the weakest part of the book, there are sensitive readings. I would instance two: the account of Petruchio as a man who can engage in the comedy of life and yet remain detached from it; and the analysis of the way the happiness of the ending of *The Merchant of Venice* is placed within "an amused awareness of human limitations" (p. 235). In discussing Shakespeare, Weld may be overconfident about some dubious readings, and he may give us more theological background than the passages he is trying to illuminate can really bear; but his approach does produce moments of insight, and if he often provokes disagreement he never fails to provoke thought.

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Jonathan L. Marwil. *The Trials of Counsel, Francis Bacon in 1621*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976. Pp. 236. \$14.95

Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* was much admired in his own time, and it has been highly influential. It established the image of Henry VII as a wise but unlovable monarch, prudent, cautious, secretive and rather cold, that has persisted to the present. In recent years, however, the *History* has come increasingly under attack. Modern studies have shown that Bacon's practice as a historiographer is a contradiction of his scientific principles; he engaged in little research, took few pains to establish his facts, acquired most of his information from easily available secondary sources of dubious accuracy, used the old classical convention of the invented speech in a manner incompatible with any real prospect for the advancement of learning, and proceeded throughout in a highly deductive fashion.

The modern process of attack on the *History* is continued by Jonathan Marwil in *The Trials of Counsel*. Marwil builds his study on the fact that the *History* was written in 1621 a few months after Bacon's impeachment and fall from his great position as Lord Chancellor. Disputing the common view that Bacon was seriously torn between the active and contemplative lives, he holds that his overriding ambition was always for political power, and that he did not retire to the studies and writings of his later years without making every effort to regain his great place in public life. In Marwil's view the *History* was written as a part of this effort. Its purpose was to persuade King James of his abilities as a counsellor of kings, so that he might be reinstated in office. Thus the *History* is very far from being an objective work; it is rather a self-interested piece of propaganda and personal image building.

In developing this thesis Marwil attempts to place the *History* not only in relation to the crisis of Bacon's impeachment but also in the wider context of the author's earlier life. He begins with a chapter on the impeachment, next moves back to give two chapters on the earlier life, to show "the progress of his mind and career up until his downfall," and then concludes with a chapter on the *History* itself.

This is, as Marwil states, an "unorthodox structure." Unfortunately problems of both proportion and unity arise from it that he does not satisfactorily solve.

He fails adequately to integrate the biographical chapters with the analysis of the *History*. Most of the book really consists in a biography of Bacon, which covers all but the last five years of the subject's life, and is thus in a curious special sense a biography *manqué*. In the biographical chapters he follows a chronicle method, going through Bacon's life frequently year by year, and sometimes month by month. In the process he opens up many themes that are relevant to the *History*, but his scheme does not allow them to be developed very systematically. As a biographer he handicaps himself by his aim of relating the life to the *History*, while he fails to keep the *History* sufficiently at the centre to justify the biography in terms of his professed purpose. His strategy of writing an extended biography for the purpose of analysing a single work by a prolific major author should be examined rather critically lest it provide too ready a precedent for a series of similar studies of other writers.

Despite the substantial length of his biography, Marwil neglects certain kinds of highly relevant biographical information, particularly on the less public and more private level. For example, he argues that the *History* is not only subjective, but even a kind of self-portrait of Bacon himself: "Bacon's portrait of Henry bears a remarkable likeness to himself." This is an over-simplified view. It ignores such a contradiction as that between Henry's avarice, which is much emphasized in the *History*, and Bacon's own notorious extravagance and carelessness about money. This carelessness indeed was a root cause of his impeachment and fall.

Marwil has no difficulty in demonstrating his thesis that the *History* is in many ways shaped by Bacon's circumstances and ambitions, and his book will no doubt serve as a corrective to unhistorical views, which are occasionally still propagated, of Bacon as a lofty philosopher dwelling in a realm detached from the limiting aspects of his time. He develops an interesting and persuasive view of Bacon as a politician whose chief skills were verbal, whose favoured method was manipulation through words, who had limited practical ability in political management, and who often displayed blindness to men. There is undoubtedly much truth in these conclusions, even if they appear ironic when read in the light of Bacon's famous criticism in *The Advancement of Learning* of those who hunt more after words than matter. However, Marwil's picture is unduly negative, because he does too little to explain what raised Bacon above the numerous other ambitious politicians of his day. He makes some acknowledgment of special intellectual powers in Bacon, but he places most emphasis upon verbal skills. Yet he does not provide much analysis of these skills; in his study they are asserted rather than shown.

In the case of Bacon it is surely a false distinction to separate his verbal powers from his other powers of mind. Many seventeenth-century writers attempted to imitate Bacon's style, but they generally failed. Their imitations are empty and unconvincing for the reason that they were able to imitate only the more superficial verbal patterns and rhetorical devices, not the power of intellect and weight of observation, which indeed proved inimitable. It is this weight as much as his verbal skills that caused Bacon to be admired by his contemporaries and many succeeding generations, and this quality still appears in the great interest and authority carried by sentences on every page of the *History*. Those who seek an explanation of this power should turn from Marwil to some other recent studies, for example the

work (which he cites and praises) by Edward Berry, who finds in the *History* a new awareness of the complexities of historical causation and character, even while he concedes, as everyone must, that Bacon failed to adhere to his own principles in relation to factual accuracy and the inductive method.

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Jacques Abélard. *Les Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitez de Troye*, de Jean Lemaire de Belges. *Etude des éditions – Genèse de l'oeuvre*. Genève: Droz, 1976. Pp. 324.

Il ne subsiste aucun doute quant à la nécessité du travail entrepris par Jacques Abélard dont l'édition des *Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitez de Troye* ne saurait d'ailleurs être attendue qu'avec impatience.

Comme prélude à son édition critique d'un texte important de Jean Lemaire de Belges, J. Abélard nous livre le premier volume de sa thèse, travail préparatoire consistant en une enquête bibliographique qui s'inspire de la méthode dite de Lachmann pour "radiographier" (p. 226) l'oeuvre. La majeure partie du livre (210 pages) est ainsi consacrée à un travail de description bibliographique visant à retrouver "la bonne version" (p. 8) ou "le texte authentique" (p. 7) des *Illustrations*.

Publiés séparément et prématurément à cause de raisons personnelles et politiques, les trois livres des *Illustrations* nous sont parvenus sous une forme imparfaite. Entre 1511 et 1524, ils parurent sous forme de recueils d'éditions séparées. C'est ainsi que, par exemple, le premier livre des *Illustrations* fut, dès mai 1511, publié avec le *Traité de la différence des schismes*, auquel on ajouta en 1512 la *Légende des Vénitiens*, deux opuscules qui atténuent le caractère belge de l'oeuvre à un moment où Lemaire de Belges quitte Marguerite d'Autriche pour passer au service d'Anne de Bretagne. Reste que dans tous les remaniements qui surviendront, et J. Abélard en est conscient, il est souvent difficile de faire la part des exigences de la carrière de l'auteur et celle des transactions commerciales de l'éditeur. De plus, à partir de 1524 (et jusqu'en 1549) des éditions complètes succédèrent aux recueils d'éditions séparées.

On ne peut qu'admirer la rigueur de la démarche, la prudence et l'assurance des conclusions. On ne peut cependant taire le fait que ces qualités aboutissent à un livre, utile sans doute, mais austère par son érudition. Cet aspect le destine à un public limité de spécialistes de Lemaire de Belges. C'est un livre d'érudit qui nous présente le travail bibliographique nécessaire à une édition critique, celle des *Illustrations* de Lemaire de Belges en l'occurrence, avec comme effet secondaire, très bien senti par l'auteur, de "mettre sous nos yeux le travail concret des ateliers d'imprimerie." Un regret peut-être: que les passages concernant la fabrication du livre ne soient pas regroupés en un chapitre mais disséminés au hasard des découvertes.

Ne parlant plus du travail bibliographique mais des quelques remarques critiques contenues dans le texte de J. Abélard, on pourrait signaler un saut trop rapide des constatations factuelles à l'explication des phénomènes textuels. Il y aurait sans