environments. How was the discourse of virtue and vice employed to guide, smoothen, protect and, ultimately, end the fragile process of scholarly cooperation?

I will discuss the three controversies in chronological order. Firstly, the controversy between Furnivall and Fleay (1873-1874), then the dispute between Furnivall and Swinburne (1875-1881), and finally, the quarrel

26 These three controversies have received some attention in literature, but apart from William Benzie, Furnivall's biographer, nobody treats the three in comparison. Moreover, historians tend to describe the controversies between Furnivall and the others in terms of method or personal antipathy only, and pay no attention to the language of vice so prevalent in the discussions. Benzie offers a short description of the three controversies, but does not dive deeply into the reasons for the falling-out. The controversy between Fleay and Furnivall, for example, took place because 'Furnivall . . . was never taken in by Fleay' (page 189), and the dispute between Halliwell-Phillipps and Furnivall was due to him being 'secretly pleased of the chance to get a shot at Furnivall' (page 203). As for the Swinburne controversy: most authors refer to Oscar Maurer's 1952 article, which describes the controversy between Furnivall and Swinburne in great detail, but analyses it solely in terms of a clash between 'aesthetic' versus 'scientific' or 'mechanical' criticism. As I will argue, however, Swinburne and Furnivall's methodological positions were much closer than Maurer is suggesting, and their controversy centred more on matters of character, vice, and the organisation of scholarship in disciplinary institutions such as the New Shakspere Society. See: Benzie, Furnivall, 189, 203; and: Oscar Maurer, 'Swinburne vs. Furnivall. A Case Study in "Aesthetic" vs. "Scientific" Criticism', *The University of Texas Studies in English* 31 (1952) 86-96. Only Richard Storer, in an article on Shakespearean scholar Clement Mansfield Ingleby, touches upon the project of collective scholarship in the New Shakspere Society and its demise through the dispute between Furnivall and Halliwell-Phillipps, but his account is rather brief and focuses mainly on Ingleby's scholarship, which was threatened by Furnivall's 'rulebreaking': Richard Storer, '"Shakespeare appears in the character of the modern Prometheus": C.M. Ingleby and Victorian Shakespeare Controversies', *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature* 131:1 (2017) 1-12, especially 15-16. Finally, William Peterson offers an account of the Halliwell-Phillipps controversy by publishing the letters sent by those involved to the president of the society, Robert Browning. There is some context given, but not much analysis of the language of virtue and vice that is almost omnipresent in the correspondence: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, Appendix A.

between Furnivall and Halliwell-Phillipps (1880-1881).To start, however, let me present a brief account of the founding of the New Shakspere Society and Furnivall's position in late Victorian literary scholarship and Shakespeare scholarship in particular. This background will enable me to outline the debates between Furnivall, Fleay, Swinburne, and Halliwell-Phillipps in more detail.

The New Shakspere Society and Frederick James Furnivall

Frederick James Furnivall founded the New Shakspere Society in 1873. He was relatively successful in gathering early support, and enlisted no less than sixty-six reputed scholars to serve as (ceremonial) vice-presidents. Among them were well-known Shakespearean scholars such as Edward Dowden (1843-1913), Walter William Skeat (1835-1912), and Bernhard ten Brink (1841-1892), but famous Victorians like Thomas Henry Huxley and John Ruskin (1819-1900) were also present on the list.[27] The society started out with 250 members and saw its membership doubled over the decade, which was quite a feat for a literary society in this period.[28]

The early success of the society was mostly due to Furnivall's own massive scholarly network and his experience in founding literary societies focusing especially on early English literature. In his capacity as editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*[29], Furnivall had previously founded three literary societies as a means to give the dictionary access to a vast amount of early English material: the Early English Text Society (founded in 1864), the

27 The presence of Ruskin and Huxley owes to Furnivall's involvement with the Working Men's College, of which he was a founder.

28 Benzie, *Furnivall*, 184-185.

29 At the time, this project was known as the *New English Dictionary*. Furnivall was its editor from 1861 until 1870. See: Simon Winchester, *The Meaning of Everything*: *The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Furnivall (performed by Steve Coogan) made a surprising comeback in the 2019 film *The Professor and the Madman*, which centres on the compilation of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Chaucer Society (1868) and the Ballad Society (1868).[30] He hoped that the same cooperative scholarly work that characterised the Early English Text Society and the Chaucer Society could now bring comparable successes to Shakespearean studies.[31] What were the aims of the society, and how did Furnivall muster support?

The Prospectus for the New Society offers answers to these questions, as it set out its ambitious societal and methodological commitments. The main goal would be to 'do honour to Shakspere, make out the succession of his plays and thereby the growth of his mind and art, promote the intelligent study of him and print texts and illustrate his work and times.'[32] Shakespeare would have to be studied as a whole, so that his entire mind could be understood. The earlier antiquarian Shakespeare Society, by contrast, had only focused on one or two plays, but neglected Shakespeare's wholeness.[33] Moreover, the founder of that earlier society, John Payne Collier, had been implicated in scholarly fraud and the forgery of a Shakespeare folio.[34] Furnivall deemed this early 'narrow' approach not 'worthy' of the great Shakespeare.[35] In a later version of the Prospectus, Furnivall added a nationalistic flavour to the recipe for the New Shakspere

30 The New Shakspere Society was Furnivall's fourth society, and after that came the Wyclif Society (1881), the Browning Society (1881) and the Shelley Society (1886). On the Early English Text Society, see: Antony Singleton, 'The Early English Text Society in the Nineteenth Century: An Organizational History', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 56: 223 (2005) 90-118. For the Chaucer Society, see: Morse, 'Popularizing Chaucer'; Phillips, '"Texts with Trousers"; and: Trigg, *Congenial Souls*. For the other, smaller societies, see: Benzie, *Furnivall*, 220-255.

31 For the successes of cooperative work for the New English Dictionary, see: Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967) especially chapter VI. For Furnivall's role in this work, see: Benzie, *Furnivall*, 179-184. Singleton has argued that the cooperative work within the Early English Text Society became 'an example *par excellence* of the industrious, co-operative middle-class activity that characterised' Victorian literary culture: Singleton, 'The Early English Text Society', 91.

32 The original Prospectus is quoted in: Benzie, *Furnivall*, 179.

33 Furnivall, *Revised Prospectus*.

34 See note 24 in this chapter.

35 Furnivall, *Revised Prospectus.*

Society: 'It was then a disgrace to England, that while Germany could boast of a Shakspere Society . . . England was then, and had been for 20 years been, without such a Society.'[36] One reason for the public support, then, was nationalist sentiment: Britain needed its bard back and Furnivall proposed to rescue him from the clutches of German scholars and fraudulent predecessors.

Another legitimation was provided by the society's ambition to render the study of Shakespeare scientific. To this end, Furnivall introduced the readers of the Prospectus to the quantitative tools of literary scholarship. He wrote that like the 'geniuses of Science so wrested her secrets from Nature', 'faithful students' of Shakespeare could make use of the scientific method to gain access to Shakespeare's mind.[37] What this scientific method amounted to, in Furnivall's eyes, was a close scrutiny of Shakespeare's changing style and the resulting 'gradual changes of versification'.[38] These changes (in style of verse, line endings, rhyme schemes and so on) should be studied quantitatively as to guarantee accuracy and trustworthiness.

This public commitment to quantitative scholarship, however, was not followed through in practice. This is nicely illustrated by Furnivall's opening and agenda-setting speech to the society. In this speech, Furnivall backtracked on the Prospectus' dedication to quantitative scholarship. Although he did attribute an important role to quantitative methods in Shakespearean scholarship, he vindicated the primacy of more traditional scholarship and its philological, antiquarian and aesthetic arguments. He stated that 'a very close study of the metrical and phraseological peculiarities of Shakspere' would enable scholars to 'get his plays as nearly as possible into the order in which he wrote them', but added that such methods only offered a decent starting point for scholarship.[39] Championing non-

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Frederick James Furnivall, 'Opening Address', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) v-vi, vi.

quantitative methods, then, Furnivall claimed that scholars should employ 'higher tests of imaginative power, knowledge of life, self-restraint in expression, weight of thought, depth of purpose; and then to use that revised order for the purpose of studying the progress and meaning of Shakspere's mind'.[40] For Furnivall, quantitative research was only the first step towards a true understanding of Shakespeare. More important were *higher* tests: the aesthetic interpretation of Shakespeare's texts by a capable critic.

The discussions during the meetings of the society also show how cooperative scholarship within the society was actually marked by heterogeneity, and that quantitative methods were only a part of the society's discussions. The discussion on a paper by quantitative scholar Frederick Gard Fleay, for example, containing a chronological ordering of Shakespeare's plays, shows how quantitative assessments about rhyme, line endings, and so on, were treated as a starting point by other scholars, who used aesthetic and historical-philological arguments to poke holes in Fleay's thesis.[41] This was cooperative scholarship at work. Fleay used the comments he received and integrated his response in his later paper, in which he offered a revised chronology.[42] Although the discussion could be heated and there was much disagreement, the fact that all participants were dedicated to the discussion and Fleay used the comments to come to a new thesis, shows the success of cooperative scholarship. This success depended on the members' shared commitment to Shakespearean scholarship and

40 Ibid.

41 The discussion after Fleay's first paper to the first meeting of the society, for example, shows contributions by Richard Simpson, who forwarded historical arguments about a quote by Shakespeare on another occasion, Edwin Abbott, discussing quantitatively the scheme put forward by Fleay, Alexander Ellis, who treated Fleay's numerical work as a starting point for qualitative scholarship, and B. Nicholson, who offered philological comparison with the work of Marlow and Greene. See: 'Discussion on Mr Fleay's First Paper', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) 17-20, 17-18.

42 Frederick Gard Fleay, 'On Metrical Tests as Applied to Dramatic Poetry. Part II. Fletcher, Beaumont, Massinger', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) 51-72. The paper was again followed by a discussion: 'Discussion on Mr Fleay's Second Paper', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) 73-84.

their adherence to gentlemanly codes of conduct and discussion.[43]

Furnivall also encouraged scholarly cooperation beyond discussions during the society's meetings. He proposed that members should meet privately with one another to talk about manuscripts and scholarly works, or, in his own words: 'to form Reading-Parties in their own circles of friends, to read Shakespeare chronologically at one another's houses, having a discussion after each Paper'.[44] The members, moreover, should try to interest the rest of the country in their Shakespearean readings, and were encouraged to collectively popularise Shakespearean scholarship: 'That is what I do want to see: a really national study of Shakspere . . . all our young fellows being traind[45] on Shakspere's thoughts and words . . . a much finer nation of Englishmen than we have now.'[46] Scholarly cooperation and collective popularisation would have national benefits.

Allow me to briefly summarise. The New Shakspere Society was founded in 1873 as an attempt to organise the study of Shakespeare in Victorian Britain, just like the earlier Early English Text Society and the Chaucer Society had been successful in establishing cooperative literary scholarship on other topics. Support was mustered by drawing attention to the national significance of Shakespeare and the deficiency of earlier attempts at organised Shakespearean scholarship. The new society promised to be scientific, accurate and thorough. In its public presentation, the society underlined its dedication to quantitative methods, but internal heterogeneity was preserved in terms of method: in line with the diversity within the society, Furnivall proposed a combination of quantitative scholarship and more aesthetic methods. Finally, the society was designed to promote collective and cooperative scholarship. I will now proceed to analyse the problems encountered by the collective scholarly project of the

43 Only Furnivall himself did not adhere to these codes, as I will show in the next section.

44 Furnivall, 'Opening Address', ix.

45 Furnivall, rather annoyingly, employed an idiosyncratic phonetic spelling of words like 'trained'.

46 Furnivall, 'Opening Address', ix.

New Shakspere Society.

Furnivall versus Fleay

Cooperative scholarship in the New Shakspere Society was not without its problems, nor without its critics. A first problem was the relative importance of quantitative methods as advocated by Frederick Gard Fleay, to more qualitative and aesthetic methods as practiced by Edward Dowden or James Spedding. As explained in the previous section, many members of the society regarded Fleay's quantitative tables and metrological tests as a *starting point* for further research, rather than as definitive proof. Furnivall himself, although he glowingly endorsed quantitative Shakespearean scholarship à la Fleay in the Prospectus for the society, was critical of Fleay's tabulations and calculations in practice. Already during the opening speech to the society, as I have stated earlier, Furnivall backtracked on his endorsement and described quantitative scholarship as just one ingredient of good Shakespearean scholarship. Furnivall saw a clear hierarchical relationship between 'higher tests of the imagination', and Fleay's mere wrangling with numbers. This tension between quantitative scholarship and more traditional qualitative scholarship was largely negated by the heterogeneity of viewpoints within the society and the constructiveness of critics during the society's meetings, but minor irritations, unfair criticisms and asides ultimately led to a falling-out between Fleay and Furnivall. I will first describe Fleay's methodological commitments, and will then proceed to analyse Furnivall and Fleay's dispute. Finally, I will argue that the social vices of which Fleay and Furnivall accused each other show that their debate was not only about centring on the proper methods of Shakespearean scholarship, but also about virtuous social conduct during a precarious process of scholarly cooperation.

Frederick Gard Fleay was a mathematician by training. He had graduated as thirteenth Wrangler and third Smith's prize winner in the Cambridge Tripos, which was a testament to his mathematical prowess and

his originality as an applied mathematician.[47] Following his graduation, Fleay was increasingly drawn to literary scholarship and employed his mathematical capacities to shed light on literary problems of authorship, authenticity and chronology.[48] His vision for the future of quantitative literary scholarship was very ambitious, as he stated in his first paper to the society:

> This, however, is the great step we have to take; our analysis, which has hitherto been qualitative, must become quantitative; we must cease to be empirical, and become scientific: . . . if you cannot weigh, measure, number your results, however you may be convinced yourself, you must not hope to convince others, or claim the position of the investigator; you are merely a guesser, a propounder of hypotheses.[49]

Fleay distinguished between true investigators of Shakespeare, and guessers. He was clearly aware of the radicalness of this position, because he responded to criticism not yet given: 'is it possible so to examine the outer form in which genius has clothed itself?'[50] Fleay argued that he could, if 'sufficient care' was given to the analysis.[51] For him, accuracy, carefulness and objectivity were the marks of a true literary scholar, as opposed to the mere aesthetic judgment of 'guessers'. The rest of his paper was a showcase of his method and provided an ordered list of Shakespeare's plays based on this method.

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47 The Smith's prize in particular was instituted to foster the application of pure mathematics to practical problems. See: June Barrow-Green, '"A Corrective to the Spirit of too Exclusively Pure Mathematics": Robert Smith (1689-1768) and his prizes at Cambridge University', *Annals of Science* 56:3 (1999) 271-316.

48 For biographical information, see: Sidney Lee, 'Fleay, Frederick Gard', in: Sidney Lee, *Dictionary of National Biography, 1912 Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912) 31-33.

49 Frederick Gard Fleay, 'On Metrical Tests As Applied To Dramatic Poetry. Part 1: Shakspere.', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) 1-16, 2.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

Not unexpectedly, Fleay's ambition to centre the New Shakspere Society on quantitative methods encountered resistance from a number of members, who were committed to more qualitative, traditional, aesthetic, antiquarian or philological methods. The discussions following Fleay's paper are a showcase of this resistance. As mentioned in the previous section, most of the criticisms were constructive and treated Fleay's work as a contribution to scholarship. Alexander Ellis, for example, praised Fleay for being 'independent of mere subjective feeling', but then proceeded to criticise the method on more qualitative grounds: what was rhyme to Fleay's ears might not have been rhyme to Shakespeare's, and 'mere mechanical counting' was not sufficient to analyse verse and metre. Ellis stated that Fleay's worth was in 'initiating rather than . . . completing the work'.[52]

Furnivall's criticisms of Fleay, however, were not as constructively phrased as those of Ellis. He responded to Fleay's first paper by saying that he was 'astonisht'[53] by the 'remarkable' order that Fleay presented.[54] In rebuking that order, Furnivall referred constantly to the 'higher tests of imaginative power' to which he alluded in his opening address.[55] He submitted himself to the authority of traditional Shakespearean scholars, aesthetic critics and reputed poets such as James Spedding, Alfred Tennyson, and Edward Dowden, even if their results were at odds with those of Fleay.[56] Their authority, Furnivall deemed higher than any metrical test: 'A Tennyson, a Spedding, has no need of the aids that some of us beginners find most valuable. . . . This, then, shows that metrical tests must, in such questions, come second, not first. Heads must judge, then fingers may count.'[57] Furnivall thus envisioned a hierarchy between 'heads' such as Spedding and 'fingers' such as Fleay: the latter should always follow the

52 'Discussion on Fleay's First Paper', 19-20.
53 Furnivall's idiosyncratic spelling even ended up in the *Transactions.*
54 'Discussion on First Paper', 17-18.
55 Ibid. 17.
56 Ibid. 18.
57 'Discussion on Fourth Paper. *Timon of Athens*', *New Shakspere Society's Transactions* 1 (1874) 242.

former's authority.

Furnivall's tone did not soften over the following months. In March, Furnivall produced a letter from James Spedding, who made a vigorous plea for the study of Shakespeare's mind, rather than the peculiarities of his verse.[58] Furnivall then used Spedding's authority to state that changes in Shakespeare's brilliant 'mind . . . cannot be detected by metrical tests', and that 'the results of these tests must be subject to, must be controlld and checkt by, the results of higher criticism.'[59] Metrical tests were only good as checks upon the higher tests of imagination, and only great men, like Spedding or Tennyson could employ such tests.

In April, Furnivall again disparaged Fleay's claims as misinformed 'checks' upon the views of Spedding and described his work as 'racy', 'hasty' and as a drawback in scholarship.[60] In the subsequent May meeting, Furnivall stated that metrical tests were useful only for a 'weak-kneed brother who has not had the training to enable him to rely on his own judgment.'[61] He then called Fleay a 'metrical-test-worker' as opposed to a 'poet-critic' such as Tennyson or Spedding, who were of considerably more value to scholarship than the mere 'worker' Fleay.[62] To make matters worse, Furnivall was not only critical during the discussions of his papers, but was also prone to give 'frequent impromptu remarks' during Society meetings, intended to taunt and belittle Fleay.[63] Despite the centrality of new scientific methods in the rhetoric of the society, Furnivall was dismissive of Fleay's prowess as a quantitative scholar, repeatedly drew attention to Fleay's character, which he deemed 'racy' and 'hasty', and typified him as a mere 'worker', as opposed to the higher 'poet-critics'.

Fleay, in response, was primarily angry with Furnivall, and not

58 Ibid. 26.
59 Ibid. 32.
60 Ibid. 102.
61 Ibid. 243.
62 Ibid. 253.
63 Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 166.

with the other critics within the society. Members such as Edwin Abbott (1838-1926), who himself was often (constructively) critical of Fleay's work, even tried to intervene and mediate. By March, Abbott persuaded Fleay not to resign over Furnivall's comments. By May, all communication between Fleay and Furnivall took place through Abbott, and by July, Fleay had resigned from the Committee of the Society and stopped contributing papers.[64] He wrote to the *Athenaeum* to defend himself publicly and ceased the use of the *Transactions* as the main forum for his theories.

In response to Furnivall's criticisms, Fleay drew on the discourse of vice. Interestingly, he aimed his arrows at Furnivall's vicious conduct, rather than at his scholarly work: he accused Furnivall of 'bitterness' and attacked him for a violation of 'earnestness' and 'that tranquil spirit in which alone the works of our great author can be duly studied'.[65] In Fleay's eyes, Furnivall had always thwarted his work because of 'personal feelings', and felt that the society was dismissing 'their hardest worker' in treating Fleay so badly.[66] Repeating his argument in the columns of the *Academy,* Fleay stated that he was offended by Furnivall's 'ungracious . . . *argumentum ad hominem*' and asked for a clarification of Furnivall's harsh words against him.[67]

Both during the meetings of the Society and later in print, Furnivall lashed out at Fleay's hastiness, inexperience, raciness and his vanity, for

64 Benzie, *Furnivall*, 189.

65 Frederick Gard Fleay, '"The Taming of the Shrew"', *Athenaeum* (30 May 1874) 732.

66 Frederick Gard Fleay, 'New Shakspere Society', *Athenaeum* (19 September 1874) 385.

67 Frederick Gard Fleay, 'Posthumus in "Cymbeline." – A Corrector Corrected', *Academy* (12 September 1874) 297. The epithet 'ungracious' is telling: *ad hominem* attacks were quite common in Victorian controversy. See note 13 in this chapter.

contending that metrical tests could reach the genius of Shakespeare.[68] In his eyes, Fleay was just a worker, who could never reach the level of imaginative power possessed by Spedding and Tennyson. Moreover, he also complained about Fleay's conduct: he referred to him as 'the industrious (&often furious) flea', and called him a 'lying sneak & cad'[69], because of his 'shuffling, evasions, & effrontery'.[70] Fleay and Furnivall never reconciled. As late as 1881, Fleay wrote to the President of the New Shakspere Society, Robert Browning (1812-1889), to persuade him to distance himself from Furnivall because of the 'opprobrious insult' that Furnivall had given.[71]

We can learn three things from the dispute between Fleay and Furnivall. A first observation is that although the New Shakspere Society was marked by heterogeneity in terms of methods used and types of scholars involved, the discussions during its meetings were generally constructive. Two layers of discussion can be discerned. On the surface, members of the society debated chronological schemes of Shakespeare's plays and questions of authenticity and authorship. At the more fundamental level, the 'centre' of the society was being defined during these discussions: through cooperation and discussion, the members decided what acceptable methods, acceptable proof, and acceptable ways of being a scholar would be. Coming to an agreement on these matters was a precarious process and a matter in which scholars with varying methodological orientations were invested. Only when Fleay became convinced that his particular brand of quantitative scholarship did not stand a chance against Furnivall's incessant criticism, did he turn to extra-societal debate in the *Academy* and the

68 For example here, in a discussion about the correct pronunciation of the word 'posthumous', where Furnivall accused Fleay repeatedly of being 'incautious': Frederick James Furnivall, 'Posthumus in "Cymbeline." – A "Correction" Confirmed', *Academy* (19 September 1874) 322.

69 'Effrontery' referred to Fleay's shamelessness in treating Furnivall as the culprit, while 'cad' had several meanings, ranging from ungentlemanliness to being unskilled, disagreeable and working class.

70 Furnivall, 'Posthumus in "Cymbeline."', 8, 166.

71 Fleay to Browning, 5 February 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 174.

Athenaeum.

Secondly, precisely because this process of centring was so precarious, social virtues and codes of gentlemanly conduct were important guarantors of constructive discussion. This becomes especially apparent when we look at the *social* vices with which the two assailants charged each other. The more the dispute regarding the relative worth of quantitative methods versus qualitative and aesthetic criticism spun out of control, the more both assailants felt the need to draw attention to the flaws of their opponent's character. Furnivall complained of Fleay's insincerity, his lying and 'effrontery', and called him a 'cad': a reference to ungentlemanliness and coarseness. In turn, Fleay accused Furnivall of ungracious *ad hominem* attacks, and for acting out of personal feelings against him. Most importantly, Fleay stated that Furnivall had effectively destroyed the 'tranquil spirit in which alone the works of our great author can be duly studied'. When seen in the light of the attempt to make collective Shakespearean scholarship work and to come to some agreement about what it meant to be a Shakespearean scholar, codes of conduct and virtuous social behaviour were crucial to the success of this venture. When these codes were breached – the 'tranquil spirit' that Fleay referred to –, intervention became necessary and the limits of cooperation were reached.[72]

Furnivall versus Swinburne

The second controversy in which Furnivall became engaged during the existence of the New Shakspere Society was wildly outrageous and deeply bitter. His opponent was Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), poet,

72 Furnivall had been accused of compromising such a 'spirit' of cooperation on earlier occasions too. When he was still a teacher of literature in the Working Man's College in London – another example of a heterogeneous grouping of scholars -, Furnivall's conduct in controversy was also regarded as being 'out of harmony' with the 'College spirit' and the 'air of friendship' that smoothed the operation of the institution. See: G.M. Trevelyan, 'The College and the Older Universities', in: J. Llewelyn Davies (ed.), *The Working Men's College 1854-1904* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904) 187-189.

author, critic and playwright. During the 1870s, Swinburne was already quite well known, and notorious for his eccentricity, alcoholism, and his rebellious willingness to break taboos of homosexuality, bestiality and masochism. He was also interested in Shakespearean criticism and questions of authenticity.[73]

The quarrel between Swinburne and Furnivall started in 1875 and dragged on until the exodus of society members in 1881. Three layers of disagreement can be discerned. First of all, the controversy between Furnivall and Swinburne was marked by a disagreement on the proper methods of Shakespearean scholarship. Swinburne was a fierce opponent of any metrical approach, championed his own aesthetic and poetic imagination, and blamed Furnivall for introducing 'finger-counting' quantitative methods.[74] Not surprisingly, the debate on these methods was fought out using the language of vice: Furnivall was accused of 'nescience' and 'presumption' – for thinking that his methods could unravel Shakespeare's mystery –, while Swinburne was charged with 'ignorance' and lack of 'modesty' – for only trusting his own aesthetic judgment.[75] As we have seen in the previous sections however, Furnivall was at best ambiguous about the role of quantitative scholarship, and used quantitative data solely as a starting point for 'higher' tests of aesthetic judgment and imagination. While their actual methodological positions might therefore have been much more similar than they themselves would have liked, previous scholarship has primarily pointed to this layer in the debate: the tension between Furnivall's 'scientific' or 'mechanical' scholarship and

73 A good source for biographical material about Swinburne is: Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917).

74 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'The Three Stages of Shakespeare', *Fortnightly Review* XXIV (May 1875) 613-632, 615.

75 For example in these articles: Algernon Charles Swinburne, '"The Court of Love"', *Athenaeum* (14 April 1877) 481-482, 481; Frederick James Furnivall, '"The Court of Love"', *Athenaeum* (21 April 1877) 512-513, 512.

Swinburne's 'aesthetic' criticism.[76] These themes are reminiscent of the discussions between Tait and Tyndall on the imagination, but betray a deeper layer of meaning at the same time.

Although I would absolutely agree that the Swinburne-Furnivall argument offers insight into such tensions between methods of literary scholarship, a careful reading of the sources and the language of vice used shows that there was another, more fundamental issue at stake: the question whether Shakespearean scholarship should be institutionalised in societies such as the New Shakspere Society in the first place. This matter of institutionalisation and the carving out of a disciplinary space in which Shakespeare could be studied was, I contend, central to the dispute. Swinburne not only took jabs at the metrical tests of the society, but aimed his arrows specifically at the 'professional' character of the society, Furnivall's position as 'sovereign pontiff' of the 'New Shakespearean church', and the dogmatic adherence of its members to the 'literary catechisms' set out by Furnivall.[77] His attacks on quantitative methods were thus embedded in a much broader resistance against what he considered the professionalisation of Shakespearean scholarship and the vicious disciplining effect this had on scholars.

The final and most superficial layer to be distinguished in the Swinburne-Furnivall controversy is that of ludicrous insult and personal antipathy. Both Furnivall and Swinburne went far beyond gentlemanly

76 This is even the subtitle of the influential 1952 article by Oscar Maurer: 'A case study in "Aesthetic" vs. "Scientific" Criticism'. In his introduction, Maurer describes the case as the result of 'the problem of the relative worth of scholarly, historical, linguistic, analytical judgments as opposed to judgments called intuitive, emotional, instinctive, synthetic. . . . it was a controversy between *scientific* and *literary*, between *mechanical* and *aesthetic* criticism.' Maurer, 'Swinburne vs. Furnivall', 86. Other scholars, like Benzie, Peterson and Storer, point to Maurer's article for the best summary of the case.

77 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Note on the Historical Play of King Edward III, Part I', *Gentleman's Magazine* (August 1879) 170-181, 171; Swinburne, '"The Court of Love"', 482; Swinburne, 'Note on the Historical Play of King Edward III, Part II', 336, 334.

codes of conduct and the intensity of their exchanges was not easily matched in the Victorian age. A few examples will suffice to show how low both parties stooped. Furnivall, scandalously referring to Swinburne's well-known alcoholism, repeatedly called him 'tipsy and clumsy'[78] and a 'drunken clown'[79], while on other occasions he called him a pig ('Pigsbrook' – a play on 'Swinburne'[80]) or a donkey ('an ass').[81] Furnivall's language was matched in viciousness by Swinburne's insults, delivered in his distinctive hyperbolic prose. He described Furnivall as 'the most bellicose bantam-cock that ever defied creation to a match for mortal combat on the towering crest of his own dunghill' and deplored 'his monumental, his pyramidal, his Cyclopean, his Titanic, his superhuman and supernatural nescience.'[82] Although both Swinburne and Furnivall went far beyond Victorian mores, we should not forget that *ad hominem* attacks were common in Victorian controversy, and that beneath the layers of insult lay a disagreement about the social organisation of scholarship.

Asides from these three layers, we can distinguish four distinct phases: a rather mild prelude, which drew in Furnivall and set the stage, a second phase in which actual discussion and debate took place, a third phase of warfare and lost tempers, and finally, the broadening of the controversy and the start of yet another between Furnivall and Halliwell-Phillipps. I will briefly discuss each phase and will pay particular attention to the language of vice.

First up is the prelude. Fleay's first agenda-setting paper to the New Shakspere Society had drawn Swinburne's attention because of an aside: 'But is not metre too delicate a thing to be put in the balance or crucible in this way? . . . [Is] not the trick of Swinburne's melody easily acquired and

78 Furnivall, '"The Court of Love"', 512.
79 Furnivall, *The "Co" of Pigsbrook & Co.,* 2.
80 Ibid.
81 Frederick James Furnivall, *The Leopold Shakspere* (London: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1877) cxviii.
82 Swinburne, '"The Court of Love"', 481.

reproduced?'[83] Swinburne was especially triggered by Fleay's affirmative reaction to his own question: yes, Swinburne could be understood metrically.[84] In reaction, Swinburne published an attack on the New Shakspere Society in general and on Fleay in particular.[85] He described the members of the society as 'scholiasts', 'pedants', 'metre-mongers', and 'finger-counters', who studied the outer shell of Shakespeare, and not the internal genius.[86] Swinburne juxtaposed virtues such as 'imagination', 'modesty', and being 'patient', with vices of 'bootless ingenuity' and 'fruitless learning', motivated by 'the horny hide of a self-conceit to be pierced by no man's pen.'[87] Where the New Shakspere Society sought to place literary scholarship on an objective 'scientific' footing, Swinburne stressed innate aesthetic sensibilities.

This heralded a short scuffle between Fleay and Swinburne. Fleay responded to Swinburne's charges by accusing Swinburne of the vice of 'arrogance', for thinking 'that his capacity is large enough to serve as a measure of the myriad-minded Shakespeare'.[88] It was not the New Shakspere Society that was marked by the vice of 'self-conceit', but Swinburne himself. This was enough to prompt Swinburne to write two angry articles. In the first, he accused Fleay, who he called a 'scholiast', of using his 'professional lash' to 'stigmatise' poets and critics, and for forcing them to follow a programme of 'measuring and appraising the height and depth of Shakespeare'.[89] In the second, he poked fun at the New Shakspere Society as a whole and described its members as 'metre-mongers', who viciously reduced the mystery of Shakespeare's mind to 'numeration'.[90]

83 Fleay, 'On Metrical Tests', 2.
84 Ibid.
85 Swinburne, 'The Three Stages of Shakespeare'.
86 Ibid. 615.
87 Ibid. 621-623.
88 Frederick Gard Fleay, 'Who Wrote Henry VI', *Macmillan's Magazine* XXXIII (November 1875) 62.
89 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'A Discovery', *Athenaeum* (15 January 1876) 87.
90 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'The Three Stages of Shakespeare', *Fortnightly Review* XXV (January 1876) 24-45.

Fleay, wisely, never responded to Swinburne's taunts, but their brief interaction does show all three layers I distinguished earlier: both parties used *ad hominem* vice charges bordering on downright insults, debated the proper methods of Shakespearean scholarship distinctively in terms of vice, and at the root of matter seems to have been the question whether or not Shakespeare should be studied in a collective effort. Swinburne's charges against Fleay's 'professional lash' and the disciplining and stigmatising effect the 'scholiasts' had on other critics should especially be seen in this light.

Furnivall took up the gauntlet that Fleay had left behind. This opened the second phase of the controversy: more or less polite debate. Furnivall's first answer, an article to the *Academy*, functioned as a fact-check on Swinburne's earlier article in the *Fortnightly Review*, in which he had attacked the views of James Spedding. Spedding, as stated earlier, was one of Furnivall's role models: a scholar and critic fully capable of the 'higher tests of the imagination'. Furnivall's fact-check was a vindication of Spedding's views, criticising Swinburne's attack as 'a most glaring misstatement of fact', pointing to at least twenty matters on which Swinburne was wrong, and concluding by stating that Spedding was 'greater than Swinburne'.[91]

Swinburne immediately wrote a reply and attacked the ambitions of the New Shakspere Society as a whole. Although he did reflect on the futility of quantitative tests, his main point was that the society had created its own 'hallowed ground of the scholiasts', controlled by 'a grand jury of Parnassian Pedagogues', which had 'established as a primary axiom or postulate that verse . . . does not appeal to the ear, but to the fingers.'[92] Swinburne's distrust of quantitative methods, then, was embedded in a much broader attack on the disciplinary space that the society had created: a hallowed ground for esoteric learning and pretentious pedagogues, far removed from the

91 Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Spedding – Shakspere's "Henry VIII"', *Academy* (8 January 1876) 34-35, 35.
92 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'King Henry VIII and the Ordeal by Metre", *Academy* (15 January 1876) 53-55, 54.

real world of scholarship.[93] By portraying Furnivall and his compatriots as 'pedagogues' and 'scholiasts', moreover, Swinburne typified his enemies as dogmatic commentators, only interested in their own right and viciously confident in their methods.

Furnivall's response in the *Academy* struck a similar note. He attacked Swinburne's method of aesthetic judgment, but also embedded this attack in a denunciation of Swinburne's idiosyncratic approach to scholarship and his refusal to cooperate with other scholars:

> He comes forward, not against me only, but against . . . Mr. Tennyson . . . Mr. Browning . . . Mr. Spedding . . . Professor Dowden . . . Messrs. Clark and Wright; – and with what weapon does Mr. Swinburne come? Simply his own confidence in his own ear, which he refuses to aid or test by another sense that God has given him.[94]

The two charges are very similar. Swinburne charged Furnivall and the New Shakspere Society with dogmatism and closed-mindedness, while Furnivall charged Swinburne with vices of overconfidence, carelessness, and deplored his refusal to let his aesthetic insights be checked by a community of scholars. Both men, then, charged each other with distinctively *social* vices: character traits that thwarted the collective pursuit of knowledge, either by dogmatically prescribing the wrong methods to others, or by forwarding theories that could not be checked. This language of social vice, moreover, suggests that it was more than competing methods of scholarship that were at stake: namely, the effort to organise scholarship and the disciplinary effect that this institutionalisation brought. Where Furnivall aimed to build common scholarly standards, Swinburne rejected communicability in literary scholarship.

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93 For the negative connotations of 'pedagogue', see: Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori (ed.), *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

94 Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Spedding – Shakspere's "Henry VIII"', *Academy* (29 January 1876) 98-99.

In the years that followed this exchange, the third stage of the controversy, Swinburne and Furnivall repeated these same arguments with ever more anger and bitterness in a barrage of letters to editors, articles to journals, books and prefaces. Nevertheless, despite their growing antipathy and vile childishness, their central concerns remained the same. Swinburne mostly stuck to the argument he made earlier: Shakespearean scholarship as practiced by Furnivall and his adepts was tainted by vices of overconfidence, dogmatism and closed-mindedness.[95]

In April 1876, for example, Swinburne published fake proceedings of what he called the 'Newest Shakspere Society', which amounted to an incessant mockery of the society and its project.[96] In the fake proceedings, Swinburne sketched a dystopian view of the society: members would only listen to metrical and tabulated evidence, a dictatorial 'Chairman' – clearly a reference to Furnivall – overruled all members who disagreed with him, and all members spoke scathingly about Swinburne's own aestheticism and the virtues of 'diffidence' and 'modesty' that were central to it.[97] The aim of this vicious 'Newest Shakspere Society', moreover, was 'the demolition of the old one'.[98] Underneath all the layers of cheap parody, however, Swinburne's arguments were quite coherent: the New Shakspere Society was dogmatic, disciplined its members into only using quantitative methods, and Furnivall was its dictatorial chairman.

Later articles by Swinburne's hand repeat the same concern with the social vices of dogmatism, discipline and dictatorialness. In 1877, to illustrate this, he attacked Furnivall's 'malevolence' and 'nescience' as the 'warlike founder of the Neo-Shakespearean dynasty – be it a dynasty of

95 For closed-mindedness as an epistemic vice, see: Battaly, 'Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism'.

96 The mock-proceedings were re-printed as an appendix to Swinburne's *A Study of Shakespeare*. I will refer to this re-print as it appeared in the second edition of the book: Algernon James Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1880).

97 Ibid. 277-278, 282.

98 Ibid. 289.

dunces mainly.'[99] And he continued by describing Furnivall as a 'scholiast', 'a medieval pedant', and as 'the sovereign pontiff of the New Shakespearean church'.[100] In 1879, likewise, he deplored the 'literary catechisms' of the 'professed critic and esoteric expert', and described Furnivall as a 'professional proficient', who was characterised by his 'presidential bray'.[101] The quarrel between Furnivall and Swinburne, at this point, had stopped being a debate, but rather resembled trench warfare. Nonetheless, as I hope to have shown, Swinburne's arguments, although more vile and childish each time, were coherent: Furnivall displayed social vices of dictatorialness, overconfidence, closed-mindedness and dogmatism, and the 'professional' institutionalisation of scholarship in the New Shakspere Society fostered those vices.

In the trench opposite Swinburne, Furnivall also repeated coherent arguments against his opponent, while enveloping them with the same layers of insult. Where Swinburne deplored the disciplining force of institutionalisation, Furnivall embraced it. Swinburne was at fault, he believed, because he was overconfident in his own aesthetic abilities, ignorant to the point of stupidity, and so vain that he was unmanly. Let me unpack and illustrate Furnivall's arguments briefly. Furnivall started out, as we have seen, by pointing to factual errors in Swinburne's articles on Shakespeare. He married these fact-checks, however, to vice charges. In a lengthy preface to his *Leopold Shakespeare* (1877), Furnivall attacked Swinburne's manifest 'ignorance', referenced Shakespeare by calling Swinburne 'a fool and a knave', and added that it was especially damaging that Swinburne would never admit his own wrongs, because of his 'wounded vanity and want of

99 Swinburne, '"The Court of Love"', 481. 'Dunce' referred to scholasticism as well. The etymology of the insult 'dunce', or fool, can be traced back to the Scholastic theologian John Duns Scotus. See: Thomas Williams, 'Duns Scotus, John', in: Ian McFarland, David Fergusson, Karen Kilby and Iain Torrance (eds.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 150-151.

100 See note 77 in this chapter.

101 Ibid. 'Bray' refers to the unpleasantly loud sounds that donkeys make.

manliness'.[102]

The invocation of masculinity is significant. On other occasions, too, Furnivall blamed Swinburne's unmanly vices for his deficiency as a scholar and critic. In the same year for example, Furnivall again attacked Swinburne's 'ignorance', 'conceit', 'querulous vanity', and lack of 'self-restraint', but coupled this to a vindication of his own masculinity: 'I, who am at least a man.'[103] Multiple times later in the controversy, Furnivall referred to Swinburne's vanity and ignorance as markers of his unmanliness.[104] Even Swinburne's well-known vice of alcoholism did not escape Furnivall's scrutiny: this was also the effect of his opponent's unmanly lack of self-restraint.[105]

Furnivall's appeal to masculinity can best be understood as a performance of the ideal of 'muscular Christianity', or, in Furnivall's case 'muscular agnosticism'.[106] As William Peterson has observed, Furnivall 'naively imagined his quarrels to be an adult equivalent of the schoolground fight, and he always assumed that afterwards the participants would slap each other on the back and receive compliments from the spectators on their prowess as boxers.'[107] Moreover, Furnivall was in vigorous health and was an enthusiastic sculler; he was often found on the Thames in his boat.[108] His sportsmanship and appeal to masculinity, therefore, drew on the

102 Furnivall, *The Leopold Shakspere,* xx, xcii, cxviii. 'A fool and a knave' refers to Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, in which the character Parolles is described as a 'fool and a knave', for his cowardice, his bragging and his effeminate qualities.

103 Furnivall, '"The Court of Love"', 512.

104 For example in these articles: Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr. Swinburne and Shakespeare', *The Spectator* (6 September 1879) 1130; Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr. Swinburne and Shakspere', *The Spectator* (13 September 1879) 1159.

105 For a reference to Swinburne being 'tipsy & clumsy', see: Furnivall, '"The Court of Love"', 512.

106 The term 'muscular agnosticism' is Bernhard Shaw's, according to Peterson: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, xxvii.

107 Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, xxvii.

108 For Furnivall and sculling, see: Benzie, *Furnivall*, 28-38.

discourse of muscular Christianity that stressed virtues of independence, pluck, truthfulness, hard work, comradeship and resiliency.[109] From this perspective, Swinburne's vices of vanity, immodesty, and lack of self-restraint were a big affront to Furnivall's sensibilities. Moreover, they were distinctively social vices: they prevented successful cooperation. Swinburne, too vain to admit his mistakes or to face a fair fight, was not someone to cooperate with and had to be kept out of the scholarly community.

Like Swinburne, then, Furnivall never lost sight of his main arguments against his opponent. Although both parties stooped lower and lower in this third phase of controversy, the three layers of the debate were still very much present: *ad hominem* vice charges were abound, aesthetic and quantitative methods of scholarship were treated as markers of one's position, and, most importantly, the attitude towards scholarly cooperation was central.

The final phase of the controversy was set in motion in 1880, when Swinburne decided to dedicate his *Study of Shakespeare* to James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, a senior scholar and member of Furnivall's New Shakspere Society. Swinburne's dedication to Halliwell-Phillipps was quite obviously designed to also be a provocation of Furnivall. It praised the former by giving 'praise and thanks of all true Shakespearean scholars', and then juxtaposed these true scholars to those that reap only from the 'harvest

109 For masculinity in Victorian science, see: Heather Ellis, 'Knowledge, character and professionalisation in nineteenth-century British science'; and: Heather Ellis, *Masculinity and Science in Britain*. For critical accounts of muscular Christianity and the qualities of independence, resiliency, comradeship, pluck, and hard work that it cherished, see: Donald E. Hall, *Muscular Christianity. Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For muscular agnosticism as a variety of muscular Christianity, see: Francis O'Gorman, '"The Mightiest Evangel of the Alpine Club": Masculinity and Agnosticism in the Alpine Writing of John Tyndall', in: Andrew Bradstock, Sean Gill, Anne Hogan, and Sue Morgan (eds.), *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000) 134-148; and: Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit. The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) especially pages 182-186.

of their own applause or that of their fellows.'[110] Swinburne alluded to the echo chamber that was the New Shakspere Society in his view. Furnivall struck back with a review, in which he repeated his charges of 'ignorance' and inaccuracy in matters of fact.[111] Swinburne, finally, retorted with another charge of social vice, accusing Furnivall of an 'evident and elaborate endeavour to put himself outside the pale of possible intercourse.'[112] This was the last exchange between the two adversaries, as Furnivall now turned his attention to Halliwell-Phillipps, a matter that I will discuss in the next section.

Let me offer a brief conclusion to the Furnivall-Swinburne controversy, as the stream of insults may have proven confusing. What was at stake in this debate? And what was the role of scholarly vice, and especially social vice? As mentioned, three layers of controversy can be distinguished. First of all, there was the personal antipathy of two sworn enemies that tainted many of their exchanges, which were vile, very personal, and of an intensity far transcending Victorian norms of gentlemanly debate. As the years passed, this layer became thicker and more prominent. But underneath this layer, we find two others: a disagreement about what methods should be used to understand Shakespeare, and an even deeper layer of debate about what the institutionalisation of scholarship and scholarly cooperation actually meant. The prominence of social vices, such as dogmatism and dictatorialness (Swinburne's accusations), or wilful ignorance and vanity (Furnivall's charges) clearly point to the central importance of this deep layer of controversy: the anxiety over institutionalisation and

110 Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare*, acknowledgement.

111 Frederick James Furnivall, 'Mr. Swinburne's "Study of Shakespeare",' *Academy* (10 January 1880) 28. In another review, Furnivall deplored Swinburne's pretence of knowledge': Frederick James Furnivall, 'Fletcher's and Shakspere's Triple Endings', *Academy* (10 July 1880) 27-28, 28. Another member of the society, Edward Dowden, also reviewed the book and questioned Swinburne's 'undisciplined' approach to scholarship: 'are we to wander in dilettantism, from one unfounded assumption to another, lit by will-o'-the-wisp fancies, until we suddenly find ourselves in the mud?': Edward Dowden, 'Mr. Swinburne's Study of Shakespeare', *Academy* (17 January 1880) 49.

112 Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Notes and News', *Academy* (3 July 1880) 9.

the disciplining of literary scholarship, or, from Furnivall's perspective, the resistance of aesthetic idiosyncrasy to collective endeavours. A vice perspective on the Swinburne-Furnivall controversy thus clearly adds to existing historiography, which has thus far only touched upon the question of method and the enmity between Furnivall and Swinburne.

Furnivall versus Halliwell-Phillipps

The final stage of the Swinburne-Furnivall controversy led to the third controversy that I will discuss here: the clash between Furnivall, Halliwell-Phillipps and a large group of members who were mobilised by the latter. Like the other controversies, this one was characterised by the prominence of social vice charges. As mentioned, social vice was an important marker of unsuccessful scholarly cooperation, and indeed, the result of the Halliwell-Phillipps controversy shows that Furnivall's alleged social vices were enough to end the New Shakspere Society. So, what happened?

When Swinburne dedicated his book to Halliwell-Phillipps, Furnivall was infuriated with both of them. He attacked Swinburne in public, but he turned to private correspondence to deal with Halliwell-Phillipps. At first, he tried to persuade him not to accept the dedication, as he would consider that a sign of bad faith: the book, after all, was filled with criticisms of Furnivall and the New Shakspere Society. Halliwell-Phillipps, however, saw no need to decline such an admiration of his scholarly standing.[113] Annoyed, Furnivall turned to Clement Mansfield Ingleby, a prominent member of the society, and wrote about Halliwell-Phillipps: 'You'll admit that he is no gentleman. No one can pretend he is one. He acted like a cad in accepting Pigsbrook's[114] dedication of those

113 Benzie guesses that Halliwell-Phillipps accepted because he was either flattered or annoyed by Furnivall. I have found no evidence to say anything about Halliwell-Phillipps' motivations, besides the fact that he thought the dedication a great honour.

114 A pun on Swinburne's name. Cad, as said earlier, referred to ungentlemanliness.

reprints of the little beast's abuse.'[115] He added that Halliwell-Phillipps was in his view 'one of the commonest & meanest minds that I've come across' and 'also a sneak', because of his 'stupidity to sneer at our methods . . . & gratify his vanity thereby.'[116] Furnivall closed with the suggestion that he had always suspected Halliwell-Phillipps of lacking the proper traits of a scholar and doubted his 'manliness & gentlemanliness.'[117] The accusations of unmanliness and vanity that Furnivall had made against Swinburne were now repeated to Ingleby.[118] Furnivall also promised to go public with his accusations if Halliwell-Phillipps did not atone.[119]

Halliwell-Phillipps, however, saw no need to do so. He had also written to Ingleby to voice his thoughts on Furnivall, who in his view, displayed social vices: a 'want of temper' and 'silly & mischievous behavior'.[120] Moreover, Halliwell-Phillipps echoed both Fleay's and Swinburne's arguments, when he called Furnivall 'his Royal Highness' and stated that he had never encountered such 'dictatorial insolence'.[121] For these reasons, after having written to Ingleby and after having refused Furnivall's demands, Halliwell-Phillipps sought out the governing Committee of the New Shakspere Society, and requested that they intervene. Trying to preserve the good peace, however, the committee stated that the matter was not within their jurisdiction. Frustrated, Halliwell-Phillipps wrote to the president of the society, Robert Browning, to make his point at the highest level. His letter to Browning again drew attention to Furnivall's 'ungentlemanly manner', his 'scurrilous attacks', 'vulgarities', and 'repulsive

115 Furnivall to Ingleby, 22 July 1880, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 167. We have met Ingleby in the previous chapter as a staunch defender of metaphysics.
116 Ibid. 168.
117 Ibid.
118 Ingleby was in contact with both Halliwell-Phillipps and Furnivall and sought to negotiate an end to the controversy: Storer, 'C.M. Ingleby and Victorian Shakespeare Controversies', 16.
119 Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 168.
120 Halliwell-Phillipps to Ingleby, 3 December 1879, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 168.
121 Ibid.

discourtesies', and stated that the society was a 'mere book-club' if the committee did not nothing more than Furnivall's bidding.[122]

Browning responded that he was merely fulfilling an honorary position and could do nothing besides urging Halliwell-Phillipps to 'invoke the spirit of "gentle Shakespeare" and be done with the matter.'[123] Halliwell-Phillipps, quite unsatisfied, answered with a denunciation of Furnivall. It was Furnivall, not him, who was responsible for the disturbance of 'the spirit of "gentle" Shakespeare', and it was Furnivall who, through his 'exaggerated behavior' and 'indecorous slang', threw 'ridicule on Shakespearean criticism'.[124] It was Furnivall, finally, who had become 'intolerable . . . to quiet-loving students'.[125] For that reason, and because of the committee's and Browning's silence on the matter, Halliwell-Phillipps went public, and printed his letter to Browning.[126]

Furnivall responded publicly. He published a rather insulting pamphlet called *The "Co" of Pigsbrook & Co.,* in which he attacked Halliwell-Phillipps for his association with the 'drunken clown' Swinburne.[127] He stated that Halliwell-Phillipps' acceptance of Swinburne's dedication was effectively 'a deliberate adoption by him of the insults' contained in Swinburne's book.[128] Moreover, Furnivall was angry that Halliwell-Phillipps had written to the committee and Browning behind his back, instead of defending himself like a real man would have: 'how much more manly it would have been in him to stand up and fight his own battle, than to go whining to our President, like a little sneak at school, "Please, Sir, Furnivall's been rappin' my knuckles . I never done nothin' to him. You

122 Halliwell-Phillipps to Robert Browning, 26 January 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 169-171.
123 Robert Browning to Halliwell-Phillipps, 27 January 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 171.
124 Halliwell-Phillipps to Robert Browning, 31 January 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 172-174, 172.
125 Ibid. 173.
126 Ibid.
127 Furnivall, *Pigsbrook & Co.*, 2.
128 Ibid.

punish him.'"[129] In presenting Halliwell-Phillipps as a childish, unmanly and cheating opponent, Furnivall again drew on the discourse of muscular Christianity that had shaped his view of Swinburne too. These unmanly social vices stood in the way of true scholarly cooperation.

But the insults did not stop there. Halliwell-Phillipps' reason for accepting Swinburne's dedication, said Furnivall, was his 'mortified vanity': Halliwell-Phillipps had never complained about the 'mere book-club' that was the New Shakspere Society, and was always positive, 'as long as he was praised'.[130] Because of his vanity, moreover, he was especially prone to Swinburne's 'injudicious flattery which has made a fool's paradise for him to live in'.[131] Swinburne's praise, Furnivall suggested, was neither sincere nor just. Halliwell-Phillipps, an 'amateur labourer' because of his old-fashioned antiquarian methods, was inferior to the 'scientific botanist', with which Furnivall himself identified.[132]

The quarrel between Furnivall and Halliwell-Phillipps echoes many of the themes of the other controversies. The quarrel shows, first of all, the thick layer of personal antipathy and insult, but is once again founded upon genuine concerns regarding both the methods of scholarship (Furnivall's juxtaposition of the 'scientific botanist' and the 'amateur labourer'), and the question of scholarly cooperation: Halliwell-Phillipps' complaint of Furnivall's 'dictatorial insolence', and the latter's accusations of 'vanity' and 'unmanliness' at the former's address point to the lack of virtuous social behaviour that would make scholarly cooperation work. Virtues of gentlemanly conduct, such as honesty, modesty and manliness were the lubricants that reduced friction between competing ideals of Shakespearean scholarship, while vices of dictatorialness and unmanly vanity were envisioned to thwart scholarly cooperation. Finally, similarly to Fleay accusing Furnivall of threatening 'that tranquil spirit' needed for

129 Ibid. 3.
130 Ibid. 5
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid. 4.

scholarship, Halliwell-Phillipps pointed to Furnivall's attack on 'the spirit of "gentle" Shakespeare' and the 'ridicule' which this had thrown on the project of collective scholarship that was the New Shakspere Society. Both Fleay and Halliwell-Phillipps, then, directly linked their attack on the social vices of Furnivall to the precariousness of a collective epistemic project: without virtuous behaviour, there was no collective scholarship. Furnivall had to be stopped if the collective project was to succeed.

To this end, Halliwell-Phillipps sought the help of fellow members of the society, with the aim of organising resistance to Furnivall and getting him to apologise and repent.[133] He found an ally in Clement Ingleby, who had concluded that Furnivall's behaviour was bad for the standing of Shakespearean scholarship. Richard Storer has argued similarly by stating that for Ingleby, Furnivall's 'volatility and rule-breaking' had sabotaged the collectivism of the enterprise', and that this was the reason for his support of Halliwell-Phillipps.[134] Together, Halliwell-Phillipps and Ingleby secured the support of many members for an effort to have Furnivall apologise for his ungentlemanly conduct. A considerable number of prominent members wrote to Browning with threats of resignation if he would not act.[135] Browning, again, sought to calm everyone down and called upon the members to be a 'temperate-blooded fellow-student', but to no avail.[136]

133 He had received a declaration of support from Swinburne, who was happy to see adversaries of Furnivall mobilise: Swinburne to Halliwell-Phillipps, 6 February 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 175-176. Fleay, although he had already stepped down as member, also wrote to Browning to voice his support of Halliwell-Phillipps: Fleay to Browning, 5 February 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 174.

134 Storer, 'C.M. Ingleby and Victorian Shakespeare Controversies', 17. Storer writes primarily about Ingleby's position in the 'ongoing process of professionalisation' in scholarship, and does not touch upon the language of vice or Furnivall's own arguments.

135 Those members included A.B. Grosart, William Aldis Wright, Samuel Timmins, Joseph Woodfall Ebsworth, and Halliwell-Phillipps and Ingleby themselves. See: A.B. Grosart to A.C. Swinburne, 15 February 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 176-177.

136 Browning to Ingleby, 9 February 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 181-182.

Browning's attitude led Halliwell-Phillipps and Ingleby to orchestrate a mass exodus of members. As the introduction to this chapter has shown, this effort was successful: in April 1881, a large number of members resigned from the society. Furnivall's alleged social vices, displayed over and over again in the controversies with Fleay, Swinburne, and Halliwell-Phillipps, ultimately led to the demise of the New Shakspere Society and the particular type of social organisation of collective scholarship that it represented.

Furnivall was not the type to apologise. Instead, he wrote a letter to all who withdrew from the society, in which he stated that it was the duty of all members of the New Shakspere Society 'to mind its own business . . . to study Shakspere . . . not to gad about interfering in its Members' quarrels.'[137] He regarded the meddling in his 'private' affairs as 'an impertinence' and he was 'glad to be rid' of their 'censorious caballing' against him.[138] For Furnivall himself, the affair between himself and Halliwell-Phillipps had always been a private matter, but as the fall-out after their controversy has shown, many members of the New Shakspere Society regarded Furnivall's conduct as detrimental to the status of Shakespearean scholarship. Indeed, their referral to gentlemanly codes of conduct was effectively an appeal to a professional ethos in the making. It was not the disciplinary effect of collective scholarship that was at stake, as it was in the Swinburne controversy, but rather the undisciplined and dictatorial behaviour of the founder of the society that alienated most members.

Conclusion: social vices and scholarly cooperation

What can we learn from the three controversies that characterised the New Shakspere Society? In all three discussions, three concerns seem to be central, which I have described as layers: 1) a superficial but increasingly thick layer of personal antipathy, 2) an intermediate layer of disagreement

137 Furnivall to former members of the New Shakspere Society, 25 April 1881, printed in: Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, 191-192, 191.
138 Ibid. 192.

about the proper methods of Shakespearean scholarship, and 3) a deep layer of anxiety regarding the social organisation of scholarship, either in disciplinary and 'professional' institutions like the New Shakspere Society, or in highly idiosyncratic individuality. It is especially on this last, deep layer that I will focus in these concluding remarks.

All three controversies were marked by disagreements on scholarly cooperation. In the Fleay-Furnivall debate, it was not just the disagreement on method that frustrated Fleay, but also Furnivall's attitude during meetings, his incessant and often unfair critique, and his dictatorial and dogmatic leanings. Furnivall, on the other side, was not primarily angry at Fleay's quantitative methods, but rather with his behaviour: Fleay was ungentlemanly, sneaky and was too easily provoked. The same can be said for the Swinburne-Furnivall debate: although the matter started as a disagreement on methods, it turned into a debate on the proper organisation of collective scholarship. Furnivall scolded the 'unmanly' Swinburne for not allowing criticism and resisting discipline, while Swinburne deplored the 'professional', dogmatic and disciplining effects of the New Shakspere Society. Finally, Halliwell-Phillipps (and the rest of the exiting members) fell out with Furnivall not because they disagreed about methodology, but because socially vicious and ungentlemanly behaviour was displayed.

The above paragraph already shows the omnipresence of social vice charges in these discussions: accusations of ungentlemanliness, vanity, sneakiness, dogmatism and dictatorialness flew back and forth. Why were they so important in these debates? I think for two reasons at least. First of all, scholarly cooperation in the field of Shakespearean studies was very precarious. There had been almost no precedent for a society such as the New Shakspere Society, and the heterogeneity in terms of types of scholars, preferred methods, and commitments was a striking feature of the society. In such an unstructured and diverse environment, scholarly cooperation was built on mutual trust and adherence to gentlemanly codes of conduct. Or, in other words, scholarly cooperation depended on social

virtues: collegiality, supportiveness, unselfishness and patience. Many of the social vice charges that I have outlined – ungentlemanliness and vanity for example – point to a breach of such codes of social conduct: they were character traits that obstructed the collective project of the society by thwarting cooperation, breaking trust and impeding both the 'tranquil spirit' needed for Shakespearean scholarship and the 'spirit of "Gentle Shakespeare"' that should permeate the society. The language of social vice, then, is an important marker of failed scholarly cooperation. Social vices threatened the construction of communicability in the realm of Shakespearean studies. As such, the debates in the New Shakspere Society reflected much older ideals of scholarly cooperation, going back to at least the early modern 'Republic of Letters'. As both Sari Kivistö and Anne Goldgar have shown, early modern scholars also relied on the practice of social virtues of 'politeness' to safeguard cooperation in a shifting institutional and ideological environment.[139]

The second reason for the prevalence of social vices in the controversies surrounding the New Shakspere Society is the disciplining effect that this new social organisation of scholarship had on individual scholars. Intensive cooperation, to put it bluntly, came at the cost of freedom and autonomy. It was a homogenising force: Fleay's quantitative methods needed to be reconciled with aesthetic and philological arguments, Halliwell-Phillipps' 'amateur' antiquarianism with Furnivall's 'scientific botanism', and Swinburne's aesthetic judgment had to be checked by organised scholarship (at least in Furnivall's opinion). The process of centring the society on the future aims, methods and personae of Shakespearean scholarship thus also incorporated the drawing of tentative boundaries and the enforcing of discipline. The social vices with which Furnivall was charged (dictatorialness and dogmatism for example) point to uneasiness with or downright resistance to this process, while his own vice charges (lack of self-restraint and vanity, to name two) were aimed at those resisting cooperation. Finally, the fact that many eminent members

139 Kivistö, The *Vices of Learning*; Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*.

of the society left in 1881, with reference to Furnivall's ungentlemanly and dictatorial behaviour, shows that many thought that Furnivall himself had become a danger to the growing professionalism of Shakespearean scholarship.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one should not make the mistake to read the language of social vice apparent in these cases as only referring to the social realm. Social vice, as I hope to have illustrated here, not only had social consequences for those involved, but also deep epistemic consequences: the future of the institutional landscape of Victorian Shakespearean scholarship was entangled with the controversies I have described, and the ultimate failure of cooperation put an end to a rather fruitful period of scholarship. As such, many of the social vices that I have discussed in this chapter would decidedly belong to the more inclusive category of 'scholarly vices' that Engberts and Paul propose to use: scholars do not pursue social goals in isolation from epistemic, political or moral goals.[140] Nonetheless, the case I have laid out in this chapter does show the importance of the social in scholarly discussions. Especially in an unstructured institutional environment, where cooperation was precarious and conflict-ridden, virtuous social behaviour was an important condition for scholars to do their work properly.

This becomes especially clear when the role of vice in this case is compared with the role of vice in the previous chapter on Peter Guthrie Tait's controversies. In the latter, the language of vice functioned primarily as a means of boundary-work between different ways of being a scholar: Tait and his opponents ascribed a certain constellation of virtuous qualities to themselves, while attributing an array of vicious qualities to their enemies. Moreover, these constellations of virtues and vices were projected on 'scientific heroes' such as Newton, Faraday and Leibniz: exemplars of scientific selfhood. As such, I have argued, accusations of vice and attribution of virtue demarcated and policed the boundaries of scientific personae. Tait

140 This is a paraphrase of my earlier quotation in note 14 of this chapter.

and his opponents primarily debated the question of what the ideal scholar should be like, while the social organisation of scholarship was of much less importance. This was primarily due to the fact that Victorian physics was already organised into an academic discipline, with support networks in place, and multiple institutions available in which careers could be made.

In unstable and incoherent institutional landscapes, as the landscape of late Victorian literary studies surely was, the language of vice was as potent a discourse as it was in such established disciplines like physics. Nonetheless, it functioned rather differently in the two contexts. Not boundaries, but centres were defined by it. Not exclusion of differing elements, but scholarly cooperation was the goal. Historians of scholarly virtue and vice, then, should keep an open eye for the institutional landscape of the field they are researching, because the discourse of virtue and vice was deeply entangled with the social organisation of scholarship.