NGLISH LITERATURE
TO 1660

COLLEGE COURSE GUIDE

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reface

This volume surveys the course of English literature from the beginnings 1660. A second volume covers the period from 1660 to 1837; and the ncluding volume in this series of three extends from 1837 to our own day. All three volumes attempt to provide for everyone interested in English rature a succinct, factual introduction to the works of every notable writer our language in the British Isles.

n line with current practice, major figures are treated at some length, n to their minor writings. Length of scrutiny, however, should not be con- red *prima facie* evidence of importance; thus, for example, the brevity he passage on Robert Herrick arrises from the clarity of his writing and consequent ease of understanding, not from any minimizing of his poetic evement. Biographical sketches are included for all English authors whose ers are known. Lesser writers are summarized in sufficient fashion to w their contribution to, and revelation of, their period. Where desirable, as icularly with the Renaissance drama, quite minor writers are discussed emonstrate the scope and variety of a period or a genre. Background erial in history, cultural conditions, and development of the language is ided in order to orient the reader and to set each author in his milieu. rder to offer the maximum amount of information about the literary ks themselves, footnotes and bibliographies have been omitted.

Our goal has been to achieve as much usefulness and thoroughness as pos- in a summary of English literature. For each significant literary work reader will find:

) THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PUBLICATION, DATE, SOURCE, ETC. Every npt has been made to offer the latest and most accurate information; ever, most literary dates before the Renaissance are largely conjectural. printers were often careless or inaccurate in date of publication; there- the actual dates given here will occasionally differ from the printed appearing on the original title pages. Other discrepancies in dating are d by the Julian calendar and the start of the New Year at the vernal ox. The English-speaking peoples did not universally follow the current orian calendar and New Year's Day on January 1 until 1752. *Unless*

otherwise stated, the parenthetical date following a title refers to date c composition (for drama, date of initial performance).

(2) BRIEF SUMMARIES. The reader is specifically informed about the exa contents of a work so that plot and characters are clearly understood. Th summaries commence new paragraphs but appear in the same size of type the biographical and other data which precede them.

(3) ANALYSES. Instead of rhapsodizing or censuring, this book seeks explain what an author said and meant in each piece of writing. Interpret tions hew as closely as possible to what seems the author's actual inter Where other interpretations are likely, they are indicated. However, th superabundance of material upon Shakespeare has compelled special brevi in this regard.

While the divisions of the book are generally based upon chronologic historical or cultural periods, those literary or art forms of special interest importance to the period under discussion have been kept separate. Thus, entire section of the book is given over to the Renaissance drama, and earli the ballad and the medieval drama are assigned a chapter. It is therefo possible, in using this series of books, to follow the development of a maj art form (such as the novel or the drama) from its beginnings to the presc by tracing it through the table of contents.

A pronunciation key has been provided where any difficulty in pronun tion might occur. Sounds follow standard Middle American:

cat, dāte, bär, âsk, bāre
bet, bē, pėr
din, dīne
dot, dōte, pröve, bôre
but, brūte, bůll
ð as in then, th as in thin.

Though the author's indebtednesses are too numerous to detail, he wo particularly like to acknowledge the assistance of Lawrence W. Lamm a Harry L. Wagner, of Copeland & Lamm, Inc.; and also to express spec thanks to his wife, Rosalie P. Day, for preparing the drawings for the ill trations that appear in this book.

Martin S. Da

HOUSTON, TEXAS
August 1962

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PART ONE

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CHAPTER 1
From Ancient Times Through Celtic and Roman Britain

The literature of any country or people is best understood if it is studied against a background of the large historical and cultural developments of the region. Literature is shaped by the world which creates it, and, in certain respects, helps to create the world which shapes it. If we are able to appreciate this interplay, we will gain a much deeper and more rewarding experience from our readings. In presenting the history of English literature, then, we shall commence each period with a brief account of the major events which influenced the style, content, and form of the great and varied English writings in poetry, drama, and prose.

We will begin our account with our earliest knowledge of the land, observe the changing and shaping of the language, and then focus our attention on the writers and their works.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS

Apparently the earliest known human beings in the British Isles were hunters who roamed the British tundra land during the last interglacial period, c. 200,000 B.C., as evidenced by the Swanscombe Man whose skeletal remains were found in a gravel pit a few miles east of London amid his prey, the mastodon and woolly rhinoceros.

In approximately the third millennium B.C. a nomadic people, driving herds of cattle and wielding great battle-axes, started a vast migration from the shores of the eastern Baltic and western Russia. They carried their speech, the ancestral Indo-European language, as far to the east as the borders of China (where pockets of Indo-European speakers still exist); to the south where they brought the forerunners of Hittite, Persian, and Hindustani; and to the west throughout Europe. As early as 2000 B.C. the British Isles were probably overrun by Indo-Europeans, late arrivals in a long-inhabited land.

Indo-European (so called because India and Europe were the opposite extremities to which such languages penetrated) is the enormous language group to which with a few exceptions all European languages belong. It is divided into six main branches: Indic, Iranian, Celtic, Graeco-Latin, Teu-

tonic, and Slavonic. It is interesting to note that the present exceptions in Europe include some tongues spoken in the Caucasus Mountains, some languages of oriental origin (Finnish, Lapp from the far north of Scandinavia, Magyar or Hungarian, Turkish), and the mystery language, Basque. It is possible that rapidly dying Basque, spoken in the rugged highlands that form an arc about the Bay of Biscay in southwestern France and northern Spain, is a survival of the original language spoken in much of Europe before the Indo-European invasion.

THE CELTS

The Bronze Age in Britain was inaugurated by invaders from France and the Low Countries early in the second millennium B.C. These Beaker Folk, so called from their distinctive, carefully-wrought drinking pots, probably spoke an Indo-European tongue, but it is impossible to say whether or not it was a Celtic language. Stonehenge, the monumental circle of massive, vertical stones, symmetrically arranged and topped with immense, smooth, horizontal slabs, probably was constructed by these Beaker Folk for the worship of the Indo-European sky god; the site had evidently been a sacred ring for untold centuries.

Certainly Celtic were the new invaders who swept into the island in successive waves from c. 600 B.C. These members of the La Tène culture (named from an extensive site in Switzerland) belonged to the Early Iron Age and displayed brilliant craftsmanship in metal. The Celts in Britain from early times had two broad divisions of language: Brythonic (Welsh, Breton, Cornish) and Goidelic (Erse and Gaelic). It is impossible to say whether this division existed prior to their migration or developed within Britain. In antiquity, Celtic languages were spoken in a broad belt north of the classic lands of the Mediterranean and south of the Germanic peoples, a belt extending from Ireland to the Black Sea. The only living remnants of the once numerous Celtic tongues have all survived from ancient Britain—Gaelic in Ireland, Erse in the highlands and islands of Scotland, Welsh in Wales, and Breton in Brittany (France).

It is of interest to note that the name Britain comes from the early Celtic inhabitants of the island, with only a slight difference in sound in the usage of the two main divisions of Celts, the Goidelic and the Brythonic. The Brythonic peoples called themselves *Brittones;* the Goidels referred to their country as *Bretain.* A still older name for the island is *Albion,* the origin of which is unknown.

The religion of the Celts was probably similar to the polytheism of other early Aryan peoples, such as the Greeks. Druidism appears to have been the religion of the pre-Celtic natives of Britain, and it was in some cases carried over into the Celtic tradition. Whatever else druidism may have been, magic constituted one of its most important elements. In fact, when the word *druid* was adopted by the Celtic languages, it meant magician. The Goidelic Celts

seem to have accepted druidism, but there is no evidence that it was ever the religion of any Brythonic peoples.

Later conquerors of Britain borrowed very few words from the Celts they displaced. From this distant era the chief survivals in modern English are the names of rivers such as the Avon and the Thames and place names such as York and London. It is possible, though utterly beyond our ability to ascertain, that certain of these river names and place names were themselves borrowed by the Celts from the unknown languages spoken in Britain before the Indo-European invasion.

Other conjectural borrowings by modern English from ancient Celtic are *bin, brat, crock, down* (meaning "hill"), and *mattock*. More recent borrowings from Celtic are surprisingly few, less than English has taken from the American Indian languages. From Gaelic come *brogue, bog, colleen, galore, shamrock, shillelagh, Tory*. From Welsh come *eisteddfod, flannel, flummery, maggot*. From Erse come *clan, claymore, coronach, mackintosh, reel* (meaning "dance"), *slogan, whiskey*.

THE ROMAN CONQUEST

In 55 and 54 B.C. Caesar made raids into Britain which were actually not much more than mere reconnaissance forays. However, in 43 A.D. (unless otherwise stated, all dates mentioned from here on will be A.D.) the Emperor Claudius conquered Britain and incorporated it into the Roman Empire. For the next three and a half centuries Britain was the farthest northern and western outpost of the Roman Empire, enjoying the cultural and commercial benefits of the most advanced civilization of the era and enjoying also relative peace and security under the ever-watchful Roman legions.

Prosperous cities dotted an island crisscrossed by stone-paved highways that were frequently punctuated with luxurious villas. Glass windows, central heating, and running water made the Roman structures in Britain's cool northern climate comfortable and almost modern. Artifacts, such as the exquisite Mildenhall treasure of tableware now in the British Museum, testify to the objects of beauty and civilized utility available to the wealthy Romano-Celts. City dwellers became Latin both in culture and in language, although those of the rural areas continued to speak the ancient Celtic tongues. If there had been no subsequent invasion by the Anglo-Saxons, the present speech of the British Isles would probably be a Romance language, similar to French.

After Constantine the Great (whose mother Helena was a princess of Celtic Britain) virtually made Christianity the official religion of the declining Roman Empire by his edicts of 313, the Latinized Celts of Britain embraced the new faith. St. Patrick (died 461), probably just such a Romano-Celt, transported Christianity to Ireland, turning the populace there from paganism, and thereby becoming the island's patron saint.

The Roman domination of Celtic Britain weakened as internal dissen-

sions grew within the great empire. The wall built by the Emperor Hadrian in 123 from Solway Firth to the mouth of the Tyne was breached by the savage Picts descending into the south from what is now Scotland. Scots from Ireland conducted raids across the Irish Sea. Worst of all was the Germanic intrusion from across the North Sea. In the latter half of the 3rd century the Romans began the stationing of naval and land forces on the east coast, known as the Saxon Shore, to repel the piratical forays of the Germans.

To the Romans, however, the plight of the Celts in Britain became of less concern when they saw the entire empire on the continent crumbling under the sword thrusts of the Germanic tribes. The Roman legions attempted to hold the Rhine-Danube river barrier cutting across central Europe from the North Sea to the Black Sea. The troops from Britain were redeployed in 407 to hold the Rhine-Danube line—but in vain. The floods of German barbarians inundated the Roman Empire, the legions were swept to oblivion, and the invaders were free to pillage Mediterranean civilization virtually at will. Rome itself was sacked by the Germans in 410.

THE ANGLO-SAXON INVASION

In this universal disaster Britain was left to its fate. Its own able-bodied men had been conscripted into the absent legions and suffered the legionnaires' downfall on the continent. Helplessly the Romano-Celts of Britain witnessed wild inroads of the now unchecked Scots and Picts. The picture of that chaotic era is far from clear, and modern historians are distrustful of the traditional account that claims the Celts hired swordsmen of the Angle, Saxon, and Jute tribes of Germans as mercenary troops against the Scots and Picts. Legend has it that Hengest and Horsa (both names mean "horse" and sound suspiciously like tribal totems rather than individual leaders) landed with their Germanic followers by invitation in 449. After successfully battling the Picts and Scots, the mercenaries (eventually taking the name of English from one of the tribes, the Angles) are said to have turned upon their employers and to have exacted not their stipulated pay but the whole island for themselves.

It is certainly clear that these Anglo-Saxons were tribes originally located in what is now Schleswig-Holstein, an area partly in northern Germany and partly in southern Denmark. Because this now fertile meadowland was then largely swamp, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes depended heavily on the sea for livelihood. ("Muffin-mouthed pirates from Schleswig" Kipling labeled them.) Although not contiguous to the Roman frontier on the continent, these Anglo-Saxons were caught up in the stupendous *Völkerwanderung* (wandering of the peoples) of all the other German tribes pouring in upon a prostrate Roman Empire, powerless to stay the plunderers.

While still resident on the continent, the Anglo-Saxons, like other Germanic

tribes, had absorbed Latin words largely through trading with Roman merchants. Hence, before they came to Britain they had borrowed from the Latin *cheap* and *chapman* (originally wine merchandising) and various forms of *monger* (now appearing in *ironmonger, fishmonger, scandalmonger*) Weights and measures appear in *mile, pound, inch.* Food products introduced to the German barbarians by the Romans bear to this day names derived from ancient Latin: *beet, butter, cabbage, cheese, pea, peach, plum, turnip, wine.* Minor civilizing influences manifest themselves in the borrowings from the Latin of *cook, dish, kitchen, mill, mortar, scuttle.*

The mighty Roman engineering constructions in Britain impressed the pagan invaders, who quickly adopted such terms as *port* and *street* into their Anglo-Saxon language, and with them the Latin word for camp, *castra,* which is retained in many English place names: *Chester, Colchester, Doncaster, Worcester.* The greatest influx of Latin words into English, however, was to occur after the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons.

So it was that to the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes fell the abandoned outpost of Britain. The Saxons seem to have secured a permanent holding of land at the mouth of the Thames about 441. Thereafter, boatloads of Germanic invaders streamed across the North Sea for a century and a half.

THE CELTS UNDER THE ANGLO-SAXONS

The Celts were forced into the corners of the island, chiefly Wales, but also Cornwall to the far southwest, and a transitory Celtic kingdom of the Strathclyde in northwestern England and southern Scotland. Some displaced Celts took ship to Christian Ireland, more to the French coast where they settled Brittany. Resistance to the Anglo-Saxon invaders seems to have been almost wholly ineffectual, but later Celtic romance was to immortalize Arthur, ostensibly a Romano-Celt who was said to have momentarily stemmed the tide of Anglo-Saxon invasion. It was the Brythonic Celts who conceived the Arthur legend, which was later to be absorbed so notably into English literature. The Goidels (and the later Gaels) had their own legendary heroes: Finn, Oisin, Diarmait.

Gildas, the earliest Celt (Welsh) historian, in the mid-6th century records a notable setback of the Saxons by the Celts at Mount Badon (Bath? Badbury? 490?), but significantly says nothing anywhere about Arthur. Reverses may have caused some Anglo-Saxons to return to the continent, but the rest surged on to end effective Celtic resistance at Deorham, near Bath, in 577. By c. 615 Anglo-Saxon control reached the Irish Channel and embraced virtually all of present-day England.

No modern historian can confidently point out on the map the locale of any of the great victories ascribed to Arthur and so widely celebrated by medieval continental poets and by other English writers of many periods. However, while Camelot and Astolat have been relegated to the realm of

myth, Tintagel (reputed birthplace of Arthur) still exists in Cornwall, lending some air of reality to the legend. Whether Arthur was legendary or a real person, there can be no doubt that soon Celtic Britain was extinguished. Henceforth, the land was to be England and from it would arise English literature.

CHAPTER 2

Anglo-Saxon Pagan Poetry

(250–597)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. Disgruntled mercenaries or outright pillagers, the Anglo-Saxons launched an invasion of the British Isles that continued with irregular arrivals for a century and a half, until about 600. It was an uncoordinated assault, successful only because of Celtic disunity. The Jutes set up an independent kingdom in Kent. The Saxons settled the area around the city of London and south of the Thames as far as Cornwall; hence the modern Essex (East Saxons), Middlesex (Middle Saxons), and Sussex (South Saxons). The rest of central and northern England was seized by the Angles.

From the welter of small tribal units and petty princedoms there emerged by the middle of the 6th century the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy of seven independent kingdoms—Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Kent, East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria. With the Celts now powerless, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms waged bitter war against each other. Some Anglo-Saxon prisoners, offered for sale in the slave markets of Rome, caught the eye of Pope Gregory the Great and caused him to institute missionary efforts for the conversion of the English to Christianity.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. Though situated on the periphery, the Celts had been within the orbit of Mediterranean civilization. The invading Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, belonged to an early Norse culture which they maintained until their conversion to Christianity.

The religion of this early Norse culture involved the worship of rugged war gods led by Woden (from whom we derive our Wednesday). His wife Frigga we still honor in Friday. From Thor, the mighty war god with his hammer (thunderbolt) we derive Thursday, and Tuesday is named for Tiw, a wrestling and sword-swinging god of battles. The most attractive of these rather monotonously similar deities were Freia, goddess of love, and Baldur, god of sunlight, springtime, and happiness. All these gods reveled in great palaces, chiefly Valhalla, the abode of Woden. Warriors killed in combat were borne aloft by warrior goddesses, the Valkyries, to banquet and roister with the gods. The overwhelming quality of this religion, however, was its

northern coldness and pessimism. *Wyrd* (fate) was stronger than all the gods, who, though long-lived, were themselves mortal. "The Twilight of the Gods" (famous subject of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*) would destroy Woden and all his fellow deities. Woden seems originally to have exacted human sacrifice, but the Anglo-Saxons apparently had abandoned this practice before migrating to the British Isles. The Scandinavian religion emphasized the military virtues of courage, endurance, and obedience to leaders. It encouraged superstition, belief in magic wells and hilltops, and fear of strange dark demons haunting forests and caverns.

When a rich and powerful civilization is collapsing, the barbarians outside start to punch into the dying colossus with small knots of tough fighting men. Thus during the invasion and conquest period, the fundamental social organization of the Anglo-Saxons was the typical warrior band of a heroic age. Like Odysseus in an earlier heroic age, these German barbarians boasted of being "sackers of cities." Their descendants looked back with awed regard upon the giants who had ripped asunder the Roman Empire, magnifying them in much the same way as contemporary Americans glamorize the "Wild West."

The Germanic warrior band accomplishing this massacre was termed the *comitatus*. At its head was the band's best proven warrior and leader, the *cyning* (king). The chieftain's rank was based purely on virile merit, not on heredity. The *cyning* regularly produced a table of genealogy to show Woden as his distant ancestor, but so could almost any noble warrior. The chieftain was forced to demonstrate himself as the "better man" or lose his life with his position. He distributed booty to his followers, the *thegns* (thanes), who quaffed ale and mead (a honey brew) with their leader and who were expected in return to follow him loyally to the death. From this simple organization developed the small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in pagan England, with such close personal ties possible because of the small Anglo-Saxon population. Probably no more than 250,000 Anglo-Saxons had participated in the entire invasion.

Law, among such men, was the rough and ready justice of frontiersmen. Instead of codified law in the Roman fashion the Anglo-Saxons considered each case individually, bearing in mind previous rulings in similar cases. Thus grew the basis for Anglo-Saxon common law which governs most of the English-speaking world today. To prevent interminable blood feuds, the Anglo-Saxons worked out an elaborate system of *wergeld* (man money). Killing a nobleman would cost six times as much as killing a peasant; killing a "Welshman" (stranger) would cost only half as much as killing an Englishman.

The conquering Anglo-Saxons scorned city life, and the once prosperous Romano-Celtic cities dwindled to shades of their former selves or lay deserted. The conquerors set up isolated farmsteads and hamlets of agriculturists bound by kinship or tribal association. To this day almost a quarter of

English place names carry within them the root *-ing* meaning "the people of," as *Washington* means "the enclosure of Wasa's people." Extensive trade and commerce became unknown for generations, but a fertile agricultural England was firmly established. With sturdy iron axes and four- or eight-ox plows, the Anglo-Saxons cleared dense forests and worked heavy soils never previously cultivated. Especially in southern and central England the Anglo-Saxons cut into the wilderness, as we can see by the changes in meaning of the word *leah* or *lea* from "grove" to "clearing" and finally to its modern meaning of "meadowland." Place names ending in -ley, -ham (home), -stead (place), -ton (enclosure) have dotted the English countryside for almost fifteen centuries and have been transferred to numerous sites in the New World. Anglo-Saxon carvings in wood and stone as well as statements in literature also display their deep feeling for nature, especially in its somber aspects.

To the defeated Celts the Anglo-Saxons were no more than pagan savages, and in the early days no Celt would ever again use a pot once soiled by Anglo-Saxon use. The Roman estimate of the Anglo-Saxons was more favorable if no less exaggerated. As their great empire was sinking toward destruction, Roman historians like Tacitus were contrasting the virtuous Germans with the dissolute Romans, praising the former for being straightforward, unswerving in purpose, and eminently moral and sober. These early Germans respected a man not so much for his ancestry and power of speech as for his ability to do things. They accorded women a high position, seeking and following their advice even in most important matters. Above all, the ancient Germanic peoples admired strength and courage. The self-portrait of the Anglo-Saxons in their literature confirms the Roman evaluation, especially as regards their love of battle. Anglo-Saxon poetry is filled with the clash of "the shields of linden wood" and "arrows sleeting like hail." The ravens of Woden circle the embattled warriors, and the end comes with the cremation of dead fighting men on great funeral pyres.

LANGUAGE. English belongs to the western branch of Low German, which in turn belongs to the Teutonic family of Indo-European languages. The nearest relatives to English are Frisian (spoken on North Sea islands off Germany and the Netherlands), Dutch, Flemish, and Low German (*Plattdeutsch*). Old English (the name given to the language, while *Anglo-Saxon* is the name for its speakers) was in use till c. 1100.

OLD ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE

Four main dialect groups dominated Old English. Northumbrian was spoken from the Humber River to the Firth of Forth in Scotland. Mercian was the dialect of the English Midlands from the Humber south to the Thames and from the border of Wales to the North Sea. Kentish was spoken in the far southeastern country around Canterbury. Wessex was the dialect south

of the Thames and along the entire southern coast from the border of Kent to the border of Celtic Cornwall. Most of the surviving literature of the Anglo-Saxon period is in Wessex dialect, thus complicating its difficulty for modern speakers of English whose "standard English" has its roots in Mercian dialect. Scholars are uncertain how much these Old English dialects owe to linguistic differences among the Anglo-Saxons in their original European homeland and how much to modifications after they settled in England.

The Anglo-Saxon version of the Lord's Prayer (c. 1000) begins "Fæder ure thu the eart on heofonum, si thin nama gehalgod." The resemblance to modern High German is apparent. Old English (OE) differs from modern English in the following chief respects:

(1) Its complex gender system bore no necessary relationship to sex. *Wif* (woman), like the modern German *Weib,* was neuter.

(2) There were elaborate declensions of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives with four cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative), containing a dual form (referring to two objects), as well as singular and plural. Virtually every one of these differing forms was differentiated by an inflexional ending joined to the stem form (as in *nama: nam-a*). Modern English pronouns and a few irregular noun plurals represent the only significant survival of this complicated system.

(3) Verbs were divided into seven classes of strong verbs and three classes of weak verbs. Strong verbs changed the interior vowel of the stem in conjugation; thus *findan, fand, funden* (find, found, found). Weak verbs simply added inflexional endings to the stem; thus *fremman, fremede, fremed* (frame, framed, framed).

(4) The word order was more fluid. Because inflexions showed the full relationship of words, OE did not necessarily have, as modern English does, a rigid Subject-Verb-Object pattern (the subject preceded the object in less than half of King Alfred's sentences), or a Modifier-Modified pattern ("our Father" instead of *Fæder ure*).

(5) The pronunciation included harsh guttural sounds dropped by later English but still evidenced by spellings: knight, brought, through, tough.

(6) Its vocabulary had about thirty thousand words. Our modern English vocabulary is more than ten times as extensive.

However, the often bewildering appearance of OE conceals the fundamental likeness of English across the centuries. The opening line of *Beowulf* reads:

Hwæt we gar-Dena *inzear dazum*

Every word in this line has been retained by modern English:

Hwæt	what (as interjection)
we	we (first person plural pronoun)
gar	spear (as in gar fish, i.e., spear fish)
Dena	Danes (Scandinavians)

in	in (the preposition)
ȝear	yore ("former" as in "days of yore")
dazum	days (plural of the noun)

Some indispensable modern English words have survived from OE without any change in form or meaning: *and, for, from, full, God, in, to, word.* Many common words in OE were pronounced exactly as in modern English in spite of their different spelling: *bæc* (back), *bricg* (bridge), *cin* (chin), *scip* (ship). Studies of average speech patterns show that a total of forty-three words such as *be, have, it, you, the,* etc., make up about half of all words employed in conversation by English-speaking people; all forty-three words come directly from OE with very little alteration. In everyday speech today at least seventy-five percent of our vocabulary comes from the OE vocabulary.

Until their Christianization the Anglo-Saxons had no genuine form of complete writing. Their early Norse culture, on the continent of Europe, had modified some Latin letter symbols for use in inscriptions cut into stone, metal, wood, and horn. These symbols were termed *runes* (originally meaning "secret" or "mysterious"). Some of these runes were retained by English scribes well through the middle ages, e.g., ð (*th* sound in *then*) and þ (*th* sound in *thin*); with the introduction of printing from the continent, English printers found *y* the symbol most like þ (thorn). Note therefore that "ye olde taverne" has always been pronounced "*the* olde taverne."

However, the very order of our present alphabet shows the succumbing of the early Norse culture to the Mediterranean culture. In OE it was not the ABC's of the Latin alphabet but the *futhark* that guided the order of English letters. The first six letters of the runic "alphabet" ran thus: f, u, þ (th), a (or o), r, k.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY: BEOWULF AND LESSER WORKS

CHARACTERISTICS OF OLD ENGLISH VERSE

All the extant literature of pagan England (anonymous as is usual with early literature) has been transmitted to us through manuscripts of the later Christian period. Since most of the recording was performed by pious clerics, the pagan elements have frequently been subdued and Christian elements have been added. The result is often an incongruous mixture of paganism and Christianity. Since the old ways died slowly, some of this mixed literature might have been wholly the product of the nominally Christian era, but it is rather likely that all the following works were originally composed by pagans, transmitted orally, and written down with modifications by Christian scribes. The composition dates suggested in this chapter are wholly conjectural and, unless otherwise stated, refer to the formulation passed down to us. It is even conceivable that this early Old English literature might have been

first created on the continent before the end of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain.

The early literature of every culture is poetry, and accordingly Anglo-Saxon culture is without prose until its Christianization brought in the prose tradition of the Mediterranean. Primitive expression glories in the rhythmic quality of verse; and a more pronounced rhythmical beat than the patterned rise and fall of metered verse of later, more literary times asserts itself in the alliterative stress verse of the early Norse culture. In no sense is this verse crude; on the contrary, it is highly stylistic and formalistic, an art form centuries in the making and already quite polished and effective in its earliest known examples.

The major techniques of OE verse include the following characteristics:

(1) Four stress line. Each line of Anglo-Saxon verse contained four accented syllables. There was no fixed number or fixed placing of unaccented syllables.

Bŏld wæs bĕtlic *brĕgorof cŷning* (*Beowulf*, 1. 1925)
Hall was splendid very valiant (the) king

This type of line survives today in some nursery rimes. Rare in OE poetry were the occasional lines of more than four stresses—"hypermetrical" or "anomalous" lines.

(2) A pause, or caesura, divided each line into two staves or hemistiches. Each stave contained two stressed syllables. (See example above.)

(3) Alliteration (the repetition of initial sounds of syllables) not end rime was the means of binding the line together and reinforcing rhythmic effect. The key syllable was the third stress. Normally the first stress bore the same alliteration, and often the second stress did also. The fourth stress rarely shared the alliteration.

Oft Scŷld Scĕfing *scĕaþena þrĕatum*
Often Shield, son of Sheaf of enemies crowds
mŏnegum mægþum *mĕodosetla ofţĕah* (*Beowulf*, ll.4–5)
many of people of meadseats deprived

Consonants could alliterate only with other consonants of identical sound, but vowels could alliterate with any other vowel. The rigidity of this system, more difficult than end rime, frequently resulted in wrenched lines and distorted meanings.

Cross-alliteration was rare in OE verse. It appears, however, in the opening line of *Beowulf* where first and third, second and fourth stresses alliterate:

Hwæt we gār-Dĕna *in ȝĕar dāȝum*

While still an important stylistic device in modern poetry, alliteration has also remained a very popular method for linking things together in the modern English vernacular: "pink pills for pale people."

(4) Repetition through synonymous words or phrases, as in *Beowulf*, l. 4, second stave ("off" stave) and l. 5, first stave ("on" stave). This parallelism resembles that of Old Testament Hebraic poetry and allows for much of the same kind of stately, solemn progress and emphasis.

(5) End-stopping of the lines, which seldom run over into the next line in enjambment.

(6) The use of the *kenning*, a compound word of metaphoric quality. The sea could be poetically described as "the gannet's bath" or "the whale-road." Woman could be termed "peace-weaver" or "dwelling ornament." Similes were seldom used in OE poetry, but the *kenning* gave a highly allusive and literary flavor.

(7) Specialized poetic vocabulary which employed words unfamiliar to current conversation. Thus verse used *reced* and *sele* as well as the common *hus* (house) and *heall* (hall); *guma, rinc,* and *secg* as well as the familiar *monn* (man). Everyday speech of the Anglo-Saxons differed as much from the contemporary poetic language as the speech of Milton's time differed from *Paradise Lost,* and OE speech was much closer to modern English speech than was OE poetry.

(8) An elevated and aristocratic tone pervaded, since poetry was primarily intended for recital with harp accompaniment to gathered nobles and warriors in mead halls. Humor was rare except as it appeared in the irony of fighting men, usually in the form of litotes or understatement, still a mainstay of English humor. Another literary convention was the *flyting,* a mocking word-contest between two warriors.

(9) A rapid narrative style, which often omitted explanatory details and abruptly turned from one event to another. Stereotyped phrases were frequent. Word order was free, sometimes even confusing.

(10) Oral, not written, composition. The *scop* (poet) composed and the *gleeman* (minstrel) chanted OE verses long before they were committed to manuscript.

OE EPIC POETRY

Beowulf (bā′ō-wulf). *Beowulf* was possibly originally composed in East Anglia, c. 700, by a resident Danish cleric. Ms. is Cotton Vitellius A XV (designation of ms. found in Cotton collection; see Robert Bruce Cotton in Chapter 10), written c. 1000 in Late Wessex dialect, by two scribes who recorded the 3182 lines of the untitled poem now named for its central figure.

I. Heorot, the bright mead hall of Hrothgar, king of the Danes, is nightly invaded by the monster Grendel who bears off thanes of the king to his subterranean sea cave. After twelve years of such depredations, Beowulf, a noble

Geat (probably of the tribe of Gøtar from southern Sweden, possibly a Jute), comes to Hrothgar's aid. Hrothgar and Queen Wealtheow feast Beowulf, while the courtier Unferth insultingly denies Beowulf's swimming victory over the warrior Breca. After retiring, the Geats are attacked in the mead hall by Grendel who kills one of Beowulf's comrades. The hero wrenches one of Grendel's arms from its socket and the monster slinks back to his native marshes to die.

II. While Beowulf and his rejoicing companions are absent from the mead hall the next night, Grendel's dam (mother) invades Heorot to avenge her dead son. She bears off Aeschere, closest counselor of Hrothgar. In the morning Beowulf descends to the monster's lair in the sea cave and slays her. He severs the head of the dead Grendel and rises in triumph to the surface.

III. Laden with presents, Beowulf returns to the court of his uncle Hygelac. After the death of Hygelac and his son Heardred, Beowulf becomes king of the Geats.

IV. After Beowulf has reigned valorously over the Geats for fifty years, a fire-belching dragon lays waste the countryside in anger over the theft by a runaway slave of a cup from a three-hundred-year-old treasure trove guarded by the dragon. Beowulf, together with his loyal shield-bearer Wiglaf, assails the dragon while his companions flee in terror. He slays the dragon but dies from his wounds after he sees the treasure and names Wiglaf his successor. Beowulf and the dearly bought treasure are burnt upon a funeral pyre on a headland.

As far as the historical aspects of the poem are concerned, Hygelac has been identified with Chochilaicus, a Danish freebooter, who, according to contemporary chronicler Gregory of Tours, raided the Franks on the lower Rhine, seized great booty, and was slain by the Franks c. 521. The Merovingian dynasty of Frankish monarchs, referred to late in *Beowulf*, reigned from 431 to 751. Although scholars believe that most, if not all, characters mentioned in the poem are historic, no others can be definitely traced. Outside of this poem, history is wholly silent about Beowulf himself. Assuming the essential facts of the poem to be correct, he was born c. 495 and died c. 550 (the fifty years of his reign are an obvious poetic exaggeration). It is altogether likely that he was a valiant supporter of and successor to Hygelac. After Beowulf's death folk narratives could improve upon his exploits or even associate him with the stupendous deeds of other historic or mythological figures.

Although many authorities now discount a totally fabulous or mythological basis, Beowulf may have originated from one of the following ideas:

(1) The contest with the Grendel clan parallels an ancient folktale, "The Bear's Son Tale," appearing in over two hundred versions, chiefly old European but ranging as far as Japan and even the American Indian. The Scan-

dinavian *Grettisaga* (c. 1300) is similar, as are other northern tales. Parallels in the Irish *Feast of Bricriu* (c. 1100) have suggested the influence of the Celtic imagination.

(2) Killing dragons seemed a commonplace medieval pastime, but Beowulf's last exploit bears interesting comparison to Frotho's dragon battle in the *Gesta Danorum* (c. 1208) of Saxo Grammaticus. The relationship is tempting because Saxo was a Dane and perhaps drew from the same source as the *Beowulf* poet.

(3) Episodes I and II may simply be myth-making on the basis of Beowulf's exploits against wholly human sea rovers, and Episode IV may symbolize a disastrous bloodletting between the Geats and the Swedes.

(4) *Beow* may be derived from OE *buan*, "grow," "cultivate," typifying the introduction of agriculture and civilization. Thus we have the struggles of the culture hero against the natural forces that civilization opposes.

(5) Beowulf might be a symbolic Mankind warring against the dangers of the deep and the fearful beasts of the forest—in short, against the unknown. His death is the inevitable overthrow of the individual by time and the world.

(6) Beowulf could be a sun-god overcoming the cold mists of northern winters and the chill of northern seas.

(7) "Bee-wolf" (enemy of the bees) could be a sacred woodpecker or bear eventually personified. In the same way, the ancient Greeks probably derived Pallas Athene from an owl deity.

(8) Possibly the Christ theme of a perfect man and a self-sacrificing king infiltrated a pagan poet's mind or dominated the mind of a Christian poet reshaping pagan material.

The pagan elements in *Beowulf* are numerous. The dead are cremated, omens are observed to direct human conduct, and sacrifices are vowed at the temple of idols. The praise of worldly glory, the theme of blood vengeance, and especially the frequent references to the power of *Wyrd* (fate) look to a heathen past. Completely absent are any references to Christ, the cross, angels, saints, holy relics, or Christian worship; it is extremely difficult to imagine a Christian work of the middle ages ignoring all of these. Nonetheless, a beneficent god is contrasted with blind and hostile *Wyrd*. The *Beowulf* poet shows knowledge of and employs terminology from the Christian Scriptures and liturgy. Cain (putative ancestor of Grendel), the giants before the flood, the deluge, and Satan are all mentioned. The virtues of moderation, unselfishness, and service to others are highly praised. Significant is the final tribute to the dead Beowulf by his faithful thanes who chiefly celebrate his kindness and gentleness.

Beowulf is the oldest complete epic, not merely in OE, but in any Teutonic language. The author probably knew Vergil's *Aeneid*, and possibly the epics of Homer. The poem displays the familiar epic qualities: extended narrative, majestic tone, the hero who performs superhuman deeds against enemies, and the inclusion of supernatural agencies that intervene in the struggle.

Beowulf is the idealized warrior of a heroic age and the exemplar of what the Anglo-Saxons chiefly admired as masculine qualities. He is fearless but not foolhardy, uncomplicated but intelligent, serious but not dull. He is thoroughly adjusted in mind and body to a soldierly code and a "kill and get killed" expectancy. His stolid, essentially pessimistic view of life is reinforced by the author of the work with nature scenes of somber magnificence. Ironically, the first great work of English literature is set entirely in Scandinavia without any mention of England or the English.

Lesser OE Epics: Finnesburh and **Widsith.** *Finnesburh* (finz'bėrg). Fragment of forty-seven lines, including two half lines, from work of presumably three hundred lines. It was composed c. 700 in circumstances parallel to *Beowulf*. Found by George Hickes and transcribed in 1705 from a volume of OE homilies, now lost, from the Lambeth Library.

It supplements the Finn episode recited by Hrothgar's minstrel in *Beowulf* at the celebration of the hero's slaying of Grendel. The Danes under Hnæf visit the Frisians whose ruler, Finn, is married to Hnæf's sister, Hildeburh. The Jutish allies of Finn precipitate a battle in which Hnæf is slain. After a year's uneasy truce the Danes under Hengest (conceivably the Hengest entering England in 449) return to kill Finn and bear Hildeburh back to her people.

The extant fragment, told from the Danish viewpoint, recounts merely the assault on the Danes, trapped in a mead hall, by the Frisians and Jutes. The bold impressionistic battle scene has tempted some to consider the author equal to the *Beowulf* poet. There is no Christian element, at least in this brief fragment.

Widsith (wēd'sēth). This is a composite work of 143 lines, some of which probably antedate the Anglo-Saxon invasion, with the latest lines dating from c. 725. The ms. derives from the Exeter Book, c. 975 in Late Wessex dialect. The literal meaning of the title (which is taken from the hero's name, the first word of the poem) is "far journey" or "far path." The oldest lines in the poem are generally accepted as the oldest surviving verse in English and perhaps in any modern language. The historical interest of this work is greater than its literary value.

Widsith, an itinerant minstrel of the Myrging tribe, lists the mighty tribes, monarchs, and heroes whom he has visited. He claims to have chanted heroic lays before Eormanric (Hermanric, 4th century) and Aelfwine (Alboin, 6th century). All the rulers who heard him honored the bard with gifts, realizing that he was the chronicler of their deeds and the means of preserving their fame for posterity.

OE LYRIC POETRY

Deor's Lament (dā'ôrz). This work is perhaps as old as c. 500, but appears in Exeter Book in Wessex dialect c. 800.

The *scop,* Deor, has been supplanted in his king's favor by Heorrenda.

He decries his fallen state, but in seven stanzas of varying length recounts from Germanic legend how other victims of misfortune have survived their troubles. Each stanza ends with the consolatory refrain: "That passed away; so can this."

This is the earliest example of refrain in Germanic literature. The poet speaks imaginatively, and certainly does not appear to be Deor himself. There is no Christian element. The theme is melancholy: the transitoriness of life and glory.

Wulf and Eadwacer (wůlf; ā-äd'wäk'er). The work consists of nineteen lines in the Exeter Book, perhaps c. 800. A woman, apparently a captive in a foreign land, yearns for her lover Wulf and recoils at the thought of her detested husband Eadwacer.

The poem is unique in OE literature for its passionate sex-intrigue. OE literature usually treats sex naively or ignores it completely. There is no Christian element. This and *Deor's Lament* are the only extant OE poems with stanza and refrain.

The Wife's Lament (from Exeter Book, perhaps c. 900). A woman separated from her husband by captivity complains of hostile relatives and bitterly concludes with a picture of how equally distressed her lover may be (or possibly in keeping with her bitterness, *ought* to be).

The Husband's Message (from Exeter Book, perhaps c. 950). The poem is probably not a companion piece, as is sometimes thought, to *The Wife's Lament.*

An absent husband (or lover) inscribes a speech to his lady on wood (presumably in runes), and the stick speaks his message to her. He promises to rejoin her when the cuckoo is once more heard in the spring. The runes which appear toward the end are probably initials of "oath-helpers" who have guaranteed the good faith of the husband's vows.

The poem is almost unique in OE literature for its absence of melancholy.

The Wanderer (from Exeter Book, perhaps c. 725). A warrior or bard laments the loss of his lord and patron. He wanders about searching in vain for a new master and a secure home. Stoically he deems that a wise man knows how to keep his sorrow to himself. The conventional Christian consolation in the ending is an incongruous addition to the pagan pessimism. With the conclusion omitted, the poem remains the longest and becomes perhaps the most fully realized OE lyric.

The Seafarer (from Exeter Book, perhaps c. 725). A dramatic monologue of a sailor who bitterly recalls the cold of the northern seas, the fearful tempests, and the painful sufferings of seamen. Nonetheless, the sea irresistibly compels him to return, although he knows it is to a tragic fate.

Again, the Christian tag end to the poem jars with its pagan melancholy. This is the first English poem to deal solely with the sea.

The Ruin (from Exeter Book, perhaps c. 700). This brief fragment contemplates the stark ruins of what was apparently a Romano-Celtic city

once rich with great halls and baths (city of Bath?). Its tone of intensity and passionate regret, as well as its unusual subject of a place instead of a person, secure it a high rank in OE lyricism.

MISCELLANEOUS OE POETRY

The following minor pieces appear to be our only samplings of a popular literature of the Anglo-Saxon period. In contrast to the usual courtly verse for recitation in the halls of warriors and nobles, these were probably repeated by the common people.

The Runic Poem. Like our children's books of today with "A is for Apple, B is for Boy," this poem runs through the futhark in the order of the runic symbols. It starts: "*Feoh* (the letter *f* with us; the word means "wealth") is a comfort to every man."

Charms. Numerous poems, each only a few lines long, consisted of chants against spells and bewitchings. From Ms. Cotton Caligula A VII, for example, comes a charm against a stitch in the side. The stitch is blamed upon witches who ride about tormenting their victims. The one afflicted is advised to boil feverfew and red nettle in butter, then chant about twenty lines of poetic malediction upon witches, punctuated with the refrain, "Out, little spear." At the conclusion the stitch should leap from the afflicted to be hurled into the witches themselves.

Riddles. Somewhat unexpected humor and puzzle fun appear in riddles that describe an object neatly but enigmatically. Paraphrased from the Exeter Book (which contains almost 100 OE riddles): I am a lonely dweller, weary in battle, devoid of comfort, sore wounded with no physician to heal my wounds. What am I? I am a shield.

Some riddles are lyrically descriptive, especially those on the sea. Some are coyly obscure and a few are grotesque, like one whose answer is "A one-eyed seller of leeks."

Maxims. About three hundred lines of versified proverbs and platitudinous wisdom have survived, such as: "*Wyrd* goeth ever as it will" (obviously pagan), "Heat cooleth, bright darkeneth, the beloved becometh hateful, the light is extinguished" (probably a translation from the Latin).

CHAPTER 3

Anglo-Saxon Christian Writings

(597–856)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. From the 7th century through the middle of the 9th century, political dominance swayed from one Anglo-Saxon kingdom to another—first to Kent, next to Northumbria (for the bulk of this period), then, briefly, to Mercia. The real conquerors of the age, however, were not the men of war but the consecrated missionaries of the new faith who endured all hardships and rebuffs, even martyrdom, to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.

For several decades it was uncertain whether the English would follow the Roman or the Celtic division of Christianity. Separated from Europe by the pagan Anglo-Saxons, the Irish, with their notable saints, had developed a remarkable Christian culture, producing exquisitely beautiful religious art objects, especially illuminated manuscripts. On the far fringes of Europe, the isolated Irish church had become a great competitor of the Roman church from which it differed somewhat in ritual and symbolism, as well as in its date for celebrating Easter. The Celtic church disclaimed papal authority and permitted marriage of its clergy.

The great superiority of the Roman church, however, lay in its tightly knit and smoothly operating administration, which it had inherited from the civil administration of the extinct Roman Empire. In 597, St. Augustine (not the famous Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, but another Augustine) landed at Kent in England, sent by Pope Gregory as the capable representative of Roman Catholic Christianity to England. St. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, an office still held by the ranking primate of the English church.

In 633, St. Aidan arrived in Northumbria from Ireland to convert the northern Anglo-Saxons to Celtic Christianity. Today the Archbishop of York is the second primate of the English church, memorializing the role of the Irish missionaries in Christianizing the north.

The Synod of Whitby answered the question of which division of Chris-

tianity England would follow when in 664 it decided for the Roman church. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury from 669 to 690, gave the first unified form of worship to all England with his well-organized national religious structure. This was, of course, centuries before England achieved political unity. Thus the decision at Whitby tied England to Europe and paved the way to national unity as the loosely organized and self-contained Celtic church could never have done.

England was galvanized by the impact of the new faith. Certain princes abandoned power and pillage to become monks, many pious noblewomen raised large sums of money to erect Christian churches, and the English people burned with missionary zeal. St. Willibrord brought Christianity to the Netherlands, and the greatest Anglo-Saxon martyr-saint, St. Boniface, converted western Germany to Christianity.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity was one of the great turning points in English history, language, and literature. The earlier Scandinavian or Nordic culture was largely abandoned in favor of the new Mediterranean culture. England became part of the mainstream of Western civilization.

The wealth of learning brought by the new faith produced a veritable Anglo-Saxon Renaissance by the 8th century. The Christian monasteries of England—Canterbury, Malmesbury, Glastonbury, York, Jarrow, and Lindisfarne—became equal to any other European center of learning of the era in the teaching of Latin and Greek, music, astronomy, and medicine. The greatest glory of Anglo-Saxon Christianity was Northumbria, from whence Boniface and Bede sprang. It was from Northumbria that Alcuin went in 782 to spark the Carolingian Renaissance of Charlemagne in France.

The fervent piety of many Anglo-Saxon saints and the extensive ecclesiastical buildings (fragments of which remain in such edifices as Westminster Abbey) should not blind us to the mere surface nature of much Anglo-Saxon Christianity. The common people, like their fellows in much of western Europe, still retained superstition and love of magic, pre-Christian symbols of worship (like the horse figures still to be seen cut into the hillside near Uffington and elsewhere), and pre-Christian rituals (like the annual sword dance still performed at Earsdon and Handsworth). Warriors often bore the pagan boar-crested helmet along with the insignia of the cross. Anglo-Saxon royalty continued bloody dynastic struggles and too often indulged in shocking brutality and immorality. The student of Anglo-Saxon Christian literature must be prepared to read: "Christ is strong, but *Wyrd* is stronger." The apostles were often termed "thanes of God." Christ is frequently pictured as a prince winning peace after his "war play." The favorite Anglo-Saxon story of the gentle Savior was the "Harrowing of Hell": His descent into Hell, between the time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, to free the souls held there since the beginning of the world. This was a combat in fearsome places similar to Beowulf's grappling with the Grendel clan.

By the Christian period, kingship had become virtually hereditary, although an inadequate prince could easily be passed over in favor of a more stalwart relative. At the head of Anglo-Saxon society were the *aethelingas* (royalty) and the *eorlas* (nobles) who still devoted much of their time to battle or battle preparation. The yeomanry were the *freomen* (freemen), who cultivated small tracts of land in times of peace and fought in the ranks during war. At the bottom were the *ceorlas* (churls) in a state of bondage, tied to the soil like chattels. The older and wiser *eorlas* sat in the *witan* (council) to assist the king in administration and in dispensing justice; the *witan* was the forerunner of the modern English parliament. Shires or counties were the next lower political units; twice a year the landowners and freemen of a shire met in a *folkmot* (people's assembly) to make local laws, collect taxes, and raise soldiers for the king. A smaller unit was the township or hundred, originally the area assigned to a hundred soldiers (the state of Delaware still refers to its townships as hundreds); a reeve or elder kept order and collected taxes. Boroughs, originally fortified camps, held separate charters from the king to levy their own taxes and pay the monarch in a lump sum. When such a community contained a cathedral, it was called a city.

Christian ties to southern Europe caused a spurt in trade and commerce. Fabrics and religious objects came to England from Italy, wine and glass from France. Continental artisans were imported to build and ornament the buildings of church and king. Archaeologists have even found coins from distant Constantinople that reached England in this age.

Christianity certainly tempered the battle-hard Anglo-Saxons. A typical transformation is that of the Mercian warrior Guthlac from a merciless fighter of the Welsh into St. Guthlac, the hermit monk, wrestling with the evil one in the Crowland marshes. This softening meant more internal peace, but perhaps the consequent enfeeblement of the warrior code rendered possible the Viking invasion of England.

LANGUAGE. The most important contribution of the Mediterranean culture brought in by Christianity was a written language using the Latin alphabet. The runes had been scattered scratches upon hard substances. With vellum, parchment, and paper, English could be extensively recorded in the form of the Latin letters introduced by the church. Latin characters are not wholly ideal for the English language, as the early scribes realized in their retention of runic characters such as ð and þ. English writing today is handicapped by the use of the same Latin symbols for the entirely different sounds of *th*in (unvoiced) and *th*en (voiced). Other Latin consonants are inadequate, as the mix-up of the dental *n* and the velar *n* (cf. sin, sing, sink). The vowels from Latin (a, e, i, o, u, y) are distressingly insufficient for English, which uses at least twice as many vowel sounds as there are Latin symbols to represent them. These objections, however, seem minute when one

considers the dearth of literacy which preceded the introduction of the Latin alphabet.

Before the introduction of Christianity, OE was strongly resistant to borrowing words from other languages. OE tended, like modern German, to translate foreign words into native elements or concoct a new Germanic word for a new experience. Early in the Christian period OE devised *efnniht* ("equal night"), *leorningcniht* ("learning boy"), and *thrinnes* ("threeness"), since discarded in favor of the Latin *equinox, disciple,* and *trinity.*

But OE absorbed a host of Latin words with the new culture. Christian influence is obvious in *abbot, angel, apostle, bishop, choir, creed, deacon, hymn, monk, pope, priest, saint.* Many other Latin words, showing diverse cultural elements, poured into OE: *cancer, candle, cedar, comet, copper, lily, plant, rose, school, sponge, tiger.* English thus began the still-continuing process of extensive borrowings from other languages, so that today it has the largest vocabulary of any of the world's languages.

OLD ENGLISH CHRISTIAN EPICS

As England's cultural center during this age, Northumbria produced the great OE Christian poetry. Because of the later Viking destructiveness in Northumbria, the extant versions of this poetry appear in copies of late Wessex dialect. The subject matter is now militantly Christian, but the verse form is still the alliterative stress pattern of the pagan OE poetry. Prose in this era was written in Latin, the language of the church and the school.

CHRISTIAN EPICS OF THE CAEDMONIAN SCHOOL

Caedmon (kad'mön) (fl. 670) If the unsubstantiated account by Bede in *Historia Ecclesiastica* is correct, Caedmon was the first known poet in the English language. Bede states that Caedmon was an untutored cowherd of Whitby who fled in embarrassment from a banquet where all were called upon to improvise verse, only later to receive in a vision divine inspiration to Christian song. The account seems questionable, for such a happening is a recurrent theme in various cultures. Bede quotes a nine-line "hymn of Caedmon" in praise of God the Creator. Most of this selection consists of kennings as paraphrases of the Deity's name. A portion is probably a translation from Latin. Neither this nor any other poem can be positively assigned to Caedmon.

The Junius Ms. (c. 950), discovered by Archbishop Ussher in the 17th century and edited by François Dujon (Junius) in 1655, contains the following poems on precisely the biblical subjects which Bede says were Caedmon's subjects. It is tempting to ascribe these works to Caedmon but really unwise to do so because these biblical topics are familiar to all Christians and logical for any religious poet, and because a large number of variations and dis-

crepancies in language, vocabulary, and personality render it unlikely that the same poet composed all of the poems.

Genesis. This material is now recognized as two distinct poems interlocked. *Genesis A* (early 8th century) (ll. 1–234, 852–2735) is an alliterative paraphrase of the first twenty-two chapters of the Old Testament, ending with the intended sacrifice of Isaac. *Genesis B* (late 9th century) (ll. 235–851) repeats at greater length the fall of the rebel angels related in *Genesis A,* and is largely a translation from an Old Low German poem.

Somber monologues of Satan and horrendous pictures of Hell in *Genesis B* have evoked the suggestion that Milton, writing on the same theme in *Paradise Lost,* was indebted to this poem.

Exodus (early 8th century). This work paraphrases only the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians. Lines 362–445 on the ancestors of the Israelites are probably an interpolation by another poet.

While *Genesis A* closely follows the Biblical text, *Exodus* widely departs from it with vivid battle scenes as stirring as any martial piece of OE poetry. Moses exhorts the Israelites much as a Germanic Aetheling would, but he also assures them of a Christian afterlife. The poet's experimentation in phrasing and word coinage contrasts sharply with the stereotypes in most of OE poetry.

Judith (early 8th century). This is a fragment of about 350 lines appearing in the *Beowulf* ms. Its ascription to Caedmon is highly dubious.

After an evening of debauchery, Holofernes, commander of the Assyrian forces besieging the Jewish city of Bethulia, staggers to his tent, expecting to revel in the embraces of the lovely Jewish widow, Judith. She cuts off his head and with it as a standard rallies her townsfolk to a spectacular victory over the Assyrians.

The account is taken from the Book of Judith, apocryphal to Hebrews and Protestants, but included in the Roman Catholic Old Testament. The extant lines look like about the last quarter of a full-length poem. Attempts to relate the heroine to contemporary Anglo-Saxon queens have not proved successful. The extant portion celebrates in vivid description the grim determination and valor of Judith, instead of emphasizing, as Renaissance fashion would, the lush sexuality implicit in the tale.

CHRISTIAN EPICS OF THE CYNEWULFIAN SCHOOL

Cynewulf (kĭn e-wŭlf) (750?–825?). Four OE poems, *Christ* and *Juliana* in the Exeter Book and *Fates of the Apostles* and *Elene* in the Vercelli Book, bear imbedded in scattered lines of each poem a runic "signature" read as either Cynewulf or Cynwulf. This is the first poet in the English language to sign his works. The distinctive style and personality certainly make it likely that all four poems are from one hand. Many other poems from the same two ms. sources have been ascribed to the same poet because of similar styles. Possibly Cynewulf founded a school of OE poets. On the basis of the

four signed poems Cynewulf has been considered second only to the *Beowulf* poet in the composition of OE verse. No historical character can be clearly identified with the poet, though Bishop Cynewulf of Lindisfarne (died c. 782) is likely; however, the name is relatively common in OE. The poet may have been of Mercian origin, but it is more likely that he was Northumbrian.

While the Caedmonian poems are entirely upon Biblical subjects, the Cynewulfian poems depict events celebrated in the church calendar. The Cynewulfian verse is therefore closer to the continental medieval church in spirit. Battle pictures are less emphasized than in most OE poems. Female saints are extremely prominent, while women do not often appear elsewhere in OE poetry. Cynewulf delights in natural scenery, especially storm and sea, and he is especially remarkable for his concern with ideas and emotions, a concern which lends to his work a strongly subjective tone.

Christ (c. 800). We begin with this work since it is definitely known that at least one of its three parts is by Cynewulf.

Part I. A series of twelve short hymnlike passages on the Nativity based on antiphons for Advent. Lines 164–214 constitute a dialogue between Joseph and Mary, perhaps the first dramatic scene in English literature and certainly an indication of developing liturgical drama.

Part II. A narrative of the Ascension largely based upon the *Ascension Homily* of Pope Gregory the Great. It contains Cynewulf's runic signature. Some of the most ecstatic religious verse in English, it sings of the story of the risen Lord and of the necessity of man's soul to leap upward to God.

Part III. This depicts Judgment Day. It is based upon an alphabetic Latin hymn on the Last Judgment quoted by Bede in *De Arte Metrica.* Amidst a universe of flaming darkness the Holy Rood rears itself, a promise of eternal salvation to true believers.

Because of its signature, Part II is virtually unchallenged as Cynewulf's own. The three parts may be three separate poems by different authors, but the passionate outpouring of personal religious feeling throughout sounds like authentic Cynewulf.

Juliana (c. 750). This is perhaps the earliest work by this poet. It is based on the saint's life as treated in the Latin *Acta Sanctorum.*

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Maximilian (305–11) a Christian maiden, Juliana of Nicomedia, daughter of Africanus, persecutor of Christians, is wooed by the Roman Prefect Eleusius. When she spurns her suitor because he rejects Christianity, Eleusius, with her father's approval, attempts to break her resistance by fearful tortures. In a notable scene the devil joins the torturers, is seized by the saint and forced to reveal his secret techniques of devilry. The saint is martyred by the sword and achieves heavenly reward. Eleusius and his retinue are drowned at sea and sent to perdition.

Fates of the Apostles. This is a cursory account of the lives and deaths

of the Twelve Apostles. Its source is probably an unknown Latin list (though possibly of Irish origin) of the Apostles, their missions and sufferings.

Elene (el'ė-nė). In 312 while battling fellow Romans (not Huns as in the poem), Roman Emperor Constantine the Great is inspired to victory by a vision of the Cross. His mother, St. Helena, performs a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and by divine intervention discovers the True Cross.

The source of this work is *Acta Sanctorum* of May 4. This poem is Cynewulf's masterpiece in vivid narration and description, and in fervent piety. It concludes with a strongly autobiographical passage on the poet's weakness from age and the strength he derives from the symbol of the Cross. The work employs some internal rime. Unsigned, the poems are attributable to Cynewulf or his school.

Andreas (ȧn'drā-ăs). St. Andrew is commissioned by God to save St. Matthew, who is held by the Mermedonians, cannibalistic Ethiopians. Andrew is miraculously conveyed there by boat and summons a miraculous flood to subdue the savages and convert them to Christianity.

Its source is a lost Latin version of the Greek *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*. The work is a kind of "Christian Beowulf"—with especially colorful sea scenes. The Apostles are presented as "twelve warriors" mighty in the "slaughter-place."

Dream of the Rood. In a dream vision the Cross tells the poet of the crucifixion, the descent from the Cross, and the resurrection. Christ is represented as an Aetheling, and at the sepulcher Apostles sing a funeral dirge reminiscent of pagan practices.

Runic inscriptions upon the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire, Scotland (c. 700), appear to be a mutilated version of this work. Two Wessex lines of the poem are inscribed on the silverwork of the Brussels Cross in Belgium.

The poem is often felt to be the greatest of OE poems because of its unusual lyric tenderness, imagination, and piety. It is the earliest dream vision in English literature, a type that becomes commonplace in Middle English. No source for *Dream of the Rood* is known.

The Phoenix. The poem is divided into two parts:

Part I. Describes the beauty, flight, death, and rebirth of the mythical bird. It is a paraphrase of *De Ave Phoenice* by Lactantius Firmianus.

Part II. Allegorically applies the myth to Christ as argument for and symbol of the resurrection. A treatment derived from the writings of Bede and St. Ambrose.

The Phoenix is a unique and successful attempt by a northern poet to evoke a gentler, more tropical locale. Its concluding eleven lines are macaronic, with the "on" stave in OE, the "off" stave in Latin; the first stress in the Latin half line bears the alliterative sound used conventionally to bind the entire line together.

Guthlac A and *B.* Both texts are probably based upon the Latin *Vita* (c. 750) of St. Guthlac by Felix of Croyland.

Guthlac A tells of the foul fiends sorely tempting the saint with physical ills but powerless against his pious resolution. They next seek to undermine his spiritual confidence by pointing out the laxity of some monastic clergy. Remarkably, for so austere a saint, Guthlac recognizes the human weaknesses of young monks and refuses to condemn all monks because of the defects of a few. Obviously, monasticism had its critics and defenders early in English Christianity. The literary quality of this work is low.

Guthlac B elaborately details the serene death of the saint following prolonged sickness. After the saint's passing, his servant leaves to announce Guthlac's death to the sister of the saint. The servant's lamentations resemble those of *The Wanderer*. The tender personal feeling and emotional depth of *Guthlac B* suggest that Cynewulf may have written this poem.

BEDE AND OTHER PROSE WRITINGS IN LATIN

As we have seen, OE Christian poetry maintained the essential traditions of OE pagan poetry. However, since pagan England possessed no prose tradition at all, the prose of this period was introduced from the Mediterranean culture and was entirely in the Latin language.

The first known prose writer among the Anglo-Saxons was ALDHELM (c. 640–709). His extant writings, entirely in Latin, were largely theological, as would befit the founder of Malmesbury Abbey and Bishop of Sherborne.

Bede (bēd) (672 or 673–735). Born near Jarrow Monastery in Durham where he spent virtually all his life, the Benedictine monk Bede was ordained a deacon at nineteen and a priest at thirty. He spent most of his career teaching and writing. Termed the Venerable Bede for his piety, "Father of English History" as the first Anglo-Saxon historian, and "Father of English Learning" for his position as the leading European scholar of his age, Bede was encyclopedic in his knowledge, conversant with Greek and possibly Hebrew as well as Latin and OE. St. Boniface called him "the candle sent by God" to illumine the church. In his *Divine Comedy* Dante accords Bede a post of highest glory in Paradise as a companion of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The range of Bede's Latin writings is rather astonishing: epistles, rhetoric, linguistics, poetics, astronomy, hymns, homiletics, history, theology. The bulk of his output fell into the domain of the typical learned European theologian of the era: commentaries on the Scriptures and patristic writings, and lives of saints and churchmen. His greatest and best remembered work is *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, called in Latin:

Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (completed 731) divided into five books:

Book I. Describes Britain and its history from the invasion of Julius Caesar to 603. Chief sources are Pliny, Orosius, Gildas.

Book II. Depicts the time from the death of Pope Gregory the Great to 633. It contains the famous simile likening the life of man to a sparrow flying

from the wintry night into the brightly lit banquet hall and then fluttering into the darkness whence it came. The image is used as an argument for the conversion of Northumbria to Christianity.

Book III. Contains the story of the Celtic vs. Roman church up to the Council of Whitby in 664.

Book IV. Relates further events up to 698. It chiefly describes the strengthened church in England under Theodore of Tarsus, and contains an account of Caedmon's inspiration to divine song.

Book V. Continues to 731. Includes brief appraisal of contemporary England.

Bede's acceptance of miraculous events is not so much due to his own credulity, as to that of European culture in general at his time. When a fabulous account is drawn by him from hearsay, he so states. Above all a scholar, he anticipates modern practice in wide examination and specification of sources and is as thorough and truthful a historian as the age could possibly produce. His style is direct and forceful. His popularity was immediate and widespread; the two earliest extant copies of his work were both produced on the continent. Bede is the chief source of our knowledge of the English people before Alfred the Great, and he produced the greatest history written by an Englishman before the 17th century.

CHAPTER 4

The Viking Invasion and the Age of Alfred the Great

(856–1066)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. During the 9th and 10th centuries there swarmed out of the wild fjords, mountains, and wastelands of Scandinavia a few thousand men even wilder than the Anglo-Saxons. These were the Vikings. They almost conquered the world.

Between 830 and 900 the Vikings plundered Hamburg and Antwerp, London and Paris, the Rhône and Bordeaux, Seville and Morocco. A Swedish tribe, the Russ, imposed their name upon conquered Slavs, later to be called Russians; overland raiding parties struck as far as the Volga River and the Caspian Sea. The Northmen even launched a mad assault against walled Constantinople. Normandy in France bears today the name of the Northmen who conquered it and later adopted the French language and culture. Before 1016 they had won Iceland and Greenland and had touched the shores of North America.

Perhaps the Vikings were impelled by overpopulation of their inhospitable homeland, or perhaps by the lure of European wealth struggling to recover from the chaos of Rome's dissolution. Since seafood has always been the staple of Scandinavian diet, a shift of the feeding areas of fish may have drawn the Vikings so far from their native land. Whatever the cause, Western civilization trembled before the ferocious pagans who tossed Christian infants from pike to pike and cut the "blood eagle" onto the quivering backs of their prisoners. Wherever they went in their shallow-draft, dragon-prowed vessels, they brought violent and unexpected death. The church added to its regular prayers the plea: "God spare us from the wrath of the Northmen."

England was hardest hit of all. The full onslaught against the English started in 856, and within a few decades the patient Anglo-Saxon building of centuries seemed to be obliterated. Northumbria was extinguished so brutally that part of the area was blighted throughout the middle ages, and Woden and Thor were chiseled into the fallen crosses of the north. Mercia's

hard-won predominance in the Heptarchy was viciously cut short. The smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were likewise overwhelmed, and by 870 only one of the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms still survived—Wessex. By early 878 even Wessex was virtually conquered, and its youthful monarch, Alfred, was hunted like a fugitive through the Somerset marshes.

In one of the world's greatest military reversals, however, Alfred struggled to victory over the terrifying Vikings, winning at Ethandun (now Eddington) one of the most important battles ever fought on English soil, and exacting at the Treaty of Wedmore (878) half of England, and, in the bargain, the Christianization of his Danish adversaries. Alfred, truly the Great, was now the first ruler of all free Englishmen; but his domain was limited to his own Wessex, little Kent, and half of Mercia. The dividing line was the old Roman road, Watling Street, running diagonally from London to Chester, on the Irish Sea. All England to the north and east was the Danelaw, composed of several Viking kingdoms and independent boroughs.

Alfred the Great was the father of the British navy. He created the first organized war fleet of England. He repopulated devastated London and established twenty-five fortified cities, among them Oxford. Yet his true greatness lay in the restoration of learning and the arts of peace.

But peace was not to be the lot of Alfred's weak successors against the ravaging Vikings. In 1017 the exasperated witan passed over the discredited descendants of Alfred to choose the ablest monarch they could find. He was the Danish King Canute, ironically the first true ruler of a fully unified England. A convert to Christianity, Canute was the able and enlightened ruler of a northern empire including Denmark, Norway, and England. He was working toward a Nordic federation from Iceland to the Baltic, which would certainly have altered England's future, when he died in 1035. England then returned to Anglo-Saxon monarchs until Harold (last of the Anglo-Saxon kings) perished at Hastings in 1066.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. Before the Viking assault the average Englishman was a small farmer cultivating his own acres. This way of life, destroyed by the "time of troubles," was to reappear among the English only with the settlement of the American colonies. For, menaced by the disorders of these early savage centuries, the little farmer relinquished title to his soil in return for protection by a warlord. Feudalism was the compromise against disaster, and it facilitated the Norman-French conquest that merely substituted new overlords for the previous Anglo-Saxon masters.

The gravest calamity which the Vikings inflicted was the fearful gutting of the English church and the virtual annihilation of learning. Along the entire east coast and inland for a day's ride almost every church was destroyed. All the schools and monasteries were obliterated, and their occupants enslaved or, more generally, slain. England's nobility and most of its surviving clergy were soon reduced to illiteracy. Alfred complained that

south of the Thames not a single clergyman understood the Latin he bunglingly repeated.

Yet not until modern times has a nation's head conceived and effected so great a nationwide educational program as Alfred's. The king himself studied arts and trades. He compelled his illiterate officials to learn their letters or lose their positions. He ordered the copying of available Anglo-Saxon literature, so that we are probably indebted to Alfred for most extant OE writings, which, of course, are in Wessex dialect. He translated into OE many Latin works of knowledge and piety. Far more than most monarchs Alfred was successful in his own wish: "I desire to leave the men who come after me a remembrance in good works."

It is difficult to appraise the Viking contribution to English culture, since the forays of the Vikings represented the last explosion of the early Norse culture to which the Anglo-Saxons had once belonged. Therefore, the Vikings probably did not bring anything radically new into English culture, but rather tended to reinforce much that was already basic in Anglo-Saxon culture and character. However, the Viking conquerors did bequeath to Ireland, southern Scotland, and much of northern England a strain of vigorous people, and they did actually settle some parts of England, like the Lake Country, that had never been truly colonized before.

LANGUAGE. In sheer number of words Latin has given more to English than has any other language, but if the test of importance is word frequency, then Dano-Norwegian exceeds all other languages in contributions to English.

On our lips every day are words the Vikings gave us: nouns such as *anger, birth, dirt, fellow, gate, husband, knife, law, skill, skin, root, window, wing;* verbs such as *call, cast, crave, die, hit, scare, take, want;* adjectives such as *awkward, happy, ill, low, odd, rotten, ugly, wrong.* The map of central and northern England is speckled with place names of Scandinavian origin, names ending with *-by* (village), *-beck* (brook), *-fell* (hill), *-garth* (yard), *-gill* (ravine), *-thorpe* (hamlet), *-thwaite* (clearing). Millions of Englishmen and Americans bear surnames with the Scandinavian patronymic (Johnson, Thompson, Richardson, Robertson) instead of the more conventional English form (Jones, Thomas, Richards, Roberts).

Proof of the potency of Viking words appears in the triumph of Old Norse terms like *sister, egg,* and *weak* over the OE *sweostor, ey,* and *woak.* Most notable is the *they, their, them* series of pronouns from Scandinavian; today's survival of the OE form—"Let 'em have it"—is considered subliterate. Scandinavian also affected English strongly in its extensive use of verbs with adverb-prepositions such as *take in, out, off, on, up, down, from, to;* though condemned by classicists like Dr. Samuel Johnson, this practice has become today one of the liveliest methods of new phrase formation.

The chaos of the Viking centuries, destroying standards of education and culture, caused a weakening of the complex structure of Anglo-Saxon words and sentences. Even before the Norman French conquest, OE was already

tending toward the sloughing off of inflexional endings and the softening of harsh consonants, processes that would accelerate in Middle English (ME).

ALFRED AND THE ORIGINS OF ENGLISH PROSE

Alfred the Great (849–900?, King of Wessex 871–900?). Alfred had always displayed an interest in books and learning that was extraordinary in an Anglo-Saxon Aetheling, and thus, after the Treaty of Wedmore (878), he devoted much of his time to improving the education of his people. He had no literary pretensions himself, but sought rather to provide in a form the English could understand the substance of what he deemed were the most authoritative works available. Therefore, he translated a number of Latin works into the vernacular, a feat which has earned him the epithet: "Father of English Prose."

Alfred was also responsible for the codification of Anglo-Saxon law, and he may be chiefly credited for the preservation of extant OE literature, almost all in his Wessex dialect. His translations, however, are best known by their original Latin titles.

Cura Pastoralis is a close translation of Pope Gregory the Great's "Pastoral Care," instructing clergymen in their duties. Alfred's own preface is the first significant prose in English. He announces his determination to revive learning and defends English as a worthy vehicle of knowledge.

Historia Universalis is a free translation of "Universal History" by Paulus Orosius, a Spanish priest of the 5th century, who sought, like St. Augustine of Hippo, to refute the contention that Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome. Alfred condensed seven books of 236 chapters into six books of 84 chapters and inserted a detailed geographical study of western Germany and accounts of travel to the Arctic (by Ohthere) and to the Baltic (by Wulfstan).

Historia Ecclesiastica, the first history of England in English, is almost a slavish translation from Bede. It omits the scholarly apparatus of the original but makes no additions. Alfred's role in this work may have been minor, perhaps limited to commissioning it.

De Consolatione Philosophiae was a free translation of "Concerning the Consolation of Philosophy," a Latin work written by Boethius in the early 6th century, and the most influential single work of philosophy during the middle ages. The original was later translated into ME by Chaucer.

This famous work, originally written alternately in prose and verse, displays the neoplatonism and stoicism that Boethius was exposed to in Rome. It deals only with natural theology, and hence does not concern itself with the Christian religion. Philosophy, in the form of a woman, undertakes the task of explaining to Boethius: knowledge of self (first book); the fickleness of Fortune (second book); that true happiness is found in God alone, who is all good (third book); that evil never really goes unpunished nor good

unrewarded (fourth book); and that man's free will is wholly consonant with God's foreknowledge (fifth book).

Alfred divided the original five books into forty-two chapters, and he also added Christian and Germanic allusions. There is a separate verse translation as well as one in prose.

Soliloquia is a work translated from St. Augustine of Hippo:

Book I. Close translation of Book I of "Soliloquies," a search for the presence of God through Faith, Hope, Charity, and Truth.

Book II. Selections from Book II of "Soliloquies" on immortality of the soul.

Book III. Free translation from *De Vivendo Dei* ("Of Seeing God"), on how wisdom accompanies the soul in its afterlife. Although the authorship is debatable, the work, especially in the third book, seems to be the latest and maturest work of Alfred.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. No original copies extant, but four different recensions of these prose annals have come down to us in seven mss. There is no significant contradiction in any of the accounts, but details, especially provincial events, vary according to the locale of the four chronicles (Winchester-Canterbury, Abingdon, Worcester, Peterborough). The *Chronicle* was probably initiated c. 891 at Alfred's direction. Entries start from the time of Caesar's invasions but are derivative and usually historically of minor value until the reign of Alfred. The longest version, the Peterborough, extends to 1154. The major English events are listed for each year, in entries sometimes as starkly brief as "869. In this year the [Danish] army again went to York and there lay in wait for one year," but sometimes as vivid and fluent in narrative as that dealing with the war years from 911 to 924.

The *Chronicle* is perhaps the most important prose work in OE. No other people in the world during these centuries possessed such a relatively complete and revealing record of their history. The *Chronicle,* in its 11th and 12th century entries, demonstrates the slow shift from OE to ME.

POEMS FROM *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* Imbedded within the *Chronicle,* especially from 925 to 975, are OE poems showing the unbroken tradition of the alliterative stress verse.

The Battle of Brunanburh (Brun'ăn-bŭrĥ) (entered for 937) celebrates the victory of the English under Athelstan over the combined forces of Dublin and York Danes, Scots, and Strathclyde Britons. The poet, possibly from the Danelaw, was evidently not an eyewitness. The poem is notable for its patriotic fervor, while its imagery is vivid but conventional, half of its staves being copied from earlier OE battle verse. The battle site represented may be what is now Burnswark in Scotland. The poem was translated into modern English by Tennyson.

The Battle of Maldon (entered for 991). In this poem the giant Alderman Byrhtnoth (his skeleton, exhumed in 1769, measured six feet, nine inches) and his retainers courageously bar the raiding Norse from a causeway join-

ing an island to the mainland. The battle site today is accepted as the mainland opposite Northey Island in Essex on Blackwater River. Some scholars now dispute the assumption that the Norwegian leader (who is not named in the poem) was the famed Olaf Tryggvason. After parleying, the chivalrous *eorl* withdraws his troops to permit the Norse to form their battle line on the mainland. The mighty alderman and many of his thanes fall, while some Anglo-Saxon warriors flee in cowardice. The Norse win a Pyrrhic victory.

The poem is often judged to be the finest piece of pure epic poetry in OE. Although the poet probably reports hearsay, he is imaginatively present in the savage "spear play." The work is famous for its picture of the indomitable Anglo-Saxon warrior. After the alderman's death, loyal Byrhtwold encourages the survivors:

> "Purpose must be the harder heart the bolder
> Spirit must be the stronger as our strength grows less."

Aelfric (al'frik) (c. 955–c. 1020). Educated at Alfred's capital, Winchester, Aelfric became the first abbot of Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire. Facile in Latin, Aelfric proved himself an extremely accomplished prose writer in OE. He wrote homilies, translations from the Old Testament, theological commentaries, admonitions on duties of priests and monks, and texts on grammar and mathematics.

Wulfstan (wulf'stän) (d. 1023). Wulfstan was Archbishop of York (1002–23) and Bishop of Worcester (1002–16), during the last and severest Viking forays. Of fifty-three homilies attributed to him in Bodleian ms. Junius 99, only four are indisputably his. The *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* ("Wolf's Sermon to the English"), dated 1014, considers the Viking depredations as divine retribution for English sins, urges valiant resistance, and issues a summons to repentance. It is highly eloquent and forceful OE prose and, with the *Battle of Maldon*, it constitutes a fitting epitaph for Anglo-Saxon England.

When Harold was killed in the midst of the shield wall of his desperate thanes, the English-speaking people had completed just about half of the timespan from their first mention in history down to the present. Prior to the end of Anglo-Saxon times, the overwhelming majority of the settlements of today's England had been established and had been given the names which, with slight alteration, they still bear. The basic English vocabulary we now employ had been almost fully established. We now recognize OE literature, which was destined to suffer centuries of oblivion in obscure manuscripts, as the greatest Germanic literature of its time and as the world's greatest literary achievement between antiquity and the 11th century.

PART TWO

The Middle Ages to the Early Renaissance

CHAPTER 5

The Norman Conquest and Three Fallow Centuries

(1066–1349)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. Even before the Norman Conquest the influence of France as the cultural center of Europe was manifesting itself among the English, especially at the court. But it was William, Duke of Normandy, who, in 1066, at Hastings, defeated the Anglo-Saxon king, Harold, and thereby established beyond question the dominance of French culture in England for several centuries. William the Conqueror, becoming king as William I, holds the distinction of conducting the last successful invasion of England right down to the present day. However, unlike previous invasions of England, the Norman Conquest did not involve a mass migration. The total admixture of Norman French blood to the population of England was relatively small. Nevertheless, with the Norman Conquest the economic and political power of the nation was settled firmly in the hands of the Norman French.

Though England had a few thoroughly incompetent rulers such as William II and John during the three hundred years after the Norman Conquest, for the most part it enjoyed remarkable prosperity and achievement under the brilliant leadership of William I, Henry I, Henry II, Edward I, and Edward III. These rulers had a truly national and, for the age, an international viewpoint and a scope of operations that in comparison made the kings of Anglo-Saxon times, except the mighty Alfred and the Danish Canute, look like mere heads of a large comitatus. They were shrewd men, strong in will, able in civil administration, and skilled and resolute in the inevitable medieval warfare. Above all, they gave England what continental peoples never knew in medieval times—internal peace and stability coupled with freedom from foreign invasion.

William the Conqueror created the great council (with much the same personnel as the Anglo-Saxon witan) which has been called parliament since c. 1240, and the epithet, "Lion of Justice," was accorded to Henry I, who

founded the exchequer (treasury) and virtually established the still-continuing royal judiciary system of England.

Still, naturally, social conflict was not absent. The famous Magna Carta (1215) arose from the first constitutional struggle in English history; it was not truly a democratic document but an exaction from King John of stipulated rights for his feudal barons.

We would be inaccurate if for most of this era we refer to the kings of England as English kings. For generations after the Conqueror they were actually, like him, fundamentally Frenchmen, dukes of Normandy, who counted the crown of England as one of the choicest plums of their domain and who found English troops to be among their finest pawns in the unceasing continental warfare. But when the weak King John lost Normandy in 1204, the Anglo-French royalty and nobles of England began to turn their interests to the island. Edward I (reigned 1272–1307) may be called the first truly English king after the Norman Conquest.

In spite of William's efforts to center the government in the court, to break up the Anglo-Saxon earldoms, and to command direct loyalty from all the major landowners, it was only during this age that England was genuinely bound in feudalism, that complicated system of vassalage by which every man was somebody else's man. King John was forced to surrender England to the Pope and receive it back again as a papal fief. Henceforth, in theory, even the kings of England had a feudal suzerain. Feudalism was "organized chaos" in an age of fear, for when early medieval Europe was beset internally and externally men eagerly gave up their freedom in exchange for protection, and relinquished their individual choice in exchange for collective security. Since England enjoyed unique internal and external peace after the Norman Conquest, the English proved particularly restive under the feudalistic fetters. One of the many effects of the black death in 1348–49 was to weaken irremediably the control of feudalism over the English.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. For three hundred years after the Norman Conquest, English literature presented a rather mediocre spectacle with little trace of the OE glory behind it and with only meager hints of the grandeur ahead. But the cultural achievements of England during this period in other respects were considerable. Some 20th-century thinkers, like the British essayist Hilaire Belloc and the American sociologist-historian Pitirim Sorokin, suggest that this was the most creative and successful epoch in English culture.

No modern effort of construction can equal in sheer economic effort, national determination, and unified devotion the building during these centuries of the great cathedrals of England—twenty-seven in all. Incredibly enough, sixteen of these were started in the thirty years from 1070 to 1100. By the middle of the 14th century all twenty-seven cathedrals were essentially complete. In addition, countless parish churches were constructed during the three hundred years after the Norman Conquest. No other area in the world of comparable geographic size displays such a wealth of ecclesiastical struc-

tures. Modern England with its hugely increased population finds it a burden simply to maintain and repair that vast construction.

All the arts contributed to the beauty of the churches. By the beginning of the 13th century, St. Albans, north of London, was the greatest artistic center of Europe. English craftsmen in wood, stone, glass, tapestry, and painting were in demand everywhere. During the reign of Henry III (1216–72) the royal court of England was a center for European craftsmen, especially the French.

If the fundamental meaning of Renaissance is a renewed interest in the learning of classic antiquity, England enjoyed a 13th-century Renaissance. Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), Bishop of Lincoln and first chancellor of Oxford University, was the universal scholar. He knew Greek and Hebrew, was a Christian humanist, and in an age emphasizing derivation insisted upon the careful study of sources. His pupil Roger Bacon (d. 1294) proved to be the greatest medieval advocate of scientific observation and experiment, foreshadowing the later Francis Bacon. Two of the most brilliant and subtle of all the world's philosopher-theologians were John Duns Scotus (c. 1270–1308), whose opponents have ironically given us the word *dunce* in ridicule of the great mind, and William of Occam (c. 1280–c. 1349), known as "The Invincible Doctor." While they undoubtedly have even older educational roots, both of the great English universities were officially founded in the 13th century—Oxford (University College) in 1249 and Cambridge (Peterhouse) in 1284.

University training, like virtually all other education, centered about the monastic orders. The monasteries and, to a lesser degree, the nunneries, were the repositories of knowledge and learning. Their libraries contained the mss. which have largely given us our picture of antiquity as well as that of the middle ages. The monks, patiently and sometimes a bit erroneously, copied mss. and themselves did much of the original composition in an age when literacy was largely confined to the clergy. Indeed, some men of this period entered the monastery not primarily because of profound religious convictions but because in it existed the only intellectual life.

The monasteries also took a major role in the most permanent economic achievement of medieval England—the draining of marshes, clearing of forests, and cultivation of the land to expand the arable soil to approximately its modern dimensions. While the monks lived without individual possessions, they lived in corporate wealth and eventually in corporate magnificence. Then the corruption that accompanied the wealth caused a mounting popular distaste for monks.

The three centuries after the Norman Conquest introduced to the English the use of surnames. The Anglo-Saxons bore only one name—Bede, Caedmon, Wulfstan, for example. The surname (name upon a name) arose partly in imitation of the aristocratic French practice and partly to discriminate among the many men in the same community who bore the name of John, Richard,

or William. Throughout the English-speaking world millions today bear descriptive surnames applied to their ancestors in this era: kinship–*Hancock* (son of little John); occupational–*Faulkner* (falconer); geographical–*Atterbury* (one who lives at the fortified town); personal characteristics–*Brown* (i.e., dark complexioned).

LANGUAGE. During this era three languages–Latin, French, and English –were spoken and written in England.

Latin was the language of the church, of education, and of scholarship. As the truly international tongue of the age, Medieval Latin (quite an elaboration and modification of the classic Latin of Caesar and Cicero) gave a decidedly cosmopolitan flavor to the learned and to the greater clergy of the period. The able Archbishops of Canterbury, Lanfranc from 1070 to 1089 and St. Anselm from 1093 to 1109, could carry on their ecclesiastical administration in the same Latin they had used in their native Italy. Students and faculties of the medieval universities could transfer to any other university in the West without language difficulties. All important theological, philosophical, and scholarly works had the ear of half the continent of Europe when written in Latin. English savants took advantage of this opportunity up to the time of Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia* (1687). Latin, however, had surprisingly little influence upon English in the three hundred years after the Norman Conquest, mainly because the gulf was simply too vast between the erudite speaker of Latin and the illiterate peasant who conversed in English.

French was the language of the conquerors, and therefore the language of public life, of fashionable and aristocratic society, of the law courts, and of the royal administration. Legal French was not formally abolished by the English parliament until 1731, and it still persists in a host of legal terms such as *petit jury* and *oyez*. Royal approval of a parliamentary bill in England is still expressed in French: *Le roi le veult.*

In this era virtually all of what is usually termed "literature," i.e., belles-lettres, was written in French. The prestige of medieval France, prop of the papacy and major power of the Crusades, made the Anglo-Normans look down with condescension upon all things merely English, including the language. As early as the 13th century French was the language of half the royal courts of Europe, and it was to remain so into the 18th century.

BEGINNINGS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH

Ignored during the fallow centuries by the leaders of English society, the English language, confined almost exclusively to the illiterate lower classes, went through rapid and significant change. Even among uncivilized peoples there is generally an elite that tends to maintain standards and traditions for an unwritten language; no such brake existed upon Middle English in the three hundred years after the Norman Conquest. Throughout the island,

English tended to accelerate the "degeneration" process initiated in the Viking period. Middle English (ME) is the name given to the English language during the time from c. 1100 to c. 1500.

CHANGES IN OE TOWARD ME. The principal changes in OE which resulted in ME are set forth below.

(1) Most of the elaborate inflections of OE, pronounced in slovenly fashion, were reduced to an unaccented *e* sound. This final *e* was still pronounced in ME and is retained in a multitude of today's spellings–*abide, complete, hope, late, mute*–where the effect is simply to lengthen the preceding vowel. The only significant survival of the older inflections occurs in the pronouns and in some irregular noun plurals.

(2) An analytical structure became necessary to show word relationship after the decline of the inflections. Hence the development of the conventional English practice of Subject–Verb–Object and Modifier–Modified. The position of a word in a modern English sentence shows its structural use, whereas OE employed inflected endings for structural indications.

(3) Use of natural gender. Among European languages English is unique in calling male beings masculine, female beings feminine, and sexless objects neuter. Minor exceptions are personifications ("France seeks to regain her former glory") and sexed beings whose sex is deemed irrelevant ("The baby lost its rattle").

(4) Extensive development of verbals. OE used the participle thus: "He had saved," and "He was saved," but ME added the adjectival uses, "A penny saved," "the saved man," and "Saved miraculously, he lived another decade." OE employed the infinitive as a noun, but ME added adverbial use: "We went to see the circus." From the abstract noun ending in *-ung* ME developed the gerund, "Reading books is my great pleasure."

(5) Less that half of the OE strong verbs (e.g., *spring, sprang, sprung*) survived in ME. Some were permanently lost; most were made weak verbs. From ME times new verbs, whether formed or borrowed, are automatically made weak (e.g., *bat, batted, batted*). Ignoring the seven classes of strong verbs in OE, we now cavalierly lump together the remaining strong verbs as "irregular." Instead of representing a sizable chunk of English verbs as they did in OE, the strong verbs are today a tiny minority of sixty-eight.

(6) There occurred an enormous multiplication of the adverb-preposition constructions in order to clarify the relations of words as the older inflections disappeared. The practice arose largely from Old Norse influence upon late OE. The speakers of ME created verb phrases with prepositions in a haphazard fashion. Consequently today's employment of prepositions is almost wholly idiomatic and the despair of dictionary editors. Prepositions constitute the major problem for foreigners learning English. Cf.: "If you don't run up the stairs to wind the clock, it will run down."

(7) The harsh guttural sounds of OE were considerably softened, largely because of the effort required to pronounce them, and partly because of their

coarseness in comparison with French. Revised pronunciation of former gutturals was quite erratic as we can see by: *rough, cough, hiccough, plough, through,* and *though.*

(8) Sizable contraction of vocabulary. Much of the vocabulary of OE poetry is alien to us because that poetry was aristocratic and perished with the Anglo-Saxon nobility. The illiterate peasant, with his narrow life in field and cowbarn, had no use for the OE vocabulary of abstract ideas and elevated life. When English rose in prestige after 1250, it had to look to French to supply many words in place of lost OE words.

THE ME DIALECTS. While these major alterations were affecting all English, innumerable smaller changes were taking place in every English-speaking community. The fluid condition of the language permitted slight but quite noticeable differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation in areas only a handful of miles apart. The classification of ME dialects is therefore arbitrary, true only of broad similarities in one section of the country set off against other sections. Northern (OE Northumbrian) was spoken north of the Humber River; it had an important subdivision in Scots, spoken originally in Lowland Scotland but extending itself farther north in ME times until today it has virtually eradicated the native Celtic. Midlands (OE Mercian) was the dialect south of the Humber and north of the Severn-Thames river line. East Midlands was a subdivision spoken in most of Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire, and in all the counties to the east. West Midlands was spoken through the rest of the Midlands; although this was the smaller of the two subdialects, it expanded westward to evoke the protests of Welsh nationalists—"Every century Welsh loses another county to English." Southern (OE Wessex) was spoken south of the Severn-Thames river line; in ME times it penetrated Cornwall until today the Cornish Celtic is extinct. Kentish, spoken only in the far southeastern county of Kent, may be termed a separate dialect or a subdivision of Southern English. Northern and Southern were rather far apart. Midlands partook of both neighboring dialects, a shading off from each.

The most obvious differences among the three dialects appeared in the form of the third person singular, present indicative, of verbs. In OE this form always ended in *-th* preceded by any vowel. In ME, Northern used *-es,* Midlands *-en,* Southern *-eth.* Thus:

OE	*lufoð*	ME Midlands	*loven*
ME Northern	*loves*	ME Southern	*loveth*

In ME Northern the OE *ā* was retained; hence *stane* and *hame* in Scots instead of *stone* and *home* as in ME Midlands and Southern which changed the sound to *ō.* ME Southern often voiced the initial *f* and *s* of Midlands and Northern, changing them to *v* and *z;* hence *verst* for *first* and *Zomerzet* for *Somerset.* Note that modern standard English has taken *fox* from Midlands and *vixen* from Southern. From the welter of ME dialects, modern

English derives from OE *ān* (one) the widely different pronunciations of *one, only, any, Aintree* (one tree).

Modern English is fundamentally derived from the dialect of London, essentially East Midlands, but revealing admixtures from other dialects, particularly Southern and Kentish. The only other dialect of English to be the vehicle of a notable literature is Scots. Both of these dialects made their first appearance in significant literature at the end of the 14th century.

THE CYCLES OF ROMANCE

ORIGIN OF MEDIEVAL ROMANCE. Until the rise of democracy and the middle class at the end of the 18th century, literature was almost exclusively composed for the aristocrats. Medieval aristocracy ultimately had its origin in the Germanic *aethelingas* and *eorlas* who had led the assault upon the moribund Roman Empire. The memory of these heroic ages provided the matter of great epics like *Beowulf* for later generations up to c. 1000. By the 11th century the aristocrats of Europe were sufficiently sophisticated to smile at what they deemed the naiveté of these epics and to prefer to them the medieval romance, a literary genre that dominated literature until the end of the 15th century. The word *romance* was originally used to distinguish poems in the vernacular French from works in the scholarly Latin. Romances before Chaucer's time were almost invariably in verse. After his time they tended toward prose. The characteristics of the medieval romance are:

(1) Narrative of heroic adventure, usually a string of episodes not too closely related.

(2) Type characters rather than individualized portraits. One knight is pretty much cut from the same armor as the next knight. A lovely damsel in distress is picturesquely immured in a forbidding castle by a foul villain.

(3) Prevalence of the Quest theme. Possibly an unacknowledged heir seeking his throne, or a knight searching for the Holy Grail.

(4) Highly imaginative encounters with extraordinary personages in fantastic settings. As the centuries progressed, romancers had to spice up their accounts with ever mounting marvels—many-armed giants, mythical animals, and enchanted forests and castles.

(5) Extensive Christian references, though sometimes merely conventionally superimposed.

(6) Love interest, which eventually resulted in the modern association of *romance* with a love affair. The courtly love convention, so prevalent in the romance, originated in 11th-century Provence (southern France). It showed a veneration of women which was stimulated by the medieval cult of the Virgin.

(7) Idealized concept of medieval knight. The perfect knight, existing in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* but seldom in real life, is portrayed as strong

and courageous, like the epic hero, but also as virtuous, moral, piously Christian, modest, and altruistic.

(8) Usual metrical romance ranged from 1000 to 6000 lines and employed octosyllabic couplets or a stanza of six, eight, or twelve lines.

The British Isles in medieval times knew the romances in all three of the languages current in England—Latin, French, and English—and also in the Celtic of Wales.

THE THREE MATTERS. Arbitrarily the romances were divided into three "Matters"—the Matter of Rome (tales of antiquity, including those of Greece), the Matter of France (essentially about Charlemagne and his paladins), and the Matter of Britain (chiefly about Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table). Medieval romancers elaborated far beyond any historical foundation. The most extensive development of all the "Matters" occurred on the continent, not in England.

THE MATTER OF BRITAIN: THE ARTHURIAN LEGENDS

Variations are enormous, but the usual account makes Arthur the son of Uther Pendragon (Welsh—chief war leader) and Igraine, wife of Gorlois of Cornwall, who was seduced by Uther through Merlin's magic. Arthur proves his ancestry and power by plucking the magic sword Excalibur from a rock. He defeats Scots, Picts, and Saxons, and from his capital at Caerleon on Usk rules all the British Isles and even Iceland. His wife, Guinevere, of a noble Roman family, falls in love with Lancelot, one of Arthur's Knights of the Round Table (round to make all equal). Arthur, ignorant of this, declares war against Rome rather than pay tribute and leaves the kingdom in charge of his nephew Modred.

In the king's absence, Modred seizes the pretext of Guinevere's faithlessness to revolt. About to enter Rome in triumph along with his loyal nephew Gawain, Arthur hears of Modred's treachery and hurries back to Britain. At a great battle far to the west in Cornwall, Modred and his knights perish as do most of the Knights of the Round Table. Arthur, gravely wounded, is borne to the isle of Avalon for the healing of his wounds. Guinevere takes the veil. In later accounts Arthur becomes quite secondary to his knights, who are devoted to the search for the Holy Grail, reputedly the cup Christ drank from at the Last Supper.

Most of the Arthurian material is pure medieval fiction, but there may be some basis for it in:

(1) Celtic mythology with Arthur, Gawain, and others representing primitive British gods. Matthew Arnold was convinced that the known composers of the Arthurian legend were building with "materials of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, and more majestical."

(2) Historical Roman defender of the Saxon Shore or Romano-Celtic chieftain momentarily withstanding the Anglo-Saxon conquest. Gildas, per-

haps a contemporary of Arthur, makes no mention of him in his Latin history, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* ("Concerning the Destruction and Conquest of Britain," c. 550), and ascribes British resistance to Ambrosius Aurelianus, "last of the Romans." However, Gildas mentions no other British leaders, for as a member of the "Roman party" he deprecated the pitiful self-help of the Britons.

The earliest unchallenged reference to Arthur appears in the Latin *Historia Brittonum* ("History of the Britons," c. 800) ascribed to Nennius (Welsh—Nynniaw). In a brief paragraph Arthur is credited with twelve great battles, in the last of which, Mount Badon, he singlehandedly slays 960 enemies. Arthur is called *dux bellorum* (battle leader, cf., Pendragon), and Nennius asserted that there were many of higher rank.

In the poems ascribed to the renowned and perhaps legendary Welsh bards, Llywarch Hên, Taliesin, and Aneirin (or Aneurin), who lived at the time of Arthur or during immediately succeeding generations, there is no mention of Arthur. To these poets the great Celtic fighter against the English was Urien, Lord of Rheged.

In *The Black Book of Carmarthen* (late 12th century) the Welsh poem, "Stanzas of the Graves," refers to the unknown or nonexistent grave of Arthur (basis for later belief in Arthur's return), and also to the final battle, Camlan, and to Arthur's one surviving knight, Bedwyr (Bedivere). Another Welsh poem in this collection, "Kulhwch and Olwen," mentions Bedwyr and Kai (Kay) and suggests that Arthur maintained a military court (basis for the later concept of the Round Table). An Arthurian knight, Gereint, son of Erbin, is the hero of still another Welsh poem in this collection. *The Book of Taliesin* (13th century) contains a cryptic Welsh poem, "Harrowings of Hell," which sends Arthur upon mysterious voyages to unknown, shadowy places. A prose Welsh romance of "Kulhwch and Olwen" appears in *The White Book of Rhyderch* (early 14th century), and in *The Red Book of Hergest* (late 14th century) translated and published by Lady Guest in *The Mabinogion* (1838). Here Arthur leads his warriors in a fabulous boar hunt. These works are of indeterminate age, perhaps no earlier than the centuries of their ms. appearance, but they all possess a mythological quality, untouched by the Gallic versions of Arthur, suggesting a remote origin. Possibly the Welsh material may antedate all other references to Arthur. Cornwall and Brittany were Celtic areas where elaborate tales were probably spun about the reputed victor over the Anglo-Saxons, but no medieval material on Arthur has survived from these regions.

Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1100–c. 1155). The real founder of the Arthurian legend as we know it is Geoffrey of Monmouth. He was probably a native of Monmouthshire, that border county disputed by the Welsh and the English through much of the middle ages. His Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136) claims as its source a volume from Brittany, but the Arthurian material is probably largely an exercise of the author's imagination

on native Celtic tradition. Almost half the book deals with the Arthurian legend, presented substantially as in the account above, but omitting Lancelot and the Round Table. Modred adulterously takes Guinevere in Arthur's absence. This is the first extended account of Arthur, and all subsequent versions are essentially variations or expansions of it.

Robert Wace (c. 1100–c. 1175). A native of Jersey and canon of Bayeux, Robert Wace prepared French *Geste des Bretons* or *Brut d'Angleterre* (1155), a verse paraphrase of Geoffrey. Wace's only significant plot addition is the Round Table, probably never previously mentioned. Most important, however, is his alteration of the primitive English story to a medieval romance with all the trappings of Norman castles, chivalry, and knight-errantry, trappings which the legend has ever since maintained.

Layamon (lā'ä-mön, lä'yä-mön, lä'mön) (c. 1205). Layamon, a priest of "Ernley" (probably Arley Regis in Worcestershire), wrote the first long poem in ME of literary distinction and the first Arthurian account in English. It is called *Brut* (bröt), and its dialect is a western form of Southern English. Usually it is referred to as *Layamon's Brut*. Basically employing the OE alliterative line, *Brut* also uses rime and assonance. No other ME work displays so much indebtedness to the OE poetical diction, since the OE tradition lingered longest in the west. The work is a free translation of Wace, double the length of the French poem largely because of Layamon's descriptive additions. Most important addition is an elaboration of the origin of the Round Table.

After Layamon the development of the Arthurian legend is largely continental. Marie de France (1154–1189), although resident at the court of Henry II, wrote in French. Her *lais* were brief chivalric romances in octosyllabic couplets, chiefly derived from lost Breton sources. While Launfall, Tristram and Iseult appear in her compact, highly-wrought verse, they are not linked to Arthur.

But perhaps the greatest figure in the assembly of Arthurian romances was Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1140–c. 1191) of Provence. His French verse introduced Lancelot in *Erec and Enide*, that knight's love affair with Guinevere in *La Chevalier de la Charette*, and Percival in the unfinished *Perceval le Gallois*. The two great contributions of Chrétien were: (1) Fusing diverse elements into a complex cycle of Arthur and his knights; (2) Shaping the whole cycle into a love sequence—courtly love for the most part, but spiritual love in the case of Percival and the Holy Grail. Chrétien ineradicably stamped his interpretation upon the Arthurian legend in its subsequent proliferation throughout western Europe: France—Robert de Barron, Béroul, Thomas de Bretagne, Bédier; Italy—Rusticano di Pisa; Germany—Hartmann von Aue, Eilhart von Oberge, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried von Strassburg, Walther von der Vogelweide.

For English literature, doubtlessly the finest telling of the Arthurian material was the work of Sir Thomas Malory (c. 1470). However, the interest

of English writers did not stop there. Before undertaking *Paradise Lost*, Milton had planned an epic upon Arthur. Among other numerous English poets using Arthurian material are Spenser, Dryden, Tennyson, Swinburne, Morris, Arnold, Masefield. The contemporary English novel has notably retold the Arthurian story in *The Great Captains* by Henry Treece and *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White. Operatic treatment appears in *Parsifal* and *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner.

OTHER NATIVE ENGLISH ROMANCES

Properly speaking, the "Matter of Britain" was of Celtic origin. The material of this section is distinctly English in origin. Probably unfamiliar to most Americans, much of this material was well known by the English up to recent generations as the literature of their childhood.

King Horn (c. 1250). Invading Saracens (apparently Scandinavians) kill King Murray of Suddene (southwest Scotland). Horn, his fifteen-year-old son, is set adrift with Athulf and Fikenhild. At Westernesse (Mull of Galloway) he is befriended by King Ailmar, whose daughter Rimenhild falls in love with Horn. Betraying the lovers to Ailmar, Fikenhild secures banishment of Horn. In Ireland Horn slays the champion of the pillaging Saracens. He returns in guise of a pilgrim to prevent Rimenhild's marriage. With the help of Irish soldiers he reconquers his kingdom and slays the traitor Fikenhild. The lovers marry.

This work, the earliest extant English metrical romance, is apparently adapted from *Horn* (c. 1180), an Anglo-French romance by one Thomas. Using short rimed couplets, *King Horn* shows conventional characterization and stock thrills. The author may have intended the work as an object lesson for noble youths on the growing-up of a knight amidst fearful adversity.

Havelok the Dane (c. 1300). English King Athelwold at his death entrusts his daughter Goldborough to Godrich, the unscrupulous Earl of Cornwall, charging him to marry the girl to the fairest and strongest man available. Meanwhile, in Denmark the villainous regent orders a fisherman to drown Prince Havelok. The fisherman and Havelok flee to Grimsby in England where, during a famine, Havelok works as a scullery boy. In festival games Havelok throws the stone farther than all the other competitors and Godrich quickly marries Goldborough to the supposed kitchen knave. In a dream, an angel reveals to Goldborough that her new husband is a king's son, and Havelok returns to Denmark where he proves his claim to the throne and is crowned king. Heading a Danish army, he invades England, burns Godrich at the stake and adds England to his kingdom. The work derives from Anglo-Saxon sources largely through *Estoire des Angleis* (c. 1150), an Anglo-French romance by Geoffrey Gaimar. Havelok may be the historic Anlaf Curran, son of Sihtric, King of Northumbria (925). As a scullery boy Havelok used the name of Cuaran, and the name Havelok may be a Celtic version of Anlaf. The wedding of Havelok and Goldborough is obviously symbolic

of the union of Denmark and England. Unusual for metrical romance is the protracted humble role for the hero, who excels in plebeian virtues. The poem employs short rimed couplets.

Guy of Warwick (c. 1300). Felice, daughter of the Earl of Warwick, spurns Guy, son of her father's steward. After valiant deeds of knighthood Guy returns to learn from Felice that she will marry only the very best knight in all the world. After renewed and incredible prowess in France, Germany, Italy, and Greece he returns to wed Felice.

Soon conscience-stricken that his deeds were performed for a selfish goal, Guy takes the cross and in the Holy Land slays the paynim giant, Amarant. He returns to England in time to slay the Danish champion, Colbrand, and save the nation. He spends his last days as a rigorously pious hermit near Warwick.

Probably the crusading elements and the monastic conclusion are additions by a clerical poet. The story is laid in the reign of Athelstan (925–40), grandson of Alfred the Great. Vikings were indeed raiding in this period, and the poem may have the historical basis, which Michael Drayton accepted in *Poly-Olbion* (1613–22), as did other chroniclers. Most popular of the English romances, *Guy of Warwick* was known by 1410 even to Moslems in the Holy Land, and proved enormously popular in Elizabethan England. The poem uses short rimed couplets.

Bevis of Hampton (c. 1300). Bevis' mother plots the murder of her husband, the Earl of Southampton, and then marries his murderer. Bevis is sold into slavery, arriving finally at the court of King Ermin of the Saracens. Ermin's daughter Josian falls in love with Bevis. After remarkable exploits, made possible by Josian's gifts of magic sword and steed, Bevis is united with Josian, now a Christian convert. They proceed to England where Bevis regains his inheritance.

This romance prefigures the Hamlet themes of family intrigue and the bearing of a sealed letter to a foreign king demanding the bearer's death, and it also reflects popular folk motifs. Its style is episodic and loosely constructed. It is remarkable among romances for its dashing style and broad humor, sometimes almost appearing a burlesque of the romances. Most of the poem is short rimed couplets, but the first 474 lines are in stanzas with rimes *a a b a a b* or *a a b c c b*. It is probably a translation of a lost French work (c. 1200) from a variety of sources. Versions exist in Romance, Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic languages.

Richard Coeur de Lion (c. 1300). This work takes literally the nickname of Richard I. The monarch thrusts his arm down the throat of an attacking lion, tears out the animal's heart, dips it in salt and promptly eats it. There is scant historical basis for most of the king's incredible feats during the Crusades. The most notable feature of the work is its intense patriotism, which is contemptuous of the French, and which makes Richard a full-

blooded Englishman though in fact he spent only a short time in England altogether and was clearly a Norman Frenchman.

THE MATTER OF FRANCE

The King of France from 768 to 814 was Charlemagne (Charles the Great). He ruled a great empire which included present-day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, western Germany, northern Italy. To Frenchmen of the later middle ages this Germanic monarch was the most shining initiator of France's glory. The historic Charlemagne was rapidly pushed to the background in the romances while his knights, the paladins, appeared in the foreground. Chief paladins were Roland and Oliver whose exploits were probably historical events in the Spanish campaign of the king in 777.

On the way back to France through the Pyrenees, the rearguard of Charlemagne, in which Roland, Duke of Brittany, was stationed, was wiped out by treacherous Basques. Reports quickly transformed the Christian Basques into Saracens, and poets transformed the skirmish into an epic struggle, patriotically commemorated in the *Chanson de Roland.* Reputedly, Taillefer, the Norman-French bard accompanying William the Conqueror, chanted of Roland's deeds while leading the charge against the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings.

As the virtual home of the medieval romance, France multiplied to a staggering number the poetic tales about Charlemagne and his paladins, classified as "geste du roi" within the body of all Old French epic poems called "chansons de geste." The Anglo-French of this period recited these metrical romances throughout England, but by the 13th century, when such romances were being produced in the English language, the hate for an old military adversary proved too great to foster much "Matter of France" in English. The extant English representatives–almost all emphasizing the conflicts between Christians and heathens–fall into three groups:

(1) The Firumbras tales concerning the giant Saracen, Firumbras, who is overpowered in Spain by Oliver and becomes a valiant Christian warrior. Best of this category is *Sir Firumbras* (c. 1375), composed in the South, over half in couplets internally rimed, the rest in stanzas *a a b a a b*. One of the earliest printed books in English was *Charles the Grete,* a prose version of the Firumbras story by the pioneer printer Caxton in 1485.

(2) The Otuel series concerning the Saracen champion, Otuel, who is converted to Christianity while battling Roland. Otuel marries a daughter of Charlemagne and becomes Lord of Lombardy. *Otuel* (c. 1300), composed in the South Midlands, is the oldest "Matter of France" in English but is otherwise undistinguished.

(3) Detached romances. From c. 1400 in the Southwest Midlands comes an inferior English version of the *Chanson de Roland.* The East Midlands *Chevalere Assigne* (c. 1475) is the only known English metrical romance upon Godfrey of Bouillon, the Crusader leader who wrested Jerusalem from

the Moslems. A prose version by Robert Copland, titled *The History of the Noble Helyas, Knight of the Swanne,* was one of Wynkyn de Worde's early printed books in 1512.

THE MATTER OF ROME

All stories of antiquity, whether Greek or Roman, were lumped together under the "Matter of Rome." The French romancers developed extensive cycles about four ancient subjects: the Trojan War, the wanderings of Aeneas, the siege of Thebes, and Alexander the Great. Only two of these, the Trojan War and Alexander—particularly the latter—really engaged English attention.

(1) Trojan War. Medieval man knew the legend not through Homer directly but from two late Greek versions, fraudulently claiming to be eyewitness accounts, by Dictys Cretensis (4th century) and Dares Phrygius (6th century). The best ME account appears in the *Laud Troy Book* (c. 1400), from the Northwest Midlands in over eighteen thousand lines of short couplets characterized by frequent alliteration. The very first printed book in English was *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (Bruges, 1474 or 1475), a prose translation from the French by the printer Caxton.

(2) Aeneas. Chaucer recounted from Vergil the Dido story in *House of Fame* and in *Legend of Good Women.* Caxton in 1490 printed his own prose translation from the French in *Eneydos.*

(3) Siege of Thebes. The only significant ME version is Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes.* Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* incorporates an episode of the siege.

(4) Alexander. This was the most popular of all the ancient material. In the *Monk's Tale* Chaucer observes:

> The storie of Alisaundre is so commune
> That every wight that hath discrecioun
> Hath heard somewhat or al of his fortune.

The ultimate medieval source of material on Alexander was the pseudo-Callisthenes (c. 200), an imaginative account written at Alexandria. Earliest ME version is *King Alisaunder* (c. 1300) in four-stress couplets, probably from a Kentish scholar. The Scots were particularly intrigued, so much so that Alexander became a standard Scottish name; hence "Sandy" as a generic term for a Scot and the surnames *Saunders, Sanderson, MacAlister.* So many French poems on Alexander were written in iambic hexameter that this line is still called an Alexandrine.

The popularity of the medieval romance induced writers to seek material even beyond the three vast "Matters." The chief area for this extension was the oriental romance typified by the Squire's Tale from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*

RELIGIOUS WRITINGS IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH DIALECTS

These works are listed by dialectal origin since our chief interest in them will be linguistic rather than literary, although some of the works have a distinct cultural value.

NORTHERN DIALECT

Cursor Mundi (c. 1300). "The Surveyor of the World" is a "Biblical encyclopedia" from Creation to Doomsday in over thirty thousand lines, generally of four stresses. In a prologue the anonymous author deplores the prevalence of the romances and claims that divine accounts are at least equally as interesting and profoundly more important. Better than the ladies of romance is Our Lady, honoree of the poem. Because French rimes are all the rage, he will write in English for the many who "na Frenche can." He is strong in concrete example and picturesque description. The influence of romances is clear in such accounts as the slaying of Goliath. The poem is attractive in its warm humanity, and proved widely popular, influencing the York and Wakefield play cycles.

Richard Rolle of Hampole (c. 1300–1349). Born probably at Thornton-le-Dale near Pickering in Yorkshire, Richard Rolle left Oxford at nineteen to don a hermit's garb and spend the rest of his life in mystic contemplation at Hampole, Yorkshire. That he was widely read is demonstrated by abundant mss. of his writings, both Latin and English. Joy in the life of Jesus is the theme of his mysticism, with its tokens of Heat (warming love), Song (inspiration of heavenly music), and Sweetness (ineffable delight suffusing the soul). His English works consist of prose renditions and commentaries on the Scriptures, psalter, and devotional life, and poetic lyrics and canticles praising Christ and the Virgin. Severely austere, his work seems more pious than poetic. No longer ascribed to him is *The Pricke of Conscience,* a rather dull, didactic poem mostly in four-stress lines, urging the reader to faith and good works.

MIDLANDS DIALECT

Orm (fl. 1185). Orm was a canon regular, possibly of Elsham Priory in Lincolnshire. In the introduction to his *Ormulum* ("Orm's little book," c. 1200) he says there are 242 homilies, but there are only 31 in the fragment of twenty thousand unrimed lines of fifteen syllables that has come down to us. Each homily consists of a translation of the Gospel of the day with commentary and application. The author's arrangement does not follow the missal, however, but attempts a chronological life of Christ. Few writers have possessed Orm's ability to say so little so tediously. The work, however, is important in English literary history for the following reasons:

(1) It is a unique guide to ME pronunciation. Orm meticulously doubled

the consonant before a short vowel in a closed syllable, and retained a single consonant before a long vowel.

> Icc hafe wennd inntill Ennglissh goddspelless hallȝhe lare.
> I have turned into English the gospel's holy lore.

The author is generally deemed the first phonetician in English.

(2) It shows the potency of English even after having been submerged by the Norman Conquest. Orm's interminable poem is almost purely English, employing only about ten French words altogether.

(3) It is the first unrimed metrical poem in English. Abandoning OE alliteration it adopts continental regular scansion.

Robert Mannyng (c. 1283–c. 1340). Born at Bourne in Lincolnshire, Robert Mannyng was canon at Sempringham Priory. *Handlyng Synne* (1303–38) is a considerably amplified translation of Anglo-French *Manuel des Péchiéz* ("Manual of Sin") by William of Wadington. In lively anecdotal fashion its four-stress lines treat of the Ten Commandments, Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Holy Sacraments, twelve requisites of a good confession, and Twelve Spiritual Graces. The work gives a rich picture of everyday medieval life. Mannyng disapproved of dancing, wrestling, beauty contests, pub-crawling, and gaming, and he derided women's coiffures, cosmetics, and voluptuous garments. He vigorously opposed popular amusements such as tournaments, songfests, and dramas outside of the church. Appealing to the common man, he attacked unjust nobles, officials, landlords, merchants. He is notable for his heavy larding of French words. Mannyng also wrote a *Rhyming Chronicle of England* (1338) based largely upon Wace and Bede, although it was indebted to many medieval accounts, including romances.

SOUTHERN DIALECT

Poema Morale (c. 1180). "A moral ode" surveys the author's life, regrets his spiritual deficiencies, recommends holy living, paints Doomsday and the terrors of Hell, and concludes with a joyful picture of Heaven. The work provides the first known example in English of the Latin septenary, a seven-stress line with a caesura after the fourth stress, used in rimed couplets.

Ancren Riwle (c. 1200). "The rule of nuns" consists of eight books on the proper conduct of an anchoress. The books were composed at the request of three young nuns, quite literally sisters. The unpromising title of the work should not keep a reader from encountering the most engaging English literary personality before Chaucer. The medieval clichés are overridden by a forceful and independent mind. The author is more concerned with individual wholeness, creative thinking, commonsense goodness, and inward godliness than he is with outward form or convention. He is outspokenly honest, thoroughly good-natured, delightfully witty. He can neatly describe a glutton, a seducer, a fanatic. His advice is moderation: "Wear no iron, nor haircloth, nor hedgehog-skins; . . . do not with holly nor with briars cause yourselves

to bleed without leave of your confessor." His appeal is homey: "Our Lord doth to us as men do to a bad debtor; he accepteth less than we owe him, and yet is well satisfied." Probably the finest piece of English prose before Malory.

KENT DIALECT

Dan Michel of Northgate (fl. 1340). *The Ayenbite of Inwit* ("Remorse of conscience," literally "Backbiting of the inner spirit") is a dreary translation of *Le Somme des Vices et des Virtues* (1279) by Laurentius Gallus. It is chiefly a commentary upon parts of Scripture and church litany. Its remarkable interest lies in its ms. written by the author himself and carefully dated 1340. It is the first work in English that is unquestionably in the form of its original composition, and it may be the first English work whose date of composition is certain. In James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) the young Irish poet, Stephen Dedalus, obsessed with the problem of sin, cannot push from his mind the recurrent title, "Agenbite of Inwit."

MIDDLE ENGLISH RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LYRIC POETRY

RELIGIOUS VERSE. The amount of ME religious lyric far exceeds that of the secular lyric, and shows itself earlier. Some 12th-century fragments are ascribed to St. Godric, once a seafaring merchant, later a hermit in Durhamshire. His "Hymn to the Virgin" (all titles in this discussion are modern because the originals were untitled) anticipates the later extensive cult of the Virgin. Latin devotional verse is behind much of this material, chiefly canticles to Christ and Mary. Conventional beratings of earthly joys and exaltations of heavenly bliss are occasionally transcended by gems like "Sunset on Calvary" (c. 1240):

Nou goth sonne vnder wode,—
me reweth, marie, þi faire Rode.
Nou goth sonne vnder tre,—
me reweth, marie, þi sone and þe.

Now goeth the sun under the forest;
My heart is stirred to pity, Mary, by thy fair face.
Now goeth the sun under the tree;
My heart is stirred to pity, Mary, by thy son and thee.

The only known religious lyricists of the 13th century were Michel Kyldare, of Irish origin, and Thomas de Hales. "Love Rune" by Friar Thomas employs the familiar *ubi sunt* (Where are they?) theme of medieval times to urge maidens to abandon earthly love for spiritual love. In the 14th century the prominent name is Richard Rolle of Hampole (discussed earlier in this chapter) who apparently stimulated a school of religious poets that endured well through the following century.

SECULAR VERSE. Because literacy during this period was largely confined to the clergy, we possess comparatively little secular lyric verse. Such poetry was evidently quite extensive, since clergy of this age frequently condemned gay, worldly song. Indeed, the ME secular lyric displays qualities alien to OE lyrics: grace, vivacity, subtlety, diversity of mood and subject, and the strong note of passionate love. Some French critics, like Hippolyte Taine, explain this alteration as the French contribution to the Anglo-Saxons, who otherwise crouched in the mud gazing dourly at the incessant rain.

On the other hand, although the French influence is undoubtedly great, the native element may be stronger. While OE verse was primarily the expression of a tough warrior aristocracy, a few samples of popular OE poetry suggest that the commonality among the Anglo-Saxons possessed both good humor and liveliness. With English literature of the "Three Fallow Centuries" created almost exclusively by the lower classes, such bubbling spirits could emerge in the ME secular lyric.

Perhaps "Now Comes the Blast of Winter" (c. 1225) may be the oldest known popular song in English. The famed "Sumer is Icumen In" (c. 1240) glories in the awakening of spring, a more exquisite experience to the medieval north than our comfortable age can grasp; elaborate instructions for singing accompany this poem. It belongs to a popular genre termed *reverdie*, celebrating the "re-greenment" of springtime.

From 1250 to 1350 the secular lyric mounts in numbers and joy, chiefly celebrating the sweet charms of nature and the even sweeter charms of the beloved. "Lenten Is Come with Love to Town" and "Alysoun" (both c. 1300) display all the freshness and delight of "Merrie England" that we associate with Chaucer. The native secular lyric and the courtly love conventions charged even the religious lyrics with their earthy qualities, so that the Virgin was often celebrated in the same fashion as an earthly inamorata. The great lyric outburst of the Renaissance had had an exuberant ancestry.

CHAPTER 6

The Age of Chaucer

(1349–1400)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. In 1348 and 1349 a new invasion of England began. The invaders, however, were not men but germs—an especially virulent strain of the dreaded bubonic plague, aptly called the "black death." All medieval statistics are uncertain, but authorities believe that between one third and one half of the island population perished within eighteen months. Manor rolls tell of untended fields, abandoned children, and even whole villages depopulated; some communities, unscathed by the Norman Conquest, vanished from the map, wiped out by the black death. This fearful visitation is certainly one of the most important events in the history of England. Continuing sporadically for three hundred years, the plague forced new trends in English life and accelerated other slowly developing tendencies.

A nationwide disaster binds together the citizenry as nothing else can. The sense of a common experience and responsibility during the plague years fostered a positive English nationalism such as the previous natural antagonism to foreigners could not alone produce. National pride and patriotism of the English seem to have their essential roots in the late 14th century. This was abetted by the mounting hatred of France during the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453). English pride swelled in the spectacular career of the Black Prince, son of Edward III and the greatest of English medieval knights (note that Richard I was a Frenchman who spent less than a year of his reign in England). At Poitiers (1356) the Black Prince gave unprecedented glory to English arms as he captured both the King and Dauphin of France, the King of Bohemia, and a large number of French knights. When the Black Prince died in 1376, popular sentiment demanded his burial at the most sacred spot in England, beside the remains of "the holy blissful martyr," St. Thomas à Becket, in Canterbury Cathedral.

This incessant warfare with France also caused a loosening of the ties between England and the Roman church. Because the papacy, under French domination, was captive at Avignon, the entire English nation lifted an out-

cry against an international church, an institution which formerly had troubled only the monarchs. In this era there emerged also the present division of parliament into the House of Lords and the House of Commons; and both houses denied jurisdiction to any foreign court (including the papal, of course) in English matters, declared England no longer a papal fief, and in 1371 ruled ecclesiastics unfit for state offices.

The laboring population suffered the greatest losses from the plague, and although a desperate nobility tried to freeze wages and jobs, employers were bidding against each other for the formerly despised worker, now a scarce and highly desirable commodity. English labor for the first time realized its worth and began to demand economic freedoms and reforms. Scattered uprisings culminated in 1381 in the Peasants' Revolt when from all the realm a horde of commoners, perhaps one hundred thousand strong, descended on London to force concessions. However, after a time, Richard II calmed and dispersed them. Yet for a few days the only power in England was wielded by peasants, armed with scythes and pruning hooks, defiantly chanting a medieval version of democracy and socialism:

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?

All the repressive measures of the government failed to maintain villenage, and workers wandered about virtually at will instead of being tied to the land. Labor shortages caused landowners to enclose the small tracts of medieval farmers, and to institute large-field cultivation and grazing, thus hastening the downfall of medieval agriculture.

England's great industrial revolution would await the 18th century, but a significant economic and "industrial" revolution stirred the last half of the 14th century. The dislocation of the medieval system and the mobility of the workers fostered new patterns of manufacture and trade.

Exports of raw wool declined as cloth weaving increased. Domestic industry thrived, and Englishmen began to depend upon trade to acquire articles instead of remaining self-sufficient upon their own acres. Edward III was forced into extensive coinage to satisfy a growing money exchange. Money was replacing labor service and barter, competitive rents and wages were supplanting immemorial stipulations, contracts were taking the place of inherited status, and individualism was emerging out of the former village cooperative communities.

The plague also brought about two diametrically opposed reactions to the previously accepted religious and moral ideals. Some individuals, dancing on the abyss of the black death, abandoned the pretext of piety and plunged into dissolute revelry. Even some clerics brazenly ignored their vows in favor of giddy pleasure, while others were brutally assaulted, even murdered, as they denounced merrymaking. Certain scholars of ecclesiastical history feel

that the English church, especially in its monastic divisions, never recovered from the holocaust of the black death.

At the same time, other individuals, with the onset of the plague, explored more profoundly than ever the depths of faith and the religious life. No previous Englishman so deeply probed the mystic bond of God and the individual as did the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. No previous Englishman so rigorously examined the visible church as did John Wycliffe. A precursor of the Reformation, Wycliffe demanded a propertyless church, bitterly denounced materialistic and power-seeking clergy, and insisted on an individual's direct access to God (hence a severe minimizing of the church as an intermediary agent). The Lollards ("mumbler," a word of Dutch origin applied contemptuously) tried to bring Wycliffe's beliefs into actual practice. The orthodox complained that every fourth man was a Lollard, and the church's desires to extirpate Lollardy were thwarted by parliament.

At last the unsettled condition of the time brought about a change in kings. Wycliffe's chief noble protector was the ablest statesman of the age, John of Gaunt (Ghent), Duke of Lancaster and brother of the Black Prince. Under the despotic Richard II, John of Gaunt fell into disfavor, and parliament, bitterly disputing with the monarch, eventually accepted the deposition of Richard II by Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt. In 1399, for the first time since Anglo-Saxon days, parliament reverted to the practice of the witan and elected a new king, dubious as was his claim by blood.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. The secularization of English life in this era marks a momentous cultural change. For the first time in over seven hundred years the most intelligent and creative minds of England were electing a secular rather than a religious career. Established in this period was the pattern that English culture would bear even to our own day: intellectual and artistic expression was to arise primarily from the laity rather than from the clergy. While the decline of the church was certainly contributory, the economic, political, and social ferment that made this-worldly concerns more exciting and stimulating than otherworldly consecration was even more important. Churchmen were almost as infected by a new materialism as were the people. Except for the Parson, every ecclesiastical figure among Chaucer's pilgrims is gross in all appetites except that of self-denying faith.

Although England had behind it a cultural tradition of almost a millennium, Chaucer's age was the first to manifest a distinctly national expression. Anglo-Saxon culture was largely a division of Germanic culture, and the three centuries after the Norman Conquest saw the English for the most part sharing the medieval culture of all western Europe. There are more centuries of English literature before Chaucer than since his time, but he appears indeed as "The Father of English Poetry" with his vigorous portrayal of uniquely English characters and attitudes. Chaucer in his essential support of the contemporary church, his distaste for Lollards and Utopians, his acceptance of

the philosophy of Boethius, and his belief in the divine right of kings may be considered medieval; but his kinship with the modern world can be seen in his mockery of outworn chivalry, his scorn of most previous English writings, his love of ancient pagan myth and story, his pragmatism and skepticism, his dislike for tyrannical monarchs, his curiosity for science, and, above all, his warm love for humanity just as it is. English historians frequently refer to the Age of Chaucer as "The End of the Middle Ages."

LANGUAGE. From the Norman Conquest until the end of the 13th century, writers using English appear apologetic, often beginning their works with a prologue that attempts to justify the use of the "ignorant vernacular." Early in the 14th century their tone changes: everybody knows and uses English. When Edward III convened parliament in 1337 for advice on his claims to the French crown, a learned lawyer addressed the assembly in English—although French was the official language of parliament—because, relates Froissart, "he might be better understood by all, for one always knows better what one wishes to say and propose in the language to which he is introduced in his infancy than in any other."

In 1362 the chancellor opened parliament with a speech in English and, more significantly, parliament in the same year ordered all lawsuits to be conducted in English. Royalty resisted abandoning French, the language of prestige, in favor of English; nonetheless, Richard II addressed the mob in English during the Peasants' Revolt and had to listen to the order in English that deposed him. The speeches of Henry IV claiming the throne and later accepting it were delivered in English and by Chaucer's day French in England had become outmoded. In the opening decade of the 15th century the *Donet François* by John Barton gives reasons for Englishmen learning French but significantly says nothing to indicate that they should communicate with each other in French.

MIDDLE ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE

The English dialect that emerged triumphant in the late 14th century was the dialect of London. It was the speech of Chaucer, and thereby contained ME's greatest peak of expression. In turn it served as the foundation of standard English today throughout the English-speaking world. As the nation's capital, London has logically given its speech to the nation as Paris has its speech to France. London was the site of the royal court, the great law tribunals, the meetings of parliament, and the whirlpool of public affairs. London was, as it still remains, the largest and wealthiest city of England, the center of commerce and social life. It has long held the cultural dominance of the nation, with the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge close enough to share its dialect.

Though Chaucer's influence was great, it was not as decisive as had been Dante's, whose *Divine Comedy* established the Florentine dialect as standard

Italian. While basically East Midlands, London English also partook of neighboring Southern and Kentish elements, and even borrowed further afield, since London for centuries had been a goal for the ambitious and talented from the entire island. More cosmopolitan and more directly in contact with many French and Latin speakers than were other dialects, London English absorbed particularly large numbers of French and Latin words.

INFLUX OF FRENCH INTO ME. Some Gallic jesters have quipped that English is poorly pronounced French. The preponderance today of Anglo-Saxon vocabulary in common speech as noted in Chapter 2, disproves this statement. Nonetheless, London English has domesticated thousands of words from French: for government and administration—*alliance, assembly, authority, council, court, record, repeal, state, tax;* for law—where virtually all our terminology is French from *advocate* to *warrant* and where English speakers would be puzzled by OE *gerihte* (justice) and OE *dom* (judgment); for the military—in which *army* and *navy* are from the French as well as most war terms (although many are from French of the 16th century and later); obviously for fashion and food—where one can point out with Wamba in Scott's *Ivanhoe* that *cow, sheep, pig,* and *deer* are English while *veal, beef, mutton, pork, bacon,* and *venison* are French; for art, literature, and learning—as in *beauty, color, copy, figure, paper, pen, remedy, stomach, story, study;* for the church—*adore, communion, confession, creator, faith, miracle, mystery, religion, sermon, theology, virtue.*

During the life of ME slightly over ten thousand French words were adopted. About three quarters of these adoptions are still widely used, while most of the remaining quarter survive in technical studies of medievalism (*assoil, foison*) and historical fiction (*"Castellan,* lower the *portcullis!"*). The greatest influx of French words occurred from 1250 to 1400, the period when upper-class Englishmen were accepting English as their tongue and larding it with necessary supplements from the richer vocabulary of French. This century and a half brought in about forty percent of all French words now in the English language; the peak period of adoption was the second half of the 14th century. The absorbed French words were so thoroughly assimilated into English that today we seldom realize their French origin, while most of the French words borrowed since the Renaissance are consciously alien (*coup d'état, hors d'oeuvres, rapprochement*).

Many ME borrowings still retain the Middle French pronunciation, while recent borrowings try to imitate modern French; thus *chair, chimney* from ME and *chaperon, chiffon* more recently. Indicative of English retention of Middle French pronunciation and especially of the great English indebtedness to French appears in our fourfold borrowing of one French word, *gentil: gentle, genteel, gentile* (all ME), and *jaunty* (modern English imitation of modern French).

Another reason why English words of French origin will vary from modern French is the French dialect from which English borrowed. Norman French

used *ca-* where Parisian French employed *cha-*. Thus English *carry* and *cauldron* instead of Parisian French *charrier* and *chaudron*. In some cases English has borrowed the same French words from both dialects: *cattle* (Norman), *chattel* (Parisian); *warden* (Norman), *guardian* (Parisian).

As the learned turned to English from 1250 to 1400 they also introduced numerous words from the Latin. In many cases, of course, it is hard to say whether the borrowing was direct or through the intermediary of French, itself a Romance language derived from Latin. In this period we note the first English appearance of the Latin words: *allegory, conspiracy, genius, gesture, history, include, infancy, inferior, intellect, lunatic, magnify, mechanical, nervous, picture, polite, private, solitary, submit, testify*. Especially important was the introduction of Latin suffixes such as *-able, -al, -ent, -ive, -ous*.

The penchant of English for borrowing words has resulted in our vocabulary offering many triads, series of three words essentially synonymous but differing in nuance: the English word blunt or direct; the French-derived word polite or formal; the Latin-derived word erudite. Examples: *ask, question, interrogate; bold, valiant, audacious; goodness, virtue, probity*—in which the first word is English, the second French, and the third Latin.

Less extensive, but still important, was the borrowing of Low German words. The Dutch, not the English, were the great seamen of this era and, therefore, English adopted the Dutch words *bowsprit, deck, dock, freight, mart, rover*. Influential too was the large Flemish population (note *Fleming* as an English surname) that settled about London in the cloth trade.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF CHAUCERIAN ENGLISH. Because of these enormous additions in the language, reading 14th-century English presents something of a problem. Therefore the following rules of pronunciation should be observed:

(1) Every letter is pronounced. The *l* is pronounced before *f, k, m*. (*half, folk, balm*). The *k* is pronounced in *kn* (cn), the *g* in *gn*, and the *w* in *wr*. The suffix *-cion* (our *-tion*) has two syllables. Both *n*'s are sounded in *sonne*. The only unpronounced letters are *h* in French words like *honour* and *g* in French words like *resigne*.

(2) All long vowels have the so-called continental values, as in Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian: *ā* as in *father, ē* as in *café, ī* (*ȳ*) as in *ravine, ō* as in *tone, ū* as in French *tu*. Doubling a vowel indicates that it is long but does not change its value (*rote* and *roote* are pronounced identically).

(3) Short vowels have essentially the same pronunciation as long vowels but are pronounced more rapidly and less emphatically. Final unaccented *e* has the sound of *e* in *cinema;* usually in verse it elides with the initial vowel (also *h*) of the following word.

(4) Diphthongs: *ai* (*ay, ei, ey*) as in *bay; au* (*aw*) like *ow* in *brow; eu* (*ew*) as in *knew; oi* (*oy*) as in *boy; ou* (*ow*) as in *crouton*.

(5) Consonants are generally pronounced as today. The *ch* is the modern

English *ch* of *chigger*, not the French *ch* of *chignon*. The *r* is trilled, much as in modern Scots. The *gh* has the sound of German *ch* in *Ich*.

The remarkable shift from OE toward modern English can be observed by comparing the start of the Lord's Prayer given in Chapter 2 with the ME version appearing in the Wycliffe Bible (1389): "Oure fadir that art in hevenes, halwid be thi name."

Scansion of the two opening lines of Chaucer's General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* reads:

Whan that | Aprille with | his shoures soote
The droghte of March | hath percëd to | the roote

Observe the initial trochee substituted for an iamb, the pronounced final *e* (elided before *of*), and the feminine endings to both lines.

MIDDLE ENGLISH PROSE AND POETRY BEFORE CHAUCER

ME PROSE WRITINGS

Travels of Sir John Mandeville (man'de-vil). The most famous medieval travel book, although written in French and only later translated into English and other languages, was *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. It was claimed to have been written by a native of St. Albans who left England in 1322, wandered about the Near and Far East for decades, and eventually settled down in France at Liége, where he was persuaded to recount his experiences. Ostensibly a pilgrim's guide to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the subject expands to include unbelievable journeys throughout the Orient: Cyclops, men without heads but with eyes and mouth in their chest, men with giant ears reaching to the knees, enormous snails whose shells are used for human dwellings.

Apparently there is no firsthand observation in the work but instead much reliance upon other medieval travel accounts, and, naturally, the author's imagination. The work was possibly composed c. 1366–71 in French by John de Bourgoyne, French physician at Liége, or it may be a hoax by Jean d'Outremeuse (1338–1400), Liége chronicler. The English translation is direct from French; another English translation is from a Latin version of the original.

John of Trevisa (tre-vē'sa) (1362–1402). A Cornishman educated at Oxford, John of Trevisa was a vicar at Berkeley in Gloucestershire. Under the patronage of Lord Berkeley he translated the Latin *Polychronicon* (1352) of Ranulph Higden into English (1387). This universal history from the Creation to the mid-14th century was the most popular historical writing of the age. Trevisa's only contributions were a continuation of the account up to his time, a dialogue on the art of translation, and a memorable passage on the supplanting of French by English as the language of the schoolroom.

The works appeared as one of the earliest printed books in English (1482) with modernizations and additions by Caxton, the printer. Trevisa also translated *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (c. 1250) by Bartholomew Anglicus into English (1398); this catchall of fact and fancy was one of the most popular volumes of medieval science and pseudoscience, and was used by the Elizabethan writers Spenser, Marlowe, and Jonson. Trevisa also translated religious writings and perhaps a part of the Bible.

The Cloud of Unknowing. This, one of the world's most remarkable mystical writings, was composed between 1350 and 1395 by an unknown cleric of north-central East Midlands. Addressing a youth of twenty-four (perhaps an imaginary figure), the author details the way to God, not through knowledge or search, but through contemplative love. The incomprehensibility of God together with man's essential ignorance creates a dense cloud of unknowing between the human and the divine. Upon this cloud the yearning spirit must beat "with a sharp dart of longing love." The author is picturesquely scornful of fanatics displaying outward signs of religious frenzy: "Some set their eyes in their heads as if they were giddy sheep beaten in the head, and as if they should die anon. Some hang their heads on the side, as if a worm were in their ears. Some pipe when they should speak, as if there were no spirit in their bodies; and this is the proper condition of a hypocrite. Some cry and whine in their throats, so greedy and hasty be they to say what they think." But it is a quiet, lonely quest for oneness with God which the writer offers to the very few who will soulfully tread the mystic path.

The work was formerly ascribed to Walter Hilton (d. 1396) whose *Scale of Perfection,* written for a nun, completely lacks the vigor and originality of *The Cloud of Unknowing.* Five other ME mystical prose treatises are probably by the same unknown author. In Aldous Huxley's work on mysticism, *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), one of the most frequently cited works is *The Cloud of Unknowing.*

WYCLIFFE'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

John Wycliffe (wik'lif) (c. 1328–1384). Probably born in the North Riding of Yorkshire, John Wycliffe (the name is spelled in a variety of ways) entered Oxford in 1345 and by 1360 was Master of Balliol College. He became Doctor of Theology in 1372. Apparently he was then in service of the king and John of Gaunt, who relished his attacks on the temporalities of the church. Secular affairs, he held, were not the church's concern; clergy were not entitled to hold worldly goods; and the state was free to expropriate church property. His powerful supporters were alienated when Wycliffe, in approximately 1379, attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation, and he retired to his parish of Lutterworth from 1380 until his death. His numerous sermons, commentaries, and treatises in Latin and English are full of Biblical precepts, bluff English independence, and sturdy common sense. These along

with his and his followers' personal influence, swayed a large percentage of the commonality of England. His teachings and those of allied Lollardy were a persistent undercurrent leading toward the Reformation, where they merged with Protestantism.

The Wycliffe Bible (first version c. 1382, second version c. 1395) was the offspring of Wycliffe's continual declarations that the Bible was the absolute authority of Christianity and should be available to each man so that he might direct his life by its teachings and interpret the Scriptures for himself. Wycliffe's was the earliest complete translation of the entire Bible into English. He derived it from the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome (c. 400). Wycliffe's actual contribution may have been no more than inspiring the translation. The first version was largely the work of Nicholas of Hereford, and the second (and much superior) version largely by John Purvey. The Authorized Version of 1611 leans heavily upon the Wycliffe translation. The magnificent outburst of Bible translations during the Reformation, in which Wycliffe's work played an important part, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

THE ALLITERATIVE REVIVAL IN ME POETRY

Between 1350 and 1400 there appeared over a score of poems, ranging from a few hundred lines to many thousands, in a verse form obviously descended from the four-stress alliterative OE poetry. Not an antiquarian revival, this was a firm maintenance of the native tradition. However, the stave pattern is generally superseded by the line as the unit of thought, and the rigid alliterative scheme of Anglo-Saxon times is abandoned for a more haphazard alliteration, now essentially a decorative feature in the poem, with the same sound sometimes coursing through several consecutive lines. The origin of this technique lies essentially in northwest England, as Chaucer's Parson indicates:

> But trusteth wel, I am a Southern man,
> I can not geste–rum, ram, ruf–by lettre.

In this age of transition the alliterative poems represent perhaps the culmination of the centuries-old native tradition as distinguished from the innovations of Chaucer and his followers. It is interesting to note the characteristics of these, the last masterpieces of English literature which are truly medieval, as contrasted with the new poetry introduced by Chaucer:

(1) Intended primarily for recital in the minstrel tradition. Chaucer's works were designed for reading, not necessarily aloud.

(2) A consequent dramatic quality of gesture and movement. Chaucer is chiefly narrative, descriptive, and lyric.

(3) Objective and anonymous. Chaucer's omnipresence as a delighted and amused observer (and participant) in the Human Comedy makes him "mod-

ern." Even the first person in the alliterative verse seems "any man," "every man," rather than a specific personality as a writer.

(4) Conventionalized subject matter and style. The great alliterative poems show masterful transcending of stereotypes, but they appear narrowly confined in comparison with Chaucer's individualized and personal expression.

(5) Underlying quality of myth and ritual, unlike Chaucer, who is sophisticated, and whose fabulous accounts (like the Squire's Tale) are "let's pretend." Chaucer looks with clear eyes upon the very world about him. His work is less rooted in a background of folk belief than the alliterative poems, and it shows far more influence from consciously literary sources and foreign cultures.

(6) Folk satire and coarse humor, most notable in *Piers Plowman*, while even the broadest humor of Chaucer is essentially the smiling good spirits of a courtly gentleman.

(7) Provincialism; i.e., closeness to social activities and pastimes, to popular dance and song. The authors of the alliterative poems are more definitely "singers with their audience" than conscious literary artists like Chaucer.

(8) Overt allegory and didacticism. Medieval art was heavily surcharged with teaching through elaborate, extended symbols. On the other hand Chaucer is far less allegorical than Dante and even less so than Spenser in the Renaissance.

The best of these alliterative poems, though, have a consummate art and a finished beauty all their own, and are perfectly capable of being appreciated by a modern reader.

The Pearl Poet. In a unique ms., Cotton Nero A X (c. 1400), there appear four untitled alliterative poems in Northwest Midlands dialect. They have been respectively designated as *Pearl, Purity, Patience,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Close resemblances in dialect, diction, style, and caliber lead to the assumption of a single authorship c. 1370.

The Pearl has one hundred stanzas (an additional stanza is spurious or was canceled by the author) subtly linked in groups of five, each stanza composed of twelve four-stress lines riming *a b a b a b a b b c b c* and containing two or three alliterations per line. An astonishing feat of intricate structure, the poem is exciting in sensuous beauty, artful phrasing, eloquent piety, and warm humanity. The dream allegory can be variously interpreted, but it seems to lament the death of the poet's two-year-old daughter Margaret (Greek for *pearl*). The poet often visits a mound (her grave?) where he has lost his beloved pearl. In a dream he is transported to a jeweled world of breathtaking loveliness where he sees a beautiful woman across a river in Paradise. His beloved has matured into the lovely spouse of the Heavenly Bridegroom. When the poet is astounded that she should be so rewarded in spite of her religious ignorance, she explains merit and grace in salvation and the equality before God of the saved. The poet is accorded a vivid glimpse

of her dwelling—the New Jerusalem from the Book of Revelation—and is awakened by his struggles to attain the heavenly city. He arises from his slumber with renewed spiritual strength. *The Pearl* has also been less convincingly interpreted as an allegory of the Eucharist or of the "spiritual dryness" of mystics.

Purity (or *Cleanness*).—Thirteen irregular sections of 1812 unrimed alliterative lines inculcate the virtue of purity through scriptural stories. The Fall of the Rebel Angels, the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the bestial fate of Nebuchadnezzar show the wages of impurity. In contrast is the purity of Christ and the Virgin, which possesses ample power to save.

Patience.—The biblical story of Jonah and the Whale illustrates the evil of impatience. The work is in 531 unrimed alliterative lines. There are vivid nautical scenes, a minutely realistic picture of the slimy interior of a whale, and a dramatic conversation between Jonah and God. The ingenuous conclusion is that he who is too hasty in tearing his clothes will often have to sit sewing them up.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (gä'win or gä'wan).—Four fyttes (fits) totaling 2530 lines in stanzas of irregular numbers of alliterative verses, each stanza being followed by five short lines riming *a b a b a*, the first line having one stress, while the remaining four have three stresses each.

Fytte I: The Challenge. A giant knight, completely green in color, interrupts King Arthur and his court on New Year's Day while they are celebrating Christmas at Camelot. The Green Knight dares anyone present to chop off his head on condition of receiving a similar stroke a year and a day hence at the Green Chapel. As the court falls back aghast at the intruder, King Arthur offers to give the blow. His nephew, Gawain, seizes the champion's role and strikes off the head of the Green Knight. The giant, however, picks up the severed head by the hair and dashes off, calling upon Gawain to fulfill the bargain.

Fytte II: The Knightly Quest. Gawain sets out on All Hallows' Day for his rendezvous in North Wales. Lost in a forest on Christmas Day, he stumbles upon a great castle where he is graciously welcomed by the lord, the lady, and an aged hag. Gawain's host assures him of the proximity of the Green Chapel and arranges for three days of pleasure. The two men agree to exchange each night whatever tokens of pleasure each has won during the day.

Fytte III: The Temptation. The lady of the castle forces her attentions upon the startled Gawain, and that night Gawain receives the game killed by the lord in the day's hunt; he responds with a kiss. The next day is a repetition of the first, but now Gawain responds with two kisses. On the third day the lady gives Gawain not only three kisses but also a green baldric reportedly magical in preserving the life of its wearer. Gawain gives three kisses to the lord but improperly retains the magic baldric.

Fytte IV: The Return Blow. At the Green Chapel on New Year's Day

Gawain presents himself to the Green Knight. Twice Gawain shrinks from the feints of the giant; but then he steels himself for the third stroke, which only gashes his neck. The Green Knight reveals himself as Bercilak de Hautdesert (lord of the castle) and the aged hag as Morgan-le-Fay, fairy sister of Arthur. The enchantress had concocted the whole stratagem to corrupt Gawain and thus shame the entire court of Arthur and Guinevere. Gawain's scratch was the penalty for violating his agreement to exchange the day's winnings. Henceforth the knights and ladies of Arthur's court wore sashes of green to commemorate Gawain's experience.

The narrative is told in a succession of scenes colorful as medieval tapestries or ms. illuminations. The dialogue is expert, and action moves forward with rare grace and continuity. Particularly noteworthy is the description of the natural scenery, probably of Wordsworth's Lake Country, and it was not until the romantic poets of the 19th century that we would again see the subtle effects and less obvious beauties of nature so well portrayed. The courtly tone has suggested that the author might have been a cleric in the Lancashire castles of John of Gaunt. The work is perhaps the greatest Arthurian poem in English, and it is one of the best short narratives of English literature.

The poem neatly unites two ancient Celtic themes, the Temptation and the Beheading. Although the concluding lines of the poem state that the whole adventure is recounted in the "book of Brutus," no known *Brut* (Layamon's or any other) recounts the tale, nor is there any authenticated source for this account. Scholars have hypothesized a previous French romance, no longer extant, that joined the separate motifs and provided a direct source for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight;* however, it is possible that the author composed it as an original work. In later narratives, as in Malory, the noble and courageous Gawain becomes coarse, cowardly, and treacherous.

The medieval meaning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may include any one or a combination of the following interpretations:

(1) The Green Knight seems obviously a pre-Christian fertility deity. Some English villages still have traditional capers crudely commemorating the eternal death-and-rebirth cycle of vegetation. Significantly, a favorite name for rural English pubs is the Green Man.

(2) Gawain may be the text for a lesson on chivalry and knighthood. The author with humor and humanity recognizes weaknesses in mankind and demonstrates how these frailties will cause us suffering, while virtue will give us strength. Except for the baldric episode, Gawain is a wholly exemplary model. The poem has a tag line of French at the very end—*Hony Soit Qui Mal Pence*—the motto of the Order of the Garter founded about 1348. Perhaps the poem was intended as part of the knightly indoctrination of the Order.

(3) The work inculcates the values of Christian chastity, honesty, fortitude, and faithfulness. This interpretation seems especially likely if the author

wrote the companion alliterative poems. The sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant, immorality of many romances is fully supplanted here by a pervasive, but not obnoxious, morality.

(4) It may be a holiday tale. With us the Christmas–New Year's period is still a brief season of merrymaking, but it holds far less excitement for us than the twelve days of Christmas held for medieval man; for him it was a prolonged revelry during a bleak time of the year when agricultural duties were few. We still associate with the Yuletide spirit fanciful tales of marvels, magicians, colorful adventure—and a happy ending. The poem supplies all these.

Piers Plowman (pirz). Some sixty mss.—indicative of its great popularity —offer three successive versions of an alliterative poem, fully titled *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman:*

(1) A-text (1362–63) of 2567 lines consisting of (a) Prologue and eight Passus dealing with the vision of the fair field full of folk, Holy Church and Lady Meed, and the vision of Piers Plowman, (b) four Passus on the vision of Dowel (Do-well), Dobet (Do-better), and Dobest (Do-best).

(2) B-text (1376–77) of 7242 lines vastly amplifying the A-text into (a) Prologue and seven Passus on the vision of Piers Plowman, (b) Prologue and six Passus on Do-well, Prologue and three Passus on Do-better, Prologue and one Passus on Do-best.

(3) C-text (1393–98) of 7357 lines considerably rearranged and altered from the B-text to (a) Prologue and ten Passus on the vision of Piers Plowman, (b) Prologue and seven Passus on Do-well, Prologue and four Passus on Do-better, Prologue and two Passus on Do-best.

John M. Manly has argued that five different authors had their hands in this work. Even scholars subscribing essentially to the theory of one authorship admit the likelihood that the C-text was written by another author, though the inferiority of that final version may be as easily ascribed to the prolixity of age as to a different author. Notes in 15th-century mss. ascribe the poem to William Langland. Hypothetical biography from references in the text would place his birth about 1332 at Ledbury (birthplace of John Masefield) in Shropshire. He was probably schooled at the priory of Great Malvern and took minor clerical orders. He wrote the first draft of *Piers Plowman* at about thirty. During its composition he lived at Cornhill in London (hence the poem appears in London dialect), earning his livelihood by clerical hackwork. Langland died c. 1400. The following summary considers the A-text, for the later versions add and elaborate, often irrelevantly, without altering the fundamentals of the work.

Vision I. Prologue opens:

In a somer seson	whan soft was the sonne
I *shope* me in shroudes	as I *shepe* were (clad; shepherd)
In habite as an heremite	unholy of workes
Went wyde in þis world	wondres to here.

Asleep on the Malvern Hills the poet dreams of a tower on a high hill, a dungeon in the valley below, and in between a "field full of folk." Lady Holy Church explains that God dwells in the tower, the devil in the dungeon, and in between is the busy world of men. In this world Lady Meed (money reward) is to be married to False until Theology objects. The King wishes to marry her to Conscience, but the latter demurs. The King appeals to Reason, who agrees to serve the King if Conscience will be their counselor.

Vision II. In a second dream the poet witnesses a sermon by Conscience urging repentance and the quest for St. Truth (God). When all are helpless in the search, a humble plowman Piers (Peter), who has served St. Truth for fifteen years, explains the way to God through a worthy and unselfish life. Piers exemplifies practical Christianity in his everyday work and conduct.

Vision III. In a third dream the poet is visited by Thought, who explains that Do-well is the decent, average Christian; Do-better is altruistic; and Do-best is the self-sacrificial saint. For additional information, the poet and Thought go to Wit, whose wife is Dame Study. Thence to Study's cousin Clergy (learning) and his wife Scripture (book knowledge). The poet finds the theory far less satisfactory than practical Christian living.

The B-text completes the threefold implication of the central character: Piers the English plowman, Piers as his namesake St. Peter, and Piers merging with the figure of Christ. What the author presents as his ideal is the vision of every man performing his allotted tasks with consecration and with genuine love for God and man.

No summary can detail the many vivid and realistic vignettes of medieval life that make this work second only to Chaucer in its evocative picture of contemporary society. Remarkable is the bitter spectacle of famine in the contest of Hunger vs. Wastor. Unforgettable is the portrait of Gluttony, swilling from his drink, and reeling about like a gleeman's cur and vomiting. The humor of the poem is not the merry smiling kind of Chaucer, but rather a grimly Anglo-Saxon satire, violently attacking unscrupulous landlords, officials, monks, friars, lawyers, and merchants. The voice is that of the common man, often gruff, even snarling, almost always vulgarly cynical about fine words and fine manners from high places. Many of the aphoristic sayings in *Piers Plowman* were slogans in the Peasants' Revolt. Most impressive is the author's intense piety and burning sincerity. His like, in an allegorical, devotional portrait of the common man, is not to be met again until John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–84).

Morte Arthure (c. 1360). In alliterative lines of Scots dialect *Morte Arthure* is to be distinguished from a decidedly inferior stanzaic poem of roughly the same period bearing the same title. The alliterative version essentially moves away from the medieval romance toward the epic spirit, almost re-creating the battle-hard quality of OE verse in recounting Arthur's last conflict. Malory was strongly influenced by this work with its atmosphere of flesh-and-blood English heroes instead of the misty supernatural figures of

Celtic romance and the stereotyped cardboard personages of much French romance. The poem is sometimes attributed to Huchown of the Awle Ryale.

CHAUCER AND HIS WORKS

Chaucer is really the first great poet of English literature. Though he was very often busy with other pursuits, when he turned to writing he was, for his time, uniquely committed to letters. That is, he devoted his considerable literary talents solely to the creation of verse that was lively and pleasing. He was not a captive of any special moral or political or social ideas, or of any set of manners. He was at home in all levels of society, and he rarely gave way to judgments or condemnations. His range and his sympathies seem almost limitless, and in this he resembles all the greatest poets, whose works may be considered "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time."

From the rich, discreet Merchant to the slimy Pardoner, Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims present an impressively realistic gallery of individualistic competitors in a money-haunted society not unlike our own. Chaucer was a new man, a product of a mercantile class which sportingly participated in the jousts and "courts of love," but which in the business world remained hardheaded and without illusions. In the fast pace of the late 14th century this mercantile class was forming the new court aristocracy, revolving in bureaucratic fashion about the monarch and supplanting the feudal aristocracy which had often defied princes from its broad manorial estates.

Geoffrey Chaucer (chô'ser) (c. 1340–1400). A prominent public figure of this age, Geoffrey Chaucer is nowhere noted as a poet in surviving records, but there is no serious doubt about the identity of the poet-statesman.

Son of a London wine-merchant, Chaucer was a page in 1357 to the countess of Ulster, wife of the king's son, Lionel. In 1359 he accompanied English forces into France where he was captured; he was ransomed in 1360. By 1366 he was married to Philippa, a lady-in-waiting to the queen. Philippa's sister, Katherine, was mistress and later wife of John of Gaunt, Chaucer's patron. By 1368 Chaucer was an esquire in the king's household, and from then until 1374 he traveled extensively in the king's service into France, the Low Countries, and Italy, where he may have met Petrarch, the Italian Renaissance poet. In 1374 Chaucer was appointed controller of customs for the Port of London, and he left this post in 1385 to serve as a justice of the peace in Kent. In the next year he represented Kent in parliament. In the ensuing perilous times the fortunes of Chaucer fluctuated, but in 1389 he was designated clerk of works, responsible for the maintenance of the royal palace and other royal properties. From about 1395 he seems to have been in the service of Henry of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt. Chaucer was well rewarded when Henry became King Henry IV in 1399, but he died soon after in 1400. His burial place in Westminster Abbey has since been ringed by the graves of later English writers and is known as the Poets' Corner.

For convenience Chaucer's works are divided into three periods, the French, the Italian, and the English, each one indicating the dominant influence on his work at the time.

THE FRENCH PERIOD (to 1372). The early writings of Chaucer are often arbitrarily listed as his "French period" because of his youthful indebtedness to French poets of the time (including Deschamps and Froissart) and to some classical material derived largely through French intermediaries. Until 1372 his European travels had been almost exclusively in French-speaking areas.

The Romaunt of the Rose (ro-mônt'). In his later *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer states that he translated *Le Roman de la Rose* from French into English. The German scholar Kaluza has broken the extant ME translation into A (ll. 1–1705)—probably Chaucer's; B (ll. 1706–5810)—probably from a Northern hand; C (ll. 5811–7696)—conceivably Chaucer's. This surviving English translation in octosyllabic couplets is about a third of the original French romance which exceeded 20,000 lines. The first 4000 lines of *Le Roman de la Rose* (4432 in the English translation) were written c. 1237 by Guillaume de Lorris. They begin with the poet in his twentieth year having a dream vision of an exquisite garden where the God of Love reveled with his retinue. Wounded by Cupid's arrows, the poet earnestly desired a Rosebud (symbol of his lady). His suit is opposed by Chastity, Danger, Shame, and Wicked-Tongue, and is supported by Franchise, Pity, and Fair-Welcome. The lover, by the intervention of Venus, kisses the Rosebud but is banished from the garden. The continuation of the poem by Jean de Meun, c. 1280, is wholly different from the opening. The lover finally possesses the Rosebud, but the style of de Lorris' courtly romancing is abandoned in favor of a rationalistic satire upon the foibles of the age; science, theology, politics, and philosophy are all elaborately and wittily discussed. To the supporters of the medieval romance and the courtly love code, the de Meun portions were heresy against the God of Love, especially in their stinging satire of women. The translation ascribed to Chaucer breaks off before the really biting sallies of de Meun. Chaucer, throughout his other writings, employed the motifs of the entire French original, and even used some quotations.

The Book of the Duchess or *The Death of Blanche* (1369) is a dream allegory in octosyllabic couplets lamenting the death of Blanche, the first wife of John of Gaunt. It is the only poem by Chaucer which has been dated with some certainty. In *The Book of the Duchess* the poet falls asleep after being deeply moved by a reading of the classic tale of Ceyx and Alcyone. He dreams of meeting a black-clad knight in a forest. The knight sorrows for his lost Lady White (French: Blanche) whom he finally admits is dead. The poet awakes with the account of Ceyx and Alcyone still in his head. The poem is virtually a mosaic of passages from Ovid, de Machault, Froissart, and others; but the tone and treatment are Chaucer's own. It is a highly personal and tasteful elegy, the first full portrait in English literature of an English lady.

THE ITALIAN PERIOD (1372–85). To the best of our knowledge,

Chaucer's first trip to Italy was in 1372 at the height of the early Italian Renaissance. Royal business took Chaucer then, and throughout the next decade, into the great courts of Italy.

The House of Fame (1379?). Elaborate epic machinery in octosyllabic couplets relates a dream vision:

Book I has Chaucer dreaming of himself in the Temple of Venus where he reads a lengthy account of the tale of Dido and Aeneas. As he steps from the temple a great eagle seizes him and flies off, explaining that Jove, because of the poet's long service to the love deities, is sending him to the House of Fame (Report, Rumor) to hear more tidings of love's votaries.

Book II is wholly concerned with the flight of the eagle, bearing the frightened poet in his claws. In a delightful bit of humor the eagle chats with him most cordially and familiarly (addressing him as Geoffrey), while the frightened Chaucer can only gasp out a horror-stricken "yes" or "nay."

Book III brings Chaucer into the sixty-mile-long House of Fame whither all tidings (mostly false) are bruited about by the world's gossips and busybodies. An important announcement is about to come from "a man of greet auctoritee" when the poem abruptly breaks off.

Did Chaucer cease suddenly because he was about to tread on dangerous ground? Some suggest that the man of authority was John of Gaunt on the point of clarifying his relations with Chaucer's sister-in-law. Others see the report announcing the approaching marriage of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. One possible explanation indicates that the work is an allegory (though a wholly inadequate one) of the poet's own life. But perhaps the search for explanation has been too subtle. The poem appears to be a rather conventional love vision for which continental literature has numerous models.

Boece (bō-ēs′e) (c. 1373–85) is a free translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Boethius. The original Latin verse and prose are both rendered in an undistinguished ME prose. Chaucer's finest employment of material from Boethius appears in *Troilus and Criseyde* and in the Knight's Tale. In fact, most of the sustained passages of philosophical thought in Chaucer's verse are derived from Boethius. For contents of the work see the OE translation by Alfred the Great in Chapter 4. Chaucer's translation was one of the earliest printed books in English (1478) by Caxton.

Troilus and Criseyde (trō′i-lus; kri-sā′de) (c. 1372–84). In the version of the story adopted by Chaucer, the Trojan priest Calchas, foreseeing the doom of Troy, defects to the Greeks, leaving behind his widowed daughter, Criseyde. Troilus, son of King Priam of Troy and the greatest Trojan warrior except for Hector and Aeneas, falls in love with Criseyde. Her uncle Pandarus acts as go-between, and Criseyde and Troilus vow eternal love. Calchas arranges for the exchange of the captive Trojan, Antenor, for his daughter, and the popular voice of Troy forces the exchange over the objections of Troilus. Criseyde promises to return to Troilus within ten days,

but in the Greek camp she becomes enamored of the handsome Diomede. One day in battle a portion of Diomede's gear is torn off, and Troilus finds upon it the brooch he had pressed upon Criseyde as she left him. In every battle thereafter Troilus seeks vengeance on Diomede, but in vain, and without ever meeting his beloved Criseyde again, he is slain by Achilles.

Dares Phrygius, that "authority" on the Trojan War, exalts Troilus as a warrior but is silent about any romance. The first account of the love affair (possibly from a lost expanded version of Dares) appears in the *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-More. Boccaccio in *Il Filostrato* expanded the love affair and made Pandaro the go-between; this work is Chaucer's immediate source. In his treatment of sources, Chaucer anticipated Shakespeare's practice: the tragic plot and the exquisite love affair are taken directly from the source, but the notable additions are (1) introduction and development of incidental comic elements, and (2) extensive and striking character portrayal.

Chaucer's poem in rime royal has often been called the first novel in English, for, unlike the previous narrators of this love affair and unlike any previous writer of fiction in English, Chaucer is primarily interested in character. While Boccaccio dwelt on the passionate aspects of the affair, Chaucer deepened the simple portraits of his sources by penetrating analyses. Pandarus is not only a philosophical adviser, but also a richly humorous character like Polonius or Sancho Panza; he speaks in wise saws with the cynicism of age. Often wordy and realistic, he valiantly seeks for Troilus the love he never possessed. Troilus is a splendid youth who realizes the inadvisability of the attachment, but is nevertheless irresistibly snared by love. Criseyde is Chaucer's remarkable creation, one of the finest in all fiction. She is no mere wanton, as later accounts make her. Here she is all feminine complexity—tender, passionate, strangely practical, weak and self-reproaching, variable, indecisive, scheming. Chaucer does not condemn her but sees her "slidynge corage" as her fated tragedy.

Conventions of courtly love govern much of the plot. It is expected that love should be sought outside marriage. Even the offices of Pandarus (his name has become a term of opprobrium, i.e., "panderer") were part of the recognized ritual. The sin of Criseyde was not in yielding to Troilus but in "falsing" him in favor of Diomede. It is difficult to say how much these courtly love conventions were a real practice and how much they were simply a literary tradition. Apparently the conventions encouraged a refinement of late medieval and early Renaissance conduct. However, Chaucer's conclusion seems genuine and not a mere pious tag when he counsels the fixing of the heart not upon earthly things but upon God's unfailing love.

The Parliament of Fowls (c. 1377–82). In a dream vision the old Roman, Scipio Africanus, transports the poet to a hillside where all the birds are assembled on St. Valentine's Day before the goddess of Nature to choose mates. First choice falls to the royal tercel eagle who claims the lovely formel

eagle on the hand of the goddess. A second and a third tercel, each of lower rank, dispute the claim of the first. Before Nature all three noble birds plead their causes. The entire assembly of birds joins in the debate, but Nature rules that the decision will lie with the formel eagle herself. The bird asks for a year's delay to make up her mind.

Possible interpretations of the poem are:

(1) A St. Valentine's Day poem. The assembly of birds, contending lovers, and suspended judgment are conventional themes of medieval literature, though the poem has no specific source. Chaucer surpasses similar pieces in this genre with lively dialogue, melodious verse in rime royal, realistic humor, and colorful imagery.

(2) An allegory of actual matings. Though the *Book of the Duchess* is the only Chaucerian poem with an almost universally accepted personal reference, the known historical facts do not jibe too well with the poetic account. The most likely reference here would be to the betrothal of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia with Friedrich of Meissen and Charles VI of France as his rivals. Another possibility for the formel eagle is Marie, daughter of Charles V of France, whose suitors were Richard II, Friedrich of Meissen, and Wilhelm of Bavaria. Or the reference could be to Philippa, eldest daughter of John of Gaunt, sought by Richard II, Jean of Blois, and Guillaume of Hainult.

(3) A social allegory. Birds may represent classes of society: birds of prey (nobility), seed-fowl (peasantry or clergy), water-fowl (mercantile class), worm-fowl (urbanites). Speeches by humbler birds suggest the social discontent that produced the Peasants' Revolt, although Chaucer usually ignores that event. The lower classes treat courtly love conventions with little respect. Chaucer is impartial.

The Legend of Good Women (1384–86). The prologue, more appealing than the legends, has the fresh directness and personal charm that we instantly recognize as Chaucerian. The poet discusses a fashionable poetic debate of the times—leaf vs. flower—and refuses to embroil himself; nonetheless, he proclaims adherence to the cult of the daisy, another poetic theme of graceful continental love poetry. Queen Anne seems to be symbolized by the daisy and also by Alceste. He lists some of his works (including items lost or known to us by different titles) and intends the following legends as penance for his writings against women in love. Perhaps this work was commanded by the queen and may be unfinished because it became a burden to Chaucer. Possibly it was a conventional medieval palinode. There are two versions of the prologue; many prefer the earlier draft.

Apparently contemplating about twenty "good women," Chaucer wrote eight and part of a ninth in a series of secular saints' lives. These are "good women" not in the Christian sense but women faithful in their love up to death itself, and hence "martyrs of love." In order the heroines are (sources in parentheses): Cleopatra (Boccaccio), Thisbe (Ovid), Dido (Vergil),

Hypsipyle and Medea (Ovid, Guido delle Colonne), Lucretia (Ovid), Ariadne (Ovid, Plutarch, Boccaccio), Philomela (Ovid), Phyllis (Ovid), Hypermnestra (Ovid, poem incomplete).

The tales are generally perfunctory though the accounts of Thisbe and Dido are charming and simple. An outstanding feature of the work is the first use in English of the heroic couplet, which later became one of the most popular of all verse forms in the English language.

THE ENGLISH PERIOD (1385–1400). During this period Chaucer wrote the most remarkable poem in the English language up to that time, and one of the great poems of all English literature, *The Canterbury Tales.*

The Canterbury Tales (1387–1400) represents Chaucer's fullest development as an artist. He concentrated on native English models and traditions for the tone and composition of the work and was able to give an incomparable picture of his time. With bold yet deft strokes he creates a living world, one whose life is still fresh and vivid even after six centuries have passed.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

FRAMEWORK. Enclosing numerous tales in one extended narrative is an oriental practice, the most celebrated example being *The Thousand and One Nights,* which, however, was first introduced into the West in the 1700s. Such a scheme was familiar to Chaucer in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid and the *Disciplina Clericalis* of Peter Alphonsus. There is no certain evidence that he knew Boccaccio's *Decameron* as a unit. He may have known the *Novelle* (c. 1374) of Giovanni Sercambi which actually employs the setting of a pilgrimage but otherwise differs widely from Chaucer's plan. In the General Prologue, Chaucer introduces the individual pilgrims who later become the tellers of the tales.

PILGRIMAGES TO CANTERBURY. As early as the 3rd century, pious Christians journeyed to the Holy Land, according to Eusebius, for spiritual reinforcement. The difficulties of medieval travel limited the number of palmers (those wearing a sprig of palm to show they had journeyed to Palestine) but many holy places were sought within western Europe and in England. In England the most famous shrine was that of Canterbury which contained the relics of St. Thomas à Becket, whose murder followed his quarrel with Henry II.

Becket was a 12th-century French cleric who rose to a high secular position under Henry II, becoming chancellor of England. Quarreling with the ecclesiastics, the king welcomed the opportunity to put his own man in power as Archbishop of Canterbury, and Primate of All England. To the surprise of all, Becket became a vigorous supporter of the church against the monarch. The ten-year struggle reached fever pitch with a Christmas Day sermon in 1170 by Becket in which he thunderously condemned and excommunicated many of the king's supporters.

Across the channel in France, Henry II foamed at the archbishop's assault and bitterly reproached his followers: "Not one will deliver me from this lowborn priest!" Four knights seized upon these angry words as a royal command, immediately embarked for England, and with a retinue of armed men invaded the cathedral to slaughter the archbishop in the midst of a service. After the brutal slaying, the blood of the martyr, taken up by those present, was quickly reported to produce miraculous cures. Until the Reformation, the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, with the saint's remains and numerous relics, was thronged by multitudes of Englishmen, and continentals, too, who each received a small leaden bottle, or ampule, filled with the miraculously inexhaustible and, by that time, highly diluted blood of St. Thomas. These healing miracles are the only ones referred to by Chaucer.

Modern readers are familiar with the account through the poetic dramas of Tennyson, *Becket* (1884); T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935); and Jean Anouilh, *Becket* (1959).

The Canterbury bells worn upon the bridle of the Monk's horse and still sold in Canterbury gift shops indicate a more joyous than solemn cause for the pilgrimage. By Chaucer's time so many of the avowed pilgrims, like the Wife of Bath, "koude muchel of wandryinge by the weye," that pilgrimages had become scandalous to the followers of Wycliffe. Medieval man liked the variety and excitement of travel as much as we do, but the expense and difficulties of travel in that era prevented tourism, except when a pilgrimage was the ostensible reason.

Even as recent centuries have seen seashore resorts and spas, originally visited for health purposes, become places of merrymaking and frivolity, so the medieval pilgrimage frequently buried its religious purpose under gaiety, as the Summoner troops along with a flower garland and a huge round loaf of bread as a mock shield. Some vituperative clerics accused the so-called pilgrims of being thieves or married folk using the guise of pilgrimage to conceal assignations. Most of Chaucer's band seem frankly to be enjoying the pilgrimage as an April release from the winter bondage, but the original pious purpose of pilgrimage shines brightly in the Parson and humble Plowman as well as in the noble Knight, who had evidently vowed to be a pilgrim while in battle and was hastening to fulfill his vows.

SUMMARY OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

The trip from London to Canterbury at that time regularly consumed three or four days, which Chaucer seems to have planned for his pilgrims as: April 17 (Southwark to Dartford), April 18 (Dartford to Rochester), April 19 (Rochester to Ospringe), April 20 (Ospringe to Canterbury). The assembly point was commonly at Southwark on the south bank of the Thames opposite London (the theater of Shakespeare was later to be located in this London suburb).

THE PROLOGUE

In the General Prologue, Chaucer gives the number of pilgrims, including himself, as thirty. With the "preestes thre" (perhaps a later scribal error) accompanying the Prioress, the General Prologue actually gives a count of thirty-two. En route the pilgrims are overtaken by the Canon's Yeoman, who relates a story and would thereby swell the total to thirty-three. Chaucer evidently intended a total of 120 stories, but wrote only twenty-four, four of these unfinished. The innkeeper, acting always as master of ceremonies, proposes the plan of each pilgrim recounting two stories on the way to Canterbury and two stories on the return trip, the best *raconteur* then being treated to a meal at the Tabard by the rest of the party. For the rendezvous Chaucer designated a real inn, The Tabard, at Southwark, so named from its signboard picturing a "tabard," a coat embroidered with armorial bearings, sleeveless and open at the sides.

Harry Bailly, "oure hooste," appears undoubtedly to have been a real person, the same Henricus Baillif who was a Southwark innkeeper and member of parliament in Chaucer's time. The other pilgrims are not identified by surname, but they are so carefully described in occupation, character, appearance, and place of residence as to tempt readers and scholars to consider them faithful portraits of living people. There were only a score or so of Sergeants of Law in Chaucer's day, and we have relatively extensive records upon them. Thomas Pynchbek is the only one who really fits Chaucer's "Man of Law," and he fits well; perhaps the line, "Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng," is a giveaway pun. The Franklin accompanying him closely resembles John Bussy of Lincolnshire. A contemporary sea captain, Peter Risshenden, actually commanded a vessel named the *Maudelayne* and may therefore be Chaucer's Shipman. For others the wide field of choice and our limited knowledge make ascription purely hypothetical, but it is strongly probable that Chaucer had living models for many, if not all, of his characters.

Sharply individualized, the pilgrims are also widely representative of class and occupation. Peasants, who constituted the vast majority of the population, could seldom afford to leave their slender acres, but their representative is present in the Plowman. The Knight and the Squire occupy the highest rank of society, short, of course, of the handful of royalty and hereditary lords. The regular clergy is represented by the Prioress (a rank apparently just below the Knight's class), the Nun's Priest, the Monk, and the Friar; the secular clergy is superbly represented by the Parson. The landed gentry appear in the Franklin, and the learned professions in the Man of Law and the Doctor of Physic. The mercantile class is represented by the Merchant, the five Guildsmen, and, in her unique way, the Wife of Bath. The student appears as the Clerk of Oxford. Minor officialdom is represented by the Reeve, Manciple, and Summoner. The Yeoman is the contemporary soldier; the Shipman, the seaman. Specialized trades appear in the Cook and the

Miller. Rounding out the group is the scoundrelly Pardoner. Each character is graphically portrayed in the General Prologue and made dynamically alive in the subsequent prologues and epilogues to each tale and in the narrating of the tale itself. Not until Shakespeare would literature present another such vivid panorama of English life.

THE TALES

The Canterbury Tales exist in eighty-three mss., the best of which is generally agreed to be the Ellesmere text, whose arrangement is the plan of the following summary. Chaucer was a poet only by avocation and never had the full opportunity to give more than preliminary form to his collection. The Second Nun refers to herself as an "unworthy son of Eve," and the Shipman several times inadvertently lists himself among the women. Although ingenious arrangements of the tales have been proposed, it seems best to present them as Chaucer apparently worked on them. Incomplete as his work remains, it offers practically every type of medieval story.

The tales themselves have come down to us in ten separate groups (which scholars have labeled A, B^1, B^2, C, D, E, F, G, H, I). As mentioned before, the sequence used here is based on the Ellesmere text which gathers the tales into a sequence that is slightly different from the alphabetical notation assigned to the groups, and different also from the order in which the pilgrims are introduced in the General Prologue. It is within this pattern that we take up each of the pilgrims and his or her tale.

Each of the discussions is divided into three parts: (1) an examination of the character who narrates the tale, based largely on the information given in the General Prologue; (2) a short summary of the tale which he or she tells; (3) an interpretation of the tale, with possibly a few words on the appropriateness of the tale to its narrator.

GROUP A

THE KNIGHT

CHARACTERIZATION. A bold and seasoned warrior fighting for Christianity and not for plunder or prestige. Modest in garb, manner, and speech, he was the ideal exemplar of the Christian concept of knighthood preached by Pope Urban II in 1095 while proclaiming the First Crusade. Englishmen took a minor role in the Crusades, and it is highly unlikely that any one knight ever covered so wide a territory. This knight participated in three broad campaigns against heathendom, fighting against the Moors, Turks, and Slavs.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Palamon and Arcite, two cousins of the Theban royal house, are imprisoned by Theseus, Duke of Athens and conqueror of Thebes. From their high prison tower overlooking the duke's garden they see and fall in love with Emelye, lovely sister-in-law of the duke. Arcite, released as a favor to an old friend of Theseus, changes his name and works as a servant in the palace to be near Emelye. Palamon escapes from prison, and the two

knights agree to duel for her hand. Theseus persuades them to accept a year's waiting and then meet in a tourney with one hundred knights on each side. At the tourney Palamon is captured, but Arcite, at his moment of triumph, is killed when his horse shies and throws him. Theseus awards Emelye to the surviving Palamon.

DISCUSSION. Chivalric romance in heroic couplets from "Matter of Rome." A free adaptation of the *Teseide* of Boccaccio with some influence from the *Thebaid* by Statius. Longest tale (2250 lines), often considered Chaucer's best one. Certainly the finest poetic romance in English (*Troilus and Criseyde* is more properly a versified novel). Sustained tone of chivalric polish, splendor, and honor. Rich tapestry effect of descriptions. Spirited narrative. Defective in what is usually Chaucer's greatest forte—character portrayal.

THE MILLER

CHARACTERIZATION. A huge coarse man, gross in mind and body. A standard medieval joke gave the miller a "golden thumb": (1) He could judge the quality of wheat and flour by rubbing it under his thumb; (2) Millers did not receive money for their services but took a toll in kind. A great deal of a farmer's flour, far more than the stipulated toll, was believed to stick to the miller's thumb.

The miller was a necessary figure in every medieval community, as the peasant could not grind his own grain. Note the modern prevalence of the surname *Miller* as well as that other village worthy, *Smith.*

PLOT OF THE TALE. John, a rich carpenter of Oxford, is duped by his young cleric boarder, Nicholas, into expecting a second flood rivaling Noah's. While the bemused carpenter is awaiting the deluge suspended in a tub upstairs, he is made a cuckold by Nicholas and Alison, the carpenter's pretty young wife. A neighboring dandy, Absalom, seeks a kiss from the chambered Alison, is misdirected, and takes revenge on the lovers by branding Nicholas with a hot iron. The ensuing roar of Nicholas for water makes the carpenter think that the flood has come. He cuts the restraining ropes on the tub and falls headlong to the ground.

DISCUSSION. Fabliau, a short realistic popular tale, usually comic and coarse. The medieval fabliaux are prototypes of the modern short story in rapid movement, true-to-life dialogue, tight plotting. The Miller's tale has two episodes: the dupe who expects the second flood, and the misdirected kiss resulting in the branding. No known source for Chaucer's heroic couplet tale, but possibly he took it from a lost French version combining the two jests. Throughout western Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries the two anecdotes appear in many languages. The Miller's tale is told with tremendous gusto and Rabelaisian humor. Directed at the Reeve, formerly a carpenter.

THE REEVE

CHARACTERIZATION. Superintendent of a medieval manor. Sheriff is a reeve of a shire. This reeve is an agricultural expert and a wily, undiscovered plunderer of his employer's property. Thin, choleric, hair cut short in front, wearing humble garb to appear poor and honest. Popular medieval concepts: (1) Reeves were scoundrels like millers; (2) Inherent hostility between the reeve and the miller in the same manor, as each sought to cheat the other.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Two Cambridge University students, John and Alain, bring the grain of their college to the miller at nearby Trumpington. They try to prevent the miller's cheating by careful scrutiny of the grinding, but the clever miller releases their horses and steals their grain as they search for their mounts. Forced to spend the night, the two young men exact revenge by using the daughter and the wife of the miller. In a wild melee the miller is knocked unconscious and the collegians dash off with their full quota of grain.

DISCUSSION. Another fabliau derived apparently from a lost French source. Numerous analogues from all over western Europe. Retaliation upon the Miller. Clever and obscene. Heroic couplets. The Cambridge students are from the North, speaking appropriate dialect. Effect is probably intended to make them appear a trifle alien and therefore taken for dupes by the Miller.

THE COOK

CHARACTERIZATION. Brought along by the five guildsmen to prepare their food on the pilgrimage; many medieval inns provided rooms, but guests had to (or might prefer to) prepare their own meals. A culinary expert in an age when English cooking was more elaborate and perhaps more delectable than it now is. A drunken libertine, unsanitary in habits as indicated by the zymotic eruptions upon his shin.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Perkin, a dissolute and worthless apprentice, is cast off by his employer. He is evidently embarking upon a criminal career when the story breaks off.

DISCUSSION. Certainly a fabliau in heroic couplets but not proceeding far enough to suggest its plot or antecedents. Some mss. append *The Tale of Gamelyn* following this fragment. The Gamelyn story is the "expulsion and return" plot underlying *As You Like It* by Shakespeare. The Gamelyn account is not by Chaucer but may have been intended by him for reworking as the Yeoman's tale.

GROUP B[1]

THE MAN OF LAW

CHARACTERIZATION. A Sergeant of the Law, one of the top score of barristers of the realm. Immensely learned and skilled in English common law as

far back as the Norman Conquest. Wealthy (perhaps from bribes), selfish and grasping to the limit of the law. Of course, in an era when money was scarce, professional fees were often collected in kind.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Constance, the daughter of the Roman Emperor (presumably Constantina, daughter of Tiberius Constantine, Eastern Roman Emperor, and wife of Maurice of Cappadocia, the succeeding emperor in 582), is married to the Sultan of Syria. Her wicked mother-in-law slays her son and casts Constance adrift to float through the entire Mediterranean and up to Northumberland, England. Constance is "framed" for a shocking murder, but the perjuring killer is miraculously revealed and slain. Constance marries the King of Northumbria and, now with her infant son Maurice, is again cast adrift through the machinations of a new wicked mother-in-law. In Rome all is disentangled and rendered happy by Constance's reunion with father, husband, and son. Eventually Maurice is the new Roman emperor.

DISCUSSION. Moral tale in rime royal, attempting to inculcate Christian virtues, especially constancy. Source is *Anglo-Norman Chronicle* (c. 1335) by Nicholas Trivet. Many authorities believe the tale was written before the other Canterbury Tales and inappropriately assigned to the Man of Law. Chaucer may slyly be recounting the sort of conventional piety expected from a "pillar of the law."

GROUP D

THE WIFE OF BATH

CHARACTERIZATION. A robust, lusty woman, a match for Shakespeare's Falstaff. Cloth weaver from near Bath. Anxious to show herself and her possessions before others, she loved pilgrimages. Her five husbands are understandable, for in her age mortality was high, and every woman of property needed a protector. She nagged her husbands mercilessly, and was partially deaf from a husband's cuffing.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A knight of King Arthur's court is condemned to die because he ravished a maiden. At the request of the queen, the youth's sentence is suspended for one year during which he must find the answer to the question of what women most desire. A hideous hag is the only person able, or willing, to give him the definitive answer: women want their own way. In exchange for the answer, the hag claims the knight in marriage. As he wryly contemplates his ill-favored spouse, she offers him the choice: either a lovely wife in private and a loathsome hag in public, or a hideous wife in private and a beautiful helpmate in public. "What you will," is his decision. That is exactly the right answer, and henceforth she is beautiful everywhere always.

DISCUSSION. An Arthurian fairy tale told in heroic couplets. Immediate source is unknown, but the theme of the Transformed Hag appears in literature, popular and belletristic, in many ages and countries. The story is proba-

bly a nature myth of primitive origin. For the completely un-Victorian Wife of Bath the story is surprisingly delicate and graceful, as well as highly amusing.

THE FRIAR

CHARACTERIZATION. A limiter within a mendicant order, i.e., a begging friar assigned a specific district or limit within which he had the right, perhaps the sole right, to solicit alms. A suave, unscrupulous fellow preying upon women. The pins he used as a lure were highly desirable and expensive in an age of hand fabrication (cf. "pin money"). Apparently he had made some young women pregnant and then provided dowries to secure husbands for them.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A summoner, on the way to extort money from a poor old widow, falls in with an ostensible yeoman who admits he is the devil in disguise. When the two hear a carter consign his mired horses to the devil, the summoner asks why the devil didn't take them. The devil states that the carter really didn't mean his curse. At the widow's house the summoner tries to get a pot as payment from the old woman. She consigns pot and summoner to the devil. Asked if she really meant the curse, she insists that she does, and the devil bears off the summoner to hell.

DISCUSSION. Fabliau in heroic couplets based on the popular belief that a curse is effective only when it comes from the heart. Directed against the summoner in an old traditional quarrel between mendicants and possessioners. No definite source, but this is an old canard variously applied against lawyers, bailiffs, clergy, etc. Vivid description and sparkling presentation of character and situation.

THE SUMMONER

CHARACTERIZATION. A lay official of the ecclesiastical courts which in this era judge legal cases involving marriage and morals. The summoner exploits his post for savage extortion. A debased and loudmouthed drunkard, he has a hideously diseased countenance. He and the Pardoner are the only two pilgrims genuinely despised by Chaucer.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A smooth-tongued, acquisitive friar employs all his arts upon the invalid Thomas. In utter exasperation the sick man consents to a gift provided it is evenly distributed to all the friars in the beggar's cell. The problem of apportioning the resulting flatus is solved ingeniously by the squire of the lord of the nearby manor, to the great inconvenience of the friar.

DISCUSSION. Fabliau in heroic couplets apparently based upon a current jest. A similar tale appears in "The Story of the Priest's Bladder" by Jakes de Baisieux. Brilliant portrait of guileful methods of begging friars.

GROUP E

THE CLERK OF OXFORD

CHARACTERIZATION. Student working for master's degree. An earnest and conscientious seeker for knowledge. Spends money on books, not on clothes or frivolity. Prays for souls of those contributing to his support, and tutors undergraduates for small fees.

PLOT OF THE TALE. The Marquis of Saluzzo in Italy marries Griselda, lovely peasant girl. To test his wife, Marquis Walter removes Griselda's infant son and daughter from her. Griselda is reduced again to poverty and distress. Claiming a divorce from her base blood, Walter asks Griselda to prepare his new bride. The lovely young "bride" turns out to be the long-lost daughter. Griselda is reunited with her husband and supposedly lost children and ends her days in wealth and happiness.

DISCUSSION. Moral tale in rime royal preaching unswerving loyalty and patience. Source, acknowledged in the Clerk's prologue, is Petrarch's Latin story *De Obedientia ac Fide Uxoria Mythologia,* a translation from Boccaccio's *Decameron.* Originally the story comes from a primitive folktale with a supernatural persecutor. Widely praised in medieval times, the ideal of "patient Griselda" seems repellent to the modern mind. However, the Clerk himself does not propound this as a standard of conduct for all wives, but rather as a demonstration of the spirit in which all men should accept the trials of life that God sends them.

THE MERCHANT

CHARACTERIZATION. Dealer in wool, either a Merchant of the Staple, resident in England, or a Merchant Adventurer, an English businessman resident on the continent to handle import-export trade. Merchant Adventurers originally formed part of the Brotherhood of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The Merchant is operating illegally according to a civil law which made foreign exchange a royal monopoly, and according to an ecclesiastical law which forbade usury, i.e., lending money at interest. Representative of the incipient mercantile and capitalistic classes which were gravely distrusted by the medieval mind but which nevertheless were rapidly rising in wealth and influence. Chaucer's Merchant is all business and importance.

PLOT OF THE TALE. An aged Lombard knight, January, marries a very young beauty, May. Handsome young squire Damian falls in love with May, who is especially susceptible when January loses his eyesight. The jealous husband holds on resolutely to May, but she and Damian trick the blind man by a rendezvous in the branches of a pear tree. January suddenly regains his sight but is persuaded by May that he saw inaccurately.

DISCUSSION. Fabliau in heroic couplets. Underlying jest, "The Pear Tree Trick," is an old folk theme throughout western Europe. Chaucer's exact source is unknown. Most of account is a descriptive and satirical addition to

the basic tale. Also it points out the foolishness of an old man who has lived his life thinking he can make a young girl happy. Chaucer apparently believes in mutual responsibility in marriage and when the old man cannot fulfill his, the young girl does not fulfill hers. The tale ends as happily as possible under the circumstances.

GROUP F

THE SQUIRE

CHARACTERIZATION. The twenty-year-old son of the Knight, the handsome embodiment of vivacious youth. A candidate for knighthood, he displays all the necessary accomplishments of a high-born young man: he is valiant in battle and joust, skilled on horseback, able to sing and dance, and apt in love.

PLOT OF THE TALE. The oriental monarch Cambyuskan (Genghis Khan?) receives from the King of Araby and Ind magic gifts: a brass horse that will fly its rider anywhere at great speed, a mirror that will show any danger to the kingdom, a ring whose bearer can understand the language of birds, a sword that will cut through any man and his armor. Wearing the magic ring, the monarch's daughter Canace talks with an exhausted and lovelorn female falcon. Canace nurses the bird back to health. Promising great adventures and marvels, the story breaks off.

DISCUSSION. Medieval romance in heroic couplets. Source unknown; probably an amalgam of Marco Polo, Prester John, and numerous other medieval accounts of the gorgeous East. Spenser wrote a continuation of this romance in Book IV of the *Faerie Queene*.

THE FRANKLIN

CHARACTERIZATION. A well-to-do landowner only one cut below titled aristocracy. Loves good eating and hospitality. Ruddy-faced, white-bearded. Vigorous participant in local politics and government.

PLOT OF THE TALE. In the absence of the Breton knight Arviragus, his faithful wife Dorigen is sought by squire Aurelius. In jest she promises to yield to him if he can remove all the black rocks that dot the coast of Brittany. By a wizard's enchantment Aurelius deludes her and everyone else into believing the miracle accomplished. Her husband insists that honor compels her to fulfill her promise. Aurelius is so touched by the nobility of husband and wife that he refuses to claim his prize. The wizard remits his fee, and all ends happily.

DISCUSSION. A *lai* in heroic couplets. Earliest known *lais*, French versions of Breton short narrative poems of romantic flavor, come from Marie de France (c. 1170). The underlying theme of this *lai*, "The Lady's Rash Promise," seems oriental, appearing in the ancient East Indian Sanskrit. Chaucer states that a Breton *lai* is his source, but no Celtic *lais* from Brittany have survived. Perhaps actually indebted directly or indirectly to Boccaccio's

Decameron and *Filocolo*. Charmingly graceful and pure, the soul of high romance. Appropriate to a high-ranking "gentleman farmer."

GROUP C

THE PHYSICIAN

CHARACTERIZATION. A fashionable practitioner, learned in medieval *materia medica* and astrology. Made his fortune during the black death. In league with apothecary to charge patients extravagantly. Suspected of being an agnostic.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A lascivious Roman judge, Appius, yearns for Virginia, the spotless daughter of the noble Virginius. Through an accomplice, Claudius, the judge claims that Virginia is a slave girl rightly belonging to him. To prevent the shame of falling into the hands of Appius, Virginia bids her father slay her. Virginius bears the severed head of his daughter to Appius, who, along with Claudius, is punished in the ensuing popular outcry.

DISCUSSION. Tragic tale in heroic couplets telling of virtue valued more than life. Chaucer says that Livy's *History* (Book III) is source, but he also made use of the version given in *Le Roman de la Rose*. Challenged as not altogether appropriate to narrator, but may indeed be the sort of eminently respectable story told by a guardedly professional master of bedside manners.

THE PARDONER

CHARACTERIZATION. The medieval *quaestor* preached and sold indulgences and relics. The Pardoner is a scoundrel, and even his pardons, like his saints' relics ("pigges bones") are suspect. He is a foppish, effeminate degenerate, apparently the "lover" of the Summoner.

PLOT OF THE TALE. In Flanders three revelers learn that a passing corpse was that of their good friend, slain by the black death. Vowing in their cups to dispatch Death itself, they proceed out of town to accost rudely an old man. He informs them that they will find Death under a certain tree in the forest. There they find a great horde of gold coins and forget their mission. They will await darkness and surreptitiously bring the gold to their lodgings. One reveler, sent to town for refreshments, poisons the wine, expecting to gain the gold all for himself. On his return the other two poniard him and sit down to drink. They too meet Death under the tree.

DISCUSSION. Exemplum, a moralizing "example" to preach that greed is the root of all evil. Earliest known version is one of the *Jatakas* or birth tales of former incarnations of Buddha. Many consider Chaucer's rendition one of the finest pieces of storytelling in literature. This tale, together with the accompanying prologue and epilogue of the Pardoner, constitutes the best psychological study of a sinner before Dostoevski. The Pardoner freely reveals his chicanery because: (1) he is drunk, (2) he is on holiday with people he will never see again, (3) his conscience demands confession. The

Host unfeelingly curses him down, heedless of a tortured, self-hating soul. The tale is told in heroic couplets.

GROUP B^2

THE SHIPMAN

CHARACTERIZATION. A highly competent mariner who is often a pilferer from his own cargoes and a pirate to other vessels. He carries a dagger secreted in his armpit. He rides as awkwardly as any seaman upon his horse, an inferior nag pawned off upon him by a shrewd dealer.

PLOT OF THE TALE. In payment for the loan of some money, a merchant's wife grants her favors to a monk. Actually the monk has borrowed the money from the merchant. On his return from Flanders the merchant is informed that the loan has been repaid to the wife.

DISCUSSION. Fabliau in heroic couplets. Source is unknown but analogues stretch as far back as ancient Sanskrit. Theme of "Lover's Gift Regained" is widespread throughout many cultures. Tale was perhaps originally intended for the starting of a feud by the Wife of Bath with the Merchant.

THE PRIORESS

CHARACTERIZATION. Superior officer of her convent. Apparently a dowerless daughter of gentle folk. She cannot sublimate the lady of fashion and romance in the nun. Chaucer notes but is tolerant of her affected French and her violation of her strict vows in wearing jewelry and keeping pets.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A Christian child, on his way to school through the Jewish quarter, is seized by the Jews, and has his throat cut and his body cast into a well. His widowed mother, seeking the boy with mounting anguish, finds his body miraculously singing his favorite hymn to the Virgin. The guilty Jews are punished. The boy's corpse, still singing the hymn, is lifted from the well and laid in a marble vault.

DISCUSSION. A miracle of the Virgin in rime royal. Such unsubstantiated stories of Christian children slain by Jews date from at least the 5th century. English version of the account, widely disseminated in the popular ballad, "Sir Hugh, or The Jew's Daughter," appears c. 1255 as the Hugh of Lincoln theme. Some interpreters might suggest that Chaucer is satirizing the anti-Semitism of the Prioress, but the care and polish of this tale render such an hypothesis unlikely.

CHAUCER

CHARACTERIZATION. Chaucer himself, presented as a self-effacing character, proceeding with his eyes fixed on the ground. The poet is portrayed as corpulent. He is sociable in the General Prologue but apparently shy and reticent thereafter.

PLOTS OF THE TALES. (a) *The Rime of Sir Thopas.* A combination of Jack in the Beanstalk, Don Quixote, and David against Goliath, Sir Thopas

girds against the Giant Oliphant (elephant), but the bored Host interrupts and Chaucer breaks off. (b) *The Tale of Melibeus.* Sophie, daughter of Lord Melibeus and his wife Prudence, is brutally beaten by her father's enemies. Melibeus is eventually persuaded by his wife to forgive his enemies.

DISCUSSION. (a) Burlesque of metrical romance in stanza riming *a a b c c b.* Mock heroic satire upon the entire genre. No known source. Flemish knighthood probably a secondary butt of laughter. (b) Close prose translation of the French *Livre de Melibée et de Dame Prudence* by Jean de Meun or Renaud de Louens, which in turn is a condensation of the Latin *Liber Consolationis et Consilii* by Albertanus of Brescia. Interminably dull moralizing.

THE MONK

CHARACTERIZATION. Superior of a subordinate cell located some distance from the chief monastery. A worldly cleric nonchalantly disobeying monastic vows of claustration and labor. He enjoys hunting and fine garments.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Short accounts of tragic downfall of seventeen distinguished figures of history and literature. Subjects range from Lucifer and Adam to medieval monarchs Pedro of Spain and Peter of Cyprus. The tedious series is broken off by the Knight's interruption.

DISCUSSION. Tragedies in the medieval sense of the word, that is, the downfall of those formerly high in fortune and prestige. Eight-line iambic pentameter stanza riming *a b a b b c b c* and called "The Monk's Tale stanza" (an additional alexandrine riming *c* forms a Spenserian stanza). Chief sources are *De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium* by Boccaccio and *Le Romaunt de la rose,* but the Scriptures, ancient mythologies, and standard medieval histories are also drawn upon.

THE NUN'S PRIEST

CHARACTERIZATION. Not clearly specified in the General Prologue, but obviously the priest accompanying the Prioress (probably only one, not "preestes thre"). Though never described, he reveals in his narration a character both wise and witty.

PLOT OF THE TALE. The rooster Chanticleer tells his favorite spouse Pertelote of a dream in which he is attacked by a doglike beast. She scoffs at his dream but cannot refute his citations, interestingly garbled, from learned authorities. Later Dan Russell, the fox, flatters Chanticleer into crowing so hard that he closes his eyes. The fox bears off the cock in his jaws, amidst a wild barnyard pursuit. Chanticleer persuades the fox to shout defiance to the pursuers. As the fox opens his mouth, Chanticleer flies into a tree. Flattery will not delude him a second time.

DISCUSSION. Beast fable in heroic couplets. Also first great mock-heroic poem in English. Sources seem to be French *Roman de Renart* and German

Reinecke Fuchs. The tale is possibly a political satire. An excellent narrative in humor, vivacity, and pictorial quality. Although ostensibly the point of the story is the moral, "Beware of flattery," the reader usually carries away a sense of sheer delight at the richness of realistic portrait. This tale is the quintessence of the qualities termed "Chaucerian."

GROUP G

THE SECOND NUN

CHARACTERIZATION. Apparently the "Chapeleyne" who accompanied the Prioress. Never described but self-characterized in narration as pious and direct.

PLOT OF THE TALE. The virgin Cecilia (variously assigned to the reigns of Roman Emperors Marcus Aurelius, Alexander Severus, and Diocletian) informs her husband Valerian on their wedding night that her guardian angel will slay any man touching her body. Valerian is converted, baptized, and then visited by the guardian angel who also promises heavenly grace to his brother, Tiburtius. Both brothers become Christian martyrs and an attempt to martyr Cecilia fails when the flames will not consume her. But she is mortally wounded by three strokes on the neck and, after three days of fervent preaching, St. Cecilia dies.

DISCUSSION. Saint's legend in rime royal. Chief sources are *Legenda Aurea* ("Golden Legend") by Jacobus de Voragine and a Latin translation of a Greek life by Simeon Metaphrastes. Breathes sincere reverence and devotion, most pious piece by Chaucer.

THE CANON'S YEOMAN

CHARACTERIZATION. At Broughton near Ospringe a canon (cleric on a cathedral staff) and his servitor overtake the pilgrims. The Yeoman rattles on about his master until the canon rides away from the party in chagrin.

PLOT OF THE TALE. An unscrupulous canon (not my canon, the Yeoman insists) dupes a priest into paying a large sum of money for the supposed secret of transmuting baser elements into silver and gold.

DISCUSSION. Anecdote in heroic couplets. No obvious source, but shows extensive technical knowledge of alchemy of the era. Probably inspired by a contemporary scandal, the tale attacks the charlatanry of alchemy.

GROUP H

THE MANCIPLE

CHARACTERIZATION. Steward for lawyers and students at an Inn of Court. Although illiterate, he is able to cheat lawyers! Perhaps the drabbest person among the pilgrims.

PLOT OF THE TALE. A crow, snow white and melodious of voice as

crows originally were, informs the god Phoebus that Phoebus' wife is faithless. The god slays his wife with his bow. Ruing his act, Phoebus in vengeance plucks out all the bird's light plumage and deprives it of attractive song. This explains why crows today are black and caw raucously.

DISCUSSION. Beast fable in heroic couplets to advise against meddling in someone else's love affairs. Source is the account of Apollo and Coronis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Effective but perhaps not altogether appropriate to the Manciple.

GROUP I

THE PARSON

CHARACTERIZATION. Humble parish priest, first practicing his religion and then preaching it. Amidst all the clerical corruption suggested by Chaucer and his contemporaries, it is the obscure but faithful priest in his local parish who sustains the true church. The parson is accompanied by his peasant brother, a plowman.

PLOT OF THE TALE. Sermon on penitence, embodying a treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins and their cure, plus a discourse on related vices. The material and approach are typical of the medieval period.

DISCUSSION. A prose sermon that is not very interesting to a modern reader. Chief sources are *Summa seu Tractatus de Viciis* by Guilelmus Peraldus and *Summa Casuum Poenitentiae* by Raymond de Pennaforte.

OTHER PILGRIMS

There are seven pilgrims characterized in the General Prologue for whom we have no corresponding tales. They are:

The Knight's Yeoman—"a forster was he, soothly, as I guesse."

The Plowman, brother to the Parson—"a trewe swynkere [worker] and a good was he."

Five Guildsmen: a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Weaver of Tapestry (Tapycer)—"Everich, for the wisdom that he kan/ Was shaply for to been an alderman."

As mentioned before, the Nun's Priest was probably her only male companion, not "Preestes thre," and the Canon leaves the cavalcade shortly after his arrival without telling a tale.

In addition, following the Parson's Tale, there is the much discussed *Retraccioun*s or Retractations of Chaucer. Here he "revokes" his "translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees. . . ." He specifically exempts from this retractation "Boece de Consolacione," and other books of moral or spiritual content, but he includes *The Canterbury Tales* and most of his other famous works. There seems to be no doubt that the statement is genuine.

OTHER POETS OF THE PERIOD

John Gower (gou'er) (c. 1325–1408). A wealthy Kentishman, John Gower was a good friend of Chaucer. He held Chaucer's power of attorney when Chaucer went to Italy in 1378; and *Troilus and Criseyde* was dedicated to the "moral Gower." Late in life (1398) he married Agnes Groundolf (perhaps his second wife). Gower appears as the chorus in Shakespeare's *Pericles*. His effigy on the tomb at Southwark Cathedral pillows its head upon his three chief books. Indicative of the linguistic conditions of his age, each of these works was written in a different language.

Speculum Meditantis ("Mirror of Meditation") (c. 1379). French work on the Seven Deadly Sins, their "daughters," and the opposing virtues. Conflict of Vice and Virtue in all society from Pope to plowman. Concludes with lengthy tribute to the Virgin. Source unknown, but theme and material are wholly conventional. Some thirty thousand octosyllabic lines in stanzas riming *a a b a a b b b a b b a*.

Vox Clamantis ("Voice of One Crying" [in the wilderness]) (c. 1382). Latin poem in classic elegiac couplets, unrimed. First third of poem (perhaps a later addition) presents in a dream allegory vivid pictures of the Peasants' Revolt and the death of Wat Tyler. The remainder of the poem is a more trite indictment of the evils of society. In *Fors Clavigera* (1871) John Ruskin follows Gower's tripartite division of classes—cleric, soldier, worker. Free borrowings from a host of classical and medieval Latin poets.

Confessio Amantis ("Confession of a Lover") (1390, revised 1393). Parody of a religious confession, written in English. Venus hears the complaints of an unrewarded servant of love and bids him confess to her priest, Genius. Since a priest hears confession of sins, the scheme of the poem is a discussion of the Seven Deadly Sins applied, sometimes quite awkwardly, to the lover's problems. A story (there are over 100 in the eight books) illustrates each point. A completely unfunny moralist and preacher, Gower cannot compete with Chaucer. The work is generally in octosyllabic couplets. First English poem known to have been translated into other languages. Almost as popular in its day as the *Canterbury Tales*. One of the first books printed by Caxton in 1483.

THE RISE OF SCOTS LITERATURE

John Barbour (c. 1320–1395). The first identifiable Scots poet is John Barbour, a student and possibly a teacher at Oxford and Paris. Archdeacon of Aberdeen from 1357 until death, he held important posts with the court of Scotland, including that of royal auditor. Lesser works attributed to him are *The Buik of Alexander* and, less likely, *The Troy Buik*, both romances on the "Matter of Rome."

The Brus (1378) is a national epic romance in octosyllabic couplets. With

some license in treatment of history and character, it covers the struggle of the Scots for freedom from English rule, 1286 to 1335. The central figure is Robert the Bruce; only slightly less terrible to the hated English are James of Douglas and Edward Bruce. Often shows dry Scottish wit and shrewd observation. The vivid, fast-moving narration rises to a climax in a stirring account of the Battle of Bannockburn (1314) where Edward II of England lost Scotland to Robert the Bruce. Barbour knew men who had fought at Bannockburn. Scott's rendition of the battle in *Lord of the Isles* (1815) is strongly indebted to Barbour, as is much of the narrative verse of Scott. Material of Barbour is his own, but the *Thebaid* of Statius is model.

Huchown of the Awle Ryale (huch'on) (fl. 1370). "Little Hugh of the Royal Court" was a mysterious, perhaps nonexistent Scot who is credited by Andrew of Wyntoun in *Orygynale Cronykil* (c. 1420) with poems on Arthur, Gawain, and Susanna and the Elders. His name has become convenient for ascription to many Scots poems of the period whose authorship is otherwise unknown. Perhaps most interesting and original of the group is:

The Taill of Rauf Coilzear. "The Tale of Ralph the Charcoal Burner" has no known source but is, in general, the theme of the incognito monarch receiving hospitality from one of his humble but independent subjects. Though ostensibly "Matter of France," the story seems wholly Scottish. Charlemagne incognito, lost from his entourage in a storm, finds rough but genuine hospitality in the house of the charcoal burner, Ralph. The king pretends to be a court retainer who can get royal business for the tradesman. Ralph, carrying his charcoal to the court, is treated discourteously by Roland, whom the tradesman offers to fight. The king intervenes, and Ralph is distressed to realize how familiarly he had treated the great ruler. Charlemagne, however, dubs Ralph a knight and appoints him the Marshal of France. The account is told in an elaborate thirteen-line stanza both rimed and alliterative. The tale has gusto, racy narrative skill, and sturdy humor.

CHAPTER 7

The Post-Chaucerian Poets and the Prose of Malory

(1400–1500)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. Not since Anglo-Saxon times had a century of English history been as war-darkened as the 15th century. Having deposed Richard II in 1399, Henry IV had to put down grave rebellions in Wales and in the north and had to prosecute the continuing war with France. During the struggles parliament seized the opportunity to gain unprecedented prestige and power, virtually commanding the royal purse strings. The monarch's time and difficulties have been brilliantly portrayed in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Parts I and II.

Continuing the cycle, Shakespeare's *Henry V* thrills every reader with the spectacular victory of English arms at Agincourt (1415) under the vigorous young monarch, who changed from the irresponsible Prince Hal into a triumphant warrior-king; but the English campaigns in France, marred by the cruel slaying of Joan of Arc, aroused the French to expel the English so that by 1453 only the precarious toehold of Calais flew the English pennant on the continent. The Hundred Years' War (1336–1453), consuming the blood and treasure of generations, had ended dismally for the English.

Its continental warfare having proved disastrous, England plunged into the long, dreary internal confusion of the Wars of the Roses (1455–85). Private armies, sporting the white rose of York or the red rose of Lancaster, visited upon England the desolation and savagery of civil conflict, unknown since the Norman Conquest. Monarch succeeded monarch partly because of changing military fortunes and partly because of the wily machinations of Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, dubbed "Warwick the Kingmaker." The great majority of Englishmen showed relatively little partisanship in the dynastic struggles, but all England suffered, and all England yearned for an end to the pointless bloodshed. Perhaps Shakespeare in *Richard III* exaggerates the villainy of Richard and the nobility of the Duke of Richmond who be-

came Henry VII; but history and the English people have agreed that the triumph of the Tudor line, a Welsh family, at Bosworth Field in 1485 brought a desperately needed peace, that, under a succession of strong monarchs, was to pave the way for England's Renaissance.

Although the total national economy suffered during the long wars, the peasantry and the city dwellers actually prospered. By the end of the century "villeins" (serfs) had completely changed into yeomanry, a class of sturdy, independent agriculturists which formed England's backbone in the ensuing centuries. While the great nobles weakened themselves in profitless warfare, the mercantile class enriched itself. During this century most of the London mayors were grocers or mercers, including the famous Dick Whittington (whose equally famous cat is probably legendary). This era saw the rise of the English merchant fleet; before the century ended, British vessels were plying the seas from Iceland to the Levant. "Keep the Admiralty" (i.e., command of the sea) was the slogan of the anonymous *Libelle of English Policye* (c. 1436), a militantly nationalistic exposition of the economic value of sea power.

Education of the laity greatly increased. Eton College, probably the most famous of the English Public Schools (equivalent to American private preparatory schools) was founded about 1440. The trend of the times was characterized by the Bishop of Ely who in 1496 dissolved the nunnery of St. Radegund and in its place founded Jesus College, Cambridge. Guilds and individual merchant princes endowed grammar schools instead of religious houses. The free grammar school at Stratford, attended by Shakespeare in the next century, was founded in this era. Between 1390 and 1415 papal and episcopal registers frequently mention "literate laymen," apparently deeming them a novel phenomenon. As the 15th century progressed, the expression vanished because literate laymen became a commonplace. This extensive education of the laity was a major factor in the English Renaissance.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. The Wars of the Roses were an anachronism, fought by an expiring knighthood that thickheadedly regarded the mercantile class and the new money economy as transitory upstarts. The age of chivalry, however, was doomed in part by the new weapons (some cannon were employed in the battles of the Wars of the Roses), but chiefly because its "idealism" and feudal loyalties were out of place in the new economic order. With the emergence of the Tudor line in 1485, vassalage died; an Englishman's obligations were henceforth to himself, to his monarch, and to his nation—not to a local suzerain. A civil service and a paid standing army were now the bases for administration and security. Feudal knighthood had already decayed to the level of the preposterous, several generations before Cervantes laughed it away in *Don Quixote.*

Art of the 15th century discarded the stylized forms connected with knighthood and religious medievalism in favor of a strongly realistic representation in line with a new class and a new spirit. Although the techniques still were

perhaps a bit crude in England, art pictured genuine people in painting and sculpture. And especially in the drama did the popular art offer a richly natural portraiture, the foundation for Shakespeare's theater. Secular workshops were created to produce artistic and literary commodities. Woodcuts permitted inexpensive reproductions of pictures, and a factory system of copyists poured out books. A still wider dissemination of literature was made possible by the invention of printing (c. 1439), usually ascribed to the German, Johannes Gutenberg. The first printed book in English was issued by William Caxton from Bruges in 1475; in the next year Caxton set up his press in England.

The Renaissance, now flowering in Italy's quattrocento, was stirring in England. The Italian humanist, Poggio Bracciolini, sojourned in England from 1418 to 1423. Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (d. 1447), an influential patron of Italian humanism and classical knowledge, donated to Oxford 279 classical mss., the nucleus of the university library. Other great libraries were formed at Cambridge University and at Grey Friars and Guildhall in London.

Between 1446 and 1483, Machiavelli and Columbus, Luther and Erasmus, Wolsey and Henry VIII, were all born. Before the last of these would terminate his career, the English-speaking people were to be well embarked upon the new world of the Renaissance.

LANGUAGE. The great "vowel shift" in English, largely effected during the 15th century, is unique among the Indo-European languages. It has given to modern English a pronunciation of vowels confusing to Europeans and distressing to schoolboys trying to learn English spelling.

Short vowels were not really affected. There is a strong continuity of English short vowels from antiquity; e.g., OE and ME *bedd* was pronounced like the modern *bed*. However, between the time of Chaucer and the time of Sir Thomas More, English long vowels went through a remarkable transformation. Each long vowel, as it was pronounced in the mouth, was gradually lifted and carried farther forward. The long vowels *ī* and *ū*, since they could not be lifted higher or sent farther forward, were split into diphthongs. The extent of the vowel shift is apparent from the following table:

Modern spelling	*Chaucer's spelling*	*Chaucer's word rimes with modern*
name	name	Brahma
sweet	sweete	data (daytuh)
life	lyf	reef
moon	mone	Daytona
house	hous	goose

The only long vowel not changed by Shakespeare's day was the *ē*. In the works of Shakespeare *clean* rimed with *lane*. The reasons for the vowel shift remain unknown.

Spelling, always behind current pronunciation, was relatively fixed before the vowel shift, because of the great growth of the literate laity. English vowel symbols today therefore represent sounds quite different from those they originally represented in English and still represent in continental languages. With the introduction of printing in the last quarter of the 15th century, English spelling was still further approaching fixity; modern readers are annoyed at the many "misspellings" in Caxton but find him quite intelligible.

The absorption of French and Latin words into English continued throughout this age. Many poets and some prose writers of the 15th century ostentatiously larded their English writings with Latin words. This so-called "aureate diction" reveled in Latinized English such as *dispone, equipolent, palestral*—words lost almost as soon as concocted. Some of these "aureate" terms, however, consciously and artificially created by 15th-century writers, did become accepted in English, as, *mediation, oriental, prolixity.*

This century witnessed the decisive triumph of London English as standard English. Since 1450 every significant literary figure in England has used the London dialect, reserving the right, of course, to introduce attractive words and expressions from other dialects. (Shakespeare occasionally uses West Midlands terms, and Thomas Hardy uses Southern terms.) The establishment of printing in London long before it appeared in other parts of the island was apparently the last prop needed to lift London English above all other dialects of the kingdom. Independent Scotland to the north maintained its version of Northern English as a literary tongue; in the 15th century Scots English was almost as important a vehicle of belles lettres as London English.

FOLLOWERS OF CHAUCER

There are really few or no outstanding poets in this rather undistinguished literary age. Actually, Sir Thomas Malory is the only memorable literary figure of the time, and his work is in prose. The incessant 15th-century warfare occupied the talents of those who might have been writers or patrons of writing. Study of classic literature (inspired by Italy's Renaissance) occupied the learned who stigmatized their own native literature as chaotic, trivial, and recent (OE was unknown, and Englishmen could claim only the Age of Chaucer as a preceding literary period). Such literary writers as there were in English now largely imitated Chaucer or the Italians. However, the great vitality of 15th-century literature appeared in the popular ballads and in the popular drama which will be discussed in the next chapter. The Scots poets exceeded the English in scope and power among avowedly literary figures. Decadent feudalism still concealed the dayspring of the Renaissance, and the literature of England, after the powerful outburst of the late 14th century, lay again in fallow, awaiting a greater age.

THE ENGLISH CHAUCERIANS

Thomas Occleve (Hoccleve) (ok'lēv) (1370?–c. 1450). A native Londoner, Thomas Occleve from the age of nineteen or twenty spent the better part of the next forty years as a clerk in the Privy Seal Office. By his own account he was a wastrel, beseeching patrons for the wherewithal to live riotously. He suffered a mental breakdown from 1415 to 1420. In about 1425 he retired to the priory of Southwick in Hampshire. While most of the English Chaucerians emphasized a Chaucerian kind of allegory, Occleve stressed realistic vignettes of contemporary life, but without Chaucer's artistry.

Le Male Règle de T. Hoccleve (c. 1406). "The Bad Conduct" is one of the most autobiographical poems in English. In rime royal the poet admits to eating and drinking to excess, flirting with girls at Paul's Head Tavern but from cowardice proceeding no further, and to overtipping boatmen who flatteringly addressed him as "Maister." In desperate need of money, the poet vows a complete reformation. The colorful images of London life in the poem render it more interesting than his more highly regarded work:

De Regimine Principum (c. 1412). "The Regement of Princes" was written for Prince Hal, later Henry V. In 5463 lines of rime royal the poem parades the usual admonitions on how to live and rule, as assembled from the *De Ludo Scachorum* of Jacobus de Cessolis, the *Secreta Secretorum* (incorrectly ascribed to Aristotle), and the *De Regimine Principum* of Egidio Colonna. In somewhat tedious tales and pedestrian verse the poet calls for peace with France and civil justice for all Englishmen. He opposes the Lollards with conservative piety. The most frequently quoted passage is his sincere tribute to Chaucer. Also interesting are his personal allusions in the preface, which comprises almost one third of the work.

John Lydgate (lid'gāt) (c. 1373–c. 1449). "The Monk of Bury," John Lydgate, was probably born in Lydgate, Suffolk. From about the age of fifteen until his death, except for ten years, he was a monk at the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. In 1423 he was elected prior of Hatfield Broadoak in Essex. He later spent some time in Paris before returning to the monastery in 1434. About 130,000 lines of verse are ascribed to him, and he may be characterized as one of the most verbose, and often most boring, poets of our language. Unlike his poetic master, Chaucer, he is a sententious cleric and teacher, and no man of the world. Much of the 15th century which apparently regarded verbosity as artistic, regarded him as the peer of Chaucer. He was a favorite among early printers. Caxton printed seven of his works, Wynkyn de Worde three, and Pynson four. Many later Chaucerians were strongly indebted to Lydgate; his influence toward tediousness and "aureate terms" was largely responsible for the subsequent branding of the entire age as literarily uninteresting.

The Temple of Glas (c. 1403) is probably Lydgate's most readable work.

An allegorical poem in heroic couplets, modeled after Chaucer's *House of Fame* and *Book of the Duchess,* it is a dream vision of the poet in a great Temple of Venus where the glass walls reflect classical deities and legends. A beautiful lady, separated from her beloved, vows constancy. There is a knight who also suffers in the same situation. Venus brings together the two suppliants in festive joy after proper moral objurgations. The poem possibly celebrates the betrothal of Judge William Paston and Agnes Berry.

The Troy Book (1412–20) includes five books of 29,626 lines of heroic couplets (and an envoy of 107 lines in rime royal) written at the request of Prince Hal. Based upon the *Historia Destructionis Troiae* of Guido delle Colonne, it is the longest verse account in English of the fall of Ilium, from the "Matter of Rome." Bright passages amidst the verbiage are: the love affair of Jason and Medea (Book I), the consoling of Menelaus by Agamemnon (Book II), and the eulogy to Chaucer (Book III).

The Siege of Thebes (1420–22) is a continuation of *The Canterbury Tales,* in 4716 lines of heroic couplets. On the return journey of Chaucer's pilgrims, Lydgate in person recounts an elaboration of the Knight's Tale ranging from the foundation of Thebes by Cadmus to the death at each other's hands of the sons of Oedipus—Eteocles and Polynices. The source is a French prose version of the 12th-century *Roman de Thebes.* This work was frequently printed in early editions of Chaucer.

The Fall of Princes (1431–38) was commissioned by Lydgate's patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Nine books, totaling 36,365 lines mostly in rime royal, versify Laurent de Premierfait's *Des Cas des Nobles Hommes et Femmes,* which was based upon Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium.* Essentially the work is the Monk's Tale, spun out to horrendous length. Linguistically the work is important; in it many French and Latin words make their first appearance in English. The poem was imitated in the Renaissance *Mirrour for Magistrates* (1554).

Stephen Hawes (1475–c. 1525). An Oxford graduate and a groom of the chamber for Henry VII, Stephen Hawes looked backward to Lydgate and Chaucer.

The Passetyme of Pleasure (1505, pub. 1509). The poem's hero, Graunde Amoure (the perfect lover), in a vision sees Lady Fame who says that La Belle Pucel (pure beauty) dwells in the magic tower of music to which monstrous giants bar the way. After a long apprenticeship to the Ladies Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric (the medieval *trivium* of collegiate study), and then to the Ladies Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy (the medieval *quadrivium*), the hero is able to slay a three-headed giant, a seven-headed giant, and a monster formed of seven metals by a wicked enchantress. He marries La Belle Pucel, ages, and dies.

An allegory of the life of man in 5800 lines, the poem is chiefly in rime royal but also has some heroic couplets. The matter is a catchall of love allegory, scholastic erudition, chivalric romance, and even fabliau. Contrary

to the standard medieval practice, however, the poet's personifications are of learning, rather than of abstract virtue. In this, Hawes is a link between Chaucer and Spenser.

John Skelton (c. 1460–1529). Tutor of the young Henry VIII, John Skelton was a classical scholar of note and parson of Diss in Norfolk from 1504. Although influenced by Renaissance humanism, he was strongly conservative; he attacked both ecclesiastical abuses and reformers such as Wycliffe and Luther. Essentially his was a highly individualistic temperament, spouting reckless vitality, bitter moral indignation, savage literary and political angers, and noble exaltation. Though branded "beastly Skelton" by Alexander Pope, his writings enjoyed a surprising revival in the 1920s and 1930s. He also translated the letters of Cicero and the history of Diodorus Siculus.

Garlande of Laurell (1523). In sixteen hundred lines of rime royal the poet lavishly praises himself. Fame and Pallas laud his artistic qualifications; Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate hail him; noble ladies fashion a laurel wreath for his crown. The lyrics to Margaret Hussey, Isabel Pennell, and Margery Wentworth are tender and charming.

More typical are *Colyn Cloute* (c. 1520), which influenced Spenser, and *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte* (c. 1522), satirically berating ecclesiastical corruption and hypocrisy, especially in Cardinal Wolsey. Its verse form uses short two-stress lines, since known as "Skeltonics," which leap at breakneck speed from clownish irreverence to classic erudition, and from bitter irony to sincere piety. Usually they are rimed in couplets, but the same rime may ride roguishly through as many as seven lines. The nearest parallel to Skelton's verse is the goliardic poetry of the late medieval period, that is, poetry which jumbles Latin tags and puns with parodies of church liturgy, and coarse allusion with abstruse scholastic philosophy. *The Tunnynge of Elynour Rummyng* (c. 1510) is a wild orgy at the alehouse of another Wife of Bath; "tunning" means the insertion of beer into casks. However, the most attractive work by Skelton is *The Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe* (c. 1507) written for Jane Scroupe, a schoolgirl at Carow near Norwich. Supposedly composed by the girl herself, it consists of fourteen hundred sportive lines lamenting the death of a pet sparrow killed by a cat. The poem was probably inspired by an eighteen-line poem by Catullus upon the same subject. Coleridge termed it "an exquisite and original poem."

Skelton's morality play *Magnyfycence* will be discussed in the next chapter.

THE SCOTTISH CHAUCERIANS

James I of Scotland (1394–1437, reigned 1406–37). In 1406, at the age of eleven, James was captured aboard ship by the English and held prisoner in London for eighteen years. He became familiar with Chaucer's writings during his relatively pleasant captivity. He was released in 1424 through a large ransom payment from Scotland and through his marriage to Lady Jane Beaufort, daughter of the Earl of Somerset and niece of Richard II. James

met an untimely death at the hands of assassins. His tragic career is the subject of *The King's Tragedy* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The Kingis Quair (c. 1423). "The King's Book" uses Chaucerian material autobiographically. The king from his prison tower spots Lady Jane just as Palamon and Arcite observed Emelye. In a dream the royal poet is transported to the palace of Venus who provides Good Hope as a guide to Minerva. Good Hope bears him to Fortune, who has him mount her ever-turning wheel. On awakening, the king finds a message from Venus promising success in his courtship. He concludes with an Envoy to Chaucer and Gower. The poem's 197 stanzas use the stanzaic form of *Troilus and Criseyde.* In deference to the monarch the stanza ever since has been called "rime royal." The youthful idealism of a generous spirit echoes through a graceful and charming romance, quite superior to Lydgate's work.

Robert Henryson (c. 1430–1506). Master of the Grammar School in the Benedictine Abbey at Dunfermline, Robert Henryson was also possibly connected with the University of Glasgow. A strict moralist, Henryson nonetheless had a canny Scot's sense of humor and a racy narrative skill as demonstrated by his versification in rime royal of Aesop's fables.

The Testament of Cresseid (kres'id) (1593) is a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde.* Deserted by her Greek lover Diomede, Cresseid returns crestfallen to her father Calchas. For her faithlessness and inconstancy, the gods snatch away her beauty and afflict her with leprosy; "unclean," she begs with other lepers at the wayside. Troilus (pictured as still alive), passing in the company of other knights, imagines some resemblance to his lost love in the diseased hag; he tosses a purse of jewels to her. Her eyesight damaged by the ailment, Cresseid has to learn from others that Troilus is her benefactor. "Fy! fals Cresseid! O, trew knight Troilus!" she wails, and expires. Troilus raises a tomb to her memory.

This is a powerful dramatic narrative in 616 lines of rime royal. The greatest 15th-century poem, the best treatment of its theme between Chaucer and Shakespeare, and perhaps the greatest Scots verse before Burns. The work is psychologically penetrating and presents powerfully and concisely the relentless drive of fate against the sinner. Subsequent treatments of the story, notably Shakespeare's, have followed Henryson's interpretation of Cressida as a wanton.

Blind Harry or Henry the Minstrel (fl. 1460). A contemporary Scottish historian, John Major (Mair), ascribes the heroic romance *Wallace* to a professional minstrel Harry, blind from birth. Harry is listed as a deceased poet in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris* (c. 1508). Harry is as shadowy as Huchown, and his blindness, like Homer's, may be folklore.

The Acts and Deidis of the Illuster and Vailzeand Champioun, Schir William Wallace, Knicht of Ellerslie (c. 1460, earliest ms. 1488). Unmentioned in Barbour's *Brus* is William Wallace (c. 1272–1305), who has been a national Scottish hero since the late 15th century, principally on the basis

of this work. Although historians are able to accept the fact that Wallace battled the English for about eight years, the poem assigns over twenty-five years to his anti-English struggles. In this poem Wallace is prominent at Bannockburn, a battle fought nine years after his execution. Harry, or whoever was the poet, ascribes unbroken victories to Wallace and monotonously depicts ghastly butchery. Replete with fervent nationalism, the book warmed the hearts of Scots smarting from defeats inflicted by the English. Among the Scots populace this was the most popular Scots poem before Burns (cf. "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled"). The work is in heroic couplets. Its source is professedly a Latin prose biography by John Blair, chaplain of Wallace; but Blair's work is altogether lost, if it ever existed. The poem shows considerable knowledge of metrical cycles of romance, but, as we can see from the rimes it uses, it is written in the broadest Scots of the common people.

William Dunbar (c. 1460–c. 1520). Of good East Lothian family, perhaps an M.A. from St. Andrews University, William Dunbar was a Franciscan who was restless under monastic rules. He lived in Paris for some time, perhaps as long as 1491 to 1500. He became a minor official in the Scottish court after 1500. He was the greatest and most versatile of the *makaris* ("the makers," the Scots 15th-century poets). His age called him "the Scottish Chaucer," and as a poet Scott termed him "unrivalled by any which Scotland ever produced." Dunbar's work falls into three broad categories: formal allegory, comic and satiric verse, and religious poetry.

The Goldyn Targe (1508) is an allegory depicting the power of love to batter down the golden shield of reason. In a dream on a May morning the poet witnesses the debarkation of Venus and her court from a gorgeous ship. With her golden shield Reason vainly attempts to deflect the arrows of Beauty and her warriors. Taken prisoner, the poet realizes that the lady is "lustiar of chere." Venus departs, delivering him to Heaviness. As she sails off, the booming cannon wake the poet to his May morning.

The poet uses a nine-line stanza riming *a a b a a b b a b*. The texture of the poem is richly colored with sensuous images, and vigorous and musical verse. It is the best in its genre between Chaucer and Spenser. Dunbar's other significant allegory, *The Thrissil and the Rois* (1503), is a prothalamium for the wedding of Scottish James IV (the Scottish Thistle) to Margaret Tudor (white and red rose of York and Lancaster).

The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo. Two married women and a widow outdo the Wife of Bath in ribald frankness and realism, discussing absolutely all aspects of marriage. No husband could withstand the savage thrusts of sarcasm, the wild flurry of imaginative epithets, and the extravagant but appropriate imagery. Dunbar's animation and homey satire have no peer until Burns. The work is in unrimed alliterative verse.

The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis (1503–08). In part indebted to Lydgate's *Daunce of Machabree* (c. 1430), it is apparently the first English employment of the danse macabre theme. In Dunbar's far superior work the

Seven Deadly Sins perform a wild dance in Hell under the direction of the Devil, Mahound (Mahomet). Damned Scotsmen and other sinners hop about under the surly prodding of the demons. The work is highly moral and pious, but displays a grotesquerie and fantastic imagination unrivaled until *Tam O'Shanter* by Burns.

Gavin Douglas (c. 1474–1522). Son of the Earl of Angus, graduate of St. Andrews in 1494, Gavin Douglas was a highly political cleric, who attained the bishopric of Dunkeld in 1516. Removed from his see in 1520 because of his English leanings, he proceeded to London where he died of the plague. He was the most learned Scottish Chaucerian, but writing was secondary to his active public life. His rather unhappy career is well described in Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* (1827–30). The *Palice of Honour* (1501) and *King Hart* (c. 1510), by Douglas, are Chaucerian verse allegories, but Douglas' chief claim to fame rests upon:

Eneados (1513, pub. 1553). This is the first verse translation of Vergil's *Aeneid* into any dialect of English; it includes a continuation of the original in Book XIII by Mapheus Vegius. The heroic couplets are vigorous, but the poem lacks the exalted melody and spirit of the original. Each book is preceded by a poetic prologue, entirely the work of Douglas. These prologues, employing a variety of stanzaic forms, have been likened in their appreciation of nature to James Thomson's *Seasons* (1726–30): Winter (Book VI), May (Book XII), June (Book XIII). Most remarkable is the diction, dredged from alliterative romances, Chaucerian English, French, Latin, and dialectal borrowings from Scandinavian. Douglas is sometimes considered, rather dubiously, as a forerunner of the Renaissance.

Douglas is said to have written "Comoedias." He may therefore be the first Scottish playwright known by name, although no dramatic works ascribed to him are now extant.

Sir David Lyndsay (c. 1485–1555). Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount belonged to a large and powerful Fife family. As Lyon King of Arms (head of the Scottish college of heralds) he was prominent at all national assemblies and performed diplomatic errands abroad. "Master usher" (guardian) of young King James V (Fitz-James in Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, which also highly praises Lyndsay) and later negotiator of the prince's marriage, he was the last of the Chaucerians, manifesting Scotland's adherence to the previous age even after the Renaissance had profoundly affected England.

Satire of the Three Estates (1540) is the conventional shortening of the title *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis, in Commendatioun of Vertew and Vituperatioun of Vyce*, the only complete extant Morality play in Scots dialect. Its performance lasted all day, and was divided into two parts with intermission for meals.

Part I shows a young king, Rex Humanitas, misled by vices under virtuous labels. Good Counsel cannot reach him; Verity, carrying the English text of the New Testament, is pilloried in the stocks as a criminal and is joined

by Chastity, an alien to Scotland. Divine Correction, however, frees the prisoners and admonishes Rex Humanitas, who promptly summons parliament to alleviate national ills.

Part II is largely the indictment of his oppressors by John the Commonweal (i.e., the common man of Scotland). Before parliament, John attacks the three estates (Spiritual or clergy, Temporal or landowners, Burgesses or merchants), especially the clergy, whom he accuses of ignorance, laziness, avarice, and lechery. A convinced parliament adopts fifteen acts, the constitution of a reformed Kirk of Scotland.

A wide variety of meters and stanzas is employed, ranging from rough vituperation to earnest sermonizing. Lyndsay is a bold, outspoken advocate of John Knox and the Scottish Reformation.

The Monarche (1553) is the alternate title of the poem, *Ane Dialogue betwix Experience and ane Courteour, Off the Miserabyll Estait of the World.* It is in 6338 lines, partly in rime royal and partly in octosyllabic couplets. On a May morning the Courtier meets the aged Experience who recounts the history of the world, emphasizing the four monarchies of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, and the "fifth monarchy" of the Pope. Sources are Orosius, Diodorus Siculus, Eusebius, Josephus, and Boccaccio. The poet's purpose is to admonish the Scottish king. With fury Lyndsay attacks contemporary ills: idolatry, warfare, immorality, incapacity of the clergy. Again he expresses the spirit of the Scots Reformation.

SIR THOMAS MALORY AND LESSER PROSE WRITERS

Sir Thomas Malory (mal'ō-ri) (c. 1408–1471). The brilliant literary detection of Kittredge and Hicks in the 1920s has revealed much about a man who was only a name for four centuries. We now know that Sir Thomas Malory was a knight of Winwick, Warwickshire, in the retinue of "Warwick the Kingmaker." In 1445 he represented his county in parliament. Starting in 1450 he embarked upon a wild spree of cattle and property stealing, church and abbey raiding, extorting, manhandling, and raping that even his knightly rank could not gloss over, nor his powerful protector condone. From late 1451 until his death, presumably in prison, he was continually incarcerated, with only short intervals of liberty. Probably after 1460 he was in London's Newgate prison, opposite the excellent Gray Friars library. From this collection his keepers apparently permitted him to secure the many romances, chiefly in French, upon which he based the greatest literary work, certainly the greatest prose piece, of the century.

Le Morte d'Arthur (1469 or 1470, pub. 1485 by Caxton). Until the discovery of the Winchester text in 1934, readers knew "The Death of Arthur" only in the Caxton version. Long regarded as a literary hack and inconsequential editor, Caxton is now recognized as the significant improver of Malory's text. The earlier accounts in the Winchester version show the dis-

turbing preoccupation with blood and lust to be expected in a felon knight. Yet as Malory proceeded, he apparently became increasingly charmed by the beauty and morality of his material. Caxton gave a unified tone to the printed version, and improved the continuity of the romance. But of course, the great task was accomplished by Malory.

The medieval Arthurian tales possessed no continuous narrative or theme in their vast proliferation. From a mountain of disjointed and inconsistent stories (the corpus discussed in Chapter 5 and the vast French prose versions in the 13th and 14th centuries) Malory produced essentially a unified account by condensing, eliminating contradictions, and supplying necessary transitions and explanations. Foreshadowing a later age, Malory minimizes the fantastic and supernatural elements, making them thereby more artistically impressive and acceptable to the modern reader.

The Caxton-Malory account displays unprecedented unity in:

(a) Organizing the whole cycle as "the birth, life and acts of King Arthur and his noble knights of the Round Table," instead of the previous tangle of Arthurian tales, lacking focus and integration.

(b) Centering the main action in the conflict of the two motives: the high and holy quest of the Sangreal (the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper), with its spiritual devotion, and the all-consuming passion of Lancelot and Guinevere, with its emphasis on physical love. As a result of this concentration of action, the work establishes the pervasive theme of the cancer of lust and deceit that destroys the puissant knight Lancelot, the noble King Arthur, and the entire civilizing and spiritualizing force of the Round Table.

The twenty-one books into which Caxton divided Malory's work are chiefly concerned with the following narratives:

(1) *The birth and early exploits of Arthur.* As we mentioned earlier, Uther Pendragon, with the aid of Merlin's magic, has a son, Arthur, by Igrayne, wife of the Duke of Cornwall. Merlin also helps Arthur through his youthful training and vicissitudes to the kingship by obtaining for him the magic sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. Arthur is unwittingly the father of Mordred by his own sister. Arthur marries Guinevere, daughter of King Leodegran. Giants, invading kings, and even the Roman Emperor Lucius are overpowered by the redoubtable young monarch.

(2) *The passion of Lancelot and Guinevere.* In earlier versions Gawain, Arthur's nephew, is the leading knight of the Round Table. In the later French versions, and here in Malory, Gawain is coarse and treacherous; the leading knight is now Sir Lancelot du Lac. For years Lancelot, "the gentlest knight that ever ate in hall among ladies, the sternest to his mortal foe that ever put spear in rest," carries on an intrigue with Guinevere, unbeknown to Arthur. Mordred reveals the liaison, and Guinevere is condemned to death at the stake. Lancelot bears off Guinevere to the castle of Joyous Gard in

Brittany, but at the Pope's order he yields her back to Arthur. At the king's death both Lancelot and Guinevere take holy vows and retire from the world.

(3) *The passion of Tristram and Isoulde.* By combat with Sir Morôlt of Ireland, Tristram of Lyonesse frees his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall, from vassalage to the Irish king. His wounds are healed by Isoulde, daughter of the King of Ireland. Later Tristram is commissioned to woo Isoulde for his uncle; as he is conducting her to Cornwall, they inadvertently drink of a love potion that makes them devoted lovers for life. Their clandestine meetings after her marriage to King Mark are at last discovered. Tristram is exiled to Brittany where he marries another Isoulde, this one called Isoulde of the White Hands. Malory ends here, not continuing the love affair to its famous and tragic conclusion.

(4) *The quest of the Sangreal.* Reputedly, Joseph of Arimathea had brought the cup of the Last Supper from the Holy Land to Britain. When it vanishes, the knights of the Round Table seek it throughout the earth. Lancelot approaches the Holy Grail but is momentarily blinded because of his sins. His son Galahad, by Elaine, daughter of King Pelles, crosses the sea to the holy city of Sarras, accompanied by Sir Perceval (in many continental versions the discoverer of the Holy Grail) and Sir Bors. After seeing the Sangreal and receiving the sacrament from it, Galahad dies; both he and the Sangreal proceed directly to Heaven.

(5) *The passing of Arthur* (apparently Caxton is responsible for designating the entire work by the title truly applicable only to this concluding portion). While Arthur is warring against Lancelot, his illegitimate son Mordred, regent in Arthur's absence, rebels. In an Armageddon-like battle in the west of England, Mordred and his knights are slain; Arthur, mortally wounded, departs in a barge to the Vale of Avalon.

Malory's narrative shows nostalgia for a departed chivalric age; it epitomizes the knightly ideals in a period when men as ignoble as Malory himself had largely vitiated that ideal; it breathes patriotism and love of England's "green and pleasant land" in an era of brutal civil war; it laments the tragic downfall of virtue and morality in an age itself witnessing such a catastrophe. *Le Morte d'Arthur* establishes the canon and concept of Arthurian material for subsequent English treatments by Spenser, Tennyson, Morris, Swinburne, and many others. Readers often find later versions, especially the highly wrought Victorian retellings, less satisfactory than the Malory account, notable in its straightforward, vigorous style which is nonetheless colorful, sensuous, and intensely earnest. *Le Morte d'Arthur* is the greatest English prose writing up to its time, and the first notable piece of poetic prose in our literature.

William Caxton (c. 1422–1491). A London mercer by trade, William Caxton lived at Bruges (in present-day Belgium) from 1441 to 1470. For much of this period he headed a chartered association of English merchants

trading in the Low Countries. Interested in the new invention of movable type, he issued from Bruges in 1474 the first printed book in the English language—*The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,* largely his own translation from the French of Raoul de Fèvre, *Le Receuil des Histoires de Troye.* Returning to England, he established the first press on English soil at Westminster (London). *The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres,* a translation of Guillaume de Tigonville's *Dits Moraulx des Philosophes* by Lord Rivers, was the first dated book printed in England (1477) and almost certainly the first book ever printed in England. Ninety-two printings of seventy-four different books have survived from Caxton's shop. His extensive publications cover a wide range, falling roughly into five categories: religious works, practical business and social manuals, lay instructional books, chronicles, and literary pieces. The latter included Lydgate (three works in 1477), Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1478), Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1483), and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485). Caxton's largest and most popular book, *The Golden Legend* (1483), is an encyclopedia of traditional sacred lore of medieval times, including saints' lives, commentary on the church service, sermons, and even a chronicle from Creation to 1250. Caxton inserted in *The Golden Legend* additional biographies of Old Testament heroes. If these are genuinely the work of Caxton, they are, especially in his account of Adam, Caxton's finest literary pieces.

Unlike many later printers, who are purely artisans, Caxton was a creative editor-printer. Over twenty of his books are his own translations into English. For most of the books from his press he wrote introductions and often epilogues. His Prologue to *Eneydos* (1490), his translation of a French paraphrase of the *Aeneid,* is notable for his discussion of English dialects, his choice of London English, and his confidence in the future of English. The medievalism of Caxton is apparent in his heavy moralizing, his reverent quotation from hallowed authorities of the middle ages, his conventional justification for writing a book (it keeps him from idleness, the instigator of sin), his untroubled inaccuracy with names and facts, and his humble insistence on his own incapacity (which unduly influenced future readers to deprecate his ability). The approaching Renaissance is foreshadowed in his pride of authorship, his relish of English, and his frank admission that he wanted to improve the older writers.

Incunabula (Latin, "swaddling clothes") is the term applied to the earliest printed books, especially those published before 1500. In addition to Caxton, early English printers included the Alsatian Wynkyn de Worde (d. 1534), the English Richard Pynson (d. 1530), and the Frenchman Julian Notary (d. 1520).

Caxton and Malory aside, the century offered meager prose, most of it antithetical to belles lettres.

John Capgrave (1393–1464). An Augustinian friar of Lynn in Norfolk, John Capgrave wrote an English *Chronicle,* extending Trevisa's account to

1417; the work is an advance over its predecessor in its wider examination of sources. The orthodox prejudices of Capgrave show in his stigmatizing of Wycliffe as "the orgon of the devel, the enmy of the cherch, the confusion of men, the ydol of heresie, the meroure of ypocrisie, the norischer of scisme." In Latin, Capgrave compiled from John of Tynemouth the first significant collection of lives of English saints, *Nova Legenda Angliae.*

Reginald Pecock (c. 1395–c. 1460). A Welsh protégé of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Reginald Pecock tried to win over the Lollards; but his *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy* (1455) with its dislike for persecution of heretics and its willingness to go some distance with Wycliffe, cost him his bishopric of Chichester. However, his work had little influence, because it was banned by the ecclesiastical authorities. His lucid English prose, free of forced Latinisms and dialectal features, mature in its sentence structure and appeal to reason, might otherwise have exercised considerable influence upon developing English prose.

Significant were the many extensive treatises on political morality, ranging from the anonymous *Libelle of English Policye* (c. 1436) to the *Monarchia* (c. 1471) by SIR JOHN FORTESCUE (c. 1394–c. 1476). John Fortescue, chief justice of the king's bench, in this work in English, was apparently the first Englishman to advocate a constitutional monarchy instead of an absolute monarchy. But modern political science started with the Renaissance Italian, Niccolò Machiavelli, who horrified the English by his accurate portraits of government as it is instead of following this 15th-century (and medieval) practice of discussing government as it should be in a Christian society.

TRANSLATION AND LETTER-WRITING OF THE PERIOD

Progress in the art of translation was considerable at this time.

Alexander Barclay (c. 1475–1552). A monk probably of Scottish origin, Alexander Barclay translated Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff* as *The Ship of Fools* (1509), chiefly in rime royal. The English version, with Barclay's humorous additions, is twice the length of the original German. A ship bearing every sort of crackbrain and eccentric is bound for Narragonia, the Fool's Paradise. Although both Brant and Barclay were orthodox in faith, they mercilessly satirized numerous clerics. Barclay also introduced the eclogue into English with *Eclogues* (c. 1513) in heroic couplets. The first three are translated from Aeneas Sylvius (Pope Pius II); the remaining two are loose paraphrases from Eclogues V and VI by Mantuan. The pastoral poetry of Vergil made the eclogue familiar to the middle ages in Latin; the English Renaissance was to produce numerous poems in this genre in the vernacular.

CORRESPONDENCE. Another manifestation of the growing literacy of the laity in the 15th century was extensive letter writing, not in the Latin of the priesthood and the erudite, but in the English of the thriving mercantile class. For the first time in English history, ample collections of private corre-

spondence appear—the Cely letters, the Stonor letters, and most notably the Paston letters.

The Paston Letters. Over 1100 letters and other documents have survived from the prosperous Paston family of Paston, Norfolk, covering family business and domestic affairs for three generations from 1422 to 1509. These have none of the literary quality of letters by Lord Chesterfield or D. H. Lawrence, but they are the source of our best insight into the everyday life of the 15th century. For no preceding period of English history is there such a rich store of information on the conduct of a household, relations of parents and children, legal and commercial transactions, life at college, the few excitements and the regular humdrum of day-to-day existence. Amidst civil disorders ("the times are right wild," opines one of the Pastons) the busy individual life goes on. The Pastons were eminently practical and respectable people, presenting a solid and businesslike front to the world, fighting out in private their family squabbles. Children and servants were disciplined rigorously with frequent beatings. When young Elizabeth Paston refused to marry an ugly widower of fifty, her mother, Agnes, famed for her piety and decorum, had the girl "beaten once in the week or twice, sometimes twice in one day, and her head broken in two or three places" over a three-month period. A far cry, this, from the aura of chivalric romance in medievalism! Elizabeth finally yielded to parental wishes, which saw marriage as a method of family aggrandizement in prestige and money, not as the consummation of true love. Two successful love affairs, however, brighten these letters. Although Margery Brews proffered only a meager dowry, John Paston at last married her; her tender love letters would melt even a hardened male heart of today. And Margery Paston secretly plighted her troth to Richard Calle, the able young bailiff of the Paston property. For years the Pastons threatened and cajoled her, but finally the family obduracy was worn down by the plucky girl, and the lovers were united in marriage. Sales and debts, lawsuits and marriage bargainings occupy most of the earlier letters. After Bosworth Field there is an understandable lightening, a feeling of greater security, and an amplified interest in the pleasures and amenities of life.

CHAPTER 8

Beginnings of English Drama and the Popular Ballads

(1350–1515)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The historical and cultural conditions of this period have been discussed in the previous chapter. It remains only to say a few words on why the drama and the ballad are here discussed in a separate chapter. As both of these forms were considered "popular literature" in this age, it seemed natural to explain this hitherto unmentioned category and examine the reasons for its importance in the 15th century.

Until the great rise of the middle class in the 18th century, and especially the development of almost universal literacy in the 19th century, formal literature was generally written by aristocratic gentlemen for other aristocratic gentlemen. The songs and the tales of the people were regarded until recently as trivial and devoid of literary value. The popular drama, perhaps largely because it contained some classical parallels, rose to a literary position in the Renaissance. The folksong had to await the late 18th century for its literary recognition.

After Chaucer it was fully two hundred years before the formal literature of England produced a poet of comparable stature in Edmund Spenser. Why there should have been this long hiatus is a question not to be answered. It is not enough to say that the 15th century was largely given over to turmoil and civil war; ages before and since have suffered equal or greater disturbances and yet were able to bring forth literary genius. There seems to be no more reason for the absence of great literature than for its presence.

However, what nature seemed to have denied to the "official" bearers of culture in this century, she gave with great prodigality to the "unofficial" creators of art, the usually forgotten tastes of the common man. It was the common man who sang the ballads and enjoyed the drama during this age.

Quite obviously both of these forms had been in use prior to the 15th century. The ballads go back to immemorial time, the oral tradition of peoples untouched by higher learning, and certainly the drama begins its emergence

from its total obscurity after the fall of the Roman Empire as early as some of the liturgical practices of the 9th century. But it was in the 15th century that the ballad received its greatest impulse—creating for the first time works comparable to its contemporary belletristic literature, and the drama, after nearly a thousand years of quiescence, developed into a fully secular medium of expression.

While it is true that the drama at this time was completely derived from religious themes and sources, it must be understood that it appealed to the people on the basis of pleasure as much as for its instructional and devotional content. And it must be remembered that frequently it is just when drama ceases to be religion that it becomes art. This shift most definitely occurred in this century.

ENGLISH DRAMA FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

Like many other peoples, the English seem to have created the beginnings of their drama from primitive attempts to explain the mysteries of birth and death, mysteries related to the succession of light and dark, heat and cold. Primitive man conceived of the struggle of winter and summer, life and death, as a cycle resulting in the death and resurrection of a hero. Many English communities still perpetuate such a belief with folk rites in Christmas, New Year, Easter, Midsummer, and Halloween mummery, evidently derived from prehistoric man's feeling that the operations of vital spirits could be controlled by symbolic pantomime or imitation. A typical example is the St. George play, basically composed of a prologue to introduce the characters, a fight in which the hero is slain, the resurrection of the hero (often by a comic doctor), and a concluding scene of general merriment and dancing.

But it was the impulse to instruct which produced the main line of English drama through the Christian church. The flourishing drama of ancient Greece and Rome, like most art of pre-Christian times, was banned by early Christianity because of its pagan and worldly associations. As centuries passed and the pagan stigma was forgotten, the Christian church became the great patron of art, in order to inculcate religious concepts; in this process the church which had destroyed ancient drama became itself the creator of the modern drama. Although paintings, statuary, mosaics, and stained-glass windows could all present religious material to the untutored, no method proved so compelling and gripping as dramatic representation, in which the spectator vicariously participated in the emotions and convictions of the characters in the drama.

EARLY LITURGICAL DRAMA

Therefore, the ancestor of the modern drama began as an integral part of the worship service of the Christian church. Developed from the liturgy,

it is termed liturgical drama from its origins (probably in the 9th century or earlier) until its increasing length and secularization removed it from the actual worship service (apparently as early as the 12th century).

The miracle of the Mass is itself exciting drama, representing as it does the ritualistic imitation of the transformation by Christ of the bread and wine into His flesh and blood. Other dramatic qualities in the church service developed during early Christian centuries: in the *neumes,* portions of the Scriptures were emphasized and elaborated with an embellished tone; in the chants a solo voice or a section of the choir was answered by another section or by all other voices; in the tropes, antiphony rose to a climax with a wordless sequence following the *Alleluia* and introducing the Introit to the Third Mass. All this ritual certainly awed the uneducated man, inspiring in him much of the exaltation that grand opera provides for many people today. When the essentially dramatic presentation went one further step to the specific imitation of Christian stories, the illiterate person felt even greater fascination as he understood specific imitation more fully. The modern drama begins with the elaboration of the Mass service by the addition of dialogue to the Easter ritual, the focal point of the Christian faith.

Quem Quaeritis Trope. As early as the 9th century in France, and probably also in England, the wordless sequences of the trope were supplied with words from the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome, telling of the visit of the Marys to the empty garden tomb (Mark 16:1–7, Matthew 28:1–7). The complete text translated from the Latin reads:

> Whom seek ye (Quem quaeritis) in the sepulcher, O followers of Christ?
> Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, O celestial ones.
> He is not here; he is arisen, as he foretold.
> Go, announce that he is risen from the sepulcher.

The first line was originally chanted by a section of the choir assuming the role of angels at the tomb. Voices representing the Marys replied with the second line. The concluding lines came from the initial singers. In *Concordia Regularis,* a ms. c. 965–75, Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, instructs Benedictines in performing the *Quem quaeritis* trope with increased mimesis. A representation of the sepulcher stands at the altar. One cleric, palm in hand, takes his post at the altar to impersonate the guarding angel; he is approached by three other clerics "stepping delicately as those who seek something," like the three Marys. After the intoning of the above lines, the cleric impersonating the angel dramatically opens the mimic sepulcher to show the folded cloths left behind by the risen Christ.

Although there are numerous references to liturgical drama in England from the 11th through the 14th centuries, few mss. survive. The successive stages of development seem easily traceable, however, through the extant parallel continental drama which the English presumably shared with all western Christendom. The actual alterations, however, must have occurred

some generations, even centuries, before the surviving texts were written.

Further "scenes" were added to the *Quem quaeritis* trope. In a 13th-century ms. of Orléans, France, the *Sepulchrum* has become a play of three episodes: the visit of the three Marys, the race of Peter and John to the tomb, and the appearance of Christ in the garden to Mary Magdalene. The earliest British version of this expansion comes from the 15th century, from the church of St. John the Evangelist, Dublin.

The success of the Easter play induced the preparation of liturgical drama for other dates of the Christian calendar. From 12th-century Rouen, France, comes *Peregrini,* for the Monday of Passion Week; here Christ appears to the disciples at Emmaus. From the same century appear *Pastores,* the account of the shepherds proceeding to the manger of the newly born Christ, and *Magi,* the visit of the Three Wise Men. The expanding and fusing technique, reaching toward modern drama, is demonstrated by *Herodes* from the Abbey Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire in the 12th century. This liturgical drama joins together the *Pastores* and *Magi* and centers upon the figure of Herod.

Semiliturgical is the term applied to plays which are performed within the worship service of the church but which commemorate Christian stories not included in formal liturgy. In *Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans* (c. 1240) Matthew Paris states that Geoffrey, later Abbot of St. Albans, had *Ludus de St. Katharina* ("Play of St. Catherine") performed in Dunstable about 1110. Hilarius (fl. 1125) may be our first known English dramatist. Although resident in France, Hilarius addressed his plays to Englishmen and has his character Barbarus, a foreigner and non-Christian, speak French. His *Ludus Super Iconia Sancti Nicolai* tells the story of the original Santa Claus, St. Nicholas of Asia Minor, in a play evidently intended for presentation at Matins or Vespers on the day (December 6) or eve of St. Nicholas. Hilarius also wrote an Easter play and a Christmas drama. In his *Life of Thomas Becket* (c. 1180) William Fitzstephen observes that in his own day, instead of the *spectacula theatralia* performed in Rome, London presented holier plays—saints' miracles and martyrdoms. Such dramas were evidently quite popular, but we do not know whether their language was Latin, French, or English.

Probably all the dramas specified above were intoned in Latin. The oldest vernacular dramas written in England (12th century) were in French—*Adam* and *Resurrection.* The earliest extant ms. with English language (early 14th century) contains three cue scripts intended for a cleric taking the role of the third Mary in *Sepulchrum* (Easter), a Wayfarer in *Peregrini* (Monday of Passion Week), and the Third Shepherd in *Pastores* (Christmas). The transitional period from drama in Latin to drama in English is neatly exemplified by these texts which show the actors first speaking in Latin and then paraphrasing their remarks in English. Perhaps the first purely English drama was *Jacob and Esau* (early 13th century), first recorded in the Towneley cycle of the 15th century but giving evidence of much greater age in its simplicity

of handling and its short rimed couplets. Another claimant for the earliest English drama is *The Harrowing of Hell* (mid-13th century), which may not have been a true drama but a declamation piece by one reader, relating several parts.

As the liturgical drama became more popular, churchmen elaborated their presentations to whole series of plays. At the altar stood a tomb, scene of the still climactic drama, the *Quem quaeritis* trope. Since there were no chairs or pews in the medieval church, it was easy to erect platforms, known as scaffolds or mansions, along both sides; here scenes ranging from Creation to Judgment Day could be enacted, with the crowd clustering about one platform after another. The actors, all male clerics, began to wear appropriate costumes, to speak the vernacular without intoning, and to play to a receptive audience for applause and even laughter. In William of Wadington's *Manuel des Péchiéz* (written late in the 13th century and translated as *Handlyng Synne* by Robert Mannyng in 1303) there is praise for pious church drama but rigorous censure for clergy who in plays show off their borrowed raiment of the world and their "ham" acting.

MYSTERY AND MIRACLE PLAYS

Drama within church walls became embarrassing to the church. What had begun as pious instruction was becoming surcharged with fun and frolic. Delighted spectators emitted excited squeals at the vivid horrors of Hell's Mouth, where devils cavorted with unholy glee, and roared with laughter at Noah's Wife, a nagging shrew who, swinging a battered birdcage, just barely scrambled aboard the ark before the deluge. In 1210, Pope Innocent III banished drama from the church interior. The clergy transferred their performances to the church porch, with the church walls as backdrop and the surrounding graveyard as accommodation for the audience. Now outside the sacred structure, dramatic presentation mounted in levity. Directions accompanying later plays gave admonition like Hamlet's to the Players, but actors could not be restrained from ad-libbing and overplaying. The audience, usually simple folk, included drunks, refreshment peddlers, and cutpurses. Newly mounted graves were favorite vantage points from which to observe the show. By the end of the 13th century the exasperated church cast off the drama from all holy ground.

In the 14th century the production of the drama was entirely out of ecclesiastical hands, but its popularity demanded continued performances, which were supplied largely through religious guilds. Such lay organizations were groups of townsmen who carried symbolic banners in religious processions and banded together to pay for masses for departed members. The religious guilds found Easter Day (the original inspiration for Christian drama and the early medieval occasion for most of the year's performances) too chilly for outdoor performances in much of northern Europe. In 1264, however, Pope Urban IV had instituted the feast of Corpus Christi, falling on the

Thursday after Trinity Sunday, in May or June, which was a far better day than Easter for outdoor activity in England. When the black death weakened the religious guilds, the trade guilds took over the drama, continuing performances on Corpus Christi. For reasons as yet unknown, this sponsorship of the plays by the trade guilds was unique to England; on the continent other secular groups took over from the religious guilds.

The Sacrament was carried throughout a medieval community on Corpus Christi with stops at various stations for veneration. After the passing of the Host, the guildsmen would drag up a pageant wagon to the station and start a play. At the conclusion of one presentation, the pageant wagon was driven to the next station where the same play was reenacted. Another decorated wagon would pull up to the first station and regale the spectators with still another play. At any station a viewer could thus witness a whole series of plays, the total number being governed by the wealth and ambition of the guildsmen.

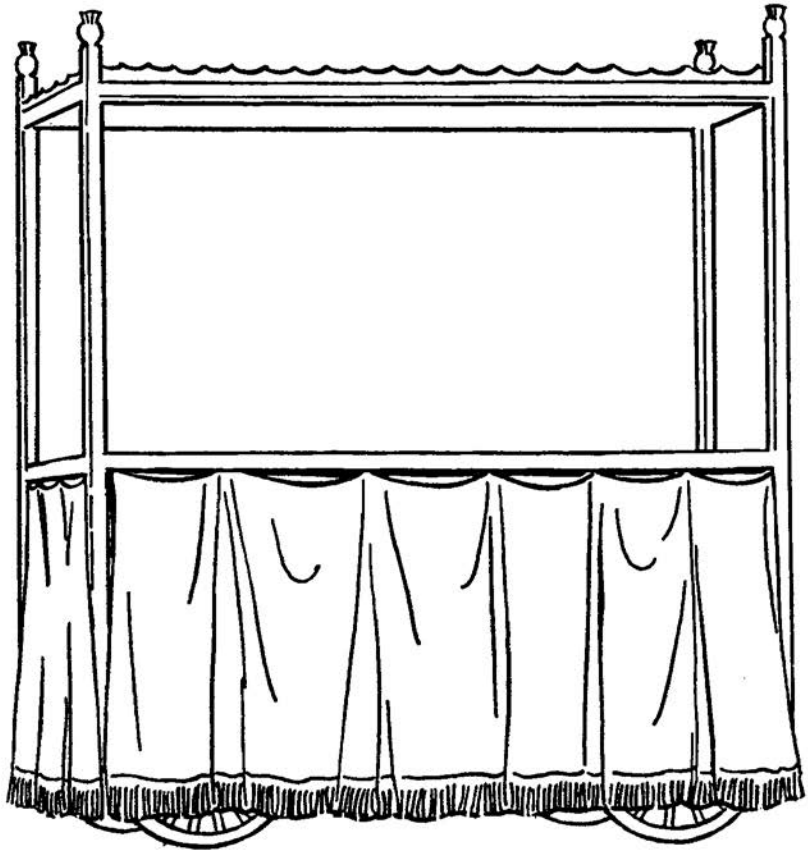

Figure 1. A typical medieval pageant wagon.

In the 14th and 15th centuries English towns vied with each other to perform the most crowd-compelling of play cycles. Pageant wagons were large and spectacular. Their elevated platforms (Earth) were the scene of vivid earthly drama, their lower portions (Hell, covered with cloth or wainscoting) were noisy with the din of Hades, while their upper scaffolding (Heavens) permitted colorful effects for the representation of God and the angels. Favorite stagecraft was Hell's Mouth, the head of a gaping demon into whose fanged maw sinners were pitchforked by howling emissaries of Satan. Costuming was showy: demons wore grotesque masks and long tails, while divine and saintly personages were distinguished by gilt hair and majestic beards. Actors stamped thunderously upon the platform and shouted at the top of their lungs. Some attempt at appropriateness was sought in assigning the play of the Three Wise Men and their gifts to the goldsmiths, the account of Noah's Ark to the shipwrights or carpenters, and the Last Supper to the bakers or brewers. In earlier times the guildsmen probably enacted the roles themselves, but by the 14th and 15th centuries they were paying sizable wages to actors. When twopence a day was deemed good pay for labor, Thomas Sawyr in 1494 at Hull received tenpence for impersonating God, and the player of Noah's wife received eightpence.

Although the drama was secular and vernacular by the outset of the 14th century, the chief subject matter of the plays remained essentially scriptural. On the continent a careful discrimination was made between Mystery drama, derived from the Bible, and Miracle plays, based upon saints' lives; in England the term "Mysteries" generally served for both. In the 14th and 15th centuries these plays were performed in about 125 British communities, ranging as far north as Aberdeen and as far west as Dublin. Surviving are: more or less complete cycles from Chester, York, Wakefield, and N. towne (often called Coventry); a few plays from Cornwall in the now extinct Celtic tongue of that area; individual plays of unknown origin or fragments from originally complete cycles in Croxton, Digby, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Norwich, and Shrewsbury. Although some of these plays may date from much earlier times, they generally have come down to us in their 15th-century form.

CYCLES OF THE MYSTERY PLAYS

CORNWALL CYCLE (late 13th century). Although we have no specific record of miracle plays being performed in Cornwall before 1602, a 15th-century ms. in the Cymric language contains fifty dramatic episodes arranged into a trilogy, presumably for performances on three successive days. Part I, "The Origin of the World," treats of Old Testament material from the Creation to Solomon's temple-building; the material also incongruously includes the martyrdom of Maximilla for refusal to abjure Christ. Part II, "The Passion of Christ," traces Christ from the Temptation to the Crucifixion. Part III, "The Resurrection of Christ," treats of the Resurrection and Ascension, with an interpolated episode on the Death of Pilate. Unlike the cycles in

English, these episodes are not composed of distinct pageants. Except for an epic poem on the Passion of Christ, these dramatic works are the sole remains of the Cymric tongue of Cornwall.

YORK CYCLE (1350–c. 1440). The 15th century Ashburnham ms. contains forty-eight complete plays and fragments of another, performed in England's greatest city of the North. Eleven treat of Old Testament stories, three are Virgin Mary plays, one portrays Doomsday, and the rest recount New Testament stories from the Annunciation to Pentecost. Perhaps the most representative of all the cycles, its verse consists of rimed stanzas. Songs occur frequently in the works. The literary quality of the plays is not high, but scenes are often vigorous and pithy. Powerful realism depicts tyrants and enemies of Christ. Annas shows barbaric glee in power over a defenseless victim. Judas is uniquely portrayed as quickly penitent, pleading with Caiaphas to take back the thirty pieces and spare Christ. As Judas waxes more importunate, Caiaphas has to order him out before he is punished for annoying his betters. Humor is meager in this cycle.

CHESTER CYCLE (origin 1475–1500, possibly dating as far back as 1378, though all five extant texts were written about 1600). The series consists of "banns" (prologues or proclamations) and twenty-four "pageants": the fall of Lucifer, four Old Testament stories, sixteen New Testament stories from Salutation to Pentecost, the prophets of Antichrist, the coming of Antichrist, and Judgment Day. Performances occurred on Whitsunday and the three following days. An interesting device is the use of an "expositor" accompanying the pageant wagons on horseback; he frankly states that he is needed to explain the full significance of the plays to the ignorant. The "expositor" expresses the moral purpose of the drama and sometimes narrates events linking the plays.

The original purpose of the dramatic series appears more clearly than in other surviving cycles—the making of a rough chronological survey of ecclesiastical history as conceived by the middle ages. Humor is more abundant than in the York cycle but less so than in the Wakefield. Without evidence, tradition ascribes the Chester cycle to Randulph Higden, author of the *Polychronicon.*

The Deluge. Typical of the Chester cycle is the story of Noah's ark related in naive fashion with humorous elements on Noah's wife and her wine-bibbing "gossips" inserted into the Biblical story of the great flood. The verse utilizes twin stanzas with interlocking rime: *4a 4a 4a 3b 4c 4c 4c 3b.* The treatment is inferior to the more lively version in the Wakefield cycle.

WAKEFIELD CYCLE (mid-15th century in extant form, but undoubtedly of earlier origin). The material is sometimes termed the Towneley cycle from the ms. once owned by the Towneley family of Towneley Hall in Lancashire. Apparently the plays were performed not upon pageant wagons, but upon fixed stages erected at the stations of the Corpus Christi Day procession; in this cycle the actors kept repeating the same play on the same immobile plat-

form, while the audience kept changing. The set consists of thirty-two plays: the fall of the Rebel Angels and Creation, seven Old Testament dramatizations, twenty-one New Testament episodes, the Harrowing of Hell, Judgment Day, and as a monologue, The Hanging of Judas, probably of later date. Five plays (Pharaoh, the Doctors, the Harrowing of Hell, Doubting Thomas, and Judgment Day) seem to be obvious plagiarisms from the York cycle. Some scholars believe that most of the Wakefield cycle (performed only twenty-five miles from York) is derived from an earlier, and now lost, version of the York cycle.

Striking similarities among the Wakefield plays, especially in keen humor and dramatic sense, suggest that one person, a postulated WAKEFIELD MASTER (fl. 1450), probably a Yorkshireman of humble birth but good education, perhaps a secular priest, wrote all of them. There is no substantiation for the existence of the "Wakefield Master" beyond the internal evidence of the plays themselves. Some authorities ascribe as few as four of the Wakefield dramas to the hypothetical Master, while others would credit him with up to twelve. If the Wakefield Master existed, he was England's greatest comic dramatist before the Renaissance.

Mactacio Abel ("The Killing of Abel"). The murder of Abel is an anticlimactic afterthought to a richly realistic and jocose picture of Cain as a coarse and surly Yorkshire peasant. Medieval tradition held that God refused Cain's offering because it was unwillingly presented. Cain was therefore the prototype of all stingy peasants who sought to evade the payment of tithes to the priest. In this play Cain at first selects sixteen sheaves for his offering, but with miserly comments on taxes, landlords, and the high cost of living, talks himself down to an offering of two sheaves. Like Chaucer and the Elizabethans, the Wakefield Master makes the biggest alteration of his sources in additions of robust and realistic English humor.

Processus Noe ("The Course of Noah"). Here the deluge is overwhelmed by the domestic spats of the Noah family. Mrs. Noah steps to the platform edge to address women in the audience on how horrible husbands are and how much better it is to be a widow. Noah addresses young men on the perils of matrimony and strongly advises them to remain bachelors. The soliloquy, no novelty by this date, was to be inherited by the Elizabethans for even more effective employment.

Secunda Pastorum ("Second Shepherds' Play"). The Wakefield cycle contains two versions of the visit by the shepherds to Christ in the manger. *Prima Pastorum* ("First Shepherds' Play") presents three genuine Yorkshire shepherds who grumble about the very real problems of their time and place. After they eat and drink, and sing familiar English folk songs, an angel tells them of the miraculous birth, and the shepherds proceed to the infant Christ. The audience must indeed have been strongly impressed that the birth of Christ was first announced to men as humble as themselves. *Secunda Pastorum* is the most famous English drama before the Renaissance. Its longer

first part is a daring parody of the Nativity. Mak (a Scot and therefore suspect to a Yorkshire audience) steals a lamb from three Yorkshire shepherds. His wife conceals the animal in swaddling clothes in their cradle. The shepherds bring gifts to the supposed infant, only to discover that it is their stolen lamb. They toss the thieving Mak in a blanket and then lie down in exhaustion to sleep. Note that the lamb has long been the symbol of Christ, and the other elements thus far parallel the announcement to the shepherds of old and their bearing of gifts. The second part is the conventional *Pastores*. Modern readers should not regard the play as sacrilegious, however, but as a medieval mixture of burlesque and reverence, even as in the grotesque gargoyles of Gothic cathedrals. Contemporary viewers were so familiar with the characters and setting as to experience personally the message of the Nativity to every man. The first shepherd is an acid rebel, a conscious proletarian, inveighing against taxes and landlords. The second shepherd is a henpecked woman hater. The third shepherd is young and excitable, protesting the oppression of apprentices like himself by overbearing masters. The rendezvous for the shepherds is the "crooked thorn," a famous Wakefield landmark. The parallel plot, with one part reflecting or commenting on the other, is a uniquely English device, later prominent in *King Lear, Merchant of Venice,* and many other Renaissance plays. The verse of *Secunda Pastorum* utilizes a bizarrely difficult stanza of nine lines with a complicated cross rime. Diagrammatically, the accentual and rime scheme is thus:

2a *2b*
2a *2b*
2a *2b*
2a *2b*
1c
2d
2d
2d
2c

The complexity of the stanza forces the dramatist to awkward, even tortured, rimes and unusual word choices. The jerky, comical lines were probably intentional, furthering the comic plot with a rapid, hopping, farcical tone.

THE N. TOWNE CYCLE (c. 1468 but giving evidence of an earlier origin). A later hand inserted in the 15th-century ms. a statement that this was the *Ludus Coventriae* ("Coventry Drama"), and the cycle for long was assigned to the guilds or Grey Friars of Coventry. Coventry in the Northwest Midlands, north of Shakespeare's Stratford, was so famed for its craft dramas (a few indisputable Coventry plays have survived in other mss.) that this was probably a generic term to the unknown annotator. The so-called Coventry cycle was written in Northeast Midlands dialect, not that of Coventry. Some scholars term it the Hegge cycle from an early owner of the ms. The text

itself repeatedly refers to "N. towne," which may be "Northamptowne," although there is no evidence that Northampton ever had a play cycle. More probably the "N." stands for the Latin *Nomen* ("name") and means that the cycle was intended for performance in any community, where the appropriate town name would therefore be inserted. The cycle has been quite dubiously attributed to Lydgate.

The N. towne cycle comprises forty-two sections, beginning with the Creation and ending with Judgment Day. At the outset there is an explanatory prologue. Three other prologues are interpolated. The performances of the N. towne cycle range from the simple procession (*The Prophets*) and monologue (*Moses*) to the elaborate staging of the two parts of *The Passion.* As in the Chester cycle there is an expositor, here named *Contemplatio.* He appears in doctor's robes to explain the moral significance of the dramas to the audience. The cult of the Virgin is prominent in this cycle, with an extensive sequence devoted to her; it is possible that the series was intended for performance on St. Anne's Day (July 26). Other sequences show an unusual attempt at the unified grouping of kindred themes. This cycle offers many more items of Christian legend, beyond Biblical material, than do the other cycles, and allegorical elements are more prominent. The figure of Death appears at the end of the *Slaughter of the Innocents;* this personification foreshadows the later Morality plays. More doctrinal and less humorous than the other cycles, the N. towne series shows signs of greater dramatic effectiveness in its extensive development of song and pageantry, and in its challenging acting roles.

Fragmentary Cycles and Detached Mystery Plays. *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (early 13th century?) is also known as the *Brome Abraham and Isaac* from the 1470–80 ms. preserved at Brome Manor, Suffolk. The Old Testament story (extant in five other versions from ME Mystery plays) is here dramatized with an unusually fine grasp of theatrical possibilities. The play is characterized by dramatic irony, suspense, depth of character portrayal, and a stirring climax. No other Mystery play evokes pathos and empathy so expertly. Often termed the greatest serious drama in English before the Renaissance, the work contains no secular or humorous elements. Its verse is in a variety of stanzas, using a four-stress line.

The Digby Plays. The Digby ms. (c. 1480–90) contains three complete plays and the fragment of another. The dramas were staged in a fashion more common on the continent. In their performance, the actors moved from one platform to another; the platforms were arranged in a wide circle, probably a marketplace or a village green. The audience, inside the circle, moved with the actors. The longest and most famed of this series is:

Mary Magdalene (c. 1480). Although the text shows no break, it seems likely that the play was performed in two parts. The first part, the fall and conversion of Mary Magdalene, was probably given in the morning. In the afternoon, logically, would follow the second part, completely separate and

later in time, concerning the voyage of Mary to Marcylle and her conversion of the King and Queen of Marcylle to Christianity. The play is remarkable for its wide diversity of material. Its tone ranges from touching piety to racy satire and jesting. Most notably, the work combines Mystery and Morality elements. The King of Flesh and the Seven Deadly Sins throng the platforms along with the Roman Emperor Tiberius, Simon the Leper, and Pontius Pilate.

MORALITY PLAYS

The Mystery plays dramatized the Biblical text. Morality plays were dramatized sermons. Within an allegorical framework, the Morality plays presented abstract personifications, primarily in the context of the contest between Virtue and Vice for the human soul. The earliest Moralities coincided with the wave of allegory sweeping all forms of Western art and literature in the late 14th century, largely from the influence of *Le Roman de la Rose*. Also contributory are the many personifications from the Bible (e.g., from Psalm 85: "Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other."). The Christian allegory of life as a struggle between virtues and vices is at least as old as the *Psychomachia* (4th century) by Prudentius.

Dimension was added to the drama through original plotting and an imagination freed from the pure Biblical narratives and saints' lives. The theme of the drama could be implicit rather than explicit, as in the Mysteries. Instead of the abstract character-type of the Mysteries, the Moralities developed a personalized character. The figure of Vice (appearing in a multitude of guises and names) became the prototype for the Renaissance dramatic villain and jester. The lay actors of the Mysteries who had slowly been replaced by professional actors were wholly superseded by professional actors in the Moralities.

In *De Officio Pastorali* (c. 1378) Wycliffe notes a York *Paternoster* drama, "a play setting forth the goodness of our Lord's Prayer in which play all manner of vices and sins were held up to scorn, and the virtues were held up to praise." The Morality play apparently developed late in the 14th century and certainly reached its apogee in the 15th century. The fragmentary *Pride of Life* (early 15th century) may be the oldest true Morality play surviving in English.

The Castle of Perseverance (c. 1425). From the Macro ms., *The Castle of Perseverance* is generally considered the oldest extant Morality in complete text. It traces the history of man (Humanum Genus) from birth to Judgment Day. After a prologue from the World, the Flesh, and the Devil (Mundus, Caro, and Belial) the play, although written without a break, falls into these divisions:

I. The Bad Angel secures the soul of man in a struggle with the Good Angel. The World gives man as guides Pleasure, Folly, Backbiter, and the

Seven Deadly Sins. The Good Angel appeals to Confession, Shrift, and Penitence, who lodge man in the Castle of Perseverance.

II. The forces of Hell cannot overwhelm the Castle, which is guarded by the forces of Heaven, but aging man is enticed outside by Avarice. Death strikes man down, but he dies repentant.

III. The Four Daughters of God (Mercy, Peace, Truth, and Righteousness) debate the disposal of man's soul, with Mercy triumphant.

Typical of the Moralities in theme, *The Castle of Perseverance* shows advance over the Mysteries: the conflict is now interior and psychological. Allegorically, the play suggests that with free will man may choose Good or Evil, necessarily paying the consequences for the wrong choice.

Staging was "on the green" according to the prologue. The Castle of Perseverance stood in the center with smaller platforms labeled World, Flesh, Devil, Covetousness, and God surrounding the large structure. Action moved through the whole area, and the crowd moved to follow it. Apparently a wandering band of professional actors performed the drama. The ms. leaves a blank for the town name, to be filled out appropriately for each performance.

Everyman (c. 1470). The finest of the Moralities, *Everyman* closely resembles the Dutch *Elckerlijc*, attributed to Petrus Dorlandus. *Everyman*, therefore, is often considered a translation, but it is impossible to say which play was first; perhaps both stem from a lost original. *Everyman* was printed four times in the early 16th century. The theme is well known, first appearing in an ancient Buddhist parable.

God, depicted as a judge, dispatches his bailiff, Death, with a summons to Everyman to appear in court for judgment. Desperately, Everyman seeks a companion for his long journey, a friend who will assist him in his plea. He appeals vainly to Fellowship, to Kindred, and to Goods; at his graveside, Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five Wits depart, and Knowledge, though it would accompany him farther, cannot. Only Good Deeds alone will descend with him into the grave, and help him present his case. The continuing popularity of the play down to the present rests largely upon its simple unity, strangely rare in the pre-Renaissance drama. All action is focused upon the central character. Everyman is a gay youth, humanly engrossed in material possessions, worldly pleasures, and personal relationships. The summons of Death strikes a real person, increasingly terrified as his treasured joys of earth rapidly desert him. The abstract and didactic elements in the work are redeemed by a vivid sense of dramatic inevitability. The simple rimed couplets permit direct forceful movement. The minor characters are colorfully drawn, not without humor.

Mankind (c. 1475). From the Macro ms. comes *Mankind*, a comic Morality, perhaps an adaptation of the anonymous poem, "Mercy Passeth Understanding," or a reworking of a lost Morality, more serious in tone.

Like the *Castle of Perseverance* the drama falls into three movements:

I. Mankind resists the temptations of Nought, Nowadays, and New Guise who proffer him obscenities including a filthy "Christmas song."
II. The major vice, Titivullus, seduces Mankind from Mercy.
III. Mercy redeems Mankind from the forces of evil.

The conventional happy ending is an unconvincing contrast to the grotesque and lewd antics of the Vices. Mercy is deliberately made ludicrous with tags of distorted Latin, a namby-pamby manner, and an "unco' guid" tone. For most of the play Mercy is outwitted by the Vices and subjected to gross indignities. The emphasis on buffoonery and indecency, the slovenly stanzas, and the mere sop to morality show a pandering to a vulgar audience. The work was obviously designed for performance by a troupe of wandering players. Only six actors are needed, and probably an improvised stage in an innyard sufficed for a performance. Although no admission was charged, a collection was taken at the first appearance of Titivullus, obviously the crowd-pleaser. Nought, Nowadays, and New Guise descended into the audience, making their "pitch" for a sizable contribution. Only when the audience was sufficiently generous would Titivullus proceed to his cavortings. It is plain that the drama was moving toward the Interlude, a completely secular drama (although not necessarily indecent) of the Renaissance.

John Skelton (c. 1460–1529). *Magnyfycence* (1516) is the earliest English drama the authorship of which can unequivocally be assigned. John Skelton's biography will be found in the previous chapter under the English Chaucerians.

Magnyfycence (mankind's potential) is deceived by Vices and overpowered by Adversity. Redemption, however, comes from Goodhope and Perseverance. The chief implied target of the drama is Cardinal Wolsey. Skelton is primarily concerned with political, rather than personal, salvation. He hopes for a peaceful and harmonious realm governed by an enlightened monarch assisted by public-spirited ministers, nobility, and commons. The chief verse form of the work is a four-stress line broken in the middle by a caesura.

The full flowering of the art of the drama in England, which occurred during the Renaissance, is discussed in Part Four.

THE POPULAR BALLADS

The standard collection of English and Scottish popular ballads, assembled by Francis James Child, prints 305 poems in over a thousand versions. "Mary Hamilton," for example, appears in twenty-eight versions. Many of these ballads are still recited in the Southern Highlands of the United States. From this country, and from England, recent scholars of the ballads, such as Cecil Sharp, have suggested an addition to the Child canon of no more than about a dozen ballads.

DEFINITION. The fundamental characteristics of the popular ballad (which will be called simply "the ballad" from now on) are:

(1) *Anonymous folk song.* From the "Ballad Revival" of the 18th century until after World War I, litterateurs had largely treated the ballads as independent verse. Actually the ballads were always sung, never recited without music. Throughout the middle ages these folk songs were transmitted by mouth and ear exclusively. Many ballads recorded in the 19th and 20th centuries were four hundred years old or more before they first appeared in print.

(2) *Short narrative stressing a crucial situation.* The violent and bizarre in human actions still fascinate the popular mind as they did in the days of ballad formation. Strong in all the ballads is the stripped, often enigmatic, quality by which details and explanations are sacrificed for the vivid drama of the central episode. The true ballad is not replete with a multitude of happenings, but focuses upon a single, suspense-laden clash. The poet Thomas Gray stated, "The ballad begins in the fifth act of the play."

(3) *Impersonal narration.* The action unfolds itself in event and dialogue with little comment from the singer. Description and moralizing are minimized. Stark human conflict dominates the concrete pictures of the ballad.

Less basic, but generally true of the ballads, are the following characteristics:

(4) *Stanzaic form.* Most usual form is the "ballad stanza" with an accentual and rime pattern of *4a 3b 4c 3b;* this is actually a rimed septenary or septenarian couplet broken into four lines. Less frequent, though perhaps older, is the rimed couplet of four-beat lines. A few ballads employ other stanzaic forms. Meter in ballads is often irregular and the rime loose.

(5) *Use of a refrain.* Some refrains are composed of meaningless syllables apparently intended purely for pleasurable choral response after each stanza. Other ballads display a thematic refrain that by constant repetition unifies the ballad and creates an almost hypnotic effect on the listener.

(6) *Use of repetition.* Occasionally repetition is used merely for vocal pleasure (cf. "Old MacDonald had a farm"), but at its most artistic there is an incremental repetition that dramatically builds up the excitement and urgency of an action.

(7) *Stereotyped expressions.* Sometimes these are simply naive, but they often forcefully express the sense of relentless fate in the lives of elemental people.

(8) *Primitive qualities of the folk mind.* Superstition and pre-Christian ritual frequently underlie the ballads. The common man's ambivalence toward the rich and noble is clear; he alternately sneers at and kowtows before his betters. Many ballads also attack the clergy and the forces of law and order. Unlike most folk literature, with the happy ending of fairy tales and the didacticism of legends and fables, the ballad is usually tragic and amoral.

The ballad discussed here is to be distinguished from other forms termed

ballads or which seem similar. Most notable of these are the street ballad, the art ballad, and the carol.

The street ballad. From the Renaissance through the 18th century every newsworthy item of scandal or violence (especially a public hanging) was crudely versified by hacks. Often the same framework was worked and reworked with only a few changes of names. These street ballads were whined by corner minstrels and often printed on broadsheets for hawking in public places. Such works show a diffuseness, a multiplicity of incidents, an artificial emotiveness and a tawdriness of descriptive quality absent in the popular ballad. Street ballads brought ballads into low repute for centuries.

The art ballad. The Romantic Period (c. 1800–c. 1837) and later periods saw numerous conscious literary artists adopt the ballad techniques for their own purposes; to mention only two, Samuel Taylor Coleridge ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner") and John Keats ("La Belle Dame sans Merci"). It is also interesting to note that "Kinmont Willie" which Child, the most distinguished and discriminating collector of popular ballads, believed to be a genuine folk ballad may actually be a creation of Sir Walter Scott.

The carol. Folk singers do not establish neat categories for their pieces. Although there is an unbroken continuum from the pure narration of the popular ballad to the pure lyricism of the carol, for purposes of literary distinction the term "ballad" has taken on an arbitrary technical meaning devised by literary figures and scholars. Therefore, since the carol does lack an essentially narrative structure it will not be considered a ballad here. It is interesting to note, however, that today the term "ballad" is employed by Tin Pan Alley to mean words to any current song.

TIME OF COMPOSITION. Some folk themes used in the ballads were already quite ancient before the Norman Conquest, although the Germanic folk ballads of the Anglo-Saxon period are virtually nonexistent. The earliest recorded English verse analogous to balladry is the "Boat Song of Canute," preserved in the 12th-century *Historia Eliensis* and attributed to the Danish monarch of England from 1017 to 1035. But "Judas," from a 13th-century ms. at Cambridge University is often termed the oldest English ballad. No ballads seem definitely to refer to any historical event before 1300, but there are numerous ballad references to known historical events in the 14th and 15th centuries, when the majority of ballads extant today were probably composed. A ms. c. 1450 contains "Riddles Wisely Expounded," the oldest text of any ballad still surviving in the oral tradition. Only eleven ballads are definitely recorded in mss. before the 17th century, when extensive written copying of the ballads began. Ballads in Denmark can be traced back to the 13th century, in Germany and Spain to the 14th century, and in France to the 15th century. The logical deduction is that the ballad as we know it is late medieval in origin.

METHOD OF COMPOSITION. Broadly, the major theories postulate one or a combination of the following methods of composition:

(1) Communal creation by the "singing, dancing throng." Early peoples do not compartmentalize expression as later civilizations do, but simultaneously sing, dance, beat rhythm, and utter poetry. Such creations are even today observable among the less advanced peoples, such as the Polynesians of the Pacific; however, their expression is almost invariably emotional rather than narrative, as the ballad is. Danish ballads frequently employ refrains obviously derived from choral dance ("Tread it so featly, noblemen"), but such refrains are almost certainly fragments from earlier non-narrative carols. A few English ballads, such as "Babylon," could well have been mass-created by spontaneous imitation of and variation upon the initial statement.

(2) Clerical creation to inculcate religious teachings among the untutored laity. Many modern art forms derive from medieval art sponsored originally by the clergy for religious instructional purposes and later seized upon for secular aesthetic delight by the populace. This theory is especially attractive in the case of ballads because the standard "ballad stanza" probably originated in the Latin septenary which was employed for English religious verse at least as early as *Ormulum* (c. 1200) by Orm (see Chapter 5).

"Judas" is a religious ballad, and was apparently approved monastically. Strange, however, in terms of this theory, is the virtual absence of religious themes in the ballads and the frequent anticlerical, non-Christian note both in England and on the continent.

(3) Courtly minstrel creation "sifting down" to the people. A frequent sociological phenomenon is the adoption by the common people, often in vulgarized fashion, of a fad enjoyed in a previous age by persons of status. For example, the people's "cakewalk" seems to be derived from the stately *ronde* of medieval courts. From the "Matter of Britain" come ballads such as "The Marriage of Gawain," "King Arthur and King Cornwall," and "Hind Horn." "King Orfeo" is almost certainly a reworking of the ME *lai* "Sir Orfeo." Other ballads share themes and style with Celtic *lais* of the middle ages. Very few ballads, however, employ the material of the romances; and the ballad narrative is a far cry from the leisurely, complex technique of the metrical romances.

(4) Creation by gifted folk poets. Probably the most tenable theory suggests that the origin of most ballads lay in composition by an uneducated poet whose crude but vigorous verses were repeated and revised through the generations of oral tradition. In the process of centuries the dross fell away, attractive additions or alterations were accepted, and the result was the compact, powerful art of the popular ballad. The common folk can well produce a great people's poet, such as Burns. Theorists have often advanced the belief that epics such as *Beowulf* or Homer's *Iliad* were amalgams of earlier short narrative poems, analogous to the ballads. Many ballads, such

as the Scottish border ballads of the 16th and 17th centuries, arose in times much like the heroic ages from which the extended narrative epics developed.

CLASSIFICATION. The major types of English ballads are (essentially as grouped by Child):

Ballads belonging to the common stock of international folk song. The eighty-five Child places in this division include most of the best ballads. Many are echoed in folk balladry throughout Europe, but the closest ties are with France and especially Scandinavia. There is no direct evidence that these are the oldest ballads, but they do incorporate immemorial folk beliefs and practices. These ballads fall into two broad categories: (1) ballads of magic and the supernatural and (2) ballads of passion and violence.

(1) Ballads of magic and the supernatural. This ballad world is filled with talking birds and animals, witches and fairies, and ghosts risen from the grave. The supernatural is presented in a matter-of-fact, unsensational fashion, with no hint of "let's pretend." Shakespeare popularized the modern idea of wee, gossamer fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* but the ballad fairies are human size. They wear green ("Thomas Rymer"), live in forests ("Tam Lin") or in castles inside hills ("The Elfin Knight"). They seek humans as lovers ("Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight"), as nurses for the offspring of fairies ("The Queen of the Elfan's Nourice"), or as sacrifices to the infernal powers at seven-year intervals ("Tam Lin").

Ghosts in ballads are not the wraithlike "spooks" of modern imagination, but more closely resemble "zombies," human in appearance, speech, and appetite ("The Wife of Usher's Well"), though moldy and worm-eaten ("Sweet William's Ghost"). Ghosts return to reprove the vanity of the living ("Proud Lady Margaret") or to punish mortal crimes ("The Cruel Mother"), and frequently show a sense of agonized heartache at their separation from the living. Strangely materialistic presentations of death and the spirit often render these ballads intense in their pathos.

Following the pre-Christian practice of stocking the grave with earthly articles for use beyond, the personal belongings of the dead are buried with them in "The Twa Brothers" and in "Sir Hugh." Other non-Christian beliefs are represented in the mountain of hell in "The Demon Lover" and in the water-crossing of departed spirits in "Lykewake Dirge" and in "Johnie Cock."

Witches transform lovely ladies into serpents ("Allison Gross") or hideous hags ("Marriage of Sir Gawain"). In "Willie's Lady," the evil mother uses necromancy to prevent her daughter-in-law from giving birth.

Riddle ballads are a battle of wits between fairies and mortals. The riddles and impossible tasks of the eldritch creatures are matched in "Riddles Wisely Expounded" and in "The Elfin Knight" by the brilliant countersallies and sparkling wordplay of humans. Other ballads are based, like the Lohengrin story, upon name magic; to reveal one's name in "Earl Brand" or in "Erlinton" is to permit an enemy to gain power over one.

Blood is magical in these ballads. The idea probably derives from the old

folk belief that blood was the vehicle of the soul. In "The Braes of Yarrow" the blood of the slain man is purposefully drunk; Scott deleted this passage from his printed version. In "Young Hunting" a murdered corpse bleeds afresh as the slayer returns. In "Sir Aldingar" a leper is cured by the blood dripping from an executed man. In "Lamkin" and in "Little Musgrave" killers meticulously catch the blood of their victims in a rare bowl; the practice probably arose from fear that the earth would cry out and avenge innocent blood spilled upon it.

(2) Ballads of passion and violence. Such ballads are the ones usually brought to mind when ballads are mentioned. Jealousy, abduction, murder, and vengeance in clan and family life are their tragic themes, and they portray such situations as: choosing a mate, testing a bride's chastity, proving faithful or faithless in love, or inflicting injury in anger and misunderstanding. The number of main characters is very small, seldom more than three; additional figures are grouped as the pursuing brothers, the mourners, the kinsmen enraged by affront. Characters are usually drawn from the nobility and gentry, and are treated in familiar, homey fashion, or sometimes with disdain.

Harking back to primitive social organization in these ballads are the remarkable dignity and power attributed to the mother and the mother-in-law, signs of matriarchy. The bridegroom's mother proves the wife's chastity in "Gil Brenton" and receives "Lord Rendal" with his tale of poisoning. The mother makes the decisions in "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet," and she apparently engineers the patricide in "Edward." Further matriarchal influence, the tracing of descent on the female side, appears in the oft-mentioned "sister's son," as in "Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet" and "Lady Maisey."

Concubinage in "Fair Annie" and elsewhere recalls a social practice of the early middle ages, one frequent in a society where marriage generally occurred for economic, rather than amatory, reasons.

Some typical ballad plots concern: murder through the misunderstanding of identity, in "Childe Maurice" (much admired by the poet Gray and the basis of John Home's tragic drama *Douglas* in 1757); bride-stealing, in "Katherine Jaffray" (model for Scott's "Young Lochinvar"); a family feud that forces the best of friends to slay each other, in "Bewick and Graham"; a servant who substitutes for his master in an assignation, in "Glasgerion," which results in the death of all the three involved characters; a brother, in "Sheath and Knife," slaying his sister whom he has made pregnant. Women are false lovers in "The Twa Corbies," but incredibly faithful in "Child Waters" (praised by the Danish folk-song collector S. Grundtvig as the pearl of English ballads). Men prove fickle in "Fair Margaret and Sweet William," but steadfast in "The Maid Freed from the Gallows."

Attractive to the ballad singer was the "good night," the story of the last moments of a condemned or trapped man, emphasizing his l'envoy, as in "Johnny Armstrong" (highly praised by Goldsmith) and "Lord Maxwell's Last Good Night" (which inspired the opening phraseology and mood of

Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*). The *coronach* or death lament appears in "Bonnie James Campbell" and in the famed "Sir Patrick Spens" (one of the greatest favorites of Coleridge and other Romantics).

Ballads based on courtly minstrelsy and clerical sources. Such works are the least numerous and least popular of the ballads. Some found in the Percy ms. seem never to have reached the folk tradition.

(1) Ballads based on the courtly minstrelsy. The finest ballad to be derived from the metrical romances is "Thomas Rymer," which has its source in the romance, "Thomas of Erceldoune." "King Estmere" and "Sir Cawline" (probably the source for Scott's spectral combat in *Marmion*) also derive from the romances. Arthurian material is the basis for "King Arthur and King Cornwall" and "King Henry"; "Hind Horn" descends from the Horn cycle. "Sir Orfeo" charmingly finds the ancient Greek Eurydice in the Shetland Islands.

(2) Ballads based on clerical sources. These ballads manifest very little Christian belief. "Sir Hugh, or the Jew's Daughter" (a version of the Tale of the Prioress by Chaucer) is one of the few saints' miracles in ballad form. Highly popular were "The Cherry Tree Carol" of Joseph and Mary with child, and "Dives and Lazarus." Delightfully naive, and not irreverent, is "The Bitter Withy," telling of the infant Jesus being birched by his mother. Perhaps the unorthodox spirit of the balladeers is reflected in the greater reliance of these ballads upon apocryphal, rather than canonical, Scripture.

Ballads based on yeoman minstrelsy. Such ballads portray common men as sturdy, independent, clever heroes, successful against the rich and noble. These works, in their length, their full plotting and detail, and in their proletarian feeling, appear to be more the work of individual folk poets than do the ballads of passion and violence. In this category, "Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough, and William of Cloudesly" is separate in theme from the Robin Hood motif which almost wholly dominates this type of ballad, accounting for thirty-nine of the Child collection.

The story of Robin Hood is known to us solely through the ballads, and the most sophisticated modern versions of the tale, such as Thomas Love Peacock's novelette *Maid Marian* (1822), Tennyson's poetic drama *The Foresters* (1892), and Reginald de Koven's operetta *Robin Hood* (1890) ultimately derive from the ballads only. The ballads picture Robin Hood as an outlaw in Sherwood Forest and Barnsdale in Yorkshire. He and his companions, Friar Tuck, Maid Marian, Little John, Will Scarlett, Allan-a-Dale, George-a-Greene, and other unnamed followers, regularly outwit the minions of the law, principally the sheriff of Nottingham. Robin Hood's band robs the rich and vanishes into the greenwood, reappearing to aid the poor and oppressed. In his old age the outlaw entrusts himself to the prioress of Kirkley who treacherously bleeds him to death. Theories on the origin of the story include the following five:

(1) Although the earlier Robin Hood ballads make their hero strictly a

rough-and-ready yeoman, the Renaissance provided him with a noble pedigree. The Elizabethan dramatist, Anthony Munday, produced two successful plays in 1601—*Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon* and *Death of Robert, Earl of Huntingdon*—which present Robin Hood as a nobleman. Martin Parker, a broadside writer, states in his "True Tale of Robin Hood" (1632) that the famous outlaw was indeed the legitimate Earl of Huntingdon, seeking asylum in the forests when defrauded of his rights, and dying in 1198. There is absolutely no historical corroboration of this assertion.

(2) According to surviving government records, about a score of Robin Hoods (in various spellings and certainly representing more than one person) ran afoul of the law in the English Midlands during the 13th and 14th centuries. No one of these lawbreakers perfectly matches the image of the ballad hero. However, it is possible that the ballads amalgamated the reputed exploits of several such figures, and then embroidered further details. The name "Robin Hood" seems to have been relatively common at the time, and may even have become a generic term for outlaw. The earliest literary reference to Robin Hood appears in *Piers Plowman* in approximately 1377 where the lazy priest Sloth, admitting ignorance of his Paternoster, asserts that he "can rymes of Robin Hood."

(3) Since Robin Hood is always pictured in his suit of green, the quasi camouflage of the medieval forester, possibly the folk hero is a vestigial remnant of a primitive vegetation deity. As we mentioned earlier, the Greenman is still a favorite name for rural English pubs.

(4) Yorkshire dialect retains the term "hob-thrush." *Hob* is a diminutive of *Robert* as are *Dob, Rob,* and *Robin* (all surviving from this period as our modern surnames, *Hobson, Robson, Robinson,* patronymics of *Robert*). The OE *thurs* meant "giant." The "hob-thrush" appears originally to have been a terrifying supernatural being gradually transformed into a good-natured household spirit. The ballad, "The Wife Wrapt in Wether's Skin" includes a very human Robin-a-Thrush.

(5) Sharp noted that country singers frequently called Robin Hood "Robin of the 'ood" (wood); perhaps the name means no more than "Robin H'ood." Proponents of the supernatural theory relate the outlaw to a primitive Germanic deity *Hode* or *Wode* (probably forms of *Woden*). Remotely, the robin as a bird may be behind all of this, undergoing an anthropomorphism akin to that of the classic Greek Aphrodite, who possibly was a sacred dove in origin.

In England, Robin Hood and his Merry Men were represented in village dance and mummery. In holiday processions masqueraders dressed as the outlaws of Robin Hood and marched the paths of English towns, just as others garbed themselves like St. George or King Arthur. From comparable popular French song-and-drama pieces was imported the romantic character, Marion, as Maid Marian. She was then introduced as the love interest in the later Robin Hood ballads.

The height of popularity of the Robin Hood story occurred after the black death, when the accounts made an eloquent outcry against the people's oppressors. Robin Hood bests the law, plunders the church (although he deeply respects religion), and discomfits the nobles (though he professes profound loyalty to the king). Whatever the supernatural or historical origin of their hero, the ballads make Robin Hood the people's champion. Altogether, the Robin Hood ballads constitute a folk epic.

Historical ballads. Such ballads present a picture of (1) national or (2) community events. Of course, no ballad is reliable about historical facts; and there is rarely any evidence that ballads were composed within living memory of the events they recount.

(1) Ballads upon significant national events. These are few, and generally not notable, perhaps because the weight of public knowledge limited the balladeer's inventiveness. Probably the earliest ascertainable historical event treated in a ballad appears in "Queen Eleanor's Confession," dealing presumably with Eleanor of Aquitaine who married Henry II in 1152. "Gude Wallace" is clearly derived from the *Wallace* of Blind Harry. Most of the ascertainable historical events noted in the ballads occurred during the 16th century.

The most famous single ballad, "Chevy Chase," falls in the category of historical ballads. It tells of the Battle of Otterburn fought on August 19, 1388, between the Scottish forces under Douglas and the English under Percy—one of the almost innumerable conflicts in the strife-ridden medieval borderland between England and Scotland. In the slaughter both leaders, as well as hosts on both sides, were killed. "Chevy Chase" was the first ballad to be praised by a serious literary critic, Sir Philip Sidney, in *Apologie for Poetrie* (1595). With his commendation of "Chevy Chase" in the *Spectator* essays, starting with No. 70 (1711), Joseph Addison probably inaugurated the modern literary taste for the ballads that still continues.

(2) Ballads upon community events minor to history. Many of these are ballads from the English-Scottish borderland of the 16th and 17th centuries. The fame of Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–03) has caused many to think of this borderland as the real home of the ballads, although the ballad impulse actually seems to have been relatively equal throughout the British Isles. Scott was influenced in his own writings by the borderland ballads, one of which, "Rob Roy," has the very title as well as some of the plot material of one of Scott's novels.

Guerrilla warfare, cattle raiding, wild rides and hairbreadth escapes, and savage revenge by the untamed raiders of this border country provided conditions roughly analogous to the heroic ages of ancient peoples. The daring exploits of the raiders ring through "Jock of the Side," "Dick of the Cow," "Jamie Telfer," and scores of other ballads.

Comic ballads. Robust folk humor appears in a few ballads, such as "Our Goodman," about the outwitting of a cuckold, and "Get up and Bar the

Door," where a married couple maintain a vow of silence under severe difficulties rather than rise from a bed of ease. The comic tradition of the ballad intrigued some of the finest literary artists of succeeding ages, for instance, W. S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads,* and some of Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads.*

Perhaps the most famous use of the ballad techniques by a serious poet comes in Wordsworth's collection of poems entitled *Lyrical Ballads.* On the international scene there seems to be no end of the riches of early popular ballads; for example, the most complete account of the exploits of the Cid is found in a cycle of Spanish ballads known as the *Cid Ballads.* And, in our own day, we have seen the performance of early popular ballads and of folk music in general become so major a form of entertainment that the 20th century may some day be called a golden age of balladry.

PART THREE

The Renaissance and the Reformation

CHAPTER 9

Early Tudor Prose, Poetry, and Translations

(1515–1579)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. The turbulent 16th century witnessed perhaps the most impressive surge forward of all English history. At the century's beginning England was a minor island kingdom, apparently a backwater for the flood of modernity sweeping Europe. By the end of the century England had effectively asserted itself as second to no other world power, seizing cultural as well as political dominance into the bargain.

Under the first Tudor monarch, Henry VII (reigned 1485–1509), a strong centralized rule overrode feudal loyalties, bequeathing to Henry VIII (reigned 1509–47) unprecedented personal power from a united and flourishing nation. So strengthened, Henry VIII, more than any previous English monarch, dabbled in Europe's power politics—unsuccessfully in Spain, inconclusively in Germany, rather successfully in France, and triumphantly against France's ally, Scotland, who was devastatingly crushed at Flodden Field (1513).

When Henry VIII sought to divorce his wife Catherine, his chancellor, Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, demurred; and the Pope excommunicated the English king. Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn and broke with Rome. Cardinal Wolsey, whose bid for fame almost made him Pope, introduced into English foreign policy the concept of Balance of Power. By this technique, followed virtually to the present day by subsequent English diplomats, England combined small nations against large ones and shifted alliances to prevent any country from complete domination of Europe. After Henry VIII's severance from Rome, Wolsey fell into disgrace and obscurity ("Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness," moans Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, in part ascribed to Shakespeare).

The Act of Supremacy (1534) designated the king and his successors "the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England." Sir Thomas More,

following Wolsey as chancellor, refused to take the oath of supremacy and was beheaded for treason in 1535. Thomas Cromwell, successor of Wolsey and More in the royal favor, was the prime mover in the dissolution of monasteries from 1536 through 1540; some clergy lost their lives, while extensive art and library objects were scattered or irretrievably lost.

After sending many others to death, Cromwell ironically met a similar fate, execution on a charge of treason in 1540. In 1536, Anne Boleyn was executed on a charge of adultery, and her daughter Elizabeth was proclaimed illegitimate (Elizabeth was legitimatized by Parliament in 1544). All told, Henry VIII had six wives. In the chaotic decade following Henry's death, the throne passed successively to each of his three surviving children—Edward VI (1547–53) by Jane Seymour, Mary (1553–58) by Catherine of Aragon, and Elizabeth (1558–1603) by Anne Boleyn.

Under Mary, known as Bloody Mary for her persecution of the Protestants, England was recommitted to Roman Catholicism, and about 300 Protestants were martyred at the stake. Under Protestant Elizabeth the ties with Rome were again severed. The doctrine of the Church of England was officially set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563. Elizabeth sought a moderate policy toward the proliferating Christian sects in her reign, but she maintained some persecution of Roman Catholics, Brownists (extreme left-wing Puritans), and Unitarians (deniers of the doctrine of the Trinity). Intrigue and stratagem—religious, political, and personal—swirled about Elizabeth, creating the same atmosphere as that of a precarious court of the Italian Renaissance. With mastery unsurpassed by any other English ruler, Elizabeth outmaneuvered all opponents, firmly securing her own royal position and lifting the nation to the status of a great world power.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. In the mid-16th century, within one short lifespan, England experienced a more rapid and momentous transformation than ever before or since in its history. The nation emerged in the essential form it would maintain to the present day—a mercantile, industrialized Protestant country. The bulwark of its rural economy was a new landed gentry, supplanting the extinguished feudal aristocracy and fattening in part upon the vast properties confiscated from the church. England's merchant fleet was greatly expanded, and a new fighting fleet readied itself for command of the sea, a command which England seldom relinquished from the days of Elizabeth I to World War I.

Parlous times breed injustice and pain, but they also stimulate. To the Elizabethans it seemed a "brave new world," exhilarating beyond measure. Excitement gripped every class of society from the monarch to the humblest yeoman. As though they were seeing the world for the first time, Englishmen sang lyrically of nature, swashbuckled with aplomb in Europe's imbroglios, vigorously sought knowledge in ancient tomes and in the careers of their contemporaries, singed the beard of the King of Spain by plundering galleons

in the Spanish Main, produced much of the world's great drama, and died while still young from packing a multitude of lives in a few short years.

In terminology, note that *Tudor* refers to the royal house reigning from 1485 to 1603, *Elizabethan* indicates the reign of Elizabeth I from 1558 to 1603, and *Renaissance* is a broad label for a broad epoch—here arbitrarily specified as the period from More's *Utopia* in 1515 to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. The Renaissance and Reformation were highly complex movements involving politics, religion, philosophy, art—the entire culture of England.

LANGUAGE. Modern English dates from approximately 1500; some might prefer to set its beginning at the introduction of printing in 1475. All such dates, of course, are arbitrary, for the language was in a constant flux, even as it continues to alter in our own day. From millennium-old English the 16th century forged a varied and facile tongue which reached its epitome of expression in Shakespeare.

MAJOR 16TH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(1) Use of English in learned areas where Latin had been supreme. Although English had triumphed over French as the universal spoken language of Englishmen by the mid-14th century, Latin remained the language of scholarship. Many of the learned feared that knowledge would degenerate if Latin surrendered to the vernacular. Especially in theology and medicine (still liberally sprinkled with Latin terms) was it deemed indiscreet to make use of the vulgar tongue.

The compelling force behind the use of English for all writings was in part the aggressive nationalism emerging in the age, but most especially it was the incessant demand of Englishmen in all walks of life to share in the Renaissance accomplishment. Ideas and facts in Latin were a prize of the few; in English they were a ready storehouse for all. The 16th century was the great age of translation into English of the significant works of Latin, Greek, and modern European languages. While some pedants still vehemently insisted on Latin as the language of learning, the translators were effectively winning the battle by making all desirable knowledge available to those skilled only in English.

The very zeal of the Renaissance humanists contributed to the displacement of their revered Latin. Scorning the innovations of medieval Latin, they insisted upon a "pure" classic Ciceronian Latin (cf. the Renaissance bishop's distaste for medieval Latin *elucescebat* in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church"). Since classic Latin, unadulterated, could not cope with the problems of the "new learning" and the modern world, science and technology were compelled to seek utterance in the vernacular.

The victory of English was clinched by the Reformation. The great strong-

hold of Latin was in theology; and in the Reformation, theology abandoned Latin for English. The liturgy of the Established Church of England was transformed into English. Among many Protestants, Latin was stigmatized as "popery." But most important was the Protestant insistence upon full theological discussion for and by each individual. Instead of confining complex religious questions to learned councils of Latinists, the Englishmen of the 16th century brought extensive theological bickerings into every marketplace and household. In sheer volume the religious writings in 16th-century English exceeded any other category of printed material.

Though English became the triumphant language for all classes of English society in the Renaissance, Latin still remained the language of international communication. Two of the most important works by Renaissance Englishmen first appeared in Latin: *Novum Organum* (1620) on the inductive scientific method, by Francis Bacon, and *Exercitatio Anatomica* (1628) on the circulation of the blood, by William Harvey.

(2) Enrichment of the English vocabulary, especially in learned terms. To make English capable of handling the most complex and technical ideas of the then current learning, a huge borrowing took place.

Latin, which was borrowed from extensively by English during the previous millennium, yielded even more words to the expanding language. Some Latin words were taken into English without any alteration: *appendix, arbitrator, axis, climax, delirium, epitome, executor, gratis, index, major, minor, memorandum, neuter, pauper, persecutor, proviso.* Other Latin words were naturalized by the simple process of cutting off the Latin endings: *conjectural* (*-is*), *consult* (*-are*), *exotic* (*-us*). Minor alterations in Latin endings domesticated numerous other classic words: *concurrentia* > *concurrence; consonantia* > *consonance; conspicuus* > *conspicuous; sanitas* > *sanity; susceptibilis* > *susceptible.* Many English verbs ending in *-ate* were derived at this time from the Latin past participle (*consolidatus* > *consolidate*) from the frequent English practice of transforming adjectives into verbs (*busy, dry*). Some Latin words previously adopted by English were again introduced to give doublets: Latin *episcopus* > OE *bishop,* Ren. *episcopal;* Latin *discus* > OE *dish,* Ren. *dais, desk, disc,* and *discus.* The extent of 16th-century borrowings from Latin appears in this sampling of *ab-* words: *abbreviate* (1530), *abdicate* (1541), *abjure* (1501), *abolition* (1529), *aborigine* (1547), *abstract* (adj.) (1557), *abstruse* (1599), *abuse* (n.) (1538).

Many Latin words in our language now have meanings quite far from their ancient meanings. Frequently in the Renaissance the original Latin meaning was retained; therefore, today's readers should note that in Shakespearean English *enormous* still meant "abnormal," *extraordinary* meant "beyond the regular pattern," and *extravagant* meant "wandering away (from the path)." *Premises* were "things previously mentioned," and *item* ("also") was still a technical bookkeeping term introducing all sections of a list except

the first, which usually started with *imprimis*. *Aggravate* meant "to add weight to," and *ponder* quite literally meant "to weigh."

The almost unbounded respect for classic Greek culture by 16th-century Englishmen introduced hosts of Greek terms into our language. Earlier borrowings from the Greek had been meager, largely through Latin. Directly from the Greek came *drama* (1515), also *catastrophe, comedy, dialogue episode, scene, theater, tragedy*. Much technical literary terminology is Greek: *elegy, epic, epigram, idyl, lyric, ode, poetry* (first recorded in English by Chaucer), *rhythm*. Rhetoric likewise leans heavily upon Greek: *colon, comma, emphasis, hyphen, idiom, paragraph, parenthesis, period, phrase, synonym*. The language of sports calls upon Greek: *acrobat, athlete, gymnastics, stadium, trophy*.

The most important 16th-century employment of Greek was in science, occasioned by the Renaissance intoxication with ancient Greek science; today our physical and natural sciences as well as medical science speak a technical language largely Greek in origin. Because Greek was a bookish tongue and not a living language like medieval Latin, 16th-century Englishmen could start the process (still the largest means of creating new technical vocabulary) of forming completely new words from Greek stems. English will, for example, take over the Greek *autonomos* as *autonomous*, and *autopsia* as *autopsy*. We will use that same stem *auto-* (self) to coin *autophyte* (Gk. *phyton*, plant), *autodidact* (Gk. *didaktikos*, taught), *autoerotic* (Gk. *erotikos*, love), and many other technical terms never known in Greek. Further, we will combine that Greek stem with stems from other languages, primarily Latin: *automobile* (Lat. *mobilis*, movable), *autostability* (Lat. *stabilitas*, firmness).

Nationalistic fervor and native conservatism, hostile to the new and alien, assailed these bookish innovations, often pilloried as "inkhorn" terms. Sir John Cheke, professor of Greek at Cambridge (1540–51), felt strongly that both classic tongues and English should be maintained without adulteration; "our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, unmixt and unmangeled with borowing of other tunges," he stated in a letter to Sir Thomas Hoby, prefacing a translation of Castiglione's *Courtier* (1561). In his translation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Cheke employed *hundreder* instead of *centurion, freshman* instead of *proselyte, crossed* instead of *crucified*. Thomas Wilson in *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), a work used by Shakespeare, objected to the obscurity of "inkhorn" terms. Even the popular theater witnessed the quarrel, as Ben Jonson in *Poetaster* (1601) berated Marston for such absurd new words as *defunct, reciprocal, retrograde, spurious*. Such opposition may have been partly responsible for the short life of *anacephalize* (to sum up), *disquantity* (to diminish), *exolete* (faded), *suppedicate* (to supply). When one of the new words proved necessary, however, as most of them did, it could not be killed.

The second category of borrowed words derided by 16th-century purists

was "overseas language," i.e., terms taken from other contemporary languages. As the "inkhorn" terms were necessary for the widened scientific and erudite horizon of the Renaissance, the "overseas language" was vital to the widened physical horizons of the age. The borrowing from French, greatest from 1250 to 1400, continued with the naturalization of *alloy, baluster, bizarre, chocolate, comrade, cuirassier, dragoon, duel, entrance, mustache, ticket, tomato, volunteer.*

From the great sea power, Portugal, and the conqueror of the New World, Spain, Renaissance English absorbed *alligator, apricot, banana, brocade, barricade, cannibal, canoe, desperado, embargo, hurricane, mosquito, negro, potato, tobacco.* The home of the Renaissance, Italy, provided a host of new words: *argosy, balcony, cameo, design, granite, portico, stanza, stucco, violin, volcano.* The genealogy of many "overseas words" is highly complex. Many Italian words like *bankrupt, brusque, cavalcade, gala, gazette, infantry, rebuff* and Spanish words such as *cavalier, grenade, palisade* were transmitted to English through French. Our English words *gallery* and *pistol* are apparently the combined products of introduction from France, Spain, and Italy.

The third category of borrowed words was termed "Chaucerisms" by the purists. By "Chaucerisms" they really meant any English words not current in standard English of the period—reintroduced archaisms and dialectal expressions. Perhaps "Spenserisms" would have been a more accurate label, since Spenser was the leading figure in employing such terms. Ben Jonson asserted, "Spenser in affecting the ancients writ no language"; but to Spenser and his followers we owe the richness of *astound, belt, bevy, dapper, disrobe, don, elfin, glance, glee, glen, gloomy, merriment, shady, wakeful, wary.* In addition to these words from native sources, Spenser seems to have coined a number of words such as *blatant, chirrup, squall* (cry).

Renaissance Englishmen felt that their language was experimental, struggling for full utterance in a broad, exciting age. The purists could not withstand the bursting eagerness of the language to try every possibility, flowering in luxuriance and letting time and experience do the pruning. For example, in Shakespeare's day *effectful, effective, effectual, effectuating,* and *effectuous* were all in active use; only succeeding generations would discard three of these five forms.

The exuberance of Renaissance language manifested itself particularly in the linguistic feature termed *conversion,* i.e., the use of one part of speech as another. No other European language has matched English in the extensiveness of conversion, because no other European language has so violently shed its inflexional endings. By the 16th century, English was free to make sport with the older parts of speech, and the nimble wits of the Renaissance vied in linguistic legerdemain. For example, Shakespeare could use an adverb as a substantive ("In the dark backward and abysm of time," *The Tempest*), as a verb ("That from their own misdeeds askance their eyes," *Lucrece*), and as an adjective ("Blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure," Sonnet

LII). These examples look a trifle bizarre today, but we constantly repeat equally daring conversions from Shakespeare: "household words," "far-off mountains," "breathing one's last," "beggaring all description," and "backing a horse." The last quarter of the 16th century seems richest in conversion, and the verbal audacity it generated has been one of the prime sources of vocabulary enrichment ever since.

(3) Spelling. The Renaissance spirit of inquiry extended to English spelling, previously (with the rare exception of an Orm) rather blindly and erratically following tradition in being neither phonetic nor fixed. Sir John Cheke, Richard Stanyhurst, Thomas Smith, and others produced reformed spelling –but to little avail. Renaissance writers and printers blithely employed within a few lines the spellings *fellow, felow, felowe, fallow, fallowe.*

A more moderate regularizing, without new symbols or violent alterations, was proposed by Richard Mulcaster, the teacher of Spenser, in *Elementarie* (1582). The extent of his influence cannot be gauged, but English spelling has largely followed his principles. Probably he was merely formulating the spelling trends developing from the great mass of Renaissance writers of English. By 1600 there appears considerable spelling uniformity in the correspondence and manuscripts of Englishmen, and by 1650 English spelling is relatively stable in its present form. Alternate spellings in our 20th-century dictionaries show that spelling is not yet completely frozen.

The strong classic influence saddled English spelling with some absurdities. Chaucer's *dette* has never had a pronounced *b* in the history of the language, but, seeking a Latin etymology from *debitum* (hence modern *debit*), the Renaissance gave us *debt.* No English speaker has ever pronounced an *s* in *island,* but the spelling was introduced from the Latin *insula* (source of *insular, insulate*). The *gh* in *delight* and *tight* are in analogy to *light* and *night,* but the former words have never had the now-abandoned guttural signified by *gh. Coud* was spelled *could* on supposed parallelism to *should* and *would.* And some genuine alterations in English pronunciation were effected in this process. Chaucer's *parfit* was transformed into *perfect* in analogy to Latin *perfectus,* and his *avantage* and *ava(u)nce* to *advantage* and *advance* from mistaken etymology of Latin *ab* (away)–*ante* (before).

(4) Pronunciation. Shakespeare's pronunciation was generally similar to today's pronunciation; probably it was much like modern Irish brogue. As yet *er, ir, ur* (*berth, birth, burthen*) had not quite fallen together, but the process was under way. The long *e* had not completed its phase of the Great Vowel Shift, so that *sea* sounded like *say* and not like *see.* The long *o* showed considerable fluctuation, and even as late as Dryden's day *flood, good, mood* were rimed, though possibly as a sight rime rather than a true rime. By the start of the 16th century the unstressed final *e* was no longer pronounced, and the preceding vowel was definitely lengthened (*name, bite, lute*).

The greatest difficulty the modern reader encounters in 16th-century English pronunciation lies in the accentual pattern of verse. The poetry of Sir

Thomas Wyatt often proves annoying, for he sometimes follows Chaucerian accent (*na-ture', rea-son'*) and sometimes follows the more modern accent (*na'ture, rea'son*). Shakespeare accentuates: *ad-ver'tise, char-act'er, de-mon'strate, en-vy', per-sev'er, well-come'*. Sometimes stress is variable: *con-fess'or* or *con'fess-or*. Before a noun the pronunciation is *com'plete;* elsewhere it follows today's practice. When a line of 16th-century verse seems bungling in scansion, it is probably Renaissance pronunciation rather than awkwardness by the poet.

(5) Grammatical elements. During the Renaissance the greatest alteration in English appeared in vocabulary. The occasional difficulties in grammar encountered by the modern reader are usually not the result of innovations but the result of retentions from older English.

Nouns. There appear occasionally the older plurals *eyen* (eyes), *hosen* (stockings), *kine* (cows), *shoon* (shoes), but the *-s* plural is predominant. Since the possessive *his* lost its *h* in unstressed position, ME gave identical pronunciation to *stonis* and *ston his*. As early as the 13th century the possessive was often written as though it were a contraction of a noun plus the pronoun *his*. Hence Shakespeare and the 16th century frequently wrote: "In characters as red as Mars his heart." This practice continued into the 18th century and is bequeathed to us as the apostrophe marking the possessive. Apparently a new creation of this period was the group possessive, *the Queen of England's arrival,* instead of the earlier form, *the Queen's of England arrival.*

Pronouns. By the 16th century the second person singular forms *thou, thy, thee, thine* had passed from popular speech in favor of the more respectful plural forms. *Ye,* originally the nominative form, was rapidly being displaced by the accusative *you;* frequently the two were used interchangeably. Our indispensable neuter possessive *its* is first recorded in 1598 and does not appear in Shakespeare or in the Authorized Version of the Bible. *It, of it, thereof* were used instead of *its* even in the time of Milton, who employed *its* only three times in all his poetry. The 16th century also introduced *who* as a relative pronoun (cf. "Our Father, which art in Heaven").

Verbs. For reasons not wholly known, the third person singular of standard London English dropped the conventional Midlands *-eth* in favor of the Northern *-s* (*giveth, gives*) in the popular speech of the 16th century. A few of the older forms, such as *doth* and *hath,* apparently survived well into the 17th century. Literary writers retained the older forms after popular speech had abandoned them, as the King James Bible employed the *-eth* forms. Shakespeare used both old and new, but more of the *-s* type. The age permitted more latitude in verb inflection than we do, as evidenced by *brake* (broke), *spake* (spoke), *baken* (baked) from the King James Bible; our present forms existed then and have since won out. Questions frequently ignored the auxiliary ("Goes the king hence today?" *Macbeth*). Apparently

the 16th century produced the compound participle (*having studied*) but used it meagerly—only three times in Shakespeare.

Adjectives. Comparatives such as *lenger* (longer) and *strenger* (stronger) often maintained a vowel change now apparent only in *old, elder.* Usage had not quite settled down to our present practice; Shakespeare used *honester* and *violentest.* Double comparatives or superlatives were not scorned as illogical ("The most unkindest cut of all," *Julius Casear*).

Prepositions. The idiomatic use of prepositions, largely introduced in ME as inflections disappeared, had not altogether shaken down to our present usage. Probably more than anything else, the unusual choice of prepositions imparts to Shakespeare's English the quality of strangeness and difference ("Our fears in Banquo stick deep," *Macbeth,* instead of "about Banquo").

A thumbnail comparison of the stages of English language development appears in the opening of the Lord's Prayer (the Paternoster) in OE, ME, and modern English. The Authorized Version of 1611 reads: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." Admittedly a bit archaic in sound at the time of translation, this phrase is distinctly modern English. Observe how it differs from present-day English, using *which* as a relative pronoun for a conscious being, *art* as the second person singular verb, *be hallowed* as a subjunctive or hortatory, *thy* as a second person singular pronominal adjective.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RENAISSANCE

Some noted 20th-century theorists of history, such as Spengler and Toynbee, see all fully developed civilizations as following parallel patterns. The early period of each is characterized by the dominance of faith; all phenomena are ascribed to supernatural intervention, and all members of the civilization are bound by a common religion. For our own civilization the medieval period is the great age of faith. Succeeding this first stage, suggest the theorists, is an era when the claims of the physical world intrude upon the religious; the challenging reason of man rises against the will to believe. This era may be the crown of a civilization, for it balances faith and reason, intellect and emotion. For our civilization this second stage is the Renaissance.

Literally the term *Renaissance* means "rebirth," as does *Renascence,* preferred by some authorities. The intellectuals of the age felt that they were participating in a rebirth, a return to the man-centered, this-world-centered learning of classic antiquity. Older historians used to point to the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 as the inspirer of the Renaissance; refugee Greek-speaking scholars with precious mss. escaped to Italy. Certainly Greek was closely associated with the "New Learning" and with the dissociation of the inquiring mind from the otherworldly emphasis of *Latinitas,* the body of learning perpetuated in medieval Europe through the Latin of the

church. The migrating Greek scholars of the mid-15th century cannot claim to have triggered the Renaissance, however, since Italy had vigorously embarked upon the Renaissance early in the 14th century. Vital as the contribution of ancient learning may have been, Europe would almost certainly have experienced the era we term the Renaissance even if classic knowledge had been wholly obliterated.

The causes of the Renaissance were essentially those that had stimulated the intellectual and artistic upsurge of western Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries:

(1) Development of a money economy with increased trade and wealth;
(2) Population growth, especially in the cities;
(3) The influence of the Byzantine and Moslem cultures;
(4) Revival of classical studies, which, especially in Roman law and Aristotelianism, relied strongly upon pagan antiquity;
(5) Expansion of intellectual interests through the rising universities;
(6) Increasing literacy and intellectual interests among the laity;
(7) Growth of a critical and skeptical attitude, as in the earlier Abelard;
(8) Development of scientific inquiry, as early as Roger Bacon;
(9) Gradual withdrawal from the ascetic and otherworldly viewpoint of the early middle ages toward the growing material rewards and attractions of a prospering society.

Many 19th-century historians, such as Michelet (who coined the phrase "discovery of man and the world" to describe the Renaissance) and Burckhardt, pictured the Renaissance as a sudden explosion of individualism against the medieval anonymity of the mass, realistic observation of the world and men rather than the medieval preoccupation with the world of the spirit, the assertion of democratic liberalism over medieval authority and hierarchy. This still widespread opinion needs considerable qualification.

The Renaissance was not a sudden but a gradual unfolding. The emergence of individualism and realism in English life and literature is shown in Chaucer's 14th century, and perhaps even earlier, and long before the Renaissance there can be found hostility to medieval authority. In many respects the Renaissance merely accentuated attitudes already centuries old. Instead of liberal democracy the Renaissance tended to substitute the authority of the ancients for the ecclesiastical authority, but with equal persistence.

Anglo-American Protestants have often tended to see the Renaissance and the Reformation as a unit, feeling both movements to have been inspired by essentially the same purpose. However, the Renaissance in southern Europe, notably Italy, included no real Protestant movement at all. One of the greatest Renaissance figures, almost indisputably the most eminent in northern Europe, Erasmus, never broke with Roman Catholicism and was indeed quite hostile to Protestantism. And many Protestants, especially Calvinists, were bitterly opposed to the sensual worldliness so prominent in Renaissance

art. The Reformation, as we shall note, should properly be considered independent of the Renaissance, though in England it developed almost simultaneously.

Today's historians seem in agreement that the Renaissance attitude, complex and multifaced as it was, especially manifested itself in *humanism*. Renaissance humanism, as distinguished from many subsequent uses of the term *humanism*, is a halfway house between theology and rationalism (i.e., the medieval mind-set and the Age of Reason following the Renaissance). The humanist was a great individualist of the physical world. He wanted to cultivate the human experience of this world and this life. He found ridiculous and meaningless the medieval dispute of how many angels could stand upon the head of a pin. He would find equally absurd many of our modern PH.D. dissertations ("The Incidence of Caries in 274 Fossil Teeth of the Ichthyosaurus"). *Humanitas* he would substitute for both, for he wished to cultivate the art of living. He was not antireligious, but he was secular-minded; he was curious about and tolerant of human foibles and viewpoints; he was perennially fascinated by the brushings of the external world against his physical and psychological self. The humanistic attitude strongly manifested itself in, among others, the following concepts and areas of endeavor:

(1) Scholarship. The humanists sought the genuine flavor of ancient culture. Thus they abandoned medieval Latin for classic Ciceronian Latin. They possessed what their Western predecessors usually had lacked—a direct knowledge of ancient Greek. In both Latin and Greek they had available almost all the ancient texts now surviving. With loving care the Renaissance humanists meticulously recovered or reconstructed accurate texts of the classics. They wanted the true original instead of seeking in medieval fashion to extract and modify in order to substantiate Christian tenets; thus they instituted the methods of modern precise scholarship.

(2) Writing style. Classical rhetoric and literary criticism, instead of the glorification of the faith, became the critical tools used in judging and creating expression. The materialism and skepticism of Lucretius could be too extreme for many humanists; "But, oh," they would exclaim, "what superb Latin he wrote!" In writing the vernacular the humanists tried to imitate the finished polish of ancient letters. Thus, down through the 18th century, liter ary English prose frequently sought the manner of Cicero.

(3) Subjects of art. Like the ancient Greeks, the humanists concentrated upon the activities of men in mortal life, but their opposition to medievalism was less extensive than it is often thought to be. Until the 12th century, throughout western Europe, the church was virtually the sole patron of art, which it scrupulously insisted had to be allegorical and pious. From the 12th century on, art gradually became more realistic and earthbound, even though the subjects remained religious and the church remained the great patron. Many Renaissance artists continued to concentrate upon religious subjects. The significant cleavage from the early medieval period lay, first,

in the shift from allegorical religious values to human worldly values, and, second, in the idealization of the sensual instead of the spiritual. Compare the portrayal of passion in Chaucer—crude lust in the Miller's Tale or etherealized love in the Knight's Tale—with the lush glorification of sensual passion in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. For the recurrent medieval theme of the Dance of Death the Renaissance substituted the Dance of Life.

(4) Ethics. Perhaps fundamentally the humanists were rebels against hypocrisy. By the 15th century there was an unbridgeable gap between the revered ideal of a Christian society of peace, unity, and piety, and the reality of a money-grubbing society endlessly struggling for self-aggrandizement, cloaking its true purpose in fair language. Humanists strongly felt that they were opening doors for fresh air. They would discredit the toppling structure of late medieval pretense, see the world clearly and honestly as it was, and rebuild a new world closer to what they thought the giants of antiquity had created. Disillusioned by the outcome of the Christian ideal, they depended upon the highest ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. The chaste and restrained architecture of the early Renaissance displays the humanistic distaste for the apparently extravagant and tumultuous Gothic, while showing its preference for the classic simplicity and discipline of antiquity.

(5) Philosophy. The medieval church, largely through St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), had abandoned the visionary Plato for the more pragmatic Aristotle. From early Italian humanists like Marsiglio Ficino (1433–99) and Pico della Mirandola (1463–94), the Renaissance figures generally associated themselves with Platonism. Often it was a mystic neoplatonism derived from Plotinus, with accretions of Byzantine and Moslem speculation. Most Renaissance Platonists, like Spenser, sought reconciliation of Christianity with their Greek-derived philosophy. The humanist in politics sought not a democratic state but a kingdom ruled by a philosopher-king out of Plato's *Republic*.

(6) Science. Renaissance science began where ancient Greek science left off. The essential innovation of the Renaissance was a practicality of application differing from the basic speculativeness of Greek science, which was never really distinguished from philosophy. A realistic temper in the Renaissance laid the foundations for the modern age of science that would truly begin in the 17th century.

(7) The Ideal Man. The typical Renaissance portrait displays a proud and handsome young man, obviously delighting in his worldly achievements. The ideal of the age is not the ascetic cleric or consecrated knight of medievalism but the widely informed man-of-the-world. The epitome, of course, is a Leonardo da Vinci—scientist, anatomist, scholar, writer, artist, inventor, and engineer. The Renaissance man ideally took all knowledge as his province. Learning had not yet become so extensive as to compel our present specialization. The greatest Renaissance figures therefore present a breadth and scope that make us feel little creatures in comparison.

A conspicuous outgrowth of such a spirit was a powerful individualism,

intensely desiring to taste of all experience and to develop selfhood to the utmost. In some this spirit seems almost childishly self-centered and egotistical, as in Benvenuto Cellini. But powerful individualism also characterized the noble and generous Sir Philip Sidney. The spirit of Renaissance individualism triumphed over the anonymity that characterized much medieval achievement. Henceforth we shall almost invariably be able to link a man's name to a work or a concept. The Renaissance figure, stamping his name and personality upon a nation or an age, blazons himself in the Tamburlaine of Marlowe.

Hedonism, a belief that the purpose of life is pleasure, is characteristic of Renaissance man. Perhaps most men have thus really directed their lives, but the avowed medieval claim (and for many of its saints, the reality) was a denial of physical delight and an exaltation of altruism and self-sacrifice. The Renaissance was open in its search for pleasure, sensual or intellectual.

Probably the most "modern" of the Renaissance traits was its spirit of optimism and dynamism. No longer need men give at least lip service to the statement that this life was no more than a "vale of tears." The Renaissance emphasized the goodness and fullness of life. Men of this era were aware that change was rife. Western society had experienced no such vivid sensation since the fall of ancient Rome, a time of dire troubles and apparent retrogression. Now, in the Renaissance, man could feel a vigorous change, and a change for the better. However, because the humanists idolized antiquity and saw themselves as reaching once more upward toward its grandeur, this sense of change did not contain in it the idea of progress, a concept largely instituted by the 18th century and dominant in the 19th century.

THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

As discussed in the previous chapter, interest in classic learning was in evidence early in the 15th century, notably through the patronage of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (1391–1447), whose donations of mss. to Oxford University formed the germ of the Bodleian Library. Lincoln College, Oxford, founded in 1427, received other mss. through its founder, Richard Fleming, Bishop of Lincoln. From Italy, Bishop Adam de Moleyns (d. 1450) brought still more mss. to Oxford. In the midst of the Wars of the Roses, monks from Balliol College, Oxford, and from Canterbury were studying at Florence. John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester (d. 1470), was accused of learning both scholarship and cruelty at Padua. George Neville, Archbishop of York, chancellor of the realm, and brother of "Warwick the Kingmaker," was employing Greek scribes before his death in 1476. Prominent Englishmen of the same era, such as William Grey (later Bishop of Ely) and John Gunthorpe (later Dean of Wells), were visiting and learning in Italy.

FIRST PHASE: THE NEW LEARNING

While previous contributions to the study of antiquity were in Latin, the great and permanent enthusiasm for classical learning awaited the introduction of Greek studies into England. William Grocyn (c. 1446–1519) studied at Florence and returned to be the first teacher of Greek at Oxford, and the introducer of the "New Learning." Except for a letter to Aldus Manutius (Italian scholar of the classics and founder of the famed Aldine Press) and an epigram (to a lady who threw a snowball at him), he left no writings. Thomas Linacre (c. 1460–1524) received a medical degree at Padua and returned to found the Royal College of Physicians at London. At Oxford he taught Greek to Erasmus and Sir Thomas More. Linacre published grammatical works and translations, particularly of Galen, from Greek into Latin. John Colet (c. 1467–1519) returned from Italy to become dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and founder of St. Paul's School (1512), the first English secondary school devoted to the "New Learning." The first high master of St. Paul's School was William Lily (c. 1468–1522), companion of Colet in Italy. Lily (Lilly, Lilye) wrote a Latin grammar that Shakespeare used and that would be the standard text in English schools almost to the 18th century.

The greatest humanist of the age was DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (c. 1466–1536), who was Dutch by birth. He resided in England for a number of years, and his significance for English literature is readily understood in view of the fact that up to this time western Europe was still possessed of a common language (Latin) and a common religion (Roman Catholicism). This led, especially in the intellectual class, to a feeling of unity throughout Europe which made for easy movement of people and ideas from one country to another.

Erasmus' most famous work, *Moriae Encomium* ("Praise of Folly"), was written in 1510 at the London home of Sir Thomas More; it satirizes the corruption of religion and learning, exalting the humanistic ideals. Erasmus typified this phase of the Renaissance, led by the "Oxford reformers," learned scholars from the university who wrote in Latin for an erudite audience. They sought the original texts of religion and knowledge, interpreting them as living documents divorced from centuries of medieval commentary; they jettisoned the vast accretions of allegorical interpretations. They attempted to reconcile God's purpose with human reason, not anchoring themselves to any one doctor of the church; as Erasmus stated, they wished "not to narrow what Christ meant to be broad." Their works breathed freedom and reform. Erasmus assailed the Medici Pope, Leo X, who acted, Erasmus insisted, "as if Christ were dead." Nonetheless, the "Oxford reformers" confidently expected to maintain Roman Catholic Christianity and opposed Protestantism.

Sir Thomas More (1478–1535). The son of a judge, Sir Thomas More was educated at Oxford, probably under Colet, Grocyn, and Linacre. For a few years he disciplined himself by the rigid regimen of Carthusian monks

(1499–1503), but then he decided upon a secular career. He trained in the law, sat in parliament (1504), and became undersheriff of London in 1510. He was an intimate friend of all humanists then in England, especially Erasmus. His political rise was steady: ambassador to Flanders (1515), privy councillor (1518), knight (1521), royal subtreasurer (1521), speaker of the House of Commons (1523), chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1525), lord chancellor of the realm (1529). Succeeding Cardinal Wolsey, he was the first layman in English history to be chancellor but, in 1532, resigned in disapproval of Henry VIII's proposed divorce from Catherine of Aragon. More was willing to swear political fealty to the king but would not subscribe to the Act of Supremacy (1534) because it would deny the Pope's spiritual authority. He was beheaded for high treason on July 7, 1535; four centuries later, in 1935, he was canonized as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. This chapter arbitrarily begins its consideration of the English Renaissance with 1515, since this was the year in which More began the writing of *Utopia,* the first great humanistic work by an Englishman.

Utopia (Greek "no place") (Latin 1515–16; translation into English by Ralph Robynson in 1551). This famous work is divided into two Books, quite different from one another, yet each interesting in its own way:

Book I. In the realistic fashion of many Renaissance fictions (perhaps derived from Plato's dialogues) More and his friend Peter Giles leave church service in Antwerp and encounter Raphael Hythloday, a Portuguese seaman who accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on his third voyage to the New World. The mariner found in Utopia a far different world from European corruption, war and waste, national and international bad faith, poverty and crime, filth and pestilence, cruelty and immoral conduct at every social level. The first book constitutes a prime historical document of contemporary conditions.

Book II. This is the part readers generally think of when considering *Utopia.* Hythloday tells of the ideal state where the government is truly representative. The economy is communistic; Utopian houses are of equal comfort and are exchanged regularly by lot. Each house has a garden and stands on a street twenty feet wide.

Gold and silver are used only for base vessels and the fetters of criminals. A six-hour day is all the work required of a man; idleness is forbidden. Robust health is exalted, and there is no asceticism in Utopia. Women as well as men receive as much education as their capabilities will permit. Happiness is the highest good, but the welfare of the body politic is always placed above that of the individual.

The Utopians detest war and bear arms only in self-defense and for the relief of others from oppression. Most interesting is the complete religious toleration; Utopians have many religions but no idols. They thank God for their present government and religion and pray that, if there should be su-

perior systems of government and religion, God might reveal the new truths to them.

This allowing of the possibility of improvement in Utopia suggests the almost startling difference between More's *Utopia* and the multitude of subsequent imaginary ideal states termed "utopian" in reference to More's work. Most ideal states are conceived of as perfect and changeless. More sees the ideal state as dynamic, recognizing the desirability and even the necessity of change and improvement beyond our fondest dreams. Writing for the limited world of erudite Latinists, More is bolder than he ever appears in his native tongue. Utopia is a rational world governed by truly humanistic principles. In an age when Christendom had apparently failed to produce the good society, More suggests the new approach of the humanists to create the right world for men. Possibly More was influenced by Portuguese reports of the Inca Empire of Peru, but Plato's *Republic* is the strongest source. Also coloring the work are St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* ("City of God"), upon which More had lectured, and the *Institutio Principis Christiani* ("Establishment of Christian Principles") by Erasmus. More's own flavor consists of a distinctly fertile imagination, witty phrasing, and confident idealism.

The English writings of More are a disappointment. His English is too often Latinical in style, prosaic, and deficient in wit and imagination. His evident sincerity is marred by prejudice and abuse. If More wrote the *Historie of Richard the Third* (c. 1516, pub. 1557), it is among his greatest works. This study was employed by the chroniclers Hall and Holinshed, and determined Shakespeare's interpretation of Richard III. Probably based on a Latin text by Cardinal Morton (early protector of More), the *Historie* is the first true historical narrative in English. It attacks the immoral statecraft of the era, as *Utopia* does, in direct and effective prose. The dialogue in the work is especially dramatic and forceful. The most touching piece by More is *A Dyaloge of Comfort against Tribulacion,* written in prison (1533) as he faced death. As a Renaissance humanist he rationally seeks comfort in his adversity. Shrewdly and humbly he argues that all men are prisoners under condemnation, and that his lot is essentially no worse than that of others.

SECOND PHASE: AN ERA OF TRANSLATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

The second phase of the English Renaissance brought a knowledge of the world to the reader and speaker of English. It meant writings upon all learning in the native tongue, not in Latin. Also it meant translation into the vernacular of a wealth of literature previously accessible only to the scholar of Latin, Greek, and contemporary foreign languages. This phase prepared for and then accompanied the great burst of literary creation in English.

In keeping with our previously mentioned differentiation of the Renaissance from the Reformation, we will cover the important translations of the Bible in the section on the Reformation, taking up here only the secular translations of the period.

We will preface the discussion of the translations with an examination of some of the original works written in English by the scholars and educators of the period who had a great influence on the spread of the "New Learning." It must be borne in mind that many of these so-called original Renaissance works are often patchworks of continental writings; yet because so many of these translations are daringly free, departing widely from their originals, they may be considered in this sense "original." After brief accounts of the works of these men will come the discussion of the actual translations from the languages, ancient and contemporary, that formed so important a part of the literary output of the age.

SCHOLARS OF THE PERIOD

Sir John Cheke (1514–1557). First professor of Greek at Cambridge, Sir John Cheke, according to Milton, "taught Cambridge and King Edward Greek." More than any other person he popularized Greek studies in England and influenced the whole subsequent generation of humanists writing in English. He translated the Gospel of St. Matthew into English.

The Hurt of Sedicion, How Grevous It Is to a Commune Welth (1549) was embodied in Holinshed's *Chronicles.* Cheke's pamphlet is indispensable to an interpretation of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, for it perfectly expresses the Tudor ideal of political order under a strong monarch and the Tudor fear of rebellion and chaos.

Sir Thomas Elyot (c. 1490–1546). Clerk of the privy council under Cardinal Wolsey in 1523, Sir Thomas Elyot was sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire by 1527. His *Governour* won him the post of ambassador to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, in the 1530s. He represented Cambridge in parliament in 1542. Elyot translated into English from St. Cyprian, Pico della Mirandola, Isocrates, and Plutarch. He also prepared the first complete Latin-English dictionary.

The Boke Named the Governour (1531, seven editions by 1580). The education of a prince should be equally practical, intellectual, and esthetic. Elyot seeks as ruler a humanist, enlightened and liberal; he considers monarchy quite superior to a democracy. The potential ruler should learn both Greek and Latin; he should cultivate a healthy body by exercise, wrestling, and horseback riding. Elyot follows the Renaissance concept of education for those in high places, not for the masses. He employs shrewd allusion and anecdote in clear, businesslike English. The story of "Titus and Gysippus" probably influenced Lyly's *Euphues.* Sources for Elyot are: Erasmus; the Italians Pontano, Patrizzi, Castiglione; the Greeks Plato and Xenophon. This is the first full treatise in English on the theory of education and moral philosophy.

Roger Ascham (as'kam) (1515–1568). Roger Ascham was born at Kirby Wiske, Yorkshire. At St. John's College, Cambridge, he became an accomplished Greek scholar. As tutor (1548–50) to Elizabeth, the future queen,

he was apparently responsible for her mature interest in classics and learning. From 1550 to 1553 he was secretary to Sir Richard Morysin, English ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor; and from 1553 until his death he was Latin Secretary to Mary and then Elizabeth. His political post was of highest importance, since almost all diplomatic documents of the age were composed in Latin.

Toxophilus (1545) was the only work of Ascham published in his lifetime. In Platonic dialogue Philologus (lover of knowledge) and Toxophilus (lover of archery) discuss the use of bow and arrow. In spite of the invention of gunpowder, Ascham considers archery the backbone of national defense and the protector of the English way of life. Archery in peace is excellent physical training and character building. Our chief interest lies in the Prologue where he casually says that his own fame would be greater if the work were written in Latin, but he vigorously urges the use of English as the language of scholarship. He was one of the purists who opposed the introduction of alien vocabulary into English.

The Scholemaster (1570). One of the most charming introductions in English literature tells of a dinner-table discussion in Windsor Castle about some students at Eton (clearly in sight across the Thames) who ran away from school because of severe whippings. At the request of one diner, Sir Richard Sackville, Ascham outlines his theories on education for the large majority of students in the first significant treatise on the subject in English.

In Book I he advocates humane pedagogy. The olive branch of gentleness, patience, and love will accomplish more than the birch rod of whippings. Slow and steady boys are to be sympathetically encouraged, not chastened because they fall behind the brilliant pupils. He wants to prevent contamination by "the enchantments of Circe, brought out of Italy to mar men's manners in England." Ascham strongly condemns *The Canterbury Tales* and *Morte d'Arthur* for immorality. They represent for the student a waste of time better spent on edifying literature.

In Book II he proposes the double translation method of teaching Latin as natural and less difficult than the wholly Latin fare of earlier students. He recommends select classical models for the proper molding of style. Ascham seeks a sturdy plainness of English prose which he attributes to Sir John Cheke. Ascham is one of the first great masters of a distinctly native English prose style. His extensive scholarship is manifested by his references to about 250 authorities.

Thomas Wilson (c. 1525–1581). Educated at Eton and at King's College, Cambridge, Thomas Wilson rose to be envoy to the Low Countries in 1576, and secretary of state in 1577. From 1579 he was dean of Durham.

The Arte of Rhetorique (1553, revised and enlarged 1560). Although derived from classic sources, this is the first modern handbook of English composition. Wilson condemns "inkhorn terms" and advocates a simple but fluent style, free of affectation and excessive Latinisms. Linguistic discussion

is flavored, in typical Renaissance style, with lively and appropriate anecdotes. Books I and II follow Quintilian; Book III leans upon both Quintilian and Cicero. More than a mere composition handbook, this is a humanistic treatise upon the full education of a man for the full life.

IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS OF THE PERIOD

It must be remembered that Renaissance Englishmen accepted many of the following translations as though they were original English works. Numerous short poems of the period are unacknowledged translations, often so free as indeed to be best regarded as original works. The full range of Renaissance translation was so extensive that this section can treat only the more significant works. The magnitude of English literary effort in the Renaissance is all the more impressive when one notes what a huge body of translation it absorbed without overwhelming its own creativity.

Since the impulse to assimilate foreign thoughts was to be a lasting one in English, we will consider in the discussion which follows Renaissance translation up into the early 17th century. A word of caution is due, however, in that it must be borne in mind that some of the translations mentioned come at too late a date to affect the works of authors covered in this and the succeeding chapter.

GREEK PROSE. Renaissance translators gave surprisingly little attention to the philosophers, but were attentive to the historians and the writers of late Greek prose romances.

The earliest known English translation from the Greek appears to be John Skelton's version (c. 1520) of the *Historical Library* of Diodorus Siculus. This work remained unpublished in ms.

The first printed English translation from the Greek was *The Doctrinall of Princes Made by the Noble Oratour Isocrates* (1534) by Sir Thomas Elyot.

In the next year appeared Elyot's translations from Plutarch, *The Education or Bringing up of Children* and *Howe One May Take Profit out of One's Enemyes*. The most important Renaissance translation of Greek prose was Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (1579, 2d ed. 1595) by SIR THOMAS NORTH (c. 1535–c. 1602). North's translation actually comes from the French version by Jacques Amyot. Shakespeare and other Renaissance authors gained most of their biographical knowledge of antiquity from this work. Frequently in *Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus,* and *Julius Caesar,* Shakespeare copies North's choice wording with little change. In elevation, dramatic power, and vivid scenes this is one of the great models for literary prose of the age. Plutarch's *Moralia* was translated in 1603 by Philemon Holland (1552–1637), whom Thomas Fuller termed "The translatour Generall of his Age."

The Ethiques of Aristotle by John Wilkinson appeared in 1547; translation was through an Italian version. From a French version came *Aristotles Politiques* (1598) by an author known only as J. D.

The Hystory Written by Thucidides the Athenyan (1550) was derived by Thomas Nicolls from a French version. The next complete—and much superior—translation, by Thomas Hobbes, appeared in 1650.

Other important translations of Greek nonfiction were the *History* of Polybius by Christopher Watson in 1568, *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon by W. Barkar or Bercker c. 1560 (much admired by Spenser) and again by Holland in 1632, *The Olynthiacs* and *The Philippics* of Demosthenes by Thomas Wilson in 1570; the *Manual* of Epictetus by J. Sanford in 1567 and again by J. Healey in 1610, *The Famous History of Herodotus* by B. R. (Barnabe Rich?) in 1584. In 1592 appeared a translation of the pseudoplatonic dialogue *Axiochus*, listing "Edw. Spenser" (probably Edmund Spenser) on the title page.

Strongly contributory to Renaissance fiction were the translations of Hellenistic prose romances: *Aethiopian History of Heliodorus* (c. 1569) by Thomas Underdowne, *Daphnis and Chloe* (1587) of Longus by Angel Day, and *The Most Delectable and Plesant Historye of Clitophon and Leucippe* (c. 1597) of Achilles Tatius by W. Burton. With support from Italian romances these works helped create the charming, idyllic picture of antiquity developed in Sidney's *Arcadia* and other Renaissance romances.

GREEK POETRY. The lyric poets received scant attention, but the Homeric epics were well translated.

Arthur Hall's *Ten Bookes of Homers Iliades* (1581) derives from a French version, and is the first substantial translation of Homer into English. GEORGE CHAPMAN translated the first seven books and the 18th book of the *Iliad* directly from the Greek in 1598. In 1610 he published the first 12 books and in the next year issued the first complete translation of the *Iliad* in English. Chapman published the first 12 books of the *Odyssey* in 1614 and the entire work in the following year. Certainly the greatest verse translation of the Renaissance, this may also be, as some claim, the greatest English translation of Homer. The famous sonnet by Keats, "On First Reading Chapman's Homer," conveys the reader's sense of sweeping vigor, fresh vision, and "high seriousness" in this translation. Perhaps the Renaissance better than any other age of English literature could capture the bold imagination and primitive power of Homer. Swinburne asserted, "No praise can be too warm or high for the power, the freshness, the indefatigable strength and inextinguishable fire which animate this exalted work." Chapman's *Iliad* employs fourteen-syllable rimed couplets; the *Odyssey*, heroic couplets. Chapman published in 1624 his translation of the *Batrachomyomachia* ("War of the Frogs and Mice") and the hymns and epigrams ascribed to Homer. Chapman's biography and a discussion of his other works will be found later in the chapter on Shakespeare's contemporaries and post-Shakespearean dramatists.

GREEK DRAMA. Renaissance translators were rather astoundingly oblivious to the genius of ancient Greek playwrights.

The only known printed translation of a Greek drama in Tudor times was *The Phoenissae* of Euripides from the Italian of Ludivico Dolce by George Gascoigne (Acts II, III, V) and Francis Kinwelmersh (Acts I, IV), appearing as *Jocasta* in the first edition (1573) of Gascoigne's works. This blank-verse tragedy (the chorus speaks in rime royal) presented Senecan horrors and moral platitudes.

LATIN PROSE. Nearly all major classic Latin prose was translated into English during the Renaissance.

The earliest English versions of prose classics from Latin were the *De Amicita* and *De Senectute* of Cicero by John Tiptoft, printed by Caxton in 1481. Robert Whittington published the *De Officiis* (1533) and another version of *De Senectute* (c. 1535). Nicholas Grimald issued his version of *De Officiis* (1553), and John Dolman translated Cicero's *Quaestiones Tusculanae* (1561). Many English prose works were modeled after the rhetoric of Cicero.

Latin historians were special favorites. The *Commentaries* of Julius Caesar was translated, perhaps by John Rastell, in 1530; Arthur Golding's translation of the *Gallic Wars* first appeared in 1565 and was often reprinted. Portions of Livy were translated by Anthony Cope in 1544 and Thomas Wilson in 1570, but the best translation was that of Philemon Holland in 1600. Holland also issued a translation of Ammianus Marcellinus in 1609 and a notable version of Suetonius in 1606. Alexander Barclay translated part of Sallust c. 1520, but the complete and excellent translation awaited Thomas Heywood in 1608. Tacitus was translated by Sir Henry Savile and, in a separate version, by Richard Greneway, both in 1598.

Consulted extensively by Lyly for his *Euphues* was Pliny's pseudoscientific *Natural History* translated by J. A. (John Alday?) from the French in 1566 and frequently reprinted. The definitive translation of Pliny was Philemon Holland's in 1601. This was probably the greatest of Holland's numerous translations. A master of Latin and Greek, Holland faithfully reproduced the sense of the original in a stirring, racy, quasi-poetic Elizabethan idiom. Portions of Seneca's philosophical works were translated by Robert Whittington in 1547 and Arthur Golding in 1577; the first complete translation was Thomas Lodge's in 1614.

Contributing to the Elizabethan imagined view of antiquity was *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius; William Adlington's version in 1566 was one of the most popular Renaissance translations.

LATIN POETRY. Lucretius was the only major Latin poet not translated in this period.

The translation of Vergil's *Aeneid* by the Earl of Surrey inaugurated a new era of English verse translation. Book IV was probably printed in 1554; Books II and IV appeared together in 1557. Surrey's work was the first to employ blank verse in English, a verse form which was to be the medium of Shakespeare and numerous other English poets.

Surrey derived his blank verse from Italian versions of the *Aeneid* by

Nicolo Liburnio (1534), Cardinal Hippolito de Medici (1539), and Bartolomeo Piccolomini (1541). Perhaps he also employed a French version by Saint Gelais (1529) and the Scots rimed translation by Gavin Douglas (pub. 1553). Surrey's version is more spirited and colorful than the original, sacrificing much of the stately oratorical quality of Vergil.

The first complete *Aeneid* in English appeared in 1573, the initial nine books translated by Thomas Phaer and the remaining books by Thomas Twyne; it employs the fourteeners so successfully used in Chapman's Homer. With his translation of the first four books of the *Aeneid* (1582) in "English Heroical verse" (classic hexameters), Richard Stanyhurst sought to set a new style for English poetry. Few poems in our language have proffered such a grotesque mixture of erudition and slang; the enraged Queen of Carthage, Dido, demands: "Shall a stranger give me the slampam?" Vergil's *Eclogues* were translated by George Turberville (1567) and Alexander Fleming (1575).

The partial translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1565) in riming heptameters by Arthur Golding was used extensively by Shakespeare, although the moralistic Golding is an odd translator for the ribald Ovid. It was George Sandys who made the great complete translation (1626). Christopher Marlowe's excellent version of Ovid's *Amores* was printed c. 1590. The fantastically titled *Petite Palace of Pettie His Pleasure* (1576) by George Pettie offers twelve prose translations largely from Ovid.

Horace did not appeal to the Renaissance as Ovid did, and the only relatively complete translation of Horace in the age was Thomas Drant's in 1567. Christopher Marlowe's splendid blank-verse translation of Book I of Lucan's *Pharsalia* was published in 1600; Sir Arthur Gorges printed the first complete version in 1614.

LATIN DRAMA. The Renaissance displayed far more interest in Latin drama than it did in Greek drama.

Probably the earliest English translation of classic Latin drama was Maurice Kyffin's version of Terence's *Andria* (c. 1520). Selections from Terence were published by Nicholas Udall in 1533; the complete Terence was translated by R. Bernard in 1598. Terence was an assigned author in schoolboy Latin classes of the Elizabethan age. The only Tudor translation of Plautus was William Warner's *Menaechmi* (1595), the inspirer of *The Comedy of Errors.* Renaissance English comedy was particularly influenced by these translations and also by the playwrights' acquaintance with the original Latin.

The most influential classic dramatist for the age was Seneca, the writer of tragedies. Jasper Heywood (1535–98), younger son of the playwright John Heywood, published translations of *Troas* (1559), *Thyestes* (1560), and *Hercules Furens* (1561). In 1581 appeared a complete Seneca translated by various hands. In ms. survives a partial translation from *Hercules Oetaeus* by Queen Elizabeth I. Seneca was admired for his ingenious maxims, but most particularly he influenced Elizabethan drama toward blood-and-

thunder tales of horror. Of course, many Elizabethans found real life a page out of Seneca.

ITALIAN NOVELLE (short stories). Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well* and probably his accounts of Romeo and Juliet, Lucrece, Coriolanus, and Timon of Athens derive from *The Palace of Pleasure* (I, 1566; II, 1567) by William Painter (c. 1525–94). Fletcher, Thomas Heywood, Marston, Massinger, Shirley, and Webster also took plots from this work. Some of Painter's tales are translations from ancient writers, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy, Aulus Gellius, but more are from the Renaissance Italian—twenty-six from Matteo Bandello (some through the French of Belleforest), sixteen each from Boccaccio and Margaret of Navarre, and scattered accounts from other Italians. Not inspired, Painter is clear and rapid in narration. Shakespeare shamelessly borrowed exact phrasings from Holinshed and North, but he took no more than plotting from Painter. It has been said that Painter's range was so wide that practically every Renaissance tale or drama has its plot counterpart in *The Palace of Pleasure.*

Certaine Tragicall Discourses (1567) by Sir Geffraie Fenton (c. 1539–1608) consists of thirteen Bandello tales translated from the French of Belleforest. Fenton typifies the "Italianate" Englishman derided by Ascham. The quality of his translation is highly erotic and emotional. Unlike most Elizabethans, Fenton leers at sex. The stories of Giraldi Cinthio are translated in George Whetstone's *Heptameron* (1582), from which Shakespeare took the plot of *Measure for Measure.* George Turberville's *Tragical Tales* (1587) translated six tales from Boccaccio, two from Bandello, and two of unknown origin. The first complete English version of Boccaccio's *Decameron* appeared anonymously in 1620.

ITALIAN PROSE. One of the favorite volumes at Queen Elizabeth's court was *The Courtyer* (1561) translated by Sir Thomas Hoby from the Italian of Baldassare Castiglione. The greatest of the "courtesy books," this work, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* attempted to mold the ideal man of the court.

Book I. The courtier is noble in blood, courageous and generous in battle, graceful and witty in peacetime courts.

Book II. Soldierly bearing should be tempered with aesthetic and literary tastes, intellectual pursuits, and healthful sports.

Book III. A lady of court is impeccable in manners, speech, garb, music and dancing. She also should cultivate the mind, even to theology and philosophy.

Book IV. There are three steps of love: through sense, reason, and understanding. Sensual love is vulgar. The love of calculating intellect is not noble or refined. The love of true understanding, in faith and sincerity, is the love to which a genuine courtier should alone subscribe.

The observations of Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare about love are clear only from a knowledge of *The Courtyer.*

Niccolò Machiavelli's *Art of War* appeared in a 1560 translation by Peter

Whitehorne and in *The Florentine History* by Thomas Beddingfield (1595). The famous *Prince* was anonymously translated before 1584 and was circulated, like many other Renaissance works, exclusively in ms. Edward Deere's printed version did not appear until 1640. The utter honesty of Machiavelli in portraying the reality of contemporary power politics and stratagems made him a legend to the Elizabethans and has mistakenly made his name a synonym for treachery and deceit. Largely from the reputation of Machiavelli, an Elizabethan audience had only to learn that a play's scene was set in Italy to expect unmitigated villainy.

ITALIAN POETRY. Although it seems hard for a modern reader to understand, Dante was wholly ignored. Petrarch was lavishly translated but generally without formal acknowledgment.

One of the excellent Renaissance translations was of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1591) by Sir John Harington; Ariosto considerably influenced Spenser. An even finer translation was that of Edward Fairfax (d. 1635) from Torquato Tasso. *Godfrey of Boulogne* (1600) is Fairfax's title for *Jerusalem Delivered,* relating the success of the First Crusade. In ottava rima Fairfax produced smooth versification, tapestried vocabulary, and vigorousness of spirit. Dryden stated, "Many beside myself have heard our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his number from *Godfrey of Bulloigne.*"

ITALIAN DRAMA. George Gascoigne's *The Supposes* (1566) is the earliest true comedy in English prose. It is more a free adaptation than a translation of Ariosto's *Gli Suppositi* (1509, in prose) and *I Suppositi* (1529, in verse). Gascoigne's play introduced the romantic domestic comedy into England and provided for Shakespeare the subplot of Bianca and the lovers in *The Taming of the Shrew.* Gascoigne's rhetoric anticipates Euphuism. The work was staged at Gray's Inn in 1566. Anthony Munday's version of *Il Fedele* (1575) by Luigi Pasqualigo was performed before Queen Elizabeth under the title *Fedele and Fortunio* (1585); it follows the formula of Italian love intrigue familiar in the lighter Shakespearean comedies.

SPANISH LITERATURE. Modern scholarship is now recognizing the great indebtedness of Renaissance England to Spain. Spanish influence was frequently deprecated during the Elizabethan age because of the hostilities between the two nations. Spain's world position in the 16th century spread her cultural effects far. Much of the influence upon England came through the Netherlands, which was under Spanish rule. There are many Spanish characters in England's Renaissance drama. We are now finding that English plays formerly believed to have no sources are often imitations or translations from the enormously prolific writers of the Spanish Renaissance.

The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius (1534) by Sir S. Lee Berners and *The Diall of Princes* (1557) by Sir Thomas North are translations from the philosophical romance about the Roman Emperor, written originally by the Spanish bishop, Antonio de Guevara. From the elaborate and affected style

of his source, Berners introduced a style that probably is an ancestor of Euphuism.

Marlowe secured his *Tamburlaine* plot from *The Forest* of Pedro Mexia, translated by T. Fortescue in 1571.

The medieval Spanish romances *Palmerin* (1588) and *Amadis de Gaule* (1589) were translated by Anthony Munday. In 1598 Bartholomew Young translated the Renaissance pastoral romance, *Diana Enamorada,* by Jorge Montemayor; this work proved highly popular and influenced kindred works in English, especially Sidney's *Arcadia.* Even more important for the history of English literature was *Lazarillo de Tormez* (1571), ascribed to Mendoza, and rendered by David Rowland; this picaresque account is considered by many to be the ancestor of the modern novel, as it certainly influenced the picaresque accounts of Renaissance England.

Naturally the most famous of the Spanish works to be translated during this time was Cervantes' *Don Quixote.* Cervantes had the first part published in 1605, and it was translated into English by Thomas Shelton in 1612. The second part was published by Cervantes in 1615, and Shelton brought out the translation in 1620. Thus Cervantes' great masterpiece quite closely parallels in time Shakespeare's great works. Also, it is indicative of the popularity of *Quixote* that its translation followed so closely upon its publication.

FRENCH LITERATURE. The tradition of translation from French into English stems from early ME and has continued unabated ever since. Almost every significant work in Renaissance French appeared in an English version. Amid such wealth appears perhaps the only Renaissance translation that has remained *the* popular version to the present–Montaigne's *Essayes* by John Florio.

Son of an Italian Protestant refugee who settled in England, JOHN FLORIO (c. 1553–1625) counted among his patrons Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, who was also Shakespeare's patron. Florio was tutor to the son of James I and Italian reader to Queen Anne, wife of James I. He married a sister of Samuel Daniel, the poet. *A Worlde of Words* (1598) by Florio is the first genuine Italian-English dictionary.

The Essayes (1603) of Montaigne are the richest fruit of the French Renaissance. The literary genre *essay* (attempt) takes its name from these short pieces, the first familiar or personal essays in literature.

The twofold quality of the essays is (1) the wide classical and contemporary learning of the author, (2) his frank and spirited observation of himself and his fellowmen. No previous author in history so fully revealed himself as Montaigne did in his foibles, prejudices, shrewd observation, tolerance, skepticism, brotherhood, curiosity, and essential optimism. Florio has made the essays of Montaigne an integral part of English literature in a lively, whimsical, and fluent translation. The work was avidly read by Renaissance Englishmen, as Shakespeare reveals in *The Tempest.*

Rabelais strongly influenced the prose of Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Har-

vey, but apparently did not appear in English until the famous Urquhart-Motteux translation in two volumes (1653, 1693). The Stationers' Register of 1592 lists *Gargantua His Prophecie* but no copies survive, if the book was ever printed.

THIRD PHASE: THE NEW POETRY

The preceding aspects of the Renaissance gave to 16th-century Englishmen the challenge and the foundation for creating an indigenous culture and literature to match the achievement of antiquity and of continental contemporaries. We of today can well point to Chaucer and say that English had already reached memorable literary heights, but we must remember the significant changes in the English language after Chaucer, changes that made Chaucer erroneously appear crude and inept to the Renaissance. Englishmen of the 16th century believed that they were innovators; England had no great literary tradition behind it, they felt, and they were the beginners of a new era. In our own century we have witnessed notable literary experiments in English, but these have been deliberate deviations from traditional standards. Renaissance men felt that English was theirs to form into any style or content they wished. Consequently they exuberantly ranged in style from the purist simplicity of Sir John Cheke to the extravagant rhetoric and vocabulary of *Euphues,* in form from Jonson's classicism to Shakespeare's romantic comedy; and in content from the most insouciant society verse to the most profound of philosophical disquisitions. The Renaissance impulse made, and still continues to make, English the vehicle of a literature equal to that of any other. The first demonstration of this literary power was in poetry.

Development in poetry was rapid. In the 1520s the only significant English verses were the wild, tumbling "Skeltonics," an almost formless poetry of vituperation arising from well-worn medievalism. In the 1530s Sir Thomas Wyatt was writing verse upon the subjects of the Renaissance in smooth versification and highly disciplined stanzas.

In the aristocratic spirit of the Renaissance, most of the new poetry was circulated in ms. It was intended for the eyes of the literati in courtly society, and it saw only belated publication via the public press. Exact dating is consequently difficult. The wide impact of much of this poetry occurred through anthologies rather than through the individual publication of poets' works. Therefore the great riches of Renaissance poetry have been preserved for us chiefly in collections, and we will now examine the scope of these miscellanies right through the entire Tudor period. Immediately afterward we will concern ourselves with some of the individual authors and works which exercised great influence on the period.

The Courte of Venus (1549) is the earliest known printing of the new poetry. It contains several lyrics by Wyatt. Only three small fragments of the volume survive, and its influence was presumably quite meager.

Tottel's Miscellany is the familiar title for *Songs and Sonettes Written by*

the Ryght Honorable Lorde Henry Howarde Late Earle of Surrey, and Other, published by the printer Richard Tottel. The first two editions (both in 1557) contained ninety-seven poems by Wyatt, forty by Surrey (whose noble rank caused his name alone to appear on the title page), forty by Grimald, two by Vaux, two by J. Canand, one by John Heywood, one by St. Leger, one by Chaucer, and one hundred twenty-six poems by "uncertain authors," certainly including Sir Francis Bryan and Thomas Churchyard. The 310 poems are chiefly lyrics (including sonnets) with a sampling of epigrams, elegies, epitaphs, satires, and pastoral and narrative verse. Many are translations or imitations of classic Greek or Latin, modern French or Italian. Probably Nicholas Grimald aided in the compilation.

As the first significant collection of Renaissance and hence of modern verse, it has been termed the most important anthology in English. Before the century's end it went through at least nine editions. Its widespread popularity caused numerous subsequent poets and printers to include the phrase "songs and sonnets" on their title pages. Shakespeare specifically refers to this collection in *Merry Wives of Windsor* when Slender asserts, "I had rather than forty shillings I had my book of *Songs and Sonnets* here." Lord Vaux's "I loathe that I did love" is famous as the Gravedigger's song in *Hamlet.* In this anthology, and frequently throughout the Renaissance, the term *sonnet* is applied to any short poem (particularly if not intended for singing), rather than being limited to the intricate fourteen-line poem now labeled the *sonnet.*

A Handeful of Pleasant Delites probably had a now lost first edition in 1566, making it the earliest Elizabethan poetical anthology. The extant 1584 edition contains the famous "Greensleeves," and the flower song ("A Nosegaie Alwaies Sweet") from which Ophelia sings in *Hamlet.* Poets include Clement Robinson (editor), Thomas Richardson, J. Tomson, and George Mannington.

The Paradise of Daynty Devises (1576) proved the most popular of the early Elizabethan collections, going through six editions by 1600. The poets represented certainly include Richard Edwards (editor), Lord Vaux, the Earl of Oxford, Thomas Churchyard, Jasper Heywood, George Whetstone, and Francis Kinwelmersh. Ascription of some of the poems to Fulke Greville, Sir Walter Ralegh, and Edwin Sandys is unsubstantiated. The tone of the anthology is graver than that of comparable collections–it includes few love poems. Perhaps the finest work in the anthology is Edwards' lyric "Amantium Irae amoris redintegratio est."

Flowers of Epigrams (1577) consists largely of translations by the editor, Timothe Kendall, but it also includes short pieces by Sir Thomas Elyot, Roger Ascham, the Earl of Surrey, Nicholas Grimald, and George Turberville. Evidently the editor had in mind the Greek anthology, which has given its name ever since to collections of literature and from which Kendall drew heavily.

A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions (1578) included poems by Thomas Proctor (editor), Owen Roydon, Thomas Churchyard, Thomas

Howell, Clement Robinson, and Jasper Heywood. Proctor extensively revised many of the poems without permission of the authors. The collection was not deemed worthy of a second printing until 1814.

The first secular songbook in English was published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1530. Thereafter printers rapidly issued collections of verses for popular singing. The Reformation momentarily interrupted the growth of secular song, but its lyricism bursts forth full-throatedly in William Byrd's *Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs of Sadnes and Pietie* (1588) and *Songs of Sundrie Natures* (1589). Unlike most composers of today, Renaissance music masters usually tried to frame their music to the words. This was especially true of John Dowland, whose *First Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1597) contains some of the most charming words-and-music in English. Evidently Dowland was a favorite of Shakespeare's, for Dowland's lute solo "Fantasia" is mentioned in *Henry IV, Part 2,* and his lute solo "Toy (the Shoemaker's Wife)" is mentioned in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* Thomas Morley's *First Book of Consort Lessons* (1599) provides the music for "It Was a Lover and His Lass" (*As You Like It*) and "O Mistress Mine" (*Twelfth Night*).

The Phoenix Nest (1593) introduced some of the new lyricists–Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Thomas Watson, Nicholas Breton, and Thomas Lodge. This anthology surpasses any of its predecessors and is the only source for some poems by Sir Walter Ralegh and Lodge. *Breton's Bower of Delights* (1591) was primarily Breton's work, but printed other poets. The printer of another collection, *The Arbor of Amorous Devices* (1597), complained that *The Phoenix Nest* had beaten him to "some of the best stuff."

England's Parnassus and *Belvedere or the Garden of the Muses* (both published in 1600) are dictionaries of quotations, rather than anthologies. Even though few poems are printed in full, the ascriptions by the editors have permitted many assignments of authorship to otherwise anonymous poems.

England's Helicon (1600) has been declared by some to be the best anthology of short English poems before Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861). The editor of *Belvedere,* John Bodenham, probably edited this collection, which demonstrates wide reading and commendable taste. He selected carefully from Spenser, Sidney, Watson, Lodge, and Drayton, as well as from current dramas, romances, and song books. For the first time appear significant poems by Henry Constable, Anthony Munday, Bartholomew Young, and unknown poets. Marlowe's "Come Live with Me and Be My Love" is first printed in this volume.

A Poetical Rhapsody (1602) was the last and the most extensive of the Tudor anthologies. Some of the best pieces are by the editor, Francis Davison, and his brother Walter. Many of the good poems are identified solely as "A. W.," who might be an unknown Elizabethan poet or "Anonymous Writer." Although the collection leans heavily toward Sidney, Spenser, and other major writers, it prints from ms. considerable material that otherwise would have vanished.

EARLY RENAISSANCE POETS

While most of the early Renaissance poetry is known through the miscellanies, the following are the most influential of the individual poets whose work we can identify. The exact canon of these writers is difficult to determine. Long circulating in ms. before publication, their poems often appeared years after writing, many posthumously. A high percentage were anonymous, and a small percentage were erroneously ascribed.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (also **Wyat** and **Wiat**) (1503–1542). Born at his father's castle in Kent, Thomas Wyatt was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge. Before he was twenty-five he had fulfilled royal missions for Henry VIII in France and Italy. In Italy during 1527 he acquainted himself with the Renaissance spirit, especially that of the love poets, Petrarch and Serafino dell'Aquila. From 1528 to 1532 he was marshal of Calais. Knighted in 1536, he was shortly thereafter imprisoned, ostensibly because of a quarrel with the Duke of Suffolk, but perhaps because he was suspected of being the lover of Anne Boleyn.

Regaining favor, he served as member of the privy council and as ambassador to Spain. In 1541 he was again imprisoned under a charge of treason during his Spanish residence, but he secured unconditional pardon through an eloquent defense. In 1542 he sat in parliament and was designated commander of the fleet. Hastening to meet the Spanish ambassador at Falmouth, he died of a fever and was buried at Sherborne, Dorsetshire. In Renaissance fashion he packed several lifetimes of drama and achievement into his thirty-nine years.

Wyatt's chief literary fame rests upon his introduction into English of the fourteen-line Italian sonnet. What English poetry needed, now that Chaucer's English had been thoroughly altered, was a disciplined form to give strength and coherence to an individual line while achieving a significant unity in the entire poem. Wyatt found this discipline in the sonnet of Petrarch, composed of an initial *octave* riming *a b b a a b b a* and a concluding *sestet* in various riming patterns: *c d c c d c, c d c d c d, c d e c d e,* etc. Wyatt frequently took the liberty (in twenty-six sonnets) seldom practiced in Italian of ending the sestet with a couplet: *c d d c e e.* In the first eight lines the poet normally stated an experience, a problem, or a situation; in the concluding six lines he presented his reaction, resolution, or emotional or intellectual response. In his last three sonnets Wyatt experiments with the sonnet form later to be dubbed the English or Shakespearean form: three quatrains, *a b a b a b a b a b a b,* concluding with a couplet, *c c.* The sonnet in this form presents statement in the first quatrain, amplification in the second, climax in the third, and conclusion in the couplet.

From Wyatt's introduction throughout virtually all of the century the subject matter of the sonnet was an English version of Petrarch's sonnets to Laura. In idealization of the courtly love conventions the Petrarchan sonnets

form a series describing an unhappy love affair. The lover is a humble servant of the cruel fair one, exalted by a glance from eyes that outshine the sun, obsessed with her snow-white brow and pearly teeth, whirled in seas of despond when rejected, finally sublimating his disappointed affections in study or art or war. The recurrent themes can be lifted to sincerity and power in the vigorous beginnings by Wyatt and in the genius of a Spenser, Sidney, or Shakespeare; admittedly they became mere hackneyed mannerism in the "sugared" sonnets of lesser Renaissance poets. Because the sonneteers of this era were expected to follow the Petrarchan motifs, many of their protestations of love's agonies should be interpreted as more fashionable and aesthetic than autobiographical.

Some of Wyatt's best sonnets are direct translations from the Italian. "The lover compareth his state to a ship in perilous storm tossed on the sea" is an English version of Petrarch's sonnet 156; the theme proved a favorite of later sonneteers. "Description of the contrarious passions in a lover" translates 104 of Petrarch, and "The lover for shamefastness hideth his desire within his faithful heart" translates 109. "The lover's life compared to the Alps" translates a sonnet by Sannazaro, an Italian follower of Petrarch.

Wyatt's *Seven Penitential Psalms* (1549) closely imitates another Italian, Pietro Aretino. From the Italian, Wyatt introduced terza rima (meagerly used by Chaucer) and ottava rima. In translations from the French he employed the rondeau, étrenne, huictain, and douzain. Wyatt is credited with creating "poulter's measure," alternating lines of 12 and 14 syllables. Perhaps the greatest of Wyatt's poems are his own original lyrics, usually on the theme of the stouthearted but bereft lover, in simple and brief stanzas.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517–1547). Henry Howard was descended on his father's side from Edward the Confessor and on his mother's side from Edward III. In youth he studied Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian. In his teens he lived in Windsor Palace as the guest of Henry VIII, and in France as the guest of King Francis. During his meteoric career he aided in the overthrow of Thomas Cromwell, the subjugation of Scotland, and the war against France. In the latter campaign he commanded large English forces. His mansion, Mount Surrey, near Norwich, was one of England's first structures imitating classic Greek architecture. In 1546 he was charged with treason because of the dispute over Henry's successor. The monarch died a week after the beheading of Surrey. In a record of 1539 Surrey was described as "the most foolish proud boy that is in England." He was notoriously headstrong, adventurous, and impetuous.

The youthful Surrey was apparently stimulated to translate from the classics by his tutor, John Clerk. His stays in France interested him in the French poets, but the greatest influence upon him was Wyatt's. Surrey's sonnets are only half as numerous as Wyatt's, but ten of the fifteen or sixteen credited to him employ the English (or Shakespearean) form, which became thereafter, largely through Surrey's influence, the most popular form of the

sonnet in the century. "Description of Spring, wherein each thing renews save only the lover" translates Petrarch's 43, but pictures an English spring rather than Petrarch's Italian spring. Wyatt and Surrey are neatly compared in their translations of Petrarch's sonnet 109; Wyatt's "The lover for shamefastness" is closer to the original and demonstrates bluff vigor and stirring imagery, while Surrey's "A complaint by night of the lover not beloved" is further from the original, smoother, more melodious. Surrey's poems on love affairs seem more literary exercises than genuine effusions; it was the love of comrades and masculine high spirits that affected him more than the love of women.

Surrey was chiefly responsible for the vogue of two verse forms in English. His extensive use of "poulter's measure" popularized that form, and he made what was to prove his momentous innovation in English prosody by introducing blank verse in his translation from the *Aeneid* (1554). For a while the two forms struggled for dominance, but subsequent Elizabethan versifying increasingly replaced "poulter's measure" with blank verse.

Mirrour for Magistrates. Although the example of Wyatt and Surrey stimulated a host of minor poets, named in the discussion of the anthologies or miscellanies, English verse produced little of greatness in the troubled reigns of Edward VI, Mary, and the youthful Elizabeth. An exception was the famous *Mirrour for Magistrates*, apparently projected by the printer Whitchurch during the reign of Edward VI as a continuation of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. Whitchurch commissioned William Baldwin (fl. 1547–60) to write the sequels, but that minor poetizer called upon collaborators to assist him. The prose introduction to the book (finally printed in 1559) dramatizes a conference between Baldwin and six other writers, including George Ferrers (c. 1500–79), where the gentlemen peruse the chronicles for material and plan copy for the poems.

Tottel published Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* in 1554 and so did John Wayland again in 1554 or 1555, but royal authority in this troubled era forbade printing of the sequels until Elizabeth's reign. The first edition of *Mirrour for Magistrates* contained, beyond Lydgate's work, nineteen dramatic monologues by fallen worthies, starting with Robert Tressillian, chancellor under Richard II, and ending with Edward IV. Four of these legends are by Baldwin, three by Ferrers, and one each by Cavyll, Chaloner, and Phaer; eight are by unknown authors, and the last is by Skelton. Skelton's verse on Edward IV appears in twelve-line stanzas; the life of Richard II uses a difficult ten-line stanza; the life of Henry VI appears in poulter's measure; and the remaining poems employ rime royal. This first edition is unimpressive as poetry, but the second edition in 1563 added eight lives, notably the *Complaint of Henry Duke of Buckingham* in rime royal by Thomas Sackville (1536–1608). Where the earlier poets of this collection sought a medieval morality and rule for living, Sackville seized upon the sense of tragic drama. Particularly good is the "Induction" preceding Sackville's narrative proper. George Saintsbury

called the Dantesque elements of the "Induction" "the best poetry written in the English language between Chaucer and Spenser." Sackville's contribution to the drama will be discussed in the chapter on early Elizabethan drama under academic drama.

In the same edition is *Shore's Wife*, about Jane Shore, the mistress of Edward IV; this is the chief work by the otherwise pedestrian Thomas Churchyard (c. 1520–1604). This poem furnished the story for the play *Jane Shore* (1714) by Nicholas Rowe and had its reverberations in Marlowe. A revised edition of the *Mirrour for Magistrates* (1574) included an "Induction" imitating Sackville and sixteen lives of ancient Britons from Albanact to Nennius, all the work of John Higgins.

The Seconde Part of the Mirrour for Magistrates (1578) contained twelve lives of early Britons and Anglo-Saxons by Richard Blennerhassett. Higgins re-edited the volume in 1587 with more tales of ancient vintage and additions to the Baldwin-Sackville text, extending through Cardinal Wolsey. The last tinkering with the *Mirrour* was the work of Robert Niccols in 1610; he revamped and rearranged much of the previous material, adding Drayton's life of Richard Cromwell and many legends of his own composition. Of course, the chronicles of the Renaissance included most of this material, but the poets of the *Mirrour* had reshaped these stories to almost straight dramatic form; the playwrights of the age dug deeply into this compendium. At least twenty-five of the ninety-one lives (in Niccols' version) portray characters employed by Shakespeare.

George Gascoigne (c. 1542–1577). Having studied at Cambridge, George Gascoigne married the widowed Elizabeth Breton to become stepfather of the poet Nicholas Breton. During 1566 he apparently resided at Gray's Inn and there witnessed performances of his translated plays, *The Supposes* (from Ariosto) and *Jocasta* (from Euripides). Gascoigne was highly adventurous and unruly; he was disinherited by his father, barred from a seat in parliament by accusations of violence and atheism, and packed off to hard fighting in the Low Countries. For a brief period he was the most important English man of letters. A discussion of his translation of Italian drama will be found in this chapter in the section on translation.

A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres (1573) contained the translated dramas mentioned above and numerous short poems, chiefly love lyrics of some polish and charm. "Gascoigne's Lullaby" is perhaps the most famous single poem. Scholars are not sure whether all of these verses are actually by Gascoigne (as he later claimed) or whether this is another Renaissance anthology including poems by the Earl of Oxford, Sir Christopher Hatton, and others.

The Posies of George Gascoigne (1575) is an amplification of the previous volume. Its chief importance lies in the prose essay, "Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English," the earliest treatise on English prosody. Gascoigne as a prosodic critic favors simple and natural English in careful metric feet and stanzas. He advises against

wrenched accent, Latinical inversions, and blatant devices of alliteration and extravagance. Content should be sincere and moral.

The Steele Glas (1576) was the first English satire in the classic sense and the first English satire in blank verse. The title refers to the old-fashioned metal mirror by which Gascoigne intended to reveal the true picture of a dissolute age which the newfangled crystal mirror falsely flattered. In lively raillery the poet blisters hypocrites and oppressors in every walk of society. His kindest words are for Piers the Plowman, a generic term since the 14th-century poem.

MAJOR ASPECTS OF THE REFORMATION

Certain great religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity (Roman Catholic in the West, Greek Orthodox in the East), have each created, in the terms of Arnold J. Toynbee, a "universal church." Such a church attempts to unify all believers of the faith into an organization uniform in tenets and ritual. To create and maintain such an all-embracing union of great masses of mankind, a "universal church" must employ rigid and coercive methods. Ironically the very qualities that make for the universality of these churches eventually cause their sundering.

After the inevitable dissension during its initial phase, the "universal church" becomes truly universal among believers for a relatively extended period, successfully muting or compromising the inevitable differences of opinion. Mounting criticism and hostility within the body of believers will, however, reach the point of irreconcilability, and then a split occurs. From the parent church fervent religionists pull away to create the Shi'ite and Sufi branches of Islam, the Mahayana division of Buddhism, the Protestantism of western Christianity. A regrettable but constant phenomenon is the intense hostility between divisions within a religion, a hostility often greater than that directed against a totally different faith.

The term *Reformation* is of Protestant origin, since members of a catholic (i.e., universal) church regard those leaving the parent church as heretics and schismatics, not as reformers. Roman Catholics, recognizing the grave defects of the late medieval and early Renaissance church, would consider the Council of Trent (1543–63)—entirely within the structure of Roman Catholicism—as the true reforming of western Christianity. We shall employ the traditional terminology of *Reformation* because of its long use and familiarity in English.

The Reformation shared some characteristics with the Renaissance:

(1) Both were products of increasing individualism that manifested itself powerfully in the 14th and 15th centuries.

(2) Both rose from a strengthening economic system, demonstrated by the rise of capitalism and the mercantile class.

(3) Both sought a return to original sources, the Scriptures and the early Church Fathers for the Reformation, classic Greek and Roman culture for the Renaissance.

In certain fundamental aspects, however, the Reformation opposed the Renaissance:

(1) The Reformation emphasized strict piety of the individual and other-worldliness, while the Renaissance gloried in this life and was essentially indifferent to spiritual claims.

(2) To the Reformation man's nature was essentially depraved, while the Renaissance humanist deemed man's nature inherently good.

(3) The Reformation leaders strove to impose their own brand of faith and conformity, while the Renaissance spokesmen advocated reason and tolerance.

(4) The past sought by the Reformation was that of St. Paul and St. Augustine, while the past sought by the Renaissance was pagan antiquity.

(5) The Reformation could never have succeeded without the strong appeal of nationalism, while the great Renaissance humanists such as Erasmus advocated an internationalism.

With the collapse of Rome in the 5th century, all Western society was plunged into political chaos. In the early middle ages the rule of the monarchs was grotesquely tenuous and uncertain. The only semblance of order throughout Western society lay in the Roman Catholic Church, inheritor of the superb administrative techniques of the defunct empire. Until the late medieval period most members of Western society gave physical support to their local suzerain but saw their larger spiritual loyalty to all Christendom through the universal church, the one tightly knit and unbroken institution of the age. Convinced of the unifying concept of a Christian society and understandably deprecatory toward the fluctuating secular rule, the Roman Catholic Church intervened constantly in domestic politics. As national monarchs became increasingly powerful in a more stable society, they inevitably opposed the international church. Much of medieval history from the 12th century on is the chronicle of frays between monarch and Pope. The rulers of states objected to ecclesiastical intervention, which sometimes proceeded as far as papal excommunication of monarchs (one provision of which freed Christians from any loyalty to their rulers) but which even under the most felicitous of conditions meant:

(1) A steady drain of national monies to the church in Rome;

(2) Support by the papacy of certain nations, thereby circumscribing a monarch's activities in continental politics;

(3) A large body of able and intelligent clergy within the nation whose first loyalties were to the church officials abroad, not to the monarch at home;

(4) Increasingly vast holdings by the church of property removed from the tax rolls and royal authority;

(5) Ecclesiastical courts that tried all clerics and all cases involving marriage and morals, withholding all such from the monarch's control.

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

As far back as Anglo-Saxon times (notably under Harold), rulers of England had come into conflict with the papacy. In the midst of the medieval period, the quarrel with the church was purely on the monarchial level, and Henry II was forced by popular clamor to contrition after the murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket. As we have seen, the populace revered the church and devoutly performed pilgrimage to the shrine of "the holy blissful martyr," whom they regarded as their clerical defender against an arbitrary secular ruler. However, by the late 14th century, Englishmen as a whole were thinking of the church as a fundamentally Italian organization, an alien that parliament and the people were opposing as well as the king.

Corruption among the clergy also contributed to popular distaste for the church. From the 14th century onward, secular life raised its intellectual and civilizing standards, while the church was stagnant or, in such affairs as the sale of spiritual indulgences, had declined in prestige.

The first phase of the English Reformation was nationalistic. The nation followed Henry VIII out of the fold of Roman Catholicism with the intent of maintaining an English Catholic Church. Henry VIII persecuted individuals whose thought was tinged with Lutheranism. What the fervent leaders of this phase sought was a cleansed church abrogating the ties with Rome but providing the familiar, cherished ritual in the vernacular instead of in Latin. This phase of the Reformation, with its extensive translation of Biblical and religious learning into English, paralleled the phase of the Renaissance that opened great wealth in secular translations.

FIRST PHASE: TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE AND OTHER RELIGIOUS WORKS

TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE BY TYNDALE, COVERDALE, AND OTHER VERSIONS

The English translations of the Bible during this period fall into three doctrinal categories (here arranged chronologically): (a) the Anglican tradition, originally rather Lutheran in bias but gradually arriving at a more moderate position—Tyndale, Coverdale, the "Great" and "Bishop" Bibles, the Authorized Version; (b) independent Protestantism, in Taverner, Sir John Cheke, and the strongly Calvinistic collaborators upon the Geneva Bible; (c) Roman Catholicism, in the Reims-Douai version. Although each group acrimoniously assailed the other two, all three involuntarily cooperated, influencing each other repeatedly. Also, they had to acknowledge the pioneer-

ing efforts of Wycliffe and his first translation of the complete Bible into English, which we have considered under ME writings in the chapter on the age of Chaucer.

In our discussion of these translations of the Bible, the different versions will be treated under the name of the translator or under the most familiar descriptive term of the translation, whichever seems more appropriate.

William Tyndale (Tindale or Tindal) (tin'dal) (c. 1484–1536). Born in Gloucestershire, William Tyndale was educated at Oxford. After his residence at Cambridge he returned to his native county about 1520 as a chaplain and private tutor in Little Sodbury, where he conceived the idea of translating the Bible into English. Opposition to the Scriptures in English, especially from Sir Thomas More, forced Tyndale to flee to Germany in 1524, where he did most of his translation and printing, and from where his translations were smuggled into England. He was tried for heresy and executed at Vilvorde Castle, near Brussels, by the Spanish.

Tyndale's Bible. First translation of the Greek New Testament into English (Worms, 1525); previous English translations were from the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome. Tyndale also brought out the Pentateuch (Marburg, c. 1531) and the Book of Jonah (Antwerp, 1531). Henry VIII ordered the burning of Tyndale's New Testament in 1527, but persecution only increased its circulation. Tyndale was determinedly Protestant and aroused opposition by reading "congregation" and "elder" instead of "church" and "priest." His glosses were especially hostile to established Roman Catholicism. But in general the translation is remarkably clear and accurate, mirroring sound scholarship. He expressed himself in an idiomatic but poetic style that would ever thereafter, in place of the pedantic style of the learned, affect English translations of the Bible. Occasionally his homey language is too common for the Authorized Version—"When ye pray, bable not moche as the hethen do" (Matthew 6:7). Some of Tyndale's coinages (*peacemaker, long-suffering, scapegoat, filthy lucre*) are firmly imbedded in the language, and he is responsible for the erroneous form *Jehovah.*

The Scots New Testament (c. 1530). Based upon the Wycliffe translation was *The Scots New Testament.* Its Ayrshire author, Murdoch Nisbet, lived in hiding for many years because of religious persecution. The Tyndale version superseded Nisbet's version, which is interesting philologically but not belletristically.

Miles Coverdale (1488–1568). Born in Yorkshire, Miles Coverdale became an Augustinian friar at Cambridge. He joined Tyndale in Germany c. 1529. He went back to England when Protestantism was safe and returned to Germany during the later persecutions of English Protestants. He became Bishop of Exeter in 1551. Under Elizabeth I, Coverdale left the church because of enforced strict observance of the liturgy. He preached independently until his death.

Coverdale's Bible (Zürich, 1535) from the German and Latin, with an

unauthorized dedication to Henry VIII but supported by Sir Thomas Cromwell, was the first complete Bible in English. The second edition (1537) was the first Bible printed in England and carried a royal license. Tyndale's Old Testament translations were included; the rest of the Scriptures were translated by Coverdale. Following continental Protestant practice, Coverdale carefully separated the *Apocrypha* from the Old Testament (since 1629 the *Apocrypha* seldom appears in Protestant versions of the Bible). The style of Coverdale follows that of Tyndale, particularly in the superb poetry of the Psalms. "The valley of the shadow of death" and "lovingkindness" are verbal creations by Coverdale, although generally he lacked the sure ear of Tyndale.

Matthew's Bible (1537). *Matthew's Bible* bore on the title page the name of Thomas Matthew, pseudonym for John Rogers (c. 1500–55), London rector and first of the Protestants martyred in the regime of Mary. This is Tyndale's Bible, as far as it went, and thereafter Coverdale's. Differences from Coverdale through *2 Chronicles* probably mean that Rogers, formerly an assistant to Tyndale, had mss. of Tyndale's translation beyond the original Tyndale printing. Dedicated to Henry VIII, this Bible was supported by Thomas Cranmer. Consequently it enjoyed unprecedented circulation.

Taverner's Bible (1539). A slight revision of Matthew's Bible, prepared by Richard Taverner (c. 1515–75).

The Great Bible (1539). Actually a second edition by Coverdale of his 1535 translation, collated with the printings of Tyndale and Rogers, is what we now call *The Great Bible.* It was also known as *Cromwell's Bible* because of its commissioning by Sir Thomas Cromwell. The Anglican Prayer Book to this day retains the versions of the psalms printed in this volume.

Cranmer's Bible (1540). Another edition of *The Great Bible* named solely from the preface written for it by Thomas Cranmer, through whose intervention this became the first English Bible set up in the churches. It was the first Bible in English to have a truly wide distribution both public and private.

The Geneva Bible (1560). Printed in Switzerland by the exiles from Mary's persecutions, the *Geneva Bible* is militantly Protestant. The New Testament of William Whittingham first appeared in 1557, its text based upon popular English translations. The entire Bible was Whittingham's work, but he was assisted by Anthony Gilby and Thomas Sampson. Their version was the most scholarly and accurate translation up to its time. This was the first English Bible to employ divisions into verses, an arrangement made by Robert Stephanus on a horseback journey from Paris to Lyon c. 1550. It was also the first English Bible to employ italics for explanatory words and phrases. Sometimes it was termed the *Breeches Bible* from its use of this word in Genesis 3:7. Dedication is to Elizabeth I. The *Geneva Bible* was the first small Bible, specifically designed for private reading. At least 140 editions were printed. Some of the felicities of the Authorized Version first appear in the *Geneva*

Bible: "smite them hip and thigh," "vanity of vanities," "except a man be born again."

The Bishops' Bible (1568). *The Bishops' Bible* was often called *Parker's Bible* because its leading spirit was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker (1504–75). Most of the Anglican bishops contributed to this translation in a desire to counteract the popular Calvinistic translation in the *Geneva Bible.* This was the strongest basis for the *Authorized Version.* As the standard church Bible of the Elizabethan era, it was well known to Shakespeare, who seems also to have known the *Geneva Bible.*

The Douai Bible (1609). English Roman Catholics in exile sought a wholly non-Protestant translation of the Scriptures. A New Testament translation by Gregory Martin of the English Jesuit College at Reims appeared in that city in 1582. The English college moved in 1593 to Douai, where the full translation was completed. The text is based essentially upon the Latin Vulgate but employs some phrasings from Tyndale and Coverdale. In turn it influenced the *Authorized Version,* especially in the New Testament. Accompanied by pointed notes on doctrinal issues, this version still remains the prime translation of the Bible for English-speaking Roman Catholics.

The Authorized Version (1611). At the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 the Puritans, through their spokesman Dr. John Reynolds, proposed a new English translation of the Bible. King James I ordered the translation —hence it is frequently termed *The King James Bible.* Under the editorship of Miles Smith, later Bishop of Gloucester, and Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, fifty-four scholars and divines, working at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge, collaborated in producing the best-known and most influential book in our language, and perhaps the greatest work of translation in any language. *The Bishops' Bible* was the avowed basis, but all previous English translations of the Scriptures were consulted. Over eighty percent of the wording is fundamentally Tyndale's, though his frequently colloquial expression is heightened in dignity and sonority. Coverdale's sense of rhythm and sound gives much of the poetic quality to this translation.

The style of *The Authorized Version* is purposely archaic, not reflecting the general idiom of its own day. The result, however, seems an almost unerring instinct for the right cadence and diction. No other work in the English language, not even the works of Shakespeare, begins to approach the circulation enjoyed by this translation for over 350 years. Everyday English speech employs numerous quotations from this translation, and practically every significant author in English since 1611 has been influenced in some fashion by this work, even to the agnostic Thomas Henry Huxley and the rebellious D. H. Lawrence. Scholars point out that in some places *The Authorized Version* excels in literary quality the original Hebrew or Greek, especially in the New Testament, parts of which were written in demotic Greek.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE PRAYER BOOK AND OTHER RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

During this period of the great translations of the Bible, other religious works were also translated into English, and the *Book of Common Prayer* was given shape by Thomas Cranmer.

The historical writings of the Venerable Bede, in Anglo-Saxon times, were translated from Latin as *The History of the Church of Englande* (1565) by Thomas Stapleton. Translations of St. Augustine had to await *Of the Citie of God* (1610) by John Healey and *The Confessions* (1620) by Sir Tobie Matthew.

The most considerable work of French poetry translated into English during Tudor times was from the Protestant poet, Guillaume du Bartas, *Divine Weekes and Workes* (1605–06) by Joshua Sylvester, in heroic couplets. This epic poem upon the creation of the world went through numerous editions during the 17th century and seems to have influenced Spenser (in the original French, of course), Donne, and Milton.

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556). Born at Aslacton, Nottinghamshire, Thomas Cranmer was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge. Supporting the divorce of Henry VIII from Catherine, he rose in royal favor to become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. Under Mary he was tried for heresy, recanted, and was burned at the stake. At his execution Cranmer offered first to the flames the hand that had signed the recantations.

The Book of Common Prayer (1549) is essentially a translation from the stately Latin liturgical prose of the *Use of Sarum,* a medieval service book employed at Salisbury, and the devotional *Book of Hours.* The original intent of the work was that worshippers attending all devotions would chant in Latin the entire Psalms each week and the entire Bible in the course of a year. With the insertion of new saints' days and other elaborations, relatively little of the Bible had been left. Cranmer was apparently the leading spirit in returning to the original purpose by having the Psalms completed each month, the Old Testament once annually, and the New Testament thrice annually. The Psalms are from Coverdale's translation and the other Scriptures from *The Great Bible.* In spite of furious national resentment, Cranmer translated into English the well-loved traditional Latin worship services, matching the sonority and elevation of the original Latin. On the basis of this work alone, Cranmer must be acknowledged as one of the consummate masters of English style. Down to the present the liturgy of most English-speaking Protestants is ultimately based upon the services of this book. Revisions were made in 1552, 1559, and 1662, all tending in a Catholic direction.

SECOND PHASE: DOCTRINAL DISPUTES

Revolt against late medieval theology and a desire to return to the earlier tenets of the church were fundamental elements in the Reformation. On the basis of the Pauline Epistles and the writings of St. Augustine, the early Christian church in the West based its theology upon the doctrines of original sin, total depravity of the natural man, predestination, and the bondage of the will. By placing man's fate exclusively in the hands of God, Augustinianism implied that the ministrations of an organized church were far less important than the soul-searchings of an individual.

In the 12th and 13th centuries Peter Lombard and St. Thomas Aquinas crystallized the newer concept that man possessed freedom of will but would fall into sin unless supported by heavenly grace. The communication of divine grace to man was through the seven sacraments of the church. Apart from baptism, the sacraments could be administered only by the priesthood. Inheritors of the keys of power from St. Peter, the clergy had sole power to cooperate with God in forgiving sins and performing the miracle of the Mass, transubstantiating the bread and the wine into the real flesh and the real blood of Christ.

In large measure the Protestant Reformation was a rebellion against the doctrines of Peter Lombard and St. Thomas Aquinas, seeking the reaffirmation of Augustinianism. Wycliffe was essentially Augustinian, as were the Lollards who had existed in subterranean fashion from the 14th century to form later a nucleus for the Reformation theology. The survival of Augustinianism was especially potent in Germany and motivated German Protestants such as Luther and Melanchthon. The early 16th-century Protestants of England, persecuted by Henry VIII, clustered about Cambridge and were scornfully nicknamed "the Germans" from the influence of Luther. Rationalism and skepticism were not involved in the religious dispute; the Augustinian Protestants were every whit as dogmatic as the Thomistic Catholics and appealed as strongly to church tradition.

Of some importance in the Reformation was the background of mysticism in such potent figures as Richard Rolle of Hampole and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Although none of the mystics preached overt rebellion against the Catholic system, they vehemently opposed the ritualistic route to salvation taught by the late medieval church. No sacraments or priestly intercessions were needed, in their eyes; the individual soul by fervent faith and deep emotional piety could establish direct contact with the deity. Translated into current popular terms, their message would make religion an intensely personal affair, would parallel the rise of individualism, and would place the burden of salvation upon the believer and not upon an ecclesiastical organization.

The intense ferment of religious ideas in 16th-century England scattered Englishmen across the entire spiritual spectrum from extreme Catholicism

to extreme Protestantism. The whole nation, and foreign powers alike, awaited in suspense the church decision of Queen Elizabeth I as she assumed the throne in 1558. With the famed English gift for compromise and accommodation, Elizabeth charted a middle position to mold an English church that is Catholic in framework and Protestant in content. The doctrine of the Church of England was officially set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563. Many of these articles are somewhat ambiguous and can be variously interpreted, but broadly they follow Augustinian Protestantism except for a strong belief in free will. The ritual of the Mass was abolished, but the organization of archbishops and bishops, and most of the familiar and time-honored rituals (now in English instead of Latin) were retained.

The transition was accomplished with very little difficulty. Of more than 9000 parish priests and other clergy, less than 200 refused to conform to the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity passed by parliament. Gradually the Catholic Mass was dropped and the reformed service substituted. All Englishmen were required, under fine of one shilling for each absence, to attend the services of the Established Church on each Sunday and holy day. Elizabeth's regime, however, imposed no repression comparable to that of Mary's reign, and as long as men conformed outwardly there was no effort to probe into their private religious beliefs. The old heresy laws enacted in 1401 against the Lollards and reenacted in Mary's period were repealed.

Hugh Latimer (1485–1555). Son of a humble Leicestershire yeoman, Hugh Latimer was brought up at Cambridge "as obstinate a Papist as any was in England," but about 1524 experienced a Pauline conversion through the Protestant martyr, Thomas Bilney (d. 1531). Thereafter Latimer preached the reformed doctrine with a vigor that made him Bishop of Worcester in 1535. Martyred at the stake during Mary's rule, he uttered the famous words to his companion martyr, Nicholas Ridley: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as, I trust, shall never be put out."

The forty-five extant sermons of Latimer are the first significant Protestant sermons in English. The short, pithy sentences–flavored with anecdote, vivid figures of speech, and richly appropriate word-choice, especially in the *Sermon on the Ploughers* (1548)–greatly stirred the populace. The sizable majority of the English people were Catholic or apathetic until Latimer moved them to the Protestant position by his eloquence.

John Foxe (1516–1587). John Foxe was expelled from Oxford for heresy and joined the Protestant exiles in Frankfort. He returned to Elizabeth's England but never received prominent rank. Though a perfervid Protestant, he attended Surrey's son, the Duke of Norfolk, to the scaffold when the latter was beheaded in 1572 as a Catholic traitor.

The Actes and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Times Touching Matters of the Church (1563), better known as *Foxe's Martyrs,* had origi-

nally been written in Latin, chronicling the Christian martyrs through Savonarola (especially the English ones), and had been published in Strassburg in 1554. Foxe started again, in English, and concentrated upon the Protestant martyrs. Often historically inaccurate and always bitterly partisan, the work is a marvel of protracted intensity and unflagging conviction. For centuries it proved one of the most frequently read books in English and is credited with a prime role in maintaining English hostility toward Roman Catholicism.

Richard Hooker (c. 1554–1600). A native of Heavitree, Exeter, Richard Hooker was educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. As clergyman, he purposely accepted quiet rural churches where he would be free to write his *magnum opus*. He died at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury.

Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie (Books I–IV, c. 1594; V, 1597; VI and VIII, 1648; VII, 1662). The last three books, especially VI, may not be authentic. As early as 1604, it was stated that the relatives of Mrs. Hooker (a strong Puritan) had destroyed the mss. of these later volumes; the present form of VI–VIII may derive from rough drafts. To this day Hooker's work is the definitive statement of the main position of the Anglican church. In the midst of embattled religious controversy Hooker wrote an enduring work which attempted to refute both the Roman Catholic and the Puritan Protestant viewpoints. To the absolutist claims of both opponents he counters the arguments for toleration and progress: "There will come a time when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpness of wit." On the bitter polemics about the Eucharist: "I wish that men would more give themselves to meditate what we have by the sacrament and less to dispute of the manner how."

With remarkable fairness Hooker recounts both Catholic and Protestant arguments. He defends the episcopal structure of the English church, while not insisting that it is indispensable. He accepts the Pauline reformed doctrine, while vigorously supporting the concept of free will. The whole work breathes moderation and goodwill. This is the first truly independent work in English prose. The style is dignified and sonorous. It neither stoops to colloquial banter nor uses the ornamentations of learned fashion.

THIRD PHASE: THE RISE OF PURITANISM IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND

Visiting Great Britain in the 18th century, Voltaire wryly commented, "The English have a hundred religions and only one sauce." Today not only outside observers but also natives to the Anglo-American tradition are bewildered by the multitude of Christian sects, ranging from small independent congregations to huge denominations embracing millions of communicants. This splintering process (almost exclusively within Protestant groups) originated for the English-speaking world during the 16th century.

When the English church severed its connection with Rome and instituted

a reformed doctrine and service, the attempted compromise did not satisfy all Englishmen. While some remained Roman Catholic and stayed aloof, others within the Established Church early displayed their hostility. The dominant critics inside it wanted a "purer" church and hence were labeled *Puritans*. Their objections were twofold: (1) to the Catholic structure, for the Puritans rebelled against the administration by bishops and all semblances in the ritual that smacked of "popery," and (2) to the Anglican version of Protestant theology, which the Puritans opposed with Calvinism, emphasizing predestination instead of free will.

In the process of rabid religious controversy, groups formed to reflect every viewpoint and, in this third phase of the Reformation, established the final Protestant position. In essence and with careful qualification for each separate sect of Christianity, the basic Protestant position supports the mechanical theory of institutions, while the basic Catholic position espouses the organic theory of institutions. To the Catholic (Roman Catholic, Jansenist or "Old Catholic," Filipino Catholic, and similar sects) the church institution is a living organism that is divine in origin, has existed since its foundation by Christ, and must be maintained inviolate; the individual must conform to the divine institution and submit to its teachings.

To the Protestant (Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist, etc.) the visible church is essentially an institution constructed to aid the individual in his salvation. Its structure grows from the individual's needs, and when individual human needs change, the institution must change to fit those needs. If the institution cannot be changed, the Protestant will drop it and create a new religious organization designed to fulfill those needs.

The Protestant position of today, it must be emphasized, is not that of the 16th century. The intensity of the religious dispute and the persecution of nonconformists (those refusing to support the Church of England) in that era made the dissident Protestant groups as hostile to other sects as orthodoxy was to the Puritans. Some, but not all, Protestant sects of today assert their unique possession of true faith as did their Reformation predecessors. However, today the Church of England prides itself upon its broad receptivity to diverse religious tendencies; thus within the one national church, worshippers may vary from Anglo-Catholicism, strongly resembling Roman Catholicism, to a low church position similar to Congregationalism or Wesleyanism. In the 16th century, however, the Established Church vigorously opposed any alteration of its Catholic-Protestant compromise. The Puritan elements in England had to leave the church and fight its tenets from without, achieving momentary success in the 17th century. In Scotland the Puritan elements triumphed within that national church and produced in the Kirk of Scotland a distinctly Protestant organization (Presbyterian) while adopting a thoroughgoing Protestant theology (Calvinism).

Since the full flood of Puritanism was not to come until the 17th century, we will mention here only a few of the early Puritan writings, most notably

those of John Knox in Scotland and the anonymous English *Martin Marprelate* tracts.

John Knox (c. 1505–1572). Born of peasant stock at Haddington, Scotland, John Knox attended Glasgow University. When George Wishart, Scotland's first significant Protestant clergyman, was martyred in 1546, Knox succeeded him as the leading Scottish exponent of Protestantism. For a time Knox toiled in captivity as a galley slave, sentenced for heresy. He escaped to England and thence to Europe when Mary Tudor was in power. He met Calvin in Geneva, and then became the most eloquent spokesman for Calvinism in English. Back in Scotland in 1559, Knox by his preaching precipitated the revolution that forced Mary Queen of Scots to recognize her subservience to the Scottish parliament, and created the Presbyterian Church of Scotland whose Confession of Faith by Knox still remains the official creed of Scotland.

Few men have so profoundly stamped their image upon a nation as Knox has upon Scotland. The course of the Scottish Reformation, proceeding to a thoroughly Protestant position, was determined by his immense energy and inspired eloquence. In his own day his most famous work was the *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) directed against the two Marys of England and Scotland.

His literary work of most importance is probably the *Historie of the Reformation of Religion within the Realme of Scotland* (1584). The first of the five books making up this study anticipates Carlyle in the perfervid descriptions of early Scottish Protestants in fearful combat. The fourth book details the dramatic interviews between Knox and Mary Queen of Scots; the jeremiads of Knox from the pulpit to all Scotland; and the wild upsurge that saw the triumph of Knox's principles. Perhaps only a Scotsman could evoke, as Knox does, the taste of raw, brutal courage and grotesque, ferocious humor in that embattled era. The *Historie* is the first great original prose work of Scotland. Because of Knox's long residence in England, the dialect is really London English instead of Scots; the Roman Catholic opponents of Knox ridiculed his "foreign" language and pointedly retorted in the broadest possible Scots. The more engrossing sections of the *Historie* were seldom to be surpassed in English historical literature until Winston Churchill's vivid report on history in which he, like Knox, had played a large part. But as dispassionate history, the works of Knox are often misleading, for his every phrase breathes his determined spirit and set point of view.

Martin Marprelate. In England the Puritan attack against the Established Church, which was to reach a literary high point in the *Martin Marprelate* tracts, began with *Admonition to Parliament* (1572), coauthored by John Field (d. 1588) and Thomas Wilcox (c. 1549–1608). In vigorous, lucid style this famous pamphlet asserts that the cardinal elements of a true church are "preaching the word purely, ministering of the sacraments sincerely, and

ecclesiastical discipline which consisteth in admonition and correction of faults severlie." Instead of the Anglican system, the work eloquently pleads for "a true platforme of a church reformed" to the three aims mentioned above. The bishops and other hierarchy of the church should be eliminated and all true ministers of the gospel placed on equal footing. Ritual pageantry should be discarded in favor of simple rites moving the spirit rather than the senses. Calvinism should be the church doctrine, rigorously supported. The pamphlet fully expounded the theological position held by the Puritans who founded the New England colonies and the Puritans in Old England who successfully established the brief Commonwealth in the 17th century.

Largely responsible for securely maintaining the position of the Established Church was John Whitgift (c. 1530–1604), raised to the See of Canterbury in 1583. As the Puritan voice was sounding ever more stridently, Whitgift obtained the Star Chamber Decree of 1586 requiring the authorization of the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London for the publication of any book or pamphlet. Officially the Puritans were silenced, and their leading spokesman, Thomas Cartwright (1535–1603), escaped arrest by a hairbreadth, fled to the continent, and for almost two decades thundered in English from the Protestant presses of northern Europe.

Unofficially a doughty Puritan supporter arose in 1588 under the *nom de plume* of "Martin Marprelate," the *Martin* suggestive of Martin Luther and Protestantism, the *Marprelate* indicating the attack upon the ecclesiastics of the Established Church. Seven pamphlets appeared over a two-year period. A roving printing press of the secret publications narrowly escaped detection a dozen times, stopping only long enough in hideaways to print up the forbidden assaults upon the prelates. The ringleaders in the propaganda drive were apparently John Udall (c. 1560–92) and John Penry (1559–93). Through an informer, the government learned the full story of the clandestine press and broke up the group in 1589. Udall ended his days in prison, and Penry was hanged on a falsified charge of treason.

The attested writings of Udall and Penry are conventional religious controversy, but the impish spirit of "Martin Marprelate" reveals a delightful and intriguing personality. Whether the assumed character of one pamphleteer or the studied style of several men, "Martin Marprelate" is the complete antithesis of the stereotyped concept of a Puritan. He is a boisterous, bouncy fellow, a laughing satirist who can stand toe-to-toe and slam out invective with the best of them or he can neatly sidestep and devastate with cold irony. Still his purpose is highly serious—the full advocacy of the Puritan position. In his opening assault he jeers at the bishops: "You defend your legges against Martins strokes, while the Puritans by their Demonstration crushe the very braine of your Bishopdomes." The hated prelates are labeled "wainscot-faced . . . bishops of the devil." A learned antagonist is addressed: "You sodden-headed ass, you." England was agog with laughter over the

saucy pamphleteer. Perhaps some of Shakespeare's racy prose dialogue shows the influence of the breezy monologue of "Martin Marprelate." The worried bishops sought the aid of professional writers in reply. John Lyly and Thomas Nashe entered the lists against "Martin Marprelate" but fell below his performances, as did all Martin's opponents.

CHAPTER 10

The Age of Spenser

(1579–1600)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. The literary career of Edmund Spenser, spanning but two brief decades, witnessed some of the most thrilling years in English history. The first part of Elizabeth's reign laid the groundwork for the stupendous achievements that concluded her rule. For more than twenty years the queen played for time, strengthening her own position and that of the realm, mollifying opposition both at home and abroad, keeping several distinguished suitors in hopeful expectancy of her hand in marriage, and, above all, refusing to be drawn into a major European war with Philip II of Spain in spite of proddings from extremist Protestants.

By the Bull of Pope Pius V in 1570 Elizabeth was excommunicated and her throne assigned to her Roman Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots (Mary Stuart). Thereafter, while Elizabeth quietly ignored English Roman Catholics who practiced their faith in private, Catholic propaganda was equated with treason. In 1568, William Allen founded an English seminary at Douai, later moved to Rouen; from here scores of English Jesuits were smuggled back to the island. Some of the secret agents were frankly political *provocateurs,* while others were motivated solely by piety. Both types were relentlessly hunted down and usually slain. Spain, as the great Catholic power, was most certainly plotting to invade England and place Mary on the throne. A refugee from her own Protestant kingdom, Mary fell into the hands of Elizabeth in 1568 and was executed in 1587.

Spain was especially exercised about English intervention in the New World. In 1493 a Bull from Pope Alexander VI divided the New World by a line running from pole to pole exactly 100 leagues west of the Azores. All land to the east (Brazil) was assigned to Portugal, all land to the west (virtually all of North and South America) to Spain. To avoid conflict the initial English drive for expansion evaded contact with the area proscribed by the Pope. In 1553–54, Richard Chancellor took English ships far to the north, landed on the Arctic coast of Russia, proceeded to the Kremlin in Moscow,

and opened up trade relations with the Czar. In 1558, the year of Elizabeth's coronation, Anthony Jenkinson penetrated overland as far as Bokhara in central Asia. Other bold Englishmen, amid incredible hardships, journeyed to Persia, India, and other lands of the East. But with the Protestant Elizabeth upon the throne, England was now to contest the Iberian dominance of the New World.

English seafaring had been devoted to Iceland and North Sea fisheries, but English Protestantism practically killed the fishing trade, since many Protestants pointedly ate no fish. The treasure-crammed galleons of the Spanish proved an attractive substitute for the English seamen. "Incredible it is," wrote William Camden, "with how great alacrity they put to sea, and how readily they exercised piracy against the Spaniards." The piracies burgeoned into a vast private war conducted by English buccaneers upon the seven seas, financed by English nobility, including the queen herself. The voyage of John Hawkins, 1562–69, precipitated the long undeclared conflict. Intended as a trading expedition, Hawkins' venture was treacherously overpowered in a Mexican harbor. The Spanish deceit, plus the fearful tortures inflicted by the Inquisition upon the English captives, stirred the English to wrathful vengeance, especially the young Francis Drake, who had managed to escape.

Drake proved in life to be a figure straight out of a wildly romantic historical novel. Friend and foe alike were astounded by his whirlwind daring, his demoniacal courage and energy, his dramatic flair, and his charmed life. For almost a decade he scoured the Spanish Main with a bold impetuosity that swept all before him. In 1577 he set out in the *Golden Hind* for a memorable circumnavigation of the globe, the first in English history. He plundered unsuspecting Spanish cities on the west coast of South America and near the modern San Francisco raised a monument proclaiming California a domain of the queen under the name of New Albion.

Drake skirted the coastline north as far as British Columbia and then struck across the Pacific to the Philippines and around the Cape of Good Hope back to England. On his return in 1580, Elizabeth gave over all caution and knighted him aboard ship at Deptford. In the hold of the *Golden Hind* was a golden treasure worth more than the entire annual revenue of England. The same years saw a host of other Elizabethan voyagers—Frobisher, Baffin, Grenville, Cavendish, John Davis, and many less illustrious but equally intrepid—carry the banner of England across the oceans of the world to leave their names upon bays, inlets, islands, and promontories all over the map of the globe. In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert set the flag of the queen on Newfoundland and thus inaugurated the overseas empire of Great Britain. On the return voyage his ship floundered, but over the tumult of winds and waves his companions on a nearby ship heard his dying shout, "We are as near to Heaven by sea as by land."

With justifiable pride Hakluyt demanded:

> Which of the kings of this land before her Majesty had their banners ever seen on the Caspian Sea? Which of them hath ever dealt with the Emperor of Persia, as her Majesty hath done, and attained for her merchants large and loving privileges? Who ever saw an English Ligier in the stately porch of the Grand Signor at Constantinople? Who ever found English consuls and agents at Tripolis in Syria, at Aleppo, at Babylon, at Balsara, and which is more, who ever heard of Englishmen at Goa before now? What English ships did heretofore ever anchor in the mighty River of Plate?

If the Elizabethan era seems wildly, romantically hyperbolic, remember that in truth it was an age of romance and hyperbole.

The triumphant reception of Drake, coupled with English support of the Dutch Protestant rebels against Spain, was too much for the infuriated Spanish; open war soon followed. Several years of feverish preparation assembled the mighty Spanish armada, probably the greatest naval expedition in history up to that date. Jammed with heavy cannon and Spanish soldiery, the deep-rolling warships of the Spanish armada wallowed northward early in July 1588. To the invaders it was a crusade, and mistakenly they relied upon Roman Catholic strength in England to revolt and render their conquest easy. The admiral of the armada, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, bore with him the magnificent dinnerware from which he expected to eat at a victory banquet in the palace of Queen Elizabeth.

Under the command of Lord Howard, a loyal Roman Catholic, fast little English vessels harried the great lumbering Spanish ships, like terriers worrying a huge bull. Their success against their vaster opponents encouraged the English, and at the narrows between Dover and Calais, the English swooped in for the kill. On Monday, July 29, watchers at Gravelines on the coast of the continent saw a daylong fury of battle, with the armada finally ripped asunder. By night the whole coastline was lit up from burning ships of the Spanish fleet. The shattered remnants beat north and doubled Scotland to flee southward along the coast of Ireland where many Spanish vessels were wrecked. Only a pitiful fraction of the once mighty Spanish armada fluttered weakly back to the protection of land-cannon in northern Spain. England's land forces under the Earl of Leicester, patron of Spenser and Shakespeare, were never called upon to repel invaders. By one quick stroke the power of Europe had been shifted from the Mediterranean to the island kingdom of England.

Turning the tables with a vengeance, English seamen swept down upon the Spanish. In 1596, Sir Walter Ralegh and the Earl of Essex steered their ships into the harbor of Spanish Cádiz, and the rich city was captured and plundered. A great library in Cádiz was borne off triumphantly to become the nucleus of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The impetuous daring of Elizabethan mariners had opened the whole world, both Old and New, to the

spread of English trade and settlement. In 1599 at Founders' Hall in London eighty merchants founded the East India Company that eventually would make the entire subcontinent of India "the brightest jewel in the royal crown."

The success of Essex in Spain, however, was not paralleled in Ireland, where he was sent in 1597 to put down the native rebellion led by the Earl of Tyrone. The troubles of Ireland that forced Spenser to flee were not solved until the "pacification" of that island by Lord Mountjoy in 1601. In the same year, Essex instigated an abortive London revolution that resulted in his own execution.

Perhaps the last significant act of Elizabeth's reign, before her death in 1603, was the Elizabethan Poor Law which remained the law of the land until the 19th century. This measure, necessitated by the elimination of medieval ecclesiastical charity, required each parish to provide for its own needy.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. Suffusing the entire English nation in these decades was an exhilaration and sense of grandeur probably never experienced before or since in English history. The magnificent tributes to England in the verse of Shakespeare are not mere rhetoric but the heartfelt certitude of national greatness. England was destiny's darling, an heir long delayed but now victoriously granted a goodly estate. The tentative gropings of the earlier Renaissance were completely superseded by a supreme confidence; assurance is the keynote of the era.

The sense of exploration and discovery seemed to grip all. No task was too great for undertaking, whether it was the command and reorganization of the Persian army by the Shirley brothers (1598–1603) or the writing of a monumental chivalric epic by Spenser. In literature there is no longer a feeling of inferiority before classical or continental models. English writers speak out in a voice that is loud and clear.

The national pride was made visible in the gorgeous pageants and displays of Elizabeth's reign. They filled the gap left in the popular imagination by the disappearance of the spectacles of the medieval church. When Elizabeth was entertained by the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham in 1591, a special lake equipped with three islands was constructed from which Nereus, five Tritons, and Neptune paid her homage; in the morning, minstrels beneath her chamber sang an air especially composed for the occasion by Nicholas Breton. The goddess at the center of these elaborate rituals was, to be sure, a very real human being who could swear like a trooper when necessary. But Elizabeth was not a mere mortal to her loving subjects; she was "Faith's pure Shield, the Christian Diana." She was a romantic idol and a sort of religion. Elizabethan literature can be understood only by recognizing the cult of Elizabeth. Spenser may set his scene in fairyland; Sidney his in Arcadia; Shakespeare his in Bohemia, Illyria, Athens, or where you will—Elizabeth's court is their true locale. Poets may rave about Gloriana, Hippolyta, Olivia, and Viola—Elizabeth is behind them all.

The primacy of the ruler was a fundamental Elizabethan concept. Today we think of an elected ruler as deriving his power and temper from the people; an imposed ruler seems to us an alien tyrant,- irreconcilable with the spirit of the governed. To Spenser's age the monarch was quite literally the country itself. Thus, Shakespeare freely designates the King of France as "France," the King of Denmark as "Denmark." The Elizabethan age saw a nation as deriving its spirit and tone from the ruler. Hence, Spenser's England is glorious because Gloriana (Elizabeth) is its head. The queen was not a mere symbol of England's greatness, as Elizabeth II seems to be; the first Elizabethans saw the magnitude of their accomplishment as the inspiration of the queen made manifest by her loyal subjects.

The stability of the realm, assured by an able ruler, was an earthly reflection of the essential harmony and benevolence of the universe. Shakespeare's tragic concept suggests that this is an intelligible and righteous universe that occasionally deviates from its proper bent when man's evil disturbs it. The sacrifice of a Hamlet may be needed to right the wrong, but the concluding note is confident of a return to the inherent order and justice.

The clear-cut operation of cosmological order seemed to be demonstrated by astrology. Elizabethans rigorously censured false prognosticators, and some intelligent men such as Sidney apparently doubted the business altogether; but most men of the age seem to have believed that our fates are largely directed by our stars. When Edmund profanely denounces astrology in *King Lear,* he is coarsely exemplifying his own rebellious atheism.

Underlying much of the Elizabethan viewpoint was at least a variety of Platonism, notably in Spenser. The physical world, exciting as it undeniably was, represented a faint imitation of the spiritual world of truth. In this dualism of matter and spirit, the ideal was a synthesis of both worlds. When Mark Antony eulogizes the fallen Brutus in *Julius Caesar,* he evidently postulates such an ideal:

> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

In the rimed quatrains of *Nosce Teipsum* (1599), Sir John Davies posited the duality of God and the world, the duality of the soul and the body of man. Apparently he accurately reflected the general opinion of the age that while the stars incline man's nature, the soul has free will, the soul is immortal, and reason is the highest human faculty.

Reason suggested that ghosts and apparitions were purely imaginary, as Reginald Scot insisted in *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) and Thomas Nashe in *The Terrors of the Night* (1593). The untutored mind of the era still nursed superstitious fears, and James I was to be a royal believer in witches. It seems reasonable to suppose that the intelligent literary men of the period in portraying eerie beings like the ghost of Hamlet's father and

the weird sisters in *Macbeth* were consciously drawing upon a hoard of folk beliefs for expressionistic effects while not being themselves overly credulous. Some men of the 17th century, like Sir Thomas Browne, were to tend more toward superstition than did the Elizabethans.

The scientific spirit of the age was a mixture of a persistent medievalism with classic Greek science, the result foreshadowing the modern viewpoint. Lyly's *Euphues* (1578–79) elaborately employs the pseudo natural-science of Pliny, but the effect tends more toward courtly and artistic reference rather than toward genuine belief. Quietly, practical investigators were observing nature as it truly is, rather than as Pliny said it was. Before Bacon, English empiricism was already preparing for later scientific advance. In 1552, Dr. John Caius, after whom Caius College (Cambridge) is named, published his clinical findings on the "sweating sickness" that several times forced Henry VIII to flee the court; the account by Caius is one of the most precise medical diagnoses since Hippocrates.

England also produced such remarkable groups of men as the Turner family. In his *Herbal* (1551) William Turner inaugurated scientific botany in England. His son Peter was a distinguished physician whose book in 1603 vigorously scorned medical superstitions and preached exact and practical medical treatment. William's grandson, also a Peter Turner, was an eminent mathematician and geometer at Gresham College, London, in the 17th century.

The end of the 16th century witnessed a host of books on psychology, apparently triggered by Timothy Bright's *Of Melancholy* (1586). Bright assigns to religion the handling of conscience-stricken sinners ("More needs she the divine than the physician," advises the doctor about Lady Macbeth). However, Bright finds other psychological problems working upon fixed principles, amenable to human diagnosis and treatment. The preoccupation of Renaissance dramatists with psychology might be accounted for by the necessities of their medium, but it is more than coincidence that they often employed the terminology of their contemporary psychology. From the medieval theory of humours they frequently held to the "ruling passion" theory, i.e., one dominant spirit which informs all the actions of a person. From this theory and from the practice of the classic Roman drama, Ben Jonson derived the "humours" comedies with characters whose names betray their "ruling passion": Subtle, Face, Wasp, etc. All the way into the 20th century, English literature will continue such characterizations and character-naming, e.g., John Galsworthy's Forsytes (Foresight).

Characters dominated by emotion were accepted as willful and wholly unreasonable; the jealousy of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* appears unmotivated to us but was acceptable to Shakespeare's viewers as were the more reasonably portrayed emotions of Othello. One emotion was believed to drive out another immediately; hence the sudden fall from morality of Angelo in *Measure for Measure*. Insanity held a strange fascination for the Elizabethans.

Rather painfully we find that the mad scenes of most Elizabethan dramas were intended to be funny, with the notable exception of Shakespeare. Women were deemed strong in emotion and weak in reason. Mistress Frankford in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* seems morally weak to the modern reader in her yielding to Wendoll, but the audience apparently considered her a naturally good woman, femininely weak.

As far as an appeal to reason goes, the Elizabethans at all levels showed what to us is an astonishing interest in formal logic. Medieval scholastics had refined Latin disputations to incredible complexity. The Renaissance, turning to the vernacular, transferred this love of complexity to the English language, and to nearly all its practitioners, as also did the Reformation's almost universal engagement in theological discussions. Early in the *Arcadia*, Musidorus discovers his princely friend Pyrocles disguised as an Amazon. Sidney has both gentlemen elaborately discuss the effects of female attire upon the character and status of Pyrocles with all the logical care of Petrus Ramus (the French philosopher, Pierre La Ramée, 1515–72), who strongly influenced Renaissance England. The logic-chopping of Shakespeare often annoys us, as when the two clowns in *Hamlet* laboriously prate about the drowning of Ophelia, but we must recognize it as the awakening of intellectual interest in an entire people who suddenly make common property out of the former monopoly of the erudite.

The Elizabethans, more attuned than we are to the sheer sound of language, roundly applauded eloquence. Classic rhetoric lay behind much of the English writings of Sidney, Hooker, and Jonson. They would grandiloquently reproduce in English the organization and sonority of Cicero. From a sprightly Martin Marprelate to a lordly Ralegh, the age was intoxicated with language. Much of the writing of the period that seems overwrought or high-flown to us was the exuberance of experimenters, a heightening not felt as artificial but deemed a worthy exploration of the language's dimensions.

Any age, of course, is rife with contradictions. And especially in the wide range of individualistic quest that marked this era would we expect to find a rich diversity of opinion and expression. Within practically every Elizabethan appeared a dichotomy as charming as it was irreconcilable: on the one hand the boundless thirst for exploration of all the world, life, and knowledge, and on the other a yearning for the simple, uncomplicated rusticity of England's greenwood and pastures.

SPENSER AND HIS WORKS

Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599). Born in London, Edmund Spenser was the elder son of Elizabeth and John Spencer, probably a textile worker (the poet preferred the spelling *Spenser*). He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School under Headmaster Richard Mulcaster, an eminent scholar in the greatest Renaissance tradition. As a sizar at Pembroke College, Cambridge,

from 1569 Spenser was required to perform some menial duties. The college was staunchly Puritan, undoubtedly influencing the poet.

Probably his greatest collegiate friend was Gabriel Harvey, who apparently aided him in securing a post in 1578 under the Earl of Leicester after Spenser received his B.A. in 1573 and M.A. in 1576. Just before entering Leicester's service, Spenser acted as secretary to Dr. John Young (later Bishop of Rochester), the chaplain of Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, later Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1580, Spenser was appointed private secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, lord deputy of Ireland. He resided in Ireland for most of his remaining life, holding minor government posts. In 1586 he leased Kilcolman Castle in County Cork, where Sir Walter Ralegh visited him in 1589.

At Ralegh's insistence Spenser accompanied him to London and saw the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* through publication in 1590. Although granted a pension of £50, Spenser was not rewarded with the recognition he sought; he returned in 1591 to Kilcolman Castle.

He married Elizabeth Boyle in 1594. They were to have four children. Another visit to London in 1595 with three more books of *The Faerie Queene* again produced no political advancement. Tyrone's rebellion in 1598 forced the Spenser family to flee Kilcolman, where additional books of *The Faerie Queene* may have been destroyed. Leaving Cork, Spenser died suddenly only a few days after his arrival in London. The Earl of Essex paid for his funeral, and literary friends deposited in his Westminster Abbey grave, near Chaucer's, the elegies they had written for him. Although the queen ordered a monument to be erected, it was not provided until the Countess of Dorset made a gesture of private generosity in 1620.

The poetry of Spenser, especially *The Faerie Queene,* is the culmination of the allegorical verse tradition exemplified by *Pearl, Piers Plowman,* and by Chaucer and the Chaucerians. But Spenser excels his predecessors in the complexity and richness of his allegory. In this sense he brings to conclusion in fullest flower an old but important stream of English literary tradition. However, to his contemporaries Spenser was the "New Poet." Wyatt and Surrey had charted a course for Renaissance English poetry, but following them had been no greater achievement than the moderate flights of Sackville and Gascoigne. Spenser proved to be the poetic master English verse needed. His facility in language blended the best of the archaic and the new vocabulary, while his fluency in many meters and stanzaic forms demonstrated that English was at least the equal to any other language as a vehicle of great poetry. In content he proved the synthesis of the age: romantic ideas within classic structure, nationalistic sentiment and idealistic expression, and the spirit of the Reformation coupled with Renaissance humanism. Spenser was the first modern English poet of major stature, inaugurating a line unbroken right to the present. To subsequent generations he was the "Poet's Poet." Although the lay reader has often waxed impatient with the length and difficulty of

his verse, the poets influenced by Spenser are virtually a roster of the great English poets since his time. His fertile imagination and especially his sensuous imagery and melodic language have entranced his poetic brethren—Milton and Thomson, Wordsworth and Keats, Rossetti and Tennyson.

THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDAR AND OTHER EARLY POEMS

The Shepheardes Calendar (1579) is a series of twelve *Aeglogai* (eclogues, "tales by a goatherder"), one for each month. The title is derived from *The Calendar of Shepherds,* a well-known almanac of the period which used astrological references and some wise saws as its text. Spenser's dominant theme here is the unrequited love of Colin Clout for Rosalinde, but the eclogues are also opportunities for comment on political and religious problems of the time and tributes to friends and patrons. The collection is dedicated to "Maister Philip Sydney," who encouraged Spenser's verse; in his *Defence of Poesie* (1580) Sidney praises *The Shepheardes Calendar* but deprecates its rustic language. Published under the pseudonym of "Immerito," the true authorship seems to have been unrealized by some contemporaries for more than a decade. "E. K." (probably Edward Kirke, a college friend) provided a "General Argument" and "Epistle" (to Gabriel Harvey) for the entire work, a separate "Argument" for each eclogue, and elaborate glossaries and commentaries, sometimes appearing more to mystify than clarify.

The poem leans heavily upon the background of pastoral verse:

(1) Theocritus (c. 280 B.C.) apparently created the literary pastoral from accurate observation of Sicilian shepherds. The luxurious and picturesque natural imagery of his verse has haunted hundreds of poets ever since. The chief subjects were the love song of courtship or unfulfilled affection, the dirge for a dead shepherd, and the singing match improvised between bantering shepherds. Moschus and Bion (Greek bucolic poets) contributed no notable innovation, but produced the finest pastoral elegies, the essential bases for Milton's *Lycidas,* Shelley's *Adonais,* and Arnold's *Thyrsis.* In the hands of Vergil the pastoral becomes a somewhat artificial refinement. His additions were the panegyric (giving an opportunity for many graceful compliments to the powerful and influential), the debate between highland and lowland shepherds, and, particularly, an allegorical quality in the thinly disguised allusions to the poet himself and the great Augustus Caesar.

(2) Petrarch's twelve Latin eclogues (written between 1346 and 1356) transform the pastoral into satire. The shepherds are mere guises for attacks upon the papal court at Avignon. In the Latin eclogues of Baptista Mantuanus (Mantuan) the pastoral becomes drastically realistic as well as satirical. In *Love's Labour's Lost,* Holofernes labels him "old Mantuan."

(3) Mantuan's contemporary, Jacopo Sannazaro, established a potent tradition with his *Arcadia* (written 1490–95), whose lyrical eclogues sing of a tender simplicity and a golden landscape. Sannazaro inspired the *Diana*

(1542) of Montemayor and the *Arcadia* (1580) of Sidney. This never-never world of pastoral idealism colors much of the Renaissance English picture of rural life.

(4) Spenser's most immediate predecessor was the French Humanist and Huguenot, Clémont Marot, who struck a note of frank and naive familiarity in his eclogues. *The Shepheardes Calendar* resembles the works of Marot more than any other.

Principal characters in Spenser's eclogues are tentatively identified:

Colin Clout–the poet himself under a name taken from Skelton. Marot also used "Colin." After receiving his degree in 1576, Spenser settled briefly in "the North country" ("June"), probably the hilly areas of Lancashire, where the Spencer family had wide connections. Here "the Widdowe of the Glen" had a lovely daughter "Rosalinde" with whom Spenser perhaps romanced.

Rosalinde–"a feigned name" states "E. K.," hinting that it is an anagram. Some suggestions: Rosa Linde (the Lindes were a prominent Lancashire family, but the ascription looks too transparent), Rose Daniel (sister of the poet and wife of John Florio), Rose Dinlay (Dynely and similar surnames appear in Lancashire, but no Rose to our knowledge), Elisa Nord (i.e., Elizabeth North, only daughter of Sir Thomas North). Perhaps Rosalinde was only a mild flirtation by Spenser or even a pure figment of his imagination.

Hobbinol–Gabriel Harvey, college companion of Spenser.

Lobbinol–the Earl of Leicester, familiarly "Sweet Robbin" to the queen.

Algrind–Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury. Obvious transposition.

Morrell–John Aylmer, Bishop of London. Anagram of pronunciation, Elmore.

Roffy–John Young, Bishop of Rochester. Latin abbreviation for Rochester was *Roffen.*

Elisa–Queen Elizabeth I.

Tityrus–Chaucer. Previously used by pastoral poets to designate Vergil.

Cuddie–Edward Kirke. Throughout northern England "Cuddie" is still a nickname for Cuthbert. It seems to have been virtually a label for "northern Englishman" (as Kirke was).

The language of *The Shepheardes Calendar* is Spenser's own unique concoction. The work employs phonetic, grammatical, and vocabulary elements from Northern, Midlands, and Southern dialects of the age. Spenser's word choice further includes Elizabethan colloquial terms such as *cranck* ("cocky"), archaic ME forms from mss. such as *wimble* ("nimble"), literary terms apparently borrowed from contemporary foreign books as in *stanck* ("weary" from Italian *stanco*), neologisms from Latin as in *crumenall* ("purse" from Latin *crumena*). In his love of obsolete forms Spenser some-

times misuses words, e.g., employing the ME third person singular *upryst* as a past participle. The result is a language that no English shepherds, nor anyone else besides Spenser, ever used.

With almost bewildering virtuosity Spenser experiments with three different types of poetic line:

(1) Archaic four-stress line, a popular survival from the Anglo-Saxon verse. This line pays no attention to the number of unaccented syllables but offers four accents to the line, usually with a caesura between the second and third stresses.

(2) Ballad stanza from the popular ballads. Spenser employs the accentual and rime pattern *4a 3b 4a 3b* or the longer *4a 4a 3b 4a 4a 3b.*

(3) Classical metrical scheme of precisely counted syllables, regularly recurring in accented and unaccented positions. Spenser patterns such lines in a wide variety of stanzas, some previously unknown to English. This is his most frequent style and his greatest contribution to English verse technique.

SUMMARY OF SHEPHEARDES CALENDAR

JANUARY

THEME. A love plaint. Colin Clout regrets the hard heart of his love, Rosalinde. The wintry landscape parallels his woe. Although Hobbinol seeks his friendship, only Rosalinde can please him. Consequently he breaks his shepherd's pipe and abjures singing.

INTERPRETATION. A graceful tribute to the friendship of Gabriel Harvey. The mysterious Rosalinde is very similar to Petrarch's Laura and all the other unresponsive beauties of the courtly love convention.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Paralleled in numerous pastoral love laments, but nearest source may be Vergil, Eclogue X. Metrical stanza *a b a b c c* in iambic pentameter.

FEBRUARY

THEME. The aged shepherd Thenot rebukes the bumptious youth Cuddie by telling the Aesopic fable of the humble oak and the upstart briar. When the tree is chopped down, the briar lifts proudly upward only to be blasted by the wintry cold.

INTERPRETATION. Bishop Aylmer was tried in Council for extensive tree-felling on church property, realizing £6000. The oak may represent Grindal, now fallen from royal favor; the briar, his ungrateful protégé, Aylmer. Or the oak may represent the true Christian spirit felled by Roman Catholicism, the briar the upstart new clergy. Anyway, the poet deprecates newfangledness and strongly sympathizes with the Puritan cause.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Setting probably from Mantuan, Eclogue VI. Shows

Chaucerian influence, though milder in humor (rather alien to the pastoral). Rimed couplets in the traditional four-stress line.

MARCH

THEME. Shepherd youth Thomalin tells companion Willye how he tried to shoot down Cupid, the god of love. Unsuccessful, Thomalin is shot by the god.

INTERPRETATION. Here is the old canard of the biter bit, as the youth attacking love is himself smitten.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Source is Bion, Idyll IV. Critics often object to the classic situation occurring in rather realistic English surroundings. Six-line ballad stanza.

APRIL

THEME. Shepherds Thenot and Hobbinol discuss the lovelorn Colin Clout, and Hobbinol recites Colin's extravagantly complimentary Ode to Elisa.

INTERPRETATION. A splendid lyrical tribute to the queen in the best courtly and classic tradition. This portion of *The Shepheardes Calendar* was apparently the best liked and the most influential of the poems in this work.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Suggested by Theocritus, Idyll XVI, and Vergil's lavish praise of Augustus. The shepherds' dialogue is handled in metrical quatrains riming *a b a b b c b c c d c d*, etc. The "laye" to Elizabeth employs a stanza invented by Spenser: *5a 2b 5a 2b 5c 5c 2d 2d 4c*. Suggestion for stanza probably from current madrigals.

MAY

THEME. Two shepherds, Piers and Palinode, respectively represent the Protestant and Catholic viewpoints. Piers relates an Aesopic fable of the innocent kid betrayed by the wily fox.

INTERPRETATION. Piers is Piers Plowman, eloquently and idealistically preaching the strict morality and purity of the individual Protestant against what Spenser sees as Catholic laxity. The Kid seems specifically the Puritans, and the Fox is the high-churchmen retaining Catholic trappings. The Kid's interest in the glass and bell seems to be an obvious warning against vestments, painted windows, and similar elements from the Catholic heritage. *Palinodia* was a current theological term for turncoat, and Dr. Andrew Perne of Cambridge was labeled "Palinode D. Perne" in the first Marprelate tract. Piers may represent the Puritan Thomas Preston.

SOURCE AND VERSE. In the tradition of Petrarch's satirical pastorals on ecclesiastical subjects. Four-stress rimed couplets of OE origin.

JUNE

THEME. Colin Clout laments to his friend Hobbinol that Rosalinde is totally uninterested in him and has taken Menalcas as lover. Hobbinol urges

his friend to forsake the northland and migrate to the more congenial south.

INTERPRETATION. Crisis of the love drama. Contains high praise of Chaucer. One of the most lyric passages of the work.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Parallels Vergil, Eclogue I. The stanza, probably Spenser's invention, employs iambic pentameter riming *a b a b b a b a.*

JULY

THEME. Shepherds Thomalin (lowlander) and Morrell (highlander) discuss the contemporary English church in a thinly disguised conversation. Thomalin stands for Christian lowliness, while Morrell condones clerical luxury and flirts with high-church concepts.

INTERPRETATION. Clearly Morrell is Bishop Aylmer. Thomalin is a staunch Puritan, perhaps Thomas Wilcox, co-author of the *Admonition to the Parliament* (1572), who was persecuted by Aylmer. Thomas Cartwright is also a possible Thomalin. The chief satiric attacks are against vestments, ecclesiastical pride, the venality of prelates, and the subjugation of the lesser clergy. Praise of Grindal, a moderate Anglican, highlights Spenser's advocacy of the golden mean rather than of Puritan extremes. One of the least poetic portions of the work.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Based on Mantuan, Eclogue VIII. Four-line ballad stanza.

AUGUST

THEME. A singing match between the shepherds Willye and Perigot. Cuddie silences both in admiration by his recital of an Italianate song by Colin.

INTERPRETATION. The vivacious love plaints of the shepherds are more attractive than the fantastically clever and wholly grave *sestina* from Colin. Their dialogue was reprinted in *England's Helicon* and proved highly popular in the age.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Derived from Theocritus, Idyll IX, and Vergil, Eclogues III and VII. In their introductory dialogue Willye and Perigot employ an iambic pentameter stanza riming *a b a b c c.* The word battle or "flyting," riming *a b a b c d c d,* etc., assigns regular octosyllabics to Perigot and loose four-stress lines to Willye. Colin's song is an elaborate *sestina,* a form invented by the Provençal Arnaut and popularized by Petrarch. It consists of six six-line stanzas plus a three-line envoy. Each stanza employs the same six line-ending words—in this case, woe, resound, cryes, part, sleepe, augment—but arranges them in a different pattern from the other stanzas.

SEPTEMBER

THEME. Diggon Davie, a shepherd who had taken his flocks abroad in hope of gain, tells Hobbinol of his great disappointments. This is the most transparent of Spenser's attacks upon high-church prelates.

INTERPRETATION. Diggon Davie clearly represents a strongly Protestant

cleric, the rank and file of the English church. He finds that politics and personal gain rule many of the church administrators, and he desperately desires a pure and spiritual clergy. Diggon is perturbed at the missionary efforts of the Jesuits smuggled into England. A multitude of contemporary clerics have been proposed, but perhaps Richard Davies, Bishop of St. David's (1561–82) best fits Diggon Davie.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Vergil's Eclogue I as developed in Mantuan, Eclogue IX. Four-stress traditional verses in rimed couplets.

OCTOBER

THEME. In a dialogue between the shepherds Piers and Cuddie, the latter (obviously the mouthpiece of Spenser) expounds the concept of poets and poetry.

INTERPRETATION. Probably the greatest poem of the work as well as Spenser's definitive statement of his poetics. The true poet is: (a) moralist, inculcating virtue and truth; (b) lover, inspired by the ultimate Platonic idea of beauty; (c) vehicle for divine inspiration. Spenser conceives of poetry as no mere decoration, nor even as mere art; poetry is the means of swaying man's total nature, disciplining the will and molding the character.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Imitation of Theocritus, Idyll XVI. Iambic pentameter stanzas riming *a b b a b a.*

NOVEMBER

THEME. Colin Clout is induced by Thenot to recite his elegy upon the death of Dido, a "mayden of greate bloud," greatly lamented by Lobbin. In the pattern of ancient elegies this falls into three movements: (a) lyric stimulus to grief by memory of the virtuous deceased; (b) questioning of the justice of fate—why should the withered flower revive while man does not, and why wasn't a less worthy person taken and this paragon spared; (c) consolation in contemplating the heavenly joy now being experienced by the dead shepherdess.

INTERPRETATION. E. K. considered this the best poem in the collection. It is perhaps the most baffling. E. K. admits complete ignorance about Dido's identity, and modern scholars know little more. Ambrosia Sidney, sister of Sir Philip Sidney and niece of Leicester (Lobbin) is one choice. Another is an alleged illegitimate daughter of Leicester by Lady Sheffield. An ingenious suggestion is Queen Elizabeth, "dead" to Leicester because of the threatened French marriage and Leicester's loss of royal favor.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Imitates the *Complainte* of Marot upon the death of the mother of French king, Francis I. The introductory dialogue employs iambic pentameter in linked quatrains: *a b a b b c b c,* etc., apparently derived from Marot. The elegy employs an elaborate stanza, apparently of Spenser's invention, in this accentual and rimed pattern: *6a 5b 5a 5b 5b 4c 4c 2d 5b 2d.*

DECEMBER

THEME. Colin Clout reviews the year as a symbol of man's life—the spring of youth, the summer of maturity, the autumn of harvest, the winter of age and approaching death.

INTERPRETATION. A conventionalized picture designed by imagined old age. The youthful poet rues the vanity of life in a fashion reminiscent of Ecclesiastes. Aged poets are frequently serene and descant meagerly on the snows of the years, but youthful poets, like Spenser here, often portray the gloom of the declining years.

SOURCE AND VERSE. Imitates Marot's *Eclogue au Roy*. Stanzaic form duplicates that of *January*, intending symmetrical completion of the calendar.

Although subsequently eclipsed by *The Faerie Queene*, *The Shepheardes Calendar* at the time of its publication was a most significant landmark in English poetry. It was the first unquestionable demonstration by a modern English poet of finished skill and virtuosity. It was the first unified production of English poetry to epitomize the Renaissance and Reformation spirit.

Complaints Containing Sundrie Small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie (1591). In the preface to "gentle reader," the printer William Ponsonby states that the success of the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* impelled him to seek out the poet's minor verse. Probably this is a blind to maintain the pose of aristocratic indifference or even hostility to publication by genteel poets. The preface lists nine titles of Spenserian works (five translations and the rest pamphlets) no longer extant. The poems in this collection date back as far as Spenser's college days and up to 1589, though precise dating is impossible for any specific piece. As Ponsonby notes, all of these poems "are complaints and meditations of the worlds vanitie, verie grave and profitable." Their somber mood may be occasioned by: the poet's protracted ill health (however, the fees regularly paid to Spenser in college for "illnesse" may be cover-up entries simply to comply with stipulations), Spenser's justifiable worries when the English state and the English church were in perilous condition, or perhaps the immemorial *Weltschmerz* of the young and sensitive. The chief poems are the ones discussed below.

"The Ruines of Time" consists of (1) a patriotic lament, (2) necrology of the Dudley and Bedford families, (3) a eulogy upon poetry, (4) a complaint of the world's vanity. Attacks Lord Burghley and highly praises Leicester and Sidney, inspirers of Spenser's verse. Rime royal. Largely influenced by Joachim du Bellay's *Antiquitez de Rome* but with echoes from Ovid, Horace, Theocritus, and Propertius.

"The Teares of the Muses," like the October eclogue, is a manifesto of the new English poetry. Its themes are the poet's power to convey immortality, his need of adequate patronage, the contrast between the wisdom and noble virtues of true poets and the base artifice and sham of false poets. He moans the apparent death of "our pleasant Willy," who may have been

George Gascoigne (d. 1577), Sir Philip Sidney (d. 1586), or the comedian Richard Tarleton (d. 1588); less likely ascriptions (on the basis of a poet's silence rather than death) have ranged from Shakespeare to Spenser himself. Verse form identical with that in the January and December eclogues. Dedicated to Alice (Lady Strange) before whom, as an aged dowager, Milton's *Arcades* were presented almost half a century later.

"Virgils Gnat" is an ottava rima translation of *Culex*, an epyllion (little epic poem) by an unknown imitator of Vergil. It belongs to that Alexandrian type of verse that strives to give significance to trivial events, in this case a buzzing gnat that awakens a sleeping shepherd imperiled by a serpent; the gnat is killed for his pains. Spenser's poem seems to record the poet's warning to Leicester about the dangers to the nobleman implicit in Elizabeth's proposed marriage to the Duc d'Alençon. As the gnat was killed by the shepherd, so Spenser is banished to Ireland by Leicester. The dedicatory sonnet for this poem employs the Spenserian version of the sonnet, perhaps for the very first time. Essentially the English sonnet in movement, the Spenserian sonnet employs an interlocking scheme: *a b a b b c b c c d c d e e.*

"Prosopopoia: or Mother Hubberds Tale" is a satire, in heroic couplets, that offended people in high places and probably resulted in the "calling in" of the whole volume. In 1579 the marriage of Elizabeth to the French Duc d'Alençon seemed imminent. The union was favored by Lord Burghley, the powerful lord high treasurer, and opposed by the Puritan party of Leicester and Spenser. The poem is ostensibly a fable about a monkey (Jehan de Simier, representative of the Duc d'Alençon) who steals the royal cloak and scepter from the sleeping lion (Elizabeth) and shares the spoils of government with the fox (Burghley) until Jove sends Mercury (Leicester) to arouse the lion. Elizabeth's pet name for d'Alençon was "frog," and the folk song "The Frog, He Would a-Courtin' Go" apparently refers to this unsuccessful wooing. Spenser works extensive social satire into his poem—on the corrupt clergy, selfish officials, gullible populace, and thieving soldiery. The most famous passage describes the ideal courtier, perhaps Sidney. Most important source is *Roman de Renard* as translated by Caxton in 1481. Influenced by medieval satiric tradition, particularly in the *Speculum Stultorum*. Spenser's epigrammatic wit foreshadows Dryden, whose fables also resemble those of Spenser.

"Ruines of Rome" is a tolerable but not notable translation of the sonnet sequence, *Antiquitez de Rome*, by Joachim du Bellay, the pivotal figure in *La Pléiade*, the group of 16th-century French poets who exalted the ancient classics and also current French as a literary and scholarly vehicle. The popularization of the sonnet form in French by *La Pléiade* influenced English sonneteers. Du Bellay employed the Italian sonnet form, but Spenser substitutes the English form. Theme is the mutability of life and human aspiration.

"Muiopotmos: or The Fate of the Butterflie" is in the genre of "Virgils

Gnat" but is a superior piece. The butterfly Clarion is caught in the web spun by the spider Aragnoll. Perhaps the ottava rima poem should be read as no more than an exquisitely graceful and charming Alexandrian *jeu d'esprit.* Zealous searchers for allegorical profundities have variously interpreted the butterfly and spider: in personal allegory, as Spenser and Elizabeth Carey; in political allegory, as Leicester and Burghley, Ralegh (associated with the house of Clare) and Essex, Sidney and the Earl of Oxford. This is often termed the most original poem by Spenser.

"Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" consists of Spenserian sonnets upon the power of the weak to injure the mighty. Belongs to the genre of emblem books which printed set moralized descriptions to accompany woodcuts.

"The Visions of Bellay" and "The Visions of Petrarch" consist of regular English sonnet translations from the French of du Bellay and Marot, exploiting the timeworn melancholic themes of the vicissitudes of fortune and the fall of the illustrious. These pieces by Spenser closely resemble translations appearing in *Theatre for Worldlings* (1569), edited by the Dutch Protestant poet, Jonker van der Noot, a refugee in England from Spanish persecution in the Netherlands. Although the 1569 translations are ostensibly the work of a Theodore Roest, they probably are Spenser's earlier version of the translations in *Complaints.*

THE FAERIE QUEENE

The Faerie Queene (Books I–III, 1590; Books IV–VI, 1596; *Cantos of Mutabilitie,* 1609). Recent generations have usually regarded *The Faerie Queene* as a series of lush word-pictures, a trifle boring in its immensity, and vexatiously complicated in its layers of allegory (which are consequently often ignored). Such a viewpoint disregards the poet's comprehensive project. Spenser was the first writer in English (and he has not had many ambitious successors) who attempted a unified presentation of the total civilization of his era. In one poem he wished to gather together all the threads of 16th-century England: native history, folklore, and topography; Elizabethan patriotism, political thought, and current world affairs; Renaissance humanism and Protestant idealism; the classic epic and the medieval romance; Aristotelian ethics, Platonism, and Italian neoplatonism; and virtually every strand of European culture forming the fabric of the age. Perhaps the work most comparable in scope is Dante's *Divine Comedy.* However, Spenser's poem fails to achieve Dante's success largely perhaps because Spenser's premature death prevented the completion of *The Faerie Queene.*

Overall Plan. The volume containing the initial three books of the work included a letter addressed to Sir Walter Ralegh stating Spenser's full intent in 1590. There are indications in the later books that the fully completed poem might have deviated from Spenser's original concept. "The generall end therefore," Spenser wrote to Ralegh, "of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." King Arthur

is presented as the exemplar of such gentlemanly virtues. The first twelve books of *The Faerie Queene* would portray twelve private moral virtues, each demonstrated by a different knightly figure and summed up in the person of Arthur himself before he became king. With generous reception of this portion, Spenser suggests, he would proceed to compose twelve more books, these celebrating twelve public political virtues of Arthur after his accession to the throne. Of the contemplated twenty-four books Spenser finished only six books, and in the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* probably left the fragment of a seventh book. In the extant books Arthur is a rather shadowy figure at best and often perfunctory in his appearances and rescues.

In a dream vision Arthur witnesses the loveliness of Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, and upon awaking resolves to seek her in Faerie Land. "In that Faery Queene," states Spenser, "I meane glory in my general intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery Land." In the twelfth book we shall have the court of the Faerie Queene all explained (and possibly witness the marriage of Arthur and Gloriana), but the poem begins *in medias res* as Horace recommended. The all-directing framework (for the projected twelve initial books) is the festival of the twelve days of Christmas at the court of the Faerie Queene. On each of these twelve days a petitioner will present to the court his or her tale of woe, and request the valiant services of a knight of the court designated by the Queene to redress a wrong, succor the distressed, or otherwise to start a chain of lengthy and labyrinthine adventures. Presumably the entire narrative covers one calendar year, and the multifarious problems will all be solved and commemorated at a second Christmas celebration.

MAIN SOURCES. The omniscience which Spenser requires of the "perfyte man" in nobility and comprehension mirrors the Renaissance concept which appears as early as Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and thereafter in Elyot's *Governour*, Wilson's *Rhetorique*, Castiglione's *Courtier*, and Ascham's *Scholemaster*. *The Faerie Queene* is, broadly, an educational treatise or exemplum-book of chivalry parallel to these predecessors.

Each of the separate books will present difficulties evoking a specific character trait in the questing knight. These traits will constitute, Spenser informs Ralegh, the twelve "private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised." Nowhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics* or elsewhere does Aristotle tot up a neat reckoning, but probably Spenser could judiciously extract this list: (1) Courage, (2) Temperance or Self-Control, (3) Liberality, (4) Magnificence, (5) Highmindedness, (6) the Golden Mean concerning Ambition, (7) Gentleness or Mansuetude, (8) Truthfulness, (9) Wittiness or Jocularity, (10) Friendliness or Courtesy, (11) Modesty or Shame, (12) Justice, (13) Friendship as distinguished from the etiquette of (10). Note that (4) is Magnificence, the quality in Arthur, according to Spenser, that will sum up all the other twelve virtues.

Neoplatonism has a long history, beginning at least in the 3d century of the Christian era. Deriving his concepts largely from the Renaissance Italians, such as Ficino, Mirandola, and Giordano Bruno, Spenser found a philosophy that had become primarily a form of poetry. To the neoplatonist, God is the unity behind all the multiplicity of the world. From God emanates the *nous* (mind or thought) whence proceeds the world-soul, which in turn produces individual souls and the world of nature. The material world is then an imagined world, and the enchanted fairyland of Spenser's poem is an extended vision as real as the troubled Ireland in which he wrote. Like many men and many poets, Spenser was deeply perturbed at the mutability of life. Neoplatonism provided him with an answer: buried in the material world of evil and multiplicity (because it is remotest from the bright light of God), the fervent soul must seek for the One that is God by the practice of virtues, the greatest of which is Love. To Spenser, Love is the sublime guide to the overcoming of error and mutability. According to the neoplatonic theories, most clearly set forth in the fourth book of Castiglione's *Courtier*, the ascent of the soul follows six stages:

(a) Love of beauty in a particular woman,
(b) Love of the idealized image of the lady,
(c) Love of the universal beauty of womanhood,
(d) Love of beauty as an inherent part of the human spirit,
(e) Love of universal beauty, identical with divine love, wisdom, and goodness,
(f) Love of the One, the God who sums up all truth, virtue, and beauty.

Renaissance neoplatonists fused this progression with the courtly love tradition and the ideal code of knighthood. The worship of England's Gloriana logically develops into the spiritual romance of *The Faerie Queene.*

Probably the most important long poem of Western society in the 16th century before *The Faerie Queene* was *Orlando Furioso* (forty cantos in 1512, revised and enlarged to forty-six cantos in 1532) by the Italian Ludovico Ariosto. Although the background of Ariosto's work is the expulsion from France of the Saracens through the valorous paladins of Charlemagne, the chief interest lies in the tangled love affairs of the warriors of one side with the charming ladies on the other side.

Ariosto is more worldly and witty than Spenser, lacking the English poet's high spirituality and seriousness, but the two poets produce much the same imagined world of gorgeous pictures, complex chivalric exploits, allegorical implications, and "linkéd sweetness, long drawn out."

Vergil and Homer as epic poets concentrated their narratives upon one figure; from Ariosto, Spenser derived his epic of many characters locked together very loosely by a central personality (Charlemagne or Arthur). As Ariosto particularly favored Ruggiero and Bradamante, founders of the

House of Este, ruling Ferrara, so Spenser centers attention about Artegall and Britomart as ancestors of Elizabeth.

Many romantic tales, such as *Ogier the Dane* and *Lanval,* deal with communication between the world of mortals and fairyland. The immediate suggestion, however, probably came not directly from the romances but from the lavish royal entertainments at Elvetham, Kenilworth, and Woodstock. The Woodstock pageantry in 1575 represented the feast of the Fairy Queen preceded by a knightly tournament. It looks remarkably like the germ of *The Faerie Queene,* which Spenser was meditating upon at least as early as 1580.

THE STANZAIC FORM. For his epic Spencer devised a stanza afterward to be known as the Spenserian stanza. Its rime scheme is *a b a b b c b c c.* The first eight lines are iambic pentameter, while the concluding line is an Alexandrine (iambic hexameter). Spenser may have created the stanza by the simple device of adding an Alexandrine to the *Monk's Tale* stanza by Chaucer. The concluding couplet may have been suggested by rime royal, ottava rima, or the six-line stanza Spenser employed in the *Shepheardes Calendar.*

Some critics, such as Thomas Warton, Jr., in *Observations on the Faerie Queene* (1754), have felt that the extensive recurrence of the *b* and *c* rimes led the poet to dilate his material unduly. In the *Lives of the Poets* (1779–81) Dr. Samuel Johnson scorned this stanza as "at once difficult and unpleasing, tiresome to the ear by its uniformity and to the attention by its length." But most critics, such as the American James Russell Lowell, have enthusiastically praised the stanza, especially for the Alexandrine that sonorously draws out and completes the colorful vignette of the preceding lines. In sequence, Spenser tends toward repetition in the opening lines for one stanza of the phrasing of the previous Alexandrine. This practice reaches its height in Book III and thereafter diminishes.

From the outset Spenser cleverly solders his stanzas together, carrying the reader on endlessly like wave upon wave of the sea. The Spenserian stanza is particularly noted for its rich tapestry effect, its glamour pictures of an enchanted world; but within the vast reaches of *The Faerie Queene* are stanzas of sharp and rapid action (admittedly few), realism even to the point of near shock, and angry satire. To subsequent poets Spenser is a prime model for sheer mastery of every effect of language, especially onomatopoeia.

THE LANGUAGE. The notes on language of the *Shepheardes Calendar* apply here but with less emphasis on the bizarre in vocabulary. For while Spenser's word choice in *The Faerie Queene* was still his own unique concoction, it more closely approximates current Elizabethan usage. Frequently the alien quality lies largely in the archaized spelling; reading *The Faerie Queene* aloud will often show lines that appear strange to be conventional and familiar English. The final *e* is unpronounced, but final *-ed* is pronounced.

Thus *seemed* is two syllables; when Spenser wished modern pronunciation, he wrote *seemd* or *seem'd.*

The archaic inflection in nouns consists largely of the genitive singular *-es* (*flightes end*) fully pronounced, the syllabic *-es* plural (*joyes*), and *-en* plural (*foen*). In verbs the chief archaic inflection is the *-en* for the plural present (*marchen*) and the *y-* for the past and the past participle (*ybuilded*). Some unusual verb forms are *raught* for *reached, hept* for *heaped, befeld* for *befallen, glode* for *glided.* Many of these seem chosen largely for purposes of meter or rime. Archaic syntax appears in the frequent omission of articles and pronouns ("Seemed in heart some hidden care she had"), the use of the infinitive as a past ("And they to fight" = "they fought"), and the archaic dative ("Enough is him").

Most of the archaic borrowings are from Northern dialect, then generally regarded as more "Anglo-Saxon" than London English. Since the *-s,* or *-es* for the third person singular of the verb was Northern, *The Faerie Queene* therefore prefers this ending to the traditional *-eth* of Midlands and London English. The *-eth* form appears far more often in Lyly, Sidney, Bacon, and the prose of Spenser than it does in *The Faerie Queene.* Of course Spenser is guilty of committing errors in using this archaic diction, but the errors are surprisingly few, and ME or dialectal justification can be cited for most of his unusual wordings. Spenser's grammar displays far fewer mistakes in case or agreement than does Shakespeare's.

ALLEGORY. In the prefatory letter to Ralegh, Spenser labels his poem "a continued Allegory, or darke conceit." While the modern reader, impatient with allegorical machinery, may with great profit read *The Faerie Queene* purely as a poetical romance, he would thereby miss much of Spenser's intent—possibly to his own great loss.

Some figures in Spenser's long poem are obviously allegorical from their names: Vanitie, Queen of Pride, Gluttony. Other names of foreign origin are likewise clearly allegorical: Sans Foy (Infidelity), Duessa (Falsehood). Actions are often clearly allegorical. When the Red Cross Knight in Book I wounds the dragon Error, "Her vomit full of bookes and papers was"; certainly this reference is to printed matter obnoxious to Spenser. In the letter to Ralegh, Spenser categorically states his allegorical intent for Arthur, Gloriana, and the three knights of the first three books; in the text further ascriptions are stated or lucidly implied; in other writings Spenser hints still further. The allegory of *The Faerie Queene* falls into three levels:

(1) Moral or spiritual, always the most important and pervasive. Immensely complicated, it nonetheless consistently spells out Spenser's mixture of neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. As a whole, it fulfills the author's purpose of molding the Puritan humanist in exemplary morals, religion, and philosophy. The setting of the poem was as unreal to the Elizabethan as it is to us, but Spenser is a speculative thinker relating stories to intelligent listeners who are expected to recognize eternal human ideals, emotions, and thoughts—

in short, the fundamental questions of our nature and our behavior. To the sympathetic reader this allegory will prove the cream of Spenser.

(2) Historical. Treading more perilous ground here, Spenser is understandably a bit cryptic. Some authorities would see this allegory as encompassing the entire range of Western civilization from the outset of the Christian era through the 16th century and referring to historical events in France, Italy, and the entire continent as well as in England. More cautious scholars have interpreted the allegory as centering exclusively on English problems originating no earlier than the beginning of the Renaissance and Reformation. Whatever the scope of this allegory, it is not as omnipresent as the moral and spiritual allegory. Also, the historical allegory cannot be carried out to the last detail (e.g., suggesting that Una's parents must be Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn).

(3) Personal. This is the trickiest and most disputed of all. The poet Dryden insisted that every significant figure in Elizabethan court and political life was shadowed forth in *The Faerie Queene*. Even if true, this allegorizing is not consistent; Arthur's squire is nameless and inconsequential in Books I and II, but in Books III and IV he is called Timias and must be Sir Walter Ralegh. The personal allusions are tangential and shifting. Duessa seems Mary Tudor at times, Mary Queen of Scots at other times; Arthur often looks like Leicester, occasionally like Sidney or Henry VIII. Probably this is the least profitable allegory for the modern reader.

SUMMARY OF THE FAERIE QUEENE

In the following necessarily simplified summaries the historical and personal allegories will be listed together. Since no two Spenser authorities fully agree on these allegories, a workable hypothesis is advanced with no assurance of finality.

BOOK I

NARRATIVE. Prefatory letter: A tall, awkward young rustic appears at the court of Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, and receives reluctant royal permission to undertake whatever adventure should arise during the queen's annual feast. Accompanied by a dwarf who leads a noble steed loaded with knightly regalia, Una enters to ask for a knight to liberate her parents from a great dragon. Assuming the armor and Christian knighthood, the Red Cross Knight sallies forth.

Poem: In a cave the Red Cross Knight overcomes a horrible monster, half-serpent, half-woman. Losing their way, the knight and Una are sheltered by the fair-seeming Archimago, really a wicked magician. Inducing in the knight a false dream of Una as a harlot, Archimago separates the pair.

Pushing on alone, the Red Cross Knight encounters an evil enchantress, Duessa (masquerading as Fidessa), who conducts him to the House of Pride where Lucifera and the six other deadly sins are frolicking. The knight is

challenged by Sansjoy (whose brothers are Sansfoy and Sansloy) but overpowers him.

Meanwhile Una is pursued by Archimago in the guise of the Red Cross Knight. She is befriended by a lion. When Sansloy attacks her, Una is saved by Satyrs. Sir Satyrane, noblest of her rescuers, is locked in battle with Sansloy.

The Red Cross Knight escapes from the House of Pride but is overcome and imprisoned by a hideous giant, Orgoglio, who takes Duessa as his mistress. The knight is tempted by Despair to commit suicide.

Prince Arthur falls in with the distraught Una. The valiant prince slays the giant, liberates the Red Cross Knight, and strips Duessa of her finery to reveal her loathsomeness. Reunited, Una and the knight proceed to the House of Holiness where the knight gains moral strength. In Una's kingdom the Red Cross Knight slays the dragon in a memorable struggle. Una's parents are released and the young couple is betrothed.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. The Red Cross Knight, by Spenser's own ascription, is Holiness. He seems a wholesome country lad, quite naive. The obvious serpent of Error is overcome by his own innate instinct, but the clever deceivers, Archimago and Duessa, easily trick him. Truth (Una) is made to look wrong, and the youth in confusion flees to fall into the arms of Falsehood (Duessa).

Falsehood introduces the youth to Society, the Renaissance Court (House of Pride), whose social arbiter and hostess (Lucifera) makes sport with a handsome but not too bright young fellow. She even makes a society spectacle out of the youth's combat with the quarrelsome oldster, Joyless (Sansjoy).

The fundamental goodness of the youth causes him to abandon the giddy and corrupt society, but his life lacks meaning. He is separated from Truth and is without goals and purposes. He falls prey to Haughtiness (Orgoglio), an empty pretense only slightly concealing a meaningless existence.

Meanwhile Truth is demonstrating its ability to soften and win the fiercest nature (lion). Lawlessness (Sansloy) assails Truth, but she is rescued by simple, honest peasants (satyrs). Aristocratically, Spenser suggests that Truth will move onward from this naive group to higher intellectual circles.

Heavenly Grace (Arthur) comes to the rescue in the direst circumstances. When even the best-intentioned soul is apparently lost in despair and confusion, God's mercy can intervene to overcome all obstacles, unite the questing soul with Truth, and rearm the spirit to win its own battles and liberate others.

The whole book illustrates Spenser's Platonic faith in the power of pure and noble love to redeem the soul of man.

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. This book appears to be an allegory of Elizabeth's problems with religion. In the pageants accompanying her coronation, Elizabeth was identified with Pure Religion and Truth. The queen was a spiritual as well as temporal ruler to her people. Presumably

Una then represents Elizabeth's brand of Protestantism. The Red Cross Knight is the English spirit, specifically the English church. The terrifying problems of this book, especially the separation of Una and her knight, mirror the vicissitudes of England and its religion until the firm wedding of the Church of England to Elizabeth's Protestantism. Duessa represents the Roman Catholic Church, often pretending to be Fidessa (faithful). Logically, for his first book, Spenser chose the biggest single problem of Elizabeth's career, religion, and allegorizes her solution of its many difficulties.

The constant disguises and hypocrisies in part portray the Platonic view of the illusionary nature of the visible world, but they also concretely refer to the contemporary plottings of the Renaissance, e.g., the disguised Jesuits smuggled into England.

For this interpretation the following personal ascriptions are possible: Arthur–Essex or Leicester; Red Cross Knight–Sidney; Archimago–Burghley or the papacy or Bishop Gardiner; Sansfoy–Sir Thomas More or Cardinal Wolsey; Sansjoy–Cardinal Pole; Sansloy–Edward Courtenay; Duessa–Mary Tudor or Mary Queen of Scots; the lion–Henry VIII or Thomas Cromwell; Orgoglio–Philip of Spain.

Far wider allegory has been suggested, equating the Red Cross Knight with the Christian Church from antiquity. Orgoglio is Charlemagne, Sansfoy is the Moslem assault upon Christendom, etc.

A median position, though dubious and still probably too extensive, sees all European history of the 16th century suggested in this book: Sansloy is the Spanish Duke of Alva and the satyrs the Dutch Beggars of the Sea opposing Alva; Orgoglio is the Duke of Guise; Sansfoy is Henry II of France.

SOURCES AND DISCUSSION. Obviously fundamental to this account is the tale of St. George, England's patron saint and a notable combination of holiness and martial prowess–especially in dragon slaying. Spenser probably knew the familiar account in *The Golden Legend* printed by Caxton in 1487.

The story of Sir Gareth, a knight of the Round Table, parallels many adventures of the Red Cross Knight; Malory and others supplied this information. Other medieval romances, such as *Bevis of Hamtoun* and *The Vision of Tundale* were influential. Most potent, of course, were the Italian romances: *Orlando Furioso* by Ariosto and *Gerusalemme Liberata* by Tasso.

The underlying spirit, as, indeed, throughout the whole of *The Faerie Queene,* relies upon the Bible and Protestant piety.

Book I is probably the best organized of the entire work. The narrative follows a logical pattern through rising action, climax, and resolution. After Una and her knight are separated in the second canto, two distinct lines of action are developed; but these are kept in close relationship by: (1) Una's unceasing search for her knight, (2) the evil contrivances inflicted in common upon the two by their mutual enemies, and (3) the constant ties maintained by the wicked characters with each other.

The allegory in this book probably surpasses that of subsequent books in its

clarity and consistency. Spenser is particularly adroit in the repetition, with variation, of important motifs. Thus the theme of pride mounts from Lucifera to Orgoglio, the theme of sorrow from Sansjoy to Despair.

BOOK II

NARRATIVE. Still hoping to harm the Red Cross Knight, Archimago informs Sir Guyon that the Red Cross Knight had violated a virgin. Hastening to right a wrong, Guyon encounters Duessa disguised as the allegedly injured girl. The enraged Guyon would attack the Red Cross Knight, but the religious insignia upon the armor of each warrior reconciles them.

With a palmer as companion, Guyon finds a bloody babe whose parents have been slain by Acrasia. Guyon vows to avenge the murdered parents. He is welcomed to the bower of Medina, a sober maiden. Proceeding, he shows up the cowardly Braggadocchio (who attempted the fair Belphoebe) and binds Furor in chains. Pyrochles releases Furor, and his brother Cymochles fights Guyon.

Bereft of his palmer-guide, Guyon is conducted through the cave of Mammon to observe great riches. The sons of Acrasia, Guyon's greatest enemy, trap Guyon in their spell, but are overcome by Arthur. The latter and Guyon visit the house of Temperance, run by Alma. Arthur overpowers Maleger, chief opponent of Temperance.

Guyon enters the Bower of Bliss, abode of Acrasia. Guyon triumphs, and Acrasia is sent back to the fairy court under guard.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. The hero of this book is an honest, manly gentleman, buffeted as all men are in the choices of the world, but who, aided by sober age (the palmer) and wiser counsel (in Arthur), proves victorious over all temptations.

The tests of Guyon are of (1) passion, as with the Red Cross Knight, Furor, and the brothers Pyrochles and Cymochles; (2) appetite, as in the Cave of Mammon and the Bower of Bliss. All tests subject the gentleman to variations upon Acrasia (Intemperance).

The story of Medina allegorizes Aristotle's doctrine of the Golden Mean between extremes. Elissa is defective pleasure, Perissa is excessive pleasure, and Medina is the moderate position between the two poles that well constitutes true temperance. Platonism emerges here, as all three damozels are daughters of one sire (the soul).

The Castle of Alma is an extended allegory of the human body assailed by twelve troops of temptation—the five senses and the seven deadly sins.

In the contest against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, Guyon overcomes the World (Mammon) and the Flesh (Acrasia's Bower of Bliss), while Arthur bests the Devil (Maleger).

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. Spenser makes religion the subject of Book I, as to him it was the preeminently important topic of the age. This second book treats of what Spenser deemed the next most important

topic of the age—the rights of Elizabeth to the throne and the threats against her rights. Broadly, Spenser seems to be praising the reign of Elizabeth as the moderate, rational middle course, perennially an English ideal.

Acrasia looks like Mary Queen of Scots, here in the guise of the secular and worldly foe of Elizabeth The imprisonment of Acrasia by the fairy court certainly looks like the incarceration of Mary by Elizabeth.

Other ascriptions appear increasingly dubious. Coligny (Huguenot advocate of a Protestant league) and the Earl of Sussex have been advanced as prototypes of Guyon. Since Spenser specifically tags Belphoebe as Elizabeth, Braggadocchio may be the Duc d'Alençon, French aspirant to the queen's hand. The Pyrochles-Cymochles passage seems to be a satire upon the Pyrocles-Musidorus story in Sidney's *Arcadia.*

SOURCES AND DISCUSSION. Homer's *Odyssey* is probably the ultimate source of the Bower of Bliss, through, of course, many intermediaries. Biblical allusions also are especially numerous in this book on temperance. Celtic elements are prominent, contributing many of the mysterious motifs, and other indebtednesses are to medieval romance; to the Italians Ariosto, Trissino, Boiardo, Tasso; to the French Du Bartas.

Less well constructed than the previous book, Book II seems essentially a series of *exempla* to instruct in temperance. Canto X, chronicling the legendary rulers of Britain from Brutus to Uther Pendragon (Arthur's father), seems an annoying interruption to modern readers, but apparently Spenser saw it as establishing the ancestry and rights of Elizabeth.

Particularly famed are the passages on the Cave of Mammon and the Bower of Bliss. Spenser's handling of the latter is singled out for especial praise by Milton in *Areopagitica,* and probably this book as a whole accounts for Milton's encomium on Spenser, "a better teacher than Aquinas."

This book, with its exaltation of universal balance and temperance, is central to the ethical theory of Spenser and the English Renaissance.

BOOK III

NARRATIVE. Sir Guyon is dismounted by a strange knight who proves to be the chaste Britomart, a female warrior in search of a promised lover. The pure Florimell is pursued by the wanton crew of Duessa and Malecasta but rescued by Sir Guyon, the Red Cross Knight, and Britomart. The Red Cross Knight describes Artegall, the destined spouse of Britomart.

Florimell's wretchedness is caused by Marinell, whom Britomart overpowers. Arthur attempts to aid Florimell, but the distressed girl flees in terror. Timias, squire of Arthur, is wounded in fighting Florimell's assailants and is nursed by Belphoebe. Belphoebe's sister, Amoret, reared in the Gardens of Adonis, loves Sir Scudamore.

Taking refuge in a witch's hovel, Florimell is pursued by the witch's son and is saved by Sir Satyrane. The witch creates a semblance of Florimell, who flirts outrageously and is sought by Paridell. The latter turns to Hel-

lenore, a young woman married to the aged Malbecco. Britomart overpowers the giants Argante and Ollyphant, and rescues Amoret from the house of Busyrane. Amoret and Scudamore are united in the 1590 edition but not in the later version.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. As the second book exalts continence in a man, so this book exalts female continence, chastity. By chastity Spenser means an Aristotelian balance, not the chastity of the celibate. Britomart and Artegall are hypothetical ancestors of the Virgin Queen. Britomart is conceived of as the ideal Renaissance woman, emotionally powerful, but not a slave of the body. Britomart performs valorous and constructive deeds, looking forward to honorable marriage which is a spiritual rather than a mere fleshly union.

Not Britomart, but Amoret, is the subject for discipline. Brought up in luxury and pleasure, she and Scudamore ignore the spiritual values of matrimony.

Florimell is the innocent victim of the self-centered Marinell. Giving himself to the acquisition of riches, he pushes love aside. Spenser sees the confirmed bachelor as inadequate in his denial of the spiritual nature of marriage. The semblance of Florimell is the woman pretending chastity while being lascivious. The unequal marriage of old Malbecco and young Hellenore is doomed to disaster. The concluding masque shows Chastity demonstrating to wedded couples that the body must be subordinate to the soul.

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. Britomart obviously represents the virginity of Elizabeth, and Timias, especially from the book's prefatory sonnet, should be Ralegh. Thereafter the personal allegory becomes highly questionable.

Amoret sounds like the heroine of Spenser's sonnets, *Amoretti,* and may refer to Lady Carey or the Marquess of Northampton or even the checked proclivity of Elizabeth for romancing. Spenser in fact stated that in this book the Queen would be able "in mirrours more than one herself to see"; perhaps all the females are aspects of Elizabeth.

The witch's son may again be the disliked Duc d'Alençon. Paridell may be the Earl of Oxford who played fast and loose with Anne Cecil (Hellenore?), daughter of Burghley. The false Florimell sounds like Mary Queen of Scots.

Ingenious commentators suggest that the real Florimell is Ireland and that much of the action and characters allegorize the troubled Irish problems of the age. Probably this type of allegory matters far less in Book III than in the previous books.

SOURCE AND DISCUSSION. The name Britomart comes from a classic wood nymph somewhat akin to Diana, according to Diodorus Siculus and Claudian. Her martial spirit derives from a long Amazon line, most immediately in Boiardo and Ariosto. The concept of the capable Renaissance woman stems from many Italian works and from English writings such as

Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*, refuting Knox's *Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

The Gardens of Adonis, one of Spenser's greatest lyric passages, is the Earthly Paradise of medieval tradition blended with classical elysiums as depicted in one of the poet's favorite handbooks, the *Mythologiae* of Natalis Comes. The concluding Masque of Cupid derives from Ovid and Petrarch, perhaps immediately from a Triumph of Chastity performed before Elizabeth in 1579. The story of Bradamante is the most careful following of the original Ariosto in all Spenser's works. In the Malbecco-Hellenore passage Spenser achieves his richest comedy and realism.

This book appears especially episodic, but each vignette develops still another aspect of chastity and the spiritual ideal of Renaissance womanhood.

BOOK IV

NARRATIVE. Duessa is up to her old machinations and with Até arouses Scudamore to hate Britomart and fight Blandamour. The sons of Agapé, Priamond, Diamond, Triamond, all fall in love with Canace and fight her brother Cambell for her hand. Of the brothers Triamond alone survives to become a friend of Cambell.

Satyrane conducts a tournament for the false Florimell, and the virtuous characters participating all fall into dispute. Scudamore is driven to the House of Care. One beneficial result is the pairing of Britomart and Artegall.

A savage man briefly captures Amoret, jealousy separates Timias from his beloved Belphoebe, and Slander pours out malicious reports about Aemylia and Amoret.

Amyas, lover of Aemylia, is captured by Corflambo; Placidas woos Corflambo's daughter to save his friend Amyas. Arthur appears to dispatch Corflambo.

The quarrels generated by Satyrane's tournament still continue and embroil Britomart, who is rescued by Arthur. Thereafter all is smooth: Concord rules the Temple of Venus, the Medway and Thames are married, and Marinell and the true Florimell are also wed.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. Friendship is the keynote of this book. To Spenser it is a communion of souls matching the Divine Harmony. The narrative demonstrates how the virtuous achieve friendship, the causes for disagreement, the warfare of the demoniacal against all harmony, and the effect of Heavenly Grace (Arthur) in re-creating harmonious friendship.

Discord (Até) falsely arouses Scudamore to hate. The three sons of Agapé (brotherly love) are short lived, but their mother has realized her prayer that the survivor will possess his brothers' souls as well as his own. Hence Triamond's soul is large enough to equal Cambell's, and chivalric friendship unites them.

A false beauty destroys friendship, as the false Florimell brings the jousters to an uproar. Further enemies of friendship are: lust (savage man kidnap-

ping Amoret), jealousy (Timias and Belphoebe), slander (attacking Aemylia and Amoret). Of the three Aristotelian friendships—affection of kin, love of man and wife, communion of virtuous minds—the third, exemplified in Amyas and Placidas, is the best, to Spenser's mind.

Although love does not necessarily contain friendship, friendship contains love, according to Plato, and the concluding scenes of harmony express union and communion.

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. Only the Belphoebe-Timias episode clearly reflects a historical situation. Timias (Greek, "honorable") is almost certainly Ralegh. The Amoret who arouses Belphoebe's rage apparently is Elizabeth Throckmorton, a maid of honor to the queen, who secretly married Ralegh in 1593. The displeasure of Queen Elizabeth, like that of Belphoebe, was not protracted; and by 1596, when Books IV–VI were published, Ralegh was an admiral in the Cádiz campaign.

More important to the book is another aspect of the queen, symbolized in Britomart. She is the embodiment of true spiritual love, solving all problems except those that Heavenly Grace (Arthur) must settle. Conceiving of Friendship (not the mere etiquette of friendliness) as the ties of Platonic harmony, Spenser sees Elizabeth as the object of affection by all Englishmen from Scudamore (the average man) to Artegall (noble justice). She is adored by her subjects not from any carnal desire but because she is the visible representative of the Soul of the World, their ideal.

SOURCES AND DISCUSSION. A wide variety of classic (e.g., Aristotle, Plato) and Renaissance (e.g., Castiglione, Elyot) sources propound these ideas of friendship:

(1) Friendship is fundamentally based on virtue,
(2) Friendship demands equality,
(3) Friendship requires similarity,
(4) True friends share a common soul,
(5) A friend is a second self,
(6) False friendship cannot endure,
(7) Friends' goods are shared in common.

The most potent story influence comes from Ariosto, with some echoes of Chaucer's Knight's Tale. The Amyas-Placidas episode is reminiscent of the 13th-century romance, *Amis and Amiloun*.

Some readers deem this the most poorly organized book of all. Its titular heroes, Cambell and Triamond, appear only briefly, and the multiplicity of incidents is bewildering. However, each of the episodes presents still another facet of friendship, the unifying theme.

BOOK V

NARRATIVE. The knight Artegall and his squire Talus set out to rescue Lady Irena from her oppressor, Grantorto. They force Sanglier, who be-

headed a woman who repulsed him, to bear her severed head upon his breast. Artegall and Talus proceed to overpower Pollente and Munera, exactors of toll from passersby, and a blustering giant who lures the populace with false social doctrines.

Next the false Florimell and Braggadocchio are revealed as impostors and unceremoniously trounced by Artegall, who also arbitrates a property quarrel between Bracidas and Amidas, and saves Sir Terpine from the women followers of Radigund.

Artegall becomes servitor to Radigund who bests him by guile. Talus guards Britomart, who proceeds to rescue Artegall. Arthur and Artegall together win a titanic victory over a wicked Souldan. The triumphant warriors slay the monster Guyle on their way to the court of Mercilla. Duessa is tried and condemned.

Arthur slays the monstrous Geriones and restores Belge to her rights. Meanwhile Artegall resumes the quest to relieve Irena, supporting Sir Burbon. Grantorto is slain and Artegall is triumphant. Talus is barely restrained from attacking Envy, the malicious defamer of Artegall. Unperturbed, Artegall sets out for the court of Gloriana.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. From Aristotle comes the doctrine of Justice as a virtue of the Golden Mean. Artegall is the personification of Justice, and his squire Talus represents the law. In diagrammatic fashion, law and justice deal with:

Canto I, punishment of the murderer, Sanglier (bloodletter).

Canto II, punishment of the extortionists, Pollente and Munera; demagogues like the giant preaching communism and other beguiling and misleading philosophies to the mob.

Canto III, punishment of defrauders and thieves, Braggadocchio and false Florimell.

Canto IV, settlement of property rights (Bracidas and Amidas); the political and legal rights of women.

Canto V, inviolability of contract, although Artegall foolishly compacted with Radigund.

Canto VI, defense of virtue, as Talus aids Britomart.

Canto VII, enforcement without pity, as Talus slays the supporters of Radigund.

Cantos VIII, X, XI, the defense of England internationally.

Canto IX, the subjugation of guile by law and justice.

Canto XII, the necessity of justice's independence from private quarrels and petty recrimination.

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. Extensive historical references are more transparent here than in any other book. Lady Irena is Ireland, i.e., the "loyalist" Ireland supporting Elizabeth, not Roman Catholic Ireland.

The main themes of this book show different aspects of the Catholic threats against Elizabeth, both national and international.

The plots against Britomart parallel the assassination plots aimed at Elizabeth. The Radigund-Britomart duel seems obviously to represent the conflict between Mary and Elizabeth.

The monumental struggle against the Souldan could symbolize the war with Spain. Canto VIII has often been interpreted as the victory over the Armada. Leicester, frequently identified with Arthur, was then commander-in-chief of the land forces (that never had to fight).

The trial of Duessa so obviously referred to Mary's trial that this passage from Spenser elicited a famous protest from her son, James VI (James I of England).

The affair with Belge clearly deals with England's fighting in the Spanish Netherlands. The role of Leicester (Arthur) in this campaign was, however, quite undistinguished.

Artegall, savior of Ireland, emerges as Arthur Lord Grey of Wilton, lord lieutenant of Ireland and patron of Spenser in Ireland.

SOURCES AND DISCUSSION. Plato in the *Phaedrus* explains Justice as an harmonious balance of the three principles: Reason, Passion, and Appetite. Aristotle in his *Ethics* is more concerned with Justice in action. He classifies Justice into Distributive and Corrective. Distributive Justice is concerned with the determination of the shares of partners in joint production, and each is entitled to his respective contributions (as in the Bracidas-Amidas passage). Corrective Justice is restoring the equilibrium disturbed by a grasping person appropriating more than his share. There is no question of proportion here, for what is wrongfully taken must be fully restored (as in the Pollente-Munera episode).

Again Ariosto is the chief source for much of the narrative, but lesser sources and analogues range from Homer and the Bible to the writings of Sidney and Ralegh.

This is one of the best organized books in the poem, never really confusing the reader and conveying its complex allegory cogently though subtly. Although there are no bravura passages to match the high points of earlier books, there is a superb consistency of poetic quality.

BOOK VI

NARRATIVE. Sir Calidore overcomes the crude Crudor, who cuts off the beards of wayfarers, and he properly rebukes the saucy Briana. Seeing a proud, discourteous knight slain by the young Tristram, Calidore makes the latter his squire. Calidore saves Serena from the Blatant Beast, although the monster escapes.

Meanwhile the knight Calepine and his wounded lady Matilda are mistreated by Terpine but saved by a rustic. Arthur befriends the injured lady

and leaves her at a hermit's residence along with Timias, Arthur's squire. Terpine is properly dealt with by Arthur.

The cruel Mirabella, laughing at her lovers' suffering, is captured by Disdain, and, now penitent, is rescued by Arthur. The wandering Serena is saved from savages by Calepine.

Calidore falls in love with Pastorella, displacing her rustic lover Coridon. To the music of Colin Clout the Graces perform a lovely dance for Calidore. Brigands bear off the lovely Pastorella, but Calidore rescues her.

In vicious combat Calidore at last subdues and imprisons the Blatant Beast. Subsequently the Blatant Beast is to escape and range the world anew.

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ALLEGORY. Spenser's *Courtesie,* like that of Chaucer's Knight, is far more than our modern *courtesy.* In his *Ethics* Aristotle propounds a median virtue between obsequiousness and surliness for which Calidore stands. This book praises the entire spirit of Renaissance courtiership, especially as detailed by Castiglione.

Gloriana's mission for Calidore is the overthrowing of the Blatant Beast or Unfriendliness. The book contrasts the courteous Arthur, Calidore, Tristram, Timias, and Calepine with a series of gravely discourteous characters:

Crudor mistreats strangers coarsely.
Briana has a vulgar tongue and manner.
The "proud, discourteous knight" slain by Tristram brutally assailed those he deemed his inferiors.
Terpine ignores fundamental hospitality and humaneness.
Mirabella enjoys inflicting pain upon those who love her.
The savages holding Serena lack any concept of gentility.
The brigands kidnapping Pastorella defy law and decency.

The pastoral simplicity of this book harks back to *The Shepheardes Calendar* and suggests that a rusticated gentleman like Spenser might better exemplify true courtliness than the popinjays clustered about the royal court.

HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL ALLEGORY. "Who knowes not Colin Clout?" —Spenser himself.

The Calidore-Pastorella passage is Spenser's *Arcadia,* undoubtedly derived from Sidney's work. The perfect courtier, Sidney would himself logically be a Calidore. The Earl of Essex would be another logical candidate, for his "wildness" appeared subsequent to 1596, when this book was published. Essex was a patron of Spenser, listening to Colin Clout's music.

The death of Pastorella's father (Meliboe) sounds like the death of Sir Francis Walsingham. Shortly thereafter his dowerless daughter Frances (the impecunious Pastorella?) secretly married Essex. Frances was the widow of Sidney.

Calidore's aiding of Serena sounds like a scandal of the era. Essex beat down slander (the Blatant Beast) about his cousin Elizabeth Vernon (Serena?) and Lord Southampton (Calepine?) in 1595.

Substantiation of the Sidney ascription, however, appears in the pursuit of the Blatant Beast by Calidore. Sidney was the staunchest supporter of Spenser's Lord Grey of Ireland against the calumnies directed at him.

SOURCES AND DISCUSSION. Classic sources are weaker for this book than for any of its predecessors, except for the late Greek idyllic romances. These fictions inspired the Italian, Spanish, and English romances (particularly Sidney's *Arcadia*) which directly influenced Spenser.

Ben Jonson, probably in annoyance, identified the Blatant Beast with the Puritans, and perhaps the more cantankerous of them were in Spenser's mind. However, the monster seems to come from *Histoire du Chevalier Doré*, where a similar allegory of slander is suggested.

For a work based upon the Arthurian cycle, *The Faerie Queene* employs surprisingly little of the vast Arthurian legend. However, this book leans more heavily upon such traditional material than do other books. The Castle of Beards in Canto I and the Tristram account in Canto II seem derived from French tales of Perceval and from Malory.

Like the previous book, this book lacks the spectacular passages of the earlier ones, but there is an even quality of high art throughout. The pastoral episodes are among the most charming and evocative of works in this genre.

In 1609, a decade after the poet's death, appeared *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie: Which, Both for Forme and Matter, Appeare to Be Parcell of Some Following Booke of the Faerie Queene under the Legend of Constancie.* Obviously the printer was uncertain about these cantos, numbered VI, VII, and two stanzas of VIII. Although in the familiar Spenserian stanza, this work may be a separate and distinct poem; or it may consist of stanzas deleted or intended for insertion within existing complete books. The fragment is a mythological allegory on mutability. Spenser sees God as eternal, unchanging order, while the physical world is changeable and chaotic. Temptingly beautiful, the Titaness Mutability is nonetheless an evil force. The more, however, that she seems to succeed, the more Change reveals itself as but the mode in which Permanence expresses itself. The inquiring soul, searching resolutely for the deity behind the material veil, will ultimately perceive and achieve the:

> rest of all things, firmely stayd
> Upon the pillars of Eternity.

In *The Faerie Queene* the neoplatonism and deep Christian faith of Spenser have received their finest statement in majestic and sonorous poetry.

LATER POEMS

Colin Clouts Come Home Againe (1595) in iambic pentameter riming *a b a b c d c d*, etc., records Spenser's return to Ireland after his visit to London under the aegis of Ralegh. As a sequel to *The Shepheardes Calen-*

dar, especially the September eclogues, Hobbinol asks for a recital of Colin's experiences. Colin (Spenser) highly praises Ralegh and Elizabeth, and extensively contrasts base and ideal love. The corruption of the London court is contrasted with the simple life in Ireland. Chief figures are: Shepherd of the Ocean (Ralegh), Cynthia (the queen), Astrofell (Sidney), Alcyon (Arthur Gorges). Two poets, the insignificant William Alabaster and the talented Samuel Daniel, are named; seven other poets are concealed under pastoral pseudonyms, and scholars have proposed virtually all nondramatic versifiers of the age to fill this list. Elegant ladies of the Elizabethan court are likewise honored. The same volume contains "Astrophel," a pastoral elegy in six-line stanzas (*a b a b c c*) modeled after Bion's *Lament for Adonis* to pay tribute to the dead Sidney. "Astrophel" is disappointingly cold and perfunctory.

Amoretti and Epithalamion (1595). Perhaps the *Amoretti* is a unique sonnet sequence in Renaissance England, celebrating the courtship of Elizabeth Boyle as a prelude to the wedding hymn, *Epithalamion*. The sonnets, however, may in conventional fashion be exultations about an idealized lady–Elizabeth Peace or Elizabeth Carey or some other Elizabeth. Obviously the ultimate source is Petrarch, for many of the sonnets employ images popularized by the Italian sonneteer; immediate, of course, is the impulse from Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*. Although frequently stereotyped in theme, Spenser's sequence demonstrates genuine personal experience, as the suitor is detained at Elizabeth's house by a rainstorm (46) and as the lovers gravely saunter by the sea (75). Most of the eighty-nine sonnets employ the Spenserian sonnet form, but Nos. 10 and 25 end with Alexandrines. Almost all the sonnets display the masterful language and essentially calm purity of Spenser.

The *Epithalamion* (ep'i-tha-la'mi-on) is the most beautiful nuptial poem in English, and perhaps in any language, as the French critic Légouis asserts. It celebrates the wedding (1594) of the poet to Elizabeth Boyle, who is symbolically the eternal spirit of nature and fertility. The tensions of the poem achieve marvelous harmony in the balance of the impatience of desire with the dominant ceremonial tone. The lush pastoral imagery is organized as a masque of Hymen, ecstatically lyric. The virgin bride is celebrated throughout the wedding day from before dawn, through traditional rites and folk practices still in vogue, to the marriage consummation. The genre appears as early as Hesiod's *Shield of Herakles* and has noble exemplars in Psalm 44, Catullus, and many others. The twenty-three stanzas by Spenser are a free adaptation of the Italian *canzone* derived from 12th-century Provence. The refrain (slightly altered in each repetition) ending each stanza is a musical triumph and a unifying theme.

Fowre Hymnes (1596), according to the dedication, consists of "two hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie" composed in the poet's youth; and because they may seem "lewd layes," they are joined by "two others of heavenly and celestiall" love and beauty, all in rime royal. The

deprecation of the earlier poems may be conventional modesty or may represent a genuine wish to correct the physical emphasis by the more mature spiritual one. The work is generally recognized as the finest exposition of neoplatonism in English, summarizing the philosophy frequently expounded in *The Faerie Queene.*

"An Hymne in Honour of Love" (to Cupid) presents earthly love not as mere amatory possession but as a manifestation in man of the informing power that brought order and harmony out of chaos. It recommends the first stage of the mystic path: purification.

"An Hymne in Honour of Beautie" (to Venus) declares that earthly beauty is but the shadow of divine beauty and that each of us should examine the earthly counterpart to comprehend universal beauty. Second mystic stage: contemplation.

"An Hymne of Heavenly Love" (to Christ) sees Christ as the Greater Man, summing up the whole plan of God. In observing Christ we may see the divine Idea made manifest. Third mystic stage: illumination.

"An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie" (to God Himself) brings the soul to direct communion with the divine presence. Here is no mutability but eternal truth, beauty, and love. Fourth mystic stage: perfection.

Spenser's sources here range from Plato through the host of Renaissance neoplatonists, especially Ficino, Castiglione, and Bruno. In essence the hymns are an attempt at reconciliation of the Puritanism and Platonism within Spenser. What sensuous youth expected from the love of woman, the older man now realizes can be attained only through love of God.

The *Prothalamion* (1596) (prō-tha-lā′mi-on) honored the double wedding of the daughters of the Earl of Worcester, Lady Elizabeth Somerset to Henry Gilford and Lady Katherine Somerset to William Peter. The progress of the brides down the Thames (water transportation was then preferred to the crowded towns and poor roads) to their marriage at Essex House in London is likened to the passage of two lovely swans attended by appropriate mythological figures. Lighter in tone and less personal than the *Epithalamion,* it is only slightly inferior. The work was probably influenced by Leland's *Cygnea Canteo* (1545) and W. Vallans' *A Tale of Two Swannes* (1590). Stanza form is the Italian canzone. Its greatest musical triumph is the refrain: "Sweete *Themmes* runne softly, till I end my Song."

THE PROSE AND POETRY OF SIDNEY AND RALEGH

Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586). Born at Penshurst, Kent, eldest son of Sir Henry Sidney, Philip Sidney was educated at Christ Church, Oxford. He made the grand tour (1572–75) of the continent, traveling as far as Hungary, but most extensively in Italy. He became a member of parliament (1581) for Kent. A favorite of the queen, he was knighted in 1583 and, in the same year, was married to Lady Frances Walsingham. He was governor

of Flushing (in the Netherlands) in 1585. Mortally wounded at the battle of Zutphen, he is said to have given water that he had requested for himself to a wounded soldier, saying, "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine." He died at Arnheim twenty-six days later.

Here was the Renaissance ideal realized—the perfect courtier and gentleman by birth and by nature. Sidney was warrior, statesman, scholar, patron of poets, and poet also. He associated with Don John of Austria and William of Orange on equal terms. Veronese painted his portrait. Elizabeth was thrilled by his handsome features and virile carriage. A notably active public life never quenched his insatiable love of learning. He could turn from court affairs to discuss classic meters with Spenser, he read Aristotle in the original Greek, and sought out philosophers like Ramus and Bruno in person. A zealous Protestant, he was armed with all the theological weapons in the current arsenal. Few Englishmen of his day were as well informed on international affairs and social theories. Fashionably complaining of melancholia, he exuberantly explored all the challenges of life in a brief life-span. A literary career never entered his head; he was a gentleman who wrote in spurts seized from a dazzling international career. His three significant writings were published posthumously.

The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia (written 1577–85, pub. 1590, 1593) was an "idle worke" sent "in loose sheetes of paper," sheet by sheet, to amuse his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. We are left with: (1) an "old" canceled *Arcadia,* (2) a fragmentary revised *Arcadia,* (3) the last three books (III–V) of the canceled *Arcadia* edited for inclusion with (2). The 1590 printing consisted of (2), while the 1593 text added (3) to (2). Modern readers probably would prefer (1) for its essentially novelistic form, but the familiar and influential version remains the tortuously convoluted reading of 1593.

The main plot of *Arcadia* concerns two shipwrecked princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, who fall in love respectively with Pamela and Philoclea, daughters of the King of Arcadia who has exchanged the court for a forest abode. The exigencies of courtship require disguises. Pretending to be a shepherdess Zelmane, Pyrocles is embarrassed by the king's affection and also by the love of the queen, who perceives the man behind the feminine raiment. Eventually sexes and lovers are properly sorted out to universal gratification. The main story is unceasingly retarded by subordinate romances, idyllic landscapes, disputations on all chivalric matters, pageantry, and picturesque adventures and misadventures. Interspersed are experimental verses, largely springing from Sidney's affiliation with the *Areopagus,* a loosely connected group of contemporary poets striving to naturalize classical meters in English.

As a novel the *Arcadia* is hopeless, but it was the most influential prose fiction before *Pilgrim's Progress* (vastly dissimilar as these works are). Like Spenser, whom he was thus anticipating, Sidney created a fairy world of enchanted beauty and idyllic charm. In lush word pictures, again suggestive

of Spenser, Sidney thrills the reader by sensuous evocation through masterful language. To many Elizabethans life was hard and monotonous. They therefore relished the romanticizing of the past, even as we romanticize the Elizabethan age and the future shall romanticize us. Perhaps no other writers in English so imaginatively could create dreamworlds to match *The Faerie Queene* of Spenser or the *Arcadia* of Sidney.

The *Arcadia* interweaves four threads: (1) Ancient Greek romance, chiefly the *Ethiopian History* of Heliodorus, for the elaborate plotting and breathless variety of adventure; (2) Medieval romance, *Amadis de Gaul* and a host of others, including Malory, for the chivalric ethics and romancing; (3) Italian *novelle*, such as Boccaccio's, for invention and narrative, though not for its humor; and particularly (4) Renaissance pastoral in Sannazaro's *Arcadia* and Montemayor's *Diana*, for the entire Arcadian atmosphere, which resembles a painting by Nicolas Poussin. So far as it presents other ideas, the *Arcadia* again preaches the Renaissance ideal man, informed with the Golden Mean of Aristotle and the stoic calm of Marcus Aurelius, faithful to monarchical principles and the Christian religion.

All cultured Elizabethans read the *Arcadia*, and writers found it a major source of inspiration. It inspired subsequent pastoral romances like Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590) and Lady Wroth's *Urania* (1621), poetic tales like Quarles' *Argalus and Parthenia* (1629), and a host of Renaissance dramas from the Gloucester subplot in *King Lear* (1608) to Shirley's *Arcadia* (1640). As late as 1754, McNamara Morgan was mining Sidney's work for *Philoclea*. Stylistically, the poetic prose of the *Arcadia* served to overthrow the Euphuistic style in fiction.

The sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella* (c. 1580–84, pub. 1591) showed Sidney to be one of the greatest sonneteers in English and certainly the most significant before Shakespeare. This was the first true sonnet sequence in our language and the inspirer of almost numberless sequences since. Sidney's sonnets immediately stimulated a great burst of sonnet writing at the century's end. The first Elizabethan to gain fame as a sonneteer was Thomas Watson, whose *Passionate Centurie of Love* (1582) consisted of one hundred "sonnets" (each containing eighteen lines). Sidney's true sonnets, circulating in ms. as early as Watson's pseudosonnets, revealed a poet at least equaling the contemporary sonnet production of Spenser.

Sidney's sonnets, like those of Petrarch, form a rather connected sequence in which the poet (Astrophel, "star lover") relates his emotional attachment to Stella ("star"). The young lady thus idolized was Penelope Devereux, sister of the famed Earl of Essex. When she was about fourteen, her father sought Sidney as her husband; but for unknown reasons the project failed. Penelope, at about nineteen, became Lady Rich and subsequently mother of a large family, while Sidney married Frances Walsingham in 1583. The sonnets themselves object to the insincerity of many practitioners in the form (15), and their manifest power has convinced numerous readers of Sidney's

own sincerity. Actually, such readers assert, Penelope was the great love of his life up to his dying hour.

Nonetheless, there are discrepancies between the biography of Sidney and events noted in the poems; the elegiac volume *Astrophel* was dedicated to Sidney's widow instead of Stella, and Sidney's sonnets display many of the themes and images conventional in the Petrarchan tradition. For instance, fervent pleas of sincerity were part of the artificial conventions of the genre. In reading any sonnet sequence, whether Sidney's, Shakespeare's, or George Meredith's, the biographical element must be deemed secondary. Dante in *La Vita Nuova* recounted an idealized love affair; he wrote the narrative in prose, while he employed sonnets for lyric heightening. Petrarch produced his sonnet sequence to Laura omitting the prose narrative. The resultant poems are therefore lyric meditations. To read such sonnets as autobiography is more preposterous than seeking the glory of grand opera in the plot. When the Muse orders Sidney, "Look in thy heart, and write" (1), the poet or any poet would find in his imaginative heart far more than photographic realism.

The earlier sonnets celebrate the spiritual and personal charms of Stella. After the thirtieth sonnet, Astrophel turns from delighted observation to fervent passion, and perhaps Stella somewhat reciprocates. Resolute hope is followed by exultation and ecstasy over Stella's kiss. Virtue and reason assert themselves in reaction. Discouragement supersedes hope, and the poet ends with philosophical resignation and consolation.

The 108 sonnets in *Astrophel and Stella* generally follow the Petrarchan form carefully in the initial octave, even to permitting only two rimes. In the concluding sestet Sidney frequently ends with a couplet in the English manner. In spite of occasional ineptitudes, these sonnets show what Spenser had not shown—the capability of then-current, standard English to be the vehicle of great poetry. Each year after the publication of Sidney's sequence until the century's end witnessed a host of sonnet sequences, including those by Spenser and Shakespeare.

An Apologie for Poetrie (written c. 1579–84, pub. 1595) was reprinted later in the same year with the title *The Defense of Poesie*. The printings were from separately circulated mss., and the text of *Apologie* is the superior. Sidney virtually inaugurated modern English literary criticism with this treatise, unequaled by any previous English work on the subject.

The essay was occasioned by *The School of Abuse* (1579), a vituperative Puritan attack by Stephen Gosson upon all imaginative writing. Gosson's piece is mostly raillery. He classifies poets with "pipers and jesters." Further, he berates all writers of fiction and drama as enemies of virtue: "he that goeth to sea must smell of the ship." The Puritan position arose from two causes, suggested rather than cogently stated by Gosson: (a) religious opposition to art that recalled paganism and Roman Catholicism, and to art that diverted minds from spiritual considerations to sensual and worldly pleasures; (b) class interest, since the Puritan strength lay essentially with the

middle-class tradesmen and merchants, who saw imaginative creations as waste of productive business time and as an attractive nuisance impelling others to waste their time. Gosson's work was dedicated to Sidney.

In his reply to Gosson via the *Apologie* ("explanation"), Sidney defends all imaginative literature:

(1) Conventional appeals for poetry: antiquity, universality, high esteem over a protracted period. To the Greeks the poet was a "creator"; to the Romans he was a "prophet."

(2) The significant arguments. Following Aristotle and most Italian Renaissance critics, Sidney saw the fictive element as the heart of poetry, while verse is merely an ornament. Such poetry is the fruit of inspiration, "a divine gift." Poetry imitates but does not simply copy nature (Aristotle), and its function is to teach and delight (Horace). The inspired poet perceives the ideal behind the transient and tawdry; poetic fiction therefore presents the highest universal truth. Deeming the great end of all learning to be the living of a virtuous life, Sidney declares that poetry simultaneously links the benefits of history and philosophy; imaginative writing transforms facts into universal truths and "doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it."

(3) Refutation of the Philistines. Sidney's statements indicate a widespread current antipathy to literature, as poetry was "the laughing-stock of children." He counters the objections that:

(a) Poetry is singsong play. Sidney refers to his definitions above.

(b) Poetry is a useless time consumer. Sidney asserts that poetry is supremely conducive to virtue.

(c) Poetry is a collection of falsehoods. Sidney claims the purpose of the poet is "to tell not what is or is not, but what should or should not be."

(d) Poetry tends to weaken and soften the martial spirit. Sidney points out that the abuses of poetry prove not the deficiencies of poetry but the limitations of inferior poets. *"Orlando Furioso,"* he affirms, "or honest king Arthur would never displease a soldier."

(e) Plato banned poets from his ideal state in the *Republic.* Sidney finds this objection the hardest to refute, but he claims that it was not poetry as such that Plato opposed but the inadequate and false statements by pagan and lascivious poets.

(4) The current condition of English letters. Sidney, unlike many of his learned and courtly contemporaries, recognized the preeminent position of the current English drama. Tragedy, he stated, follows not the laws of history but the laws of poetry; hence the dramatist is free to violate absolute fact. Sidney strongly criticized the current neglect of the unities of time and place. Less severely he protested the mingling of comic and tragic elements. Comedy, he felt, was too frequently concerned only with "laughter," which he defined as "a scornful tickling," induced by a sense of incongruity. "De-

light," a joy arising from a sense of harmony and proportion, he thought essential to great comedy.

Sidney ranked lyric poetry next to dramatic poetry in current production but lamented its frequent artificiality. "Fine writing," then quite an affected rage, was equally distasteful to him. Concluding with remarks on the reforming of English verse after classic models, Sidney was astute enough to realize the accentual nature of English speech.

Sidney's critical essay deeply influenced Ben Jonson; to a lesser degree Shakespeare also was influenced. The effects of this work extended even to Shelley, who derived from it material for his parallel essay. Sidney manifested not only critical acumen but excellent poetic taste, as in his high praise of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the popular ballads. Certainly it is the very first piece of literary criticism in English that is itself literature.

Arte of English Poesie (1589). The next most significant literary criticism of the period appeared in the anonymous *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), usually ascribed to George Puttenham (c. 1529–90) and containing: Book I, "Of Poets and Poesy," offering conventional definitions of poetry and dissecting the various genres in minute fashion; Book II, "Of Proportion," discussing prosody, strongly favoring rime, and recognizing the accentual nature of English; Book III, "Of Ornament," treating of poetic devices, which are minimized in favor of an art that conceals art. Though lacking the literary quality of Sidney's piece, and concentrating upon the minutiae of poetic form, the *Arte* displays, like Sidney's *Apologie*, English common sense and refusal to straitjacket English even though classic models are applauded.

Sir Walter Ralegh (c. 1552–1618). Later generations judged Sir Walter Ralegh second only to Sidney among the courtly poets of Elizabeth. After leaving Oriel College, Oxford, he served in the Huguenot army (1569) on the continent. In 1578 he joined his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in piratical raids on the Spanish. In 1580 he commanded an English company in Munster, Ireland, where, like Spenser, he advocated forceful suppression of the Irish rebels. Returning to court, he gained royal favor, perhaps because of the famous cloak episode, certainly from his good looks, dashing personality, and powerful friends. In 1585 he became warden of the stannaries, controlling the rich tin mines of the west, and vice admiral of Devon and Cornwall. The next year he was captain of the royal guard.

Through the exploring party he dispatched but did not accompany to the Americas he named Virginia in honor of the Virgin Queen. His Roanoke Colony of 1587 was the first—though ultimately unsuccessful—attempt at English colonizing in the New World. Ralegh probably introduced potatoes and tobacco to England. He encouraged Spenser to publish *The Faerie Queene*. As the star of Essex rose, Ralegh's declined. In 1592 he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for his seduction of and subsequent marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the queen's maids of honor. Released, he headed a "school of night," a coterie of brilliant contemporaries

suspected of agnosticism. An inquiry into his beliefs was dropped in 1594 for lack of evidence. In 1595 he sailed up the Orinoco in South America, and in 1596 commanded a squadron in the raid upon the Spanish fleet at Cádiz. In the next year he captured Fayal in the Azores.

In 1601 he helped suppress the rebellion of Essex and captained the guard at the earl's execution. On the accession of James I, Ralegh was charged with a plot to place Arabella Stuart on the throne and was condemned to death, but instead was imprisoned in the Tower until 1616. He was released to command another expedition to Guiana in South America, promising not to molest the Spaniards. In a fray with the Spaniards in South America, Ralegh's son was killed. On his return, because of a protest from the Spanish ambassador, the suspended sentence was invoked and Ralegh was executed. When he was asked to place his head upon the block facing east, Ralegh is supposed to have said, "What matter how the head lies, so the heart be right."

Like Sidney, Ralegh was the embodiment of the ideal Renaissance man. Literature was but a minor facet of a headlong, adventure-packed life. Primarily a courtier, he was also an explorer, soldier, navigator, musician, chemist, essayist, historian, and poet. His poetic canon is difficult to determine, many of his poems being ascribed to "Ignoto," a pseudonym used by other writers.

Ralegh matched the best of his peers in the pretty tributes to the queen, in occasional verse such as the epitaph upon Sidney (probably the best piece in the memorial volume, *Astrophel*) or the commendatory sonnet accompanying *The Faerie Queene,* and in the debonair wit of "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" (a riposte to Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"). Perhaps his truly great work was *Scinthia,* whose only remains are a fragmentary eleventh book; these surviving heroic quatrains, imaginatively portraying "The Shepherd of the Ocean" as the deserted lover of Cynthia (Elizabeth I), throb with bleak despair and wild passion. Three short complete poems by Ralegh, all written during his incarceration, are perhaps his chief claim to poetic fame: "The Lie" (apparently from his 1592 imprisonment), vigorously challenging the pretense of wholesomeness and virtue throughout the fabric of society; "The Passionate Mans Pilgrimage" (supposedly written after his condemnation in 1603), which in noble calmness and exaltation anticipates the devotional poetry of the 17th century; and "Even Such Is Time" (found in his Bible after his execution), a fervent plea for release from death to eternal life.

Ralegh may also claim literary fame on the basis of three prose works. *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Açores* (pub. 1591) is a prose epic about the dramatic struggle of Sir Richard Grenville against an overwhelming Spanish fleet in the Azores. "The Revenge" by Tennyson is derived from this stirring account. *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana* (1596) is the stuff of romance that no previous English traveler had so well evoked. The quest for the dreamworld El Dorado

("City of Gold") is recounted with a master's hand, lush in descriptions of a virgin jungle unknown to our times, tense in the telling about bitter hand-to-hand fighting. *The History of the World* (1614) was written in prison. As history it is not valuable, but it contains some of the most majestic prose in English. The opening lines on the Deity superbly keynote the theme of how God judges the wicked, and the concluding apostrophe to Death is a brilliant piece of writing. Composed for Prince Henry, whose father ordered Ralegh's execution, the first and only volume concludes with the events of 130 B.C.

OTHER ELIZABETHAN LYRIC POETRY

The last two decades of Elizabeth's reign and the opening years of her successor's reign witnessed in England the greatest creativity in poetry and drama in the world's literary history, an achievement unmatched even by Periclean Athens. Culminating in Shakespeare, the poetic furor possessed all literate society from the monarchs themselves down to such obscure men as Chidiock Tichborne. The reader of Elizabethan literature finds in the plays, songbooks, miscellanies, broadsides, and mss. of the period an almost endless profusion of lyric and dramatic poetry of high standard. All England was a "nest of singing birds." We gather from *The Gentle Craft* (1597) of Deloney that even the journeyman cobbler sang and recited verse at his last. We will discuss all the major writers of the period in this and the succeeding chapters. Up to this point we have treated Spenser, Sidney, and Ralegh. We will now consider the development of Elizabethan poetry in general, and then go on to an examination of individual writers and their works.

The "courtly lyricists" were by no means the least of the Elizabethan poets. Although today's royal courts seem vestigial remnants, designed chiefly for elaborate and ceremonial social functions, the court of Gloriana felt itself to be the focus of Western civilization, not only politically, but culturally as well. The titled nobility of the age accepted the duty of patronizing the arts and, unlike most of their descendants, of producing art themselves. Indeed, Elizabeth herself, if she actually wrote "When I was Fair and Young," was no mean poet and might well have expended even more wit upon verse. However, since the aristocrats abhorred the idea of being considered grubby scribblers, custom bade them circulate their poetry in ms., usually anonymously. Much of their production is undoubtedly lost, much is not true copy, and much is doubtful in dating and authorship. Among the courtly lyricists we will discuss are: Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke; Sir Edward Dyer; and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.

The "University Wits" were a number of Elizabethan youths of modest birth who were fired with the humanistic spirit while studying at Oxford or Cambridge. Quite a few of these college men found it profitable to write for the popular theater, while others followed law and medicine but still retained a desire to write. Like Sidney and other courtiers, they too could indite son-

nets and equal or surpass Oxford and Essex in graceful lyrics. Even Shakespeare who had no university training was able to write verse like a gentleman, as well as turn out popular fare for the stage.

Our discussion here will be limited to the primarily lyric poets among the "University Wits," while the biographies and detailed examinations of such men as Marlowe, Peele, Greene, Chapman, and others will be found in the following chapters on Elizabethan drama. Included in our present chapter will be: Nicholas Breton, Thomas Lodge, Robert Southwell, Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, and Thomas Campion.

There were also verse forms other than lyric which interested poets of this period: history in verse, storytelling in verse, verse satire, and philosophy in verse. Some of the notable examples of these forms will be considered after the discussion of the lyric poets.

Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604). In his own day Edward de Vere was exalted above all other courtly poets, Sidney and Ralegh included. In his youth, Oxford was one of Elizabeth's favorites, introducing to courtly circles Italian fopperies which were often ridiculed. In 1579 he insulted Sidney, and only the queen's intervention prevented a duel. He was one of the judges condemning the Earl of Essex, and under James I he was lord great chamberlain. His patronage of drama is cited as evidence by the fanciful who wish to ascribe to him the works of Shakespeare; the plays of Oxford, politely praised by contemporaries, cannot now be identified. His sonnets such as "Who Taught Thee First to Sigh?" and lyrics such as "If Woman Could Be Fair," are graceful and finished, worthy of a talented as well as noble lord.

Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554–1628). Fulke Greville had a slender literary reputation in his own era, was highly esteemed by Charles Lamb, and continues to grow in stature in our age of cerebral verse. After study at Jesus College, Cambridge, he became a favorite of the queen and a close friend of his kinsman, Sir Philip Sidney, whose biography he wrote (pub. 1652). Giordano Bruno was Greville's guest at London in 1583. Greville became secretary for Wales in the same year, treasurer "of the wars" in 1598, chancellor of the exchequer in 1614, and commissioner of the treasury in 1618. He was patron to Camden, Daniel, and Davenant. Greville was murdered by one of his own servants, disgruntled at exclusion from the will of Baron Brooke. Dating Greville's work is impossible, since he authorized no publication in his lifetime.

Mustapha (pub. 1609) may be the first genuine closet drama in English. Its Senecan atrocities set in Turkey were never intended for stage presentation, but showed the way to *Samson Agonistes* by Milton and other poetic works cast in dramatic form for effective private reading. Another Senecan closet drama *Alaham*, set in Persia, appeared in his collected works.

Certaine Learned and Elegant Works (1633) contains *Caelica*, a "sonnet sequence," though less than half its poems follow the genuine sonnet form.

Apparently this is an early work, some parts antedating Sidney's death. Elizabeth is certainly celebrated in some of *Caelica,* but most remarkable is the intellectuality of the verse, combining Platonism, Calvinism, and the "New Learning" in courtly compliment. The same volume contains later long philosophical "treatises" in six-line stanzas and ottava rima. *Human Learning,* for example, is epistemology in verse, paralleling the contents of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning.* Greville reveals, as few other poets do, the intellectual tensions of the Elizabethan age; there is no boyish exuberance in his somber meditation upon the irreconcilable pulls of passion and reason, the world and the spirit. He is too often ignored because he will not fit our preconception of the period and because he is rather cool and lyrically defective.

Sir Edward Dyer (c. 1550–1607) and **Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex** (1567–1601). Highly rated in his own day, Sir Edward Dyer, friend of Sidney and Greville, left few identifiable poems. After a brief period of popularity at court, he lived in obscurity. "My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is" asserts the Renaissance glory in self-sufficiency. It was set to music by William Byrd and even appeared as a broadside ballad. Also famed in the era was Robert Devereux, favorite of Elizabeth, and brother of Sidney's Stella. According to Sir Henry Wotton, Essex would often "evaporate his thoughts in a sonnet." His surviving pieces like "Change Thy Mind," possess a quality that is somewhat similar to the later Byron's.

Nicholas Breton (c. 1545–c. 1626). Possibly the earliest of the "University Wits" was Nicholas Breton who seems to have belonged during his Oxford days to a group greatly admiring Sidney; at Oxford, Breton published two long allegories to the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister. Breton proved to be one of the most popular Elizabethan and Jacobean lyricists. His pastoral verse displays the idyllic charm and freshness for which "Elizabethan" is the only proper term, and his lyrics in cadence and sound virtually sing themselves. His "Phillida and Coridon," written for singing under the queen's window at Elvetham, was set to music at least three different times.

Thomas Lodge (c. 1558–1625). Thomas Lodge crowded his literary career into the last fifteen years of the century, thereafter as an Oxford M.D. proving himself one of London's most reputable physicians. His *Rosalynde* (1590), indebted to Sidney's *Arcadia* for setting and to Lyly's *Euphues* for diction, was the source of *As You Like It.* It is a prose romance interspersed with sonnets and eclogues. In 1593 he issued *Phillis,* a sonnet sequence encrusted with odes and songs. With *A Fig for Momus* (1595) Lodge ushered in a memorable period of verse satire. His own satire, often in end-stopped heroic couplets, anticipates the 18th-century satiric verse.

Robert Southwell (c. 1561–1595). Born in Norfolk, Robert Southwell was educated at Douai and Paris, entering the Society of Jesus in 1578. At his own request he was sent in 1586 as one of the secret Jesuit priests to the Roman Catholic faithful in England. Disguised as a huntsman called Cotton,

he became chaplain to the Countess of Arundel in 1589. He was betrayed in 1592, tortured, and executed. Apparently there was no popular antipathy to him, and his verses were quickly printed after his death and widely sold. Southwell wished to show how appropriate were religious subjects in verse, and he even wrote sacred parodies of popular love poetry. "The Burning Babe," highly esteemed by Ben Jonson, remains one of the most fervent and beautiful Christmas poems ever written.

Henry Constable (1562–1613). Converted to Roman Catholicism after his Cambridge days, Henry Constable had therefore to spend much of his life abroad. His sonnet sequence, *Diana,* appeared in 1592 with twenty-three sonnets and in amplified form in 1594 with seventy-six sonnets. His pastoral verse in *England's Helicon* (1600) was also highly regarded. Constable's religious sonnets, devoutly Catholic, remained in ms. until 1815. His own generation, especially at Cambridge, deemed him one of the greatest contemporary lyricists.

Samuel Daniel (c. 1562–1619). After leaving Oxford, Samuel Daniel traveled on the continent, and returned to become tutor of William Herbert, son of the Countess of Pembroke and nephew of Sidney. He is said to have been poet laureate briefly in 1599, but to have resigned in favor of Ben Jonson. Under James I in 1603 he was appointed master of the revels. He wrote masques for the court until Jonson again superseded him. He retired and died in his native Somerset.

Daniel was applauded by his contemporaries for his purity of diction—he was termed "well-languaged Daniel" by William Browne. He was a favorite of both Coleridge and Wordsworth. Coleridge praised Daniel for using diction "just such as any very pure and manly writer of the present day—Wordsworth, for example—would use."

Delia (1592), his sequence of fifty sonnets, is one of the most mellifluous collections of sonnets in English. Probably no other English sonneteer has so lacked originality in the content of a sequence, yet possessed such superb ability to state the trite in memorable and pleasing verse. Delia may be the Countess of Pembroke or Elizabeth Carey, daughter of Sir George Carey. The form usually employed is the Spenserian sonnet.

The Complaint of Rosamund (1592) is a rime-royal monologue modeled after the *Mirrour for Magistrates.* Lamenting her faded charms and lost virtue is Rosamund Clifford, mistress of Henry II. The spectacular progress of English poetry is demonstrated by this tale of pathos, which, though a minor achievement of its own age, remains equal or superior to Sackville's similar work, the outstanding poetic accomplishment of the previous generation.

Though not as intellectual as Greville, Daniel is next to him in the age as a "poet of ideas," and the ideas are often remarkably down-to-earth. *Musophilus* (c. 1599) in six- and eight-line stanzas presents a dialogue between Musophilus ("lover of the Muses") and Philocosmos ("lover of the

universe"). The latter is no mere straw man but an enlightened opponent of literature *qua* literature. Literature, Philocosmos pointedly states, is a minute part of human life at best. The governance of the world's affairs requires skills unrelated to literary abilities. To search for fame in letters is a dubious gamble at best, especially in a "barbarous language" spoken only upon one relatively small island. Daniel's famous reply to the last objection hopes for a great future for English in the "yet unformed Occident." Musophilus recognizes that literature will appeal only to a minority for only a portion of their lives, but that, he feels, is enough to give them rich benefit and joy. Even if a poet writes without an audience, he must write, for the spirit compels him to utterance.

Apparently Daniel regarded as his *magnum opus* the *History of the Civil Wars* (I–V, 1595; VI, 1601; VII–VIII, 1609) in ottava rima, recording the Wars of the Roses. Much of this work is drearily prosaic, but Daniel occasionally rises to great scenes, as when Queen Isabel mistakes Bolingbroke for Richard. Best are his meditations on life and social institutions which caused Coleridge to write to Lamb, "Thousands of educated men would become more sensible, fitter to be members of Parliament or Ministers, by reading Daniel."

A Defence of Ryme (1602) was occasioned by Campion's *Observations* (1602), an attack upon rime as not justified from ancient verse. Daniel supports the practice because of its prevalence, and in his defense of the middle ages that produced rime he shows a remarkable breadth and tolerance of spirit.

Certaine Small Poems (1603) contains Daniel's best-known lyric, "Ulisses and the Syren," and versified "Epistles" in various stanzas. The latter are the first significant poetized essay-letters in English, anticipating the popularity of the genre in the Age of Enlightenment. The best, addressed to the Countess of Cumberland, in iambic pentameter stanzas *a b c a b c d d*, preaches the intellectual life that stoically accepts the world's vagaries and finds solace in the noble spirit. The Epistle to the Countess of Bedford in terza rima praises virtue as its own reward.

Michael Drayton (1563–1631). Brought up as a page in the household of Sir Henry Goodere at Polesworth, Michael Drayton never studied at the universities. Eager from at least the age of ten to be a poet, he was restive as a dramatic hack under Henslowe until Sir Walter Aston became his patron. His contribution to the drama will be discussed in the chapter on Shakespeare's contemporaries and post-Shakespearean dramatists. In his later years he was regarded as a leader by the younger Spenserians. Drayton's verse was addressed not merely to the brilliant court circle but also to the solid citizenry who read him extensively. If devoted purpose could sway the Muses, Drayton would be one of our greatest poets.

Drayton is the answer to a textbook writer's prayer. He produced all the types of verse popular in his age and produced them at exactly the fashionable

time. When Spenser was the rage, Drayton indited the pastoral eclogues of *Idea, the Shepherd's Garland* (1593). As Sidney's sonnet sequence set the pace, he wrote *Ideas Mirrour* (1594). The neater, more concise verse favored early in the reign of James I brought forth his odes of 1606. Under Charles I, he rivaled the younger Carolines in the graceful touch of *Nimphidia* (1637). With indefatigable labor, Drayton constantly revised and expanded.

Ideas Mirrour (1594) contained fifty-one sonnets, some in the Italian form, some in the English form, and a few that fall into neither category. The heroine's name derives from Plato via *L'Idée* (1579) by the French sonneteer, Claude de Pontoux. "Idea" is Anne, daughter of Drayton's early protector, Sir Henry Goodere. Although "Idea" means the Platonic concept of beauty, Drayton's sequence sounds like one of the most straightforward and sincere portrayals of a love affair in the history of sonnet writing. Drayton steadily altered and expanded the sequence, giving it finished form in 1619. In this latter edition appears "Since there's no helpe, Come let us kisse and part" (61), which Rossetti declared "almost the best in the language, if not quite."

England's Heroicall Epistles (1597) proved Drayton's most popular work, achieving thirteen editions during the poet's lifetime, and being frequently reprinted until the mid-18th century, probably because of its heroic couplets. In the first edition nine pairs of famous English lovers exchange imaginary poetical letters; by the 1599 edition Drayton had expanded to twelve pairs of lovers. The most famous letters were those ascribed to the Earl of Surrey and the Lady Geraldine, popularizing the Italian travels of Surrey.

Poems Lyrick and Pastorall (1606) printed the enthusiastic "Ode to the Virginian Voyage," probably inspired by preparations for the 1607 voyage, and metrically paraphrasing parts of Hakluyt. The "Ballad of Agincourt," possibly inspired by Shakespeare's *Henry V*, is perhaps the most stirring of martial lyrics in English.

The Battaile of Agincourt (1627) is an extended narrative poem not to be confused with the "Ballad of Agincourt." This volume includes *Nimphidia*, perhaps the most delightful piece by Drayton. Incredibly he here weds the mock-heroic manner of Chaucer's *Rime of Sir Thopas*, the fairy lore from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the narrative technique of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* to produce a unified and distinctly individualistic fantasia of Oberon, Puck, and Queen Mab. *The Shepheards Sirena*, containing the great lyric, "Near to the Trent, *Sirena* dwelleth," is perhaps the epitome of pastoral verse in its delicacy and grace.

Unfortunately, Drayton poured out most of his energy in historical verse. *Poly-Olbion* (1612, rev. 1622), chiefly a versification of Camden's *Britannia* in alexandrines, is a strong competitor for the dubious distinction of being the longest and dullest poem in English.

Thomas Campion (1567–1620). Thomas Campion studied at Cambridge

but left for the study of law at Gray's Inn. Never called to the bar, he went to the continent where he secured a degree in medicine. While a physician by profession, he was a poet-musician by avocation. Under James I he wrote court masques.

Campion holds a unique position in English art as a composer of verse and song. It is as unwise to dissociate his poetry from his music as it is to separate the poetry of William Blake from its accompanying pictures. *A Booke of Ayres* (1601), *Two Bookes of Ayres* (c. 1613), and *The Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres* (c. 1617) contain the words and music for about 150 songs by Campion. All but about a half dozen must be acknowledged as among the most exquisite lyrics in English. The variety of rhythms, changing from line to line, might puzzle the reader unless he realizes that Campion "chiefly aimed to couple my words and notes lovingly together." The composer explains the complexity of his famous "Rose-cheeked Laura" as starting with "dimeter, whose first foot may either be a spondee or trochee. The two verses following are both of them trochaic and consist of four feet, the first of either of them being a spondee or trochee, the other three only trochees. The fourth and last verse is made of two trochees. The number is voluble and fit to express any amorous conceit."

Campion may range from the bob line of two syllables as far as an eight-beat line like that found in Tennyson's *Locksley Hall,* but all his verse sings with the idyllic grace and lightness characteristic of Elizabethan lyrics. Ostensibly on love, his poetry breathes no passion; it is a world of lyric and pastoral beauty that a false note of solemnity or intensity would shatter. "What if a day" was his most popular piece in his time; it was frequently reprinted, even as a broadside ballad. From "My sweetest Lesbia" and "When to her lute Corinna sings" in his first book to the incomparable "There is a garden in her face" in the last book, Campion is perhaps the sweetest singer in the language.

Observations in the Art of English Poesie (1602) advocated classic prosody for English verse. First, Campion supported the ancient quantitative principle (length of syllable) against the modern qualitative principle (accent). Second, he opposed rime, since it is absent in ancient poetry. Certainly his unrimed lyrics are unequaled in English poetry, except by those from the *Princess* by Tennyson. His musician's ear, however, renders much of his English verse qualitative, even against his own tenets. Campion's nonchalant dismissal of European culture before Erasmus is distressing; Daniel corrected the picture in *Defence of Ryme* (1603).

Other Verse, Other Versifiers. The writing of history in verse form, more than a trifle bizarre to the modern reader, was the forte of Daniel and Drayton, but most particularly of William Warner (c. 1558–1609), an attorney, whose *Albion's England* (1586) in endless fourteeners recounted the national destiny from the beginning to the death of Henry VII. Subsequent editions kept extending and dilating into the reign of James I. Nashe and

Drayton were lavish in their praise, largely because of the rampant nationalism at the century's end.

Storytelling in our prosaic days has almost completely abandoned verse, but the Elizabethans produced numerous poetic tales, now generally forgotten. Chiefly they concentrated upon respectable themes of English history, as in the *Mirrour for Magistrates*, or recounted classic myth with a profusion of Arcadian idyll or Senecan horror, embowered with languorous flowers or chthonian specters. Their own era did not move them; wisely perhaps, the Muse avoided kindling current events into song. The wealth of Renaissance Italian novelle, in prose, powerfully affected the dramatists, but seldom inspired the poets. An interesting exception is *Romeus and Juliet* (1562) in turgid poulter's measure by Arthur Brooke, imported from Italy via a prose French version from Pierre Boisteau. Virtually all of the characters and incidents in Shakespeare's first great tragedy were skillfully extracted from Brooke.

In the opening lines of *Virgidemiarum* (1597) Joseph Hall (1574–1656) boldly claimed to be the first English satirist, a ridiculous claim in the light of English tradition from ME times through Gascoigne. Hall aspired to be his country's Persius or Juvenal, and from his Latin masters conceived of satire as ragged and obscure. Occasionally his commonplace vituperation against the hypocrites, parasites, and dunderheads of the period sounds like Augustan satire in end-stopped heroic couplets. Alexander Pope, perhaps in an off moment, declared Hall's work "the best poetry and truest satire in the English tongue." Hall stirred up a hornet's nest of biting satirists that caused Archbishop Whitgift in 1599 to order the burning of Hall's satires and to ban future satire. But the satirists multiplied like the heads of Hydra. Although their righteous indignation is now forgotten, they were a vocal throng of a type we usually ignore in thinking of the period.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge in literature is the philosophical poem, seldom achieving greatness except in a Lucretius or a Shelley. One of the few successes in this genre is *Nosce Teipsum* ("Know Thyself") (1599) by Sir John Davies (1569–1626), for years a high government official in Ireland and the appointee as lord chief justice of England at his death. In remarkably readable heroic couplets Davies argues the soul's immortality. Like Greville, Davies pins his reputation upon intellectuality rather than grace and beauty. Davies is virtually the only poet of the age to whom no lyric is ascribed.

ELIZABETHAN PROSE FICTION

For the title of "first English novel" there are any number of claimants. That hardy innovator, George Gascoigne, might receive the palm on the basis of *The Adventures of Master F. J.* (1573). This anonymous prose piece of twenty-five thousand words runs counter to the *novella* pattern of sensational plotting and meager characterization which Gascoigne was fa-

miliar with from the Italian models. The hero of Gascoigne's work experiences mild and unsuccessful flirtations at a splendid manor house in North England. The chief interest lies in the daily routine of the idle rich: games, storytelling, strolls, canters in the park, and tête-à-têtes. Genteelly observing the emotional and personal relationships, this piece of fiction resembles real life and may belong to the essential tradition of the novel. When Gascoigne published the work under his own name in 1575, he discreetly excised the spicier passages and changed the whole setting to Italy.

Nevertheless, the writings of the "fictionists" of this period will not seem readily recognizable in form to the reader accustomed to the modern novel. English fiction during this time ranged from the highly ornamented *Euphues* of Lyly and the aristocratic romance of Sidney's *Arcadia,* through the bourgeois commonplaces of Deloney's *The Gentle Craft,* down to the seamy underworld of roguery. As early as 1567 a Kentish country gentleman, Thomas Harmon, in *Caveat of Warning for Common Cursetors* had explored the racy life of scoundrels and criminals. The main examples of this "low life" material are the pamphlets of Greene and Nashe, and the Greene-Nashe-Harvey controversy, which will be discussed briefly after the individual authors. Thus, while many of these works have novelistic tendencies and characteristics, we can scarcely call them novels in the later sense of the term.

The chief Elizabethan practitioners of the art of prose fiction whom we shall now consider are: John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, and Thomas Deloney. Both Greene and Lyly are prominent dramatists and their contributions to the drama will be discussed in the next chapter under the pre-Shakespearean dramatists.

John Lyly (1554–1606). The most famous of the "fictionists" was John Lyly, a native of Kent, who graduated from Oxford and sought a literary life in London. He championed the bishops in the Martin Marprelate controversy and served four terms in parliament. He wrote stage plays, the first effective high comedy in English, and set a pattern of prose drama for later dramatists. Perhaps, unfortunately, his fame then and now rests chiefly upon:

Euphues: The Anatomy of Wyt (1578). The inconsequential plot of this work may be autobiographical, reporting an actual experience involving Lyly, his college friend John Thornborough, and the daughter of the mayor of Brackley near Oxford, although the literary origin is obviously the tale of Titus and Gisyppus in Ascham's *Governour.* The fiction bears the foppish Athenian, Euphues, to Naples where a good friend, Philautus, introduces him to his fiancée, Lucilla. Euphues displaces his friend in Lucilla's heart, and the two young men exchange taunting letters. When the mercurial Lucilla discards both youths for still another suitor, the young men are reconciled, and Euphues returns to Athens. With or without the slightest excuse, the characters launch into elaborate discussions of love and women, education

and friendship, morality and religion. In the spirit of Castiglione, physical love is minimized and the Platonic love of kindred males is exalted.

All the fashionable of the age read *Euphues*, not for its thin story or banal moralizing, but for its fantastic style which has given the word *euphuism* to the language. The style employed: (1) structural decoration—balance, antithesis, rime, assonance, alliteration, and practically all the rhetorical devices ever classified by meticulous rhetoricians; and (2) imagery decoration—"unnatural natural history," largely from Pliny, encrusting the work with herds of unicorns and coveys of phoenixes. Lyly invented nothing new in these extravagant decorations. The style can be traced to Gorgias in aniquity, and Lyly had more recent models in the Spanish Antonio de Guevara and in the English Lord Berners. The sole novelty of *Euphues* is its overpowering use of such ornamentation.

The work's popularity is partly explained by its Ascham-type humanism, but largely by the existence of a self-conscious Elizabethan audience uncertain about English literary style and intrigued by the bizarre and the affected. Blunt Drayton said that Lyly taught the English to speak and write "all like mere lunatics." In comparison to Gascoigne's beginning, *Euphues* seems rather a retrogression than a step forward of the novel. Dubiously, this work has been termed the first psychological novel in English. However, with more basis it has been called the first novel of manners in our language. Certainly its popularity gave impetus to the subsequent novel of manners.

Euphues and his England (1580) brings the reconciled friends to Elizabeth's court. The Neapolitan Philautus falls madly in love with a cool English beauty, Camilla, who prefers the noble Englishman, Surius. Euphues returns to Athens enthusiastically sounding the praises of the English court. The work concludes with the most extensive praise ever penned to the much-flattered Elizabeth. Interspersed stories in this volume cause far more to happen than in its predecessor. The youthful misogyny of the first work that scorned women and women's love is modified so as to discriminate worthy and appropriate romances from unsatisfactory love affairs.

While rhetoric is still Lyly's chief concern, there is a trifle less artificiality and a trifle more humanistic substance. The beau monde of Lyly's London was lured to this volume even more compulsively than to the first. Thinly disguised under pseudonyms were many of the courtiers and ladies clustered about Elizabeth. There were numerous allusions to the court activity during the very year of publication. All the characters were invested with wit and fluency they never possessed in real life. They were immensely flattered to see themselves as they wished to be rather than as they were. Both of Lyly's volumes went through at least nine editions before 1600. Everybody at court was then trying to talk like the beings in *Euphues*, and a host of imitators copied the dubious splendors of Lyly.

Robert Greene (1560–1592). Robert Greene was the most prolific prose fictionist of the age, spewing forth a score of romances in the 1580s. He

is also noted as a dramatist, and a discussion of his plays and his biography will be found in the next chapter under the pre-Shakespearean dramatists. Greene's earlier prose works are frank copies of Lyly in style and subject matter, while the later romances more closely resemble Sidney's *Arcadia*. His most popular romance, in circulation for centuries, was *Pandosto, the Triumph of Time* (1588), which provided Shakespeare with much of the plot of *The Winter's Tale*. In later editions the work was frequently titled *Dorastus and Fawnia*.

A reporter by nature and a Bohemian by preference, Greene is also famous for a series of works dealing with Elizabethan low life.

Greene, in 1561, issued *A Notable Discovery of Cousenage*, which went through three editions in a few months. This was the first of his "cony-catching" pamphlets ("cony" or *hare* in the sense of "sucker") that continued unabated until his death. Ostensibly these works were revelations of how cardsharks, con men, and other tricksters fleece the unwary, and were intended to warn the populace. Actually, Greene delighted in these wild tales, unsavory characters, and slangy speech. These works caught the vivacious idiom of the streets instead of imitating Lyly and Sidney, as Greene had in his earlier fiction.

Thomas Nashe (or **Nash**) (1567–1601). After his Cambridge days Thomas Nashe wrote some drama and verse, but concentrated upon pamphleteering. Nashe wrote only one novel, rather unlike any of his other works and unlike anything before in English literature. *The Unfortunate Traveler, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1594) has been termed the first historical novel in English. It is certainly the first picaresque novel, the term *picaro* meaning "rogue" or "vagabond" in Spanish. *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Spanish original 1553, English translation 1571) may be deemed the forerunner of the modern novel, as it substituted stark realism and characterization for the "never-never world" of medieval romance. The Spanish novel burlesques the romance by tracing, instead of a knight-errant on wondrous quests, a scamp who must live by his wits. Nashe seems indebted to *Lazarillo* for a similarly structureless series of adventures.

Beginning with the farcical situations of a *picaro* and then developing into melodrama, Nashe's novel follows its adventurous narrator, Wilton, through France and Germany, into Italy, during the time of Henry VIII. Historical personages, Erasmus, Luther, More, and the Earl of Surrey, troop through its pages. As a sop to English morality, Wilton witnesses the horrible fate of the monstrous Cutwulfe at the end of the novel and vows repentance. The aristocratic romances of Lyly, Sidney, and Greene were more highly regarded in this age, but Nashe's work was more indicative of the novelistic future.

Thomas Deloney (or **Delone**) (c. 1543–1607). A London silkweaver by trade, Thomas Deloney wrote over fifty narrative ballads and three quite popular episodic prose fictions. In his prose works he uniformly applied the formula of glorifying tradesmen against pseudohistorical backgrounds. It is

an imagined world of industrious apprentices who marry their masters' widows and soon become joyously prosperous widowers. In model factories model employers are sublimely generous to model workers. *Jack of Newbury* (c. 1597) praises the clothiers who appear largely responsible for winning Flodden Field (1513) during the same period as Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveler. Thomas of Reading* (c. 1598), set in the reign of Henry I, the Conqueror's son, exalts the weavers in the person of Thomas Cole, a merchant prince.

The shoemakers are the heroes of *The Gentle Craft* (licensed 1597 but no extant edition until 1637). Dekker dramatized part of this volume in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599). Deloney is especially good in dialogue, capturing authentic Elizabethan speech more effectively than any other fictionist of the period. More than Nashe, Deloney lights the path to the primarily middle-class proclivities of the novel. His works were frequently reprinted until well into the 18th century.

THE NASHE-HARVEY-GREENE CONTROVERSY. In one of Greene's last works, *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592), he flung some quips at the Harvey family of Saffron Walden. Gabriel Harvey, Spenser's friend, would have sued Greene, but the pamphleteer was dead. Nashe leaped into the controversy through *Pierce Penniless* (1592), precipitating one of the most amazing, as well as puzzling, literary feuds in English. The whole dispute is hazy, but the vituperation is exhaustive and magnificent. The retorts of Gabriel Harvey are no match for the scintillating Nashe. Harvey is pilloried by Nashe as Gilgilis Hobberdehoy, Gerboduck Huddleduddle, and Braggadochio Glorioso. Harvey rightfully complained of Nashe that "his pen is like a spiggot" and labeled him with more truth than his sarcasm intended, "this brave Columbus of terms."

Readers laughed uproariously at the first spectacle in English of such gigantic hyperbole, Rabelaisian absurdity, monstrous word and phrase coinage, and insane burlesque. In 1599 the redoubtable antagonists were still greatly gifted with invective, but Archbishop Whitgift silenced both by a confiscation of their existing works and a ban on future writings. Perhaps the whole affair was no more than a pretended rhubarb, but without any momentous literary worth, the logomachy, as well as Greene's earlier reportage, showed the tremendous resources of English, especially in dashing colloquial speech.

OTHER PROSE OF THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD

History, properly speaking, is an interpretation of past events. Except for More's *History of Richard III* the 16th century is devoid of true histories. Nonetheless, the age is replete with chronicles, essentially simple chronological accounts of previous happenings. The Renaissance quest for knowledge, plus the increasing nationalism of the English, focused 16th-century minds upon

the storied past of the island as never before. The most famous of these chroniclers, discussed here, are: Robert Fabyan, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, and John Stow.

As distinguished from the chroniclers, the antiquarians collected and wrote about all kinds of antiques from coins to armor, and also interested themselves in ruined monasteries and outmoded castles. We are greatly indebted to these zealous curio seekers of late Tudor and early Stuart times for the preservation of much medieval material which otherwise would have been irretrievably lost. The antiquarians who will be considered here are: Matthew Parker, John Leland, William Camden, and Sir Robert Bruce Cotton.

Perhaps no other prose writings evoke the Elizabethan thrill and achievement as fully as do the stirring accounts of exploration and discovery. Early in the 16th century the English Renaissance desire to learn about wider horizons had only translations from the Spanish and the Portuguese to satisfy it. The initial Elizabethan travel accounts, plain narratives from plain sailors, are distressingly bald, succeeding in throwing a pall of drabness over even the most exciting experiences, as in *A True Declaration* (1569) by Sir John Hawkins concerning his exploration of the West Indies and Guiana. The first English travel account really to grip the reader is *True Discourse* (1578) in which George Beste, a minor officer, captures the heroic character of Frobisher's futile search for the Northwest Passage. In it the strange landscape of the north and the trials of shipboard life come vividly alive. The first English record of what later was to become part of the United States was *A Brief and True Report of the New-found Land of Virginia* (1588) by Thomas Hariot, distinguished astronomer and mathematician. However, the most noted of the Elizabethan compilers of travel accounts, whom we will discuss in detail, are: Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas.

Robert Fabyan (d. 1513). The first Tudor chronicler was Robert Fabyan, a London clothier and sheriff, who wrote *The New Chronicles of England and France,* first published in 1516 and reprinted three times during the century. He starts with the mythological arrival of Brutus (putative great-grandson of Aeneas) to found London, and ends with the reign of Richard III.

Edward Hall (c. 1498–1547). Edward Hall produced *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and York* (1542), generally called *Hall's Chronicle.* It is a record of events from Henry IV through 1532, and is especially important for its information on the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Shakespeare followed this work for some of his historical plays, and Holinshed and Stow also borrowed from him. Hall is largely indebted to the Latin chronicle (1534) by the Italian-English cleric, Polydore Vergil. During Mary Tudor's regime the work was prohibited.

Raphael Holinshed (d. 1580). Raphael Holinshed was more the editor than the actual writer of *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1578), popularly known as *Holinshed's Chronicles.* Early in Elizabeth's

reign, Reginald Wolfe, a London printer, sought to create a universal history upon the foundation of notes bequeathed by Leland. Holinshed, a Cambridge graduate, worked with Wolfe until the latter's death in 1573, and then saw the work through to publication. The English history, carried up to 1575, is Holinshed's own, though he leaned heavily upon older chroniclers back to Geoffrey of Monmouth. The history of Scotland is essentially a translation from the Latin (1527) of Hector Boece, and the history of Ireland is a translation from Giraldus Cambrensis. "The Description of England" by William Harrison is one of our finest sources for knowledge of everyday Elizabethan social life. From Holinshed, Shakespeare secured the plots of *Macbeth,* part of *Cymbeline,* and perhaps *King Lear.* Holinshed is the source, too, of most of the historical dramas of the era. Much of the discussion of recent events in the work was expurgated by order of Elizabeth's Council.

John Stow (c. 1525–1605). A London tailor, John Stow edited Chaucer in 1561, published a chronological epitome of English history called *A Summarie of Englysche Chronicles* in 1565, and brought out his own *Chronicles of England from Brute . . . unto This Present Year of Christ 1580.* His great work, however, was *A Survey of London* (1598), our greatest source book about England's greatest city in medieval and Renaissance times.

Matthew Parker (1504–1575). One of the most notable of the antiquarians was Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1559, who founded the first English Society of Antiquaries in 1572. It lasted until 1606, when it was dissolved by James I. With the aid of Stow, Parker saw to the first printing of medieval English chroniclers, Gildas, Asser, Florence of Worcester, and Matthew Paris. He was the first modern scholar of Anglo-Saxon language and literature. Parker's chief work was *De Antiquitate* (1572), perhaps the first privately printed book in England.

John Leland (c. 1506–1552). John Leland was appointed king's antiquary by Henry VIII in 1533. For six years he combed the island for mss. and all ancient records, in his own words conducting "a laborious journey and search for England's antiquities." At his death he left voluminous notes, extensively used by Harrison, Holinshed, and Stow. His *Itinerary* was not printed until 1710; his *Collectanea* was first printed in 1715.

William Camden (1551–1623). The greatest of the Elizabethan antiquaries, William Camden, was one of the significant cultural and scholarly forces of the age. As headmaster of Westminster School he had Ben Jonson for one of his pupils. His Greek grammar (1597) held in English schools the same position enjoyed by the older Lyly's Latin grammar. His monumental work on English antiquities, *Britannia* (1586), was written in Latin and translated into English by Philemon Holland in 1610. Also in Latin was *Annales,* a history of English and Irish affairs during Elizabeth's reign. The Camden Society, founded in 1838 to publish English historical documents, was named for him.

Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571–1631). Robert Cotton was no writer,

but English literature owes this antiquarian an immeasurable debt. He accumulated the largest private library of old mss. in his age, and among his volumes are often the unique copies of older works, such as *Beowulf*. His collection of original documents became so great that the government feared it as a source of danger; when Cotton lost political favor, the collection was sealed and rendered unavailable until Cotton's son recovered the library after his father's death. The Cotton family sold the collection to the nation in 1707, and it has reposed at the British Museum since the founding of that institution in 1731. The cryptic designation of mss. in the Cottonian library arose from Sir Robert's bookcases. He stored his volumes in double cases, over each of which stood the bust of a Roman emperor. Thus, the Beowulf ms. appears as Cotton Vitellius A XV, meaning that Cotton numbered it fifteenth among the volumes in the left-hand side of the bookcase upon which the bust of Emperor Vitellius rested.

Richard Hakluyt (hak'löt) (c. 1552–1616). The greatest of the Elizabethan travel writers was Richard Hakluyt, an Oxford graduate, who became archdeacon of Westminster, but who varied his clerical duties by an indefatigable search for fascinating travel literature. His writings sought to implement the English settlement of the New World. He was a member of the South Virginia Company and was appointed the clergyman for the proposed James Town, not founded in Virginia until after his death. Hakluyt periodically published collections of voyages, many in translation. The masterpiece of English travel literature was: *The Principal Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* in three volumes (1598–1600). The 517 accounts range from genuine literary pieces by Sir Walter Ralegh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert to dull recitals by men more at home at the helm than with the pen. Through even the least inspired, however, sounds the romance of wonder at the marvels of nature, the courage of man, and the awesome reaches of an uncharted planet. So far as possible Hakluyt employed firsthand reports. His own translations and writings show scholarly care and commendable style. Dozens of British explorers since have admitted that Hakluyt inspired them, often in their boyhood reading. In the 19th century the historian James Froude termed this work "the prose epic of the modern English nation."

Samuel Purchas (c. 1575–1626). Also a clergyman, Samuel Purchas continued Hakluyt's editing to culminate in *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625), usually termed *Purchas's Pilgrims,* in five volumes. One of the accounts in this work inspired Coleridge to write "Kubla Khan."

PART FOUR

English Renaissance Drama

CHAPTER 11

Early Elizabethan Drama and the Pre-Shakespearean Dramatists

(1515–1595)

England's drama is the crown of its Renaissance art. Only ancient Greece gives us a comparable body of great plays, and therefore we will devote this entire Part Four to the study of the English Renaissance drama. The first chapter of this section on Renaissance drama will trace the development of the theater up to and including the forerunners of Shakespeare, and the next chapter will deal solely with the works of Shakespeare. In Chapter 13 the discussion is taken forward to the drama's decline and demise at the closing of the theaters in 1642.

Because the period covered here is roughly the same as that covered in Chapters 9 and 10, the background material will not be repeated.

THE PRE-ELIZABETHAN THEATER

The Miracle plays and the Morality plays, which we have already discussed, continued to be widely acted throughout much of the 16th century. To Shakespeare's audience they were living memories. When Hamlet objected to ranting because it "out-herods Herod," listeners clearly recognized the reference to the slayer of the innocents who had become a blustering braggart on the stage of the Miracle plays. When Hamlet described his uncle as "a very Vice of kings," the audience knew the reference to the Morality plays.

These dramas were so popular by the late 15th century, that wandering troupes of actors toured England in the warmer months, presenting their Miracle and Morality plays upon improvised stages wherever they could coax pennies from viewers. A favorite and logical play site was the courtyard of the medieval inn. The crowded medieval streets forced inns to provide a commodious innyard where travelers could mount and dismount. Inns, therefore, were usually built in the shape of a huge U with stables closing the open end.

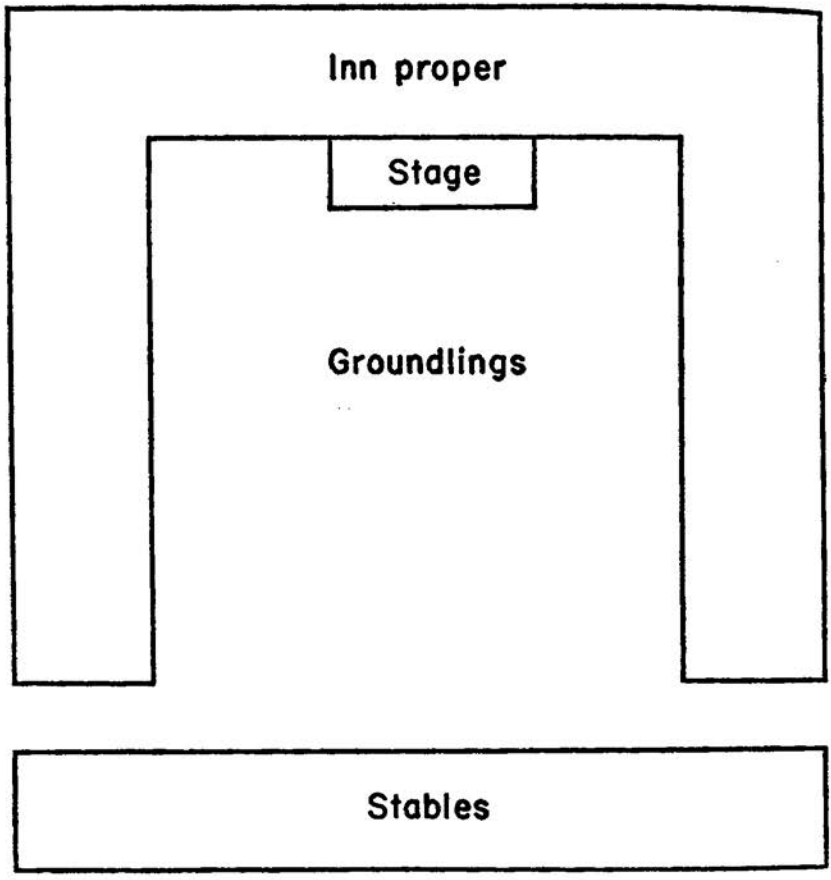

Figure 2. Aerial view of a medieval innyard prepared for performance of a drama.

Men would be stationed at the innyard entrances to collect the money of play viewers. A temporary stage was erected against the inn structure, with inn doors providing stage entrance and exit. The medieval inn used the first floor as public rooms, storerooms, and offices, while rooms for guests were located on the second floor, opening upon a gallery that extended around the entire inner three sides of the U. Guests and playgoers who wanted seats, and a better vantage point, sat in chairs upon the gallery. The mass of viewers stood throughout the performance upon the earth of the innyard.

Medieval social theory saw all men having status by bonds of feudal loyalty. "Masterless men" were rogues and criminals. Actors could protect themselves from laws against vagabonds by claiming to be "servants" of influential lords. In 1482 there were acting companies under the patronage of the Earl of Essex and the Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III).

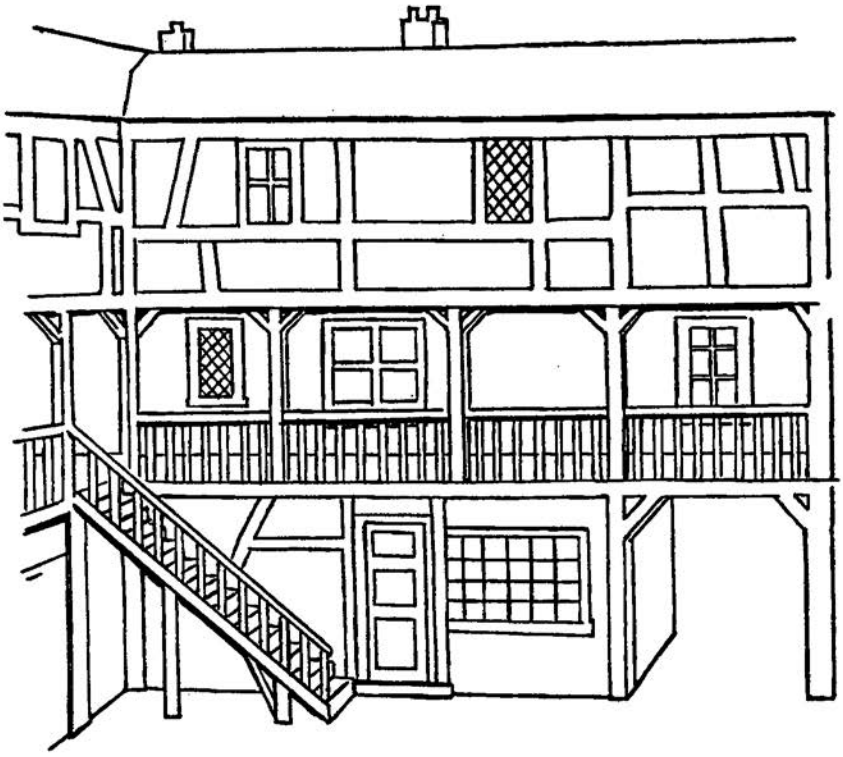

Figure 3. View of one wing of a medieval inn as seen from the innyard. For an extra payment, playgoers could secure chairs in the gallery.

The account books of Thomas Cromwell show payments through 1538 to ten different troupes of actors, bearing such descriptions as The King's Men, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and The Marquis of Exeter's Men. The germinal elements of Shakespeare's theater structure and acting company were present in such practices a century before the great dramatist's career.

THE EARLY TUDOR INTERLUDE AND THE RISE OF SECULAR DRAMA

The later Moralities included much completely nonreligious material, and it is impossible to distinguish clearly between them and the early secular interludes. In fact, after 1500 the term *interlude* was often used indiscriminately for any play, although usually it suggested the idea of essentially secular humor. E. K. Chambers believes that *interlude* (*inter*, "between"–*ludus*, "play") originally signified a playlet between two characters. As Lyndsay employed the term in *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaits*, it apparently meant a brief skit between courses of a banquet or rounds of festivity. Lawsuits of

the age seem to consider *interlude* as a play performed indoors during the winter, while a *stage play* was performed outdoors in the summertime. Whatever its origin or exact meaning, the interlude is significant for developing the first wholly secular drama in English.

CARDINAL MORTON'S CIRCLE. The precise stages of the evolution of secular drama are a bit hazy, but the great impetus seems to have come from the circle of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury. This group, which included Sir Thomas More, was apparently interested in private drama, performed indoors before a festive audience composed of the household of the nation's greatest prelate. The actors probably consisted of one or another of the touring companies under the protection of a noble lord. The performers, adding these plays to their repertoire, might perform them before other audiences and adapt these interludes for the general public.

Henry Medwall (fl. 1490). Henry Medwall was a chaplain and teacher in the household of Cardinal Morton. His play, *Nature* (c. 1486), is a Morality in the old allegorical tradition, but his only other extant play is the one that will interest us most.

Fulgens and Lucres (c. 1497, pub. c. 1515) shows no traces of allegory. To our knowledge, this is the first purely secular drama in English. Although we do not know the exact circumstances of its writing and production, its opening shows that it was intended for presentation between courses of a banquet. The play dramatizes *De Vera Nobilitate* ("On True Nobility"), a Latin *declamatio* by Bonaccorso da Pistoja (1428); the treatise was printed by Caxton in English translation in 1481. The plot involves the earliest appearance in English of the love-triangle drama. The hand of Lucretia, daughter of the Roman senator Fulgentio, is sought by the noble and wealthy Cornelius and the poor but honest Flaminius. After the two youths debate their claims, Lucretia chooses Flaminius (in the original, Fulgentio makes the dispute a public issue in the senate). The parallel humorous subplot, original with Medwall, pits two servants (designated only as A and B) against each other for the hand of Lucretia's maid, "the flower of the frying pan."

John Heywood (c. 1497–c. 1580). John Heywood was musician for Cardinal Morton, in whose household he seems to have written his interludes. Though of good social position, he was a sort of royal jester under Mary. A staunch Roman Catholic, he left Elizabeth's England to settle in Mechelen (Malines), Belgium, where he apparently lived to an advanced age. His nondramatic works consist of facetiae (witty writings or sayings), highly popular in his day for their pithy and incisive wisdom. Heywood's dramatic pieces established the main line of the interlude as farce. All of his plays are thin but extraordinarily ingenious, really spinning out a single simple joke for more than half an hour.

The Playe Called the Foure PP. A Newe and Very Mery Interlude of A Palmer, A Pardoner, A Potycary, A Pedlar (c. 1523, pub. 1545) was his most popular work and is typical. In a lying match the apothecary (seller of

patent medicines) relates a fantastic medical cure. The pardoner tops this tale with an account of his own quest in Hell for a shrewish housewife, whom the devils find too quarrelsome and gladly relinquish to the pardoner. The palmer (professional pilgrim) bests all with the straight-faced claim that he has never in all his vast travels seen a woman lose her temper. His whopper is the winner. The work is written in loose couplets of four-stress lines.

SECULAR MORALITIES. Humanistic influence in the early 16th century employed the traditional Morality play for secular instead of religious indoctrination. Such dramas were apparently performed in schools by students. The earliest of these secular Moralities may be *A New Interlude and a Mery of the Nature of the iiii Elements* (c. 1517) by John Rastell, a printer associated with the circle of Cardinal Morton. The play is a dramatic exposition of recent discoveries in geography and science. Perhaps the best of this genre is John Redford's lively *Wyt and Science* (c. 1530) which allegorizes the scholar's quest. The student, Wit, wishes to marry Lady Science. Her father, Reason, requires Wit to overcome the monster Tediousness and make pilgrimage to Mount Parnassus. Such drama indicates vigorous playwriting and playacting at England's schools and colleges.

NATIVE AND NEW ELEMENTS IN THE PROFESSIONAL DRAMA. Texts for the professional theater of the early 16th century are scarce since the wandering careers of actors militated against ms. preservation and since these companies feared that publication of their plays would give scripts to rival troupes and would discourage readers from witnessing the live performances. The trend of the times suggested to actors that they maintain the essence of the native tradition but incorporate new and secular material. The religious matter of the past was ticklish indeed in those controversial decades, and in 1543 a royal decree forbade publication in songs, plays, and interludes of any explanations of Holy Writ opposed to church doctrine as fixed by Henry VIII.

The professional troupes therefore produced plays like John Pickeryng's *A Newe Enterlude of Vice Conteyninge the Historye of Horestes* (pub. 1567). Here is the classic tale of Orestes, owing nothing to the Greek dramatists. The Vice, straight from the old Moralities, largely works out the plot. Scenes move about with medieval freedom, and the stage is littered with bloody corpses.

More famous is Thomas Preston's *A Lamentable Tragedie, Mixed Full of Plesant Mirth, Containing the Life of Cambises, King of Percia* (c. 1569). The casting is arranged for six men and two boys to handle thirty-eight roles. Blood covers the floor as a fake skin is flayed from a would-be usurper; the king's brother nicks a bladder of wine to drip away his life's blood; and Cambises enters at the conclusion with a sword thrust into his side "as you right well may see." Ambidexter, the Vice, scuffles with low comedians Huf, Ruf, and Snuff, and all characters rant bombastically in rimed fourteeners. Falstaff (in *Henry IV, Part 1*) mercilessly satirizes *Cambises,*

a play in which his creator possibly enacted roles early in his career. Although Shakespeare's sallies against the play are justified, Shakespeare's own drama is a direct outgrowth of such crudities of mixed comedy and tragedy, rapid shift of locale, Vice transformed into stage villain, and melodramatic violence.

The earliest employment of historical material in the drama appears in a strange mélange, *King Johan* (c. 1538), by John Bale, a Roman Catholic priest converted to Protestantism. For a touring company of actors Bale concocted what is essentially a Morality play with historical personages. King John is assailed by the abstractions Sedition, Dissimulation, and Usurped Power, which later are addressed by the names of anti-John nobles. The primary purpose of Bale's drama is to express anti-Catholic propaganda. The prototype of the chronicle play appears in this strange hybrid.

THE NONPROFESSIONAL THEATER DURING THE RENAISSANCE

The drama proliferated bewilderingly, being performed by amateurs and professionals under all sorts of conditions in all sorts of places. It was constantly fluid, changing every season and offering astonishingly new and vital theater while still incongruously repeating some of the older, anachronistic patterns. The Renaissance drama can be divided into two categories: the nonprofessional theater which we will discuss now, and the public theater which we will discuss later in the chapter.

ACADEMIC DRAMA

The classic Latin dramas of Plautus, Terence, and Seneca were held up to Tudor students as models for living and models of literature. Their performance in the schools by student actors was an educational device to instruct in moral lessons and literary style. Logically, imitative drama in Latin was written by humanists: *Christus Redivivus* (1543) by Nicholas Grimald, *Ricardus Tertius* (1579) by Richard Legge, and *Jephthes* (c. 1570) by the Scot, George Buchanan. The next step was to write an imitation of the Latin drama in English.

ACADEMIC COMEDY. Plautus and Terence were the models for comedy, but there had been a tradition of farce from the older Miracle plays.

Nicholas Udall (1505–1556). Headmaster of Eton from 1534 to 1541, and of Westminster School (c. 1554–56), Nicholas Udall translated selections from Terence which were frequently made a textbook of style for Tudor schoolboys.

Ralph Roister Doister (c. 1535, pub. 1566), modeled upon the Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence, is often termed the first true English comedy. The five-act division of Latin drama is followed in a genuine development of comic conflict, replacing the brief skit of the interlude. Unities

of time, place, and action are carefully observed. Ralph, a penniless braggart soldier (the *miles gloriosus* of Plautus) is encouraged by Merrygreek, a parasite who lives by his wits, to woo the well-to-do widow Custance. She spurns the importunate warrior, but her returning lover, Gawain Goodluck, suspects her of inconstancy. The lovers are reconciled and all end as good friends. Udall uses rimed couplets of loose four-stress lines. The play is good fun, and the author's ostensible moral, to deplore the vainglorious and to exalt the homey virtues, is not blatant.

Gammer Gurton's Needle (c. 1553, pub. 1575). A "Mr. S." of Christ Church, Cambridge, wrote *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. It is outwardly as classical in form as Udall's work, but it is more English, more original, and more humorous. The author may be John Still, William Stevenson, or John Bridges. What would have lasted John Heywood half an hour is here cleverly spun out to five classic acts, observing the unities.

Diccon, a dischargee from Bedlam, the insane asylum, persuades Gammer ("old woman") Gurton that her lost needle is now held by Dame Chat. Since needles had only been introduced into England in 1545, they were at the time of the play scarce and expensive, and the concern for the lost needle is understandable. The whole community becomes involved, and the curate, Doctor Rat, is soundly belabored in trying to pacify the brawling ladies. In seating himself, the servant Hodge painfully locates the needle in his breeches.

The doggerel couplets of the play are racy and joyous. The greatest virtue of the play is its realism, presenting the authentic local color of an English village.

ACADEMIC TRAGEDY. As comedy to the English humanists meant Plautus and Terence, so tragedy meant Seneca. The closet dramas of the classic Latin writer had been partially intended to inculcate the Stoic philosophy of resignation. From the ancient myths Seneca chose the most violent themes of murder, incest, and adultery to display the conflict of human passions with external responsibilities. The plays of Seneca were, of course, available in the original Latin throughout the Renaissance, and English translations appeared frequently between 1559 and 1581.

Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex. What is often termed the first true English tragedy was presented at the Christmas feast of the Inner Temple, 1561–62. It was modeled after Seneca, and it was called *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*. At the Inner Temple young men studied law and apparently enjoyed playacting as a cultural relaxation. *Gorboduc* was written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, young lawyers about to embark upon successful public careers. Sackville's contribution to the *Mirrour for Magistrates* has been discussed in the chapter on Spenser, under Early Renaissance Poets. The novice playwrights selected a legendary tale of ancient Britain perhaps deriving immediately from Grafton's *Chronicle* (1556), and ultimately from Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Gorboduc, while still alive, divides the kingdom of Britain between his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. Quarreling, Porrex slays his brother, who was his mother's favorite. In vengeance Queen Videna murders Porrex. The angry people rise in rebellion to kill both Gorboduc and Videna. The nobility put down the rebels but, since there is no clear successor to the throne, they wage an indecisive civil war, at last requiring an alien monarch to be chosen. The implied moral is a hint to Elizabeth that she marry, produce an heir, and thereby spare modern Britain the chaos of Gorboduc's time.

The incessant violence takes place offstage, with relays of messengers to announce the horrors at horrific length. Following Seneca, the play is divided into five acts, each ending with a chorus of four aged Britons. The classic unities are treated with some liberty. A "dumb show" or pantomime to precede each act was introduced from the contemporary Italian theater; this innovation proved highly popular to subsequent dramatists. Perhaps the most important innovation of *Gorboduc* was blank verse, here employed in drama for the first time. The verse and the entire play are depressingly wooden, but Sidney's praise of the work in his *Defense* is understandable, since the great Elizabethan tragedy was yet to come. In subsequent years the law students at the Inns of Court continued to satisfy their taste for Senecan tragedy, as in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1588), one of whose writers was Francis Bacon.

Henceforth the Senecan tradition was to proceed in opposite directions, to the closet drama written by cultured dilettantes such as Greville, and to the public drama through such playwrights as Kyd and Marlowe.

DRAMA OF THE COURT

The royal court early in Elizabeth's reign was composed of rather rough-and-ready noblemen who shared the common taste for farce and violence on the stage but who also yearned, somewhat pathetically, to match the elegant refinement of Renaissance Italian courts. One source of such elegance lay in the symbolic pageantry long associated with monarchy. In the medieval period the taste for allegory caused royal pomp to be flattered with figures such as Faith and Purity, humbly paying tribute to the ruler. It was an easy step in the Renaissance to transform this allegorical eulogy into a classic mold.

When the Earl of Leicester feted the queen for three weeks at Kenilworth in 1575, the monarch was greeted by a giant porter representing Hercules. The Lady of the Lake, accompanied by nymphs, next saluted her. A Savage Man (the poet Gascoigne) paid her poetic tribute, and Deep Desire sang a song to her from a holly bush. Such performances were a regular feature of the royal "progresses" through the nation.

In the court calendar specific seasons were designated for festivity, arranged by the office of the revels. The queen's Accession Day (17 November), Christmas, New Year's, Twelfth Night, Candlemas, and Shrovetide were

commemorated by dances, concerts, athletic exhibitions, "pastimes," and dramas. The visits of foreign royalty or ambassadors, and grand ceremonial occasions in general, were also celebrated with symbolic or dramatic entertainment.

The extensive records of Elizabethan court drama show performance of a wide variety of plays throughout the queen's later reign. There were some Moralities, Italian stories, even Biblical dramas, but the classics predominated: pastorals, comedies patterned after Plautus and Terence, and, in largest number, plays on ancient mythological and legendary themes.

A second source of court drama lay in the performances by the Inns of Court (law school) and the London choirboys. Sought-for gentility and sophistication were provided in plays whose central features were proper decorum, elegant etiquette, and a modernization of the medieval ideal of courtly love and chivalry.

From Gray's Inn, one of the law schools, came George Gascoigne's *Supposes* (1566), translated from the Italian Ariosto, as we have previously mentioned. This play, the earliest comedy in English prose, placed its great emphasis upon romance and the gay elimination of obstacles to true love. The style smacks of Euphuism and resounds with puns, a favorite Elizabethan vice. From this start English comedy branches into the elaborate formalities of the court drama of love, and into the spirited romantic comedy of the popular theater.

In 1561, Richard Edwards was designated Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal. Although his charges were primarily choristers, Edwards wrote for them some plays, frequently interspersed with songs, to be acted before the royal court.

The only one of Edwards' dramas printed under his own name was *Damon and Pithias* (pub. 1571), probably performed during the Christmas season of 1564–65. The prologue to the drama scorns the "toying plays" (interludes) and promises a faithful adherence to the classic unities. Nevertheless, there is no five-act division; and the sober tale of the two famous friends is counterpointed with a comic duel of wits between Aristippus, "a pleasant gentleman," and Carisophus, "a parasite." The verse is loosely rimed in slovenly couplets. The mixture of "mirth and care" Edwards terms a "tragical comedy." Such a combination will be characteristic of much Elizabethan drama, later termed *tragicomedy*.

The choirboy dramas were staged indoors, probably with a fixed painted backdrop, like those of contemporary Italian drama, depicting a street scene of antiquity. The actors were the pretty, pert boys whose voices had not yet changed. It was charming to the courtiers and their ladies to see these youngsters garbed as girls and old men. Here was the opportunity for a graceful and delicate drama, an opportunity seized by John Lyly, whose further contributions to the drama will be discussed later in this chapter and whose prose fiction has been treated in the chapter on Spenser.

Lyly's six plays for the choirboys of the Chapel Royal and of St. Paul's set the fashion for the court drama in: (1) the romanticized idyl of antiquity; (2) the mixture of humorous, sobering, and didactic elements; (3) artificial speech and manner, not bombastic but dandiacal; (4) sumptuous pageantry; (5) retention of simultaneous settings from medieval practice, although the public stage had abandoned this method. (Simultaneous settings consisted of several completely different sets—e.g., the outside of a residence, a shop interior, a mountain peak, shipboard—all present upon the same stage at the same time.)

The choirboys were skillful and attracted the talents of great dramatists such as Jonson and Marston to write for them, but their obvious immaturity necessitated an emphasis in their presentations upon graceful charm, romantic pageantry, and melodic song.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC THEATER DURING THE RENAISSANCE

The first permanent theater for public performance of the English drama was erected in 1576 in Shoreditch, immediately north of London, by the Earl of Leicester's Men under the leadership of James Burbage. Its name was simply The Theatre. It was in this arena of the public theater rather than the private academic and court circles that the greatest development of the Elizabethan drama was to take place. It was at The Theatre that the plays of Shakespeare were probably performed until it was demolished in 1599 and was reconstructed on the south bank of the Thames as The Globe. A decree of the London Common Council in 1574 forbade public theaters within the city limits, largely because of the Puritan dominance of London but perhaps also because of the health and safety factors involved in the congregating of large crowds. Londoners flocked to The Theatre, initially accepting the fare of *Cambises* and the repertoire of late Morality plays and interludes which the wandering troupe had acted throughout England in banquet hall, on village green, and in innyard. But a permanent site, the incessant demand for more plays than a "one-night" stand ever required, the urban taste of Londoners, and the impact of academic and court drama stimulated the thespians to vast expansion and experiment.

The reader must realize that the popular Elizabethan drama was never intended for reading. It was script, comparable to a musical score. Its actual form was realized only in live drama, performed by live actors, upon the living stage. To understand Elizabethan drama the reader must always visualize how the lines project to the audience.

THE THEATRICAL COMPANY. Theoretically, to evade laws against vagabonds, until the closing of the theaters in 1642 all the acting troupes were "servants" of noble protectors. The nobleman did not finance the company but permitted its members to wear his livery and bear his letters of recom-

mendation. In return the actors provided entertainment for any festivity of their patron. The most famous company was the Lord Chamberlain's Men, organized in 1594 from the remnants of previous companies. With the accession of James I in 1603, it became the King's Men. Its greatest actors were Richard Burbage in tragedy and Will Kempe in comedy. Its star dramatists were Shakespeare and Jonson. Principal rivals were the Lord Admiral's Men, known as Prince Henry's Men from 1603 to 1612, and thereafter as the Men of the Palsgrave. Their chief actor was Edward Alleyn. Marlowe was their greatest dramatist.

The original wandering troupes of actors had, of necessity, been small, usually composed of half a dozen men (cf. *Mankind*, the old Morality play, c. 1475, which required only six actors to take all the roles). Settling in London late in the 16th century, the troupes greatly expanded to handle the new drama. The core of the acting company was still this original half dozen, but such a large-scale operation required far more organization.

As a hardworking business corporation, the acting company was patterned after the trade guild. Corresponding to the *masters* were the *sharers*, usually nine to twelve in number. They were the leading actors who would share in all profits. Roles would be required for each *sharer* in most dramas, and some students of Shakespeare believe they can detect fixed patterns of casting in his plays closely paralleling the chief acting talents of the company.

Corresponding to the *journeymen* were the *hired men* who took the minor roles for a stipulated wage, usually four to six shillings weekly. The *hired men* also included musicians, stagehands, "gatherers" (collecting admission fees), and "bookholders" (prompter and stage manager). The *hired men* floated in and out of the company.

The *apprentices* were boys learning the craft of acting, and as in the guilds they were each apprenticed under written articles to a specific *sharer* who was responsible for their training and conduct. Boys started at the ages of ten to twelve and took all the roles of young women (mature men would enact the roles of older women, such as Lady Macbeth). Generally, promotions within the company were directly from apprentice to sharer, when the able youths reached twenty-four.

Because they depended upon immature boys whose voices had not changed, female roles are generally in the minority throughout Elizabethan drama and seldom call for complex characterization. Much of the stage humor evidently lay in the transvestism of the boys. A notable instance is the amusing sex muddle of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* where a boy is disguised as a girl disguised as a boy. The problem of love scenes under such circumstances was brilliantly solved by Shakespeare in idealizing the encounters between a Romeo and a Juliet; had he called for a passionate embrace, as in the modern cinema, the spectacle of a man embracing a boy in a farthingale would have elicited obscene guffaws from the groundlings.

Since the Elizabethan popular stage had few properties and no scenery, the

actor dominated the play. On the stage, actors wore the habitual garments of the Elizabethan age, but lavishly ornamented and enriched. Theater-owner Philip Henslowe paid £6 13*s* for a "woman's gown of black velvet for the play of *A Woman Killed with Kindness,*" but paid Thomas Heywood, who wrote the play, a total of only £3. As Hamlet's speech to the players indicates, actors were tempted to pad their own parts. Low comedians frequently picked out individuals in the audience to harangue, as modern burlesque comics will do, and ad-libbed whenever the crowd was heartily with them. Some dramatists, like Marlowe in *Dr. Faustus,* may have despaired of restraining the comedians and have simply thrown together a few nominal lines, knowing the actors would go their own way regardless.

THE ELIZABETHAN PLAYHOUSE. Although our knowledge of Shakespeare's physical theater is far less extensive than we would wish, it is clear that The Theatre and its numerous progeny derived ultimately from the medieval innyard. Although each theater differed somewhat from every other one, the usual overall form was round or polygonal. Only the Fortune was square, and after its burning in 1621 it was rebuilt as a circle. Estimates place the capacity of each theater between 1300 and 3000 spectators. Theaters were about one hundred feet in diameter, and three stories in height. A playgoer found over the tunnel-like entrance to the Globe a sign showing Hercules bearing the globe and a Latin inscription meaning "All the world's a stage." Passing through the one public entrance into the Globe, a spectator deposited with the "gatherer" his penny (the standard admission fee), which permitted him to observe the play while standing in the open pit. For an additional penny or so he could secure a seat in one of the three tiers of galleries circling the interior under a thatched roof.

Remaining in the pit a Globe spectator would be confronted with the elaborate stage directly opposite the entrance. The platform, about five feet high, projected approximately forty-five feet from the rear wall into the open pit.

Every part of this complex stage was shrewdly employed in the three-dimensional Renaissance drama:

(1) The area beneath the stage flooring was termed "cellarage" or, from the traditional medieval staging, the "Hell." From underneath here came the ghastly voice of the spirit of Hamlet's father, commanding, "Swear." The trapdoor toward the rear of the stage was used for the grave of Ophelia.

(2) The elevated stage proper contained most of the drama. By its projection into the audience, the platform virtually created "theater in the round" with groundlings on three sides of the actors. Show-offish gallants, for a special fee, could even rent a chair upon the stage itself and thus completely surround the players with spectators. Actors were therefore in far more immediate contact with the audience than in today's "picture-frame stage."

Scenery was altogether absent from the stage proper, and playwrights had

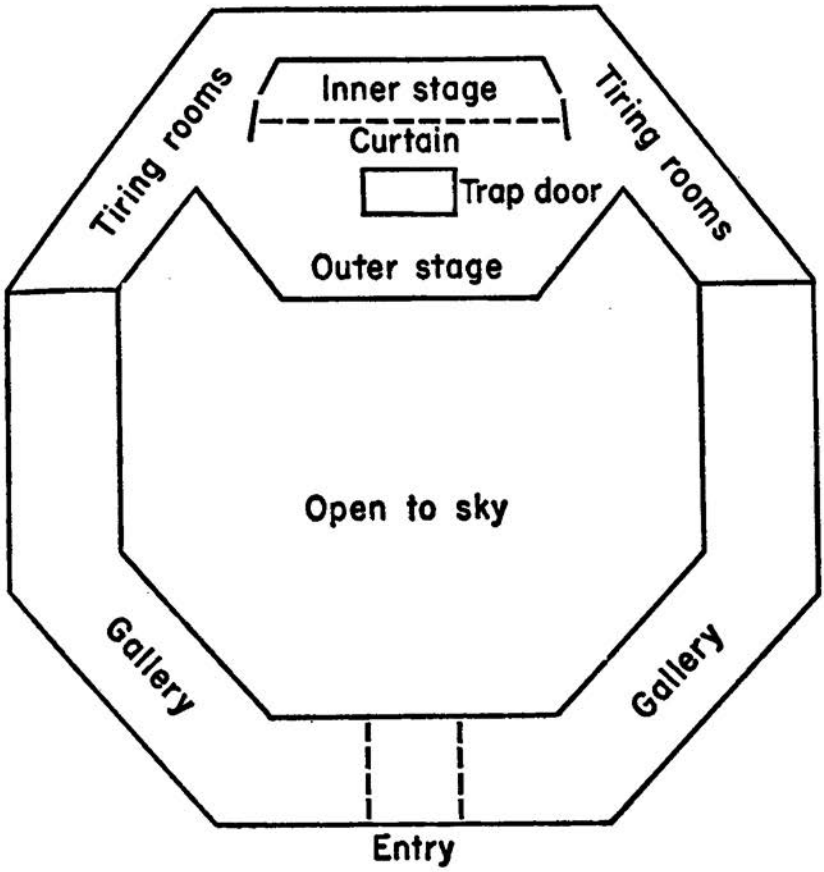

Figure 4. The Globe seems to have looked like this in floor plan.

to provide the actors with word pictures of setting, time of day, and the weather. Stage electricians of today will gradually bring up the stage lights to announce dawn, but Shakespeare in the first scene of Hamlet must have Horatio report the dawn in memorable poetry. In Renaissance drama a few props were used. Tables and chairs were carried upon the stage by the stage crew. An actor on a couch would be thrust in to indicate a scene in an invalid's room.

All entrances and exits were through the two doors at the rear of the stage proper. Without the breaks in modern stage performances, an actor would leave through one door, while a second actor would appear through the other door to swing into the next scene. To today's reader, the stage direction from *Cymbeline*, "Enter Lucius, Iachimo, and the Roman army at one door and the Briton army at another," seems bizarre; but Shakespeare always wrote with an eye to the realities of his stage. Many Renaissance scenes are

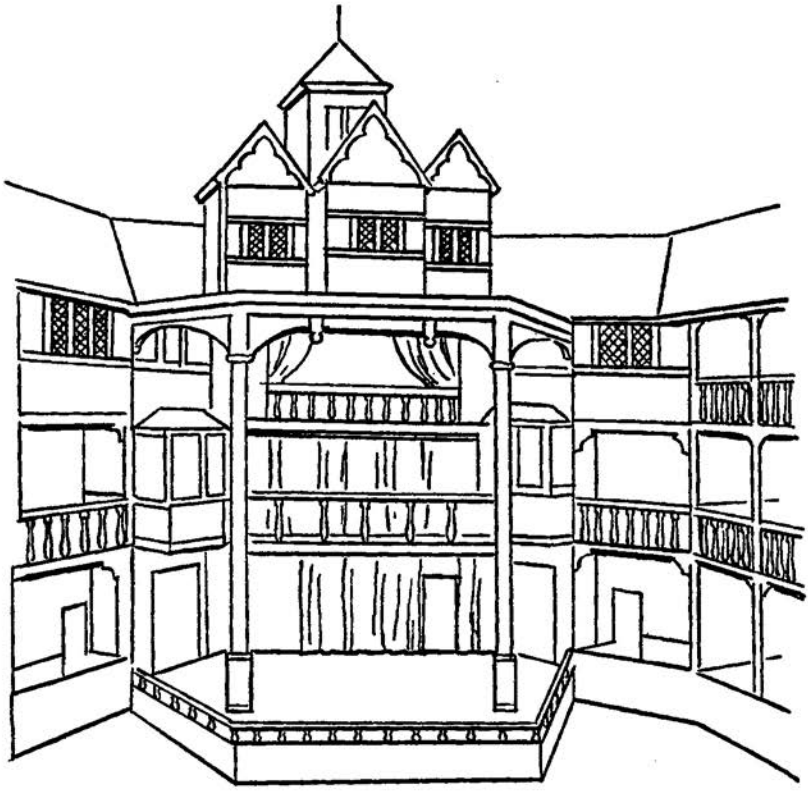

Figure 5. Reconstructed, the stage probably looked like this.

set before doors, and the actors would often bang and halloo before the rear stage doors.

Even the pillars upon the stage, holding up the projecting roof, were employed dramatically. Eavesdroppers would slink around the pillars or murderers wait in ambush, obvious to the audience but supposedly hidden from the other actors. When Orlando in *As You Like It* nails a sonnet to a tree, the actor simply affixed the sheet of paper to one of the pillars.

(3) Between the rear doors was an inner stage, probably twenty to twenty-five feet wide and seven to ten feet deep. With its curtain, it resembled the modern stage, but it was seldom used in this fashion by the Renaissance dramatist. The traverse curtain served as an arras concealing the executioners who came to blind Arthur in *King John*. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia bids Nerissa "draw aside the curtains" to reveal the three caskets. When the curtains were pulled aside, there might be the popular "dumb show" within. Upon this inner stage the "play within a play" from *Hamlet* was performed. Elaborate props were possible here; in *The Roaring Girl* by Dekker the inner

stage showed side by side "a potecary's shop . . . a feather shop . . . a sempster's shop." The rear wall of the inner stage was hung with tapestry, the only customary "scenery" used by the public stage. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* Falstaff vainly attempts to conceal his great bulk behind this tapestry.

(4) Immediately above the inner stage was a curtained alcove normally occupied by the musicians who started playing an hour before the commencement of the drama and displayed their art at appropriate times throughout the drama. For acting purposes this alcove frequently served as a "chamber." It probably served as the bedroom of Gertrude (*Hamlet*) and of Desdemona (*Othello*). Occasionally, as in *The Comedy of Errors* (Act II), this alcove permitted the audience to witness two scenes simultaneously.

(5) The bay windows on either side of the alcove were utilized for the frequent window scenes. Brabantio appears at one of these windows at the opening of *Othello,* and from one of these windows Jessica tosses Shylock's jewels to Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice.* The first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* indicates that such a window is employed for the famous "balcony" scene.

(6) Above the alcove in the third tier was a small balcony or *terras* probably three to four feet wide. Frequently it represented the wall of a castle or a city, as the wall of Harfleur in *Henry V.* Here too was the elevated pulpit of the Roman forum from which Brutus and Antony delivered their addresses to the mob in *Julius Caesar.*

(7) The highest part of the theater was a small storeroom above the little balcony, constituting a fourth floor. Usually this room was the domain of the hired man who ran up the flag on the flagpole to let the world know a play was to be performed that day. Rarely, this high point might be dramatically employed. Ariel in *The Tempest* magically appeared at this height.

THE AUDIENCE. Since no places were normally reserved in the Renaissance theater, playgoers arrived early to secure the best vantage points. Before the drama commenced, lounging spectators played cards, cracked nuts, gnawed on fruit and sausages, smoked and chattered, and sometimes indulged in mild fisticuffs and impromptu wrestling. Even during the performance they continued to drink bottled ale, and the customers seated in the galleries would lob an occasional apple core into the ranks of the groundlings, inelegantly termed "stinkards" by the quality.

The groundlings were the unruly sort who seldom frequent the modern theater. Outside the playhouse their favorite entertainments were eating contests ("gorgings"), boxing and wrestling, bearbaiting, and cockfights. In the playhouse they demanded action and violence upon the stage. The smut of low comedy tickled their palates. They shouted their enthusiasm, and announced their disapproval with hooting, spitting, and the throwing of objects. When Spenser wanted a vivid image to demonstrate rowdy confusion, he labeled it "such as the troubled theaters oftimes annoys." But this turbulent

crew, touched by the excitement of the age, also relished the Renaissance spirit of adventure and discovery. It was stirred by Shakespeare's history plays, exalting a great national past. It could be impressed by drama that gave it a taste of the court and academic refinement. It was quickened by resounding verse and noble eloquence.

The Guls Hornebooke (1609) by Dekker is certainly guilty of satiric exaggeration, but in "How a Gallant Should Behave Himself in a Playhouse" this work offers our only full-length account of conduct in the theater. Apparently the gentlemen seeking special seats upon the stage, and some of the gallery occupants, were far less interested in seeing than in being seen. They welcomed a public spectacle to show off their handsome garments and manly physiques. They sought a reputation as dandies and drama critics, but their studied interruptions and posturings frequently elicited protests and pummelings from the groundlings.

The gentry seated in the tiers of galleries included many cultured gentlemen who demanded an intellectual quality in the drama, and Shakespeare spoke to them as well as to the groundlings. Some coarse country women and harlots were in the audience, but very few respectable women ventured into the public theater.

In the modern theater separate types of entertainment cater to varied tastes. In the Renaissance theater some spectators wanted clowns and bawdry, music and dancing, swordplay and bloodletting, while others preferred romance and imagination, or philosophical speculation and psychological acumen. Such plays as *Romeo and Juliet* might satisfy all.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS. In *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592), Robert Greene tells how he was miserable and low in his luck when he was approached by a gorgeously dressed stranger, announcing himself as a player. The actor explained that he had himself written Moralities and interludes, but the public taste now called for drama from the scholars. Would Greene dash off some such stuff for a modest fee? Symbolically, this reveals the union of the acting companies with the "University Wits," brilliant youths, fresh out of college and bursting with humanistic learning. We have discussed them earlier in the Spenser chapter in connection with Elizabethan lyric poetry. A reference in the same work by Greene to "the only Shake-scene in the country" is usually interpreted as a slur against Shakespeare, who was never a collegian but rose through the theater itself to challenge the previous playwriting monopoly of the "University Wits."

By the 1590s, companies had sizable collections of scripts and hosts of eager college graduates, ready to embark upon playwriting careers. The younger "University Wits" such as Thomas Heywood, Marston, Beaumont, and Fletcher, as well as the actor-turned-playwright such as Shakespeare, had to start as hacks, doing whatever the company ordered. Perhaps they would be called upon to refurbish an older play, as Jonson revamped *The Spanish*

Tragedy. Perhaps they would be asked to rewrite completely an inferior script, as Shakespeare wholly redid *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. Perhaps they would be required to collaborate with other dramatists employed by the same company, as in *Eastward Hoe* (1605), the joint effort of Chapman, Jonson, and Marston. If the dramatist showed real achievement, he could look to "original" dramas exclusively from his hand. The era of most extensive collaboration seems to have been in the 1600s and 1610s. By the 1620s there was an enormous backlog of dramas and a somewhat diminished attendance because of mounting Puritanism; new dramas from then to the closing of the theaters in 1642 were less numerous and tended to originate with individual authors.

CONVENTIONS IN THE DRAMAS. Throughout Elizabethan and Stuart plays to 1642, audience and playwrights blithely accepted stereotypes in the following three areas:

(1) *Plotting*. The soliloquies and asides, even the commentator, stemming from medieval practice, seemed logical in the intimate "theater in the round." Disguises were accepted as impenetrable, a father not recognizing his own daughter in a doublet. Love at first sight, instantaneous conversions, the miraculous potency of aphrodisiacs and sleeping draughts, and the appearance of ghosts and demons were likewise accepted. Mob scenes and battles were suggested by a handful of extras in token bustlings. The viewers were willing to imagine for themselves on the basis of verbal pictures from the performers.

(2) *Play construction*. Except for a determined classicist like Jonson, playwrights completely ignored the unities of time, place, and action. A dozen years could elapse between two scenes, or a short scene supposedly occupy an entire day. Modern editors carefully ascribe an exact locale to each scene from Shakespeare, but in actuality many scenes are unlocated. If the dramatist wished to specify a precise location, he expounded it in words. Otherwise, to him and to the audience it was simply a meeting of characters, with the locale immaterial. Action was generally consecutive, but the playwright felt at perfect liberty to allow the action to move in any direction or break apart completely if it proved more dramatically effective. Subplots, parallel to the main plot or simply as relief and contrast, were thoroughly acceptable. So were comic bits imbedded in a tragedy, such as the gravedigger's scene in *Hamlet*.

(3) *Acting*. Outdoor acoustics emphasized strong voices rather than subtle intonations. Actions also were vigorous and clearly observable motions rather than nuances of "stage business." Emotions were somewhat stylized. A lover sighed; a troubled character "suddenly rose and walked about, musing and sighing, with his arms across" (Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, II, i); while an enraged person knitted brows, bit lips, and stamped angrily. The distraught appeared with hair "about their ears," and the recipients of bad news, like Romeo, threw themselves prone upon the stage flooring. Hamlet's

advice to the players indicates the frequent ranting and overacting that Shakespeare deplored but which both he and his fellow dramatists often expected to carry a meagerly written part and please a good portion of the audience.

THE TYPES OF PLAYS. Renaissance drama developed with the rapidity of the modern motion picture. Just as older viewers of *Gone With the Wind* and *Quo Vadis* can recall the crude movies of the early Biograph era, mature spectators of Shakespeare's plays could remember a youthful diet of nothing but Moralities and interludes. The changing tastes of the Renaissance public theater fall roughly into three distinct periods: the pioneering period, the peak of Renaissance drama, and the decline of the drama to the closing of the theaters.

THE PIONEERING PERIOD, c. 1585–c. 1595

REVENGE TRAGEDY, modeled largely upon Senecan dramas, seems to have begun with Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1586). Replete with physical violence, its standard pattern was a treacherous slaying atoned for by an indefatigable avenger.

The "FALL OF PRINCES" TRAGEDY apparently began with Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (c. 1587). Its material and scheme followed the familiar Wheel of Fortune concept in medieval times: the great of the world rise to an apogee through ruthless ambition, and then descend to misery and destruction. The *Mirrour for Magistrates* was the immediate source for scores of dramas on this theme.

The CHRONICLE PLAY is a rather free dramatizing of history with the primary purpose of exalting the nation's past. Its materials are usually adapted from Hall and Holinshed. Frequently the dramatist works his subject into the pattern of revenge tragedy or "Fall of Princes" tragedy. Marlowe's *Edward II* (c. 1591) seems to be the beginning of this type.

ROMANTIC COMEDY appears to begin with Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* and Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, both c. 1590. Central is a love affair, always ending happily. Every obstacle is treated in an optimistic spirit, so that virtue inevitably triumphs and the oppressed are made free.

THE PEAK OF RENAISSANCE DRAMA, c. 1595–c. 1610.

REVENGE TRAGEDY, as in *Hamlet* (c. 1601), matures from its simple origin into a psychological and philosophical analysis of the human situation. The avenger is not a mere feudist but a Renaissance humanist confronted with basic moral and spiritual questions.

"FALL OF PRINCES" TRAGEDY transcends the medieval theme of Fortune's vagaries to portray the human dilemma: that life is a series of decisions made in ignorance of their outcome, and that only through the experience of suffering can true wisdom be gained. As in *King Lear* (c. 1605), the theme now is the tortured progress from blindness to vision.

DOMESTIC TRAGEDY appears as early as the anonymous *Arden of Fever-*

sham (1592), based on a real-life murder in 1551. Middle-class business folk are the subject, and the setting is frankly contemporary England. Instead of the elevation of grand tragic figures, the characters are here treated with pathos and sentimentality. Such plays preach the necessity of commonplace morality and homey virtues.

The CHRONICLE PLAY reaches its height of popularity in this period. From the defeat of the Spanish armada to the death of Elizabeth I, over two hundred chronicle plays (more than a fifth of the total play production) were performed. Shakespeare's chronicle plays in themselves constitute the great literary epic of English history. Retorting to the Puritan hostility, supporters of the theater, like Thomas Heywood in *Apology for Actors* (1612), frequently felt that their strongest case lay in the educational and patriotic achievement of the chronicle plays. In this period, far more than in the previous presentation of such drama, the theme underlines the necessity of a stable reign and an enlightened monarch.

However, although the chronicle play was one of the most popular dramatic forms of the period, almost all of the historical dramas, except Shakespeare's, were more patriotically than aesthetically appealing. The only chronicle play of the era to stand any comparison with Shakespeare is the anonymous *Edward III* (c. 1594–95, pub. 1596), which deals largely with the stirring exploits of the Black Prince, England's greatest medieval knight. The play has been ascribed to Shakespeare, but scholars believe that his only contribution may be the scenes in Acts I and II depicting the king's wooing of Lady Salisbury. Marlowe, Greene, and Kyd have each been suggested as the main author.

ROMANTIC COMEDY also reaches its heights in this era, especially in the "joyous" comedies of Shakespeare. While such drama whisks the viewer into an enchanted "never-never land" there now appears a marked sophistication, supplanting the earlier naiveté. This, the dramatist implies, is escapism, the charming fabric of pure imagination, the poetic view of love and life. Gradually this type of comedy acquires a semblance of realism, as in *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1596), which suggests a grim and destructive actuality.

REALISTIC COMEDY appears as early as William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* (c. 1598). Here a happy marriage is based not upon poetry but upon adequate material possessions. The characters are conceived of not in the vein of poetry but with amused contemplation of human vanity, cupidity, and muddleheadedness. This type of drama fostered the growing taste for satire in other literary genres.

COMEDY OF HUMOURS traces its ultimate roots to the classic comedies of Plautus and Terence. These ancient dramas employed stock characters, many of which—the clever slave, the braggart soldier, the elderly miser—are directly incorporated into the comedy of humours. Unlike romantic comedy, the ancient comedy displayed and passed on to the comedy of humours no

affection for its characters, who are designed for the amused laughter of the spectators. A classic work also influencing the comedy of humours was the *Characters* of Theophrastus (c. 372–c. 287 B.C.), vivid vignettes of personality types such as the Grumbler, the Boaster, the Sycophant. Another ancestor of the comedy of humours was the late medieval Morality play with its personified virtues and vices, each stage figure representing one attribute or attitude. The very name applied to this type of comedy stems from the medieval theory of physiology that ascribed human temperaments to combinations of bodily fluids, the "humours." Our language still employs the medieval "humours" vocabulary: sanguine ("blood," hence vigorous and energetic), phlegmatic ("phlegm," hence dull and ponderous), choleric ("yellow bile," hence angry and violent), melancholy ("black bile," hence pessimistic and antisocial). The "humours" theory was especially popularized by Thomas Elyot's *Castel of Health* (1539), which went through fifteen editions by 1618. The first employment of "humours" in English comedy seems to be in *An Humorous Days Mirth* (c. 1597, pub. 1599) by George Chapman, but Jonson is the chief exemplar of the comedy of humours.

THE DECLINE OF THE DRAMA, c. 1610–42.

TRAGEDY, less frequently written in this era than in the preceding decades, tended strongly toward shock and sensationalism. Earlier tragedy employed sensation and shock in actions, but this newer tragedy startles and strikes home with horrifying and sensational ideas. *The Maid's Tragedy* (c. 1611), by Beaumont and Fletcher, inaugurates such tragedy. In this drama, a king's mistress is forced as wife upon the hero to conceal the royal indiscretions. Incest and similarly shocking themes are exploited in the tragedies of this era.

TRAGICOMEDY is defined by Fletcher in his preface to *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c. 1609): "A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy." This may sound like Victorian melodrama to some, and to preclude our equating of the two, it may be well to show here just what their similarities and differences are. Renaissance tragicomedy shared with the Victorian melodrama:

(1) Subordination of character to plot;
(2) Sentimentality rather than sentiment;
(3) Atmosphere of tragic consequences, even mounting horror, but:
(4) Happy ending often at cost of severe wrenching.

The Renaissance tragicomedy differed from Victorian melodrama in:

(1) Poetic exaltation instead of prose;
(2) Central characters are kings and princes, queens and noble ladies, instead of middle-class characters;

(3) Sophistication of worldly wise court instead of middle-class ethics;
(4) Frank escapism, not pseudorealism.

Tragicomedy, however, is no mere alternation of grim and gay, as we find in Shakespeare's juxtaposition of serious main plot and comic subplot, but rather it is a plot that shapes toward a tragic conclusion only to be converted to a happy finale by the ingenious playwright. An age that muted Elizabethan exuberance found this type of escapist drama particularly to its taste.

The COMEDY OF MANNERS was an outgrowth of the realistic comedy and the comedy of humours. The first significant example is Fletcher's *Wild Goose Chase* (1621). The comedy of manners is a witty mirroring of upper-class mores in which genteel conduct and flashing repartee are far more important than emotions or ideas. Its preoccupation is the gay stratagems of the game of courtship.

THE PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMATISTS (1585–1595)

In Renaissance England the drama as a medium of expression for the would-be writer was roughly analogous to the position of the novel in recent years. A lucky hit meant fame and fortune unattainable from other types of literary writing. Initially the "University Wits" in the 1580s started the public theater on the way to greatness with the dramas of Lyly, Peele, Greene, Kyd, and Marlowe. These dramatists were for the most part fresh from the humanistic training in the universities and altered the medieval forms of the drama in the light of their classic education. However, in order to gain subject matter for their plays, they used every source available to them, thereby ranging far from their classical and medieval models; also they were able to inform their works with a sense of their own personalities, a quality that the earlier writers of the Miracle and Morality plays rarely achieved.

In the great age, during Shakespeare's active career, a company produced numerous plays each season and forced speedy delivery from playwrights. A successful new play would be produced once a week for about twelve weeks, its total receipts amounting to about £100, its total attendance to about twenty-five thousand. The playwright normally received about £8 for a play and a share of the receipts of the third performance. The scripts were the exclusive property of the acting company. Believing that attendance would be cut if a play were circulating in printed form, the companies jealously hoarded scripts and themselves published the plays to make a bit more money after the acting days of a play were considered over. Initial printings were usually in quartos, the cheapest form of contemporary book printing. The form in which we possess most Renaissance drama is therefore often rather sloppy and always subsequent to the date of first performance. Con-

sequently the exact dating and priority of these dramas one to another cannot be determined.

John Lyly (1554–1606). In the summer of 1583, John Lyly, whose prose fiction is discussed in the chapter on Spenser and who is also treated in this chapter under drama of the court, received from the Earl of Oxford the lease to Blackfriars Hall where the choirboys presented plays for the nobles. For the ensuing Christmas season he prepared *Campaspe* (1584) for performance before the queen by the choristers. In this prose comedy, Alexander the Great relinquishes the beautiful Campaspe to her artist lover, Apelles. The love scenes are actually offstage, and Lyly concentrates upon courtly behavior and euphuistic dialogue. "Apelles' Song" is one of the most famous *vers de société* in English. Although his own drama is slender stuff, Lyly proved one of the most influential playwrights of the age.

In *Galathea* (before 1588) Lyly brought in the device of girls disguised as boys; Shakespeare was to employ this plotting frequently. In *Endimion* (c. 1588) Lyly introduced etherealized fairies into English drama, and Shakespeare seized on this innovation. Lyly even anticipated the later comedy of manners. The robust popular theater could not tolerate the pure confection of Lyly, but it was strongly influenced by it, often proffering a little "caviar for the general" to let the groundlings taste a bit of the court refinement.

George Peele (c. 1557–1596). George Peele was the son of a Christ's Hospital clerk who wrote pageants. With a B.A. and M.A. from Oxford, Peele returned to a vagabond existence in London. Probably he was a scamp and a swindler. In impassioned addresses and odes he displayed an extravagant chauvinism. He died in obscurity. His first drama was *The Araygnment of Paris* (1584), which repeats the famous mythological tale of the argument over the Golden Apple of Discord; rather absurdly, Peele wrenches the end by having Diana discard the three claimant goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite, and Pallas Athena, and present the prize of beauty to the then fifty-year-old Elizabeth I.

His imitations of Marlowe, *Edward I* (1593), a chronicle play, and *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594), presenting the historic English adventurer Thomas Stucley, are quite inferior. *The Love of King David and the Faire Bethsabe* (pub. 1599) is one of the very few Elizabethan dramas dealing with scriptural subjects. Perhaps the best work by Peele, it is the text of 2 Samuel 11–20 set to poetry. Unlike the miracle drama and like the modern cinema, it lards the Biblical tale with the exotic and the erotic.

The Old Wives' Tale (c. 1590)—Romantic comedy. In what was perhaps Peele's most influential work, aged Gammer starts a rambling story that comes to life on the stage. Princess Delia has been enchanted by Sacrapant. Searching for her are her two brothers, her lover Eumenides, and a stupid pedant Huanebango (satirizing Gabriel Harvey). The magician places her brothers in a spell and magically blinds Huanebango, who is married to a hideous shrew. By his own natural goodness and the assistance of a friendly

ghost, Eumenides overpowers Sacrapant. The magic spells are broken and the lovers united.

Admittedly a whimsical prose fairy tale, Peele's play is apparently the founder of Elizabethan romantic comedy. Freshness, high spirits, and optimism suffuse the drama. The lyrics sung by the chorus of harvesters are among the most charming of the age. A far cry from the homey scenes of *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and the brittle comedies of Plautus and Terence, this play casts a romantic luster over its potpourri of disparate materials. Its source is unknown except for the whole world of fairy tale. This work influenced Milton's *Comus,* and its title was used by Arnold Bennett for his greatest novel (1908).

Robert Greene (1560–1592). Robert Greene took his degree at Oxford, reveled abroad, then set himself to short but fertile literary production until his death. Greene produced several plays, and may claim greatest fame for the varied and graceful lyrics scattered through his romances and dramas. His prose works are discussed in Chapter 10, under prose fiction.

As a dramatist Greene at first imitated Marlowe. Perhaps his most interesting work of this period is *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (pub. 1594), freely dramatizing Ariosto. Probably his best constructed play was *The Scottish Historie of James the Fourth* (pub. 1598), completely pseudohistory actually based upon the *Hecatommithi* by the Italian Cinthio; notably this is the first appearance upon the English stage of Oberon, King of the Fairies.

The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bungay (c. 1590, pub. 1594)—Romantic comedy. The main plot is a fictionalized account of the distinguished English scholar of the 13th century, Roger Bacon, who, along with Friar Bungay, constructs a marvelous Brazen Head. The magic head speaks its piece while Bacon sleeps, then falls into fragments. The subplot concerns Margaret, the Fair Maid of Fressingfield, who catches the eye of Prince Edward. The prince sends Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, to secure the girl as a royal mistress, but the intermediary and the girl fall in love with each other. Edward surrenders Margaret to Lacy and is rewarded for his generosity by securing Princess Elinor as his wife.

Margaret is the first great romantic heroine of the English stage, a man's ideal woman and the prototype of Shakespeare's many lovely women. Nashe termed Greene "the Homer of women." Greene portrays Margaret as virtuous and charming but also as vivacious, mentally alert, and equal to a man in will and spirit. The play is particularly delightful because of its idyllic mood and occasional lyricism. The two plots are adroitly joined by having characters move from one to the other, by simultaneous scenes befitting the Renaissance stage, and by the parallelism of their themes. Greene suggests that the power of love (Lacy and Margaret) is like the power of magic (Bacon and Bungay).

In plotting, atmosphere, and characterization the drama brings to full form the pattern of romantic comedy. The source for the main plot is *The Famous*

History of Friar Bacon, apparently not printed until 1627 but available to Greene in ms. The love story is probably original. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* undoubtedly inspired this writing about "white magic," as distinguished from the "black magic" of Faustus. Like Wagner in the Marlowe drama, Miles (Bacon's servant) and Ralph (the king's jester) are descendants of the medieval Vice.

Thomas Kyd (1558–1594). A native Londoner, Thomas Kyd may never have attended a university. His *Spanish Tragedy,* produced c. 1586, was probably the best-known play until the end of the century. Its lines were quoted and burlesqued in the 1590s as much as we today repeat and parody Shakespeare. Also ascribed to Kyd is *Arden of Feversham,* but it has been ascribed to nearly every playwright of that time. During riotings in 1593, Kyd's living quarters were searched and allegedly irreligious writings were discovered. Under torture Kyd asserted that the writings belonged to Marlowe, who was killed before he could be examined. Released under a cloud of suspicion, Kyd died in poverty.

The Spanish Tragedie, or Hieronimo is Mad Againe! (c. 1586)—Revenge tragedy. Horatio, son of Hieronimo, the Marshal of Spain, and Lorenzo, nephew of the king, capture Balthazar, son of the Portuguese envoy, as a prisoner of war. Balthazar falls in love with Lorenzo's sister, Bel-imperia, and for political purposes Lorenzo encourages the alliance. However, Horatio and Bel-imperia are lovers. Lorenzo and Balthazar surprise the pair and murder Horatio. Hieronimo feigns madness while plotting vengeance. In a play-within-the-play arranged by Hieronimo, Balthazar and Lorenzo are killed. Hieronimo and Bel-imperia commit suicide.

With this play Kyd apparently inaugurated the revenge tragedy. Seneca is the mainstay, but Kyd outdoes Seneca in bloody horrors. Senecan influence is also manifested in the ghost, the chorus, the numerous accounts by messenger, the set declamations, and the alternate-line dialogue (stichomythia). No previous English drama has such clear-sighted unity, here concentrated upon a father's revenge for his slaughtered son.

Perhaps no predecessor of Shakespeare is quite so effective in constructing scenes around the emotional reactions of his characters to the pressure of circumstances. The play establishes later practices, such as feigned madness and the play-within-a-play. Hieronimo is the pattern for the Revenger, a good man forced to take vengeance into his own hands when the law will not help him. Lorenzo is the model for the antagonist, the soulless Machiavel, capable of every nefarious scheme and duplicity. The soliloquies of Hieronimo humanize him and gain audience sympathy. But Kyd is no poet, and his blank verse is bombast. The source is unknown but probably was a contemporary tale now lost. Although the material is not historical, it may have been suggested by the war between Spain and Portugal in 1580.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593). Born in Canterbury, Christopher Marlowe was the son of a shoemaker. He received a B.A. from Cambridge in

1584 and an M.A. in 1587. By the latter year it seems he was attached to the Lord Admiral's Men as a dramatist. Sir Walter Ralegh and other dashing men-about-town were his roistering companions. He was accused of heretical, even atheistic, views, but before the authorities could question him, he was rather mysteriously killed by his companion, Ingram Frizer, a gentleman, in a tavern brawl at Deptford. Marlowe may have been a victim of a conspiracy, possibly because of his alleged political activities as an agent of France.

Marlowe's reputation slumbered through the 17th and 18th centuries, but rose to giddy heights with the Romantics of the 19th century. Twentieth-century fantasizing about him, such as claiming him to be the author of Shakespeare's plays, is unnecessary. The ascertainable facts about Marlowe assure him major stature in English letters. His great dramatic achievements were:

(1) "Marlowe's mighty line," as Ben Jonson aptly termed it. Although Surrey introduced blank verse into English and *Gorboduc* had employed it in drama, blank verse was a pale and chambered thing until Marlowe made it resound with eloquence and grandeur. Shakespeare and the multitudes of English poets who have since employed the form ultimately derive blank verse's expressive force from Marlowe.

(2) "The Muses' darling," as Peele termed him, first trumpeted from the stage the Renaissance lust for life. Not since Chaucer had an English voice so sounded the robustness of living, its challenges and its glories. But Marlowe senses the tragic grandeur of life quite differently from Chaucer. The central character in each of his dramas is a towering figure, insatiably desiring to wrestle with every experience. Not even Shakespeare pictured such supermen, driven by such consuming desire.

(3) No previous English dramatist had such a sense of theater. Kyd may have known more about dramatic construction, but Marlowe knew the brilliant stage maneuver that would stir the audience by its sheer theatricality.

Following is a discussion of his plays arranged in chronological order as nearly as possible.

Tamburlaine the Great (Part I, c. 1587; Part II, c. 1588)—"Fall of Princes" tragedy. This was apparently Marlowe's first work for the stage and it may well be the most remarkable initial effort by any of the world's great authors.

Part I. The ruthlessly ambitious Scythian shepherd, Tamburlaine, conspires with the general Theridamas to overthrow the King of Persia. The king's treacherous brother, Cosroe, is used, then slain in turn, as Tamburlaine makes his bloody way to the throne. Bajazeth, ruler of Turkey, and his wife, Zabina, are defeated and publicly exhibited in a cage until in chagrin they dash out their brains. Tamburlaine's beloved, Zenocrate, pleads for the sparing of her land and her father, the Soldan of Egypt, but the merciless

conqueror obliterates that country. He even slaughters the virgins of Damascus who are stationed before the city to intercede for it.

Part II. A wildly enthusiastic public demanded a sequel to the original play, which is now known as Part I. In Part II, Tamburlaine's gory conquests continue. He enters Babylon in a chariot drawn by defeated kings. The confident victor, however, is shaken by the death of Zenocrate and the cowardice of one of their sons. Drunk with power and sated with blood, Tamburlaine wildly orders an assault by his troops upon the powers of Heaven. Now his all-conquering armies are helpless, and death claims the conqueror. He falls dead upon the tomb of Zenocrate.

The stunning innovations wrought by Marlowe in this work set the stage for portrayal of the Renaissance hero. While Spenser was celebrating the Christian virtues of holiness, moderation, courtesy, piety, and humility, Marlowe was creating the prototype of the Renaissance egoist, the audacious villain, a figure as enthralling as Milton's Satan. Here is the fascinating "Renaissance beast," crushing all opponents in his bid for power. This monstrous figure gains the understanding and even the sympathy of the audience because he does not seek mere wealth and power; his is the intellectual pleasure of toppling the established order. His single-minded drive is strangely refreshing when compared with the weakness, pettiness, and labored scheming of his adversaries. Tamburlaine is consumed by the Renaissance worship of unattainable beauty. Like his creator, he is a poet and a visionary. Part II begins to underline the horrible futility of all this power-seeking. All ten acts sweep onward with epic and lyric strength. In the arc of the two plays the hero-villain is carried from humble origins through incredible triumphs to eventual fall, thus fulfilling the medieval Wheel of Fortune theme, and creating the "Fall of Princes" tragedy.

There was an actual Timur-Leng (1369–1405), a Mongol emperor and a contemporary of Chaucer, whose ravages extended from Asia Minor to India. Marlowe's chief source was *The Forest* (1571), a translation by Thomas Fortescue from the Spanish of Pedro Mexia. The initial success of the drama was assured by the huge and highly popular actor, Edward Alleyn, who first created the stage role.

The Tragicall History of Dr. Faustus (c. 1589)—"Fall of Princes" tragedy. Dissatisfied with barren philosophy the aging German savant, Dr. Faustus, conjures up Mephistophilis, who agrees to be his slave for twenty-four years in return for the pledge of Faustus' soul. Now equipped with superhuman powers and renewed youth, Dr. Faustus roams the world in search of all knowledge and experience. He can perform incredible deeds, including the summoning of spirits, most ecstatically performed in the case of Helen of Troy. At times he seeks repentance, but the exhilaration of ever-new learning and living is too much for him. Finally the years of the compact expire. Dr. Faustus tries to appeal to Christ and God, but he has forfeited his right to

pray. At the stroke of twelve, Lucifer bears the soul of Dr. Faustus away to perdition.

Again Marlowe's central character is consumed with vaulting ambition, now for complete intellectual power. Marlowe was the first to see the poetry in the Faust theme, later to reach its highest expression in Goethe's *Faust* (1790–1833). The superstitious mind frequently deemed magicians in league with the devil (magicians still garb themselves in "devilish" attire and are often pictured on posters with imps around them). Such tales clustered about a German charlatan, Johannes Faust, who posed as a philosopher, astrologer, prophet, and magician c. 1510–c. 1540. The German *Historia von Dr. Johann Fausten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1587) prosaically recounts the story as Marlowe uses it, in stern Protestant piety. The English translation was not published until 1592 but probably was known to the dramatist in ms. Marlowe transforms the concept into a "Fall of Princes" tragedy for the Renaissance intellectual–in terms of aspiration, bounding achievement, and inevitable failure.

The surviving text from 1604 seems horribly mangled by more than a decade of playhouse tinkering. The superb opening and conclusion are not matched by the intervening scenes. We know that William Bird and Samuel Rowley, minor playwrights, were paid £4 by Henslowe in 1602 for revisions. Perhaps they are to blame for the banal comic bits and prose passages. In extant form the play shows the familiar double-plot construction with buffoonery in the subplot to parallel the Faust theme. The Good and Bad Angels contending for the soul of Faustus come straight out of the medieval Moralities. Although Marlowe was universally reputed by his contemporaries to be heretical, if not blasphemous, the play is completely orthodox in its Protestant Christianity.

The Jew of Malta (c. 1591)—"Fall of Princes" tragedy. Half the wealth of the Jew, Barabas, is confiscated by the Governor of Malta, Ferneze, to pay the tribute demanded by the Grand Seignior of Turkey. Barabas plots revenge for the theft but in the process causes the death of his daughter Abigail. Barabas plans to betray the island to the Turks, then dump these allies into a boiling caldron. One of his intended victims springs the trap and sends Barabas to his death.

Again the Marlovian central figure is grasping for the world, this time the world of financial wealth. Material possessions are the goal of Barabas because they alone can confer power and respect on him in a hostile Christian community. Barabas achieves magnitude by the audacity and might of his ambition. Although this play follows the "Fall of Princes" tragedy from financial embarrassment through material triumph to downfall, it also shows a debt to Kyd's revenge tragedy: Barabas avenges the loss of his money as Hieronimo avenged his son's death. Barabas is another Lorenzo, a Machiavel, but lifted above Kyd's art to become a poetic titan.

The first known edition of the play dates from 1633 and is certainly im-

perfect. The concluding three acts cannot match the power of the first two acts. Barabas compels genuine sympathy at the outset but then degenerates into a monster. A later hand may have rewritten the drama to accentuate its anti-Semitism. No source is known, but a suggestion may have come from a contemporary Constantinople Jew, David Passi, and a rumor in 1591 of a Turkish assault upon Malta that never took place. This seems to have been Marlowe's most popular play. It was frequently performed in 1594 when Elizabeth's physician, Lopez, a Spanish Jew, was accused of treason. *The Merchant of Venice* may have been written by Shakespeare to give his company a competing play.

The Troublesome Raign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second (c. 1592)—Chronicle Play. The weak English king is forced by irate nobles to banish Gaveston, his favorite. The estranged queen, Isabella, to regain her husband's favor, intervenes to have Gaveston recalled. Mortimer incites the queen against the king and the barons against Gaveston and the king. Momentarily, the Spencers aid the monarch, but with the return of the queen from France (where Normandy had been lost by the English) Edward is deposed and assassinated. The young prince who comes to the throne as Edward III orders the execution of Mortimer and the imprisonment of Isabella.

The earliest text, of 1594, is the best text of all Marlowe's plays. It is certainly the best constructed of his dramas. Marlowe's problem is that of Shakespeare's Richard II: how can the audience sympathize with a weak, wrongheaded king? Marlowe's solution is to show the treacherous, selfish crew tormenting the king, and to bring things to a pathetic climax (much admired by Charles Lamb) in the slaying of Edward II. Further sympathy arises from the belated loyalty of Kent and the firmness of the prince, who loved his father. Far beyond Marlowe's other plays, this drama develops character in other than the central figure. Gaveston is mean and sycophantic, Spencer is staunch and resolute, and Mortimer is villainous and daring. Although lacking the bravura poetry of Marlowe's earlier plays, this is smooth and even theater, brisk in movement.

The historical events, derived essentially from Holinshed, cover the period from 1307 to 1330, but Marlowe telescopes the action for dramatic effectiveness. The chronicle play reaches a maturity in this drama, offering to subsequent playwrights the clue to revision and compression of facts for theatrical purposes. Marlowe molds history into the plot form of the revenge tragedy and gives to the chronicle play the characterization and tragic heights of the "Fall of Princes" tragedy. Especially, he made the genre not a mere spectacle of previous history but a study of real people in understandable, real-life situations.

Marlowe was one of the outstanding Elizabethan lyric poets as well as a great dramatist. We will now briefly discuss a famous short poem, his narrative poem, and his two translations from the Latin.

"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (c. 1588) appeared in *The Passionate Pilgrim* and *England's Helicon.* It is one of the best known of the great Elizabethan lyrics. It called forth the answer "The Nymph's Reply," by Ralegh.

Hero and Leander (1598) is the undisputed masterpiece of Marlowe's lyric genius. It is a reworking of the famous story by the Greek poet, Musaeus. Written in heroic couplets, it is particularly noted for its lush sensuality and ringing, memorable lines. Many consider it to be the finest example of the erotic epyllion in the English language. However, Marlowe finished only two sestiads (about eight hundred lines) of the work. George Chapman (discussed in the chapter on Shakespeare's contemporaries and post-Shakespearean dramatists) completed the rest.

Ovid's Elegies (pub. 1596) was a translation of Ovid's *Amores.* It was probably a work done in Marlowe's early student days at Cambridge.

Lucan's First Book (pub. 1600) is a translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (Book I) into blank verse.

CHAPTER 12

Shakespeare

(1564–1616)

The previous chapters on the Renaissance have frequently referred to Shakespeare and may be consulted in conjunction with this section. Following general practice, this chapter treats all of Shakespeare's dramas as a unit, but the reader should, of course, consider his works to be a part of the entire literary scene.

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

KNOWN EVENTS. There are fewer known facts about Shakespeare's life than there are about Chaucer's. Ignoring the host of legends and fabrications, the significant ascertainable facts are:

1564, April 26. Baptism of William Shakespeare in his native community of Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire. Since he died April 23, 1616, "*anno aetatis* 53" (in his 53d year), his birth was not later than April 24. The generally accepted birthdate is April 23. His father was a tanner, glover, dealer in agricultural products, and town official. His mother was Mary Arden. William was the third of eight children and the eldest son. The Stratford Grammar School is accepted as his alma mater (c. 1571–c. 1577), but no records are extant.

1582, November 28. Marriage bond of sureties for "Willm Shagspere" and "Anne Hathwey" (Hathaway). He was then eighteen and she twenty-six. Contemporary records show frequent marriage of young men to older women. There is no information on the actual date of the wedding ceremony, nor is there evidence about the happiness or unhappiness of the union, but Shakespeare's gradual—and eventually complete—retirement from the stage and his return to his family and his small native town after his London career suggest at least a conventional marital relationship.

1583, May 26. Baptism of "Susanna, daughter to William Shakespeare." In the light of contemporary betrothal customs, the birth of a child six months after formal marriage was neither unusual nor discrediting. Formal engage-

ments before witnesses often preceded a wedding ceremony by some time and were deemed proper marriage. However, it does throw an aura of impetuosity over the whole affair.

1585, February 2. Baptism of "Hamnet and Judith, son and daughter to William Shakespeare." Shakespeare is believed to have gone to London c. 1587. Leaving his family in Stratford was perfectly acceptable, as most women of the era stayed at home when their husbands migrated elsewhere for careers. Conjectures about Shakespeare's activities in his early twenties have credited him with being schoolmaster, soldier, and so on, but we have no real idea how he spent this period.

1592. A statement by Greene in *Groatsworth of Wit* is apparently the first professional reference to Shakespeare: "an upstart crow, beautiful with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes factotum,* is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in the country." ("O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide" appears in *Henry VI, Part 3.*) We are certain that a William Shakespeare was an actor, for his name appears in casts of players for Ben Jonson's dramas. Presumably he had already achieved quite a reputation as a playwright.

1593. First published work of Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis,* dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. The author terms the poem "the first heir of my invention," probably because stage plays were not yet deemed literature. During 1592–93 plague caused the closing of the London theaters and perhaps suggested to the idle poet that he might try to show that he could write verse on mythological subjects as well as any gentleman.

1594. *The Rape of Lucrece,* also published with dedication to Wriothesley. This seems the "graver labour" promised in the dedication to *Venus and Adonis.* First Shakespearean drama in print, *Titus Andronicus,* published anonymously.

1594, December 28. First wholly authenticated performance of a Shakespearean drama: *Comedy of Errors* performed at Gray's Inn, the law school, according to *Gesta Grayorum,* a facetious record of student activities.

1595, March 15. Payment of £20 to "William Kempe, William Shakespeare, and Richard Burbage, servants to the Lord Chamberlain" for two play performances before the queen. Shakespeare's earlier professional affiliations are uncertain, but by this date he certainly was an important member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, formed after the plague of 1593 from the remnants of several previous companies.

1596, August 11. Burial of "Hamnet, *filius* William Shakespeare" at Stratford.

1596, October 20. Grant of coat of arms to John Shakespeare for faithful and valiant service rendered by ancestors to Henry VII. This entry in

the College of Arms is usually interpreted as William's attempt to better his social status, now that he was well-to-do.

1596, November 29. Shakespeare was apparently involved in a quarrel between Francis Langley, builder of the Swan Theatre, and William Wayte, stepson of William Gardiner, justice of the peace in Surrey.

1597, May 4. Shakespeare purchased New Place and an acre of ground in Stratford, using the monies from his career in the theater.

1598. Shakespeare's name first appeared upon published plays: *Richard II, Richard III, Love's Labour's Lost.* He is highly praised as a poet and dramatist in *Palladis Tamia* by Francis Meres. He is recorded as taking an acting role in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour.*

1599. *"The Passionate Pilgrim,* by W. Shakespeare," a piratical printing by William Jaggard. Only five of the twenty poems in this collection are by Shakespeare. Obviously, his name sold books by this time.

1600, August 23. Shakespeare's name first appears on the Stationers' Register, as author of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Henry IV, Part 2.*

1603, May 17 and 19. Shakespeare is mentioned in royal documents as one of the sharers in the King's Men, new designation for the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

1608, February 21. Baptism of Elizabeth Hall, daughter of Susannah, and the only grandchild Shakespeare knew.

1608, August 9. Shakespeare became a housekeeper of Blackfriars Theatre with a seventh share. This was a "private" indoor theater within the city of London.

1609. Publication of the sonnets.

From the purchase of New Place in 1597 Shakespeare reassociated himself with ever stronger ties to his native community. His name appears in quite a few records as a property holder and participant in local affairs. Apparently he gradually withdrew from his London career to Stratford life. After 1610 he seems to have maintained a permanent residence in Stratford, coming up to London only for visits. His last documented appearance in the great city was November 17, 1614.

1616, March 25. Shakespeare revised and signed his will. The date for the original draft of the will is unknown. The will mentions all his immediate family and many Stratford neighbors. Among bequests is: "to my fellows John Heminge, Richard Burbage, and Henry Condell, xxvj *s.* viij *d* a piece to buy them rings." Heminge and Condell in 1623 assembled the First Folio, the first attempt to publish the collected works of Shakespeare. The most famous entry of the will is: "unto my wife my second best bed with the furniture." To the modern reader this phrase sounds like a concluding slap at Anne. However, it was the standard legal wording in wills of the age. In medieval times the monarch had the right to a subject's best property at the subject's death. To secure all property for one's heirs, a legal fiction specified all one's holdings as "second best."

1616, April 25. Burial of "Will Shakespeare, gent." in the chancel of Stratford church. The monument, erected before 1623, gives April 23 as the date of death and specifies the poet's age as 53.

Attempts to find autobiographical allusions in Shakespeare's works are highly dubious. The sonnets may be a conventional exposition of Petrarchan and Renaissance sonnet themes. In the plays Shakespeare seems to have no definitive mouthpiece or image of himself; rather, he is the perfect dramatist, calling upon his characters to say and do what is in their inherent nature instead of his own.

SHAKESPEARE'S AUTHORSHIP DISPUTED. According to the Romantics, the mild bourgeois Stratfordian, satisfied with life as a modest householder and amusingly seeking a doubtful coat of arms, could not be the author of the immortal dramas. In 1769 Herbert Lawrence for the first time in history challenged the ascription of the plays to the minor actor William Shakespeare. In 1857 William Henry Smith proposed Sir Francis Bacon as the real playwright. In the 20th century, candidates galore have been advanced as the author of the Shakespearean plays: Earl of Rutland, Earl of Derby, Earl of Oxford, Christopher Marlowe, and so on. Any of these choices could display the intellectual culture and social breadth questionable in the less educated Shakespeare. The proposal has also been made that "William Shakespeare" was a corporate name used by collaborating playwrights.

Ingenious and diverting as most of these hypotheses are, there is no convincing substantiation for any of them. Shakespeare's own age fully accepted him as the great dramatist, especially the shrewd, no-nonsense Ben Jonson. There is absolutely no report or rumor against Shakespeare's authorship until 1769. Apparently Shakespeare was the sort of artist whose actual experiences are commonplace and whose vast Renaissance adventure takes place in his mind and spirit.

SHAKESPEARE'S POETRY

THE NARRATIVE POEMS AND WORKS FROM ANTHOLOGIES

Venus and Adonis (1593) was dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley. This and *Lucrece* seem to be the only works of Shakespeare whose publication he supervised. Although modern scholars usually conceive of the Aphrodite-Adonis account as a myth of the vegetation cycle, to Shakespeare it is simply a love story. The goddess of love, Venus, is enamored of the handsome mortal, Adonis, a lover of boar hunting. The goddess parades all her wiles and charms to dissuade the youth from hunting, but he is decidedly cool. She begs him to meet her on the morrow, but he proceeds to the hunt. The next morning she hears his hounds at bay and finds Adonis slain by the wild boar. The dead youth is transformed into the anemone.

This first certain product of Shakespeare in London shows his bid not for

dramatic but for literary fame. The form is an erotic narrative poem, strongly sensual and lacking any assertion of spiritual love. Ultimate source is the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* where Adonis is older and bolder. The shy boyishness of Shakespeare's Adonis may come from the reluctant Hermaphroditus wooed by Salmacis in the *Metamorphoses.* Lodge's *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589), with the running title *Glaucus and Scilla,* is the prototype, with a shy Glaucus and the same stanza as Shakespeare's poem, the sextain of iambic pentameter, riming *a b a b c c.* A hint of the reluctant Adonis appears in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander.*

Shakespeare gauged well the current taste, for this proved his most popular work during his lifetime. By 1616 *Venus and Adonis* went through ten editions and was referred to or quoted in at least thirty-four contemporary writings (*Hamlet* came next with twenty-nine allusions by contemporaries). Although the poem is heavily laden with Renaissance lilies and roses on damask cheeks, it displays much personal observation of authentic English countryside. Shakespeare spins out the tale to 1194 lines with superb descriptions of Wat the hare, the dive-dapper peering through the wave, and even a hurt snail. Coleridge declared, "In this beautiful poem there is an endless activity of thought in all the possible associations of thought with thought, thought with feeling, or with words, of feelings with feelings, and of words with words."

The Rape of Lucrece (1594), also dedicated to Wriothesley, may be the "graver labour" promised in the dedication to *Venus and Adonis.* This poem may have been occasioned by criticism of the previous work's lush amatory quality.

Lucretia, the beautiful daughter of Lucretius and wife of Collatinus, is violently assaulted by the lecherous Sextus, son of King Tarquin of Rome. After urging her father and her husband to revenge, Lucretia commits suicide. The subsequent revolt deposes Tarquin and establishes the Republic.

Ostensibly this rime-royal poem exalts the spiritual virtues of chastity, faithfulness, and honor. The Elizabethan audience realized the implication of human passions and improper conduct destroying the stability of the realm. The ultimate source is Ovid's *Fasti* and Livy's *History of Rome;* Shakespeare may have derived the account at closer hand from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* or Painter's *Palace of Pleasure.* Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamund* (1592) probably inspired the verse form and the prevailing tone. Modern taste seldom enjoys the leisurely pace and minute dwelling upon detail in this poem, nor its set speeches, extended rhetoric, and wholly undramatic quality. Nonetheless, the poem shows Shakespeare's mastery of language and lyricism. In vivid contrast to its predecessor, it is told reverently, without any sensuality. Coleridge appears to be the only great Shakespearean critic to hold the work in high esteem.

The Passionate Pilgrim (1599) was a pirated printing by William Jaggard, capitalizing on the sales value of Shakespeare's name. Of the five genuine

Shakespearean works, two are sonnets (138, 144), and the others songs from *Love's Labour's Lost.* The remaining poems in the volume have been attributed to Richard Barnfield, Bartholomew Griffin, and Christopher Marlowe.

"The Phoenix and the Turtle" is a short cryptic piece unlike anything else by the poet. It appeared in 1601 as one of the appended poems to Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr.* Generally accepted as Shakespeare's own, it has been praised by some critics, but no one really knows quite what it is about. Chester's own poem celebrates the love of his patron, Sir John Salisbury, and Salisbury's wife Ursula. From the union of the turtledove (constancy) and the phoenix (love) sprang their daughter Jane. Possibly Shakespeare's poem lauds not a physical but a spiritual union, "leaving no posterity." It sounds much like the "mystic death" of sexual ecstasy. Perhaps Shakespeare was essaying the crabbed "metaphysical" style of Donne, even tongue in cheek.

THE SONNETS

Shakespeare's Sonnets Never Before Imprinted (1609) contained 154 sonnets in the English form, two of which (138, 144) had previously appeared in *The Passionate Pilgrim.* The publisher Thomas Thorpe, whose reputation was a bit unsavory, undoubtedly printed these poems without Shakespeare's authorization. Circulating in ms. for some years, the sonnets were apparently transmitted to Thorpe by an unknown person, possibly the man addressed in the poems by Shakespeare. Critics universally agree that these are the greatest sonnets in any language. Upon virtually all other points the scholars disagree in vexed puzzlement.

SUMMARY. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to a handsome, noble, blond youth.

1–17 urge the young man to marry and thereby perpetuate his virtue in offspring.

18–26 pay fulsome tribute to the handsome youth. Modern readers are tempted to find homosexuality in these and other affectionate addresses to the young man, but Renaissance mores permitted far more loving expression of normal male friendship than our customs will sanction. Also Sonnet 20 would seem to rule out any such interpretation. Sonnet 26, "a written ambassage," appears the accompanier of a gift.

27–32 indicate the sorrow of the poet at enforced separation from his friend. Here appear "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes" (29) and "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought" (30).

33–35 and 40–42 deal with the Dark Lady (a brunette), the poet's beloved who has been taken from him by his friend. This group appears to belong properly with 127–152, which deal extensively with the Dark Lady. All of these sonnets turn upon the Renaissance dispute of male friendship vs. love between the sexes, with the conventional claim of friendship's superiority.

This theme is introduced by the famous 33, "Full many a glorious morning have I seen."

36–39 and 43–47 seem to recount the friend's absence from London.

48–55 indicate the poet's removal from his friend. "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments" is 55.

56–58 and 61 form a group on loneliness.

59–60 and 62–65 are a series on time and beauty, perhaps best expressed in "Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore" (60).

66–70 and 94–96 treat of the world's corruption.

71–74 and 81 brood upon death, especially in the incomparable "That time of year thou mayst in me behold" (73).

75–77 praise the friend as the inspirer of the poet's verse.

78–80 and 82–86 reproach the patron for bestowing favors upon an unnamed "Rival Poet," evidently a person of ability and reputation.

87–93 regret the loss of the patron's confidence rather than a mere shift of financial patronage.

97–103 and 113–114 recount another absence of the poet from his friend.

104–108 and 115–116 are essentially congratulatory, reaching a climax in the magnificent "Let me not to the marriage of true minds" (116).

109–112 and 116–126 seek a restoration of the poet in his friend's heart. The ties of affection are strongly affirmed and misrepresentations are denied.

From 127 to conclusion may be another partial sonnet sequence, for these poems are largely meditations upon the poet's relations with the Dark Lady and do not appear specifically addressed to the handsome youth. Perhaps the printer had scrambled sheets, and these sonnets should be appropriately worked into the midst of the earlier sonnets. Certainly 127–154 are not in any genuine order.

127–128, 130 are "taunting" compliments similar to those we shall find in the somewhat tortured verse of John Donne.

129, 146, 147, and 152 bitterly reject the Dark Lady and all she stands for.

135, 137, and 143 are the "Will" sonnets, shamelessly punning on the poet's name.

The rest of the sonnets treat of the poet's wooing of the Dark Lady.

Even this disjointed summary imposes more order upon the sequence than it possesses in its printed form. Many of the sonnets could be applied equally to the blond male, the Dark Lady, or neither. Much ingenuity has been expended upon a revised order of the sonnets, by Samuel Butler in the 19th century and by others. No truly satisfactory arrangement is known, but 1–126, with the possible exception of the encased Dark Lady sonnets, may appear substantially in the order Shakespeare wrote them.

AUTHORSHIP. Hardly anyone doubts that these sonnets are essentially the product of Shakespeare. Remembering *The Passionate Pilgrim,* however, some scholars surmise that sonnets by other poets have been tossed into the mélange, especially from 127 on. Conjecture, not too convincing, has at-

tributed some of these sonnets to Barnabe Barnes, Samuel Daniel, John Donne and William Warner.

DATE OF COMPOSITION. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* inaugurated the sonnet vogue in 1591. After 1596 the fad sharply declined. Shakespeare notably followed contemporary literary fashions, and it is likely that he composed the sonnets between 1592 and 1596. Certainly they were in ms. circulation by 1598 when Francis Meres praises Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends." It is possible that the printed text includes sonnets written even later.

BIOGRAPHICAL ALLUSIONS. Every situation, theme, and image in these sonnets can be found in previous sonnet cycles, continental and English. All the fashionable gentlemen of the age were inditing sonnets, and Shakespeare may be indulging in a mere literary exercise through a conventional genre. The gripping sincerity of most of the sonnets may be simply the dramatic imagination of Shakespeare. Certainly the creator of Hamlet and Lady Macbeth could easily have imagined and convincingly created a blond youth and a Dark Lady. But many readers are resolutely persuaded that the poet is mirroring, no matter how darkly, a real-life experience. Wordsworth asserted of the sonnets that Shakespeare "With this key . . . unlocked his heart." Seekers for autobiography, however, stumble upon these problems:

(1) "W. H." The printed text devotes a full page to this enigmatic dedication: "To the onlie begetter of these insving sonnets Mr. W. H. all happinesse and that eternitie promised by ovr ever-living poet wisheth the well-wishing adventvrer in setting forth. T. T." Probably no other initials in history have bred so many words of speculation. Since the dedication is not by Shakespeare but by Thorpe, perhaps W. H. was merely the supplier of the ms. (Eliz. "begetter" could mean "transmitter"). William Hall was such a supplier of mss. to publishers. Two patrons of Shakespeare have been suggested, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, but a noble lord was not then referred to as "Mr. W. H." Other suggestions are Sir William Harvey, Wriothesley's stepfather, and a conjectural William Hughes based upon puns about "hews" in the sonnets. The blond youth and "W. H." may plausibly be Wriothesley, but we do not know.

(2) The Dark Lady. Supporters of the Wriothesley theory urge Mrs. Davenant, wife of an Oxford innkeeper; 17th-century rumor claimed that her dramatist son, Sir William Davenant (1606–68), was fathered by Shakespeare. Supporters of the Herbert theory offer Mary Fitton, Herbert's mistress; but her surviving portraits depict her as a blonde. Other suggestions have been Elizabeth Trentham, Elizabeth Vernon, Anne Whateley. There may be some tie with the dark Rosalines of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost.*

(3) The Rival Poet. George Chapman appears the favorite candidate, but

there is no definitive proof supporting that or other proposals: Barnes, Daniel, Drayton, Spenser.

THE ART OF THE SONNETS. The fascinating puzzles of the sonnets are insignificant in comparison to their achievement as poetry. No other sonneteer in all literature has brought to the form such breadth and depth in treating universal human experiences in masterful language. Minimized for generations in comparison to the dramas, the Shakespearean sonnets rose in reputation with the early 19th-century Romantics and were adored in a gushing crescendo by mid-Victorians. The modern and continued high repute of the sonnets is more moderately but no less vigorously keynoted by George Gissing, who said of them in 1883: "Every word is full-burdened with meaning, every line is a cadence of music." The great 20th-century French novel *Remembrance of Things Past* (1918–27) by Marcel Proust takes its title from one of these sonnets.

Appended to the printed text of the sonnets is a mediocre poem, "A Lover's Complaint," in the same stanzaic pattern as *Lucrece*. In verbose sentimental fashion a girl relates to a cleric her chagrin at a glib but heartless lover who ruined her. This may be an early work by Shakespeare, though many deny his authorship altogether.

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

THE TEXTS. Until 1623 all the printed plays by Shakespeare appeared in small, cheap quartos, each costing about a shilling and running to about one hundred pages. At best these quartos were hastily set up by compositors for quick sale. Approximately one in every ten plays on the current stage saw such publication. From Shakespeare's first printed play in 1594 until his death in 1616 a total of 184 dramas were printed in London, of which eighteen were by Shakespeare. A nineteenth, *Othello*, appeared in quarto in 1622, and the next year saw the first folio, containing thirty-six plays. It seems perfectly clear that Shakespeare had no hand in the publication of any of these plays.

Scholars have divided the quartos into "bad" and "good" quartos. The "good" quartos seem to have been printed from Shakespeare's mss. or from prompt-copies used by the theatrical company in play performance. "Good" quartos apparently originated in the following ways:

(1) After a play had run its course on the stage, the acting company (sole owner now of the drama) would have it published to obtain a bit more money from its property. Companies generally avoided publication during a play's active run for fear of losing customers.

(2) A need for ready money might extract playscripts from a company. Shakespeare may have written first for the Earl of Pembroke's Men who went bankrupt in 1593; this disaster might account for the first printed play by Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (1594). Seeking funds for the erection of the

Globe Theatre in 1599 may account for the extraordinary appearance of five Shakespearean plays in print in 1600.

(3) In pique at the pirated "bad" quartos and hastening to issue a correct copy for their reputation, companies might release even a current hit for publication. The "good" quarto of *Hamlet* (1604) thus seems to be a counter to the "bad" quarto of the previous year.

"Bad" quartos are garbled or otherwise inferior versions secured by unscrupulous publishers probably by one of these methods:

(1) Drama scripts, like gentlemen's verses, were occasionally circulating in ms. Though not an inferior version, *Troilus and Cressida* (pub. 1609) has all the appearances of thus coming to a printer's shop.

(2) One of the hired men, receiving only meager wages from a company and sharing none of its profits, might easily be persuaded to purloin a copy or reproduce a play in which he had acted. The "bad" quarto of *Hamlet* (1603) was probably concocted by a minor actor who knew his own lines and cues but botched the job horribly on speeches delivered while he was offstage.

(3) A stenographer or memorizer might take down the dialogue from viewing a stage performance. Gentlemen of the period were constantly inserting good quotations in their commonplace books, and a copyist might thus have disguised his activities in the playhouse. The "bad" quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) looks like a stenographic account, especially as its stage directions are not those of an author or director but rather those of an eyewitness.

The folios were large, handsome volumes. The first folio of Shakespeare's plays appeared in 1623, dividing its thirty-six dramas arbitrarily into Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. The text, in double-column format, totaled 908 pages and sold for £1. Of the approximately 1000 copies printed, about 156 survive, only 14 in perfect condition. A first folio in good condition now costs around £20,000. As mentioned previously, the compilers were John Heminge and Henry Condell, beneficiaries of Shakespeare's will and the sole survivors from the poet's old acting troupe, who paid tribute to their dead friend by collecting his dramas. For twenty of Shakespeare's plays the first folio is the only source, and the compilers seem to have used original ms. or prompt-copies as texts. Four of the previously published plays (*Love's Labour's Lost, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream*) were apparently reprinted from "good" quartos. For the rest, prompt-copies and perhaps original mss. were used. We can never be sure how close to Shakespeare's own writing are the versions of the first folio, but Heminge and Condell did their level best.

The second folio (1632) is a reprint of the first. The third folio (1663), a reprint of the second, includes *Pericles* (omitted from the first two folios) and six spurious plays. The fourth folio (1685) reprints the third, including the six dramas falsely ascribed to Shakespeare. Printed without reference to

quartos or mss., the last three folios are of no value in determining the original text. The first critical editor of Shakespeare was Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718) who began in his edition (1709) the still zealously pursued task of correcting and emending toward the true original of Shakespeare.

DATING. We do not know the first performance of a single Shakespearean drama. The ascertainable dates from publication, records by spectators, historical and literary allusions provide terminal dates only; we cannot be sure how much earlier the plays were written. The order of the dramas is likewise cloudy. It seems clear that *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Part 1* and *Part 2*, and *Henry V* were written in that order, and that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the next comedy after *Love's Labour's Lost;* but this assurance pins none of them down to a specific date. The order of arrangement that follows is based upon the considerations above together with the developing state of the Renaissance drama during Shakespeare's career and the internal evidence of his evolution from novice playwright to consummate master.

Considering the vast amount of writings about Shakespeare's dramas and the multiplicity of their interpretations, it would be impossible to present here anything like a detailed analysis of each of his plays. Therefore, the following examination of the plays attempts only to summarize the significant facts about each play and to offer comments on its style and structure, and, in the case of the more difficult plays, to indicate a few of the possible interpretations. However, as an aid to the student in arriving at his own interpretations of the plays, he should remember that in any approach to Shakespeare's plays the following considerations apply:

(1) How does the play project to an audience? Generations of studious readers of these plays have often neglected the cardinal point that these were scripts meant for actors to perform. Thus an interpretation of any of these plays—no matter how ingenious—that does not take this point into consideration bears but little relevance to the text and is really no more than an intellectual exercise.

(2) What did this Renaissance drama mean to a Renaissance audience? Though Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of the world's most universal writers, it must be kept in mind at all times that he was a Renaissance Englishman speaking to his age. Hence, a scene that may seem obscure or in need of explanation to a modern reader may have appeared perfectly clear and simple to one of Shakespeare's contemporaries.

EARLY COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Every craftsman must learn his trade. Shakespeare's early plays are his apprenticeship to a playwriting career. The plays of this period are strongly imitative, leaning in comedy upon the academic theater with its Plautine influence, the courtly drama of Lyly, and the popular romantic drama of Greene and Peele; leaning in tragedy upon the Senecan revenge motifs of Kyd; leaning in the chronicle play upon Marlowe. The blank verse often seems

to be ticked off upon the fingers and only occasionally matches the "mighty line" of Marlowe. Distinctly Shakespearean, however, is the unprecedented emphasis upon characterization and the warm affection for humanity.

The Comedy of Errors—Farce Comedy

Written c. 1590–93. First known performance December 28, 1594, at Gray's Inn. Stationers' Register, November 8, 1623. First printed in First Folio in "good" text. This is the shortest of Shakespeare's plays and the most artificial of his comedies, with doggerel verse, balanced speeches, puns and quibbles.

SUMMARY. A Syracuse merchant, Aegeon, and his wife Aemilia are shipwrecked with their twin baby boys, both named Antipholus, and twin baby slaves, both named Dromio. Aegeon with one son and one slave returns to Syracuse. Aemilia gets to Ephesus with the other son and other slave. Separated, Aemilia thinks all her family lost and enters a convent.

Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse at eighteen start a search for their brothers. Aegeon, losing contact with them, goes after them. All arrive in Ephesus on the same day. Since Ephesus is at war with Syracuse, Aegeon is condemned to death.

Ludicrous mix-ups occur as each Antipholus and each Dromio is mistaken for the other. Antipholus of Ephesus begs the Duke of Ephesus for justice in the misunderstandings with his wife. The convent abbess (Aemilia) intercedes for Antipholus of Syracuse. A general recognition with all twins at last together straightens out the tangle.

SOURCE. *Menaechmi* by Plautus, translated by William Warner in 1594. This must have been available in ms. some time before publication, and, of course, the original Latin was always present. The locking out of Antipholus of Ephesus from his home comes from *Amphitruo* by Plautus, not translated in the time of Shakespeare.

DISCUSSION. A farce about mistaken identities, the play nonetheless shows excellent construction and theatrical effectiveness, superior even to Plautus. Shakespeare molds a classic farce toward romantic comedy. His characters are not mere greedy scamps as in Plautus but normally selfish beings who presumably deserve the happy ending.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona—Romantic Comedy

Written c. 1590–94. Mentioned by Meres in 1598, but no pre-Restoration performance is known. Stationers' Register, November 8, 1623. First printed in First Folio. May be based upon a Greene play. Text displays inconsistencies and may be doctored by inexpert member of acting company.

SUMMARY. The two gentlemen are Valentine and Proteus. To be "tutor'd in the world," Valentine joins the court of the Duke of Milan and falls in love with the Duke's daughter Silvia, intended for the cowardly Thurio. Proteus wishes to woo his sweetheart Julia in Verona but is packed off by

his father to Milan and to his friend. Proteus also falls in love with Silvia and secures the banishment of his rival, Valentine, by revealing Valentine's infatuation with Silvia to her father. Disguised as Sebastian, a page, Julia in boy's clothes follows Proteus to Milan, only to find him making love to Silvia. Rejecting Proteus, Silvia dashes off after Valentine.

Silvia is captured by outlaws whose leader is Valentine. Proteus and Sebastian (Julia) recapture Silvia. Valentine saves Silvia from the advances of Proteus and then quixotically offers to let Proteus have her. Julia promptly faints at this offer. Recovering, she reveals her identity and Proteus realizes how much more he loves her than Silvia. The ducal party comes to the rescue, but Thurio's craven behavior causes the Duke to award Silvia to Valentine. The outlaws are reprieved and all ends merrily.

Low comedy is provided by the servant of Proteus, Launce, and Launce's dog, Crab.

SOURCE. *La Diana Enamorada,* a Spanish prose romance by Jorge de Montemayor, translated into English by B. Yonge in 1582, but first published in 1598. A French version by N. Collin (1578) may have been employed, for unlike many fellow dramatists Shakespeare seems to have combed all available sources for his plays. While *Comedy of Errors* often closely translates Plautus, the phrasing here is strictly the dramatist's own.

DISCUSSION. The story is thin and often a bit boring. Structure is loose. The blank verse is an improvement over the *Comedy of Errors,* and "Who is Silvia" is one of Shakespeare's most famous songs, especially enchanting with the later Schubert music.

For perhaps the first time, Shakespeare here hit upon two themes he later exploited with far greater success: (1) The disguised girl in pursuit of her lover, (2) the love vs. friendship theme, as two devoted friends love the same girl. Valentine's apparently cavalier renunciation of Silvia shocked Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch into saying that there wasn't even one gentleman of Verona, but the purpose is evidently to substantiate the Renaissance concept of male friendship transcending love between the sexes.

Picturesque pastoral scenes and plot business such as the use of the outlaws will form the staple of romantic comedy in later plays. Launce is Shakespeare's first wonderful clown. Lyly's influence is clear in the courtly flavor, love-friendship theme, and symmetrical pairings; Greene's influence can be seen in the blank verse and elements of romantic comedy.

Love's Labour's Lost—Romantic Comedy

Written c. 1590–94. Possibly the extant text is revision of a play performed at the home of Wriothesley during the plague year of 1593–94. First quarto (1598), a "good" but sloppily printed text, suggests performance before Elizabeth I during the Christmas season of 1597–98. Style is obviously early: doggerel verse, meticulously end-stopped blank verse, and extensive

rime in couplets, quatrains, and sonnets. The play certainly seems intended for the courtly audience rather than the populace.

SUMMARY. King Ferdinand of Navarre and three of his nobles vow to study for three years, during which time they will avoid the very sight of women. But a state visit of the Princess of France and her attendant ladies, while loftily barred from the castle and celebrated in park pavilions, smites the studious gentlemen's hearts with love: the king with the princess, Biron with the dark Rosaline, Longaville with Maria, Dumain with Katharine.

Each of the men sternly reproves the other backsliders while clandestinely advancing his own wooing. All are revealed and general merriment follows. To amuse the ladies the gentlemen provide a Russian masque that the saucy ladies thoroughly enjoy. A burlesque masque by the clowns Dull and Costard together with the pedants Don Adriano, Holofernes, and Nathaniel reaches delirious madness only to be shattered by grave news: the father of the princess is dead. The ladies depart, promising to marry their lovers at the end of a year if the gentlemen's love proves true.

SOURCE. This is Shakespeare's only play whose plot source is unknown. Possibly wholly original or derived from some source now lost. Contemporary French politics undoubtedly motivated the works. Ferdinand is Henri IV (Henry of Navarre). Biron is Charles de Gontaut, Baron de Biron; and Longaville is Henri d'Orléans, Duc de Longueville. Both were generals of Henri IV. Dumain's name appears to come from the Duc du Maine, who actually was an opponent of Henri IV. In 1578 and again in 1586 the French queen, Catherine de Médicis, with her ladies-in-waiting held diplomatic conferences with Henri IV. Later the Princess Marguerite of France became his wife.

DISCUSSION. The work is a satire that assails all utopias, all thwarting of natural impulses. The insincerity and vanity of the court are contrasted with the wholesome purity and natural wisdom of country life. Although the romancing of Costard and Jacquenetta parodies that of the aristocratic lovers, the chief purpose of the subplot is to ridicule Euphuism. Nowhere else in Shakespeare is the influence of Lyly's court comedy so prominent. As in Lyly the subjects for the pedants Holofernes, Nathaniel, and Don Adriano are learning, love, women, and marriage, all treated in an affected, artificial wordplay that annoys a modern reader but appeared brilliantly clever to the Elizabethan court.

Characterization is usually sacrificed to the witty dialogue, but Biron is the first of Shakespeare's intellectual, critical heroes, and Rosaline is one of his brilliant, thoroughly capable heroines. Probably with an eye to a courtly audience, this play offers more singing than any other Shakespearean drama, approaching almost the musical comedy. The most memorable lyrics are "When daisies pied and violets blue" and "When icicles hang by the wall."

The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus—Revenge Tragedy

Written c. 1592–94. Reference in *Bartholomew Fayre* (1614) by Jonson could set the play back even as far as 1589–90. Henslowe (the virtually illiterate playhouse proprietor) lists a "tittus & vespacia" for April 11, 1592, perhaps an error for *Titus Andronicus*. A "titus" was performed in 1593, and a "ne titus & ondronicus" in 1594. Stationers' Register, February 6, 1594. First quarto (1594) is "good." Meres mentions in 1598.

SUMMARY. After a victorious campaign against the Goths, the Roman general Titus Andronicus returns to Rome bearing Queen Tamora and her three sons as captives. The eldest of Tamora's sons is sacrificed by the four surviving sons of Titus to the memory of their twenty-one brothers, fallen in the wars. Although the people acclaim Titus as emperor, he defers to Saturninus, eldest son of the late emperor, who has promised to marry his daughter Lavinia. Bassianus, the brother of Saturninus, kidnaps Lavinia with the aid of her brothers and marries her. In struggling to regain his daughter for Saturninus, Titus kills his youngest son, Mutius. Saturninus weds Tamora, who long ago had caught his fancy.

Tamora plans horrible vengeance for the death of her son with the aid of her paramour, Aaron the Moor. Tamora's sons kill Bassianus and throw his body into a pit. Lavinia is ravished and her hands and tongue chopped off. Aaron plants gold near the pit containing the body of Bassianus and contrives that two sons of Titus shall fall into the pit and be accused of slaying Bassianus for the gold. Aaron informs Titus that his sons will be pardoned by the emperor if either the third son or Titus' brother sends a hand in ransom. Titus sends his own severed hand only to receive it back with the severed heads of his sons.

The mutilated Lavinia writes the names of her assailants in sand with a staff, guiding it with her mouth and arms, and the family of Titus determines full revenge. At a banquet in the palace of Titus, a cannibal dish fashioned from the flesh of Tamora's sons is served to Tamora. In a general melee, Lavinia, Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus are slain and Lucius, the sole remaining son of Titus, emerges as the new emperor and condemns Aaron to death by starvation.

SOURCE. *Troades* of Seneca for the initial sacrifice. *Thyestes* of Seneca for the cannibalism. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for the treatment of Lavinia. The themes of the monstrous Moor and the liaison of Moor and European woman were common. *A Noble Roman History of Titus Andronicus*, a prose account published in 1594, may have existed earlier and have provided Shakespeare's chief source; the play demonstrates improved plotting over the prose tale.

DISCUSSION. This holocaust of blood and terror looks like a talented beginner's attempt to outdo *The Spanish Tragedy*. However, its somber style and careful plotting make it a very good revenge tragedy, though modern

readers of Shakespeare find this fare repulsive. Attempts have therefore been made to ascribe the play in whole or in part to Kyd, Marlowe, and others; but all external evidence points to its firm inclusion in the Shakespeare canon.

Aaron the Moor is a villain modeled after the Tamburlaine and Barabas of Marlowe, though not too successfully, and the blank verse is closer to Marlowe than to Kyd but seldom rises to stirring poetry. If the play means anything beside entrail-twisting horrors, it is the relentless triumph of Nemesis which engulfs all who live by the sword.

EARLY CHRONICLE PLAYS

The Chronicle Play is the only form of drama invented by the Elizabethans. In some of these first plays Shakespeare is still leaning heavily on Marlowe and probably collaborating with other dramatists also.

The First Part of King Henry VI—Chronicle Play

Written c. 1591, probably after Parts 2 and 3. Henslowe's record of performance of "Harey the vj" on March 3, 1592, may be this drama. Reference by Nashe in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) to a play about Talbot seems to point to Part 1. Stationers' Register November 9, 1623. First printed in First Folio.

SUMMARY. It weaves together two major threads of English history from the death of Henry V to the marriage of young Henry VI to Margaret, daughter of the King of Naples:

(1) The French portion deals with Joan of Arc, generally portrayed as a wanton witch, and her military successes against the doughty Talbot, leader of the English.

(2) The English portion treats of the power struggle between the Protector Gloucester and the Bishop of Winchester, Henry Cardinal Beaufort. Most memorable scene is the plucking of white and red roses in the Temple garden as a prelude to the Wars of the Roses between York and Lancaster.

SOURCE. Chronicles by Fabyan, Hall, and especially Holinshed.

DISCUSSION. Generally ascribed to Shakespeare are II, iv, and IV, ii, and possibly all the English scenes. The French scenes are probably from another and lesser playwright. Maybe this is "play-doctoring," with Shakespeare touching up "Harey the vj." No other Shakespearean play shows so many likenesses (including actual quotations) to the work of other dramatists—Greene, Peele, Marlowe, Nashe—and contemporary poets—Spenser, Golding, Gabriel Harvey.

Two interpretations of Joan of Arc appear. The first, and dominant, is highly unfavorable, making her treacherous and lascivious. The second is more moderate and closer to general opinion today. The disparity of viewpoint suggests collaboration or work by more than one hand.

Characterization is subordinated to plot; the work is apparently constructed as a prelude to Part 2, though, as mentioned before, it was probably written later. No other Shakespearean chronicle play so violates historical

fact in juggling events out of chronology. Perhaps nowhere else is such a picture of English national confusion, with savage brawls ranging from the streets into parliament itself. The moral is clear: a monarch like Henry VI means a chaotic realm torn asunder by the selfish feuding nobles.

The Second Part of King Henry VI—Chronicle Play

Written c. 1590. No recorded performance before the Restoration. Stationers' Register March 12, 1594. First quarto (1594) a "bad" quarto perhaps reconstituted by the actor playing Suffolk and Cade. First good text appears in First Folio.

SUMMARY. The Protector Gloucester, angered at the cession of Anjou and Maine to secure Margaret as Henry VI's bride, earns the hostility of the queen plus that of Suffolk, York, and the Bishop of Winchester. His enemies secure the banishment of the Duchess of Gloucester on a trumped-up charge of sorcery against the king; then they murder Gloucester. Suffolk, the queen's lover, is banished for the murder and is slain by pirates. Most of Act IV is taken up with the Peasants' Revolt led by Jack Cade in 1450, its subsequent defeat, and his death. In the last act the Wars of the Roses begin, pitting Warwick, Salisbury, and the Yorkists against the Lancastrians, including the king and queen, Somerset and Clifford. The play concludes with the battle of St. Albans, in which Somerset and Clifford die.

SOURCE. Chronicles by Fabyan, Hall, and Holinshed, perhaps also Grafton and Stow. *Mirrour for Magistrates* was a possible influence.

DISCUSSION. Even with poetic license (Richard was less than three years old when Shakespeare makes him a brutally successful warrior at St. Albans), the play is episodic rather than truly unified. Also, the earliness of the play is indicated by the long, stiff, formal speeches, frequently end-stopped blank verse, and the rarity of dialogue starting in midline. Some scholars suspect that this is Shakespeare's very first play.

Analysis of history is rather naive, for the turmoil of the period is interpreted as generated solely by the personal feuds of greedy lords. Characters usually orate with the same eloquence and vehemence, but Gloucester and Cade are forerunners of Shakespeare's greater portraits of sympathetic tragic figures. Margaret appears onstage for some time but does not hold the deep interest of the audience.

The Third Part of King Henry VI—Chronicle Play

Written c. 1590. Quoted by Greene in *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592). "Sundrie times acted" by 1595. First printed in "bad" quarto (1595), the text probably having been reconstituted by the actor playing Warwick and Clifford. First authoritative text appears in the First Folio.

SUMMARY. After the battle of St. Albans, York is declared the royal heir by Henry VI, but Margaret, aided by young Clifford, supports the Prince of Wales, her son Edward. At the battle of Wakefield, Clifford kills the youngest

son of York; York himself is captured and fiendishly slain by Clifford and Margaret. At the ensuing battle of Towton the sons of York, Edward and Richard, kill Clifford and capture Henry VI. Edward of York is proclaimed king. Because of Edward IV's marriage to Lady Elizabeth Grey, Warwick aids Margaret in releasing Henry and capturing Edward. Escaping, Edward recaptures Henry and defeats and slays Warwick at the battle of Barnet. Later in the same year (1471) the Lancastrians are finally overwhelmed at Tewkesbury and Henry's son is killed. Richard dashes to the Tower of London and kills Henry.

SOURCE. Same as for Part 2.

DISCUSSION. This drama continues Part 2 virtually without a break and displays the same characteristics in style and structure.

The Tragedy of King Richard III—Chronicle Play ("Fall of Princes" Tragedy)

Written c. 1592. The "Buckingham" play performed on December 30, 1593, according to Henslowe may be *Richard III*. Stationers' Register October 20, 1597. First quarto (1597) "good" but perhaps a transcript from acting version or reconstitution from memory by a touring company. Dubious attempts have been made to attribute the play to Kyd, Marlowe, and Thomas Heywood with revisions by Shakespeare.

SUMMARY. As Edward IV is dying, his brother Richard sees six persons between him and the throne: the young sons of Edward, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York; Edward's daughter Elizabeth; Richard's elder brother Clarence, and Clarence's son and daughter. Richard has Clarence murdered in the Tower of London. By a strange wooing, he wins the Lady Anne, widow of Henry VI's son Edward, whom Richard and his brothers had stabbed to death at Tewkesbury.

After the death of Edward IV, Richard, aided by Buckingham, attacks his opponents, executing the Lords Rivers, Grey, and Hastings and Sir Thomas Vaughan. With the young princes immured in the Tower of London, Buckingham persuades the London mob to acclaim Richard as king. Once crowned, Richard has the young princes assassinated. He hastens the end of Anne and plans to marry Elizabeth. Clarence's son is kept under surveillance even though he is regarded as "foolish," and Clarence's daughter is thrust aside into a base marriage. Buckingham, distressed at the murder of the young princes, tries to join Richmond, but is captured and executed.

Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, leads an army against Richard at Bosworth Field. On the night before the battle Richard is haunted by the ghosts of those he slew, prophesying his defeat. In the battle Richard is slain by Richmond, who is proclaimed Henry VII—the first Tudor monarch. Henry marries Elizabeth, thus joining the houses of Lancaster and York and becoming the grandfather of Elizabeth I.

SOURCE. Hall, Holinshed, and Sir Thomas More's *History of Richard III*.

Resemblances are only slight to *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third,* written c. 1590 by Peele or Lodge and printed 1594.

DISCUSSION. With this drama Shakespeare seems definitely to have ended his apprenticeship. This is an imitation of Marlowe's "Fall of Princes" tragedy with a demoniacal hero-villain, but Shakespeare here surpasses any of his models.

The deformity of Richard provides some motivation for his villainy, which, unlike that of Marlowe's titans, is directed not at mankind but at a specific group of his kin and associates. Shakespeare therefore provides in Hastings, Buckingham, and others not mere foils for the central character but realistic human figures, acting and reacting with Richard. The horror of disorder occurs, Shakespeare points out, when a tyrant impiously rises to the throne by slaughter of the legitimate heirs. But, there comes the recoil of honest men, and the kingdom is purged that righteousness may prevail.

Because it is an early play, *Richard III* lacks great poetry and tragic grandeur, but it moves with dazzling speed and becomes a unit instead of a series of episodes. The wooing of Anne and the downfall of Buckingham are brilliantly conceived scenes. No previous play shows Shakespeare so deft and so sure as a dramatist. Perhaps its very lack of subtlety and its obvious conflicts explain why it alone of Shakespeare's early histories and tragedies has consistently held the stage down to the present.

THE GREAT CHRONICLE PLAYS

By 1595, Shakespeare seems to have gained self-confidence and the confidence of others. He now belonged to the prosperous middle class whose working arrangement with the Tudor monarchy had brought stability after generations of feudal bickerings (detailed in Shakespeare's early chronicle plays). Shakespeare and his class fully supported the principles of order, authority, and security, and abhorred a weak government and the threat of chaos. While in liberal fashion condemning absolute power and the oppression of the people, Shakespeare demanded firm, enlightened rule of the "fickle" mob. Henry V, for instance, seems to be his political ideal.

Having already proved his ability to construct a play and write blank verse, Shakespeare is now ready to produce great poetry in superb drama. He is now fully his own master, speaking in his own voice. In all the plays, characterization will be rich and deep, and especially in the histories and tragedies will the intellectual content be high and the analysis profound.

The Life and Death of King John—Chronicle Play ("Fall of Princes" Tragedy)

Written c. 1595–96. Mentioned by Meres in 1598. No known performance prior to 1737. First printed in the First Folio.

SUMMARY. King Philip of France and the Duke of Austria support the claim of Arthur to the throne of his uncle, King John. John invades France,

bringing with him his mother Elinor and Faulconbridge, illegitimate son of Richard I. Peace is effected by the marriage of John's niece, Blanch, to the Dauphin. However, Philip of France turns upon John, who has been excommunicated by Cardinal Pandulph, the papal legate, for refusing to accept Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. The English defeat the French, Austria being slain by the Bastard, and Arthur captured and sent to England for slaying by Hubert de Burgh. Grief brings madness and death to Constance, Arthur's mother. Hubert is unwilling to murder Arthur, but Arthur kills himself in an attempted escape.

Suspecting John of murdering Arthur, Salisbury and other English nobles join the Dauphin. John meets the allies in battle, but illness forces his retirement to Swinstead Abbey where he is poisoned—supposedly by a monk—and dies in fearful agony. John relinquishes rule to Faulconbridge the Bastard. Discovering the Dauphin's treachery, the English nobles restore their allegiance to the English line. The play ends with the retreat of the French and the united pledge of the English to the new monarch, Henry III.

SOURCE. Chiefly *The Troublesome Raigne of Iohn King of England,* probably written c. 1588 at the height of anti-Catholic feeling by Marlowe or Peele, printed 1591. *The Troublesome Raigne* in 1611 and 1622 reprintings was ascribed to Shakespeare. *King John* is a shrewd rewrite of the earlier play, condensing much and expanding judiciously for dramatic effects.

DISCUSSION. This play is often cited to show Shakespeare's hostility to Roman Catholicism. Usually he treats the Old Faith with gentle respect, and here he moderates the bitterness of the source drama. Shakespeare's emphasis is not upon the anti-Catholicism of *The Troublesome Raigne* but upon patriotism.

Although the play offers more great rhetoric than great poetry, the maturing of the dramatist is demonstrated by:

(1) The examination of current political concepts. The rights and duties of kings, the inheritance by primogeniture, and the relations of secular to spiritual rulers are aired as never before in Shakespeare. The playwright obviously supports the concept of order and the unique glory of England, but he avoids committing himself further.

(2) The determination of history. Although Shakespeare sees events as caused largely by personalities, no previous drama so achieves a national viewpoint. The destiny of the nation and the war of principles prove larger than the mere selfish bickerings of unruly lords.

(3) The humanization of history. Shakespeare induces more pathos and sentiment. Arthur begging Hubert for his childish life and eyesight is more effective than the murder of the young princes in *Richard III.* Constance's bereavement is a touching scene; attempts at dating have suggested the dramatist's personal grief for his son Hamnet, dead at eleven years of age in 1596.

The entire play looks suspiciously like a rewrite job instigated by the com-

pany, not wholeheartedly undertaken by Shakespeare, but competently and eloquently constructed.

The Tragedy of King Richard II—Chronicle Play ("Fall of Princes" Tragedy)

Written c. 1595–96. This may be the "K. Richard" play performed at the house of Sir Edward Hoby December 9, 1595. On February 7, 1601 the supporters of Essex paid the Lord Chamberlain's company to perform this drama on the eve of the rebellion by Essex; it was apparently hoped that the spectacle of the deposing of a king might stir the citizenry to revolt, but the wild uprising was put down the next day, February 8. Stationers' Register, August 29, 1597. First quarto (1597) a "good" text.

SUMMARY. Mowbray is accused of murdering the Duke of Gloucester by Henry Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt. Richard II orders trial by combat but at the last moment exiles Mowbray for life and Henry for ten years. At the death of John of Gaunt his property is seized by the king to pay for war in Ireland. With Richard absent from the realm, Henry lands in Yorkshire to reclaim his family's property. Aided by Northumberland, Henry confronts the regent, York, uncle of Richard.

Returning to Wales, Richard finds his forces melting away to join the popular Henry. Richard and Aumerle, York's son, are captured by Henry at Flint Castle. Although protesting that he seeks only his rightful prerogatives as Duke of Lancaster, Henry bears Richard as prisoner to London. Before parliament, Richard is forced to confess crimes against the state and to abdicate in favor of Henry IV.

Richard is imprisoned at Pomfret Castle. Aumerle seeks to lead a rebellion against Henry IV; while his loyal father agrees to Aumerle's death, the Duchess of York successfully pleads for her son's life. On hint from Henry IV, Sir Pierce of Exton has Richard murdered. Henry IV regrets the assassination, exiling the murderer and vowing his own repentance.

SOURCE. Holinshed, and perhaps Daniel's *History of the Civil Wars.*

DISCUSSION. With this drama Shakespeare starts the great tetralogy, proceeding through the Henry IV plays to his last chronicle play, *Henry V. Richard II* seems to be the second part of a two-part drama (the first concluding with the murder of Gloucester and setting the stage for the opening of this play), but there is absolutely no evidence that Shakespeare wrote such a predecessor.

This seems to be the first consciously developed tragedy of character in the English drama. The real opponent of Richard is himself. He is a sentimental play actor, reveling in the role of king, but woefully miscast. He is an appealing figure—sincere, well-intentioned, eloquent, genuinely poetic—but only when the assassins spring upon him does he at last leap to direct and vigorous action.

Bolingbroke unites in his person all the forces arraigned against Richard and all the qualities truly demanded by kingship of the era. In the play, Henry

is impressive but unlovable. He is a man of actions, not of words. He knows when to use guile and when to use force.

Wholly Shakespeare's invention is the scene of the two gardeners in Act III. By comparing the state to their garden, the common workmen force even the dullest of the audience to realize the unifying concern that the play shares with Elyot's *Governour* and scores of other Tudor works: the nature and functions of the ideal ruler.

The First Part of King Henry IV—Chronicle Play and Realistic Comedy

Written c. 1597. Meres mentions "Henry the 4" in 1598. First known performance, March 6, 1600. Stationers' Register, February 25, 1598. First printed in "good" quarto (1598).

SUMMARY. Two separate tales of history and comedy are united by the Rabelaisian Falstaff and the gay young Prince Hal, son of Henry IV.

The redoubtable Percys of the North, who had aided Henry IV in deposing Richard II, are jealous of their power and prerogatives. Henry IV is intractable, and the volatile Hotspur revolts. Alienating many of his supporters, Hotspur is defeated at the battle of Shrewsbury, dying at the hands of Prince Hal.

The roguish knight, Sir John Falstaff, is the boon companion of Prince Hal. Together they explore low London life, especially at the Boar's Head Tavern. In a mock interview Falstaff pretends to be the king discussing with the prince the latter's shady conduct. In the real interview Prince Hal promises his royal father that he will reform, and in battle he proves himself by slaying the valiant Hotspur, but he allows Falstaff to pretend that he was the one who killed Hotspur.

SOURCE. Holinshed for the historical facts. Apparently an early chronicle play, now lost, essentially related the events that Shakespeare expanded into three dramas—the Henry IV plays and *Henry V*. *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (licensed for printing in 1594) appears to be a shortened and inferior version of the earlier play. The comic scenes and details of Prince Hal's life were suggested by Shakespeare's dramatic sources.

DISCUSSION. Henry V was a great national hero, and part of his endearment to the English people lay in the legends of his dissolute youth. Shakespeare wishes to correct the popular opinion by having Prince Hal explain in a soliloquy that he is amusing himself in youthful capers while at the same time determinedly preparing himself in inward spirit to be a great monarch.

However, the most original creation of the drama is Falstaff, the most superb comic figure in Shakespeare, and a comic masterpiece unequaled in English except by Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Falstaff seems to have evolved thus:

(1) Sir John Oldcastle (c. 1375–1417), Lord Cobham, was the one figure among the nobility to be associated with the Lollard movement. He was a friend of the real Prince Hal, who tried to persuade him out of his heretical

beliefs. His execution for heresy caused Foxe to celebrate him as a martyr. Popularly he was regarded in the 15th and 16th centuries as a hypocrite, attempting to corrupt Prince Hal.

(2) Oldcastle is Prince Hal's boon companion in *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, where he is a buffoon, portrayed in shallow fashion.

(3) In the original stage version of the *Henry IV* plays, Shakespeare apparently retained the name of Oldcastle. In *Henry IV, Part 1*, "my old lad of the castle" is an obvious pun, and in *Henry IV, Part 2* one of the speech prefixes in the quarto is *Old* and Falstaff is termed former "page to Thomas Mowbray," as Oldcastle had been.

(4) Protests from Lord Cobham, descendant of Oldcastle, apparently caused Shakespeare to change the name to Falstaff. The revised name is a slight transliteration of Sir John Fastolf, a Lollard and an army officer who had been charged with cowardice in *Henry VI, Part 1*. The epilogue to *Henry IV, Part 2* denies that Falstaff is Oldcastle, "for Oldcastle died a martyr." In revision Shakespeare probably added considerably to the role of Falstaff, especially in prose, while reducing the history portion of the drama.

The apparently disparate actions of the drama create a panoramic effect of English life from the highest to the lowest levels. Actually the two plots are superbly united in Prince Hal. The shrewd young prince thwarts Falstaff's plan to rob the king's treasury at Gadshill and thwarts Hotspur's plan to rob the king of his power and realm at Shrewsbury. The larger theme of the drama emerges as a Renaissance study of the proper education of a prince.

The Second Part of King Henry IV—Chronicle Play and Realistic Comedy

Written c. 1598. "Sundrie times publikely acted" before "good" quarto of 1600 (Stationers' Register same year). Certainly performed before the royal court in 1612.

SUMMARY. Continuation of Part 1, utilizes the same two plots of history and comedy united by Falstaff and Prince Hal.

The historical portion bears less interest than in the preceding drama, for it chiefly details the mopping-up operations against the remnants of the Percy rebels. Archbishop Scroop, Hastings, and Mowbray are tricked by Prince John of Lancaster into disbanding their troops; they are then seized and executed.

Comedy dominates this drama, with Ancient Pistol, a wild slinger of phrases, and Bardolph, a superbly funny drunk, to spark further the rascally crew of Falstaff. After Rabelaisian revels with Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet, Falstaff goes recruiting in the Cotswolds. His ragged troops consist solely of the hapless who are unable to buy their way out of military service. From Justice Shallow he borrows a sizable sum on the security of the accession of his friend, Prince Hal.

With the death of Henry IV, Falstaff rushes to the coronation of Henry V.

He is rebuffed by the reformed young man and sternly banished from the royal presence, but he is provided for.

SOURCE. Same as for Part 1.

DISCUSSION. With Hotspur gone, Falstaff dominates this drama. Sympathizers with Falstaff have therefore been grievously distressed by Henry's stern dismissal of Falstaff at the play's end. Shakespeare's meaning is clear: When one becomes a king, one puts away frivolous things. And here we have Shakespeare's incomparable realism. There is no doubt but that he enjoyed his creation as much as anyone else, but Falstaff is no one to have around the throne of a great king. With this realization, Shakespeare shows more hardheadedness than many of his admirers.

The dying Henry IV sounds the call of duty, and though he tragically misunderstands his son up to the end, it is a determined and responsible Prince Hal that takes up the crown. Thus, while Falstaff is gleefully plucking his goose, Shallow, in the country, history has outstripped him in London. The long agony of Henry IV is over, and the stage is set for the glorious reign of Henry V.

The Life of King Henry V—Chronicle Play (Historical Epic)

Written almost certainly in 1599. The reference to Essex in the prologue to Act V suggests composition between departure of Essex for Ireland March 27, 1599, and his return on September 28. "Sundrie times play'd" before first quarto. Perhaps it was intended for the gala opening of the Globe Theatre, "the wooden O" of the Prologue. Stationers' Register, August 4, 1600. First printed in "bad" quarto of 1600, a version possibly reconstituted by an actor playing Exeter, Gower, or the Governor of Harfleur. First good text in First Folio.

SUMMARY. The death of Falstaff is reported by the former Mistress Quickly, now the wife of Ancient Pistol. Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol go off to the wars. Henry V, assured of his rights to the French throne by the Archbishop of Canterbury, puts down his would-be assassins, Cambridge, Grey, and Scroop, and sails for the continent. Harfleur falls to the English, and Henry V pushes toward Calais, but is intercepted at Agincourt. On the eve of battle the disguised monarch moves about the bivouac, preparing his troops for resolute action. Though outnumbered, the English forces, fired by their courageous leader, win gloriously at Agincourt. The French king names Henry heir to his throne, and by the ensuing Treaty of Troyes, Henry marries his daughter Katharine, whom he woos in bluff, soldierly fashion. Bardolph and Nym are hanged for looting, and Pistol is forced by Fluellen, a gallant Welsh soldier, to eat a leek because of his insults against the Welsh.

SOURCE. The wooing scene occurs in *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. Holinshed provides the basis for the rest.

DISCUSSION. The last of Shakespeare's chronicle plays is an epic spectacular, a lyric dramatizing of Drayton's "Ballad of Agincourt." It displays

Shakespeare's definitive concept of the ideal Renaissance ruler. By his actions Henry displays the Platonic virtues of Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and Wisdom. He administers justice in proper Aristotelian fashion, both distributive and corrective. He is the perfect Renaissance monarch, possessed of all virtuous attributes in harmony. He is a scholar who knows diplomacy, the tactics of war, the handling of civil affairs, theology, and psychology. He is a leader of men, not swayed by the mob but calm and reasonable. He is an eloquent orator. He seeks the opinions of specialists but makes decisions himself. He displays the Golden Mean of Aristotle; unlike Hotspur his courage is tempered with prudence to make true fortitude. He is a pious man, and the great victory is treated as the justice of God for the cause of right. Perhaps most notable of all is his common sense. He knows the responsibilities of kingship, he knows that a king is only a man, and he knows that a nation's achievement is the effort of all its people. Henry V is Shakespeare's one unqualified hero.

Some scholars propose that Shakespeare originally intended to bring Falstaff into the French campaign, but when Will Kempe (the great comic who created the stage role of Falstaff) left the company, Falstaff was killed off and Pistol substituted for the comic scenes. Others believe that Shakespeare feared that Falstaff would outshine even Agincourt. Whatever the reason, Falstaff's death is artistically right, for Henry V must dominate the play. The most famous emendation to Shakespeare was made by the 18th-century editor, Theobald, in Mistress Quickly's report of Falstaff's death. The folio reading, "a Table of greene fields" was altered to "he [i.e., unaccented *he* pronounced as *a*] babbled of green fields." If Shakespeare did not write the latter, he should have.

This is Shakespeare's only drama in which the chorus materially furthers the action. The appeals to the audience in the Prologue and the four choruses show Shakespeare's method which asks the viewers to accept symbols and suggestions, imaginatively projecting these into the vast fields of France and the savage clash of great armies.

FANTASY AND SERIOUS COMEDY

Shakespeare's acceptance of economic, political, and cosmic order as fixed principles confers the essentially optimistic effect we find in the comedies and even in the bloodiest tragedies to follow. Disorder is interpreted as only a brief swirl in the divinely conceived order; such disorder arises from occasional greed and error in an individual, but the aberration will be purged and wholesome order will again prevail. In the comedies of this period, the age's joy in order produces lyric optimism.

A Midsummer Night's Dream—Masque Fantasy

Written c. 1591–96. Mentioned by Meres in 1598. Dialogue between Puck and Oberon in II, i, suggests Elvetham festivities in 1591 when the Earl

of Hertford sought the queen's legitimizing of his son by Lady Katherine Grey; cf., the "changeling child" disputed by Titania and Oberon. First specified performance on New Year's night, 1604, before royal court. Probably first written for a noble wedding, then adapted to the public stage. Stationers' Register, October 8, 1600. First quarto (1600) a "good" but not carefully printed text.

SUMMARY. In celebration of the marriage of Theseus, King of Athens, to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, Bottom and other Athenian workmen start a woodland rehearsal of the play of Pyramus and Thisbe, "very tragical mirth." The eloping lovers Lysander and Hermia enter the woods, pursued by Demetrius who loves Hermia and by Helena who loves Demetrius. Because they have quarreled, the fairy monarch Oberon squeezes upon Queen Titania's eyes a magic liquid that will make her infatuated with the first creature she sees upon awaking. Puck, the mischievous lieutenant of Oberon, transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass, and it is this grotesque being that Titania comes to adore.

Pitying Helena, Oberon orders Puck to squeeze the magic liquid upon the eyes of Demetrius, but Puck mistakenly anoints Lysander, who promptly falls in love with Helena. Demetrius is anointed by Oberon and also falls in love with Helena. After wild confusion, abetted by the waggish Puck, the lovers fall asleep. The spells are removed from Lysander, Titania, and Bottom. Theseus finds the sleeping lovers, approves the marriage of Lysander to Hermia and Demetrius to Helena. All three couples simultaneously celebrate their weddings and are regaled by the ludicrous performance of Pyramus and Thisbe.

SOURCE. Plutarch's *Lives* and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* for Theseus and Hippolyta. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for Pyramus and Thisbe and the name of Titania. R. Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* and *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius (translated by William Adlington in 1566) for the ass-head transformation. *The Scottish History of James IV* by Robert Greene for Oberon.

DISCUSSION. The dreamy enchantment is Shakespeare's own, and it is easy to see how it inspired the famous Mendelssohn score. The verse and play itself are full of music. Plot construction is extremely well managed. Central theme consists of young lovers Lysander-Hermia and Demetrius-Helena; they are the epitome of ardent, unworldly youth. The framework is the royal union of Theseus and Hippolyta. The Athenian tradesmen form the comic plot. All three are unified by the Oberon-Titania theme, occasioned by the fairy visit to bless the king's wedding. Completely ignoring the classic unities, Shakespeare creates a complex, a greater unity of atmosphere and effect.

The lovers usually speak in rimed couplets, royalty in blank verse. The fairies appropriately chant a lyrical trochaic tetrameter. The clowns employ prose except for the ballad measure of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The play looks early, especially in characterization, which is rather thin (everyone delights in Puck and Bottom, but no one really loves them), and

in thought content (of course, the play's masque origin would minimize this in favor of spectacle).

The Merchant of Venice–Romantic Comedy

Written c. 1596–97. Mentioned by Meres in 1598. "Diuers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants" before first quarto. First specified performance on February 12, 1605 before James I. Stationers' Register, July 22, 1598. First quarto, good text, 1600.

SUMMARY. The merchant of Venice, Antonio, lends 3000 ducats for three months to his friend Bassanio, who wishes to court the lovely heiress Portia at Belmont. Since his capital is tied up in merchandise and ships, Antonio secures ready money from Shylock the Jew, who demands a pound of Antonio's flesh if the money cannot be repaid. Accompanied by Gratiano, Bassanio proceeds to Belmont, there winning Portia over two rival suitors, the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon, by choosing the leaden casket which contains her portrait. Gratiano weds Nerissa, Portia's companion. Another Venetian, Lorenzo, appears with Jessica, Shylock's daughter, who had stolen her father's money to finance the elopement.

Shylock demands the pound of flesh when Antonio cannot pay his debt because his ventures have miscarried. Bassanio and Gratiano hasten to Antonio's aid. Unknown to them, Portia, disguised as a lawyer, and Nerissa, disguised as a legal clerk, come to judge the case. Portia decides that Shylock is entitled to the pound of flesh, but his life is forfeit if he sheds one drop of Antonio's blood or cuts off more or less than an exact pound. Shylock's fortune is automatically forfeit because he has plotted against the life of a Venetian citizen. The Duke of Venice spares the life of Shylock and leaves him half his fortune on the condition that he become a Christian and make Lorenzo his heir. The only reward accepted by Portia and Nerissa is rings from Bassanio and Gratiano, with which they tease their husbands upon reunion at Belmont.

SOURCE. The casket plot, demonstrating that inward substance is better than outward appearance, is an ancient oriental tale available in many forms. Shakespeare may have secured it from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* or from Richard Robinson's translation (1577) of the *Gesta Romanorum.*

The rest of the plotting, even to the merry ring episode at the end (but excepting Jessica's elopement) appears in *Il Pecorone* (1558) by Giovanni Fiorentino; no English translation is known at the time of the play.

On June 7, 1594, Roderigo Lopez, a converted Jew from Spain and the Queen's physician, was executed on a charge, possibly false, of intended poisoning of the monarch. Shylock as a name looks like *shalach* (Hebrew, "cormorant") and Jessica a form of *Iscah* (Hebrew, "she that looketh out"), both from the Bible.

In *The School of Abuse* (1579), mentioned in the chapter on Spenser in the section on Sidney, Stephen Gosson exempts from his general condemna-

tion of the stage a play, *The Jew*, now lost. Shakespeare's work may be based upon this drama, whose apparent purpose was the denunciation of greed and usury.

DISCUSSION. Central to the drama are two favorite Renaissance themes:

(1) The nature of true love. The suitors of Portia reveal their amatory characteristics in choosing the caskets. Morocco is sensual love; Arragon, love directed by intellect. Bassanio is true love, depending upon intuition and innate spirit.

(2) Claims of friendship vs. love. Antonio violates his own business principles initially, entering into a bond with Shylock against his better judgment, to befriend Bassanio. The newly wedded Bassanio and Gratiano quickly leave their brides to go to Antonio's assistance. Portia and Nerissa in disguise force the issue in demanding from their husbands the marriage rings in payment for saving Antonio, and the obligations of friendship compel the release of the rings.

Great actors of modern times have often interpreted the role of Shylock as the tragedy of a persecuted race, but Shakespeare clearly intended the emphasis to be upon a romantic comedy of true friendship and true love. Shylock of the Rialto demands justice, the legal fulfillment of his bond. Opposed to his wrathful demand for justice is Belmont, where the quality of love and mercy is triumphant. Portia's saving of Antonio is not mere legal quibbling but the romantic insistence upon the power of merciful love to overcome retributive justice. With the tables turned, love and mercy spare Shylock.

As throughout the mature works of Shakespeare, great speeches and great poetry abound, particularly in Portia's address, "The quality of mercy."

ROMANTIC AND HISTORICAL TRAGEDY

The two tragedies following are perhaps the most performed of all Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare is still in the early stages of his career and these plays have not taken the darker turn of his later, great tragedies.

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet—Romantic Tragedy

Written c. 1595. The Nurse's statement, "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years," may refer to the English earthquake of 1580 and thus date the play as early as 1591. Mentioned by Meres in 1598. Marston in *Scourge of Villanie* (1598) states that "Iuliat and Romio" was played at the Curtain Theatre. First quarto (1597) is a "bad" text apparently reported by two or three actors who played a cut version. Second quarto (1599) is the first "good" text.

SUMMARY. When the old feud between the Verona families of Montague and Capulet breaks out in street brawling, Prince Escalus threatens with death any further perpetuators of the quarrel. Romeo, a Montague, is in love with Rosaline but forgets her when he daringly attends a Capulet masked

ball and sees Juliet, a Capulet. Beneath her window he hears her proclaim her love for him, and they agree to marry. They are secretly wed the next afternoon by Friar Laurence.

Tybalt, a Capulet, taunts Romeo, who refuses to fight against his cousin by marriage. Deeming Romeo a coward, his friend Mercutio fights Tybalt and is killed. The enraged Romeo slays Tybalt and is banished from Verona.

Friar Laurence advises Romeo to spend the wedding night with Juliet, then hasten to Mantua and await his friends' appeal against his banishment. Capulet betroths Juliet to Paris and persists against Juliet's protests. Her mother and her nurse failing her, Juliet consults Friar Laurence. He gives her a magic potion that will counterfeit death for forty-two hours and promises to fetch Romeo to release her from the burial vault of the Capulets.

Friar Laurence's messenger to Romeo is delayed by the plague, and Romeo learns that Juliet is dead. At her tomb he kills the mourning Paris and finds the apparently dead body of his bride. He drinks poison and dies beside her. When Juliet revives from her torpor and discovers Romeo's body, she stabs herself. Friar Laurence, Romeo's servant, and Paris' page explain all, and Montague and Capulet are reconciled over the bodies of their dead offspring.

SOURCE. Immediately *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Iuliet* (1562), a poem by Arthur Brooke. The theme is at least as old as the ancient *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus. Earliest known modern version is by Masuccio of Salerno (1476), then through a series of hands to Brooke's source, the Frenchman, Boaistuau (1559). The latter is also the source for Painter's prose version in 1565–67. Brooke indicates that the tale was in dramatic form in his time; Shakespeare may have rewritten an earlier play.

DISCUSSION. Both Romeo and Juliet properly belong in the world of romantic comedies, for theirs is the classic ecstasy of young love, glorious unheeding love at first sight. But they are "star-cross'd" lovers, cursed in a world made by their elders. They are headstrong and unthinking, but it would be absurd to demand of them more wisdom than their years possess. Perhaps the ultimate tragedy of the drama is that of brokenhearted age when it realizes it has destroyed the glory of youth, but the total effect of the drama is pathos rather than the awe the greater tragedies will inspire.

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1598–1601. A Swiss visitor, Dr. Thomas Platter of Basel, reports witnessing a "Tragedy vom ersten Keyser Julio Caesare" at a Bankside theater (probably the Globe) on September 21, 1599. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in First Folio.

SUMMARY. Early in 44 B.C. Cassius rallies conspirators against Julius Caesar, partly because of his personal jealousy, partly because of his fear of dictatorship. The noble Brutus, loving the Roman republic even more than he does his friend Caesar, joins the conspiracy. In the midst of the Senate

House Caesar is stabbed to death. Brutus tries to justify the assassination to the populace, but Mark Antony's eloquence far surpasses his. The people drive the conspirators from Rome, and the triumvirate of Antony, the young Octavius (adopted son of Caesar), and Lepidus is formed against the killers of Caesar. Brutus and Cassius unite forces at Sardis in Asia Minor. Brutus quarrels with Cassius about bribes reputedly accepted by the latter, and Brutus is saddened by the news of his wife's death. At Philippi in Macedonia in 42 B.C. the army of Antony and young Octavius overwhelms that of the conspirators. Brutus and Cassius commit suicide.

SOURCE. Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives.*

DISCUSSION. By all logic of play construction this should be a failure. The title role is ended with the second act. Brutus, the real hero if there is one, does not clearly emerge as the dominant character until the play is more than half over. Nonetheless, this has been a perennial stage favorite since its composition. The explanation lies partly in Shakespeare's superb sense of conflict upon the stage, and perhaps mostly in his incomparable rhetoric.

However, the play is correctly entitled *Julius Caesar,* named for the pillar of order. Brutus wars against order; in rebelling against constituted authority, he brings sedition and chaos into the political and social fabric. Although his intentions are splendid, his achievement is a catastrophe. Shakespeare shows no sympathy for the republicanism of Brutus. Rather, Brutus is portrayed as the most dangerous of subversives—the misguided intellectual and idealist. Caesar, as he briefly appears, is blinded by his own divinity, but he is a majestic figure and remains through the play, and after his death, the martyred symbol of order.

Antony's funeral oration is justly prized as the perfect model of a speech inciting to action. Neither Antony nor young Octavius gains stature as the avenger from a revenge tragedy, though Shakespeare shows Senecan leanings, especially in the appearance of Caesar's ghost before Philippi. The playwright's first venture into ancient history survives chiefly as sublime spectacle in masterful language.

FARCE COMEDY

The Taming of the Shrew shows Shakespeare at his most extravagant in creating farcical schemes, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is his only play on his contemporary world. Both are without question playable farces.

The Taming of the Shrew—Romantic Farce Comedy

Written c. 1594–97. First printed in First Folio. The period confused Shakespeare's play ("*The* Shrew") with an earlier play, *The Taming of a Shrew.* "*A* Shrew" was noted in the Stationers' Register May 2, 1594, and appeared in quarto the same year. Some scholars believe "*A* Shrew" to be a particularly "bad" quarto or a sizable revision of the Shakespeare play for a traveling company. In "*A* Shrew" Petruchio is called Ferando; Bianca and

Lucentio appear as Philema and Aurelius (their names from the Gascoigne source) in a shortened version of the subplot. Other scholars deem *"A* Shrew" a pre-Shakespearean drama (c. 1589) written perhaps by Samuel Rowley in the prose passages and Marlowe in the verse. *"The* Shrew" was never entered in the Stationers' Register, presumably because it was considered covered by the entry for *"A* Shrew."

Henslowe's entry of a performance, "the Tamynge of A Shrowe," for June 13, 1594, may refer to either play. "The Taminge of the Shrewe" was acted November 26, 1633, before the king and queen.

Since Greene in *Menaphon* (1589) and Nashe in the preface to this work both refer to a "shrew" play, it is now thought that a lost original is the source for both *"A* Shrew" and Shakespeare's play.

With the complete dubiety of external evidence, scholars are forced to internal evidence to date the Shakespearean play. Assignment to his early maturity is based upon:

(1) Absence of the early imitative style (i.e., echoes of Lyly, Marlowe, etc.)

(2) Romantic tone unlike the later "problem" comedies.

(3) The plays of Shakespeare display an ever-mounting ease in the technical handling of blank verse. The percentage of enjambment instead of end-stopping, speeches beginning and ending in mid-line, and freedom of scansion increases steadily through his career. By such technical criteria this play seems to be contemporaneous with *Romeo and Juliet.*

SUMMARY. For a lark, a Lord and his party carry Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, to the Lord's mansion where he is ensconced amid every luxury. Revived, Sly is told that he is the master, just recovered from fifteen years of insanity. A page boy is disguised as his noble wife, and a touring company of actors performs for him *The Taming of the Shrew.*

The wealthy Baptista of Padua has two daughters, the younger the lovely Bianca, the elder the shrewish Katharina. Many suitors besiege the younger, but no beau wants the elder. Baptista insists that Katharina must be married before Bianca. Hortensio seeks Bianca and persuades his dashing friend Petruchio to woo Katharina for the sake of her dowry. Once wed, Petruchio bridles his shrewish spouse, curbing her will beneath his stronger determination.

Petruchio and Katharina return to Padua from the honeymoon to find that Lucentio, pretending to be her schoolmaster, has won Bianca. The thwarted Hortensio must console himself with a wealthy widow. At a feast in Lucentio's home, the host has a merry wager with Hortensio and Petruchio to see whose wife is the most obedient to her husband. Petruchio wins handily, and the submissive Katharina demurely lectures the other wives on wifely duties.

SOURCE. The play unites three plots:

(1) The Sly story. This playful hoax is an old folk theme, exploited in the *Arabian Nights* and in many oral tales of the people.

(2) The Bianca-Lucentio-Hortensio subplot derives ultimately from Ariosto's *I Suppositi* through Gascoigne's *Supposes*. If Shakespeare rewrote "*A* Shrew," he went back to Gascoigne for fuller elaboration of the subplot. It is possible that the present subplot was prepared by a collaborator of Shakespeare's, but the neat dovetailing suggests one author.

(3) The wife taming, like the Sly portion, is a folktale often starting with the husbands' wager and the subsequent taming of the most unruly spouse to the astonishment of the confident bettors.

DISCUSSION. (1) Shakespeare annoyingly drops Sly and the play's logical framework after the second scene of the first act, while "*A* Shrew" finishes with the tinker back in his rags, confident that the whole experience was a dream. Shakespeare may have written a Sly ending that was cut in an acting version or have left the follow-up of Sly to the improvisation of the low comedian.

(2) The subplot of the lovers is a bouncy affair from the contemporary Italian comedy of intrigue, ultimately from Plautus and Terence. Its stock characters and complicated maneuvers are cleverly comical, but still farce.

(3) Shakespeare shows his distinct hand in the Petruchio-Katharina tale. This could be pure farce, but it is more. The plotting calls for wife-beating, but Petruchio is no wife-beater. He is actually Katharina's friend and tames her for her own benefit as well as his own. By burlesquing her, he makes Katharina see her own absurdity and his truer vision. He is no domestic tyrant, but rather an unorthodox and effective teacher.

Behind Katharina's nasty pose is an intelligent woman. When she sees herself as Petruchio shows her to be, she at last realizes her erroneous way of life. Many modern actresses play Katharina's concluding lecture tongue-in-cheek, winking knowingly at the audience, but Shakespeare seems to have been serious, climaxing an account of wifely education by detailing what he judged the ideal wife to be.

The Merry Wives of Windsor—Realistic Farce-Comedy

Written c. 1598–1600. First specified performance November 4, 1604, at Whitehall. Stationers' Register January 18, 1602. First quarto (1602), a "bad" quarto probably reconstituted by the actor playing the Host; passages from *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2* and from *Hamlet* are incorporated. Folio text is superior but not perfect.

SUMMARY. Falstaff writes identical love letters to Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, wives of substantial burgesses of Windsor. Pistol and Nym, dismissed by Falstaff, inform the ladies of Falstaff's perfidy. The suspicious Ford tests his wife's fidelity by disguising himself as Master Brooke (Broome in the Folio) and pays Falstaff to woo Mistress Ford. To teach the knight a lesson, Mistress Ford invites Falstaff to her home. When her jealous husband appears, she and Mistress Page hide Falstaff in a basket of dirty linen which

is thrown into the Thames for washing. At a second assignation, Falstaff, disguised as the fat woman of Brentford, is soundly thrashed as a witch.

The Pages' daughter Anne has three suitors: Abraham Slender, stupid cousin of Judge Slender and favorite of Page; Dr. Caius, a peppery Frenchman, favorite of Mistress Page; and Fenton, a gay young blade loved by Anne. Mistress Quickly aids all three suitors. The Welshman, Sir Hugh Evans, vigorously supports Slender's suit and precipitates a laughable duel with Caius.

The merry wives conspire with their husbands for a final humiliation of Falstaff. Disguised as Herne the Hunter, the knight arrives in Windsor Park for a supposed tryst. "Woodland spirits" (Evans, Pistol, Mistress Quickly in disguise) pummel him mercilessly. The suitors elope with characters dressed as fairies. Caius and Slender find their companions to be boys. Aided by the Host of the Garter, Fenton has secured Anne Page.

SOURCE. The themes of the "tricker tricked" and the "boy bride" stem from Plautus and Italian comic intrigue. Without clear substantiation, "the gelyous comodey" entered by Henslowe January 5, 1593, has been suggested as the basis for Shakespeare's play. The modification of characterization in Falstaff, Mistress Quickly, Nym, and Pistol from their previous Shakespearean appearances does suggest that the playwright may have hastily revamped an earlier play, often merely changing names.

DISCUSSION. In 1702, John Dennis stated that this play "pleas'd one of the greatest Queens that ever was in the world. . . . This Comedy was written at her Command, and by her direction, and she was so eager to see it acted, that she commanded it to be finished in fourteen days." Although written a century after the event, this report seems probable, for the play shows many signs of hasty writing.

There is less poetry here than in any other of the mature writings of Shakespeare, but the preponderance of prose over blank verse may be occasioned by realism. No other Shakespearean play presents so many vignettes of contemporary Elizabethan life.

Falstaff is back again, but the world has generally agreed that it is not the inimitable figure from the Henry IV plays. Although there are some grand flashes of the fat old scoundrel, he is here hoodwinked by some quite ordinary people, and, in the verse portions especially, sounds distressingly like any silly old philanderer. Mistress Quickly has discarded her Rabelaisian manner and seems rather like a continental marriage broker.

The Jonsonian "humours" seem to have mitigated Shakespeare's customary depth of characterization, but there are some excellent stock figures: Caius as the stage Frenchman, Abraham Slender as the stage nincompoop, Fenton as the stage dashing wastrel.

THE GREAT COMEDIES

The three following comedies have been termed Shakespeare's "joyous" comedies. They epitomize the magic world of youth and youthful love.

Much Ado about Nothing—Romantic Comedy

Written c. 1598–1600. Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) ascribes to Shakespeare a *Love's Labour's Won* which might be this play. First specified performance during Court Revels of 1612–13 for the betrothal and wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine. Stationers' Register August 4, 1600. First printed in "good" quarto of 1600.

SUMMARY. In Messina, Claudio, a young lad in the retinue of Don Pedro, falls in love with Hero, daughter of the governor, Leonato. To thwart the marriage, Don John, bastard brother of Don Pedro, arranges for Claudio and Don Pedro to see Borachio apparently making love to Hero at her window (actually it is Margaret, gentlewoman to Hero and sweetheart of Borachio). Before the marriage congregation, Claudio and Don Pedro denounce the innocent Hero and scornfully depart. Friar Francis suggests that Leonato aid his daughter's good name by reporting the swooned girl as dead.

The most bungling constables of all time, Dogberry and Verges, nonetheless get the truth from Borachio. The repentant Claudio is willing to make amends by marrying Leonato's "niece," who, of course, turns out to be Hero.

Claudio's companion, Benedick, is a professed bachelor. Beatrice, Hero's cousin, is a professed spinster. Friends, amused at their brilliant exchange of witty raillery, persuade Benedick that Beatrice is enamored of him and persuade Beatrice of Benedick's affection for her. They find that indeed they do love each other, and as a test of his love, Beatrice asks Benedick to kill Claudio for his slander of Hero. Claudio's repentance precludes his slaying, and Beatrice and Benedick are married at the same time as Hero and Claudio. The play ends with the news of Don John's capture.

SOURCE. Shakespeare masterfully unites three stories:

(1) The Hero-Claudio plot is at least as old as Greek romances, c. 400. It appears in a *novella* by Bandello translated into French by Belleforest in *Histoires Tragiques*. It is also in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* translated by Sir John Harington, and in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

(2) No literary source is known for the Beatrice-Benedick plot, but it is the familiar and ancient theme of the would-be slayers of Cupid who find themselves in love against their will.

(3) The comic subplot of Dogberry and Verges appears wholly original.

DISCUSSION. (1) Claudio's bitter denunciation of Hero at the altar seems unspeakably cruel to the modern audience, but is commonplace in contemporary romances. Also Claudio's willingness to marry anyone designated later by Leonato will often distress today's romantic hearts, but marriage was quite a businesslike proposition in the age, especially among the nobility. The code of a gentleman in that age required Claudio to make whatever amends were suggested by Leonato, whose family Claudio had so grievously wronged.

(2) The Beatrice-Benedick plot is probably Shakespeare's closest approach

to the comedy of manners. But these two are no blasé Millamant and Mirabell, those two ultrasophisticated and worldlywise creations of William Congreve, the 17th-century playwright. Benedick was one of Garrick's favorite roles, as Beatrice was a favorite of Ellen Terry. Beatrice is one of Shakespeare's great women—spirited, brilliant, proudly independent, yet completely feminine. Benedick is superbly witty and masculine, catching fire from Beatrice. In the great church scene both rise amidst the Hero-Claudio catastrophe to lyric love.

(3) The Dogberry-Verges subplot is great low comedy. Kempe, who created the stage role (his name actually appears instead of Dogberry at one point in the quarto), found ample opportunity in Shakespeare's script to produce the monumental absurdity of incompetence, self-importance, and utter confusion. That the truth should somehow emerge from the opaque smoke screen cast by Dogberry is proof of its potency and perhaps proof that intelligence and logic are not the usual governors of men.

Much Ado about Nothing? "As it truly is," sighed George Bernard Shaw. Although the intellectual content may be disappointingly meager to the modern intelligentsia, this is a brilliant comedy, mirroring the optimistic spirit of the Elizabethans.

As You Like It—Romantic Pastoral Comedy

Written c. 1599–1600. Earliest known performance may have been December 2, 1603, when the King's Men acted before James I at the Herbert family's Wilton House, where the court resided during the plague. In 1865 Lady Herbert claimed that a letter still in the family's possession showed this performance to be of *As You Like It* with Shakespeare present, but the letter has never been located. Stationers' Register August 4, 1600, but not printed until First Folio (1623).

SUMMARY. The Forest of Arden is a "Sherwood Forest" refuge for a motley host. The rightful duke, deposed by his younger brother, is rusticating in a way reminiscent of Robin Hood with the melancholy Jaques and other followers, while his daughter Rosalind remains at court as a companion to the usurper's daughter Celia. Handsome Orlando, fearing his villainous elder brother Oliver, joins the refugees along with his faithful servant Adam. Banished from court, Rosalind garbs herself for protection as a boy; Touchstone, the court jester, and Celia flee with her. Out on the fringes of the forest are figures straight out of Arcadian pastorals: Corin, Silvius, and Phebe.

Orlando is lovesick for the Rosalind he knew at court. Girlish page-boy Ganymede (Rosalind in disguise) suggests that he woo Ganymede as though Rosalind were before him. She reveals herself and eventually all are properly paired off: Orlando with Rosalind, a repentant Oliver with Celia, Touchstone with the gawky Audrey, Silvius with the dainty Phebe.

The usurper repents and restores his elder brother to his rightful dukedom.

When everyone else departs for the court, Jaques remains with the repentant usurper in the forest.

SOURCE. *Rosalynde, or Euphues Golden Legacie* (pub. 1590) by Thomas Lodge. Lodge's source was the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Gamelyn* which, though it remained in ms. until 1721, was perhaps available to Shakespeare. The playwright alters the beginning of the tale and introduces new characters, notably Jaques and Touchstone.

DISCUSSION. The Forest of Arden is Shakespeare's rural Warwickshire, though a lurking lioness is provided when Orlando must rescue his vicious brother Oliver and cause the latter's change of heart. More than that, Arden is the pastoral freshness and dreaminess of Arcadia, of Elizabethan romances, and of eternal romance. A dominant theme, as in Spenser, is Shakespeare's contrast of the intrigue at court with wholesome country life.

Rosalind has the richest sense of humor of any of Shakespeare's heroines, and she also represents the dramatist's fullest portrait of a young heroine, vivacious and uncomplicated without being naive, and full of both wit and determination.

Touchstone's role was apparently tailored to Robert Armin who succeeded Will Kempe as chief comedian of the Lord Chamberlain's Men about 1598. From Touchstone on, Shakespeare's comedian tends to be the wise fool, the philosopher in motley. Touchstone is the first conception of what later will be one of Shakespeare's most profound and moving characters.

Jaques seems to be Shakespeare's reaction to growing literary trends: the satire, which was increasing in nondramatic literature and appearing strongly in Jonson's plays, and the appearance of the figure of the malcontent. Instead of the bitter misanthropist of Marston's *Malcontent*, Jaques is the melancholic man of middle years. He is the intellectual tragically aware that he has lost the capacity for wonder and love. When all things are romantically settled at the end, Jaques is still the voice of lost illusions.

Twelfth Night; or What You Will—Romantic Comedy

Written c. 1600–01. Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, of ancient Roman lineage, visited London during the winter of 1600–01; Orsino in the play was probably suggested by the noble visitor. First specified performance February 2, 1602, in the Middle Temple. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First published in First Folio.

SUMMARY. Shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria and believing her twin brother Sebastian lost in the storm, Viola disguises herself as a page boy, Cesario, and enters the service of Orsino, Duke of Illyria. Viola-Cesario falls in love with her master, but his soul sighs dolorously for Olivia, who is in mourning for her brother, and Orsino uses Viola-Cesario as a messenger to his beloved. Olivia falls in love with the messenger. Sebastian appears, is mistaken for Cesario by Olivia, and quickly agrees to marry her. Orsino is

angered, but Viola meets Sebastian and explains the mix-up. Orsino discovers his love for Viola and marries her.

The subplot centers about Olivia's steward, Malvolio. His officious administration annoys members of the household: Olivia's gentlewoman Maria, Olivia's sottish uncle Sir Toby Belch, the jester Feste, and the stupid Sir Andrew Aguecheek who vainly pursues Olivia. Maria concocts a plan to embarrass Malvolio. She has the steward receive a letter written by her but purportedly from Olivia, encouraging the steward to make love to Olivia. Malvolio's subsequent conduct causes his imprisonment as a madman, but he is released when Olivia learns of the trick. Sir Toby is so pleased at the practical joke that he marries Maria.

SOURCE. (1) The Olivia-Orsino, Viola-Sebastian plot derives immediately from the "Apolonius and Silla" story in *Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581) by Barnabe Rich. This in turn derives from Belleforest's French version (1571) of a Bandello *novella* (1554) based upon a Sienese comedy *Gl' Ingannati* (c. 1531). The original Italian comedy was translated into Latin and performed under the title of *Laelia* at Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1595. Possibly there was a now lost English drama on the same topic, improved by Shakespeare.

(2) The Malvolio subplot and its attendant characters appear to be Shakespeare's own creation.

DISCUSSION. From the title onward the whole play exhibits a holiday mood. Twelfth Night (the evening of January 6, the feast of the Epiphany) was traditionally a time of jesting and merrymaking. The plot resembles *Comedy of Errors,* but unlike its farcical predecessor, the emphasis here is not upon mere misunderstandings of identity, but upon the joyous triumph of love. Orsino is in love with love, wooing Olivia through a messenger (Viola-Cesario) rather than confronting her face to face. Olivia is the biter bit. She will have none of Orsino's wooing because she is in love with her grief. However, when Cesario appears, Olivia is smitten. Viola does not have Rosalind's gay humor, but she competes with her for the title of Shakespeare's most charming creation. Viola is a superior reading of Julia from *Two Gentlemen of Verona;* like Julia she is agonizingly feminine beneath the male garments. Understandably she is wistful and sorrowful, but her courage and undaunted love never leave her. The Malvolio subplot is the most realistic in the romantic comedies of Shakespeare.

Twelfth Night has been termed Shakespeare's most nearly perfect comedy. Plot construction is superb, lacking altogether the mechanical feel of *Comedy of Errors.* The two plots are neatly joined at many points, e.g., the comic duel between Cesario (Viola) and Aguecheek; parallel and contrast are established, as in the major love affairs and that between Sir Toby and Maria. The poetic level is high, even when Orsino talks like a minor Elizabethan sonneteer, and the exquisite songs of Feste lend an unforgettable lyricism to the work.

THE PROBLEM COMEDIES

After *Twelfth Night* all the dramas of Shakespeare display a more somber tone. This darkening may be the product of personal experience, but we possess no evidence here. More than likely, Shakespeare was mirroring the change in the spirit of Renaissance England. The Elizabethan exuberance was declining, especially with the death of Elizabeth. The antagonism between Puritan and Anglican was mounting toward the explosion of the next generation. The theater was increasingly slanted toward the court and the upper classes, who would smirk at the joyous optimism of the people's theater. Perhaps Shakespeare was expertly reflecting the pessimistic mood of the period, while still compensating with a happy ending.

All's Well that Ends Well—Tragicomedy

Written c. 1595–1603. No known performance before the Restoration. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio in a somewhat botched text. Internal evidence of style suggests some parts as early as 1595. *Love's Labour's Won* mentioned by Meres in 1598 may be this play. Present text looks like a revision c. 1603 of an earlier draft.

SUMMARY. With a prescription bequeathed by her father, Helena cures the King of France of his illness. For reward she claims as husband Bertram, Count of Rousillon. Bertram unwillingly marries her and promptly sets off for the wars, leaving Helena this message: "When thou canst get the ring upon my finger which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband. . . ."

In Florence, Bertram arranges an assignation with Diana. Helena at night takes the place of Diana in bed, is made pregnant by Bertram, and secures his ring in exchange for one presented to her by the King of France. Confronted by the evidence, Bertram promises to love and cherish his Helena.

The subplot, loosely tied to the main plot, concerns the cowardly braggart, Parolles, whose pusillanimity is realized by his friend Bertram only some time after the rest of the world knows it.

SOURCE. The tale of *Giglietta di Nerbona* in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, translated in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*.

DISCUSSION. The enchantment of Illyria and the Forest of Arden is not found here, nor is Shakespeare's great poetry. Otherwise this is not the "dark comedy" it is often termed by the modern critics. We are entirely too modern in our reading of Bertram as a wild young man and Helena as a relentless female pursuing her male. We must view the drama through Elizabethan eyes. Helena (Shakespeare's "loveliest character" according to Coleridge) is a full-blown Shakespearean heroine. She struggles hard to get Bertram's hand in marriage; rebuffed, she succeeds in conquering him completely by a stratagem deemed ingenious and daring by Shakespeare's audience. Also

Bertram's sudden conversion apparently fitted the psychological theory of the age and should not be taken with modern cynicism.

Measure for Measure—Tragicomedy

Written c. 1604. The official Revels Accounts report a performance of the play by the King's Men on December 26, 1604. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio in a text replete with mislineation and signs of cutting.

SUMMARY. Angelo is left as deputy by Vicentio, Duke of Vienna, who pretends to visit Poland but actually remains in Vienna, disguised as a friar. Angelo condemns to death Claudio, seducer of Juliet. When Claudio's sister Isabella, a novice in a nunnery, pleads for her brother, Angelo offers Claudio's life if she will give herself to him. Although her brother pleads for her sacrifice, Isabella refuses to yield to Angelo.

The disguised duke advises Isabella to pretend acquiescence, substituting for the assignation Mariana, Angelo's discarded fiancée. Though apparently yielded to, Angelo nevertheless orders the execution of Claudio, an order secretly stayed by the provost. The duke reveals himself and solves all by ordering the marriage of Angelo and Mariana, Claudio and Juliet. The duke avows his own love for Isabella, and they are to be married also.

SOURCE. A two-part play, *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) by George Whetstone, based upon a *novella* in Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi.* In 1582, Whetstone translated the Cinthio tale into a prose story. Cinthio dramatized his own account in the Latin tragicomedy *Epitia* (pub. 1583). In previous versions the girl yields to Angelo's demands, but Shakespeare permits Isabella to remain chaste by the introduction of the "bed trick" of *All's Well that Ends Well.*

DISCUSSION. The title suggests "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," and the problems such a philosophy of justice implies. Only that *deus ex machina,* the good Duke, brings a sordid tragedy to a happy finale.

It would be wrong to see this play as a study in Puritanism—Isabella the good side, Angelo the hypocritical Puritan. Isabella is almost as extreme about purity as the rest of Vienna is about vice. Though Angelo condemns Claudio, whose immorality he promptly proceeds to duplicate, rather than as a satire upon the Puritans, we should see him as the picture of a grave, humorless man who tries to rule without acknowledging the passions at all. In Shakespeare's view this is impossible, indeed, monstrous. Baser than Bertram, Angelo is converted as rapidly and presumably as sincerely.

The comic scenes are perfunctory rewrites of Shakespeare's earlier portraits of low-life types, but set in a grimmer, more sordidly realistic atmosphere. Imbedded in the play is the memorable lyric "Take, O take those lips away," and also other phrases of great beauty.

Troilus and Cressida

Written c. 1598–1602. No specified performance before the Restoration. Stationers' Register February 7, 1603. First and second quartos (identical texts, "good") in 1609.

SUMMARY. Troilus, son of Priam of Troy, loves Cressida, whose father Calchas, a priest, divining the doom of Ilium, has deserted to the Greeks. Cressida lives with her uncle Pandarus, who acts as intermediary to bring Troilus and Cressida together. Calchas persuades the Greek commander Agamemnon to exchange the Trojan prisoner Antenor for Cressida. The handsome Diomedes comes from the Greeks to conduct Cressida to her father.

The Trojans debate the return of Helen to the Greeks. The arguments of Troilus are especially influential in causing the council to retain Helen. Hector, eldest son of Priam and the Trojans' greatest warrior, sends a challenge of single combat to the Greeks. The Greek champion, Achilles, is sulking in his tent, and at the suggestion of Ulysses, Ajax is named to oppose Hector. After the mighty warriors tilt inconclusively, Greeks and Trojans join in feasting.

Conducted by Ulysses, Troilus goes to the tent of Calchas, there surreptitiously observing the wanton Cressida with Diomedes. On the morrow Hector slays Patroclus in the armor of Achilles. Enraged, Achilles storms forth to slay Hector treacherously. Diomedes evades the heartbroken, vengeful Troilus. The play ends with a curse upon Pandarus, the go-between, by Troilus, who senses his own imminent death in battle.

Throughout, the scurrilous Greek, Thersites, comments cynically.

SOURCE. The love theme, constituting about one third of the play, derives from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (q.v., for earlier sources) and the subsequent denigration of Cressida in Henryson and others.

The siege of Troy derives from the *Troy Book* of Lydgate, Caxton's translation of Raoul le Fèvre's *Recueil des Histoires de Troyes,* and the contemporary Homeric translations by Arthur Hall and George Chapman.

In April and May 1599, Henslowe paid £5 to Henry Chettle and Thomas Dekker for a play, *Troylles and Creseda* for the Admiral's Men. Meager references to this lost play suggest that it dealt essentially with the later history of Cressida as narrated by Henryson. Perhaps Shakespeare wrote his drama as a competing vehicle for the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

DISCUSSION. This is Shakespeare's most enigmatic play. Scholars are not even sure whether to term it a comedy or a tragedy, although it was labeled a tragedy in the quartos and was printed among the tragedies of the First Folio. However, its heavy mood of cynicism makes it radically different from the other tragedies. In puzzlement these interpretations are offered:

(1) Shakespeare's contribution to the "war of the theaters" (discussed in full in the next chapter), involving Jonson, Marston, and Dekker. Jonson may be pictured as Ajax, Marston or Dekker as Thersites.

(2) A burlesque of George Chapman. The great translator of Homer is often identified as the "rival poet" of the sonnets and supplanter of Shakespeare for patronage. Certainly it is a far cry from Chapman's exalted account of Troy to Shakespeare's depiction of shoddy characters and coarse vulgarity.

(3) Personal disillusionment with women paralleling the sonnets, *Hamlet,* and the "problem" comedies. Troilus, a romantic lover like Romeo, throws himself away upon a wanton. The play may be a satire upon the sentimental infatuation of Troilus.

(4) Satirical treatment, following the growing tendency, of heroism and love. A developing spirit of cynicism found preposterous the pretenses of chivalry and courtly love.

(5) Pathos of misguided loyalties of inadequate people. None of the characters in this work manifests the greatness of spirit needed for a tragic figure –the noble idealism of Brutus or the intellectual perceptivity of Hamlet. Shakespeare employs two characters as commentators. Thersites is foul-minded and foul-mouthed, reducing the whole Greek crew to vulgar nastiness. Ulysses is the sly counselor, sagely and dryly probing the weakness of Trojan and Greek. The famous speech by Ulysses, beginning "The specialty of rule hath been neglected" (I, iii), is the fullest statement by Shakespeare of the Renaissance creed of order and degree.

THE GREAT TRAGEDIES

The following four plays constitute the universally acknowledged body of great Shakespearean tragedy. For both poetry and drama they are unmatched in English letters.

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark–Revenge Tragedy

Written c. 1601. Stationers' Register July 26, 1602, terms it "latelie Acted." First quarto of 1603 is a "bad" quarto probably reconstituted by the actor playing Marcellus and other minor roles. Second quarto of 1604 is a "good" quarto, slightly longer than the folio version. The drama was frequently acted until the closing of the theaters, and was even played aboard Captain Keeling's East Indiaman in 1607.

SUMMARY. Prince Hamlet of Denmark is summoned from studies at Wittenburg University to find his father suddenly dead and his mother Gertrude hastily remarried to Claudius, Hamlet's uncle, who has ascended the throne in place of the legitimate claimant, Hamlet. The ghost of Hamlet's father informs the youth that Claudius murdered the elder Hamlet, and orders revenge, though Gertrude is to be spared. Hamlet feigns madness and repulses his beloved Ophelia. She is dominated by her father, Polonius, an aged courtier supporting Claudius. By a play-within-a-play Hamlet touches the conscience of the king, and becomes convinced that the specter of his father was an "honest ghost." In the confusion engendered by the king's interrup-

tion of the play, Hamlet has the opportunity to slay Claudius, but spares him because Claudius is praying.

Conferring with his mother, Hamlet kills the concealed Polonius, whom he mistakes for Claudius. The king sends Hamlet to England, with secret orders to the English monarch for Hamlet's murder. Ophelia goes mad, and her brother Laertes returns from abroad to avenge her madness and their father's slaying. Hamlet succeeds in returning to Denmark in time to witness the burial of Ophelia, who has drowned, but whether by accident or her own design is not made wholly clear.

Claudius plots with Laertes to kill Hamlet in a fencing match where the foil of Laertes will be poisoned and unbuttoned. Laertes wounds Hamlet treacherously. Hamlet seizes the sword and mortally wounds Laertes. Gertrude dies by drinking a poisoned beverage intended by Claudius as further insurance of Hamlet's death. Hamlet kills the king and, after preventing his friend Horatio from joining him in death, himself expires. A new ruler of Denmark, Fortinbras, appears to bring order to the tragic scene.

SOURCE. The Hamlet story is that of Prince Amleth of Denmark in the *Historia Danica,* a Latin history of Denmark written by Saxo Grammaticus c. 1200 and first published in 1514. Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1576) contains a French version. First known English prose version is *The Historie of Hamblet* (1608). Henslowe's diary records the performance of a dramatic *Hamlet* at Newington Butts on June 11, 1594; this lost play was probably by Kyd.

DISCUSSION. There is little doubt that this is Shakespeare's most complex and most difficult play. It has been noted that for all other Shakespearean plays one supplies an interpretation while for *Hamlet* one proposes a theory. Needless to say, the number of theories about *Hamlet* is nearly equivalent to the number of its readers.

Even in their most ambitious dramas, playwrights tend to present a relatively single-faceted main character with a series of complex problems, or a complex character with a single major problem. In *Hamlet,* Shakespeare chooses to confront an extraordinarily complicated personality with almost the whole gamut of serious human problems, and perhaps it is because of this diversity that virtually every reader or viewer of the play is inclined to identify with Hamlet.

A number of critics maintain that the play should be regarded as typical Elizabethan revenge tragedy and that no recourse to modern theories is needed. Coleridge and subsequent Romantic critics have pictured Hamlet as being undone by his doubting and hesitation. Hamlet's delay in revenging his father and killing Claudius is unquestionably a central problem of the play. Some critics have felt that Hamlet delayed doing the deed because he was of too sensitive a nature to act in that fashion; others feel that he is in a state of psychic shock over his father's death and hence is unable to act; still

others maintain that he is suffering from a sex neurosis, that he is the victim of an Oedipus complex. Whatever the theory, the fascination of the play remains largely undiminished, except for one school of critics which feels that the problems of the play arise because Shakespeare is himself not sure what he wants the play to be. It is their contention that the play is an artistic failure and that its problems are due more to incompetence than design. On the other hand, the fact that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's most poetically charged drama may mean that it was the one he worked over most carefully.

At any rate, *Hamlet* has been an enormously popular work since its inception; nearly every great dramatic actor of every age has felt the irresistible attraction of its title role. Perhaps this general popularity is due to the fact that for all the evil revealed in the play its total effect is not one of pessimism like, say, *Measure for Measure* or the later *Timon of Athens,* but rather it is the theme of the hero's death which brings purification and renewed life that informs the work. And finally, there is no greater dramatic poetry to be found anywhere else in English literature.

The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice—Domestic Tragedy

Written c. 1604. Dekker's *Honest Whore* (1604) in the first scene almost certainly refers to Othello. The official Revels Accounts list "The Moor of Venis" performed by the King's Men at Whitehall November 1, 1604. Stationers' Register October 6, 1621. First quarto, "good," 1622.

SUMMARY. The swarthy Moor, Othello, a general of the Venetian Republic, secretly weds Desdemona, daughter of Senator Brabantio. While Othello is explaining his conduct to the Venetian senate, word comes of a threatened Turkish assault upon Cyprus. Othello proceeds to the island's defense, accompanied by Desdemona.

Iago, Othello's ensign, is jealous of Cassio, who is promoted to lieutenant. Iago gets Cassio drunk on duty and thereby stripped of rank. At Iago's instigation, Cassio asks Desdemona to intercede with Othello for Cassio's restoration. Iago poisons the mind of Othello against Cassio, asserting that the disgraced lieutenant is Desdemona's lover. Iago convinces Othello of the accusation by arranging for Cassio to find and display a handkerchief which was Othello's gift to Desdemona.

Othello smothers his wife with a pillow. Iago persuades his dupe Roderigo to murder Cassio, but Roderigo fails and is slain by Iago to conceal the plot. Iago's wife, Emilia, who is gentlewoman to Desdemona, reveals Iago's treachery and Desdemona's innocence just before she is slain by Iago. Othello kills himself as Iago is carried off to punishment.

SOURCE. A *novella* in Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565) details the story but names only "Disdemona." No contemporary English translation is known. Shakespeare's version improves the original plotting appreciably.

DISCUSSION. Expertly, Shakespeare demonstrates how Othello's noble virtues were responsible for his heinous crime. Othello is a straightforward pro-

fessional soldier unacquainted with the wiles of a "super-subtle Venetian." He keenly realizes his precarious position as an alien holding a critical post and is touchingly humble in respecting Desdemona's superiority in youth and social esteem. It is thus the cruelest tragedy of life that it can form from our very virtues the means of disaster and misery. And it is the same with Desdemona who hastens her doom by her own generous nature. She pleads for Cassio, never realizing that each exhortation strengthens Othello's belief that she is Cassio's mistress.

Iago is Shakespeare's consummate villain. Coleridge was annoyed with the "motiveless malignity" of Iago, but Shakespeare carefully presents two causes for Iago's hate of Othello: the ignoring of Iago's claim to promotion, and Iago's suspicion of Othello's interest in Emilia. However, Iago also stems from the medieval Judas and Vice whom the spectators accepted as evil without expecting any attempts at motivation.

Witnessing a performance of the play will solve a vexatious problem often worrying the scholars—the so-called "double time" in *Othello*. The time suggestions in the play sometimes indicate rapidity of action, sometimes indicate slow, drawn-out action. An audience is never worried about these references, for Shakespeare uses time impressionistically.

The Tragedy of Macbeth—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1606. The banquet scene seems clearly referred to in Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (c. 1607). Metrical and stylistic tests indicate c. 1605–06. Earliest specified performance, April 20, 1611, at the Globe, was witnessed by Simon Forman, contemporary physician. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in First Folio. Text looks like prompt-copy, the shortest Shakespearean play except for *Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest*. The Hecate scenes are probably derived from *The Witch* by Middleton.

SUMMARY. After vanquishing an army of Scottish rebels and Norwegians, Macbeth and Banquo, generals of King Duncan of Scotland, encounter three witches. The three weird sisters hail Banquo as begetter of kings and Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor and "king hereafter." News shortly arrives that Duncan has created Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. Reading of the account in a letter from Macbeth, Lady Macbeth decides that Duncan "must be provided for" when he is a guest of Macbeth.

Persuaded by his wife, Macbeth slays the sleeping monarch and is proclaimed king when the sons of Duncan, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee for their lives. To forestall the witches' prophecy, Macbeth plots the murder of Banquo's family, but the latter's son Fleance (reputed ancestor of James I) escapes. Macbeth is haunted by Banquo's ghost and is greatly suspected by Macduff. The witches warn Macbeth against Macduff but assure him that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth," who shall be unvanquished "until/Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill/Shall come against him."

When Macduff joins the exiled Malcolm in England, Macbeth orders the murder of Lady Macduff and all Macduff's children. Macbeth's supporters drift away from him, and Lady Macbeth becomes insane from guilt and commits suicide. The enemy troops cut Birnam trees and bear them as cover to approach Macbeth's castle. Macduff in combat informs Macbeth that he himself was brought into life in a Caesarian operation, not "born" of his mother. With Macbeth dead at Macduff's hands, Malcolm is proclaimed King of Scotland.

SOURCE. Holinshed, whose history of Scotland comes from the Latin *Scotorum Historiae* by Hector Boece. Shakespeare picks items from other Scottish reigns, as well as from Macbeth's, to piece out the drama.

DISCUSSION. Macbeth as the protector of his nation at the play's outset and as a scion of royal blood might well have succeeded Duncan according to ancient Scottish practice, but by appointing Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland Duncan designated Malcolm as heir to the throne. The witches are an expressionistic device to objectivize Macbeth's logical but impious ambitions for the crown. Thwarted by Duncan, Macbeth considers the achievement of his desires by murder but hesitates because of his scruples. The slaying is doubly horrible–striking down the Lord's Anointed and violating the sacred guarantee of a guest. Thus Macbeth must will himself to ever-mounting brutality, as sin constantly breeds more heinous sin.

No other play by Shakespeare is so completely the tragedy of evil. Yielding to sin, Macbeth eventually destroys within himself the ultimate human need, the belief that life is meaningful. The play achieves perhaps the most remarkable of all Shakespeare's feats; it presents a man who has forfeited his humanity and yet claims our interest and our understanding.

Shakespeare's sure grasp of effect upon the audience in this play is really remarkable. Also, the dramatist's imaginative penetration is at full maturity in the play. His insight into men appears, for example, when the thought of revenge first strikes the mind of Macduff after he learns of his family's extermination: "He has no children," he says of Macbeth.

The Tragedy of King Lear—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1605–06. The conversation of Lear and the disguised Kent is imitated in *The Fleare* (Stationers' Register May 13, 1606) by Edward Sharpham. First known performance was by the King's Men before James I at Whitehall December 26, 1606. Stationers' Register November 26, 1607. First quarto (1608) prints a satisfactory but suspicious text; the verse is sometimes printed as prose and the prose as verse. Probably the text was taken by a capable stenographer from a live performance. The quarto text is actually longer and occasionally better than the First Folio version, which probably reflects some years of tinkering by acting companies.

SUMMARY. The aging King Lear of Britain decides to divide his kingdom among his daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. The first two flatter the

old man outrageously, while Cordelia refuses to be such a sycophant. The enraged monarch disinherits Cordelia and banishes Kent for protesting. The King of France marries the dowerless Cordelia.

Goneril with her husband Albany rules half the kingdom, while Regan with her husband Cornwall holds the rest. Once entrenched, both daughters display base ingratitude toward the old king, taking from him his pride and his prerogatives. Lear at last dashes out alone into a wild storm where he goes mad. His only companions are the court Fool and Edgar, son of Gloucester, who pretends madness as he flees from his father, whom the bastard son Edmund has led to believe Edgar a traitor. The disguised Kent comes with Gloucester to Lear's aid. Gloucester's eyes are put out by Cornwall because he assisted Lear.

Edgar helps his blinded father to Dover where Cordelia has landed with French troops to assist Lear, brought thence by Kent. In the ensuing battle Lear and Cordelia, now reconciled, are captured. Edmund orders the slaying of Cordelia. Goneril poisons Regan for love of Edmund; and when the bastard is killed by his good brother Edgar, Goneril commits suicide. Edgar is reconciled with his father before Gloucester dies. Lear carries in the body of the dead Cordelia and himself expires. Albany is left to rule the reunited kingdom.

SOURCE. The Lear account appears in Holinshed, *The Faerie Queene*, and *The Mirrour for Magistrates*. At the Rose Theatre on April 6, 1594, according to Henslowe's diary, was performed *King Leir*, an anonymous play variously ascribed to Lodge, Peele, Greene, and Kyd. Performed again in 1605, this play may have caused Shakespeare to write his version. The older play (pub. 1605), like all other non-Shakespearean accounts of Lear, ends happily and does not include the Gloucester subplot.

Sidney's *Arcadia* offers the Gloucester subplot in the tale of the "Paphlagonian unkinde kinge."

The play must have been written after 1603, for Bishop Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603) provides the names of the fiends mentioned by Edgar in III, iv.

DISCUSSION. *King Lear* deals with education, ultimate education in the great verities of life. Even men of years, experience, and power such as Lear and Gloucester may have a false vision of their responsibilities. The play concerns their education, bringing it about that in his physical blindness, Gloucester, like Lear, gains true understanding. All other versions of the story end happily, but Shakespeare rightfully brings both Lear and Gloucester to their death. Both have fully completed their education and therefore die fulfilled.

Lear and Gloucester violate nature but retain our sympathies, for they err in ignorance, not malignity. Their oppressors, Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, are pure villains, the embodiment of perverted nature, purposeful evil. The aged men are partly responsible by negligence for their unnatural children,

though Edmund as a bastard was automatically deemed an enemy of society by the Renaissance audience. But such evil eventually works its own destruction. Edmund makes his improper relations with the wicked sisters his steppingstones to power, but this adultery causes Regan's murder by Goneril, Goneril's suicide, and Edmund's death in combat. These liaisons join the main plot with the subplot. The subplot neatly parallels the main plot, contrasting the righteous and unrighteous sons of Gloucester with the kind and unkind daughters of Lear.

The violence in *King Lear* has been matched frequently in the theater, but only Shakespeare can evoke the sickening sense of sin and evil. In its titanic magnitude, this play has been considered by many as Shakespeare's greatest drama.

LATER TRAGEDIES

These later tragedies, while perhaps not reaching the heights of the great ones, nevertheless show that Shakespeare suffered no real diminution of his artistic powers.

Antony and Cleopatra—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1607. *The Devil's Charter,* a tragedy by Barnabe Barnes, printed in October 1607, seems to refer to the Shakespearean play. No recorded performance before the Restoration. Stationers' Register May 20, 1608, but no printing until the First Folio.

SUMMARY. Enraptured by the loveliness of Cleopatra, Antony tarries in Egypt until recalled to Rome by the threat of civil war and the death of his wife Fulvia. A quarrel with Octavius is settled by Antony's marriage to Octavia, sister of Octavius. Octavius defeats Pompey and sloughs off Lepidus, leaving only Antony to dispute his rule of the world. At the sea battle of Actium, the Egyptian squadrons desert Antony, and Octavius wins a resounding victory. The defeated Antony is cornered in Alexandria, where his friend Enobarbus deserts him and he is falsely informed of Cleopatra's death. Antony stabs himself and is carried to Cleopatra, dying in her arms. To prevent being displayed as a spectacle in a Roman triumph planned by Octavius, Cleopatra causes an asp to sting her with its deadly venom.

SOURCE. North's translation of "Life of Marcus Antonius" by Plutarch with some indebtedness to *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1594) by Samuel Daniel.

DISCUSSION. This is a twofold tragedy involving both title characters. The tragedy of Antony is the familiar downfall of the great, but Cleopatra's tragedy is a triumph in death.

The play encompasses the whole of the Mediterranean world from Rome to Alexandria, and the richness of the tragedy is due no less to its breadth than to its depth. The whole Roman world, unappreciative of Cleopatra's charm, sees only Antony's dereliction and condemns it. Shakespeare, as a

dramatist rather than a proscriptive moralist, records the decline and fall of Antony without himself denouncing the surrender to passion.

For the first three acts Cleopatra seems essentially a voluptuary and a siren. Shakespeare does not assign to her the culture and intellect ascribed her by North's translation from Plutarch. In the 13th scene of Act III, Cleopatra, under an angry diatribe from Antony, begins her transformation. After Antony's suicide she must confront her own life and character as she never had to before. The buffets of fate and suffering transform the Cleopatra of the last two acts from a selfish, wanton girl into a true inward woman and queen. She achieves self-mastery and dies triumphantly. The North translation ascribes both wantonness and grandeur to Cleopatra, and Shakespeare incorporates both convincingly.

With the prodigality of his maturity, Shakespeare endows even minor figures with greatness—Enobarbus repentant after his desertion of the magnanimous Antony, Charmian delivering the valedictory upon the expiring Cleopatra. One of Shakespeare's longest plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a tremendous historical spectacle, evidently inspired by the success of *Julius Caesar* but surpassing its predecessor in tragic insight.

The Life of Timon of Athens—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1605–08. *Humor out of Breath* (1608) by John Day seems to refer to this drama. No record of pre-Restoration performance. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in First Folio after *Romeo and Juliet* in place of the withdrawn *Troilus and Cressida*. Probably this play was not originally intended for publication, but was inserted to fill a gap in the Folio. Text is confusing, with much mislineation and frequent confusion of verse and prose. Possibly it is a revision of an earlier work or a tinkering with the Shakespearean text by another dramatist, perhaps George Wilkins or George Chapman. In its present form it seems unfinished, perhaps abandoned by Shakespeare in favor of *King Lear*, which is similar in theme.

SUMMARY. Heedless of warnings from his faithful steward Flavius, the noble Athenian, Timon, beggars himself by lavishly entertaining his friends who in turn desert him when he seeks their help in his subsequent poverty. He invites the ingrates to a pretended banquet where the uncovered dishes reveal only warm water and, hurling water and dishes at them, drives them out.

Retiring to a cave near the seashore, Timon scorns all mankind. When he discovers gold, he cynically tosses it to passersby. He repels Apemantus, also a misanthrope, with scurrilous language. Alcibiades, banished by the ungrateful senate of Athens, leads forces against the city, passing the cave of Timon. The distraught senators offer absolute power to Timon if he will thwart the attack of Alcibiades, but Timon drives them off. The one honest man Timon finds is Flavius, but he will not permit the faithful steward to comfort him. Alcibiades captures Athens and learns of Timon's death.

SOURCE. The essential story appears in North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* of Antonius and Alcibiades; in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure;* and in Lucian's dialogue, *Timon, or the Misanthrope.* Another academic drama in ms., *Timon* (c. 1585), added to the original story the character of the faithful steward and the mock banquet.

DISCUSSION. Comment is dangerous about a play that probably was neither completed nor acted. It seems to be an undeveloped study of three reactions to injustice. Apemantus is the philosophic misanthrope, a hater of mankind on general principles and without proper justification. Alcibiades is the normal man, angered at his mistreatment and trying to right the world. His victory at the end faintly suggests Shakespeare's usual conclusion; like a Fortinbras or a Henry VII, he is the restorer of normal and just social and political order. Timon has been forced by man's ingratitude to flee human society and detest mankind.

In some respects, this play resembles the Morality plays. Change some names to "False Friend," "Selfhood," etc. and you have a play on "Man's Ingratitude." In fact, characters named Poet and Painter really do occur in the drama.

The Tragedy of Coriolanus—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy

Written c. 1607–08. Jonson's drama *Epicoene* and Robert Armin's poem "The Italian Taylor, and His Boy," both in 1609, seem to refer to this play. No known performance before the Restoration. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio with many mislineations and misprintings.

SUMMARY. For skill and intrepidity during the capture of the Volscian town of Corioli, the Roman general, Caius Marcius, is honored with the surname Coriolanus and the office of consul. His arrogant contempt for the Roman plebeians infuriates the masses, fired by the jealous opponents of Coriolanus.

Banished from Rome, Coriolanus joins his former enemy Aufidius and leads a Volscian army against Rome. In vain his old comrades Cominius and Menenius plead with him to spare his native city, but Coriolanus finally yields to the pleas of his mother Volumnia, his wife Virgilia, and his son Marcius. Coriolanus returns to Corioli with riches and a favorable peace, but he is murdered at the instigation of Aufidius. Quickly repenting, Aufidius resolves to honor properly the memory of the great Coriolanus.

SOURCE. Essentially North's translation of the *Life of Caius Marcius Coriolanus* by Plutarch.

DISCUSSION. In our democratic days a play rooted in the aristocratic tradition is both disliked and misinterpreted. Coriolanus is apparently Shakespeare's attempt to portray the pure aristocratic ideal. Since the dramatist was middle class himself, his noble Roman tends toward statuesque marble, set upon a pedestal, without the warm humanizing usual to Shakespeare.

Shakespeare seems to have conceived Coriolanus as the aristocrat, loving humanity but contemptuous of the mob. Coriolanus sees the role of his class as the governors of men; the masses, while containing many worthy members, are collectively fickle and weak, easily blinded by demagogues, totally unable to recognize the true national interests. While the politicians grossly pander to the mob, Coriolanus insists on following the law and his principles. His banishment arises from trumped-up charges, and Coriolanus sees his native city as legally forfeiting its claims upon him. When he leads an army against Rome, he is placed in the dilemma of a Greek tragedy: his city is legally and politically wrong, but he is wrong in attacking his own blood and his own family. His mother, who has exercised a dominating influence on him throughout the play, makes him realize that he is polluting his own blood and his own nature in assaulting Rome. The play is a political tragedy; Coriolanus is a misplaced personality, a political leader who cannot stand politics.

THE LATE ROMANCES AND FANTASY

Shakespeare at the end of his career turned to a series of romances; some critics have advanced the idea that in them he finds a resolution to the problems of life less costly and less stern than the one the tragedies offered.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre--Dramatic Romance

Written c. 1608. Sometime during his English residence (January 5, 1606, to November 23, 1608) the Venetian Ambassador, Zorzi Giustinian, witnessed this drama. Apparently *Pericles* in 1660 was the first Shakespearean drama performed after the Restoration. Stationers' Register May 20, 1608. First printing in first quarto (1609) is a corrupt text, possibly a shorthand copy. This is the basis for all subsequent versions. Excluded from the first two folios, the play text, derived from the fifth quarto (1630), was printed in the third folio (1664). Heminge and Condell probably omitted the play from their editions as not wholly the work of Shakespeare. Acts I–II are possibly by George Wilkins, who published a prose tale, *The Painfull Aduentures of Pericles Prince of Tyre,* in 1608. Acts III–V are almost universally assigned to Shakespeare.

SUMMARY. Intending to woo the daughter of King Antiochus, Pericles to his disgust discovers the incestuous love of father and daughter. To escape the vengeance of the guilty monarch, Pericles leaves his government in the hands of Helicanus and sails for Tarsus. Shipwrecked off Pentapolis, Pericles in a tournament wins and weds Thaisa, daughter of King Simonides.

Learning of the death of Antiochus, Pericles and Thaisa sail for Tyre, but Thaisa is mistakenly thought to have died immediately after having given birth to a daughter. She is buried at sea in a casket which later is washed ashore at Ephesus. Thinking Pericles dead and not certain whether she bore a child, Thaisa enters the temple of Diana of the Ephesians. At Tarsus,

Pericles leaves his baby daughter Marina with the governor Cleon and the governor's wife Dionyza.

Sixteen years later Dionyza, chagrined that Marina is far lovelier than her own daughter, plots to murder Marina, but the girl is captured by pirates and sold to a brothel-keeper in Mytilene. She is ransomed from there by the governor, Lysimachus. Meanwhile, Pericles in Tyre sees in a vision the tomb of Marina at Tarsus. Sickness causes him to put in at Mytilene, where he recognizes Marina. Another vision summons Pericles to Ephesus where father and daughter are reunited with Thaisa. Marina is betrothed to Lysimachus, and Gower as chorus relates the burning of Cleon and Dionyza by the irate citizens of Tarsus.

SOURCE. The appearance of Gower as chorus tacitly admits indebtedness to his *Confessio Amantis* for the Apollonius of Tyre story. The earliest extant version is the 5th- or 6th-century Latin *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri,* based upon a lost earlier Greek romance. The play also leans upon Laurence Twyne's *The Patterne of Painfull Aduentures,* registered in 1576 and printed in an undated edition and in another of 1607. The change of name to Pericles may have been suggested by the maritime adventures of Prince Pyrocles in Sidney's *Arcadia.*

DISCUSSION. This play purposely conveys an archaic flavor of old-fashioned romance. Spectacle (as in the dumb shows), the remoteness in space and time, the strange and supernatural, the chorus of old Gower, and the poetic tone all combine to form a fairy tale. However, it is not the youthful fairyland of the "joyous comedies," but an older man's musing upon a romantic and departed world. The final note is of serenity and peace rather than the ecstasy of earlier comedies.

With the ingenuity of the tragicomedies, the visions of Pericles are the extraordinary devices to resolve an otherwise hopeless situation. Shakespeare simply employs the means of the old Apollonius tale, and, with all its improbability, the account has never been so skilfully and interestingly constructed.

Cymbeline—Tragicomedy

Written c. 1609–10. Simon Forman witnessed the play sometime between April and September 1611, probably at the Globe. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio in fair text.

SUMMARY. Secretly, Imogen, daughter of the British king, Cymbeline, has married Posthumus. Her stepmother, who wished her son Cloten to marry Imogen, reveals the clandestine marriage to Cymbeline, who banishes Posthumus. In Rome, Posthumus makes a wager with Iachimo that Imogen is altogether faithful, but Iachimo goes to Britain and gains admittance to the quarters of the sleeping Imogen, carrying off from there mementos to incriminate the pure Imogen. Convinced of his wife's infidelity, Posthumus writes to her to meet him at Milford Haven, simultaneously ordering Pisanio,

his servant, to kill her. At Pisanio's urging, Imogen disguises herself as a page boy and joins the Roman general Lucius, who is invading Britain.

Imogen finds in a mountain cave the banished lord Belarius and her two brothers whom Belarius kidnapped when they were infants. Seeking Imogen, Cloten is killed by her brothers. Imogen takes a potion brewed by the wicked queen and appears dead. Awaking, she thinks the decapitated corpse of Cloten that of her husband. The Roman forces are defeated chiefly because of the courageous Belarius, the sons of Cymbeline, and Posthumus, who has returned from the continent. The wicked queen dies and in an elaborate recognition scene all are reunited: husband and wife, father and sons, sister and brothers. Cymbeline makes peace with Rome, ordering that "a Roman and a British ensign wave friendly together."

SOURCE. The central theme comes from the story of *Bernabo of Genoa* in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It appeared in a variety of English forms to which Shakespeare was also indebted.

The Belarius theme seems derived from an anonymous play, *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, performed before Elizabeth I in 1589. In the old drama the princess is Fidelia (Fidele is the assumed name of the disguised Imogen).

The legendary British history derives from several parts of Holinshed.

Cymbeline bears resemblances to *Philaster* (c. 1610) by Beaumont and Fletcher, but it is impossible to say which play influenced the other.

DISCUSSION. The tragic theme of *Othello* is here modified into tragicomedy. Posthumus is no Othello, and Iachimo is no Iago. The wager by Posthumus should not make him scorned, but he is rather ineffectual. So likewise is Iachimo, a somewhat petty villain, properly repentant at the end. Imogen is another charming and resolute Shakespearean heroine.

Again the whole story is an adult fairy tale (complete with wicked queen). The account gains credence by its simple and naive narration. The recognition scene in the last act is generally lauded as one of the finest bits of stagecraft in the theater. Shakespeare squeezes every bit of suspense and drama from it. It is interesting to note that the hisory of ancient Britain and the Celts was not entirely forgotten in these times, but remained an undercurrent of myth.

Most memorable are the lyrics, "Hark, hark! the lark" and "Fear no more the heat o' the sun."

The Winter's Tale—Dramatic Romance

Written c. 1610–11. The bear and the dancing satyrs in IV, iv, may imitate those in Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, performed at Whitehall, January 1, 1611. Simon Forman witnessed a performance of this play at the Globe on May 15, 1611. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio, a "good" text.

SUMMARY. Leontes, King of Sicilia, falsely believes that his friend,

Polixenes, King of Bohemia, is the lover of Hermione, his queen. Polixenes escapes death from poisoning by Leontes, but Hermione is incarcerated. In prison Hermione bears a daughter, whom Leontes orders exposed. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi states that Hermione and Polixenes are blameless and that "the King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found." Mamillius, the little son of Leontes, dies of grief for his slandered mother, and Hermione is reported dead.

The baby girl is abandoned on the seacoast of Bohemia (strange geography, for Czechoslovakia is completely landlocked), where she is found by a shepherd and brought up as his daughter, Perdita. When Perdita is sixteen, Florizel, son of Polixenes, falls in love with her; but the marriage is forbidden by Polixenes. The lovers sail to Sicilia, where Leontes finds that Perdita is his long-lost daughter. They all go to inspect a statue of Hermione, which is reputed to be unbelievably lifelike. It turns out to be the queen herself, who had lived for years in seclusion. Leontes is reunited with his family and friends. With Polixenes he arranges for the marriage of Florizel and Perdita.

Comedy is provided by the winsome rogue, Autolycus (a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles"), a shepherd, and the shepherd's clownish friend.

SOURCE. *Pandosto, or The Triumph of Time* (1588) by Robert Greene, reprinted in 1607 as *The History of Dorastus and Fawnia.* The statue coming to life was probably suggested by the Pygmalion legend. Autolycus is Shakespeare's own remarkable creation.

DISCUSSION. The first three acts constitute a tragedy traceable to the insane jealousy of Leontes. The King of Sicilia is the enraged monarch straight from a romance or fairy tale, and we must accept his behavior without the promptings of an Iago or any other real justification. The fourth act, set upon the mythical coast of Bohemia, is one of the most charming pieces of English pastoralism. The fifth act has another great recognition scene, and all the threads of the drama (except the theme of sad little Mamillius) are neatly repeated, woven together, and straightened out. Hermione outdoes the patient Griselda (who never lost a child), still deeply loving the imperious Leontes and offering no complaint about her many years of forced seclusion. Leontes is appropriately penitent, and all ends happily.

Shakespeare had not written himself out. This is a well-constructed drama, energetic, moving, and rich with individualized characters.

The Tempest–Dramatic Romance

Written c. 1611. The official Revels Accounts list a performance at Whitehall before James I by the King's Men on November 1, 1611. Stationers' Register November 8, 1623. First printed in the First Folio–with more stage directions than any other Shakespearean play.

SUMMARY. Absorbed in books and magic, Prospero, Duke of Milan, is expelled by his brother Antonio and cast adrift with his baby daughter Miranda in a leaky boat. On a desert island Prospero makes servants of the

ethereal spirit Ariel and the subhuman Caliban, son of the witch Sycorax.

The play opens twelve years later, when the magic of Prospero causes the shipwreck of Alonso, King of Naples, and his followers: brother Sebastian, son Ferdinand, honest counsellor Gonzalo, and Antonio. Prospero contrives to isolate Ferdinand, who falls in love with Miranda but is treated as a spy by the magician. Sebastian and Antonio unsuccessfully attempt to murder Alonso and Gonzalo. Rebellious Caliban persuades Stephano (a drunken butler) and Trinculo (a jester) to try an assassination of Prospero.

Prospero frees Ferdinand from his spell, betroths him to Miranda, and has Ariel display a masque before the lovers. Further, the magician drives off Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, and transports the spellbound Alonso and his entourage to Prospero's cell. Antonio is forgiven but must restore the dukedom to Prospero. Ferdinand is reunited with his father. Renouncing his magic, Prospero frees Ariel, and all sail for Italy, leaving Caliban the sole resident of the island.

SOURCE. The original story stems from a medieval Latin account by the Priest of Dioclea. Shakespeare's immediate source is unknown, but is probably from *Li Tre Satiri* (extant in ms. of 1622), a scenario for the Italian *commedia dell' arte*. Italian actors visited England in Shakespeare's time, and he may have witnessed this Italian drama staged in England.

Shakespeare makes free poetic use of three contemporary English travel accounts about shipwreck in the Bermudas:

(1) Silvester Jourdan's *A Discovery of the Barmudas* (1610), detailing the wreck of Sir George Somers' *Sea Venture* in 1609.

(2) William Strachey's *A True Repertory of the Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates* (dated 1610 and published in *Purchas His Pilgrims* in 1625). Gates was lieutenant general of the Virginia Company on the expedition by Somers. Both Strachey and Jourdan sailed on the *Sea Venture*.

(3) The anonymous *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colonie of Virginia* (1610) published by the Council of Virginia to explain the same voyage.

Gonzalo's oration upon the ideal commonwealth derives from *Des Cannibales* by Montaigne in the Florio translation. The name Caliban seems a variant of "cannibal."

Prospero's most famous speech, "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on," is based upon but is vastly greater than a passage from *Tragedie of Darius* (1603) by Sir William Alexander. The name and something of the story of Prospero apparently come from William Thomas' *Historye of Italye* (1561); Prospero is also the name of a character in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (Stationers' Register 1600).

Richard Eden's *History of Travaille* (1577) names Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, and also the Patagonian deity Setebos (god of Caliban). Ariel ("Lion of God") appears in the Biblical *Isaiah* and in the Hebrew *Kabala*.

DISCUSSION. *The Tempest* is often interpreted as Shakespeare's *envoi.* Considering Prospero the magician-dramatist himself, such a reading sees Prospero's renunciation of magic as Shakespeare's own farewell to the theater and retirement to Stratford.

Symbols of Prospero's power are the contrasting figures: Ariel and Caliban. Ariel is a spiritual essence, the light, volatile, ethereal. Caliban is the brutish, semihuman creature, representing the baser side of nature. Prospero commands both beings, but both seek freedom from rational control. They regain their freedom, and it is the challenge to every man to reassert Prospero's sway over these rebellious elements within himself.

For "the soul of the age" Shakespeare is strangely silent until this play about the lure of the intrepid English voyagers. The opening scene shows such familiarity with nautical terms as to cause seamen to claim the poet as one of their fraternity, but his facile use of maritime vocabulary, as elsewhere of law, medicine, theology, etc., points less to the skilled tradesman than it does to the mind of a consummate observer and artist.

Foreshadowing later English drama, this play is unique among Shakespeare's for obeying the classic unities of time and place, everything occurring on the magic isle within a twenty-four-hour period. The unity of action is somewhat marred by the subplot, the conspiracy against Alonso. Jonson's influence may explain this tight construction, or it may be the playwright's reaction against the loose formation of *The Winter's Tale.* Apparently the last full play by Shakespeare, *The Tempest* displays his fullest mastery of character and theme, variety and poetry, thought and spirit.

OTHER PLAYS KNOWN TO BE AT LEAST PARTLY BY SHAKESPEARE

All the preceding dramas were printed in the First Folio, except *Pericles,* which, after extensive appearances in quartos, was printed in the Third Folio. Shakespeare has been credited with other plays, the most important of which is:

Henry VIII (c. 1612) which caused, with its elaborate production, the burning of the Globe Theatre on June 29, 1613, when wadding from cannon charges on the stage ignited the structure. The play itself is rather a sequence of private disasters and pageantry than a unified drama. Modern scholars see Shakespeare's hand in only three scenes and part of a fourth. The most famous passage, Wolsey's "A long farewell to all my greatness," long a favorite "Shakespearean" gem for declamation, is possibly by John Fletcher who is thought to have collaborated with Shakespeare on the play. The character of Henry VIII is never clearly grasped.

There are two other plays on which it is believed Shakespeare collaborated with Fletcher: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (c. 1613) and *Cardenio. The Two Noble Kinsmen* retells the Knight's Tale by Chaucer. Four scenes seem defi-

nitely to resemble the technique of the later Shakespeare. *Cardenio,* a lost play, was acted in court in 1613 and was entered in the Stationers' Register of 1653 as by "Mr. Fletcher & Shakespeare."

OTHER PLAYS ASSOCIATED WITH SHAKESPEARE

There are two plays which give evidence of Shakespearelike writing but which present no external evidence of his authorship.

Sir Thomas More, a ms. play variously dated between 1593 and 1600, was probably written for the Admiral's Men by Anthony Munday, Henry Chettle, and Thomas Heywood. Revisions were possibly made by Dekker and Shakespeare. Three pages (known as Hand D) offer 147 lines during which More pacifies the anti-alien riots of 1517; many believe that this passage is by Shakespeare in his own handwriting. The drama revealingly demonstrates the high regard that Protestant England held for a distinguished Roman Catholic martyr only a half century after his death.

Edward III, published anonymously in 1596, was ascribed to Shakespeare in 1656 by the bookseller William Ley, whose numerous ascriptions are often preposterous. There are obviously two hands in this play, and the line "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds," appearing in II, i, and also in Sonnet 94 suggests that Shakespeare's may be one of the hands. While not a major work, the play is better for its time than the work of any other practicing historical dramatist except Shakespeare.

In addition to *Pericles,* accepted in the Shakespearean canon, six other plays were printed in the Third Folio in 1664 (not the compilation of Heminge and Condell): *The London Prodigall; The History of Thomas Ld. Cromwell; Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham; The Puritan Widow; A Yorkshire Tragedy; The Tragedy of Locrine.* All of these had been printed earlier in quarto, and attributed to "W.S." or "Shakespeare," but all except *Pericles* are generally deemed non-Shakespearean.

In *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598) Francis Meres highly praises Shakespeare for six comedies and six tragedies. All are familiar plays except the cryptic *"Loue labours wonne,"* among the comedies. This may refer to a lost play or may merely be an alternate title to an existing comedy such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

After the Restoration and into the 18th century, unscrupulous or overly enthusiastic publishers, booksellers, and amateurs often ascribed to Shakespeare any anonymous or disputable play composed between 1590 and 1615. *Faire Em, The Merry Devil of Edmonton,* and *Mucedorus,* for example, were bound under the title "Shakespeare Vol I" in the library of Charles II.

The late 18th century witnessed many literary frauds, including those of Chatterton and Macpherson. William Henry Ireland as a boy of eighteen pawned off his own concoction, *Vortigern and Rowena* (1796) upon Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Sheridan actually had the play performed as a tragedy

by Shakespeare at Drury Lane to the accompaniment of much laughter. Another Ireland forgery of Shakespeare, *Henry II,* never got so far.

In a book of any size it would be hard to do full justice to the importance of Shakespeare. He is a writer who has fascinated succeeding ages right down to the present. His plays are constantly performed, and have seen productions in every medium both new and old, and yet have never lost their freshness, vitality, and pertinence. In mirroring his own time so well, he has given to all succeeding ages an accurate glass in which to see themselves.

CHAPTER 13

Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Post-Shakespearean Dramatists

(1595–1642)

We have already discussed in Chapter 11 the beginnings of the Elizabethan drama and the playwrights who practiced just prior to Shakespeare. In Chapter 12 we examined the complete works of Shakespeare; and now we will pick up the thread of developing Renaissance drama again, and treat first those playwrights who may be deemed most nearly contemporary with Shakespeare and then those who come after, right up to the closing of the theaters in 1642.

The background information given in Chapter 10 will be applicable to most of the early playwrights discussed in this chapter. The decline of the monarchy and the rise of Puritanism which formed the historical background of the later authors discussed in this chapter will be found in the opening section of the next chapter, where it is of more immediate concern to the issues and authors taken up.

However, for the purposes of identification, it is well to remember that after the death of Elizabeth (1603) the Renaissance drama is divided into two categories named after the two monarchs who succeeded her: Jacobean, those plays written under James I (1603–25) and Caroline, those plays written under Charles I (1625–49). The next chapter may be consulted for background information on the Jacobean and Caroline periods.

Each of the plays discussed in this chapter will be identified as to type, as in the preceding chapters, and thus the variety of styles mastered by many playwrights will be the more readily appreciated. Of course, not all the plays of this era are treated—that would require a book in itself—but all the important plays of each author are included. A few minor plays are discussed to show the full range of dramatic genres.

As in Chapter 11, we find the drama here divided into the nonprofessional theater and the public theater. We will first examine the nonprofessional theater during this period and then go on to a discussion of the individual playwrights of the public stage in this, the greatest era of English dramatic production.

THE NONPROFESSIONAL THEATER DURING THIS ERA

THE ACADEMIC DRAMA

Shakespeare had emerged from the world of the theater, but most of the dramatists of the Elizabethan period continued to come from the universities. Throughout this period the English schools and colleges continued to produce in their own halls drama in Latin and English.

In 1592 at Christ Church, Oxford, Elizabeth witnessed a Latin comedy by William Gager, who was ranked by Meres as one "of the best for comedy amongst us." The great designer and architect Inigo Jones assisted in the presentation of three Latin plays at Christ Church in 1605; in the audience was James I. The king so greatly enjoyed the Trinity College, Cambridge, performance of George Ruggles' Latin drama *Ignoramus* in 1607 that he attended a second performance two months later.

The most interesting academic drama in the English tongue was composed of the three anonymous Parnassus plays, dubiously ascribed to William Dodd from Cheshire (which is mentioned in the plays) or to:

John Day (c. 1574–c. 1640). John Day was a farmer's son from Norfolk who was expelled from Cambridge University in 1593 for stealing a book. From 1599 through 1603 he was a hack playwright for Henslowe and the Admiral's Men. Jonson classed him among rogues and "base fellows," who were "not . . . of the faithful" (i.e., true poets). If Day wrote the college plays, they surpass his professional hackwork.

The Pilgrimage to Parnassus in ms. was probably acted at St. John's, Cambridge, during the Christmas season of 1598. It clearly evolved from the secular Moralities earlier in the century.

The Return from Parnassus, Part 1, in ms. was probably acted at St. John's during the Christmas season of 1599. Its theme is the very real Renaissance plight of the college graduate, rendered unfit by his training for commonplace labor and woefully unsuccessful in obtaining congenial employment.

The Return from Parnassus, Part 2, was probably acted at St. John's during the Christmas season of 1601. It was noted in the Stationers' Register for 1605 and was printed the next year. This play continues the previous drama of unemployed intellectuals, dropping them to even lower plights.

While witty, the whole series of plays shows a rather despairing view of the college graduate's prospects in a greedy commercial world. The satire pictures realistically the callousness and corruption of the contemporary world.

DRAMA OF THE COURT

From the accession of James I in 1603 until the closing of the theaters in 1642 the royal court exercised a growing influence upon the drama. In part this influence arose from the more extensive patronage by James I and Queen Anne of Denmark. From 1594 to 1603 under Elizabeth I, Shakespeare's

company, easily the most popular, performed 32 times before the court; from 1603 to 1616 the King's Men gave 177 performances before the court.

The courtiers became the chief patrons of the "private theater" because of their place of residence, their leisure, their taste, and their money. As Puritanism, with its fanatical distaste for the theater, gained strength in the middle classes and among urbanites, the actors increasingly sought the patronage of the courtiers.

The most spectacular type of the court drama and the court's own unique contribution to the Renaissance theater was the *masque* (a French term popularized by Lyly and Jonson over the earlier "mask"). Mummery or disguising is extremely old, dating back to at least neolithic times, but more civilized eras maintained the practice as fun, unaware of its primitive origin in ritual. By the 14th century in England the masque was a well-defined entertainment in which disguised friends brought presents and music to a home, dancing before the hosts and then inviting everyone to join. During the 15th century the masque became a separate show which at no time included the undisguised hosts, who now became mere spectators. On Twelfth Night 1512, the youthful Henry VIII reintroduced from Italy the practice of bringing the viewers back into the gaiety of dancing after the masque spectacle. Throughout subsequent Tudor times the masque proved an immensely popular diversion of the royal court, consisting generally of allegorical pageantry followed by the "commoning," or the participation in a dance, of masquers and spectators.

With the accession of James I the court masque expanded tremendously. Apparently Jonson was chiefly responsible for transforming the masque into a full-fledged dramatic performance. He and other poet-dramatists such as Beaumont and Chapman teamed up with the brilliant architect-designer Inigo Jones to produce glorious spectacles, enormously expensive and fabulously lavish. The masque was presented at night solely to the royal court, and therefore ladies of the court took female roles; all other Renaissance drama used males in female acting parts. The indoor, artificially lit settings were fantastically elaborate and showy. Costuming was gorgeously colorful and ornate beyond that of any other stage of the period. While music and spectacle were of greatest importance to many court viewers, a high literary quality was insured by excellent dramatists such as Jonson, who wrote at least thirty masques for court performance.

THE PRIVATE THEATER

The roofed and enclosed theaters originally occupied by the choirboy actors were termed "private" to distinguish them from the open-air public theaters of the adult companies. The Paul's Theatre was circular, but the others were rectangular, like the great hall of a Renaissance mansion. Blackfriars had at least one gallery. Seats were available throughout the private theater and prices started at sixpence, in contrast to the penny admission of the

public theater. Plays were usually performed in the afternoon, but the artificial light of candles and torches supplemented the daylight. Scenery and backdrops were employed, though not upon the elaborate scale of the court drama. The audience consisted of the well-to-do, chiefly the royal court.

Because the private theater originated in boy choirs, music was more important than in the public theater. When Shakespeare's company took over the Blackfriars in 1608, it continued the tradition of extensive music between the acts. The adult companies felt the competition of the youngsters (whom Hamlet scornfully refers to as "little eyases") because they drew many of the better-paying spectators. When the King's Men occupied Blackfriars, they found the private-theater receipts higher than those of the public theater and therefore started playing more particularly to the courtly audiences now within reach.

After Lyly's career the private theater largely drew upon the fertile talents of the playwrights of the popular theater. Since Marston, Jonson, Beaumont, and other dramatists wrote for both the boys' and the adult companies, and because the dramatic fare in the 1590s and thereafter was similar in both types of theaters, the plays of the private theaters are hereafter discussed among the public drama.

BEN JONSON AND OTHER CONTEMPORARIES OF SHAKESPEARE

We now come to the public theater and a discussion of those playwrights who may best be considered contemporaries of Shakespeare. All of these playwrights are interesting in themselves, but certainly the most important figure among them is Ben Jonson, the only contemporary playwright who comes even close to rivaling Shakespeare. His influence, particularly in the area of lyric poetry, extended far into the 17th century, and, again with the exception of Shakespeare, he was unmatched both in the excellence of his plays and in the variety of his style.

Ben Jonson (1572–1637). Officially named Benjamin but known always as Ben, Jonson was posthumously born of a Scottish father at Westminster. After studies at Westminster School under the great William Camden, Jonson was apprenticed to bricklaying, his stepfather's trade. He left Cambridge without a degree but later received honorary M.A. degrees from both Cambridge and Oxford. He fought in Flanders under Sir Francis Vere, returning to London c. 1592. After several years in the theater he produced his first success, *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), in which Shakespeare acted. In the same year Jonson killed a fellow actor, Gabriel Spenser, in a duel and escaped hanging only by pleading "benefit of clergy" (by proving he could read and write, a medieval man could claim to be a cleric and thus receive trial before the ecclesiastical courts, largely dissolved by Jonson's time).

In prison Jonson was converted to Roman Catholicism, which he abjured

twelve years later. Writing for the King's Men, he vied in popularity with the company's other great dramatist, Shakespeare. The greatest year of Jonson's life was 1616 in which he published his collected dramatic works (the first time in English history that a playwright had done this); he and Drayton reputedly drank Shakespeare into his fatal fever; and he received a royal pension of 100 marks as the first (though unofficial) poet laureate. In 1619 he visited William Drummond of Hawthornden, who acted partially as a Boswell to this Jonson. He was the acknowledged literary dictator until his death, although his quarrel with Inigo Jones in 1631 ended his writing of court masques.

Of Jonson's thirty masques we will discuss only two representative ones.

Oberon, the Faery Prince, performed January 1, 1611, in honor of Prince Henry, who played Oberon, is typical of the masque as jointly created by Jonson and Jones.

The masque opens with the cavortings of a Silene and ten Satyrs amid dark rocks. After brief dialogue the rocks move apart to reveal a magnificent palace with transparent gates and walls. Singing by the Satyrs awakes two Sylvan guards who announce the opening of the gates at cockcrow. After time-killing songs and dances by the Satyrs, the cock crows. Then "the whole palace opened, and the nation of Faies were discovered, some with instruments, some bearing lights, others singing; and within, afar off in perspective, the knights masquers sitting in their several sieges; at the farther end of all, Oberon, in a chariot which, to a loud triumphant music, began to move forward, drawn by two white bears." After songs and dances by the Faies, Oberon and the knights dance and sing. Then the Queen and the court join in the revelry that continues until dawn.

The dance of the twelve satyrs in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* may have been suggested by this masque.

The Hue and Cry after Cupid (1608) introduced Jonson's innovation of a comic antimasque, replete with the ridiculous and the grotesque. This antimasque, either separate or combined within the conventional masque, proved an interesting diversion, even though it sometimes degenerated to vulgarity.

Following the fashion, short masques appeared on the popular stage in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet,* and later plays, and also in the plays of other dramatists. Even *Timon of Athens* displays a Masque of Amazons, with Cupid as "truchman" (presenter or interpreter).

Jonson tried to alter the course of the public drama by injecting into it the classic concepts followed in the academic drama. In his two Roman tragedies, *Sejanus his Fall* (1603) and *Catiline his Conspiracy* (1611) he rather carefully followed the unities of time, place, and action; decorum in character and speech; and high seriousness without comic relief.

Sejanus his Fall (1603)—"Fall of Princes" Tragedy. The pleasure-loving emperor, Tiberius, has permitted his favorite, Sejanus, obscure in ancestry and devoid of virtues, to gain power second only to Tiberius. Sejanus seduces

the wife of Drusus, the emperor's son, and then poisons Drusus. With mounting success and audacity Sejanus destroys his opponents, clearing his way to becoming the successor of Tiberius. But the suspicious emperor, from his rural retreat, sets Macro to spy upon Sejanus. Under cloak of honoring Sejanus the emperor convenes the Senate. The statue of Fortuna, the goddess of fortune, averts her face from Sejanus, but he is scornful of portents. Expecting crowning glories at the Senate, Sejanus is denounced by Tiberius, seized by troops under Macro, and, while proceeding to prison, killed by the Roman mob.

The lust for power dominates all these Romans, even Macro, who sees his own chance to rise by dragging Sejanus low. Though eloquent and majestic, these ancients are like Jonson's "humours" characters of the comedies, selfish schemers and unscrupulous opportunists. In Renaissance fashion the mob is portrayed as fickle and unthinking. Plotting is excellent, as the Wheel of Fortune bears Sejanus ever upward until he seems wholly triumphant, and then dashes him to disaster. Of course, the foreboding signs, most of them unnoticed by Sejanus, have been carefully planted. The play is learnedly documented from Tacitus, Dion Cassius, and other ancient Latin sources. Some speeches are rather close translations from Roman authors. Even an excellent cast from the King's Men, including Shakespeare in his last documented appearance as an actor, could not make this classic piece palatable to the public theater audience. The drama foreshadows the reign of classic concepts in the drama which ended this century and extended into the 18th century.

Jonson as a master of comedy often seems to modern readers of English literature to lack both good taste and good "funny" comedy. The potent influence of Shakespeare has probably caused in us this preference for romantic comedy. Jonson's comedy is classical, satiric comedy; as in Molière and other playwrights of classical comedy, his figures are intended not for our sympathy so much as for our critical laughter. Also in contrast with Shakespearean comic figures, like Bottom, Jonson's comic characters require a moral condemnation. In the dedication to *Volpone*, Jonson asserts, "The office of a comic poet is to imitate justice and instruct to life, as well as purity of language." We of the 20th century find that this didactic purpose often runs counter to many of our attitudes toward art.

Jonson's pictures of contemporary Englishmen are generally highly critical and unflattering. Their usual fidelity to life grates upon our desire to romanticize the Renaissance. Coleridge stated: "There is not one whim or affectation in common life noted in any memoir of that age which may not be found drawn and framed in some corner or other of Ben Jonson's dramas." The awe, the mystery of life is not the subject of Jonson; it is human behavior, human folly. Jonson was a straightforward man who tended to see people and their conduct as all black or all white. He tended to pigeonhole them into neat categories, frequently, in bluff English fashion, into good and stupid or smart and bad.

In manner Jonson was not the most congenial personality, not the crowd-pleaser that Shakespeare was. Stiff-necked, Jonson appealed to "scholars that can judge" not to the "nutcrackers that only come for sight." He insisted upon the classical unities in composing a drama and the rational powers in composing a life. We have seen that his tragedy was not the greatest, but he was a genius of comedy, largely on the basis of Horace Walpole's assertion: "Life is a tragedy to those who feel, a comedy to those who think."

Upon the rationalistic age following, until almost the end of the 18th century, Jonson was a more important influence in comedy than was Shakespeare. For fuller comments upon the comedy of humours at which Jonson excelled, see Chapter 11, the discussion on the development of public theater during the Renaissance.

Every Man in His Humour (1598)—Comedy of humours. The play was written for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with Shakespeare in the cast, probably as the Elder Knowell. In 1709, Rowe claimed that Shakespeare was responsible for the company's acceptance of this play when Jonson was "altogether unknown to the World." Kitely was a favorite role for David Garrick, and Charles Dickens shone as Bobadill in an amateur performance of 1845.

A thin but well-constructed plot is a framework for a series of character studies on contemporary London types. The events revolve around three groups: Edward Knowell, senior and junior; Wellbred and his hangers-on; merchant Kitely with his wife and sister. Young Knowell is amused by the antics of Wellbred's circle and entranced with Bridget, Kitely's sister. The high-living Wellbred has "two hangbys, . . . wind instruments," Matthew, the town gull and ape of fashion, and Bobadill, a braggart soldier and lounger. Kitely fears that this riotous crew will make him a cuckold. Clever intrigue is supplied by Brainworm, descendant of the ingenious slave of Latin comedy. Suspicions and trickery involve most of the characters, whirling them to jovial Justice Clement for solution. In spite of Old Knowell, his son and Bridget are married.

The prologue keynotes Jonson's purpose:

> But deeds and language such as men do use,
> And persons such as comedy would choose
> When she would show an image of the times
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

The spectator is delighted not by happenings but by character. Jonson starts by conceiving of "the deceived father" (Elder Knowell), "the country bumpkin" (Stephen, Knowell's nephew), "the jealous man" (Kitely), "the plain squire" (Downright, Wellbred's brother), and the rest. His story emerges from the playing of one "humourous" character against the others. Though the play has no specific source, the shadow of Plautus looms behind it. Nonetheless, this is thoroughly English and Elizabethan, a racy excursion through

the sights and sounds and smells of contemporary London, richly enjoyed by its typical denizens.

Volpone, or The Fox (c. 1605–06)—Comedy of humours. Shakespeare's company premièred *Volpone* in 1605 or 1606 and quickly repeated it at both Oxford and Cambridge, to both of which institutions the printed work in 1607 was dedicated.

Volpone ("Fox"), a scoundrel magnifico of Venice, feigns deathly illness to extract gifts from covetous acquaintances. He and his parasite Mosca ("Gadfly") delude each gull in turn, even Voltore ("Vulture"), the unscrupulous lawyer, into believing he is Volpone's beneficiary. Corbaccio ("Carrion Crow") seeks favor by drawing up a will disinheriting his virtuous son Bonario in favor of Volpone. Corvino ("Raven") offers his faithful wife Celia to the lecherous Volpone, but she is saved by Bonario. Mosca turns the tables on Celia and Bonario, getting the court to condemn Celia as a bawd and Bonario as a would-be patricide. To cap his jest, Volpone pretends death, naming Mosca as his heir. The dupes try to unseat Mosca before the court, and Volpone reveals himself to prevent Mosca from retaining his property. All the wily tricksters are sentenced to appropriate punishments.

Volpone is the greatest satiric comedy in English, but its bitter exposure of human greed and depravity verges on tragedy. The burlesque Englishman, Sir Politick Would-Be, foolish concocter of business projects and politicking schemes; his wife, desperately afraid that he will be enticed by Venetian harlots; and the good but colorless people, Bonario and Celia, are no match for the vicious beast-men. The Italian character names stem from the medieval Beast Epic, but the character portraits are gimlet-eyed observation of contemporaries. The drama typifies the growing satiric indignation at the mounting corruption of the era.

Particularly astute handling of the Renaissance stage is manifested in the mountebank passage of Act II when Volpone from his platform hoodwinks the stage actors and the closely surrounding audience into believing in his nostrums: not just the extras upon the stage but the whole world consists of credulous gulls. Jonson's blank verse seldom kindles to poetry, but it marvelously recaptures speech rhythms and the animality of his avaricious dupes. Though there is no specific source, the theme of legacy hunting has been satirized in many works from Lucian's ancient *Dialogues* to Erasmus' *Encomium Moriae*. Perhaps typical is the Gianni Schicchi story noted in Dante's *Inferno*.

Epicoene; or The Silent Woman (1609)—Comedy of humours. "The most entertaining of Jonson's comedies," according to Coleridge, was *Epicoene*.

Suspecting that his nephew Sir Dauphine Eugenie is ridiculing him, Morose intends to marry and beget an heir, cutting off Dauphine. Because he is almost psychotically distressed by noise, Morose asks his barber, Cutbeard, to get him a very quiet woman. Friendly to Dauphine, Cutbeard produces a

"silent woman" whom Morose marries. Immediately after marriage, the "silent woman" finds her tongue and drives her husband to desperation. Hoping to escape, he submits to the final indignity of admitting impotence. Then the "silent woman" is revealed as a boy in disguise. Morose is free of his pest, and Dauphine is again the heir.

A whole host of laughable "humours" characters inhabit this drama, which is perhaps the least biting of Jonson's plays. Morose is cleverly punished not merely for his humour but by it. The construction is equally clever, as the audience smilingly follows the gulling of Morose, confident that it is in the know. With the concluding scene, unmasking the "silent woman" as a boy, the audience suddenly finds that it too has been gulled. The trick worked well on the Renaissance stage where female roles were taken by boys. Blithely accepting the boy actor as a girl, the spectators astonishingly realize that indeed it was a boy all along. The Sixth Declamation of Libanius, a Greek author c. 400 B.C., portrayed Morosus suffering from a talkative wife. The boy-bride theme appears in the *Casina* of Plautus. Echoes of several classical writers sound in the dialogue.

The Alchemist (1610)—Comedy of humours. This play was declared by Coleridge to have one of the three perfect plots in literature. The other two, according to Coleridge, are *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles and *Tom Jones* by Fielding.

While Master Love-wit rusticates during the plague-stricken summer, the sharper Subtle sets himself up in Love-wit's mansion as an alchemist, gulling a host of the greedy: Abel Drugger, a tobacconist; Sir Epicure Mammon, a Renaissance speculator; Ananias, a mealy-mouthed Puritan; Tribulation Wholesome, a zealous Puritan pastor. Love-wit returns to dispense comic justice and forgiveness.

Subtle is the prototype of all con men, and his victims of all "suckers." The schemers are defeated by their own cupidity. As the ripple widens from the casting of the Philosopher's Stone, that trickery broadens into a giant symbol of man's foolish quest for the impossible in the face of common sense and reason. The opening scene contains all the seeds of the denouement. Sir Epicure Mammon is a tremendous and scathing portrait of how the Marlovian seeker for the absolute has become a comic monster of sensuality and covetousness. Subtle may be a satiric study of Dr. Simon Forman, a contemporary pseudoscientist. The *Mostellaria* of Plautus provided the framework of the empty house exploited by rogues, the opening scene, and the unexpected return of the master. Humanistic exposure of fraudulent alchemists appeared widely, in Erasmus, Ariosto, Giordano Bruno, and many others.

Bartholomew Fayre (1614)—Realistic comedy. This work is the most richly comic of all Jonson's plays and one of the great realistic comedies in English literature.

The major plot threads are two contested romances. Zeal-of-the-land Busy,

a hypocritical Puritan, seeks the hand of Dame Purecraft, but she is won by the gamester Quarlous. The loutish Cokes is betrothed to Grace Wellborn, but she is snared by the more gentlemanly Winwife.

Plot, however, is subordinated to the garish, gaudy colors and characters of England's greatest fair. Cutpurses, pitchmen, bunko artists, ballad singers, gingerbread women, corncutters, punks, puppetmasters, and so on *ad infinitum* swirl the audience into all the riotous excitement and bewilderment of the fair. Notable is the fat Ursula, vendor of liquor and roast pig, who almost achieves full female Falstaffism. Lanthorn Leatherhead, toyseller and "professor of puppetry," is probably a laughing representation of Inigo Jones, the Renaissance architect-designer feuding with Jonson. All characters emerge scot-free, invited to dinner by Adam Overdo, a justice of the peace who in disguise observes all the follies of the fair.

Probably no other English writer has known London as well as Jonson, and no other has so vivaciously painted its fascinating human circus, while still skeptical of its tinsel finery and remaining unshakable in his moral principles. Jonson attempts to laugh away the Puritans, especially in that grand hypocrite, Zeal-of-the-land Busy. The incensed Puritan unsuccessfully tries to close the puppet show, but in real life Busy's equivalents were making ready to destroy the entire theater in the next generation. Only Molière's Tartuffe can compete with Busy as a portrait of religious hypocrisy.

The Devil Is an Ass (1616)—Comedy of humours. This play brings a minor devil on holiday from hell to London's world of business and fashion. Meercraft, a sharper, displays the wildest possible ingenuity in get-rich-quick schemes. London's fantastic "projects" bedevil the devil himself. Unwin declares of the play, "A study of its leading characters would be by far the best introduction to the economic history of the period."

The Staple of News (1626)—Comedy of humours. In this play Jonson ridicules the recently created news industry ("a weekly cheat to draw money") and redoubles his assault upon the power of finance. Rather surprisingly, the drama uses conventions of the old Moralities, trooping in Lady Pecunia ("Money") and her train of Mortgage, Wax, Statute, and Band ("Bond").

At the Mermaid and other London taverns, a host of young poets, "the sons of Ben," eagerly sat at the feet of the literary dictator, for it must be remembered that Jonson's contributions to lyric poetry exerted great influence through much of the 17th century. The group of Jonson's followers will be discussed in the next chapter under the Cavalier poets.

Jonson's short verses are scattered through his plays and masques, and were collected in his *Works* (1616) under the headings of: "Epigrams," "Forest," "Under-wood." On the basis of "Epigrams" he has been termed the true founder of the epigram in English (even until Milton much of the epigram writing in England was in Latin). The lines on his dead son (Epigram XIV) have been deemed among the noblest in the language.

"Forest" is a miscellany of short pieces, including some of the most graceful lyrics in English, usually with subtle prosody and clear statement. "Underwood" contains the famous poetic tribute to Shakespeare ("He was not of an age, but for all time").

In conscious rebellion against Spenser ("Spenser writ no language," tartly opined Jonson), Ben sought conciseness, clarity, good current idiom and vocabulary—in two words, classic perfection. He brought to English verse the chiseled craftsmanship and tone of Roman antiquity in Catullus, Horace, Martial. Instead of Elizabethan exuberance, Jonson chose Augustan urbanity; he is therefore the main inspiration for much of the verse of the Enlightenment, and he has influenced modern poets such as Yeats, Auden, and T. S. Eliot. Jonson's was the art that conceals art. Any reader is impressed by the spectacular style of Spenser or Donne, while Jonson is deceptively easy and straightforward.

Jonson wrote in a wide variety of verse forms—love lyrics, *vers de société*, poetic epistles, epigrams, odes (including in the "Ode to Cary and Morison" the first true Pindaric ode in English)—and to each he brought a disciplined simplicity that reads sincerely and limpidly like a perfectly cut gem. Much of his material is assembled from the ancients; for example, "Drink to me only with thine eyes" is derived from the prose *Epistolae Eroticae* of Philostratus, a late Greek writer. But Jonson has so domesticated his matter that it appears native to the English tongue.

Jonson also left an extremely important legacy in prose. He had a greater critical consciousness of literature than any previous English writer. Sidney's *Apology* was the work of a superlative amateur, but Jonson was a systematic and exhaustive student of critical theory.

Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter (posthumously 1640) consists largely of translations or paraphrases from the Latin writers such as Quintilian, the elder and younger Seneca, and Vives. There is no evidence that Jonson intended publication, and he certainly made no pretense of originality. He was applying terse and apposite Latin literary standards to the English literature of his own day, with a strong admixture of sound common sense and realization of the peculiar problems of contemporary English. Bacon and Shakespeare are judiciously praised by a hardheaded insister upon logic and cogency. This work was tremendously influential in shaping 17th- and 18th-century English literature into classic patterns of thought and expression. Jonson set the tone of practical and aristocratic wisdom, coupled with firm, sane morality.

George Chapman (c. 1559–1634). Born near Hitchin, George Chapman probably studied at Oxford. There is really not much information about his life. He is thought by some to have seen active service in the Netherlands,

and he was imprisoned in the same year that Jonson was, perhaps for the same reason.

It seems that he belonged to a coterie composed of Ralegh, Marlowe, and two scientists, Roydon, the mathematician, and Harriot, the astronomer. The group was known as the "school of night," and its affectations were ridiculed by Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost.*

Chapman is famous for his translations from Homer (see Chapter 9, the section on Renaissance translations), but he also achieved considerable contemporary reputation as a dramatist.

Bussy D'Ambois (c. 1604)—"Fall of Princes" tragedy. At the lowest ebb of fortune, the adventurer, Bussy D'Ambois, is introduced to the French court of Henri III by the king's brother, Monsieur, Duc d'Alençon, who seeks "resolved spirits" to aid him in his bid for the throne. The insolence of Bussy arouses enemies at court, especially the powerful Duc de Guise. In a bloody quarrel Bussy emerges as France's greatest swordsman.

Bussy and his patron Monsieur both seek the love of Tamyra, Countess of Montsurry. Learning of his rival through Tamyra's maid, Monsieur teams up with Guise to inform the Count of Montsurry and thus destroy Bussy. The count forces his wife to write in her own blood an assignation note to Bussy. Though warned by spirits, Bussy keeps the rendezvous. In the melee Bussy spares the life of Montsurry but is himself slain by the hired assassins. Dying, he forgives his murderers and urges the reconciliation of Tamyra and her husband.

Though the precise source is unknown, Chapman's drama adapts with liberties the life story of Louis de Clermont d'Amboise, Seigneur de Bussy, nobly born in 1549.

The Wheel of Fortune motif dominates Chapman's play. Bussy is first seen in rags and poverty. From these he ascends to military brilliance and to a liaison with the reigning beauty of France. At his peak of arrogance, opposing forces marshal to strike him down.

Bussy falls short of heroic stature in modern eyes, for he is an arrogant adulterer. Nonetheless, probably no other figure in English drama so closely approaches the raging titans of Marlowe, in soaring Marlovian verse. Bussy seeks the whole compass of Renaissance *virtu,* and repeatedly we are assured of his "greatness," his epitomizing of the Aristotelian *magnanimity.* The stoical and skeptical temper of the playwright confers upon Bussy a towering Renaissance self-reliance. Bussy's end makes him a noble tragic hero. Although rather despicably trapped, he desires in death the restoration of moral order. Characterization is generally inferior to Chapman's epic and oratorical verse. Classical influence shows in the Senecan ghosts and bloodletting, and in the Homeric similes. What emerges from Chapman even more than from Shakespeare is the realization of the Renaissance as a stirring individual experience and movement in history.

First performed by the Boys of St. Paul's, *Bussy* was frequently acted until

the closing of the theaters, and again during the Restoration in spite of Dryden's hostility. *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (c. 1607–12) is a sequel, a revenge tragedy in which all of Bussy's enemies meet death, largely through the dead man's valorous brother and sister, Clermont and Charlotte.

All Fools (c. 1599–1604)—Realistic comedy. This is Chapman's one comic masterpiece, an amusing comedy of intrigue in the classical manner, better constructed than most of his plays. Here Chapman cleverly combines two plays by Terence, *Heautontimoroumenos* ("Self-Tormenter") and *Adelphi* ("Brothers") in a contemporary Florentine setting.

Fortunio, son of the kindly Marc Antonio, loves Bellanora, daughter of the dictatorial Gostanzo. Valerio, Gostanzo's only son, for fear of his father pretends to be sober and dull; secretly he is wed to the dowerless Gratiana. Fortunio's younger brother, Rinaldo, lets Gostanzo believe that Fortunio is married to Gratiana but fears to bring his bride home. Gostanzo offers to discipline the couple in his home and thus unwittingly brings his son and daughter into contact with their own true loves.

In a singing match Valerio is humiliated by Cornelio; for revenge, Valerio fools the already jealous Cornelio almost into divorcing his wife Gazetta. Turning the tables, Cornelio has Gostanzo witness the tavern revelry of Valerio. After considerable fussing, everything is explained and all ends happily.

Chapman improves upon his sources, transforming the clever slave into Rinaldo, the detached and amused scholar who manipulates others, and transforming the nondescript fathers into the sharply differentiated Gostanzo and Antonio. The courtesan of Terence becomes a secret wife. The most interesting character is Rinaldo, a sort of youthful Jaques who comments wryly on human cupidity and stupidity.

Chapman also is a noted lyric poet. The most important of his poems are discussed below.

The Shadow of the Night (1594) is made up of two long poems, "Hymnus in Noctem" and "Hymnus in Cynthiam." They are both extremely verbose and deliberately obscure. In some of Chapman's less tortured conceits it may be possible to discover a forerunner of the later Metaphysical school of poetry.

Ovid's Banquet of Sense. A Coronet for His Mistress Philosophy and His Amorous Zodiac (1595) shows Chapman more to advantage. The poetry is not so obscure, and some of the learned subtleties definitely do prefigure the later metaphysicals. *The Coronet for His Mistress* is a set of ten sonnets appended to *Ovid's Banquet of Sense.*

Hero and Leander (1598) brings Chapman's poetic talents to their full heights. Chapman's conclusion to the poem so splendidly begun by Marlowe is surprisingly right, for the nature of the story utilized the best talents of both men: Marlowe's talent for sensuous verse in the beginning, and Chapman's darker gifts for the tragic end. Here is one of the few occasions in

literary history when a poem begun by one man and finished by another is an artistic success.

John Marston (c. 1575–1634). Born at Coventry, John Marston was the son of a lawyer and an Italian mother. From Brasenose College, Oxford, he proceeded to study law at the Middle Temple but, to his father's chagrin, abandoned law for literature. In 1598 he published satires, *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image, and certaine Satyres,* and *The Scourge of Villainie,* under the pseudonym of W. Kinsayder; their coarse eroticism caused their burning by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Apparently Marston was writing scripts for the Admiral's Men in 1599. Certainly he was writing for the Boys of St. Paul's 1600–03 and for the Queen's Revels (another children's company) from 1604 to 1608. Giving up the theater, Marston was ordained in 1609 and became rector of Christchurch, Hampshire, in 1616. Resigning this ecclesiastical post in 1631, he returned to London where he died.

Antonio's Revenge (c. 1599)—Revenge tragedy. This work is a sequel to *The History of Antonio and Mellida,* Marston's first independent play.

Piero is a villain, capable of all monstrous sins, including the defamation of his own daughter and the poisoning of Antonio's father. Disguising himself as a Fool, Antonio attaches himself to Piero until he can slay Julio, Piero's son. Then, amid masque and torture he kills Piero himself.

Senecan and Kydian horrors are assembled into a simple melodrama that accepts the code of vengeance in completely non-Christian fashion. The avenger emerges triumphant and, according to his father's ghost, "blest." Marston sees the conflict within Antonio as passion vs. stoicism but never searches the full implications of this conflict.

The Malcontent (1604)—Revenge tragedy. Marston's masterpiece was *The Malcontent,* his most popular and influential drama. The rightful duke of Genoa, Altofronto, has been deposed, but he parades in the court disguised as Malevole, a jester who brutally and cynically derides the corruption of the courtiers. His duchess, Maria, is imprisoned. The usurper is Pietro, who is supported by the city of Florence primarily because his wife, Aurelia, is the daughter of the Florentine duke. The power behind the usurper's throne is Mendoza, a scheming villain who is secretly Aurelia's lover. Mendoza plans to eliminate Pietro, marry Maria, and rule Genoa as duke. Mendoza thinks to use Malevole as his tool, but in the climactic masque, Altofronto and the reformed Pietro turn upon Mendoza, though they spare his life. Pietro and Aurelia are properly repentant, and the rightful duke reascends the throne.

All the apparatus of the revenge tragedy is here—horror, disguise, deaths aplenty (though all feigned), even the play-within-a-play of the masque—but everything ends happily and bloodlessly. There are effective scenes and a gallery of sharply drawn characters, indebted to Jonson's "humours" portraits. The characterization of the Genoese courtiers is a scathing indictment of the courtiers of James I.

Mendoza is one of the greatest of villains, trapped by his own fiendish

ingenuity. Pietro is an amiable and weak character molded by a dissolute age. Marston apparently originated the character of the "malcontent," an honest but bitter man, able by his disguise to utter disillusioned truths about a naughty world. The figure of Hamlet owes a great deal to Malevole, and Jaques of *As You Like It* even more. Marston is essentially the satirist of human baseness rather than an interpreter of the tragic intensity of life.

The Dutch Courtesan (c. 1603–05)—Realistic comedy. Marston carries his bitter satire into this play, his one great comedy. The work derives both main and subplot from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure,* Bandello supplying the original version of the Countess of Celant story, and Masuccio supplying for the subplot the pranks of Cocledemoy. All Marston's settings are in London.

Engaged to the incomparable Beatrice, Young Freevill wishes to break off his liaison with the Dutch strumpet, Franceschina. His Puritan friend Malheureux falls madly in love with Franceschina. When the harlot demands from Freevill a ring upon his finger that is a gift of Beatrice, Freevill refuses. Franceschina demands that Malheureux murder Freevill and bring her the ring. To trap the harlot the young men retire for a pretended duel. Malheureux hastens with the ring to Franceschina, who promptly reports him as a murderer and dispatches the ring to Beatrice, hoping to drive her mad. As Malheureux is about to be executed, Freevill appears to save him. Freevill is reunited with Beatrice, and Franceschina is condemned "to the extremest whip and jail."

The subplot treats of a merry contest of wits and pranks by the knavish Cocledemoy against the dishonest vintner Mulligrub.

Marston's cynical depiction of the courtesan contrasts violently with the romanticized portrayal Dekker was to draw in his play, *The Honest Whore,* which will be discussed later. In Marston's play, vice is sordid and its practitioners vile. The drama is robustly realistic with a Renaissance richness of tongue and spirited action.

Thomas Dekker (c. 1570–c. 1632). Thomas Dekker was probably a Londoner of Dutch extraction, but the first known date in his life was c. 1598 when Henslowe bailed him out of debtor's jail. Dekker's hack-writing for Henslowe produced relatively little money but did produce about ten plays of his own and collaboration in about thirty more. His pamphleteering culminated in the *Gull's Hornbook* (1609) which in racy language suggestive of Damon Runyon offers us the richest picture available of contemporary London and theatrical life. In 1613, Dekker was imprisoned again for debts, serving for six years. In later life he collaborated with Ford and Massinger. Open and sunny, Dekker is probably the best-loved Renaissance dramatist after Shakespeare. He radiates a geniality, tenderness, droll humor, and humanitarianism unusual in the age. Charles Lamb asserted, "Dekker had poetry enough in him for anything."

Old Fortunatus (1599)—Romantic comedy. Dekker here dramatizes an ancient oriental fable, printed as German folklore in 1509 and composed

as a play by the Nuremberg *Meistersinger* Hans Sachs in 1553. Dekker's is the only known English version before the 17th century.

The goddess Fortune offers one of six choices to the aged beggar Fortunatus. Unwisely he chooses wealth and receives an inexhaustible purse. When the Soldan of Babylon seeks to trade for the purse a magic hat that will convey its bearer anywhere he desires, Fortunatus claps the hat on his head, wishes himself with his sons on Cyprus, and vanishes with both hat and purse. Lacking wisdom, neither Fortunatus nor his sons make good use of the magic purse and magic hat. They select the fruit of the tree of Vice rather than the fruit of the tree of Virtue. At the death of the sons Fortune reclaims the magic articles.

Here in Renaissance trappings is an outright Morality play. Its superiority over its less sophisticated predecessors lies in characterization (chiefly of the merry rascal Fortunatus), orderly plotting, and especially the breezy spirit of fantasy and lyricism in Dekker.

The Shoemakers' Holiday (1599)—Romantic comedy. This play, performed by the Admiral's Men, has proved one of the best loved of all English comedies. From Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (1598), Dekker neatly weaves three plot strands:

(1) Rowland Lacy, nephew of the Earl of Lincoln, deserts his colonelcy in the French wars of Henry V to disguise himself as a Dutch shoemaker in the shop of Simon Eyre. In his disguise, Lacy woos Rose, daughter of Lord Mayor Oteley. Aided by the shoemakers, the lovers elope and marry.

(2) Ralph Damport, drafted into the army from Eyre's shoemaking establishment, tearfully leaves his new bride Jane. Wealthy Hammon, spurned by Rose, produces a casualty list including Ralph's name. The returned Ralph, maimed in the wars, rescues Jane with the aid of the shoemakers as she is about to marry Hammon.

(3) Simon Eyre (historically a draper) with advice and money supplied by his shoemaker Hans Meulter (Lacy in disguise), makes his fortune and rises to become Lord Mayor. Delighted by the bold, hearty Simon, Henry V forgives Lacy, knights him, and approves his marriage.

The romantic comedy is here placed in realistic settings of contemporary London. Dekker's robustness and sheer joy in life are infectious. The first two plots are bubbling love stories shrewdly paralleled: (1) the lovers separated by the call to arms, (2) the stratagems of the males to regain their loves, (3) the intervention by superior powers (Henry V for Lacy-Rose and the shoemakers for Ralph-Jane) to straighten out the crooked course of love. Simon Eyre is the epitome of Elizabethan ebullience and optimism in the tradesman class. The geniality and high spirits of Dekker permit the daring suggestion that a shoemaker is as good as a king. The play is indicative of the rising spirit of the common man in Elizabethan times, asserting his importance as a man among men. The play is Dekker's joyous tribute to the raciness of London life and to the essential goodness of youth and all life.

The Honest Whore, Part 1 (1604)—Sensational tragedy. Dekker, collaborating with Thomas Middleton, exploited the growing trend to sensational drama with this play. It expertly combines three plots:

(1) Infelice, daughter of the Duke of Milan, loves Count Hippolito but is drugged and declared dead by her obdurate father. The attending physician, Doctor Benedict, is ordered to poison Hippolito but instead reveals all to Hippolito, who finds and marries his love.

(2) The courtesan Bellafront tries to lure Hippolito while he mourns for the supposedly dead Infelice. Devoted to his love's memory, Hippolito converts Bellafront to virtue. Eventually the duke intervenes to marry her honorably to Matheo, her original seducer.

(3) Mistress Viola Candido is heartily vexed at the quiet patience of her husband, a linen draper. Nothing she does can perturb him, even when she finally gets him committed to Bethlem Monastery for the insane. In the Monastery all characters come together for the resolution.

The title was purposely paradoxical as a lure. Used in reference to a woman, "honest" in James I's England meant "chaste." The title plot emphasizes morality and bourgeois ethics, though long delaying Bellafront's conversion to righteousness. The Candido plot is a smiling one of London merchant life, darkened for us by Candido's grossly unfair incarceration. The characters in this subplot derive from the "comedy of humours." The years since *Shoemakers' Holiday* have sobered Dekker, though he still is a deep lover of robust London life and a master of quaint humor. The Hippolito plot is essentially romantic, but Dekker's Milanese court is a thin disguise for the Jacobean court, approaching the somberness of *Measure for Measure*'s Viennese court.

The Honest Whore, Part 2 (1605). Apparently solely Dekker's work, this play is his masterpiece. It continues most of the characters of the first part but works some spectacular plot changes:

(1) The first wife of Candido being dead, the patient linendraper remarries but with a bride displaying equal possibilities of shrewishness. A friend assists Candido in making the second wife submissive. Tricksters still try his patience and lure him to Bellafront's home in time to be caught by the police dragnet and committed to Bridewell as a supposed dealer in stolen goods.

(2) Thoroughly reformed, Bellafront is the devoted wife of the ne'er-do-well Matheo. He squanders everything, even pawning the gown from his wife's back; he suggests that she return to her former profession to cadge some money. She remains faithful to him alone. Her aging father, Orlando Friscobaldo, had disowned her when she was a strumpet, but in servant's disguise he dwells in her household, trying to help her against her worthless husband. To heighten her distress, Hippolito, who had persuaded her to decency, now wishes to seduce her, but she resists him. In Bridewell she forgives her imprisoned husband, and they start life anew.

Matheo is a heedless, unprincipled scamp worthy of a comic master like

Jonson or any realistic dramatist. Bellafront and Friscobaldo, however, are tender, sympathetic portraits that only a Dekker, or a Shakespeare, could create. Bellafront is a reformed harlot, subjected to almost intolerable pressures upon her new-found virtues, even by her reformer. Seldom has literature paid such a touching tribute to humanity risen from the depths of shame to sterling purity. Except for Dekker's sentimentalism, she could be a great tragic heroine. Friscobaldo is an old man heartachingly proud of a regenerated daughter and solicitous for her in her trials. In this drama a semidisillusioned idealist powerfully penetrates far beneath the surface of life. The painful problems of the play foreshadow the later tragicomedy.

Thomas Heywood (c. 1575–1641). Born in Lincolnshire, Thomas Heywood claimed residence at Cambridge, but there is no official record of his attendance. As an actor he performed for several companies, particularly the Earl of Worcester's Men. He wrote several lengthy didactic poems but is noted chiefly for his dramas. In the preface to his *English Traveller* (1633) he claimed "an entire hand or at least a main finger" in 220 plays. His *An Apology for Actors* (1612) is notable for its references to contemporary theatrical affairs and its spirited defense of a profession severely criticized by the Puritans. Probably no other playwright of the period so mirrored the middle class in its life and its tastes. His sentimentality caused Charles Lamb to term him "a sort of prose Shakespeare." His keen sense of theater and his audience caused T. S. Eliot to say that Heywood "would in any age have been a successful dramatist."

A Woman Killed with Kindness (c. 1603)—Domestic tragedy. This play is the period's masterpiece of domestic tragedy. Master Frankford and his wife Anne are idyllically happy, virtual paragons of husband and wife. However, Anne, in feminine weakness, yields to Master Wendoll, Frankford's best friend. The adulterous lovers are betrayed to Frankford by a faithful servant. Wendoll escapes. Instead of killing his wife or publicly exposing her, Frankford banishes Anne to another of his estates. He vows never to see her again but yields to her pleas as she is dying. He forgives her on her deathbed, and she dies in his embrace, a woman "whom her husband's kindness killed."

In the subplot, another friend of Frankford, Sir Charles Mountford, in a hunting quarrel slays some of the men of Anne's brother, Sir Francis Acton. Seeking funds for his legal defense, Mountford falls into the clutches of a usurer and is thrown in jail. Earlier entertaining improper ideas about Mountford's sister Susan, Acton now falls genuinely in love with her and pays Mountford's debts. With a high sense of honor, Mountford persuades Susan to marry Acton as repayment for his kindness. The marriage turns out happily.

Completely disregarding the revenge tradition, Frankford does not slay his faithless wife, and he is grateful when restrained from killing Wendoll. Frankford even goes beyond the recognized practice of the age: wives caught in adultery were publicly exposed by their husbands and thereafter were cut

off from all husbandly support. The "kindness" of Frankford spares his wife the customary shaming, sees to her continued support, and finally offers Christian forgiveness to her on her deathbed. But, on the other hand, his actions inflict more suffering on her, through the workings of her own guilt feelings, than outright brutality would have done. Frankford himself realizes this after her death, and it is he who proposes the inscription for her tombstone: *"Here lies she whom her husband's kindness killed."* The line is spoken more than half in bitterness.

Modern viewers, accustomed to modern psychologizing, find unaccountable the ease with which the happy and excellent wife Anne succumbs to her seducer. However, as we have seen, Heywood's contemporaries deemed women frail creatures, quick to fall if not carefully supervised. Also, dwelling on the fall of Frankford's wife would lead the play too far from Heywood's purpose. It was the husband's ostensible "kindness" and its consequences that he was interested in.

Unfortunately the subplot is sentimental in the worst sense. The fantastic honor of Mountford and the conversion of Acton from lecher to lover are cardboard devices. However, the subplot in tone and mood parallels the main plot if it does not equal it in perceptivity. Heywood's great virtues are his gentleness and simplicity. The delicacy, sensitivity, and highmindedness of his characters and especially these attributes assigned to middle-class figures mark Heywood's unusual position in Renaissance drama.

Both plots are suggested in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, deriving from Italian *novelle* in Bandello and Belleforest. Heywood, however, has made the material thoroughly English.

Michael Drayton (1563–1631). Michael Drayton labored assiduously for the Admiral's Men, usually collaborating with Dekker. However, as he is most noted for his poetry, his biography and a discussion of his poetic works will be found in the chapter on the age of Spenser. The following play has been dubiously ascribed to him.

The Merry Devil of Edmonton (c. 1599–1604)—Realistic comedy. The work proved highly popular, as attested by Jonson in the prologue to *The Devil Is an Ass* (1616).

Sir Arthur Clare intends to break up the romance between his daughter Millicent and Raymond Mounchensey, immuring the girl in a nunnery. With the aid of Peter Fabel, magician and "merry devil," Millicent is spirited from the nunnery to Enfield Chase. Here a superlative quartet of scoundrels—miller, smith, vicar, and innkeeper—in their poaching mistake the elopers' party for gamekeepers. After wild confusion the lovers are married by the vicar, and all are reconciled.

The comic characters are choice, and the entire play again suggests *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Country life is realistically and sympathetically portrayed in a wholesome, smiling, well-constructed romp.

William Haughton (fl. 1598). William Haughton collaborated extensively

with Chettle, Day, Dekker, and other playwrights. We know very little of his life. There is only one known play supposed to be entirely from his hand.

Englishmen for My Money, or A Woman Will Have Her Will (c. 1598)—Realistic comedy. The play shows the shift of emphasis from Dekker's romantic approach to London toward a realist's bent. The plot, vaguely reminiscent of *The Merchant of Venice,* is sufficiently romantic.

The Portuguese moneylender Pisaro has three daughters for whom he wishes French, Italian, Dutch sons-in-law—anyone but an Englishman. Three substantial English merchants, however, successfully woo the daughters, and the usurer must gracefully accept his inevitable thwarting.

Highly patriotic and only slightly poetic in blank verse, the drama nonetheless presages realism in its extensive handling of London bourgeois life and mercantile problems. Much of the humor depends upon the difficulty of foreigners with English, and the English with foreign accents.

Henry Porter (fl. 1598). Henry Porter was praised by Meres in 1598 as one of "the best for comedy amongst us." He may be the Henry Porter at Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1589, or one of the contemporary musicians bearing this name. Henslowe lists payments to him for the Admiral's Men from 1596 to 1599, when record of Porter vanishes. We have only one surviving drama of his.

The Pleasant History of the Two Angry Women of Abingdon (c. 1596–98)—Realistic comedy. The play chooses a rural setting for an understandable spat between two families.

Mistress Barnes and Mistress Goursey quarrel bitterly without any true justification. Their husbands try a reconciliation by betrothing the Barnes' daughter Mall to the Goursey's son Frank. Fathers and children agree, but the mothers engage in a kick-and-claw-'em brawl. The husbands pretend to duel and the wives regain their senses. The lovers are united and general peace again prevails.

Country life is sympathetically portrayed, neither romantically (as generally with Shakespeare) nor satirically (as with the later court dramatists). It is a hearty, healthy, earthy piece, robustly realistic and perhaps a cue to *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Thomas Middleton (c. 1570–1627). Probably born in London of a good family, Thomas Middleton seems to have studied at Oxford and at Gray's Inn (law school). His dramatic career began c. 1599. By 1602 he was writing for Henslowe and the Admiral's Men, also for the Boys of St. Paul's. He collaborated with most of the dramatists of the era. In 1620 he was appointed Chronologer of the City of London. He is frequently termed the master of Jacobean realistic comedy, the Hogarth of his age.

Michaelmas Term (c. 1604–06)—Realistic comedy. The title of this work refers to the first or autumn session of London courts of law. Though no source is known, numerous contemporary works detailed the slick practices of usurers.

An unscrupulous London moneylender, Ephestian Quomodo, covets the estates of Richard Easy, a simple country gentleman from Essex. Through a lieutenant of his, Quomodo entangles Easy in legal documents that convey the Essex property to the usurer. Eager to see how his family will now respect the memory of a propertied gentleman, Quomodo feigns death. In disguise Quomodo attends his own funeral and is horrified to discover that his children are glad of his death and his wife Thomasine quickly elopes with Easy. Quomodo reveals himself but is tricked by his wife into signing a document restoring to Easy all his rightful property.

The play is virtually a case study in contemporary hard dealings. Every trick of law and business is meticulously described. Like a 19th-century French naturalist, Middleton takes no sides but examines his specimens in their habitat at their customary behavior. Materialistic values entirely engross his characters. Quomodo mirrors the contemporary drive of the bourgeois to secure real estate for its practical income and for the status of landed gentry that it confers. Quomodo's final discomfiture is the old theme of the biter bit, but the outcome is not for moral purposes: these are the vicissitudes of sharp trading. Middleton's robust humor, clever intrigue, and complex plotting parallel those of his contemporaries. The great difference is his objectivity and the picture of a world framed entirely by the goals of wealth and possession.

A Trick to Catch the Old One (c. 1604–07)—Realistic comedy. This play reverses the plot of *Michaelmas Term* to show a country slicker out to gull a townsman.

Theodorus Witgood, a riotous countryman, has lost his property to his old uncle, Pecunius Lucre, the shrewdest and nastiest money gouger of London. Witgood hits upon the scheme of disguising his strumpet as a wealthy widow and pretending that he has prospects of marrying her. Expecting that by his nephew's marriage he can secure the widow's "wealth," Lucre loads Witgood with money. A rival usurer, Walkadine Hoard, thinks he has outwitted Lucre by marrying the "widow." Witgood produces documents of the "widow's" financial obligations to him, and to free the "widow's property" Hoard pays all Witgood's debts. Old Lucre gains some satisfaction in revealing that his enemy is married to a whore, but Mrs. Hoard boldly admits all and offers to be a good enough wife to an old man. Witgood marries Joyce, Hoard's niece.

Middleton's play is another documentary. Witgood is no admirable character, simply a man fighting for existence by his wits in a world ruled by money. There is no moral justification for his actions or those of the other characters. The seamy, money-grubbing atmosphere of a materialistic society is brilliantly evoked. The amorality of this drama presages the later 17th-century comedy of manners with its absence of solid moral values.

The Changeling (c. 1622)—Sensational tragedy. Middleton wrote *The Changeling* in collaboration with William Rowley, who was a hack writer

for various companies, and acted and composed for the King's Men (1623–25). Rowley collaborated extensively, perhaps writing the non-Shakespearean portions of *Pericles*. However, most of the credit for *The Changeling* is ascribed to Middleton, the comic master who in this play produced one of the most powerful of English tragedies.

The Changeling in title puns upon meanings of the word:

(1) An ugly and vicious child superstitiously explained as a substitute by fairies for a stolen child–De Flores.

(2) A changeable person, a turncoat–Beatrice-Joanna.

(3) An idiot–Antonio and Franciscus disguised as insane.

It is possible that the title refers directly to the genuinely demented of the sanatorium scenes, and hence symbolically to the entire set of characters.

The fickle Beatrice-Joanna of Alicante is betrothed to Alonzo but falls in love with the noble Alsemero. To rid herself of an unwanted bridegroom she persuades the ugly, lustful De Flores to murder Alonzo. De Flores will not accept money but demands the use of her body as his price. Marrying the innocent Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna substitutes her maid Diaphanta in the wedding bed to conceal her loss of virginity. When the maid delays and might thereby expose the guilty parties, De Flores starts a fire and kills the maid, concealing her death as a fire accident. Alsemero observes a compromising conference of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores. He confronts the two, and De Flores slays Beatrice-Joanna and himself.

The subplot concerns the worries of Alibius, doctor of a madhouse, for his wife Isabella. Antonio and Franciscus disguise themselves as madmen to court Isabella, but she maintains her virtue. The subplot is joined to the main plot as the two gallants *in absentia* are suspected as murderers of Alonzo. The subplot parallels the main plot as the servant Lollio tries to blackmail Isabella for her supposed succumbing to the gallants.

This remarkable psychological drama first shows Beatrice-Joanna nauseated by the hideous De Flores. She tries to use him as a tool and then is bent to his evil will. The yielding of Beatrice-Joanna comes only after her desperate struggles, hysterically trying to defend her "modesty." De Flores brutally smashes her sentimentalism: "A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty!" Defiling herself by contact with De Flores, Beatrice-Joanna is transformed into a bloody harlot. Seldom has the stage so vividly depicted how passion will drive its slaves to the basest degradation and destruction. To complete the deep character penetration, Beatrice-Joanna in the midst of her loathing of De Flores finds a subtle attraction in the ultramasculinity of his ugliness and lust for her. Gradually she becomes wholly dependent upon him, psychically as well as physically ensnared by evil. The very rhythm of the verse carries a brooding intensity, especially in the speeches of De Flores, one of the theater's most devastating villains. The main plot is derived from *The Triumphs of God's Revenge against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Murther* (1621) by John Reynolds. The subplot, for which no source is

known, distresses modern readers by its comic interpretation of the insane, but such was the standard attitude of the period.

The Roaring Girl, or Moll Cut-Purse (c. 1604–08)—Romantic comedy. In collaboration with Thomas Dekker, Middleton wrote this wildly romanticized account of the career of Mary Frith (c. 1584–c. 1660), who was a coarse virago, forger, and pickpocket. She dressed like a man, carried a sword, and used it; she is the first woman known to smoke tobacco. Moll of the drama is the champion of all virtue and all her sex. She associates with criminals to forestall their plots against decent folk, and she defends pure womanhood against dissolute males, even at sword point. Dekker's sentimentalizing undoubtedly explains much of the drama's tone, but even more apparent is the popular spirit that turns a Robin Hood into a romantic hero. The play brings merry sunshine into the dark underworld of the era. T. S. Eliot has highly praised this drama.

The Tragedy of Mr. Arden of Feversham (c. 1592)—Domestic tragedy. *Arden of Feversham* has been ascribed to virtually every contemporary dramatist from Shakespeare down. Perhaps Kyd or one of his imitators was the author. Apparently it is the first domestic tragedy in English, based upon a sordid, real-life murder on February 15, 1550/51 (in chronology of the period the first of the year until the vernal equinox could be computed as part of the previous year—Old Style—or part of the following year—New Style).

Mistress Alice is faithless to her gentlemanly husband Arden. Several attempts are made upon Arden's life, but gullibly he is reconciled to her. Finally, Alice's paramour Mosbie and his thugs brutally slay Arden and drag the corpse to the fields, leaving telltale marks in the snow. Alice dies at the stake, and all her accomplices meet violent ends.

Holinshed dwells upon this *cause célèbre* for five pages, and other contemporaries, including Stow, report all the gory details. This is prose without any noble tragic exaltation. Alice (Swinburne termed her a "village Clytemnestra") and Mosbie are coarse adulterers, and the thugs who kill Arden are passionless cutthroats. While ostensibly teaching the domestic virtues and denouncing sin, the play clearly gained its popularity through sensationalism and violence.

A Yorkshire Tragedy (c. 1605–08)—Domestic tragedy. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* has often been ascribed to Shakespeare but with no reasonable justification.

The Husband is a dissolute spendthrift who squanders everything and ruins all about him, including his good brother, a university student who stands surety for him and is thrown into prison for the Husband's debts. Shown his errors by the Master of the college that his brother attends, the Husband runs amok, killing two of his sons, wounding his Wife and a servant. He is captured and committed to prison for trial.

Stow's *Annals* and many contemporary references relate the sensational

story of Walter Calverly, executed for his crime in August 1605 at York. The Husband of the play, based on Calverly, is an unsympathetic fool and the Wife a dull, docile creature. The play's popularity lay in its timeliness, its portrayal of the extravagant conduct of the Husband, and its wild violence.

"THE WAR OF THE THEATERS." Poetomachia (as Dekker termed it), or "the war of the theaters" was a sort of Nashe-Harvey controversy fought on the private stage, 1599–1602, with Marston writing for the Boys of St. Paul's and Jonson for the Children of the Chapel. It demonstrated in the theater the growing satiric spirit of the age. Probably the stage plays of this period contain much more personal allusion and satiric portrait than we can now recognize. In "the war of the theaters" the attack upon personalities is sharp and obvious. It is impossible wholly to ascertain the origin of the quarrel or even its seriousness, though Jonson was never given to fake banter or the comedian's pseudohassle for publicity purposes.

Histriomastix (1599), anonymous work revised by Marston, presented Chrisoganus, the crabbed poet and philosopher, as a portrait of Jonson. Though not really an offensive portrayal, it apparently induced Jonson to retort in:

Every Man out of His Humour (1599), satirizing Marston's style and vocabulary. Clove talks "fustian a little . . . as you may read in Plato's Histriomastix."

Jack Drum's Entertainment (1600), of which Marston was part author, pictures Jonson as the cuckold, Brabant Senior.

Cynthia's Revels (1600) by Jonson widens the quarrel in attacking Dekker as Hedon, "a light voluptuous reveller," while reserving some telling blows for Marston as Anaides, "a strange arrogating puff."

What You Will (1601) by Marston satirizes Jonson in the guise of Lampatho Doria.

The Poetaster (1601) is Jonson's double-barreled blast at Demetrius (Dekker), "playdresser and plagiary," and Crispinus (Marston), "poetaster and plagiary." In a wonderfully comic scene Horace (Jonson) compels Crispinus to take a pill that will purge him of his windy words. Sallies in the drama against lawyers and soldiers caused Jonson's arraignment before the Lord Chief Justice.

Satiromastix, or The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet (1601) by Dekker, probably assisted by Marston, has Crispinus and Demetrius ridicule the laborious, rule-following poet Horace.

Shakespeare mentions the Poetomachia in *Hamlet*, II, ii, but does not appear to have participated himself, in spite of the passage from *The Return from Parnassus, Part 2* where Will Kempe asserts that Shakespeare gave Jonson, that "pestilent fellow," a "purge" in return for his "pill." The dispute was certainly resolved by 1604 when Marston dedicated *The Malcontent* to Jonson. Energies of the Poetomachia combatants were turned to perhaps

more creative competition in an interesting trio of realistic bourgeois comedies in 1604–05.

Thomas Dekker and John Webster (whose work will be treated later in this chapter) started for the Boys of St. Paul's with:

Westward Ho (1604), set in typical London locales such as bourgeois residences, taverns, and bordellos. Merchants and their wives are the central characters. The title arose from the cries of the water "taxi" drivers of the day. Until the great fire of 1666 the city was medieval in layout, with narrow, congested streets. Hence much traffic used the river, where, on the landings, the boatmen sought fares by calling out their direction, as, "Westward ho," indicating that the boat was proceeding westward on the Thames.

A naturalized Italian merchant, Justiniano, suspects his English wife of infidelity and disguises himself as a tutor-pander to obtain evidence against her. His stratagems cannot injure his own chaste wife, but they reveal the willingness to wander in other bourgeois spouses: Judith Honeysuckle, Mabel Tenterhook, and Clare Wafer. The husbands of these ladies are all interested in Mistress Luce, a courtesan. Instead of seeking lovers themselves as they had intended, the ladies drub their errant husbands and the bawds in a wild melee.

Though lightweight, the drama is great good fun set in places familiar to virtually any Londoner and re-creating much authentic atmosphere. The theme asserts the prized morality of bourgeois wives and their forgiveness to errant husbands.

Immediately after this, Chapman, Jonson, and Marston competed with:

Eastward Ho (1605), written for the Children of the Revels at the Blackfriars who previously had concentrated upon romantic comedy. Three great students of the classics demonstrate their ability to write a racy comedy adapting stock Roman comic situations to the spirited life of contemporary London.

William Touchstone, honest master goldsmith, has two daughters, snooty Gertrude, who wants to rise in the world, and modest Mildred, sober and hardworking. His apprentices are Golding, industrious and sober, and Quicksilver, riotous and prodigal. The goldsmith happily unites Golding and Mildred, and casts off the drunken and improvident Quicksilver. Expecting a fine castle and ladyship, Gertrude is wed by the penniless Sir Petronel Flash, who covets her small inheritance. Tricking his wife, Flash sells her property and boards ship for Virginia, accompanied by Quicksilver.

A storm shipwrecks the Virginia voyagers, who try unsavory methods to relieve their destitution. The solid Golding, now a magistrate, is forced to commit the voyagers to prison as rogues and masterless men. However, in pity Golding lures Touchstone to prison to see the malefactors, now vociferously repentant. All is straightened out, and everyone is properly united.

Easily the best of the trio, this dashing comedy matches neat plotting with amusing characters. More than its two competitors, it underlines its

moralistic theme of staunch bourgeois virtues and sticking to one's social class. The substantial qualities of Touchstone, Golding, and Mildred bring success and happiness, while the dissipation of Quicksilver and the absurd pretensions of Gertrude bring disaster. The skipper of Flash's boat, Seagull, eulogizes Virginia often in the words of More's *Utopia*. In first performance the drama apparently satirized the Scots vigorously, as well as the "thirty pound" knights, like Flash, that the Stuart James I was creating so abundantly. These sallies, softened in the printed text, caused the brief imprisonment of the three authors. The play proved tremendously popular in its original form and in later revisions by Philip Massinger (1632), Nahum Tate (1685), and Charlotte Lennox (1775).

Dekker and Webster tried to capitalize upon the "Ho's" with still another: *Northward Ho* (1605 or 1606) also a realistic drama of London merchants.

The virtuous Mistress Mayberry repulses the advances of Luke Greenshield, who then vengefully boasts to her husband that she has yielded to him and produces her ring as evidence. Mayberry blandly pretends in public that Greenshield is referring to another woman, but he privately rants and denounces his wife, ignoring her protestations. Biding her time, Mistress Mayberry tricks her husband into an apparently compromising situation. Forgivingly, she is reunited.

Distasteful to the modern reader is an excursion to Bedlam, the insane asylum, for laughs at the deranged inmates. Again the bourgeois world is depicted sympathetically with no one's virtue injured en route.

THE POST-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMATISTS

Although Shakespeare's career in the theater ended about 1610, many memorable plays were still to be written. Particularly, men like John Webster and John Ford were to contribute much to the literature of English drama. In connection with these later playwrights it may be well to look ahead to the discussion of "Mannerism" in the section on cultural conditions in the next chapter. This would serve to explain somewhat more fully the darkening of tone that pervades the works of this period, and most especially the works of Webster and Ford.

There was also a decrease in dramatic output from the earlier days of the Elizabethan theater, caused partly by the enormous backlog of actable plays from preceding playwrights, but chiefly due to the loss of the popular audience through Puritan hostility, forcing the theater more and more into the smaller audience of the court.

Francis Beaumont (1584–1616) and **John Fletcher** (1579–1625). Francis Beaumont was the son of a distinguished lawyer and jurist in Leicestershire. He broke off his Oxford education and was admitted to the Inner Temple of law in 1600. His dramatic career commenced about 1606, per-

haps through the encouragement of Drayton, a family friend. In 1608 or 1609 he began a famous collaboration with Fletcher that has forever linked their names, though probably less than a dozen plays of the fifty-two in their second folio (1679) were actually written together. According to Aubrey, the two playwrights shared bachelor's quarters near the South Bank theaters. Marrying an heiress in 1613, Beaumont retired from the theater. He died in 1616, one month before Shakespeare. Of the two collaborators, Beaumont is usually credited with being the superior in dramatic know-how, plot construction, and romantic characterization.

John Fletcher was born in Rye, Sussex, son of the Rev. Richard Fletcher, chaplain to Elizabeth I and later bishop successively of Bristol, Worcester, and London. The poets, Giles (the younger) and Phineas Fletcher, were cousins of John. The young Fletcher probably attended Cambridge. His career from 1596 until 1606 is unknown, but he apparently served a literary apprenticeship under Shakespeare, collaborated with the Stratford master, and succeeded him as chief playwright of the King's Men. Much of Fletcher's work was in collaboration, and most of it seems tailored to the Blackfriars "private" theater. He died of the plague in 1625. Fletcher is generally deemed superior to Beaumont in lyricism, imagination, and vigor. In the Restoration period the dramas of Fletcher proved more popular than Shakespeare's.

The Maid's Tragedy (c. 1608–11)—Sensational tragedy. This play seems to have inaugurated the sensational tragedy, thereafter the vogue until the closing of the theaters in 1642.

Evadne, mistress of the King of Rhodes, needs an honorable husband to conceal her shame. She designates the noble Amintor, and the compliant monarch compels the young man to break his betrothal to the sweet Aspatia and wed Evadne. Melantius, friend of Amintor and brother of Evadne, persuades his sister to repentance and to vengeance against the king. Meanwhile, Aspatia, disguised as her soldier brother, goads Amintor to slay her. Evadne appears with bloody hands to announce her assassination of the king. Failing to secure Amintor's forgiveness, she stabs herself. With both wife and fiancée dead, Amintor kills himself. Lysippus, brother of the slain monarch, succeeds to the throne.

This type of tragedy can be distinguished from Shakespearean tragedy by the following characteristics:

(1) Its emphasis upon the theatricality of startling scenes rather than in the overall concept of man's tragic destiny;

(2) Its conscious manipulation of scenes to create diversity and contrast instead of a pervasive tone;

(3) Its sentimentalization of its chief figures (here Amintor and Aspatia).

No exact source is known for the Beaumont and Fletcher drama, but Sidney's *Arcadia* suggests several episodes. The device of the girl disguised as a boy was a commonplace.

In this drama Beaumont and Fletcher strongly exemplify the "Mannerism"

mentioned earlier and discussed in the next chapter. The total effect of this tragedy is brilliantly effective scenes of disparate nature, lacking the final sense of unity or tragic grandeur. This and other kindred plays by the two collaborators foreshadow the heroic drama of the Restoration.

Philaster, or, Love Lies A-Bleeding (c. 1609–10)—Tragicomedy. Beaumont and Fletcher teamed to produce this work, the first great success in tragicomedy. *Philaster* remained a leading stage production throughout the 17th century and was frequently reenacted well into the 19th century. This play apparently set the fashion for many subsequent tragicomedies to adopt the love dilemmas and courtly adventures of Sidney's *Arcadia.* There are resemblances to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,* but it is impossible to say which play came first.

Philaster is the rightful heir to the kingdom of Sicily, but his father was deposed and succeeded by the tyrannical King of Calabria. Philaster is spared because the people love him. The usurping king betroths his lovely daughter, Arethusa, to the lecherous Spanish prince, Pharamond. Loving Philaster, Arethusa takes his page Bellario into her service to convey messages between the lovers. Learning of Pharamond's assignation with Megra, a lascivious lady of the court, Arethusa has them apprehended to discredit Pharamond. Megra, however, accuses Arethusa of improper conduct with Bellario. The lovers and the page are about to fulfill a suicide pact when a countryman wounds and drives away Philaster. Suspicious of Bellario, Philaster wounds the page, but the boy's willingness to protect his master brings Philaster out of hiding to confess. As her life was threatened by Philaster, Arethusa demands disposal of the prisoner. She marries him, and the popular voice compels her father to give the kingdom to Philaster. Bellario turns out to be Euphrasia, a disguised girl hopelessly in love with Philaster.

In his preface to the collected works of Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley lavishly praises the dramatists for their depiction of hapless love and "manly rage." Beaumont and Fletcher indeed anticipate the preoccupation of the late 17th-century heroic drama with these two rhetorical and grandiose emotions. The drama is really a framework for grand-opera effects, inflated and extravagant. Sex intrigue dominates the play, giving large emphasis to the female roles. To startle and surprise, the playwrights produce at the end the secret marriage of the lovers and the masquerade of Euphrasia.

PROBABLY BY BEAUMONT ALONE, BUT PERHAPS WITH SOME AID FROM FLETCHER

The Knight of the Burning Pestle (c. 1607–10)—Mock-heroic comedy. This play is the first excellent mock-heroic drama in our literature, and has few peers. Though no longer in the professional repertoire, it remains a favorite revival in amateur and collegiate drama today. While the whole business of romantic and stage heroics is its butt, the drama shows unmistakable indebtedness to *Don Quixote.* The first English translation of Cervantes, by

Shelton, did not appear until 1612, but Beaumont probably heard enough oral reports about the Spanish masterpiece to suggest the parallels.

The Prologue gets the audience set for a realistic comedy, *The London Merchant* (obviously patterned after the *Ho*'s), but a disgruntled Grocer mounts the platform with his wife and apprentice Ralph, angrily opposing these plays that jibe at the solid bourgeois. The Grocer is going to devise a real heroic play with Ralph starring. Ralph shows his ability with a thundering and blundering version of Hotspur on honor from *Henry IV, Part 1.* The professionals valiantly strive to continue *The London Merchant,* in which a virtuous apprentice outwits an avaricious mother to gain the hand of the merchant's daughter. Their scenes are disrupted by the wildly romantic burlesque from Ralph. As "the right courteous and valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle" (the absurdly plebeian insignia upon his shield), he defeats a monster (a barber), woos a Moldavian princess (giving her threepence to buy pins at Bumbo Fair), and generally comports himself as a "grocer-errant." For a glorious finale, Ralph enters with a forked arrow through his head, grotesquely paraphrases *The Spanish Tragedy,* commends his soul to Grocer's Hall, and most pitiably departs this life.

A familiar sociological phenomenon is the discarding of a fad by the upper class of one age only to have the lower classes of a subsequent age adopt the same fad. Favorite reading materials of the Elizabethan tradesmen and apprentices were medieval romances, usually endless and butchered translations from the French and Spanish. The original performance of Beaumont's play failed because of its threefold ridicule of current popular taste:

(1) The bourgeois Grocer and his family with pronounced and lamentable taste in their dramatic preferences;

(2) A parody of romantic love in *The London Merchant;*

(3) A hilarious burlesque of chivalric romances in the title piece.

When the drama was revived before an aristocratic audience in 1635, it proved highly successful in its riotous laughter against the middle class.

BY FLETCHER ALONE

John Fletcher failed with the popular audience in his first tragicomedy. As he notes in the preface to the following drama, the crowd, "missing Whitsun ales, cream, wassail, and morris dances, began to be angry." Later performances before the royal court were well received.

The Faithful Shepherdess (c. 1608–09)—Tragicomedy. This play has no precise source, but its characters and events mirror the centuries-old pastoral conventions of Guarini's *Pastor Fido,* Tasso's *Aminta,* and the pastoral verse of Spenser.

Amoret and Perigot are pure shepherdess and shepherd, in love. Their romance is threatened by the lustful Sullen Shepherd and the wanton shepherdess Amarillis. They are aided by the God of the River and a satyr, servant of Pan. The chaste lovers are finally united and the impure Cloe (shepherd-

ess) and Daphnis (shepherd) rebuked. Greatest praise is for Clorin who faithfully mourns her long-dead "chaste love."

These are highly idealized country denizens, not derived from English rural life but from the artificial world of neoclassic pastoralism. Looking toward late 17th-century drama are the sentimentalized concepts of love and honor. The plotting calls for wide variety, from bestial lust to ideal devotion. Miraculous solutions resolve potential tragedy. Song and riming speech are extensive.

The Wild-Goose Chase (c. 1619–22)—Comedy of manners. Fletcher, savoring the approval of the aristocratic audience at the opening performance, admitted that his first comedy of manners was indeed the "rare issue of his brain." The work has no known source. Its Parisian setting is a thin disguise for contemporary aristocratic London.

The central chase is of the fair Oriana for the wild goose, Mirabell, a "great defier of all ladies in the way of marriage." His equally aristocratic and rakish friends are also pursued, Belleur by Rosalura, Pinac by Lillia-Bianca. The young ladies employ, with diversity and charming inconsistency, all feminine devices to secure husbands; the young gentlemen seek dexterously to evade matrimony, but eventually capitulate.

Whether the first or the first highly successful comedy of manners, the play sets the pattern for the genre and anticipates Restoration comedy:

(1) The subject is the stratagem of love affairs. Marriage is recognized as the only legitimate career for women of the era, and the womanly business of snaring a husband is neither passion nor romance but practicality with coy and debonaire handling.

(2) The characters are exclusively aristocrats, oblivious to the bourgeois money-grubbing concerns and loudly asserted morality. These noble folk pursue entirely a life of pleasure, composed chiefly, if not exclusively, of the battle of the sexes. The women are reputedly virtuous, though complete mistresses of coquetry. The males in speech parade a most exciting and immoral sex life, but their actions are never really shocking and their thorough last-act repentance stands them up properly before a clergyman for conventional wedding rites.

(3) The dialogue seeks brittle wit and sophistication. The intense self-consciousness of these characters precludes any "natural" action or feeling. Every gesture is studied for its effect, and every emotion is relished for its pleasing novelty and verbal felicity.

Mirabell from this play and from the exact repetition of his name in Congreve's *Way of the World* (1700) has become the prototype of the 17th-century courtier—the insouciant conqueror of boudoirs, wary of marriage until trapped in matrimonial toils by a respectable but worldly-wise woman —a far cry from the Sir Philip Sidney ideal of the 16th century.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife (1624)—Comedy of manners. This play

is probably Fletcher's best-constructed comedy, and a revealing adaptation of the shrew-taming theme.

Donna Margarita, the wealthiest and loveliest woman of Valladolid, is sought by many suitors, but she wants a stupid husband who will not thwart her desire to pursue interesting love affairs, especially with the Duke of Medina. Don Leon, well coached in the role, proves acceptable. Once married, he asserts proper husbandly control over Margarita. All her stratagems and those of the duke are effectively countered. She becomes a faithful wife, and the duke and Leon become friends.

In the subplot Margarita's servant, Estifania, dupes the conceited Perez into marrying her by pretending to be the mistress of Margarita's estate. When he realizes the trick, she holds the coward at pistol point and with money she swindled from a fat usurer she pacifies him so that at last they both settle down in peace in her mistress' house.

The main plot seems original. The subplot stems from a story by Cervantes in *Exemplary Novels* (1613), extensively altered and cleansed. Comparison with *The Taming of the Shrew* shows what a few decades have effected in the theater. All of Fletcher's characters are involved in duplicity, and except for Don Leon it is wicked duplicity. Although conventional ethics and morality are placated in the end, the chief interest of the drama lies in the characters' ingenious stratagems. The dramatist's main purpose, superbly achieved, is to create theatrically uproarious scenes.

Cyril Tourneur (c. 1580–1626). Cyril Tourneur was probably of genteel family and decent education, although little is known about him. In 1625 he was appointed secretary to the Council of War and sailed on the unsuccessful Cádiz expedition under Sir Edward Cecil. On the return trip he was deposited with the sick and wounded at Kinsale, Ireland, where he died.

The Revenger's Tragedy—Revenge tragedy. This work was printed anonymously in 1607, and ascribed to Tourneur by bookseller Edward Archer in 1656. Its imagery and moral tone resemble those of *The Transformed Metamorphosis* by Tourneur in 1600. Passages in the play show similarities to Shakespeare, Marston, Jonson, Dekker, and other contemporary playwrights. Its superiority to Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* has caused many scholars to doubt Tourneur's authorship. Perhaps Webster or Middleton wrote this somber masterpiece.

Holding in his hands the skull of his dead sweetheart, Gloriana, who was poisoned by the lecherous old Italian duke when she refused to be his mistress, Vindici vows revenge upon the ruler. His opportunity comes by disguising himself as Piato, pander to the duke's son, Lussurioso. Lussurioso engages the disguised Vindici to secure Vindici's own sister for him, but Vindici forestalls him by revealing that the duchess is secretly a lover of Spurio, bastard son of the duke. Vindici and his brother Hippolito lure the duke into kissing the poisoned skull of Gloriana and let him expire only as he sees Spurio making love to the duchess. Lussurioso, the new duke, hires

Hippolito and Vindici in his own garb to kill the supposed pander Piato, but instead they slay Lussurioso during court revels. Most of the remaining villains die similarly in the scuffle. As Vindici and Hippolito are hustled off to execution, the virtuous Antonio is crowned duke.

The title is admirably chosen. At the outset Vindici is the wrathful honest man, standing apart Hamlet-fashion to observe a world thoroughly debauched by lust and greed. When he enters the world of evil, he intends to maintain his honor and self-respect, but he is drawn ever more excruciatingly into plot and counterplot. Unlike Hamlet, Vindici permits his revenge to pervert his sense of values. He purges the state of sin and evil but in the process himself succumbs to evil. In his concluding speech Vindici acknowledges his previous blindness to the distinction between justice and murder: "'Tis time to die, when we're ourselves our foes."

A major accomplishment of the play is the bonding of the malcontent to the revenge tragedy, as Marston had not done. More importantly, it places a Christian interpretation upon the Renaissance revenge tragedy: returning evil for evil destroys the avenger in guilt. By implication rather than overt statement, vengeance belongs to God, and man should return good for evil. As in Shakespeare, the end must be the restoration of the moral order, not merely the claiming of an eye for an eye. Structurally the drama is remarkable for its unified drive and its adroit handling of complex plotting. T. S. Eliot and others have praised its emotional imagery and symbolism, which from the opening scene grip the audience with the hypnotism of evil. If the play were infused with Shakespeare's poetic majesty of language, it would probably be one of the greatest dramas in English.

The Atheist's Tragedy (1611)—Revenge tragedy. This play is another blank verse tragedy, universally assigned to Tourneur but inferior to *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Tourneur is apparently criticizing the Jacobean court in England but, like all his contemporary dramatists, carefully sets the locale abroad; here the imaginary setting is France, though Italy was the favorite choice for courtly tragedy. No source is known for this or the previous drama.

D'Amville, a materialist and avowed atheist, kills his older brother, Baron Montferrers, and, spreading a false report of the death of Charlemont, the baron's son, assumes his brother's wealth and power. To maintain his line, he forces Charlemont's fiancée, Castabella, to marry his son. When his son proves impotent, D'Amville attempts assault upon Castabella.

Returning from the wars, Charlemont would slay D'Amville, but the ghost of Montferrers urges the son to leave vengeance to Heaven. D'Amville's offspring all perish, and the maddened villain personally brandishes the ax to execute Charlemont. Heaven intervenes, and D'Amville accidentally slays himself with the ax. His dying confession clears the way for the happy and prosperous marriage of Charlemont and Castabella.

The plot is wrenched for Tourneur's moral, a remarkably Christian modification of the revenge tragedy. Previously the avenger's code was accepted

without challenge in its exaction of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; it is tacitly accepted in *Hamlet,* where the revenge is unceasingly sought. Tourneur's tragedy employs the ghost not to urge vengeance by the son but to admonish the son to leave vengeance to God. The point is made explicit in the subtitle, "The Honest Man's Revenge." By trusting in divine justice instead of taking the law into his own hands, Charlemont emerges unstained at the play's end, and, in rather naively bourgeois fashion, is rewarded with splendid riches and perfect spouse.

"Atheistic" D'Amville is an indictment of the new materialism, which sets Nature (as did Edmund in *King Lear*) above the divine and seeks only tangible and immediate worldly pleasure.

John Webster (c. 1580–c. 1625). We know little of the life of John Webster. He may have been the John Webster who acted in the English touring company of Robert Browne in Germany in 1596. The first certain mention of him appears in Henslowe's diary of 1602, where Webster is part of that entrepreneur's stable of playwrights. In his City of London pageant, *Monuments of Honour* (1624), Webster identifies himself as a "Merchant-Taylor." He collaborated chiefly with Dekker, but also with Marston, Thomas Heywood, and others. Webster was virtually forgotten until Charles Lamb rediscovered him. George Bernard Shaw scoffingly derided Webster as a "Tussaud laureate" (referring to Mme. Tussaud's famous waxworks featuring reproductions of horrible murders), but Swinburne matched Webster with Aeschylus, Dante, and Shakespeare. All estimates of Webster are based essentially upon but two of three plays, the only surviving works known to be his independent labor.

The White Devil or Vittoria Corombona (c. 1607–12)—Sensational tragedy. The work is based upon the real-life story of Vittoria Accoramboni, murdered in 1585. None of the contemporary printed accounts can be specified as Webster's source, for he probably depended upon an oral report. Virginio Orsini, the Giovanni of the play, visited England in 1601.

Bored with his dull, virtuous wife Isabella, Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, visits the home of Camillo and falls in love with his host's wife, Vittoria Corombona. She has no love for her aging husband and by relating a dream induces Ursini to kill Isabella. The portrait of Ursini is smeared with poison; when Isabella follows her nightly practice of kissing the picture, she dies in convulsions. Vittoria's brother Flamineo contrives the death of Camillo in a horseback "accident." Vittoria is tried as an accessory and jailed as she arrogantly defies the court. Francisco, Duke of Florence and brother of Isabella, does not want open war with Ursini's state. Cunningly Francisco writes a pretended love letter to Vittoria and contrives that Ursini receive it. Ursini visits Vittoria in prison to reproach her for romancing with Francisco; however, allured by Vittoria's beauty, Ursini carries her off in page-boy disguise and marries her. Instigated by Francisco, murderers slay Ursini, Vittoria,

and Flamineo. Giovanni, son of Isabella and Ursini, succeeds to the dukedom of Brachiano and metes out justice to all the malefactors.

Perhaps no other English drama except *Othello* so maintains high tension from the opening word to the very conclusion. Nervous horror and foreboding are undiminished until Giovanni restores order and justice at the end. The impact is sadistic frenzy, bizarrely ingenious in violence of word and deed. Webster sees Jacobean "greatness" as hopelessly corrupt and decadent. The avengers in this revenge tragedy are as evil as those they slay. In Webster's world, unlike Shakespeare's, good does not overcome evil; the only escape seems the rampant clash of evil with itself until evil's self-destruction leaves a weary, spent world. Remarkably, Webster imparts an acrid individuality to each of his similarly vicious characters. The central roles reach tragic grandeur in Vittoria's spirited defiance of the court and Ursini's courage before the threats of a corrupt ecclesiastic. The one touch of innocence and natural love appears in Vittoria's mother, Cornelia, who over the body of her son Marcello, killed by his own brother, Flamineo, speaks the exquisite lyric, "Call for the robin-redbreast and the wren," probably the finest lyric of the drama outside of Shakespeare.

The Duchess of Malfi (c. 1612–14)—Sensational tragedy. This play is likewise historical, dealing with events between 1504 and 1513. In recounting the story, Bandello claimed to know the principals personally, and he may be the prototype of Delio in the Webster drama. Lope de Vega, the great Renaissance Spanish playwright, wrote a play on the same subject, but there is no evidence of the Spanish play influencing the English. Webster's immediate source was Painter's *Palace of Pleasure.*

Giovanna, the widowed Duchess of Malfi, secretly remarries beneath her, wedding her honest steward, Antonio Bologna. Her brothers, the Cardinal and the Duke of Calabria, jealous of her wealth and the family name, have planted their spy Bosola as her gentleman of horse. Bosola discovers the pregnancy of the duchess and warns her brothers. As they close in, she unwisely reveals all to Bosola and is thenceforth in his power. The duke presents her with a dead hand, supposedly that of her husband. Then he surrounds her with the insane to derange her. Executioners bring in a coffin and strangle the duchess and her two youngest children. Meanwhile, with his one surviving child, a son, in custody of friendly Delio, Antonio, ignorant of his wife's murder, seeks a reconciliation with the Cardinal and the duke. Mistaking Antonio for the Cardinal, Bosola kills him. In remorse Bosola confronts the two wicked brothers; all three are killed in the altercation. Delio produces the little boy, and the shaken court resolves to make amends by aiding the child.

Contrary to previous English practice, the plays of Webster make women the central figures. By Jacobean standards Giovanna deserves punishment. She violates the commands of church (Cardinal) and state (Duke), and the family wishes as stated by both brothers. She is willful and concupiscent.

Nonetheless, she is a lovely and natural woman, deserving no such horrible fate. The death scene of Giovanna amounts to a ritual of purification, her soul cleansed of venal sins and destined by the enormity of her punishment for eternal beatitude. Over her dead body the duke utters a line that Shakespeare would envy: "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle. She died young." The inhumanly cruel duke is shattered by remorse and goes insane.

Perhaps Webster's greatest characterization is Bosola, one of the most complex figures in Renaissance drama. He is a philosophic man, but, lacking money, has been forced to seek preferment in court. Unlike the Prince of Denmark, he cannot maintain his moral character in a treacherous court but must do the bidding of his patrons. To himself Bosola cynically justifies his immoral actions as reasonable self-interest in a corrupt, money-mad world. In Hamlet fashion he soliloquizes as a malcontent, disdaining the foulness of his world. Incredibly it is he, her murderer, who soothes the last moments of the duchess. The spiritual peace of the dying woman, a peace largely of his creation, moves Bosola to future righteousness. Ironically, a being sunk into sin like Bosola perpetrates further sin (the inadvertent killing of Antonio) even as he wills to goodness. We are to believe that Bosola, like Macbeth, was originally a "good" man; however, his crimes arise not from ambition but from the miasma of a polluted society that lacks true morality and stifles it in those who dwell in that society. Confronting the vicious brothers of Giovanna, he displays a growth of moral stature and understanding roughly comparable to that of Lear and Gloucester.

The drama just misses the great sustained effort of *The White Devil,* for Giovanna dies in the fourth act, leaving the last act largely to Bosola. Nonetheless, the same dark horrors impart a pervasive atmosphere of corruption and jittery tension.

Philip Massinger (1583–1640). Philip Massinger was a native of Salisbury, son of a confidential servant of the second Earl of Pembroke. He left Oxford in 1606 without a degree. By 1613 he was writing plays for Henslowe, collaborating with Dekker, Fletcher, Tourneur, and others to produce close to forty dramas. He proved one of the mainstays of the King's Men, although his democratic ideas were unpopular with Charles I. Technically his verse resembles Shakespeare's, causing some scholars to credit him with the non-Fletcher portions of *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

A New Way to Pay Old Debts (c. 1621–25)—Comedy. This work is a skillful rewrite of Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One.* In contrast with the Middleton play, this drama is strongly moralistic, intent upon punishing the usurer, Sir Giles Overreach. Overreach is a far more monumental portrayal than his original, Pecunius Lucre, in the Middleton play. Massinger's unscrupulous giant of greed seems clearly patterned after Sir Giles Mompesson (1584–c. 1651), who was exposed and punished in 1621. "Both a lion and a fox in his proceedings," Overreach has been a favorite role for great actors from the 18th-century Englishman, David Garrick, to the 20th-

century American, Walter Hampden. Overreach is chiefly responsible for the play's phenomenal success over the centuries. Of all English drama before Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) only the plays of Shakespeare and this drama by Massinger have consistently held the stage down to the present time.

The Maid of Honour (c. 1621–32)—Tragicomedy. Massinger was probably the most moralistic of the Jacobean and Caroline dramatists, creating more substantial characters in tragicomedy than did most of his contemporaries. *The Maid of Honour* freely adapts a story from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure.*

Camiola of Sicily loves Bertoldo, a valiant Knight of Malta, who is pledged to celibacy and to fighting for the cross. Bertoldo joins a freebooting expedition against the Sienese. He is captured by the noble Gonzaga who strips from Bertoldo's breast the cross of the Knights of Malta for his debasing of the Order. Camiola ransoms Bertoldo in return for his pledge to marry her, but the Duchess of Siena is enamored of him. In bridal veil, Camiola claims the fickle Bertoldo as he is about to wed the duchess. The Sienese duchess renounces Bertoldo. Camiola's bridal garb heralds not her marriage to Bertoldo but her entrance into a nunnery. Bertoldo, repentant, renews his vows to the Order, and Gonzaga restores to his breast the white cross of the Knights of Malta.

In her concern for Bertoldo, Camiola momentarily forgot his vow of celibacy. This forgetfulness can be the only blot upon one of the great women of the Renaissance drama. She is the last of her type, wholly charming and affectionate, while also wholly brave and morally strong. Bertoldo's fickleness and his knightly pledge (he was not a Knight of Malta in the original) make him wrong for her; though highly theatrical, her final resolve caps a masterful and majestic portrait. The superb conclusion of Bertoldo's reinvestiture seems the last great dramatic statement of the Renaissance's "rage for order" and restoration of complete moral soundness.

The Fatal Dowry (c. 1618–19)—Sensational tragedy. Massinger wrote this play in collaboration with NATHANIEL FIELD. Field, though his father was a noted Puritan cleric and bitter opponent of the theater, started acting with the Children of the Chapel Royal about 1600, moving later to adult companies. He enacted the title role in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* and starred in drama by Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher. Like the Stratford master he was an actor-playwright. *The Fatal Dowry* proved highly popular in itself and in its rewritten form as *The Fair Penitent* (1703) by Nicholas Rowe.

Creditors keep the corpse of the Marshal of Burgundy from honorable burial, and the son of the deceased, Charalois, offers his own incarceration in return for decent rites for his father. His friend Romont shares his fate for protesting the court's decision. Rochfort, ex-president of the parliament, pays the debts for the young men and marries his daughter Beaumelle to Charalois. Her former suitor, young Novall, becomes Beaumelle's lover. To

protect his friend's honor, Romont forces Novall at pistol point to renounce all interest in Beaumelle, but the philanderer immediately thereafter proceeds to an assignation with his mistress. Charalois surprises the lovers and slays Novall. Rochfort sorrowfully hears the story in person and imposes the death penalty upon his own daughter, who is immediately stabbed by Charalois. Charalois is acquitted by the court for the two murders but is slain by a friend of Novall. Romont kills Charalois' slayer.

No specific source is known, but the "lively grave" of the son to permit the father's burial is told of Cimon and his father Miltiades by Valerius Maximus. The condemnation of an adulterous wife by her just father and her subsequent slaying by her husband appears in several Spanish accounts. *The Fatal Dowry* is a domestic tragedy with a tail end of revenge tragedy, all manifesting Jacobean tendency toward sentimentalizing. Charalois varies from earlier comparable figures in his emotional control. He purposely forces Novall to draw sword first and thus render Charalois a killer in self-defense. Charalois insists upon Rochfort's judicial scrutiny of Beaumelle instead of killing her in rage. A self-conscious age has changed from the impassioned Moor of Venice.

John Ford (1586–c. 1640). Born at Ilsington in Devonshire, John Ford entered Oxford in 1601 and the Middle Temple of law in 1602. By 1612 he was writing for the King's Men. In collaboration with Dekker, Rowley, and Webster he wrote about sixteen plays. Practically nothing is known about his later life, though late 17th-century references suggest that he retired to rural seclusion in his last years. Ford often seems the most "modern" of the Renaissance dramatists. His are "problem plays" all centered about the concept of the dynamic force of love. To Ford the marriage of true minds is the true union, regardless of moral conventions. Forbidden love and its pathetic frustrations are his themes, and for his entangled lovers he has sympathy, not revulsion. Ford's tragedies were directed at a court influenced by Queen Henrietta's revival of the medieval court of love ("Platonic" love) and Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Melancholy is the "mind's disease," and Ford attempts to construct upon this concept a theory of tragedy comparable to Jonson's "humours" for comedy. But in portraying the "quality" of each character, whose amorous nature conflicts with law and custom, Ford is not asking for moral condemnation, nor for a 20th-century appeal against inhibitions. He seeks to create in his audience a sense of pity.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (c. 1625–33)—Sensational tragedy. This play is apparently a wholly original story.

Beautiful Annabella of Parma has several suitors, but the most likely is Soranzo, a wealthy young noble. To secure her he casts off his mistress, Hippolita. Meanwhile Annabella's brother Giovanni confesses his passionate love for her, his own sister, and she admits the same affection for him. Friar Bonaventura urges the marriage of Annabella to prevent sin. Hippolita tries to disrupt the wedding feast but dies from a poisoned cup proffered her by

Soranzo's servant, and the wedding takes place. Soranzo soon discovers that his wife is pregnant. She will not reveal her lover, but Soranzo's servant extracts the secret from Annabella's maid. Soranzo under the guise of a birthday feast plans to have assassins murder Giovanni. Warned by the friar, Giovanni confronts Annabella beforehand and slays her. He enters the feast with her heart upon his dagger. Giovanni kills Soranzo and dies at the hands of the assassins.

Ford treats this incestuous love virtually as a *Romeo and Juliet* story, with moral law rather than family feud separating the lovers. The three suitors, one stupid and the other two vicious, make Giovanni sympathetic. His passion is aroused not as theirs by her social position and wealth but by her beauty and virtue. It is a world of ethical anarchy in which a sentimental tear is demanded instead of a moral judgment. The revenge motifs are subordinated to the emotional picturing of brother-sister romance. Almost the utter limits of sensationalism are reached in the melodramatic entrance of Giovanni with his sister's heart skewered upon his dagger. Apparently it was the sort of shocker needed for an audience blasé to clichéd horrors.

The Broken Heart (c. 1625–33)—Sensational tragedy. This work has no known source, but the prologue suggests a foundation in actual fact, possibly the triangle of Sir Philip Sidney, Penelope Devereux, and Lord Rich.

In ancient Sparta, Orgilus and Penthea are in love, but her brother Ithocles compels her to wed jealous old Bassanes. After her marriage Orgilus claims her as his by the laws of love ("Platonic" love). She admits her love for him but will not succumb to adultery. The tortures of conflicting passion and chastity drive Penthea mad and eventually kill her. Ithocles meanwhile falls in love with Calantha, the king's daughter, who is betrothed to a neighboring prince. Now he realizes his cruelty to Penthea. However, the King of Sparta, at his daughter's request, betroths her to Ithocles. Enraged by Penthea's death, Orgilus kills Ithocles by trapping him in a chair from which he cannot move and stabbing him. At a dance to celebrate the marriage of Orgilus' sister, Princess Calantha is informed first of her father's death, then of Penthea's, and finally of her beloved's, Ithocles'. She amazes all by not showing the slightest emotion over any of these tragedies. She allows Orgilus to choose the method of his execution, and he elects to open a vein and bleed to death. Calantha settles all the problems of state, and formally marrying the dead Ithocles, dies herself of a broken heart. Her amazing self-control concealed not just sorrow, but the very fact that her heart had been overwhelmed and broken by her terrible ordeals.

The desperate search for new sensationalism provides the ingenious device by which Orgilus traps Ithocles before slaying him. The names of the characters betray Ford's "tragedy of melancholy humours": Orgilus ("Angry"), Ithocles ("Honor of Loveliness"), Penthea ("Complaint"), Calantha ("Flower of Beauty"). Again the revenge theme is essentially plot machinery, as Ford's concern lies with the psychological heart-twistings of love. Even

more than in the previous drama, the female roles dominate the play. In a piece of brilliant dramatic construction, Ford has us believe that Penthea is the tragic heroine, as she is the center of interest during the first half of the play. Only in the last act does Calantha really become the commanding figure of the work.

Ford is rightly praised as a poet producing many lines of sorrowing beauty, but about his lovers there is a decadent flavor, as with a death wish they welcome release from their amatory tortures. Withal, he is unquestionably the greatest and most original of the Caroline dramatists.

The Witch of Edmonton (1621)—Domestic tragedy. Ford wrote this play with the collaboration of Rowley and Dekker. This work demonstrates how the contemporary stage, as well as street ballads, fulfilled the function of today's "yellow journalism," recounting current scandal and excitement among average people. Elizabeth Sawyer of Edmonton was executed for witchcraft on April 19, 1621. Before the year's end the account was dramatized on the public stage and had even been acted at court.

Aged Elizabeth Sawyer, a poor, deformed, ugly woman, is scorned and persecuted by all, especially Old Banks. In desperation she makes a pact with the black dog of the devil and thereby inflicts disease upon the cattle of Banks and mildew upon his grain. Her tormentors set fire to her hovel, but she tongue-lashes them away. She goes too far in having the devil turn Ann Ratcliffe mad. When Ann beats out her own brains, Gammer Sawyer is tried and executed at Tyburn.

In the subplot, which in length and interest outstrips the witch's story, Frank Thorney, in the service of Sir Arthur Clarington, is induced to marry Winnifride, Sir Arthur's servant-mistress. Because of the elder Thorney's hostility, the marriage is kept secret. Assuring his father that he is unwed, Frank is then married to sweet Susan by Old Thorney. Conscience-stricken, Frank tries to flee with Winnifride, who is disguised as a horseboy. Loving Susan will not be shaken off, and Frank slays her. His attempts to foist the blame on others fail; the corpse of Susan bleeds in the presence of her husband. Frank is executed at the same time as Witch Sawyer.

The subplot exploits the familiar theme of "the miseries of enforced marriage." Frank is an object lesson in how weakness and duplicity will destroy a decent and promising chap. The bleeding corpse is an old folk motif showing how the stage still reflected age-old superstitions of the people.

The main plot fails to convince modern readers, because its authors apparently completely believe in the reality of witchcraft. Nonetheless, there is a surprisingly sympathic portrayal of a hounded, wretched old woman forced by a cruel community into league with the devil.

Perkin Warbeck (c. 1629–34)—Chronicle play. Ford apologized for this dramatic form that had "been of late so out of fashion, so unfollowed." *Perkin Warbeck* is the only Renaissance chronicle play after *Henry VIII* that can remotely be compared with Shakespeare's history plays. Its sources

are *The True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck* (1618) by Thomas Gainsford and *The History of the Reign of Henry the Seventh* (1622) by Francis Bacon.

Claiming to be Richard, younger son of Edward IV and supposed victim of Richard III's assassins, Perkin Warbeck proclaims himself Richard IV and seeks the aid of James IV of Scotland. Actually he is the unwitting tool of Yorkists opposing the incumbent English monarch, Henry VII. The Scottish ruler gives the lovely Katherine Gordon, a princess royal, as wife to Perkin and promises attack upon the English. Perkin's star is rising, as Cornish rebels push eastward and the Scots besiege Norham Castle. The valorous Henry, however, roots out the court plotters favoring Perkin and disperses the Cornish insurgents. In northern England James IV finds no sentiment to support Perkin. Henry offers his daughter, Princess Margaret, to James IV in return for an alliance. The Scottish ruler casts off Perkin who, accompanied by Katherine, seeks to reassemble the rebellious Cornishmen. Perkin is captured and executed, Katherine remaining loyal to him to the end.

Ford's sources present Perkin Warbeck as a vulgar impostor, but the dramatist creates a sympathetic figure, royal in bearing, convinced of his just rights. Perkin's claims are left problematical. Here is an ideal tragic character: a king in rags, but a king by nature, and a doomed king. In fact, all the major characters of this drama are sympathetically pictured. Katherine is "majesty in league with love." Henry VII is "a prince composed of sweetness"; if Perkin would renounce his claims, Henry would gladly spare him. James IV is a problem to the playwright; he must betray Perkin whom he earlier supported with enthusiasm and promises. Ford works hard to justify the decision of the Scottish king, with the crowning temptation of peace not only with England but throughout Christendom if James will discard Perkin. Moderation and human understanding produce a play that Shakespeare could have improved only in poetry.

Sir William Davenant (or **D'Avenant**) (dav'e-nent) (1606–1668). The one significant bridge between the Renaissance and Restoration drama is William Davenant. Once thought to have been the natural son of Shakespeare, he was almost certainly the son of the proprietor of Crown Inn, Oxford. During his second year (1622) in Lincoln College, his father died, and Davenant entered the service of the Duchess of Richmond and later that of Fulke Greville. He composed masques for the royal court and in 1638 succeeded Jonson as poet laureate. During the civil wars he supported the cause of Charles I and was forced to flee to France. He was knighted after the siege of Gloucester in 1643. Setting out in 1650 on a diplomatic mission to America for the exiled Stuarts, Davenant was captured by an English ship in the Channel and languished in jail for some time. After release he privately produced drama in noble houses, in 1656 presenting *The Siege of Rhodes,* often termed the first English opera. At the Restoration in 1660 Davenant

was one of the two patentees receiving royal commissions to reopen the theater. He headed the Duke of York's Players until his death.

Love and Honor (1634)—Tragicomedy. This play has no known source.

Princess Evandra of Milan and her knight Leonell are captured by Count Prospero, who is fighting for Savoy. Both young men, plus Alvaro, Prince of Savoy, fall in love with Evandra. Alvaro's father, the Duke of Savoy, has vowed the execution of all Milanese prisoners in revenge for his brother's murder years ago. Love and honor rend the hearts of Prospero and Alvaro. By stratagem Evandra locks up both and orders Leonell to guard them. She then nobly surrenders herself to the Duke of Savoy. However, Melora, her faithful maid of honor, pretends to be Evandra to save her mistress. The Duke of Savoy orders both women executed. Leonell reveals himself as Prince of Parma, whose father captured the duke's brother. The ladies are reprieved and Leonell led to the block. Then appears a bearded ambassador from Milan who removes his disguise to show himself as Evandra's father and presumably the real slayer of the duke's brother. Leonell is removed from the block and the Duke of Milan is substituted. Now troops in the duke's long-lost brother, alive after all. The execution is called off, with Leonell marrying Evandra and Alvaro marrying Melora.

The drama harks back to Beaumont and Fletcher in all the conventions of tragicomedy—aristocratic romance, impossible and surprising plot devices, tragic airs and happy ending. The drama looks ahead to the heroic drama in the grandiloquent contest of honor vs. love. It was revived almost immediately after the Restoration to begin the entire genre of heroic tragedy. It is almost impossible to strain theatrical effects beyond the final scene of Davenant's play, and theatricality rather than profound drama is the swan song of the Renaissance stage.

James Shirley (1596–1666). Called "the last of a great race" by Lamb, James Shirley was the son of a London merchant. Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, he became a clergyman, serving as parish priest and schoolmaster near St. Albans. He left the church about 1624, possibly as a convert to Roman Catholicism, and from then until the closing of the theaters in 1642 wrote over thirty plays. He was the outstanding dramatist in all genres when the Puritans closed the stage. During the Civil Wars he served the king under the Duke of Newcastle, then retired to schoolteaching. In 1647 he edited the first collected text of Beaumont and Fletcher. He and his wife both died of exposure in the Great Fire of London in 1666.

The Cardinal (1641)—Sensational tragedy. This work has no known source, but its popularity if not its inspiration undoubtedly sprang from the spectacular contemporary career in France of Cardinal Richelieu.

The power behind the throne of Navarre is the wily Cardinal who has the king break the engagement of the Duchess Rosaura to Count d'Alvarez and betroth her to Columbo, the Cardinal's nephew. Away at war, Columbo earns the enmity of Hernando, a colonel, whom he falsely accuses of cowardice.

Rosaura asks in a letter for release to marry Alvarez, and Columbo scornfully agrees. Upon his triumphant return Columbo murders Alvarez. The military hero is excused for his crime, through the Cardinal's intervention, but Hernando, at Rosaura's instigation, kills Columbo in a duel. Named guardian of Rosaura, the Cardinal intends to rape and poison her. Hernando interrupts the Cardinal's assault, stabs him, and commits suicide. Dying, the Cardinal pretends to confess all and in restitution offers a powder as antidote to the poisoned food. He eats of the powder to show its harmlessness. Rosaura swallows the powder. It is a deadly poison by which the Cardinal effectively brings Rosaura as well as himself to death.

Shirley deemed this drama "the best of my flock," and undoubtedly it is the last great play of probably the world's greatest dramatic epoch, which had its start less than a lifetime before in Marlowe and the University Wits. But the Renaissance drama had written itself out. The ingenious plotting and skillful verse cannot lift to monumental tragedy what is essentially a melodramatic thriller. The drama meshes three patterns of vengeance:

(1) A discarded fiancé slays his successful rival;
(2) A wife obtains the death of her husband's murderer;
(3) A monstrous villain fiendishly destroys the woman who brought his nephew to destruction.

All the machinery of the revenge tragedy is lavishly displayed, even to Rosaura's pretended insanity, but it is now hackneyed and worn, unleavened with a sense of tragic grandeur or meditation upon human destiny.

Hyde Park (1632)—Comedy of manners. In portraying London life, *Hyde Park* is interested not in the rowdy hodgepodge of *Bartholomew Fayre* but in the light love intrigues of the upper class, focused about the recently opened pleasure gardens. The triple love affair has no specific source but is familiar plotting of the genre.

Fairfield is attracted by the witty independence of Carol. Unsuccessful in his suit, he piques her into pursuing and marrying him. Lacy expects to wed Mrs. Bonavent, whose sailor husband has been absent for seven years. In disguise the missing husband plagues Lacy, finally revealing himself to disrupt the wedding festivities. Trier, courting Julietta, tests his beloved by subjecting her to the advances of the lascivious Lord Bonvile. Julietta withstands Bonvile's improper advances, converts him to morality with astounding speed, and accepts Bonvile's proposal of honorable marriage. Trier, like Lacy, is left spouseless.

One of the gayest of English comedies of manners, this play convincingly pictures an idle, fun-loving, careless aristocracy in diverting situations. The chief scenes celebrate the races, lovemaking, fashionable promenading, and other amusements of Hyde Park. There is not a whisper of the brewing conflict of the era that will soon sweep aside this joyous, heedless aristocracy.

Perhaps the very ignoring of the rising conflict doomed the upper class mirrored in this entertaining drama.

The Lady of Pleasure (1635)—Comedy of manners. This work loosely borrows from *The Noble Gentleman* by Beaumont and Fletcher.

Lady Bornwell persuades her reluctant husband to enjoy the delights of London. She revels in the city's pleasures, including assignations with the gigolo Kickshaw, while her husband sees bills mount ever higher. He tries to awaken her by surpassing her extravagances and by hovering about the beautiful widow Celestina. Celestina is offered honorable marriage by a noble lord who had earlier solicited her. Lady Bornwell regains her senses and retires with her husband to the country.

The Restoration comic drama is clearly foreshadowed by this play. Though virtue supposedly triumphs, it is stretched mighty far. Lady Bornwell wades through gay adultery before the last-scene "conversion." Celestina is supposedly the wholly pure woman of society. She shamelessly leads the noble lord on to proposition her, then displays her "wit" by forcing him back to morality. Apparently virtue to her social class means the maximum of provocation without yielding, the amused playing at love without getting attached or stung. The emphasis in this play has passed from situations to dialogue. In a clever scene Lady Bornwell tries to have Celestina humiliated, but in fashionable French the lovely widow can bat back as sharp repartee as is fired at her. The play in lively manner depicts the luxurious trappings of a glittering cavalier society, an aristocratic group that is fatuous and ineffectual, oblivious to the world outside its mansions and estates. By narrowing its world to such selfish, trivial concerns the cavalier aristocracy largely forfeited its leadership of the populace; and into this vacuum strode the mercantile leaders, realistic and Puritanical.

On September 2, 1642, "An Order of the Lords and Commons concerning Stage Plays," emanating from the triumphant Puritan administration, stipulated that "public stage plays shall cease and be foreborne." Thus ended what many claim as the greatest era in the world's drama. When the public theater reopened in 1660, the English stage bore little resemblance to that of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

PART FIVE

The Later Renaissance and the Commonwealth Era

CHAPTER 14

The Age of Bacon and Donne

(1600–1642)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. Englishmen deeply felt at the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, as they were to feel again at Victoria's death in 1901, that a glorious era had ended. The expansiveness of England under a truly great monarch was to be superseded by a contraction and a weakening. James VI of Scotland was now James I of England, personally linking the northern kingdom to England (formal union did not occur until 1707). Though a Protestant, James was not popular with the English. Lacking the flexibility and wisdom of his predecessor, he sought to bend the English system into royal absolutism, believing as he did in the divine right of kings and also in the divine right of bishops. The year of his accession witnessed two plots against James I: the "Main," an attempt to replace him by his cousin, Arabella Stuart, and the "Bye," a proposal to imprison him. The king forthwith proceeded, as did his succeeding son, to maintain a tyrannical personal rule that alienated the people. The parliamentarians increasingly united against the monarchy to seek an oligarchy of powerful nobles and city merchants. In 1604, James issued a proclamation rigorously enforcing the Act of Uniformity, enraging both Puritans and Roman Catholics. The latter responded with the famous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, thwarted only by the apprehension of Guy Fawkes (the English still merrily burn his effigy each November 4). Some Puritans fled across the Atlantic in 1620 to escape English persecution and to found the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The Puritans remaining in England became the focal point for resistance against the Stuarts. In a ceaseless power struggle, James I and his son Charles I angrily dissolved parliament repeatedly, only to reconvene it each time in search of more funds. An obdurate parliament in 1621 presented to James the Great Protestation, asserting "that the liberties, franchises, privileges, and jurisdictions of Parliament are the ancient and undoubted birthright and inheritance of the subjects of England, and that the arduous and urgent affairs concerning the king, state, and defense of the realm . . . are proper subjects

and matters of council and debate in Parliament." The enraged monarch ripped the page from the journal of the Commons.

Charles I, ascending the throne in 1625, proved as intractable as his father. The famous Van Dyck portraits in the National Gallery in London brilliantly reveal the monarch's proud arrogance. Here was a handsome, imperious ruler that the Cavaliers would follow to their death, and a weak and willful man that the Puritans would hate and pursue until his death. Parliament compelled Charles to accept the Petition of Right in 1628, giving parliament power in taxation, forbidding unlawful seizure of subjects, and preventing martial law in peacetime. In the next year the king dissolved parliament and conducted an eleven-year personal rule of autocracy. Hatred was focused upon Charles by his levying of "ship money," a tax previously levied only upon seacoast towns, but by royal edict of 1634 extended throughout the nation. John Hampden, a Buckinghamshire country gentleman, was tried in court during the same year for defying the tax; he lost the lawsuit but won the country's sympathy. More than a century later in Gray's famous elegy Hampden would be praised as the symbol of freedom-loving Englishmen.

The attempt of Charles to impose episcopacy upon Scotland's Presbyterians brought to the far north the First Bishops' War (1639) and the Second Bishops' War (1640). Seeking funds, the monarch summoned the Short Parliament (three weeks in 1640), which he quickly dissolved. The Long Parliament convened late in 1640 and continued until 1660. Controlling monies, the parliament presented Charles with the Grand Remonstrance in 1641, summarizing all the grievances against his reign. The king tried to capture the leaders of parliament, but the citizens of London defied him. Fleeing north, Charles raised the royal standard at Nottingham on August 22, 1642, to open the military phase of the great rebellion.

The Civil Wars split communities and families into tangled confusion, but, broadly, the conservative and feudalistic north sided with the king while the more populous and mercantilized south favored parliament; in social structure the gentry, the Anglican clergy, and the peasantry were royalists while the middle classes and great merchants were parliamentarians. To put it broadly, the royalists were the gay, dashing Cavaliers; the parliamentarians were the dour, pious Roundheads (derisively labeled because of their cropped hair in comparison to the flowing locks of the Cavaliers). The Cavaliers are well keynoted by the "Cavalier Tunes" of Browning. They tried to be colorful, swashbuckling heroes of romance. Less dramatic, but fanatically determined and efficient, were the Roundheads.

Initially the military traditions of the Cavaliers won battles for them, but there gradually emerged from the parliamentary leaders a sober and resolute tower of strength, Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658). His forceful personality and sound sense caused his rise to dominance in the Long Parliament. Without any army training, he was one of the first to raise a regiment sup-

porting parliament. His "Ironsides" became the toughest and most successful fighting force of the period, the nucleus for the New Model Army. Cromwell's troops represented one of the most unusual armies of all times. It was a praying army, dropping to its knees in prayer at first call, at mess, before battle, after battle, at taps. It was a hymn-singing army. It was a pious army in which a trooper using an obscene or profane word was lashed until the blood flowed to his heels. It proved an unconquerable army, putting to flight the swaggering, dashing Cavaliers.

The battle of Marston Moor (1644) proved the decisive victory for Cromwell and his Ironsides. After Naseby (1645) the royalist cause was hopelessly lost, the king surrendering to the Scots. Parliament obtained Charles from the Scots and demanded his submission to its terms. Cromwell apparently hoped for a compromise, offering lenient provisions to the monarch except for a firm insistence against the episcopacy and for parliamentarian supremacy over the ruler. Charles I refused, was tried by the high court, and was sentenced to die. On January 30, 1649, the king was beheaded at Whitehall. The nation declared itself a commonwealth, nominally a republic, and Cromwell assumed the title of Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. Throughout western Europe the 17th century was "the age of genius." Probably no other century of our civilization has produced so many superlative minds and great creators. Though wracked by internal conflict, breaking out into bloody civil wars, England shared in this glory, boasting at the century's outset the mature genius of Shakespeare and at the century's conclusion the great scientist Newton. Though Bacon set the course for modern science, the important discoveries of modern knowledge were made by others. Logarithms, indispensable to all modern mathematics and technology, were invented by John Napier (1550–1617) and revealed in *Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Descriptio* (1614); in *Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Constructio* (published by his son Robert in 1619) he established the decimal point in its modern use. The circulation of the blood was discovered and made known to the world by William Harvey (1578–1657) in *Exercitatio de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis* (1628).

European science was starting the profound questioning and disturbance of thought that it has continued to exercise into our time. Galileo, the Italian astronomer, observed sunspots, and Tycho Brahe, the Danish astronomer, revealed that the planetary orbits were elliptical and not perfect circles. We find it difficult to understand the perturbation raised by such discoveries, but to the era these revelations seemed catastrophic denials of the perfection of God's creation. While the New Scientists vigorously asserted their piety, the mass of mankind felt that science was destroying its cherished and confident beliefs. The 19th century believed that modern thought originated in the late 15th century and in the 16th century. Today's historians widely feel that the 17th century was the pivotal age for the gradual turn from medieval scholas-

ticism toward today's acceptance of the essentially scientific view. The opening of the 17th century therefore manifests an especial disturbance of the Western mind as this adjustment is underway.

Observe that the scientific study of this and the next century arises primarily from individual scholars, rather than college dons, as is the case today. The universities of the age were chiefly concerned with theology. The redoubtable Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, set Oxford University essentially upon the discipline and order it still follows. The furious and profound religious controversies at both Oxford and Cambridge nursed a host of prominent clergymen and religious writers as different as Fuller, Milton, and Crashaw, but all were stirred by the hurricanes of faith.

The economic level of England was rising. The most ambitious land project of English history started with an act of 1600 to drain the eastern fen country. In spite of troubled times, about 700,000 acres of arable soil were added to the country's productivity, far surpassing any comparable project in English history. Improved agricultural techniques vastly increased agricultural yields, and even Cromwell on his East Anglia farm experimented with new methods of cultivation. The greatest English manufacturing was still in woolens, with a huge and growing export market, but the cotton trade, later one of England's largest industries, started in Lancashire during the reign of James I. James also introduced silk cultivation, and the worried French forbade the importation of English-made silk stockings.

The English trading and colonizing flag was sailing to distant seas. Seeking commercial profits, the East India Company (chartered in 1600) had to resort to weapons in the poorly governed lands of the East and often had to fight other Europeans for the rich trade. In 1622 the English merchants-in-arms wrested Hormuz in the Persian Gulf from the Portuguese and maintained English influence in that country until our own generation. The English were in India at Masulipatan in 1620, at Madras in 1639. The first English colony in what is now the United States was the Jamestown Colony in Virginia, 1607. Massachusetts was settled in 1620 by the Puritans; Maryland was settled in 1633 by a mixture of Roman Catholics and Protestants. Connecticut was founded in 1635 by colonists from England and Massachusetts, and Roger Williams the next year started the Rhode Island settlement.

All the wealth pouring into England could not satisfy a spendthrift court. Elizabeth's court had known splendor, but that of James I proved wildly extravagant, draining the nation. Perhaps it was this expenditure that disgusted the Puritans, who acrimoniously denounced the courtiers for dissolute living. Ladies and gentlemen of the court were observed rolling on the floor in drunkenness. The secretary of the Venetian ambassador was revolted by the mad rush for refreshments that knocked over the table and spilled food everywhere. William Prynne's *Histriomastix* (1633) was a Puritan attack upon the stage, singled out for abuse because it was the favorite amusement of an immoral court. The populace exalted the imprisoned Prynne as a

martyr, but defiantly the four Inns of Court united to present a masque at the cost of £21,000. The court of Charles I was an improvement over that of James I, but Rubens, the visiting continental painter, was astounded at the gross expenditures of the Caroline court. Popular animosity mounted because of the Roman Catholic influence through Charles's wife, Queen Henrietta, a French princess and a Roman Catholic. We of today can hardly conceive of the importance of court influence in that era. Most advancement in church and state depended on court favor, and the entire nation felt that its tone and spirit were being set by the royal court and the personality of the monarch.

Disunity, disharmony, incoherence—such was the atmosphere of the Jacobean and Caroline period. All Europe had experienced such a feeling in the wake of the High Renaissance, and England, after Elizabeth I, was to participate in the letdown. Most of Europe became embroiled in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) which bled Germany white (historians estimate that one-third of the population of central Europe was annihilated). The implacable religious wars on the continent between Roman Catholic and Protestant made all Western society feel deeply the tragic sundering of its society. In the words of Donne: "'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone."

A relatively new term taken from the pictorial arts to identify this phase has rapidly gained currency in literature. *Mannerism* (which we have briefly noted earlier in connection with the later Jacobean and Caroline playwrights) is the designation for the sense of anxiety and tension that separates English literature of the early 17th century from the serenity and harmony of the Renaissance spirit proper. Spenser is true Renaissance in his optimistic unification and balance of all life. After Spenser comes the Mannerist period with its imbalance, disproportion, pessimism, and death wish. Mannerist expression tends to emphasize artifice and form, often sporting in the willful and grotesque. The Mannerist spirit feels an irreconcilable struggle between idealism and realism. The early 17th century manifests Mannerist tendencies in literature in two directions: (1) the widely separated literary cliques or groupings, each pursuing its own path; (2) key figures of the age, such as Donne or Webster, who display within themselves the warring, jarring elements of Mannerism.

Readers of 17th-century literature should note the following practices, rather alien to modern literature:

(1) Literary qualities and pretensions had not yet been narrowed to what we consider belles lettres—poetry, drama, and imaginative prose. Today it is inconceivable that a country physician would present to a provincial society of scholars an archaeological paper that would prove to be great literature. Yet that is precisely what Sir Thomas Browne did in *Urn Burial* (1658).

(2) Writing was the concern of amateurs not of professionals. Fuller was one of the earliest Englishmen to embrace writing as a profession, frankly admitting that he hoped in printing his books "to get some honest profit for

himself." The Elizabethan dramatists had no more thought of themselves as litterateurs than do today's gag-writers for Hollywood comedians; Jonson was the first English playwright stoutly to maintain his work as art. Until the Restoration almost all English authors looked upon their writings as subsidiary to their other careers. Literature was a gentleman's pleasure.

(3) Literature was therefore still the province of the few, who wrote primarily for a limited audience. Most of the poetry of Donne and Herbert circulated among their friends during the poets' lifetimes and only saw public dissemination posthumously. The significant men of letters during the age were clustered in a very few groups, most of whom knew each other rather intimately. It was an aristocracy—not a republic—of letters.

LANGUAGE (to 1660). The linguistic exuberance of the Elizabethan age gave way to restraint as typified by two great figures of the period, Jonson and Bacon. Both men deplored the extravagance of rhetoric and vocabulary. In *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) Jonson concludes:

> You must not hunt for wild, outlandish termes,
> To stuffe out a peculiar dialect:
> But let your Matter runne before your Words.

Strangely, perhaps, the Elizabethan "rage for order" had not extended to the English language. The ideas and new words supplied by classical learning had intoxicated the Elizabethans with their new vistas, and little thought had been given to applying grammatical and disciplining form to the vernacular. Classical studies dominated English culture at the outset of the 17th century. Only gradually did systematic studies turn to English. Henry Peacham in *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) regretted, "I have known even excellent scholars so defective this way that when they have been beating their brains twenty or four and twenty years about Greek etymologies . . . could neither write true English nor true orthography." Elizabeth I had a remarkable attainment in foreign languages but in spite of several great speeches did not prove to be a model of good English. James I was learning descended to pedantry. Gondemar, the Spanish ambassador, purposely bungled his Latin so that in schoolmaster fashion James could enjoy correcting it.

BEGINNINGS OF STUDY OF MODERN ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE

The Italians and French of the 16th century apparently inaugurated the serious study of modern languages, and in the opening chapter on the Renaissance we observed English theorists addressing themselves to their own tongue. The grass-roots work began with *The English Schoolmaster* (1596) by Edmund Coote. For elementary students this work studied English according to the pattern of classic Latin. Coote's text proved standard for a century, going through forty-two editions before 1684. The influence of other

17th-century volumes such as *English Grammar* (1633) by Charles Butler and *Orthoepia Anglicana* (1640) by Simeon Daines has resulted in the Latinized terminology, declensions, conjugations, syntax, etc., of English down to the present, although linguists of our age are now striving to break this centuries-old imposition. Jonson's *Grammar* (1640) had little influence, perhaps because he was not as pat and formula-ridden as his fellow grammarians. While Jonson religiously employed the Latin structure for English, his pliability is demonstrated by the title-page motto of his book: "Custome is the most certaine Mistress of Language, as the publicke stampe makes the current money" (adapted from Quintilian).

Not until the end of the 16th century was the need felt for a dictionary explaining English words to the English. These early works, however, were not modern dictionaries, for they listed only a few difficult or unfamiliar words and generally attempted to prescribe usage instead of describing current practice. At the end of *Grammatica Anglicana* (1594), a volume in Latin, appears a section on English words derived from Latin and another section on Chaucerian terms. For the layman, Robert Cawdrey in 1604 published *A Table Alphabeticall* of about three thousand "hard vsual English words," mostly borrowings from the continent but including some archaisms. Cawdrey's work has been termed the first real English dictionary, though it was far from complete. John Bullokar followed with *An English Expositor* (1616).

Amusing to the modern reader is the arrangement of *The English Dictionarie* (1623) by Henry Cockeran; his first book contains "the choicest words," while the second condescendingly lists "vulgar words." A popular successor was Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* (1656). Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew, released *The New World of English Words* in 1658. Phillips carefully marked words he disapproved of, so that "he that studies a natural and unaffected stile, may take notice of them and beware them." *The English Dictionary* (1676) by E. Coles boasted about thirty thousand words, chiefly "hard words" of science and learning, but also canting terms from the underworld.

Spelling reforms recommended by the theorists often opposed current usage and generally have fallen out of usage since. Apparently there was a mass drive among English writers of the 17th century toward uniformity, and it was this ground swell rather than learned proddings that brought English by the Restoration to virtually its modern spelling. Printers of the age may consciously have striven for this uniformity, but probably they were only reflecting the tendency of the age.

The successive folios of Shakespeare's works (First, 1623; Second, 1632; Third, 1664; Fourth, 1685) interestingly display this regularization. In the First Folio *v* is used initially where we would often employ *u*, and in medial positions *u* is often employed where we would write *v*; *j* appears annoyingly where we would prefer *i*, especially as the last of a series of *i*'s. About 1625

the modern distinction between *i* and *u* as vowel symbols and *j* and *v* as consonant symbols was established, and the Second Folio follows this practice. In *New English Grammar* (1655), J. Wharton carefully explained the final *e*, which in Elizabethan usage followed no governing law, and was freely inserted or dropped as a printer wished to fill his line. Wharton showed its use, peculiar to English, as a lengthener of the preceding vowel (*bit, bite*). The Third Folio dutifully produces spelling identical to the modern employment of the final *e*. Earlier usage had called for the apostrophe solely to show elisions such as *'tis* and *rous'd*. The Third Folio irregularly introduces the apostrophe to show the possessive, but the Fourth Folio more consistently applies this practice.

In the quartos of Shakespeare's works, *his* and *it* are frequently employed as the neuter possessive pronoun, but by the Third Folio *its* has triumphed. Other sprucing up of Shakespeare toward today's grammar appears in these altered versions from *Hamlet:*

First Folio	*Second Folio*
Betweene who?	Betweene whom?
more richer	more rich
nine yeare	nine yeares
Whose phrase of sorrow coniure the wandring starres	Whose phrase of sorrow conjures the wandring starres

The vocabulary, the phrasing, the cadences of everyday speech in the 17th century were profoundly influenced by the Authorized Version (King James Version) of the Bible (1611). Under the Puritan regime there were many statutes compelling its public reading and private study. Even without these commands, the Bible was the chief, often the only, reading of the Puritans. Most of Cromwell's Ironsides knew the Bible, frequently by memory, as do very few divines today. The 17th-century emphasis produced at least one masterpiece of literature in the idiom of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress,* and imperishably knit into the language Biblical echoes that later and less Bible-reading ages have not obliterated.

Most literary men of the era had the classical authors whispering to them as they wrote. The long-flowing, sonorous rhythms of Cicero sound through much prose of the period. The two principal prose styles of the 17th century are essentially deviations from this base, on the one hand the curt and pithy brevity of Bacon, and on the other, the "loose," wildly pouring sentences of Burton. In verse the classical influence muted or at least modified the native Elizabethan singing in favor of the pagan joys and sorrows of "the sons of Ben," or in favor of the church litanies of the devotional poets.

As the next chapter deals primarily with the Puritan and Commonwealth writers, this chapter will concentrate on the non-Puritan writers of the period up to the Restoration in 1660.

For the first time in English literature here is an era whose prose can challenge the nondramatic verse in literary range and caliber. Rather astonishingly, fiction, now the dominant prose form, was largely neglected in the age of Bacon and Donne.

BACON, HOBBES, AND OTHER PHILOSOPHERS

Britain had produced some of the significant philosophers of the medieval era in men like Duns Scotus and Roger Bacon, who wrote, of course, in Latin. However, the 17th century saw the beginning of the mainstream of great English philosophers, peers of those on the continent. Although much philosophic writing continued to employ Latin in order to command the whole scholarly community of Western society, the 17th century witnesses the first great philosophical writings in English. Since any educated Englishman of the age could read Latin fluently and was as much influenced by Latin writings as by those in the vernacular, the Latin works are here included with the English. Philosophy in this period still remained a division of literature, not, as it has now become, a highly technical preserve of specialists.

Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans (1561–1626). Francis Bacon was the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord keeper of the Great Seal. Through his mother he was related to the Cecils, a family powerful politically through the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. Bacon studied at Cambridge (1573–75) and at Gray's Inn (1576 on). He was admitted to the bar in 1582 and entered parliament in 1584. In 1601 Bacon vigorously prosecuted the charge of treason against his erstwhile friend and benefactor, Essex, winning the death sentence against the noble lord. He was perhaps the closest adviser of James I in the monarch's ceaseless struggle with parliament and rose to high office, in 1618 becoming lord chancellor. His enemies accused him of accepting bribes in 1621; he was condemned, fined, and stripped of office. Bacon admitted the charges but claimed rather ingenuously that his judicial decisions had not been influenced by the gifts he received. In retirement he continued his writing and scientific research. While gathering snow to test its preservative qualities on chicken flesh, he caught cold and died. Some have therefore termed him "the first martyr to experimental science."

Writing was to Bacon an entrancing diversion from a busy public life in which he was apparently as efficient and unscrupulous as any politician. Pope blistered him as "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind," and Macaulay sourly described him as the man "whom the wise Queen Elizabeth distrusted and the foolish King James honored and advanced." Personally he was cold and selfish, but his writings reveal a superb intellect and exhilarating practicality. He encompassed the magnitude of the Renaissance spirit in a letter to Burghley (c. 1592): "I have taken all knowledge to be my province."

Essays (10 in 1597, 38 in 1612, 58 in 1625) began as jottings in Bacon's

commonplace book. From Montaigne's *Essais* ("Attempts") (1580–88), he borrowed the title and little else. The French essayist was interested in communicating his highly individual opinions, but Bacon is intent upon cold-blooded instruction on how to get ahead in life. More than half of the essays in the final edition are concerned with public life, and the entire atmosphere breathes "business," expediency, the road to practical success in the hard-headed struggle for power. In descending order of interest, the essays treat of: (1) Man's relations to the world and society, (2) Man's relations to himself, (3) Man's relations to God. The first concern is influencing others to one's profit, the second concern is more with self-confidence and self-realization of faculties than with any conscience, and the third concern with the deity is rather perfunctory advice on religious moderation and conformity. Bacon is the scientific analyst scornful of rambling or gossiping like Montaigne.

In Bacon's hand the essay is an impersonal gem of worldly wisdom. The style is a *tour de force*, "pemmican" prose modeled after the short incisive Latin of Tacitus. Every sentence is loaded with material, and virtually every sentence could be expanded into a sizable essay of its own. The aphoristic skill and wise experience of Bacon unite to form some of the most memorable and penetrating phrases in English: "He ~~who~~ hath wives and children hath given hostages to fortune"; "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark"; " 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate and would not stay for an answer."

De Sapientia Veterum (in Latin, 1609), translated by Sir Arthur Gorges as *The Wisdom of the Ancients* (1619) in Renaissance fashion interprets classic myths symbolically. Bacon's speculative mind elicits many purely imaginative meanings for ancient mythology but also demonstrates occasional flashes of remarkable psychological insight. Shelley had this work in mind when he declared, "Lord Bacon was a poet."

The History of the Reign of King Henry VII (1622) is the first great history in English after More's *History of Richard III* (1543). The stern, able, unheroic monarch greatly resembled Bacon, and it is the mind and character of Henry VII that Bacon scrutinizes with keen psychological penetration. The account is written in pithy, lucid style that is nonetheless subtle and intellectual.

Instauratio Magna ("The Great Renewing") was Bacon's title for his ambitious organizing and promulgation of all human knowledge. Like the *Faerie Queene* it is a vast fragment, and the demands of an active public career rendered it far more incomplete and disjointed than Spenser's work. Bacon contemplated the entire project in Latin:

(1) *Partitiones Scientiarum* ("Divisions of Knowledge") intended as an introduction. *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) in English was actually the start of the enterprise.

In Book 1 Bacon considers the excellence of knowledge, what has been done in history to disperse it, the popular prejudices and ignorance thwarting

knowledge, and the need to expand knowledge. Bacon arraigns medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism for studying words instead of matter, the university disciplines for ignoring nature and cherishing an abstract and useless rationalism, and the pseudosciences of alchemy and astrology for absurd theory and flight from reality.

In Book 2 Bacon divides all knowledge into three kingdoms with each a separate function of human understanding: history (memory), poetry (imagination), philosophy (reason). Bacon deplores the preoccupation of learned men with purely metaphysical problems. Study "morality" and "policy," actual human experience in the practical world, he insists. Factual knowledge by accurate observation and experimentation is his goal. Bacon leaves the world of the spirit to theology and asserts his piety, but his primary task is to free the scientific mind from religious interference and dogma. *De Dignatate et Augmentis Scientiarum* ("Concerning the Dignity and Increase of Knowledge") (1623), translated by G. Wats in 1640, is largely a Latinizing of *The Advancement of Learning* with some amplification.

(2) *Interpretatio Naturae* ("Interpretation of Nature") is represented by the *Novum Organum* ("New Instrument") (1620), the most complete and influential statement of his philosophy. The supreme purpose of this work is to substitute for the *organon* of medieval and Renaissance deductive Aristotelianism the inductive method of research and experiment. The deductive method starts with accepted premises and from these deduces specific instances (e.g., the syllogism: All men are mortal; the King of England is a man; therefore the King of England is mortal). Such a method can produce many particularized statements but cannot achieve new truths. The inductive method proposed so eloquently by Bacon accumulates masses of specific instances and then arrives at a general statement of new truth. Only by such an inductive method has modern science unlocked so many mysteries of the physical world.

Bacon was not the inventor of the inductive method, and he did not himself discover any of the fundamental truths upon which modern science is established. His role was that of the great champion of the scientific method, powerfully reinforced by his personal prestige, eloquence and thoroughness of mind, and impressive consistency and mighty intellect. Bacon cannot be blamed for his interpretation of nature as simple and obvious; he could have no concept of the bizarre structure of the universe now presented by experimental physics. But he seriously disregarded the necessity of scientific imagination in hypothesis (Einstein admitted that the theory of relativity came to him as a hypothesis which he and hosts of succeeding scientists have sought to establish as valid). Bacon so much despised mere traditional authority and syllogistic reasoning that he placed too much trust in mere observation of nature. Nonetheless, he brushed aside older prejudices and in his magnificent plea for studying facts without preconceptions made himself "The Father of Modern Science."

The most famous passage in the *Novum Organum* describes four obstacles in man's attitudes to the apprehension of truth:

(a) Idols of the Tribe, erroneous modes of thought and feeling instinctive in mankind;

(b) Idols of the Cave, individual errors due to background and temperament;

(c) Idols of the Marketplace, errors in society's use of language to perpetuate traditional misconceptions;

(d) Idols of the Theater, errors based upon the false doctrines of philosophers who create their own little worlds, divorced from reality.

By understanding these errors, Bacon insists, man can labor to overcome them.

(3) *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis* ("Natural and Experimental History") sought to collect data organized according to the empiricism of the previous section. In Latin this division is represented by a work bearing the above title, published in 1622 and translated by R. G. Gent in 1653. Also in Latin was *Historia Vitae et Mortis* (1623), translated in 1638 as *The Historie of Life and Death.* In English appeared *Sylva Sylvarum* ("Forest of Forests") (1627). All these works are collected essentially from Bacon's reading rather than from his primary observation.

(4) *Scala Intellectus* ("The Ladder of the Intellect") was to work out examples according to his inductive plan, but only a brief preface is extant.

(5) *Prodromi* ("Forerunners") was to present generalizations worked out without using his inductive method. Again only a brief preface remains.

(6) *Philosophia Secunda* ("The New Philosophy") was intended as the complete science of nature using the methods of (2) to work over the facts of (3). Nothing survives of this section, if in fact Bacon ever started upon it.

The New Atlantis (1627) is an unfinished Utopian romance whose narrator finds on the island of Bensalem in the Pacific an ideal state based upon Christianity, philosophy, and, above all, on scientific research. In the research college (Solomon's House) inductive scientists explore realms of science that Bacon could conceive of even if English had no terms for them: acoustics, aeronautics, meteorology, hydraulics. Bacon anticipated many of the discoveries of later researchers (submarine, airplane, telephone) and leaves still other fields for generations beyond ours to explore. It is a world of imaginative excitement, unmarred by the mechanized scientific horrors now envisioned by the predictors of the future. Out of this book came much of the inspiration for the Royal Society (incorporated 1662).

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Thomas Hobbes was the son of a Wiltshire parson. After graduating from Oxford in 1608, he spent most of his life as private tutor in the households of English noblemen. For a period c. 1625 he was the secretary of Francis Bacon. During an extended continental tour (1634–37) he became friendly with many European intellectuals such as Galileo and Descartes. Fear of persecution for his heterodox viewpoints

drove him from England in 1640 and from France back to England in 1651. Hobbes was the greatest English philosopher between Bacon and Locke.

The Elements of Law Natural and Politic circulated in ms. as early as 1640 but was not printed in full until 1889. Portions were published in 1650, establishing Hobbes as the founder of modern empirical psychology. Relegating any Creator to a distant First Cause, Hobbes postulates the reality of the world as the ceaseless motion of matter. Every concept man possesses ultimately springs from the sense reception of this motion. Man's chief drive is toward self-preservation, and what aids him in this drive (or what he believes will help him in this drive) he terms good. There is no absolute good, for all things are good only as man desires them. Man is the complete tool of determinism, and free will is an illusion.

Leviathan (1651), Hobbes' most famous work, is the first great system of secular political philosophy in English. Building upon his previous concepts, Hobbes asserts that in the original state of nature man in selfish egotism was in constant warfare. From self-interest, men voluntarily surrendered natural rights by conferring all power and strength upon one man, the monarch, whose will governs the mass of men and who by force, actual or threatened, maintains the peace. Hobbes thus justifies sovereignty not by divine right but by mundane utility and security. The body politic, like the great leviathan of the sea (the world's largest biological organism) forms one whole, a social organism. Like the whale or any creature, the state must have only one governor, and his will is supreme and unchallengeable. Hobbes' concept of sovereignty sprang from a troubled era, when a peace-loving man could earnestly justify almost any royal stupidity or tyranny to insure tranquillity in the state.

Edward Herbert, Baron Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648). Edward Herbert was the eldest of the three most notable Herbert brothers, including George (devotional poet) and Thomas (sea captain and occasional poet). After Oxford studies Edward traveled extensively on the continent, fought as a volunteer in the Low Countries, and returned to share in the distinguished literary circles of Donne, Jonson, and Carew. From 1619 to 1624 he was English ambassador to France. He tried to steer a middle path during the civil wars, receiving a pension from the parliamentarians. His flamboyant autobiography, discovered and published by Horace Walpole in 1764, makes Herbert a second Cellini. On the basis of this work Sir Leslie Stephen called him a Bobadil-Kant, for probably no other serious philosopher in history has portrayed himself as such a swaggering adventurer. Incredibly, this braggadocio was the first significant English metaphysician since the medieval Schoolmen.

De Veritate ("Concerning Truth") (Paris, 1624) in Latin sought to be the *Novum Organum* of metaphysics. This work, especially in its supplemented edition of 1645, became the forerunner of 18th-century deism, a religion of reason founded upon natural theology. That is, Herbert sought the principles

of truth in the "natural instinct," "the common notions," of all mankind. Not the dogmas of any church or philosophic system, he claimed, but the universal consent of humanity constitutes truth. Herbert's five fundamental articles are:

(1) Belief in a supreme and providential deity;
(2) The necessity of serving and worshipping God;
(3) Virtue and piety as the essentials of worship;
(4) Obligatory repentance of man's sins;
(5) Proper rewards and punishments to be administered in an afterlife.

De Religione Gentilium ("Concerning the Religion of the Non-Jews") (1663) is one of the first attempts at comparative religion. Herbert felt that the common denominator of all faiths substantiated the five principles of *De Veritate* and would suffice for a universal religion in which all rational men of the earth would join.

The Cambridge Platonists. This was a group of liberal theologian-philosophers clustered about the University, roughly from 1640 to 1680. They countered the materialistic determinism of Hobbes with a spirituality best summed up in their favorite quotation, from Proverbs: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." They were unified by confident belief in universal truth and goodness, the beneficent symmetry of a divine cosmos, God as perfect wisdom and virtue, the living reality of the indwelling spirit in man, and the "deiform" freedom and nature of man. Probably the founder of the Platonist School was Benjamin Whichcote (1609–83). The most brilliant and profound thinker of the group was John Smith (1618–52). The most picturesque and imaginative was Henry More (1614–87). The most influential was Ralph Cudworth (1617–88). Peter Sperry (1613–73) from this group became Cromwell's chaplain; he was a Puritan much of Milton's type and in 1675 penned a notable plea for religious toleration.

History of Philosophy (1655–62). The first *History of Philosophy* in English was written by Thomas Stanley (1625–78). Although mainly a compilation from Diogenes Laertius, the work aroused interest in Democritus, Epicurus, and other ancient philosophers virtually unknown to many Englishmen.

PROSE STYLISTS AND THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

Religious controversies loomed larger in 17th-century England than they had even in the 16th century and larger than they have ever since. The overwhelming mass of printed matter in the age was centered about religious discussions, most of it more incendiary than illuminating. The sermons of Donne have engaged modern taste, but there were two other eloquent divines of the period of notable literary quality and influence. These are Thomas Fuller and Jeremy Taylor. Their works will be treated in the following dis-

cussion along with two works from lesser clergymen, William Chillingworth and John Hales.

There were a number of essayists and kindred prose writers in this period who put forward their ideas and observations in extraordinarily beautiful prose in a various assortment of informal essays, memoirs, and *obiter dicta.* The prose stylists to be treated in the following discussion are: Robert Burton, William Drummond, John Selden, Sir Thomas Browne, and Izaak Walton.

Another form of prose writing, as popular to the early 17th century as sonnet writing had been to the late 16th century, was "character" writing. This was a pithy description in prose of a social type, not to be confused with the biographical study of an actual individual. The ancestry of this genre was that of the comedy of humours, and perhaps the first English "character" writing consisted of Jonson's brief descriptions of each role in *Every Man out of His Humour* (1600). The ancient Greek "characters" of Theophrastus had just recently been discovered and published with a Latin translation in 1592 by Casaubon, a noted French scholar. The first collection of "characters" appears to have been *The Characters of Vertues and Vices* (1608), a strongly moralistic and seriously religious set by Joseph Hall. The "character" writers discussed here are Sir Thomas Overbury and John Earle.

The last great translation in the Renaissance tradition was the version of Rabelais' *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* by Sir Thomas Urquhart (er'kärt) (1611–60), a Scottish royalist who, tradition says, died of laughter when he heard the news of the Restoration. The translation is virtually a new creation, often outdoing the original in wild gyrations of language. For most English readers this robust, full-blooded spree is the accepted concept of Rabelais. The first two books were printed by Urquhart in 1653; the third book, by Urquhart, Motteux, and others, appeared posthumously in 1693; and books four and five, translated in kindred spirit by the French Huguenot refugee, Pierre Antoine Motteux, were printed in 1708.

The pioneer translation of *The Lusiad,* an epic by Camões (Camoëns in English) and the most famous work of Portuguese literature, came in 1655 from Sir Richard Fanshawe (1608–66), English ambassador to Portugal and Spain. While competent, the translation has lost the swagger of the Elizabethans and is at least partially responsible for subsequent failure by the English-speaking people to recognize the greatness of Camões.

THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

Thomas Fuller (1608–1661). One of the remarkable clergymen of the period was Thomas Fuller who was born in the same community as Dryden, Alwinkle in Northamptonshire, where his father was rector. After a brilliant career at Cambridge, outshining that of his classmate Milton, he became the most popular preacher of the age at the Savoy in London. In 1643 he joined the king at Oxford as royal chaplain. As a moderate, he was attacked by both royalists and parliamentarians. After the Restoration, however, he was

appointed chaplain to Charles II. As a writer, Fuller is one of the most appealing wits and social critics. His smiling treatment of the most serious subjects and his homey wisdom and phrasing pained many contemporary dignitaries of the church but immensely delighted the populace of his age and many later readers, Charles Lamb to name one. Few English authors have been such spirited storytellers.

The Holy State and the Profane State (1642) is a five-book *olla podrida* mixing up the four popular forms of 17th-century prose: the essay (influenced by Bacon), the Theophrastian "character," the short biography, and the "courtesy" book (etiquette). Broadly, Fuller's subjects are:

Book 1. Family relationships in a Christian society;

Book 2. Occupations and trades, encouraged in bourgeois Protestant fashion;

Book 3. Essays on practical living, often with the very titles of Baconian essays;

Book 4. The governing class, supported adroitly by a royalist sympathizer;

Book 5. "Profane" characters, persons like Caesar Borgia, are held up as examples of what is to be avoided.

Fuller is the ingratiating supporter of a static, comfortable world which he thinks existed in the good old days and which he regretfully sees shaken to bits around him. He believes in the divine logic of monarchy and caste, the responsibility of the individual to God and to the established social and political system. He cajoles the reader with quaint anecdotes and laughable puns to share his fundamental earnestness. In his wholly pragmatic and this-worldly approach he typifies much of English Protestantism.

The History of the Worthies of England (1662), usually called *Fuller's Worthies,* is a great mine of antiquarian lore, combining in one work history, gazetteer, guidebook, biography, memorabilia. It leans heavily upon Camden and Stow. Arranged alphabetically by counties, it is a rare assembly of fascinating miscellany. This work is the source for the dubious tale of Sir Walter Ralegh and his cloak spread at the queen's feet, and also for the wit-combats between Shakespeare and Jonson. Fuller is concerned with people, not ideas. His knowledge of literature and philosophy is meager, and his Latinity is much lighter than most of his contemporary clerics.

Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667). Like Fuller, Jeremy Taylor was a classmate of Milton at Cambridge. A barber's son, he became rector at Uppingham in Rutlandshire. During the civil wars he sided with the royalists and was several times imprisoned by the parliamentarians. He is supposed to have received the last personal mementos from Charles I before the king's execution. For a while he taught school and acted as chaplain for the Earl of Carbery. By the aid of the noted diarist, John Evelyn, he obtained a clerical post at Lisburn, Ireland. After the Restoration he was named Bishop of Down and Connor, and, later, administrator of Dromore. A moderate and tolerant Anglican, he was severely troubled during his Irish years by the intransigence

of both Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. Taylor was probably the greatest prose writer of the 17th century. Coleridge praised him for his "great and lofty mind." Emerson declared, "His words are music in my ears." It is the grand poetic style of Taylor that chiefly engages modern readers.

The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living (1650) and *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651), both dedicated to the Earl of Carbery, were among the best-read works in English for over a century. *Holy Living* is a perfervid plea for faith and a holy life. Probably no other devotional treatise in English so lyrically exhorts the familiar Christian summons to prayer, morality, modesty, humility, acceptance of one's lot in life, charity, and external and internal piety. The inexhaustible flow of melodic and inspirational language has enthralled many who find its substance conventional.

Taylor's masterpiece is *Holy Dying*, a piece of baroque splendor, meditating upon mortality. Here the reader is not disturbed by strange, new thoughts, as in the works of Donne, but rather finds the richest and most gorgeous expression of what virtually every man feels. Almost any orthodox Christian reading these two works by Taylor feels impelled to say: "This is exactly how I would say it if I possessed Taylor's consummate mastery of language." Taylor is a Spenser in prose: tapestried imagery sonorously contrasts in *Holy Dying* the themes of God and man, Christianity and paganism, good and evil, light and dark, heaven and hell, life and death.

Liberty of Prophesying (1646) in majestic cadences advocates religious moderation and toleration. Taylor is willing to call any man a Christian who subscribes to the Apostles' Creed. Thereafter each man is free to follow the dictates of his soul and reason. Taylor makes himself the great voice of "latitudinarianism," the Broad Church spirit that today is the heart of liberal Protestantism and the Anglo-American attitude toward individual belief; Taylor avoids the extremes of High Church insistence upon obligatory ritual and submission to the formal Church and also the doctrinal obstinacy of the Puritans.

The Religion of Protestants, a Safe Way to Salvation (1637) and **Golden Remains** (1659). A whole school of such tolerant clerics was produced at Great Tew, a manor house near Oxford. Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, at first patronized the "sons of Ben" but after his father's death made his home the focal point for liberal theologians. Among the notable writings of this group calling for religious toleration were *The Religion of Protestants* by William Chillingworth (1602–44) and *Golden Remains* by John Hales ("the Ever-Memorable") (1584–1656).

PROSE STYLISTS

Robert Burton (1577–1640). One of the most significant of the early 17th-century prose stylists was Robert Burton, a native of Leicestershire. From his entry into Brasenose College in 1593 until the end of his life, he buried himself in Oxford with his books. He held several clerical "livings,"

but farmed them out to vicars, seldom bestirring himself from the Bodleian library, which in the age was surpassed only by the Vatican.

The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) by "Democritus Junior" snowballed with each succeeding edition (1624, 1628, 1632, 1638, 1651), finally to reach almost half a million words. The work falls into four broad divisions:

A lengthy introduction which resembles Hamlet's melancholy speech, "What a piece of work is a man!"

Book I analyzes the symptoms and causes of melancholia, ranging from the new cosmography of the universe to chills and ague.

Book II suggests practical cures, extending in range from broad streets, old-age pensions, and laws against idleness to old-fashioned herbal remedies for constipation.

Book III treats of love melancholia and religious melancholia. The torments of love are discussed through most of the world's great amours. Marriage is a good remedy, but Burton advances with equal aplomb the opposing arguments. " 'Tis a hazard both waies I confess, to live single or to marry." If all other remedies fail, "the last and best cure of Love Melancholy, is, to let them have their desire." Religious melancholia was a very real problem when Puritan pulpits ominously described the howls of the damned and the crackling flames of eternal torment. Burton advises his readers to avoid such dwellings upon horror, and instead, to contemplate the infinite lovingkindness of God, and concentrate upon wholesome tasks and recreations.

Burton is neither a critical historian nor a scientist, and he blithely espouses each of Bacon's four Idols. He is a most sensitive and sensible amateur, however, who counters melancholia with a love of life, a broad sanity, and a delicious sense of humor. To compare Lyly's *Euphues* with Burton's *Anatomy* is to see the change from the High Renaissance to the Mannerist Period. Lyly's concern (using many of the subjects of Burton) is for the "brave courtiers" of Spenser's time with their grand successes in life; the style, though fantastic, is consistent. Burton reacts to the "malcontent" tradition of Mannerism, and in the Mannerist fashion skips from slangy colloquialism to orotund pedantry, from solemn lecturing to sly wisecracking.

Perhaps the world has never known a more burrowing bookworm than Burton; certainly it has never known a more interesting one than this assiduous delver into the quaint and fascinating lore of all times. If all ancient and Elizabethan literature were lost, we could derive a rather clear notion of their contents from the voluminous references and quotations in the *Anatomy*. Dr. Samuel Johnson lauded Burton's work as "the only book that took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise." The book has been a mine for numerous writers, for Ford immediately in his drama *The Lover's Melancholy* (1629), for Sterne in the 18th century, and for Keats in the 19th century as the source for his *Lamia*.

William Drummond (Drummond of Hawthornden) (1585–1649). William Drummond was the most noted Scottish poet of his era. Except for

study at Edinburgh, Bourges, and Paris, his entire life revolved about Hawthornden, the place of his birth and death, the community of which he was laird. From 1610 until his death, Drummond lived in retirement, concentrating upon literature and scientific experimentation.

Notes of Ben Jonson's Conversations records the visit of the great Renaissance figure with Drummond in 1619, but the work was not printed until 1833. Drummond possessed a retiring character which was both awed and abashed by the robust personality of Ben. No one could ever claim that Jonson was humble or abstemious, but Jonson could not be so commanding a figure in English letters if he were only the burly, arrogant, violently opinionated Rabelaisian pictured by Drummond. For over a century now, the vivid portrait by Drummond has been largely the English image of Jonson.

John Selden (1584–1654). A native of Salvington, Sussex, John Selden studied at Oxford and at Clifford's Inn of Court, London. He established a highly lucrative legal practice but became even more famous as the most scholarly writer of the age on the history of English law. Selden was also probably the most learned English orientalist of the age. He was the instigator of the Great Protestation in 1621 and helped to formulate the Petition of Right in 1628. During the civil wars his moderate spirit deplored excesses of both sides. Perhaps Selden should be revered as the first great critical scholar of modern England. Ironically, however, the reputation of this indefatigable writer of books rests today upon a book he never wrote or even saw:

Table Talk (1689) is a collection of Selden's sayings recorded and edited by his secretary, Richard Milward. "The chief of learned men reputed in this land" (states Milton) wrote in a dry, heavy style quite unlike the pithy, colloquial English that he spoke. *Table Talk* enshrines Selden's superb conversation, replete with wit, shrewd analysis, dashing anecdote, sound common sense. The subjects range through all human activities, and all are commented upon by a thoughtful and balanced mind. In religion and politics, as in all things, Selden is a moderate liberal asking for the fullest development of the individual within a framework of enlightened monarchy and priesthood. Dr. Samuel Johnson highly praised Selden, and Coleridge revered his "weighty bullion sense."

Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682). Born in London, Sir Thomas Browne studied classics at Oxford and then medicine abroad at Montpellier, Padua, and Leyden, receiving his M.D. from the latter c. 1633. His first book, *Religio Medici*, was written in Yorkshire, before he undertook active medical practice. From 1637 until his death he was a provincial physician in Norwich. Although he wished that men might procreate like trees, he married in 1641 and had a dozen children. Browne was knighted by Charles II in 1671. Along with Burton, Browne shared a fascination for the quaint and unusual that makes him one of the most engrossing literary companions of all time. There is virtually no echo in his writings of the stirring times in which he lived.

Browne, along with Donne, is one of the first English prose writers deliberately exploiting and projecting his own personality. The tendency springs from the self-consciousness of Mannerism, with its cultivation of quirks and eccentricities.

Religio Medici ("A Physician's Religion") was written in 1635 and surreptitiously printed by a friend in 1642; the authorized edition was released in 1643. Its grave reflective mood and wide discursive range suggest an author of seventy rather than a thirty-year-old. The Mannerist period is well exemplified as Browne toys with all the skeptical arguments shaking contemporary faith (this work is still listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* of the Roman Catholic Church). Although a scientist by profession, Browne completely embraces Christianity. He admits being "naturally inclined to that, which misguided Zeal terms Superstition." While he supports reason for the problems of the physical world, reason in Browne's world of the spirit exists only to start game for faith to shoot down. Browne joyfully accepts all the miracles claimed by faith, and like the later Newman yearns for more miracles to test his faith. "I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest point: for to credit ordinary and visible objects, is not faith, but perswasion." Philosophically he is a Platonist. The most notable feature of the work is its baroque prose: rhythmic, lyrical, fervent.

Pseudodoxia Epidemica ("Widespread Errors") (1646) follows Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* in examining the mistaken concepts in the popular mind.

Book I. Introduction, treating of the psychological causes of error.
Book II. Fallacies concerning vegetable bodies and minerals.
Book III. Fallacies concerning animals, their anatomy and behavior.
Book IV. Fallacies concerning human beings, their powers and conduct.
Book V. Misrepresentations in pictures and descriptions.
Book VI. Fallacies concerning geography.
Book VII. Fallacies of history and biography.

Browne intended the work as a restatement of the Baconian Idols, a protest against credulous tradition, a scientific challenge to "the Goliath and Giant of Authority." Browne was a tireless experimenter and observer, hastening to study a whale thrown up upon the Norfolk coast and feeding iron to an ostrich (with fatal results) to test the belief that it could digest the mineral. In addition to the Baconian emphasis, Browne advocated critical reason in examining common conceptions of nature. In exploding popular superstitions Browne surpassed Bacon, who had accepted what Browne refuted: that coral is soft under water and hardens in the air, that a salamander can live in fire, that the chameleon lives on air. To modern readers much of the delight in the volume consists of the strange credulity still remaining in Browne; he believed in alchemy, astrology, and witchcraft. Unlike a scientific treatise of our day, Browne's work is highly personal, often speaking humorously, always charmingly. The style is the least ornate of Browne's writings but still so

largely "literary" as to appall any editor of a scientific journal today. Browne shows increasing love for periodic sentences and sonorous Latinized vocabulary.

Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall (1658) was occasioned by the exhuming of between forty and fifty Roman funeral urns at Walsingham near Norwich. Browne seizes the opportunity to explore virtually all the known burial practices from ancient times to the present. He then soars to contemplate the entire theme of death, the vanity of the world and man's pitiful seeking of immortal memory through monuments, and the imperishable grandeur of Christian immortality. The concluding chapter is a prose poem upon death, deemed by many readers the most magnificent treatment of the theme in English, excluding the Bible. The style is the exalted glory of Baroque. Long-sustained rhythms, rhetorical devices of every variety, and mellifluous words and coinages from Greek and Latin enrich his prose with all the dithyrambic quality of poetry.

The Garden of Cyrus (1658), published in the same volume as *Urn Burial,* is an elaborate playing upon a conceit in prose to outmatch the Metaphysical poets. The subject is the quincunx (the geometric arrangement of the five dots on dominoes or dice). Browne proceeds to investigate the presence and symbolism of five in history, art, anatomy, magic, and nearly everything else. As Coleridge declared, Browne found "quincunxes in heaven above, quincunxes in earth below, quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in everything." Though the subject matter seems a trifle abstruse to modern readers, the style is again among the most entrancing in English—a stately tread that widens out in great reverberations, like passage through a stupendous, high-vaulted structure.

Izaak Walton (1593–1683). Born at Stafford, Izaak Walton gained his living as a London ironmonger (hardware dealer). He was a devoted parishioner of John Donne. At the outbreak of the civil wars he retired. The one drama in his life was the bearing of a jewel of Charles II to London after the battle of Worcester (1651). His quiet life ended at Winchester. Serenity and simplicity, in the very best senses, characterize a man who witnessed tumultuous times in the life of the nation and tragedy in his personal life (he buried eight of his nine children and both his wives). His writing is as simple as the man, ignoring as it does the current fashions in literary style.

Walton was induced into writing when, after the death of Donne, Sir Henry Wotton planned a biography of the poet and asked Walton to assemble materials. Wotton died in 1639, and Walton wrote his *Life of Donne* to accompany the poet's sermons published in 1640. The account was revised and separately printed in 1658. It is factually as accurate as Walton could make it, but one looks in vain for the tortured, cynical, fire-laden Donne. For this as for all his biographies—Sir Henry Wotton (pub. 1651), Richard Hooker (pub. 1666), George Herbert (pub. 1670), and Robert Sanderson (pub. 1678)—Walton guilelessly transforms his subjects into his own image, that of a

staunch, heart-of-oak traditionalist who views men and life with the eyes of an Anglican archbishop. All of his subjects except Hooker he knew personally.

The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation (first pub. 1653) is a dialogue between Piscator ("Fisherman"), Auceps ("Fowler"), and Venator ("Hunter"), and later between only Piscator and Venator (Viator, "Traveller," in the first edition). The fifth edition (1676) has a supplement upon fly-fishing by Charles Cotton with Piscator chatting with Venator. Through the mid-20th century the work has had at least 280 editions. Of course, this is the classic work upon the art of angling, replete with wise lore about fish known to an inveterate angler who frequented every haunt of fresh-water fish in southern England.

But the love of angling is only the outward sign of a gentle inward grace, the soul of a thoroughly good man who loves peace and quiet meditation. If any one man created the idyll of the English countryside, it was Walton. The modern reader may shake his head at Walton's complete absence of "social consciousness" and the perplexing conundrums of men and life; but the headshaking is ultimately stilled by the naive genius who evokes with all the charm of an old woodcut an England of sweet streams, smiling fields, cheery taverns, and unshakable faith in God and His wonderful world. Walton may be summed up in the last words of Piscator: "Study to be quiet."

CHARACTER WRITERS

Sir Thomas Overbury (1581–1613). A native of Warwickshire, Sir Thomas Overbury, the most famous of the English "character" writers, studied at Oxford and in London at the Middle Temple of law. He was the friend and adviser of Robert Carr, later Earl of Somerset. When Overbury opposed the marriage of Carr to Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, her influence largely caused his imprisonment in the Tower of London, where he died of poison. The popular clamor over the scandal apparently gained a wide audience for:

A Wife (pub. 1614), a poem, to which were appended twenty-one "character" studies. The authorship of these short, witty prose characterizations is disputable, for Overbury was admittedly assisted by "other learned Gentlemen his Friends." Subsequent editions were swelled by the contributions of other authors: Webster, now assigned thirty-two of the sketches added to the sixth edition (1615); Dekker, probably the author of six pieces added to the ninth edition (1616); and Donne, who certainly supplied the last two pieces (1622) to amass a total of eighty-two. The Overburian "characters" set the pattern for this genre throughout the century. Each vignette consists of 100–200 words variously picturing: A Courtier, An Amorist, A Braggadocio Welshman, A Pedant, A Puritan, A Milkmaid, etc. The style is highly epigrammatical and terse, enriched with metaphors and conceits. Although there is frequently a straining for brilliant effects and witticisms, the "char-

acters" often demonstrate acute insight into human nature. The whole style and purpose of the "character" is revealed in the definition of the term from "What a Character Is": "It is a picture (real or personal) quaintly drawn, in various colors, all of them heightened by one shadowing. It is a quick and soft touch of many strings, all shutting up in one musical close; it is wit's descant on any plain song."

John Earle (c. 1601–1665). A native of York, John Earle matured rapidly at Oxford. He rose to the chancellorship of Salisbury Cathedral by the eve of the civil wars. On the continent he was the chaplain of Charles II in exile. By royal request Earle translated into Latin (pub. 1649), the *Eikon Basilike,* reputedly the meditations of Charles I before his execution. In 1662 he was consecrated Bishop of Worcester and was translated to the see of Salisbury the next year. He accompanied the king and court to Oxford during the plague year of 1665 and died there of the disease.

Microcosmographie ("The World in Little") (pub. 1628) is the greatest of the "Character" writings and one of the most remarkably mature writings ever to come from so young a man. Earle unites the ethical penetration and dramatic imagination of Theophrastus with the epigrammatical sprightliness and realism of the Overburians. It is the spirit of a liberal and cultured cleric, devoutly wed to the doctrines of social order and intelligent piety. Earle is a psychologist and philosopher within the tiny compass of his "characters": A Young Raw Preacher, An Antiquary, An Upstart Knight, A Downright Scholar, A Pretender to Learning. The work is indeed a human comedy, treated with benign humor and tolerance. In many cases Earle chooses the same "characters" as did the Overburians and demonstrates superior discrimination and analysis, for Earle is primarily concerned with the heredity and environment that would shape a man's character.

THE CAVALIER POETS AND THE SPENSERIANS

Not until Milton did English poetry produce a figure to rival Spenser. The poetry of the early 17th century is best understood as partly a continuation of the Spenserian tradition and largely a revolt against it.

No single poet had the stature to attempt the vast synthesis achieved by Spenser, but a host of minor poets seized upon one or another aspect of Spenser's verse. The "Spenserians" whom we shall discuss are: Giles Fletcher the Younger, Phineas Fletcher, William Browne, and George Withers. The Cavalier poets will be taken up immediately after the "Spenserians."

THE SPENSERIANS

Giles Fletcher the Younger (c. 1588–1623). One of the more influential of the "Spenserians" was Giles Fletcher the Younger, so called to distinguish him from his father, Giles Fletcher the Elder, an English diplomat who wrote some love poetry and the first full-length history of Russia in English. The

younger Giles (first cousin of the dramatist John Fletcher) was educated at Westminster School and Cambridge, and spent most of his life as the rector of Alderton in Suffolk. With his brother, Giles the younger inherited the moral and allegorical emphasis of Spenser. When Milton went to Cambridge, the poetry of the Fletchers was all the vogue. By belaboring the morality of Spenser and overrefining his melodies, the Fletchers practically forced a reaction against Spenserism.

Christ's Victory and Triumph, in Heaven, in Earth, over and after Death (1610) employs a modified Spenserian stanza riming *a b a b b c c c;* the first seven lines are iambic pentameter, the last line an Alexandrine. Chief influences are the *Mutabilitie Cantos* of Spenser and Sylvester's translation of du Bartas' *La Semaine.*

Book I. Christ's Victory in Heaven—debate between Mercy and Justice over the redemption of man.

Book II. Christ's Victory on Earth—the Temptation in the wilderness.

Book III. Christ's Victory over Death—the Crucifixion.

Book IV. His Triumph after Death—the Resurrection. This part includes graceful praise of James I and *The Purple Island,* a poem by the author's brother.

Where Fletcher is not straining for effects reminiscent of the metaphysicals, he often achieves Spenserian somnolence; the work shows considerable virtuosity, especially in sensuous imagery and archaic diction. The influence upon Milton is evident from the style of the "Nativity Ode" to the subject of *Paradise Regained.*

Phineas Fletcher (1582–c. 1650). The elder brother of Giles the younger, Phineas Fletcher was educated at Eton and Cambridge. For most of his life he was rector of Hilgay, Norfolk. While facile, his verse does not attain the Spenserian richness of his brother's poetry. Archaisms are less prominent in his work than in Giles's.

The Purple Island, or the Isle of Man (pub. 1633) was apparently complete at the time of his brother's major work (1610). "The Purple Island" is the human body, and the poem is a tedious allegory, in pseudomedieval and pseudoscientific fashion, of the human body as a geographical island fighting off besieging enemies. The bones are the island's bedrock, the veins the streams, and so on. An occasional flash of rural scenery relieves an otherwise pedantic and laborious work. Du Bartas was influential, but more especially was Spenser's allegory of the body in Book II of *The Faerie Queene.*

William Browne (c. 1591–c. 1643). William Browne of Tavistock, Devonshire, exemplified the pastoral tradition of Spenser. *The Shepherd's Pipe* (pub. 1614) offers eclogues in imitation of Spenser's; seven poems in the collection are Browne's.

Britannia's Pastorals (Book I, 1613; Book II, 1616; Book III in ms. until 1852) employs the fluent, running couplets Keats was to resurrect in *Endymion.* The idyllic love tale of Marina and Celandine, reminiscent of

Sidney's *Arcadia* as well as Spenser's pastoral verse, becomes hopelessly entangled in nostalgia and prettiness. The Romantics, Keats, for instance, enjoyed his still-Elizabethan never-never world of pastoral simplicity and beauty.

George Wither or **Withers** (1588–1667). A native of Brentworth in Hampshire, George Withers was educated at Oxford. In 1639 he was a royalist captain of horse against the Scottish Covenanters, but by 1642 he was a Puritan, rising to the rank of major in the parliamentarian army. Cromwell made him master of the statute office and major general for Surrey. The poet was imprisoned four or five times, at first for writings that piqued the Stuarts and subsequently for his high posts under the Commonwealth.

Withers was one of the most voluminous writers in English, composing at least eighty-six volumes. Ironically he is remembered generally for only one brief Cavalier lyric, "Shall I wasting in Dispaire," from *Fidelia* (1615). His *Abuses Stript and Whipt* (1613) give an extensive satiric picture of the age and caused the writer's imprisonment. While in jail he wrote *The Shepherd's Hunting* (pub. 1615), charming pastorals picturing himself as Philarete (lover of virtue; Roget, in first edition) and William Browne of Tavistock as Willie. *Britain's Remembrancer* (pub. 1628) is a vivid eyewitness report on the London plague year of 1625. Pope dismissed him as "wretched Withers," but Lamb applauded his "homely heartiness of manner."

THE CAVALIER POETS

The Cavalier poets are more familiar than the followers of Spenser, and perhaps are more indicative of their time than his traditionalist followers. Both John Donne (whom we shall discuss later in this chapter) and Ben Jonson influenced the dashing, debonair Caroline courtiers, but Jonson's was the greater influence. Many of the Cavaliers dubbed themselves of the "tribe of Ben," for while they toyed with the conceits of Donne, as a group they displayed these notably similar characteristics:

(1) A cultivated but colloquial idiom. They sought the ease of a noble lord, a tone that echoes through aristocratic English verse right down through much of Byron. Sometimes this manner tended to the slipshod and the obscene.

(2) Artificiality. As in the comedy of manners, love is a gentleman's game. No deep or terrifying emotions stir these hearts to lose their poise. Urbane refinement and elegant symmetry of form substitute for feeling.

(3) Indebtedness to the lighter Latin poets. The ease and grace, the perfect clarity and fluency of poets like Catullus, Horace, and Ovid are the ideals of the Cavaliers.

(4) Strong sensuous and worldly quality. These are pagan sophisticates, foreshadowing the amorality of the Restoration.

The above tendencies have generally characterized the aristocracy of Western society for centuries, but they were accentuated by 17th-century

conditions. The Cavaliers exaggerated their credo in defiance of the somber, pious Puritans. Blending into the conformity of opposition, they tended to deviate far from Jonson's fixed morality and masculinity, and were inclined to become almost indistinguishable one from the other. The Cavalier poets to be treated here are: Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, and Sidney Godolphin.

Robert Herrick (1591–1674). The greatest of the Cavalier poets and of the followers of Ben Jonson was Robert Herrick. He was raised by his uncle, one of London's richest goldsmiths, and was educated at Cambridge. After a mutually enjoyable friendship with Jonson from 1617 to 1629, Herrick accepted the benefice of Dean Prior, Devonshire, from which his royalist sympathies caused his ejection in 1647. He resided in London until his restoration to Dean Prior by Charles II in 1662. He continued to be a country parson until his death. Before 1648 Herrick had contributed a few poems to books by other Caroline authors.

Hesperides, or the Works both Human and Divine of Robert Herrick, Esq. (pub. 1648) takes its name from the maidens of Greek mythology who guarded the tree of golden apples intended by Gaea (Earth) as a marriage gift to Hera. Although 17th-century anthologies frequently reprinted Herrick poems, he was virtually forgotten until John Nichols rediscovered him for readers of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1796 and 1797. Approximately 1130 poems display a phenomenal versatility with almost every stanzaic and verse form in English. Through virtually all these poems Herrick expounds a hedonistic philosophy, *carpe diem,* compounded of pagan raptures and wistful sorrow amid a joyous English landscape. Jonson is his immediate master, but ultimately his supports are Anacreon, Catullus, Horace, Martial, Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus.

The moral earnestness and masculine vigor of Jonson are absent, and the result is a charming daintiness and a consummately beautiful artifice. In many respects his collection is a defiance of the bitter political and religious wars raging about him. Here, says Herrick, is a world of eternal sensuous loveliness, of hock-carts and possets, of blossoms and bowers, where the spirit may go forever a-Maying. "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" ("Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may"), "Corinna's Going A Maying" ("Get up, get up for shame, the Blooming Morne"), and scores more will disappoint the searchers for profundity or social consciousness in poetry, but will always enthrall the lovers of exquisite goldsmithing in verse.

Noble Numbers, appended to *Hesperides*–it is the "divine works" of the title–consists of about 270 religious poems by Herrick and bears the date 1647. Here likewise is no metaphysical ecstasy, no mystic exaltation, but simple and sincere piety, again expressed in flawless verse. The effectiveness of "His Litany to the Holy Spirit," "A Thanksgiving to God for His House," and many others rests in their everyday satisfaction with the wholesome, uncomplicated gifts of a kindly, uncomplicated deity.

Thomas Carew (kār'i) (c. 1595–c. 1639). Son of Sir Matthew Carew, Thomas Carew studied at Oxford. In the train of English ambassadors he resided in Italy and France. In 1628 he was appointed gentleman of the privy chamber, and in 1630 taster-in-ordinary to Charles I. About the court he had the reputation for brilliant wit and genteel debauchery.

Poems (1640) consists of about sixty-five percent love poetry. From Jonson, Carew borrowed classic polish, and from Donne the excitement of conceits. There is actually a deeper vein of thought in Carew than is customary in the gay and frivolous courtiers. His chief subject is polite seduction, uniting pagan sensualism with the verbal ingenuity of Donne. Elegant voluptuousness and urbane worldliness characterize his work. "Ask me no more where Jove bestows" is his best-known short poem, and "A Rapture," owing much of its frank passion to Aretino, is best known among his longer works. "An Elegie upon the Death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr John Donne" is perhaps the most judicious 17th-century appraisal of Donne.

Sir John Suckling (1609–1642). Sir John Suckling was the son of the comptroller of the household of Charles I. After Cambridge he served on the continent in the Swedish forces of Gustavus Adolphus. In the 1630s he wrote three court masques. In the First Bishops' War he raised a troop to fight for the king but in 1641 he was charged with high treason in a plot to liberate the Earl of Stafford. Fleeing to the continent, he reputedly committed suicide in Paris. Suckling has been labeled the typical Cavalier—rich, handsome, dashing, a devil with the ladies, an inveterate gambler. He is said to have invented cribbage.

Fragmenta Aurea ("Golden Fragments") (1646) included all Suckling's significant works. Unlike Carew, Suckling has no real capacity for thought. But as a light lyricist, gaily pursuing women and never letting himself get caught, careless and impudent, he is superb. His only debt to Donne is his cynicism about love. Suckling's best is colloquial ease in neat, short stanzas: "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" or "When, dearest, I but think of thee."

Richard Lovelace (1618–1658). Richard Lovelace was educated at Charterhouse and at Oxford. Parliament imprisoned him in 1642 for petitioning in the king's favor. He took part in the siege of Dunkerque (1646) and was again imprisoned on his return in 1648. Released after the king's execution, he died in poverty, for he had spent his entire fortune (large estates in his native Kent) in the royalist cause. About Lovelace clings some of the knightly aura of Sir Philip Sidney. His spectacular personality, dissolute living, and striking good looks caused his name to appear as that of the seducer in Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe.*

Lucasta (1649) published by the poet and *Lucasta: Posthume Poems* (1659) assembled by his brother comprise his body of verse. The poetic name *Lucasta* is derived from *Lux Casta* ("Pure Light") and probably refers to Lucy Sacheverell, the betrothed of Lovelace who married another after a false report of the poet's death. In two brief lyrics ("To Lucasta, Going to

the Warres" and "To Althea, From Prison") Lovelace immortalized the Cavalier trinity—love, beauty, loyal honor. Even these two poems had fallen into oblivion until rescued in the late 18th century by Bishop Percy.

Sidney Godolphin (1610–1643). Sidney Godolphin is our century's addition to the Cavalier poets. His poems were first published by George Saintsbury in 1906 and have not yet been fully appraised. His admirers would claim that his combination of Donne's subtlety with Jonson's clarity should place him high among his fellow versifiers.

DONNE AND THE METAPHYSICAL AND DEVOTIONAL POETS

The term "metaphysical" applied to Donne and his subsequent school of poets was originally a derisive label by Drummond of Hawthornden. It was loosely known to Dryden and Pope, becoming fixed by Dr. Samuel Johnson's employment in his *Life of Cowley*. "The metaphysical poets," pontificated Dr. Johnson, "were men of learning, and to show learning was their whole endeavour." From the Restoration until the end of the 19th century these poets were usually dismissed as crabbed, eccentric, chaotic. However, from the 1920s on, there has developed a vast admiration for this group, with the term "metaphysical" now a highly complimentary label.

The first manifestation of the metaphysical school may lie in the poetry of George Chapman in *Shadow of Night* (1594) or in the verses of the lesser known scholar, lawyer, and wit, John Hoskyns (1566–1638) whose "Absence, heare thou my Protestation" (first printed 1602) has often been ascribed to Donne. Both Chapman and Hoskyns produced verse Donne-like in its attempted synthesis of passion and intellect, expressed strenuously and obscurely. Donne is perhaps properly the wellspring of the metaphysicals, for he and his followers exceed the intellectual and philosophical subtlety displayed by quite a few Elizabethans, and produce a unique blending of the "New Science" with intense non-Petrarchan passion, forceful colloquial language with fantastic conceits, meditative refinement with violent realism. Spenserism is defied at virtually all points. Objections to Donne and the metaphysicals by 18th- and 19th-century critics centered chiefly about the outward form of their writings. The 20th century, sharing much of the tradition-attacking and inward turmoil of Donne, feels much more akin to the Mannerism spirit that produced the metaphysical characteristics:

(1) Vivid, abrupt speech patterns instead of Elizabethan smoothness. The effect is shockingly direct ("For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me loue," "The Canonization," Donne). In place of charming grace and mellifluous harmony, here is realistic expressiveness from the dramatists.

(2) Within even conventional verse and stanzaic forms, a sharp and unexpected pause, stress, and tempo, transmitting the feel of inward pulls and violent jerks. Earlier critics blamed the metaphysicals for "defective ear,"

but modern critics interpret this style as a necessary delineation of Mannerism.

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe. ("Satyre III," Donne)

(3) Conceits, exploiting far-reaching allusions to physiology, astronomy, alchemy, chemistry, geography, biology, and so on. In general the imagery of the metaphysicals is a conscious revolution against the Petrarchan and Spenserian imagery. The impulse is parallel to that of modern poets who scorn the old-fashioned poetic references to sword and carriage and insert machine gun and automobile into their poems. The metaphysical imagery is usually associated with the "New Science" and new intellectuality, but in the revolt against traditional, stylized images the metaphysicals also note "unpoetic" snoring, beds, weaning children, moles on the body, etc.

(4) Startling imagery that associates incongruous objects. Instead of Elizabethan sense of harmonious progression, there is an impetuous wrenching.

> And all your graces no more use shall have
> Than a Sun dyall in a grave. ("The Will," Donne)

Dr. Johnson chiefly objected to the metaphysicals because "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together." While modern critics would admit frequent bizarreness in the metaphysicals, they applaud the sense of imaginative pressure and intensity.

(5) Amatory and religious melancholy, to follow Burton's analysis. The optimism and exuberance of the Elizabethans are followed by a Mannerist preoccupation with the pains and anguish of love and faith. Donne is perhaps more touched with morbidity than any other major English poet.

(6) A pervasive atmosphere of a disrupted and confused world instead of the ordered sane universe of the Elizabethans. "All cohaerence gone . . . proportion is dead" ("First Anniversarie," Donne).

(7) "Unified sensibility," as T. S. Eliot praises the metaphysicals. The best work of these poets fuses sensation, emotion, and thought as succeeding verse would not. In the late 17th century, Eliot claims, "a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered."

John Donne (dun) (c. 1572–1631). John Donne was born to a prominent Roman Catholic family of London. His father was warden of the Ironmongers Company (1574). On his mother's side he was related to Sir Thomas More and John Heywood. He was educated at Oxford, Cambridge, and Lincoln's Inn. He was converted to Anglicanism c. 1593. With Ralegh and Essex he participated in the Cádiz expedition (1596) and with Essex he joined in the Azores campaign (1597). In the latter year he was appointed secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, lord keeper of the Great Seal, but lost his post in 1601 because of his clandestine marriage to Egerton's niece. His wife's

father, Sir George More, actually had Donne briefly imprisoned in 1602. From 1601 until 1615 Donne was dependent upon irregular patronage. He received the Oxford M.A. in 1610. In 1615 he was ordained in the Anglican church and rose rapidly, holding the deanship of St. Paul's from 1621 until his death in London. He was acclaimed the foremost preacher of the period, spellbinding vast audiences. During his lifetime only two of Donne's poems and six of his sermons were printed. It is a remarkable tribute to Jonson's critical breadth that although worlds away from Donne as a poet, he admitted that Donne was the first poet in the world "in some things." While Donne's reputation was high until the Restoration, it was meager thereafter, in spite of praise from Coleridge and understandable enthusiasm from Browning. The 20th century has reaffirmed his stature.

Poems (1633, 1635 with extensive additions and alterations) comprises all the verse generally ascribed to Donne. Dating is usually dubious, but the poems seem to fall into three rough categories which are also chronological:

(1) From his return to London from Cambridge (1592) until his marriage (1601). The poems of this period are his most famous, chiefly love poetry characterized by psychological penetration, powerful realism, and especially a wide range of mood from ecstatic passion to flippant cynicism. Here and in the next two sections his most representative and most difficult pieces will be summarized. In "Songs and Sonets" there are no sonnets but rather a collection of his best-known short poems:

"The Good Morrow" is addressed by a lover to his sweetheart after a night of love. He lets others explore the expanding globe and affirms a whole world of love for the two of them. Their united souls will form, in philosophical terms, a "simple" substance that cannot perish.

"Go and Catch a Falling Star" gaily, not bitterly, insists on the impossibility of finding a faithful woman.

"The Indifferent" is spoken by the promiscuous bachelor who wants no bonds with one woman but freedom to play the field. Anyone so foolish as to be constant in love will find the object of his affections wholly fickle.

"The Canonization" asserts that the values of the world are wholly different from those of lovers. Truly valid and complete relationship between man and woman will fuse their souls into a perfect whole. The resultant microcosm of a living world should properly be regarded as sacred.

"Twicknam Garden" as a lovely floral spectacle is inappropriate for the lover whose beloved spurns him. If he were transformed into a fountain, lovers could compare the fountain water with women's tears and find most women false.

"The Sunne Rising" apostrophizes the sun after a night of love. Love is indifferent to all the influences exerted upon the earth by the sun, for the lovers are as complete in themselves as is the whole earth.

"Confined Love" urges promiscuity in women, for no woman should be enmeshed in love solely to one man.

"The Prohibition" pleads with a woman both to love and hate him, for either her unabated love or unabated hate would equally destroy him.

"Communitie" wittily violates logic to prove that women, like fruit, are neither good nor bad. Therefore they may be used as a commodity, without the raising of a moral issue.

"The Flea" brilliantly urges a woman to yield, employing the conceit of a flea that has bitten both. The flea has mingled both their bloods already, so why not they? The flea is their wedding bed, and crushing it is their destruction. When the lady crushes the flea and observes no injury to them, the seducer turns the tables and triumphantly proclaims that his request is then obviously harmless.

"Aire and Angels" states that a man has a Platonic concept of the woman he would love long before he applies his affections to a specific woman. Since no woman actually coincides with this concept, the man must adjust his love. This adjustment is possible since woman's love is less than man's and can be the "spheare" of man's love.

"A Nocturnall upon Saint Lucies Day" (the shortest day of the year) discusses spiritual death. A man who has not experienced love is "nothing." A man who, like the poet, has known love and been bereft of it by the physical death of the beloved, is also "nothing." The latter state is the worse because he has experienced the soul fusing of lovers into a meaningful microcosm and now realizes that he can never regain this lost world. He looks forward only to death when he can join her in bliss.

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" affirms constancy of lovers in separation. The compass conceit is the most famous in Donne. Lovers share a single, indivisible soul, and absence will not impair this unity. This poem and "Sweetest love, I do not goe" were apparently written in 1611 to his wife who objected to his continental tour (1611–12) with Sir Robert Drury.

"Loves Diet" sees "discretion" as the thinning diet upon fattening love. The diet permits the poet to evade ultimate committal and continue the promiscuous game of love.

"The Extasie" follows the Platonic ladder of sex to ultimate rebirth and new personality achieved by the fusion of the souls of the two lovers. Like a religious mystical experience, this fusion solves all earthly problems and confers limitless bliss. Yet, he concludes, this soul fructification cannot be entirely of the spirit. It must arise also from the fleshly union.

"The Legacie" puns upon the equation—absence = death—and the cliché that a lover has "lost his heart" to his beloved. In macabre fashion the lover is searching a corpse for his lost heart. In contrast to the blithe Elizabethan love lyric ("My true love hath my heart and I have his," Sidney), Donne contrasts masculine romanticism with feminine practical promiscuity.

"Lovers Infiniteness" is word play upon the possible meanings of "all your love." One of his gentlest poems, it works toward a felicitous understanding rather than an intense urge to mutual affection.

"Loves Deitie" says that in less complicated eras love was a simple business of "correspondencie." To the modern intellectual, however, it has become thraldom to a wretched passion. Wake up from this romantic love nonsense. A logical, ironic analysis of what love really is will keep you from getting hurt.

"The Relique" suggests that ages hence his exhumed corpse will be found wearing a bracelet of woman's hair. Since such an ornament would possibly cause the veneration of his remains as a "relic," the two in life should provide some miracles to justify this future reverence. But they have already done so in a full Platonic love affair.

(2) From his marriage (1601) to his ordination (1615).

The dashing bachelor has become a husband with no fixed income, dependent upon patrons. The miscellaneous poetry of this period is the least interesting as a whole, often consisting of occasional verse (i.e., poems suggested by or commissioned for a specific event). Most notable are:

"Satyre III" offers a rational and moderate protest against religious extremism. Liberal Protestantism is the keynote of a protest against any absolute, permanently frozen faith in favor of an empirical, relativistic approach to faith.

"The Autumnal" (Elegy IX) is a magnificent tribute to Lady Herbert, mother of the remarkable Herbert brothers. Platonism and a graceful encomium upon a great lady achieve tenderness and melody usually not associated with Donne. The noblewoman was probably in her early forties, then deemed the autumn of life.

"The Storme" and "The Calme" were products of Donne's Azores adventures. Couched as verse letters in heroic couplets to his fellow law-student Christopher Brooke, they are among the best descriptive verse in English. Ben Jonson and many other contemporaries praised these poems generously.

The three Epithalamions, written for distinguished marriages of the era, are not far below Spenser whom they imitate. These poems clearly demonstrate that Donne's metaphysical style arose from his clear intent and not from any inability to reproduce the Spenserian melody and smoothness.

"The Progresse of the Soule" (1601) is an irreverent fragment, apparently intended as a satire against Elizabeth I (no Gloriana to Donne). Presumably the "soul" beginning life in Eve's apple eventually turns up in the queen. En route the soul passes through a wide variety of creatures and risqué situations. It is perhaps Donne's most wildly imaginative piece. The poet is fascinated by esoteric learning and skeptical philosophy.

The death in 1610 of fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Drury, daughter of Donne's patron, Sir Robert Drury, elicited two subsequent anniversary poems which mark the transition of the poet to the consecrated religious life. "The Anatomie of the World" (1611) protests the emptiness and rottenness of the world after the death of such youth and innocence. "And new Philosophy calls all in doubt" begins the celebrated passage epitomizing Manneristic *Weltschmerz*

with its sense of confusion and decay, corruption and chaos. The world seemed as stale, flat, and unprofitable as it had to Hamlet. But the Christian should realize that the pollution was only of the flesh, and the death of the girl was release of her soul from infection to immortal purity. In "The Progresse of the Soule" (1612, perhaps better termed "Second Anniversary" to distinguish it from the 1601 poem) Donne follows the departed soul into the perfection of eternity. Earthly knowledge and earthly existence are trivial, mean things. Death is to return home to glory.

(3) From his ordination (1615) to his death.

These poems hold second position to his early secular verse. The best manifest in religious fervor the same brilliant wit and emotional intensity.

Holy Sonnets (12 in 1633, 4 more in 1635, 3 in ms. until 1894) may have been written as early as 1609. The sonnet had earlier been employed for matter other than Petrarchan love: Drayton wrote excellent sonnets on his native Warwickshire stream, the Ankor (32, 53), and his theatrical success (47), while Chapman had inaugurated the metaphysical style for the sonnet in *A Coronet for His Mistress Philosophy* (1595). Nonetheless, Donne's are the first great sonnets in English to abandon the love poetry tradition established by Sidney. Donne uses the English form with concluding couplet for the theme of religious rather than love melancholy.

Part of the remarkable effectiveness of these sonnets lies in the use of contemporary imagery for profane love to make concrete and shockingly personal the impact of divine love. The pervasive demand is for God to become dynamic in Donne's life to the exclusion of all else. Sin and death are preternaturally vivid and soul-shaking to the poet. Like all great religious poetry, Donne's sonnets record the powerful emotional attachment to the divine, but they further detail, in metaphysical manner, the excruciating trials of an intellectual in search of faith. It is not only the validity of Christian dogma that Donne accepts but also religion's psychotherapeutic virtue. Perhaps most famed are: 10, an exultant proclamation of the ultimate defeat of death; 14, the necessity of divine intervention to save the sinner, and the paradoxical freedom in submission to God; 18, prayer to see the true Church of Christ, invisible and indivisible.

"A Hymne to God the Father" is firmly established to this day in the *English Hymnal*, for, unlike the intensely personal sonnets, this poem expresses a community feeling of reverence and need for saving grace. However, imbedded within the poem is typical punning of the poet upon his own name.

"Hymne to God My God, in My Sicknesse," written, according to Walton, eight days before the poet's death, uses Donne-type imagery again, this time likening the soul to a "flatt Map" which is made globular, complete and eternal, by death into God's eternal life.

"The Litanie" is a rhapsodic tribute (c. 1609) to the eternal grandeur and power of the Christian church. Although Donne offers it as the *via media* of Anglicanism, the poem has the passionate Manneristic violence of in-

extricable entanglement with God lyricized by much contemporary Roman Catholic poetry.

DONNE'S PROSE. Donne was also noted for his prose style, his sermons having been famous during his lifetime and having remained as moving to today's readers.

Devotions upon Emergent Occasions (1624) consists of twenty-three groups of essays, each group composed of a meditation, an expostulation, and a prayer. Each group corresponds to a stage in the illness of Donne, 1623–24. At the heart of the work is Donne's faith that "God will make a feaver speak to me, and tell me his mind, that there is no health but in him." To the cleric his illness is a symbol of human imperfection, the opportunity for God to communicate with and rescue the soul. Hemingway secured his book title, *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* from essay 17.

During the last sixteen years of his life Donne devoted most of his literary output to sermons. Only six of these were printed during his lifetime. His son brought out three collections of Donne's sermons: *LXXX Sermons* (1640), *Fifty Sermons* (1649), and *XXVI Sermons* (1660, actually containing only 24). A total of 160 Donne sermons were published in the 17th century. To Donne a sermon, like his *Devotions,* was virtually poetry; to his listeners it carried the exaltation only possible today in a sports event or a triumphant military victory.

As is his verse, Donne's sermons are sensuous, vivid, dramatic in style, yet subtle, witty, and intellectual in content. Instead of today's sober and matter-of-fact sermon, a Donne sermon is an experience in profound mental and emotional tension, teetering upon chasms of horror, struggling with agonies of the soul, culminating in the safe haven of faith. Religion was not an essentially pragmatic social instrument to Donne but an ideal, a means of understanding the whole cosmos. Donne could appeal to a simple soul like Walton because his basic religion was not philosophically original or heterodox; Donne could communicate better than most other religious writers and preachers the poetry of the individual's struggle for salvation.

George Herbert (1593–1633). Born at Montgomery Castle, Wales, George Herbert was the second of the three most notable Herbert brothers, Edward being the elder and Thomas the junior. George was educated at Westminster and Cambridge. In 1619 he was designated public orator of the university with the duty of writing all official letters to the government. In 1629 he married Jane Danvers and the next year received from Charles I the rectory at Bemerton near Salisbury, serving there until his death. His prose work, *A Priest to the Temple* (1652), is a practical, wise, and often witty manual for the country parson.

The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations, posthumously published in 1633, contains 160 poems, virtually all the verse of Herbert. By 1670 over twenty thousand copies had been sold, making Herbert in literature as well as in life one of the great religious forces of the century. In 1681

the Puritan cleric, Richard Baxter, stated, "Herbert speaks to God like one that really believeth a God, and whose business in the world is most with God." A sizable portion of Herbert's poetry is strictly Anglican, demonstrating the strength and serenity of the 17th-century Church of England and fully appreciated only by "an affectionate and dutiful child of the church," according to Coleridge. The poems of wider appeal give fresh and moving utterance to the aspirations and frustrations of his spiritual life.

Modern criticism tends sharply to differentiate Herbert from Donne, and Herbert most certainly tends to simpler, more familiar patterns of mind and to more universal religious responses. Nonetheless, there is with Herbert a similar feel of shock and repose. Herbert's imagery is usually more commonplace—nature, music, church funishings, etc. His themes are usually the Christian Incarnation, Passion, and Redemption. There are no conflicts of faiths in Herbert, for he never challenges the rightness of his Anglicanism. The struggle is between the world's lure and the call of God for total obedience.

Few English poets have been so versatile in every conceivable stanzaic form, including some of his own invention. One of his specialties is "pattern poems," where the arrangement of the lines forms a picture of its subject; thus "The Altar" pictures a church altar in lines of verse, and "Easter Wings" shapes its two stanzas into a pair of wings.

"The Collar" takes the ancient symbol of slavery and turns it into a symbol of submission to God. After tortured pleas for freedom, the poet joyfully yields to God.

"The Pulley" suggests a symbol of God's means of providing in addition to the sensuous joys of earth a spiritual craving that will draw men back to God.

"The Elixir" claims that the pious phrase "for Thy sake" is like the alchemist's stone, for it will transform commonplace tasks and routines into divine service.

"Dullness" is a love lyric to Christ, in its mixture of wit and piety typical of much 17th-century religious verse.

"The Church-Floore" uses the cement of Charity to bind together the stones of Humility and Patience.

"Vertue," probably his most popular poem, contrasts the ephemeral physical world with the eternal spiritual existence.

Richard Crashaw (c. 1613–1649). Richard Crashaw was the son of William Crashaw, a militantly Puritan cleric. Richard was educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. At the latter he was strongly influenced by the high-church spirit of Bishop Laud, and he frequently visited the devotional colony established at Little Gidding in 1625 by Nicholas Ferrar. In 1644 he was ejected from his fellowship at Cambridge for refusing to subscribe to the Puritan Covenant. About 1645, when the "middle way" of Anglicanism seemed on the brink of destruction, Crashaw became a Roman Catholic on the continent. In 1649 he was appointed sub-canon of the Basilica Church

of Our Lady of Loretto, but he died, probably of a fever (there was gossip about poisoning), soon after arrival at Loretto.

Crashaw is the chief English poet representing the Catholic Counter Reformation. His spirit is not Manneristic, like the other metaphysicals, but really Baroque (a term discussed in the next chapter). Crashaw does not manifest the fierce inward turmoil of Donne and Donne's successors but is overpowered by the grandiose magnifying and unifying of the sensual and the spiritual. Although Byron in *Don Juan* sneeringly deemed Crashaw wild and incomprehensible, this poet influenced Milton, Pope, Coleridge, Shelley.

Carmen Deo Nostro ("Song to our God") (Paris 1652) contains most of Crashaw's poetry, incorporating the earlier *Steps to the Temple* (1646, 1648). With the lushness often manifested in the Counter Reformation, Crashaw extravagantly explores every device presenting the spirit in sensuous terms. Daring paradox, startling confrontation of tears and ecstasy, characterize his dazzlingly intense religious verse.

"The Weeper" plays with the idea of Mary Magdalene's tears which are variously dew, wine, medicine, pearls, spring showers, until they fall upon the feet of Christ. *Marinism* is the label often applied to Crashaw, since this and other poems follow the Italian poet Giambattista Marino and the "secentismo" school of luxuriant conceits.

"The Flaming Heart" in heroic couplets rhapsodically extols the Spanish nun, St. Teresa, canonized 1622. In mystic visions St. Teresa was accosted by an angel who touched and kindled her heart to ecstasy with a flame-tipped spear. To the poet the saint is "My Rosy Love," in the tradition of erotic imagery for the mystic experience.

"Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa" is concentrated and intense but less bravura in its imagery. Its fervent octosyllabics contemplate the voluntary search of the saint for martyrdom. This poem is strongly suggestive of Francis Thompson, the English Roman Catholic poet of the late 19th century.

"In the Holy Nativity of Our Lord God, a Hymn Sung as by the Shepherds" in delicate stanzas blends the pastoral conventions with the piety of childhood.

Francis Quarles (kwôrlz) (1592–1644). Born at Rumford, Essex, Francis Quarles was educated at Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn. He was a protégé of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I. Although a fervent royalist, Quarles in verse is not Cavalier but sententiously moral and pietistic, perhaps because of his secretaryship (1620–29) to Archbishop Ussher, famed for his assigning of creation to 4004 B.C. Quarles was appointed city chronologer of London in 1639. While his writing is extensive, he is remembered chiefly for one book:

Emblemes (1635) has been termed the most popular book of verse in the 17th century. Because of it, Horace Walpole quipped, "Milton was forced to wait until the World had done admiring Quarles." Each of the five sec-

tions of the work consists of fifteen symbolic pictures or "emblems." For each illustration there is a motto and a poetic exposition. The emblem books began in 1531 with the Italian Alciati, who drew largely upon ancient Greek models, notably the Greek Anthology. The first English emblem writer was Geoffrey Whitney in 1586. Quarles was the greatest poet in this genre, a sort of "poor man's" George Herbert. The metaphysical struggle between the world and the spirit is couched wittily but clearly. Comparing death to a protracted sleep, Quarles demands, "And why not Wormes as well as Fleas?"

Henry Vaughan (vôn), **"The Silurist"** (1622–1695). Henry Vaughan was born at Newton-by-Usk, Brecknockshire, Wales. His epithet was derived from the Silures, ancient inhabitants of South Wales. Educated at Oxford with his twin brother, he became a physician c. 1645. About 1648 he experienced a profound religious conversion, perhaps occasioned by his illness and the distraught era, but ascribed by Vaughan to the life and verse of George Herbert. The religious poetry of Vaughan is obviously inspired by Herbert, but where his inspirer suggests the medieval Morality and the Biblical parable, Vaughan strikes out with neoplatonic mysticism to mysterious and inexpressible realms. In many respects he is the consummate poetical voice of the Cambridge Platonists.

Silex Scintillans ("Sparks from the Flint") (1650) contains Vaughan's essential contribution to English poetry. He moves away from Herbert's community faith toward the individual's inner sense of God's presence; hence Vaughan particularly pleased the Romantics. Like the Romantics, Vaughan looks upon nature, physical objects, and childhood as states closer to spiritual realities than mature, intellectualized manhood. Vaughan sees the whole material universe as a veil separating man from God and time from eternity. His best poems rend the veil for awe-inspiring vistas, but too frequently his verse continues after the flash of penetration has dimmed.

"The Retreate" pictures the divinity of childhood, a period of human innocence and spiritual rapture. The poem anticipates Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" but instead of the Romantic's dithyramb Vaughan offers metaphysical wit, concision, and concreteness.

"Peace" with quiet power in alternately riming trimeter sees the dwelling of Christ as the heavenly home awaiting the exiled soul that longs for return.

"The World" begins with perhaps the greatest sublimity of any poem in English. It descends from the poet's contemplation of mystic beatitude to earthbound man and then tries to return full circle to the divine perfection.

"Departed Friends" observes the heavenly bliss of departed saints and welcomes the same opening to the poet of the doors of light through death.

"Man" shows a typical non-Herbert effect. Though reunion with God is implied, the poem regrets that man knows not the unconscious "staidness" of lower beings but is rendered eternally restless in the spiritual quest.

Edward Benlowes, "Benevolus" (c. 1603–1676). Son of wealthy Roman Catholic parents, Edward Benlowes became a Protestant c. 1630. He aided

Fuller, Quarles, and Phineas Fletcher financially (hence his nickname), but apparently lost most of his fortune in the royalist cause. *Theophila* (1652) is a lengthy poem on the soul's ascent to God by the mystic paths—"Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive." The work displays Donne-like tendencies with some admixture of Crashaw Baroque. Throughout pulsates the vivid, even grotesque, struggle to convey the inexpressible glory of mysticism.

Thomas Traherne (tra-hėrn′) (c. 1637–1674). Thomas Traherne was born at Hereford and educated at Oxford. In 1657 he became rector of Credwell in Herefordshire. During his lifetime he published only two minor prose works. His verse remained in ms. until its discovery in 1886. Traherne was a completely unknown poet until:

Poetical Works (pub. 1906) revealed a devout Anglican not properly classifiable as a metaphysical, but certainly a deeply devotional poet. His poems are momentarily troubled by sin and the world, but the overwhelming sense is of sweet refreshment, a childlike eagerness and joy of God and of his wondrous handicraft. Traherne foreshadows the spirit that in the next few generations would turn to sentimental deism. His best-known poem is "Wonder," almost primitivistic in its unclouded appreciation of all God's creation about him.

Centuries of Meditation (pub. 1908) in prose, often more highly esteemed than his verse, is a similar paean to "felicity," to him a spiritual revelation which he urgently seeks to communicate. The style is a happy mixture of simplicity and rhapsody, wholly commonplace Christian optimism in smooth but striking phraseology. When Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *Ulysses* meditates upon the mystery of birth, his poet's mind fingers Traherne's passage beginning, "The corn was orient and immortal wheat."

CHAPTER 15

The Age of Milton

(1642–1660)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS. Soon after the execution of Charles I in 1649, parliament abolished the monarchy along with the House of Lords and proclaimed England "a Commonwealth or Free State." Parliament was to rule the nation through a forty-one-man council of state, an executive body elected annually. The obstinacy of Charles I had accidentally created a republic. In no sense could the new state be termed democratic, for it was the product of a rump parliament, reduced by political purges to less than a hundred members. Real power lay with the victorious army, forced to incessant battle by the hostility of foreign powers, and by the rebellious royalists throughout the British Isles, aghast at the king's execution.

The royal standard rose in Ireland under the Marquis of Ormonde, and Cromwell conducted a savage campaign there from 1649 through 1652 until Ireland was pacified. The stern repression by Cromwell has never ceased to rankle in Irish hearts, and much of the 20th-century tension between present-day Protestant Ulster and Roman Catholic Eire is a heritage from those bitter times.

Henry of Navarre had deemed Paris "worth a Mass." Charles II, in exile after his father's execution, deemed the crowns of Britain worth a jettisoning of the bishops; in 1650 he swore to the Scottish Presbyterian Covenant, abandoning the cause for which his father died, and was crowned King of Scotland at Scone. Cromwell decoyed the Scottish forces into a trap, overwhelming them at Worcester (1651). Fleeing for his life, Charles II encountered scores of romantic adventures until he was safely back on the continent.

War with the sister republic of The Netherlands broke out soon after. The Navigation Act of 1651 attempted to bolster the English merchant fleet at the expense of the Dutch, then the greatest merchant seamen of the world. The Anglo-Dutch War raged from 1652 until 1654. English naval successes impressed many European nations and stayed continental arms that might have been lifted against the regicide Commonwealth.

Cromwell tried to mediate between the army and parliament, but confusion resulted. The vexed general on April 20, 1653, cleared parliament with Roundhead musketeers, dissolved the council of state, and began his five and a half years of personal rule. Before the year's end he was proclaimed "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland." Cromwell was offered the crown but refused it. Even at this distance of time, political and religious preferences vehemently color any appraisal of the stern and mighty Lord Protector. His tragedy was his inability to produce a constitutional basis for his government, but even his severest critics must admit that he was the most effective "monarch" England had known since Elizabeth I and perhaps the most remarkable dictator the world has ever known:

(1) He lifted English prestige abroad far above the depths of the Stuarts to unprecedented heights, in the face of general hostility.

(2) He never abandoned his principles of "liberty of conscience." Roman Catholics and Anglicans he excluded because of their political ties, but Jews and all others he protected against vociferous Puritan bigots. "To be a Seeker," declared the Lord Protector, "is to be of the best sect after a Finder, and such a one shall every faithful Seeker be in the end." The economic, political, and religious freedoms cherished by the Anglo-American peoples owe a great deal to Oliver Cromwell.

(3) He valiantly sought to give peace and order to troubled times. Cromwell attempted repeated constitutional experiments that might well have produced a lasting English republic, but his exhausting post hastened his death at the age of fifty-nine.

One of Cromwell's experiments was the Assembly of Saints, a parliament of devout reforming Puritans also known as Barebone's parliament from the name of its most loquacious member. Seeking to apply the law of Moses to the new Commonwealth, the Assembly of Saints proposed impossible schemes. "I am more troubled now," dryly observed the Lord Protector, "with the fool than with the knave." Cromwell's new council of state was spearheaded by John Milton, officially charged as Latin secretary with the preparation of numerous diplomatic documents to be sent to continental powers, and voluntarily the greatest voice of the Independents who "looked for the long-expected birth of freedom and happiness."

Cromwell died in 1658 and was briefly succeeded by his incompetent son, Richard, who fell before a military *junta* within eight months. From the military emerged General Monk who marched his Coldstream Guards from Scotland to London and opened the way for the return of Charles II. The exiled monarch in his Declaration of Breda promised "liberty to tender consciences" and a general pardon except as parliament would decide. On May 29, 1660, Charles II was tumultuously welcomed to his capital. The corpse of Oliver Cromwell was unceremoniously yanked from its resting place and publicly gibbeted. Other prominent figures of the Commonwealth were punished, but the Latin secretary, John Milton, now totally blind, was left to

relative poverty and obscurity. Charles brought back with him the reconstituted hierarchy of class and privilege which sought to efface the dour aspect and zealous austerity of the Commonwealth Puritans. The gay monarch was to keynote the extravagant Restoration.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS. Formally expelled from England in 1290, Jews were readmitted by Cromwell's order in 1655. Charles II was petitioned after his Restoration to re-expel the Jews, but he refused. Financial considerations as well as a tolerant spirit had motivated Cromwell. Since the Puritans were essentially middle-class traders, the Puritan regime encouraged business (even to war with the Dutch) as previous aristocratic, landholding reigns had not. National economic prosperity increased as wages rose more rapidly than prices. The conquest of Jamaica in 1655 was the only significant addition to the overseas empire during the Commonwealth, while the fostered trade with the older colonies such as Maryland and Virginia considerably muted royalist sympathies in the New World.

The rigorous morality of the Puritans caused a spate of sumptuary laws unknown in any other period of English history. Sociability, at least in public, almost vanished. Plays and bearbaiting were forbidden in 1642. By 1657 cockfighting, maypole dancing, swearing, gambling, drunkenness, and horse racing were all outlawed under severe penalties. Cromwell, Milton, and many other Commonwealth figures displayed moral rectitude previously almost unknown among high English officials. Although the Protector maintained court functions for the national reputation, sobriety and plainness in garb and behavior were the rule. The London throng, taking its cue, manhandled the wearers of elaborate garments as "French dogs."

The exciting Commonwealth times saw the rise of newspapers. Apparently the first English newspaper was *The Weekly Newes from Italy, Germany, etc.*, started in 1622 by Nathaniel Butter and Thomas Archer. The rage for news induced the sour response of Ben Jonson in *The Staple of News* (1625), but Jonson never foresaw the rapid spread of the newspapers under the Commonwealth. It is estimated that at least 170 weekly newspapers, chiefly in London, were started in the few years between 1642 and 1649. These papers chronicled a changing world, as they reported such establishments as the first English coffeehouse in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill (1652), and the first English stagecoaches (1658).

Akin to journalism was pamphleteering, the product of unprecedented religious exhortation and political haranguing. The bookseller George Thomason collected over twenty thousand different pamphlets printed between 1640 and 1660. The voice of the common man, often crude, often frenzied, rose as never before. Every conceivable concept of religion and politics was aired, usually in ephemeral writings quickly forgotten.

Religion was the jumping-off place for all these voices. The Protestant tendency to create new splinter groups erupted during the Commonwealth period like an exploding volcano. A bewildering host of at least three hun-

dred sects sought the souls of Englishmen. Presbyterians represented the largest single sect under the Commonwealth, but their attempts to make Presbyterianism the Established Church utterly failed. Pressing them were Socinians and Anabaptists, Quakers and Congregationalists, and sects with such bizarre labels as the Muggletonians.

Modern students of this age have perhaps overemphasized the writings of the most radical sectarians, more strident than influential. The Levellers, whose spokesman was John Lilburne, demanded a full democracy of universal manhood suffrage, parliaments directly responsible to the entire electorate, and absolute freedom of conscience. The Diggers, arguing the equality of every man in God's eyes, demanded communism; under Gerrard Winstanley the group attempted equal assignment of land to all from a "common stock" at Cobham, Surrey, but the enterprise quickly failed.

The Fifth Monarchy Men (taking their title and text from the Book of Daniel) were protofascists; they deemed themselves the elect of God to rule the world in anticipation of Christ's second coming. To establish the Fifth Monarchy (Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome were the preceding four) they preached the use of force, rising unsuccessfully in 1657 and against Charles II in 1661. A steadying influence came from the Independents, who, like Milton, desired a franchise based on property and a government composed of an elite of worthy Christians. Behind all this fervor was the groping for a better human society, a new golden age made possible by the overthrow of a millennium-old system of authoritarian monarchial and ecclesiastical rule, "a truly happy and wholly free nation."

Belletristic literature, always a thin trickle in comparison to the total writing output of any epoch, was practically drowned by the flood of Commonwealth printings. The two chief supports for literary production had been the court and the church, and both were brushed aside by the Puritan ascendance. Literature was anathematized by the Puritans, who felt toward it much like the early Christian church which had stigmatized pagan letters. Still further, the hard-working bourgeois Puritan saw little value in what had been essentially an ornament of a leisured, indolent class.

Because the last chapter treated most of the non-Puritan writers of the period, and because most of the royalist supporters were either in prison or in exile during the Commonwealth era, this chapter will deal primarily with the Puritan and nonconformist writing of the period. However, where possible and desirable it will include some writings of the royalist opposition.

MILTON AND HIS WORKS

John Milton (1608–1674). More biographical information is available for John Milton than for any previous figure in English literature, because:

(1) Except for Sir Winston Churchill and possibly Geoffrey Chaucer, no other great English litterateur has held so prominent a place in public affairs.

(2) Milton was a scholar in days when scholarship was highly esteemed and its devotees carefully noted.

(3) Not until the Romantics would any other English writer be so intent upon projecting his personality to the world.

KNOWN EVENTS. Following are the highlights of Milton's much-documented life.

1608 Born December 9, the second of three surviving children. His elder sister Anne married Edward Phillips when Milton was fifteen; his younger brother Christopher became a judge with royalist sympathies. Father, John Milton, Sr., came from a Roman Catholic family that disinherited him because of his conversion to Protestantism. The intense religious fervor of the John Miltons may be traced to their sense of sacrifice in renouncing the ancient faith. John Milton, Sr., became a wealthy scrivener (legal stationer, notary, collector of bills) and as a hobby was an accomplished musician, bequeathing musical taste to the poet. The poet's mother was Sarah Jeffrey, daughter of a merchant tailor.

c. 1620 Entered St. Paul's School, graduating in 1624. Delay in schooling may have been occasioned by inferior health, especially eyesight. His best friend was Charles Diodati, of Italian Protestant ancestry.

1625 Enrolled as a lesser pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge, February 12. Matriculated April 9. Because of his delicate, even fragile, appearance and general fastidiousness he was nicknamed "The Lady of Christ's." Nevertheless, he was an accomplished fencer. B.A. degree March 26, 1629. M.A. degree July 3, 1632.

1632–38 Residence at his father's estate at Horton, near Windsor. Originally intended for the ministry, Milton determined on poetry for his vocation and spent his time in study and writing until his mother's death. Like Spenser and a few other English poets, Milton felt a passionate dedication of his life to poetry.

1638–39 Grand Tour of the continent, chiefly Italy. In the Renaissance spirit Milton sought the great minds of the era such as Grotius and Galileo. It was one of the great *Wanderjahre* of literary history, comparable to Goethe's Italian journey. Milton broke off his tour and returned in August 1639 because of the outbreak of the First Bishops' War. As an opponent of episcopacy, Milton identified himself with the Scots rebelling against the imposition of bishops upon Scotland by Charles I.

1640 Residing in London, Milton started to teach his nephews, John and Edward Phillips, and eventually sons of friends.

1641–42 Milton entered the realm of clamorous public controversy, establishing himself by the antiprelatical pamphlets as a great voice of Puritanism.

1643 Married Mary Powell, seventeen, when he was thirty-four. Apparently it was a sudden romantic love affair; certainly it proved unhappy. Mary

came from a staunch royalist family, and after "a month or thereabout" she returned to her parents at Foresthill, Oxfordshire.

1643–45 Milton's pamphleteering mounted on subjects of education, freedom of the press, and (because of estrangement from his wife) divorce.

1645 Reconciliation with his wife in July or August. Her return was probably at her family's insistence. After the battle of Naseby the royal cause was hopeless, and the Powells evidently hoped to protect themselves through a prominent Puritan son-in-law.

1646 First volume of poems published. Title-page date of January 1645 is Old Style. First child, Anne, born July 29. The Powells briefly took refuge with the Miltons.

1648 Second child, Mary, born October 25.

1649 Appointed Latin secretary to council of state in March. Continued propaganda writing until Restoration. The name of Milton was second only to Cromwell as champion of the Commonwealth government.

1651 Third child, John, born March 10, died in infancy.

1652 Blindness of the poet, probably from glaucoma. Fourth child, Deborah, born May 2. Wife died probably of childbirth.

1656 Married Catherine Woodcock November 12. Union probably quite happy.

1658 Death of second wife and infant daughter born the preceding October.

1660 Dismissed from office at the Restoration. Arrested as high Commonwealth official but released with fine because of his blindness.

1663 Married Elizabeth Minshull February 24. Apparently a happy marriage with a wife who was primarily the blind man's nurse.

1667 Publication of *Paradise Lost.* Ungracious daughters acted as secretaries.

1671 Publication of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes,* in one volume.

1673 Publication of augmented short poems from 1646 and of private letters and academic writings.

1674 Publication of second edition of *Paradise Lost.* Milton died of gout November 8.

Milton's domestic difficulties might seem humorously to detract from his dignity, although they were unquestionably painful. We must understand, however, that personally he was an austere man, engrossed in his work, the sort of genius who is inspiring in his work, but who is quite possibly very trying to live with. The man's courage and character must be glowingly praised. He dedicated his life to poetry and then smothered his life's purpose for the cause of the Commonwealth, only to lose both his sight and the cause. Under such circumstances, most men would thereafter indulge in bitter scorn and protestations. But not Milton. By sheer willpower he created his three

masterpieces in obscurity and pain, thereby displaying one of the world's greatest examples of self-mastery.

DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES OF MILTON. No other English author, except Shakespeare, has been so highly and continuously admired, and no other writings, except those of Bunyan, so devoutly revered by many generations. Often, however, this very popularity was engendered by qualities that the modern reader finds alien, or not at all to his taste. To enumerate a few:

(1) The religious convictions from which Milton constructed most of his work are often minimized, ignored, or disliked by today's readers. Yet the aesthetics of Milton are so indissolubly tied to his religious convictions that the reader must espouse at least a momentary sympathy for his theology to enjoy his poetry even as poetry.

(2) Milton is the least "human" of all great English writers. Perhaps because of his blindness he offers far less contact with the tangible and the familiar of this world than does, say, a Shakespeare or a Donne. Even the most pious of medievalists relate religious beliefs and moral principles to the life we all know. Milton, on the other hand, is soaring into Heaven and Redemption, or descending into Hell and Damnation. Dante displays, in a kindred pilgrimage, a concreteness and sharpness that appears strikingly earthbound in comparison to the vague, awesome majesty of Milton's vision. The reader must reach with Milton toward what is truly beyond human language and experience.

(3) Milton like Spenser believed intensely that poetry was spiritual instruction. An age that finds preaching and teaching in literature distasteful is wary of Milton, especially as his purpose is not merely to teach the mind but to elevate and purify the heart. The appreciation of Milton by a modern reader therefore requires more than the normal "willing suspension of disbelief."

THE EARLY POEMS (CHIEFLY THROUGH 1640)

The shorter poems of Milton are almost entirely (except for a few great sonnets) the work of his early years when he was preparing himself hopefully for a poetic career. Often they display all the tendencies of a young, experimenting poet seeking his own voice while strongly influenced by tradition (Spenserism and Jonsonianism) and current practice (Manneristic). There are several, however, that are among the finest lyrics in the language, and even the least of them manifests an individualistic expression and a remarkably high caliber of poetic achievement.

During his earlier Cambridge days Milton wrote verse almost exclusively in Latin, following the learned precedent of his age. His 1646 volume prints seven elegies and eight epigrams in elegiac meter (*Elegiarum Liber*) and ten poems in miscellaneous meters (*Sylvarum Liber*). The 1673 edition added three epigrams to the first group and an ode to the second. Elegies II and III were written at the age of eighteen in 1626. The others date through his Grand Tour as late as 1641. The earlier pieces lean on Ovid; the later sound

more Vergilian. These Latin poems constitute an important, almost year-by-year record of Milton's feelings, thoughts, and poetic maturing in the university and Horton periods. Since these writings in the learned tongue could be shared only with the erudite few, Milton is more personal and sensuous than in his English verse.

The greatest of this collection is *Epitaphium Damonis* (1640), a pastoral elegy occasioned by the premature death of Charles Diodati in 1638 at the age of thirty. Damon is the poetic shepherd's name for Diodati, and Thyrsis, the lamenting fellow shepherd, is Milton. Following the pattern of ancients Bion and Moschus, Milton bitterly grieves for his dead friend, with the recurrent refrain, *Ite domum impasti, domino jam non vacat, agni* ("Go home, my lambs, unfed; your master has now no time for you"). Concluding is the triumphant assertion of Diodati's immortality. In their lavish imagery and emotional disturbance, even these Latin verses manifest Mannerism.

The 1646 volume prints five Italian sonnets and a canzone. All six are closely related in theme to the Latin "Elegy VI" and are likewise addressed to Diodati. These Italian sonnets seem to be the product of a highly talented dilettante in Italian, who is fascinated by the opportunities of the Petrarchan sonnet in the southern tongue. The lady is Emilia, conventionally and extravagantly praised; she was either a passing acquaintance of the poet or an imaginary creation. The sonnets, though in Italian, follow the familiar Sidney sonneteer patterns. They apparently were written in England before Milton made his Italian journey.

The earliest extant verse by Milton is in English—paraphrases of Psalms 114 and 136, done at the age of fifteen. These are school exercises evidently indebted to Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. This practice of straitjacketing the Psalms into hymn meters may seem eccentric to us, but it had been a standard Protestant practice since the Renaissance and would continue in English hymnology down through the 19th century.

"On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough" (c. 1628, pub. 1673) commemorates, according to Edward Phillips, the death in 1626 of Anne Phillips, daughter of Milton's sister Anne. Milton employs the seven-line stanza of Phineas Fletcher, *a b a b b c c* with a concluding Alexandrine. The style is more Elizabethan Ovid than Spenser.

"At a Vacation Exercise in the College" (1628, pub. 1673) was a heroic-couplet poem appended to the sixth Latin prose prolusion by Milton. The significance of the poem is the patriotic and aesthetic enthusiasm for English and the poet's determination to write a great work in the vernacular. He objects to the "late fantasticks," presumably Donne and George Herbert.

"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (1629, printed as opening poem in 1646 edition) was Milton's first great poem. The triumph of Christ over the pagan deities and oracles is a familiar theme of the period, most closely paralleled by Tasso in *Rime Sacre*. In Renaissance fashion Milton sees Christ not as the suffering Savior but as the mighty Pan, come to dwell among men,

bringing pure simplicity of ethical and religious truth to banish error. At this time Milton is an orthodox trinitarian, devoutly expressing Protestant humanism. The poem is a remarkable amalgam of daring metaphysical conceits and quaint homely sincerity. The four introductory stanzas employ the same form as "On the Death of a Fair Infant," but the twenty-seven stanzas of "The Hymn" proper use a modified Spenserian form of accentual and rime pattern: *3a 3a 5b 3c 3c 5b 4d 6d.* Giles and Phineas Fletcher are the chief influences. Hallam termed this poem "perhaps the most beautiful ode in the language."

"The Passion" (c. 1630) follows the "Nativity" in the 1646 edition. It is incomplete. Even at this age Milton found the Crucifixion uncongenial as a subject, for the later Milton looked to Christ as model and guide rather than Redeemer. The conceits and the emotion are forced. The stanza is that of "On the Death of a Fair Infant."

"Song on May Morning" is grouped in the 1646 volume with the university poems, but the date of this lovely lyric is unknown. In its simple evocation of an English spring morning it resembles Herrick, while also showing Jonson's influence.

"On Shakespeare" (1630) was Milton's first published poem, probably written to order for the second folio of Shakespeare's works (1632). Its heroic couplets constitute a sixteen-line epigram stating in more elaborate form Jonson's epigram in the first folio. Like critics for over a century after Shakespeare's death, Milton praises him not as a conscious artist but as a spontaneous genius. This is the only thoroughgoing metaphysical conceit in Milton's verse, probably intended to emulate the current fashion.

"On the University Carrier" (1631) consists of two heroic-couplet poems belonging to that dubious genre termed undergraduate humor.

"An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester" (1631) was Milton's first use of octosyllabic couplets. Lady Jane, the Marchioness, had died in childbirth. Jonson, then poet laureate, duly commemorated her death, and Milton's simple and charming elegy follows the Jonsonian style, sounding again much like Herrick.

"L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" belong either to late university days or early residence at Horton (1629–34). The two lyrics are a diptych or, better perhaps, the two sides of a coin. "L'Allegro" offers the life of gay sociability, bright and joyous, while "Il Penseroso" counters it with pensive thought and study (Milton's preference). The resemblances to the first prose prolusion, "Whether Day is more excellent than Night," suggest that the two poems are an academic exercise; and the suggestion is strengthened by the openings which are probably Milton's rather unsuccessful attempts at playful humor. These are the verses of a youthful poet, boyishly excited with life, untried in the fires of adversity, still able to indulge in a dilettante enthusiasm for natural beauty, stimulating books, diverting music, and unhurried reverie. The debonair octosyllabics are in the best Jonsonian tradition, and if Milton had never

written beyond his early poems he would be classified with Herrick as one of "the sons of Ben." Influences appear to be "A Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain" prefixed to Burton's *Anatomy*, a lyric by Beaumont and Fletcher in *Nice Valour* contrasting "vain delights" and "lovely melancholy," and a similar lyric by Nicholas Breton; all three exploit the dancing iambic tetrameter Milton here employed.

From this same period came three short odes or canzoni with irregular line length and rime, suggestive of Cowley's pseudo-Pindaric odes. Milton never again attempted this experiment except in some of the irregular lines of "Lycidas." "On Time" was apparently intended as an inscription for a clock, contrasting time and eternity and concluding with the contemplation of Heaven and immortality. "At a Solemn Musick" testifies to Milton's deep-seated affection for music; he offers a mystical Christian interpretation of the Platonic idea of the music of the spheres.

"Upon the Circumcision" is probably Milton's attempt to continue the poetic observance of the Christian calendar started with the "Nativity" ode, but as in "The Passion" the subject of Christ's suffering cannot inspire the poet to more than conventional statements. All three poems fit into the pattern of 17th-century devotional verse.

"Arcades" consists of three songs and a heroic-couplet recitation, part of a masque performed before the Countess of Derby at Harefield sometime between 1630 and 1634. The Countess was the noble lady to whom Spenser dedicated *Tears of the Muses* in 1591. A group of shepherds, searching for their Arcadian queen, find her in the person of the Countess. The Genius of the Wood (a part taken by Henry Lawes, the musician) pays graceful compliments to the Countess and brings the Arcadians to sing and dance for her. Although Milton refers to his contribution as "part of an entertainment," "Arcades" appears a complete short Jonsonian masque in the most delicate Elizabethan manner.

"Comus" (1634, pub. 1637) was Milton's first printed work except for the lines to Shakespeare in the Second Folio. This masque was presented September 29, 1634, at Ludlow Castle to celebrate the appointment of the Earl of Bridgewater (stepson of the Countess of Derby) to the lord presidency of Wales.

Her two brothers, accompanied by Thyrsis (Attendant Spirit), seek a Lady abducted by Comus (Revelry). They physically rescue her, but her own immaculate virtue has been her greatest defense against all the temptations offered by Comus. Frozen to her seat by the enchantment of Comus, the Lady is released by Sabrina (Spirit of the Severn River). Thyrsis (played by Henry Lawes) closes the pageantry and dancing by urging all to "Love Virtue; she alone is free."

The Lady personifies purity, Comus seductive vice, Thyrsis the divine protection accorded the virtuous. The Elder Brother has learned virtue through philosophical study, while the Younger Brother has yet to mature into knowl-

edge and faith. Throughout the work sounds the Platonic doctrine as stated by Spenser: "The soul hath form and doth the body make." Comus is self-indulgence, against which Milton himself inwardly fought. Chastity had earlier been the poet's expedient to permit work and study. Now he seeks to transform this negative principle into an active principle. The soul of man enters a mystic marriage with God, full compensation for an earthly life of chastity.

The mythological background for the masque is the Circe passage from the *Odyssey*, with allegorical interpretation suggested by Spenser's Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*, and more specifically by William Browne's treatment of Ulysses and Circe in the *Inner Temple Masque* (c. 1620).

Comus, from the ancient Greek word for "revelry," had been personified in antiquity. Comus also appears in Jonson's masque, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619), as a glutton. Milton's strongest resemblances are to *Comus* (1608), a Latin drama by the Dutch humanist Hendrik van der Putten; this play was reprinted at Oxford the very year of Milton's masque. Other obvious parallels are to Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*.

"Lycidas" (1637) was initially printed as the last poem in a collection of memorial verse, *Obsequies to the Memory of Mr. Edward King* (1638), and was reprinted with minor alterations in the 1646 volume. Although King was an alumnus of Christ's College, Cambridge, his drowning in the Irish Channel on August 10, 1637, was not the personal loss to Milton that Diodati's death was. The *Epitaphium Damonis* is therefore a more intimate and deep-felt experience. For Milton the premature passing of King was that chilling foreboding always experienced by the young when some admirable person of one's own age (and in this case a fellow poet) is suddenly carried off. The entire pattern of the poem, even to its attack on corrupt clergy and personal allusions, follows the conventions of the pastoral elegy discussed in the chapter on Spenser. Rigid as the form is, Milton's poem is nonetheless completely free and unstilted. The central question through most of the poem is Milton's query about the value of noble purpose when life is subject to such insane accidents (the ship reportedly foundered in a calm sea). The answer is Milton's confident restatement of his faith in himself, his determined way of life, his God, and immortality. At the conclusion he wills himself to resolute facing of life anew. References in the poem present a few problems: the "Woolf" is obviously the papacy; the "uncouth swain" is Milton himself in the tradition of the untutored shepherd swain of pastoral verse; "old Damoetas" presumably refers to a beloved Cambridge tutor, Joseph Mead; and the "two-handed engine" has been variously interpreted, most logically as the two houses of parliament. Dr. Samuel Johnson was impatient with this poem because he could not stomach the artificiality of pastoralism, but almost all other critics have extravagantly praised it. Mark Pattison declared it the high-water mark of English poetry and full appreciation of it the first fruit of literary culture.

THE SONNETS

Although the great urge for writing sonnet sequences had been confined primarily to the age of Spenser and Sidney, the sonnet has remained a valuable and popular (with poets) form of English lyric poetry. The twenty-three sonnets of Milton have caused many to rank him second only to Shakespeare as a sonneteer in English. Their notable features are:

(1) A return to the Italian form instead of the English sonnet which had generally triumphed over the form introduced by Wyatt. Milton was influenced in this reintroduction by Diodati, study of Italian, and the Italian journey.

(2) Violation of the rhetorical pause at the end of the initial octave. While Petrarchan sonnets observed this neat break, other Italian sonnets did not, notably those of Giovanni della Casa, a copy of whose verse reposed in Milton's library.

(3) Complete ignoring after the first six sonnets of the Petrarchan love subject and conventions. Milton had precedent in scattered Elizabethan sonnets and notably in those by Donne. Tasso produced heroic sonnets roughly comparable to Milton's address to Cromwell.

(4) A distinctly new tone of loftiness and epic majesty in the sonnet. As Wordsworth asserted, "In his hands/The Thing [sonnet] became a trumpet."

I–VI consist of an English sonnet on the nightingale and the five Italian sonnets already noted. Style and subject are conventionally Petrarchan. Written probably during late university career.

VII ("How soon hath Time") was apparently written on his twenty-fourth birthday (1632). An ambitious spirit rues its failure to achieve desired greatness but rests upon the divine will.

VIII ("Captain or Colonel") was ostensibly for affixing to Milton's Turnham Green residence in 1642, asking that the poet's house be spared as the royalists seemed on the point of capturing London. The might of poetry and the chance of the benefactor's immortalizing in verse are offered as inducements.

IX ("Lady") praises in 1644 an unnamed woman who had elected the virtuous contemplative life. Possibly the reference is to a Miss Davis who interested Milton during his estrangement from his wife.

X ("Daughter") in 1644 sees in Lady Margaret Ley the virtues of her distinguished father, the Earl of Marlborough. This and all preceding sonnets appear in 1646 volume.

XI ("A book") and XII ("I did but prompt the age") are scathing denunciations of the unfavorable reception of Milton's divorce pamphlets (1645–46).

XIII ("Harry") in 1646 gracefully praises the musical ability of Henry Lawes, who composed music for "Arcades" and "Comus" and performed in both masques.

XIV ("When Faith and Love") in 1646 soothingly eulogizes Mrs. Katharine Thomason. Sonnets XI–XIV appear in the 1673 volume.

XV ("Fairfax") for political reasons was not printed until 1694. It commemorates in 1648 the success of parliamentarian arms under General Fairfax, but the poet seizes the occasion to demand a civilian victory against fraud and immorality.

XVI ("Cromwell") in 1652 (pub. 1694) mightily extols the Lord Protector for his military victories and urges protection against restraint of religious conscience.

XVII ("Vane") in 1652 (pub. 1694) champions Sir Henry Vane, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and a vigorous defender of religious freedom.

XVIII ("Avenge O Lord") in 1655 (pub. 1673) protests the massacre of Waldensians (Italian Protestants) by the Duke of Savoy and urges flight from the papacy.

XIX ("When I consider") was written early in the blindness of the poet (c. 1652–55, pub. 1673). A proud man accepts his affliction as divine will.

XX ("Lawrence") addressed to Henry Lawrence, son of the president of Cromwell's council, counsels moderate enjoyment of life's good things (c. 1656, pub. 1673).

XXI ("Cyriack, whose Grandsire") is addressed to Cyriack Skinner, grandson of the eminent jurist, Sir Edward Coke. Like its predecessor it advocates reasonable pleasures and displays a geniality not usually associated with Milton. Written c. 1655, pub. 1673.

XXII ("Cyriack, this three years day") rejoices in the poet's support of the Commonwealth and the cause of freedom, even though blindness was the price. Contemporaneous with its predecessor, this sonnet for political reasons could not be published until 1694.

XXIII ("Methought") was written immediately after the death of Milton's second wife, Catherine Woodcock, in childbirth, 1658. It is perhaps the most human pathos in all Milton as he laments a face he never saw, in the double night of blindness and bereavement.

When the sonnet revival was instituted by the Romantics, Milton's sonnets were the chief cause and model.

In 1648, Milton formed into common hymn meter (alternating eight and six syllables) Psalms 80 through 88. More literal and pedestrian than the youthful paraphrases, these were intended for congregational singing. In 1653 he turned Psalms 1 through 8 into a variety of metrical and stanzaic patterns, no two alike. Presumably they represented spiritual occupation and consolation in the early stages of his blindness.

THE PROSE (CHIEFLY 1640–1660)

More than in the verse, the prose of Milton reveals what Cromwell termed a Seeker. Otherwise forgotten quarrels have been immortalized in Milton's

pamphlets, each bearing the powerful stamp of a vigorous personality and a master of language.

ACADEMIC EXERCISES IN LATIN. *Prolusiones* were printed with Milton's private correspondence in 1674. Aylmer, the printer, was refused government permission to print Milton's public correspondence of the Commonwealth period and therefore obtained from the poet his undergraduate exercises as a substitute. These seven pieces range from Milton's sophomore year until his graduation. Dealing with such topics as "Whether Day is more excellent than Night," "That sometimes sportive exercises are not prejudicial to philosophic studies," and "Knowledge renders man happier than ignorance," they reveal the current undergraduate intellectual interests and most particularly these qualities of Milton:

(a) Remarkable elegance and ingenuity in Latin composition;

(b) Humor that is heavy-handed, not the forte of a grave nature;

(c) Conscious superiority to others and belligerency to make his own personality an issue in any controversy;

(d) Vigorous support of humanism and Baconianism in academic circles still resolutely following medieval scholasticism.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE. Many letters are extant from such a prominent public and literary figure. The skill of Milton is apparent, since the correspondence appears in Latin, Greek, Italian, and English. The most interesting are *Epistolae Familiares* ("Familiar Letters," pub. 1674), twenty-one Latin letters ranging from 1625 to 1666. In the tradition of Renaissance humanism Milton made these models of epistolary art. They show a bantering lightness, urbanity, and self-deprecation alien to the rest of Milton.

ANTIPRELATICAL TRACTS IN ENGLISH. In 1640–41 parliament was considering bills that would abolish all bishops and establish a Presbyterian system similar to the Scottish. Bishop Joseph Hall pamphleteered for the bishops and was opposed by Presbyterian divines who called themselves Smectymnuus from their initials (*S*tephen *M*arshal, *E*dward *C*alamy, *T*homas *Y*oung, *M*atthew *N*ewcomen, and *W*illiam *S*purstow). As a personal friend of Young and a determined opponent of episcopacy, Milton first gained wide public attention through his pamphlets:

Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England (1641). Milton temperately and rationally examines the English Reformation and the Anglican compromise. He argues on Biblical grounds against bishops in the early church and on logical grounds against bishops as a parallel to monarchy. At this time he is essentially a Calvinist and a convinced trinitarian, politically accepting monarchial government. The close is a majestic prayer for deliverance from prelatical tyranny.

Of Prelatical Episcopacy (1641) is a calm point-by-point refutation of Bishop Ussher's citation of patristic writers to uphold the episcopacy. Milton demonstrates scholarly knowledge of early Church Fathers. Here first appears his doctrine of popular sovereignty.

Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence, against Smectymnuus (1641). Bishop Hall, earlier a writer of "toothless satire," used ridicule and sarcasm in his role of Remonstrant for the bishops. In dialogue form Milton quotes weak points from Hall and blasts the ideas of the Remonstrant. As yet the attack is upon ideas, not personalities. Milton here advocates an unpaid clergy, laboring solely for the glory of God.

The Reason of Church Government Urg'd against Prelaty (1642) is the longest and most interesting of his ecclesiastical tracts. In essentially philosophical fashion Milton supports Presbyterianism against episcopacy. He eloquently presents the Protestant pleas for freedom of conscience and the separation of church and state. He deems the multiplying sects a sign of healthy individual religiosity, not chaos. The introduction to Book II is famous autobiographically, including the promise of writing a great epic poem.

An Apology against a Pamphlet Call'd A Modest Confutation of the Animadversions of the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus (1642) attacks the work of Bishop Hall named in the title. Hall debased the quarrel by scurrilous accusations against Milton, who retorts in kind. The philosophic calm is discarded here for bloody infighting of intense animosity. In justifying himself Milton tells a great deal about his Cambridge and Horton periods of study and thought.

DIVORCE TRACTS IN ENGLISH. Milton states that these works are his continued campaign in the cause of true liberty, logically a step succeeding the assaults upon episcopacy. However, the notes of personal rancor seem to justify the general assumption that Milton was smarting from the desertion by Mary Powell and was contemplating divorce himself. The earliest biographer, writing anonymously about 1680 (pub. 1902), suggested that Milton wished to remarry, perhaps the shadowy Miss Davis.

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643). The current law permitted divorce solely on the grounds of adultery. Believing marriage to be a spiritual union, Milton resented the assumption that it was dissoluble purely upon physical grounds. His central contention is that incompatibility of temperament is the greatest impediment to true union. Since marriage is a mutual agreement, the will of either or both parties should be free to dissolve the marriage. In the first edition Milton implies that his views were arrived at independently. The second edition (1644) shows that in a few months he had canvassed the Renaissance discussions of divorce, which frequently foreshadowed his views. An unexpected influence of this work appears in *The Beaux' Stratagem* by Farquhar where material of this pamphlet is transformed into dialogue upon the stage.

The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce (1644) cites those passages of *De Regno Christi ad Edw. VI* by Bucer that argued incompatibility as grounds for annulment of marriage. Bucer was a German Protestant cleric appointed professor of divinity at Cambridge in 1549 by Edward VI.

Tetrachordon (1645) takes its name from the four-stringed Greek lyre. Milton's tract deals with four portions of Scripture that he interprets as favoring his position: Genesis, Deuteronomy, Matthew, First Corinthians. No new arguments are advanced.

Colasterion (1645) is the most violent of the divorce tracts, savagely ridiculing hostile pamphleteers opposing his ideas on divorce.

EDUCATION TRACT IN ENGLISH. *Of Education* (1644) was written at the request of Samuel Hartlib, contemporary reformer. Milton, like the men of the early Renaissance, is intent upon a humanistic training for future public leadership, not upon mass education. The goal is the fully rounded scholarly gentleman. Milton's model school would train boys from twelve to twenty-one, after which foreign travel is advised. Milton emphasizes subject matter over methodology and practicality as well as theory. Greek and Latin are to be learned for what they have to say, not as graceful accomplishments in themselves. He opposes empty rhetoric before the student has ideas to bite into. His ambitious training program encompasses a study of virtually all the arts and sciences as revealed in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Italian, and English. Military discipline and contact with men of practical experience are also specified. His sources are the ancient educational philosophers such as Plato, Cicero, and Quintilian, and most especially *De Tradendis Disciplinis* (1531) by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives.

TRACT IN ENGLISH ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND PRINTING. *Areopagitica; for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing* (1644) takes its name from the Areopagitic speech by the 4th-century-B.C. Greek orator Isocrates; the ancient address called for a revival of the power and prestige of the high court of Athens, the Areopagus. The Miltonic piece was occasioned by the Licensing Act of June 14, 1643, which required that all books be licensed by an official censor before publication. In August of 1644 a sermon by Herbert Palmer before parliament sought silencing of Milton's divorce tracts, and a petition to parliament by the Stationers' Company cited Milton as a violator of the Licensing Act. Milton's work is addressed to parliament in an attempt to persuade its members to repeal the restrictive measure. The appeal failed, and unlicensed printing was not inaugurated in England until 1696. Subsequent generations, however, have reckoned Milton's *Areopagitica* as one of the greatest documents in the struggle for human freedom and have repeatedly quoted it against all forms of intolerance; Mirabeau cited it in France in 1788.

First, after suave compliments to parliament, Milton reviews the entire history of censorship from ancient times, demonstrating that it has always been a concomitant of tyranny and ascribing its contemporary creation to the Roman Catholic Council of Trent. He thus seeks to associate censorship with all the forces parliament detested.

Second, Milton defends the free employment of books in order to attain knowledge in a complex world where good and evil are almost inextricably

woven together. Censorship inevitably strikes at the good in trying to extirpate the evil.

Third, he reaches eloquent heights in his central contention that men cannot be made virtuous by compulsion. Only inner discipline insures true virtue. The righteous man is one who freely explores all the world's choices and of his own volition chooses the good.

Fourth, he argues the impossibility of complete effectiveness in the Licensing Act. Although he does not so state, *Areopagitica* itself violated the law.

Fifth, Milton attacks the measure as a hindrance to the search for truth and a threat of intellectual stagnation. Milton confidently asserts that mankind is capable of working out its own intellectual salvation, and truth shall prevail if it can grapple against error without fetters.

Areopagitica is probably the best example in English of the formal classic oration, fully conforming to the principles of oratory established by Quintilian and exemplified by Demosthenes and Cicero. In eloquence the work may be deemed the greatest prose selection in the language in majesty and sonority. In content it shares with the American work of the same year, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution* (1644) by Roger Williams, the position of a noble monument in the human struggle for freedom and tolerance.

TYRANNICIDE TRACTS IN ENGLISH. *Of the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) was probably composed during the trial of Charles I and appeared two weeks after the monarch's execution. There is no mention of the king's name, for the tract argues the abstract issue of man's political freedom. Milton claims that purely a voluntary contract binds men to their governors; if they will to discard their leaders, they are morally free to do so. He marshals a host of authorities, from ancient Greece through the Renaissance, and propounds no new theories. Milton over a period of years has changed from a monarchist to a republican. The style is plain and sober as its author cast his lot with the regicides.

Eikonoklastes ("The Image Breaker" in reference to *Eikon Basilike*, the "Royal Image") (1649) was commissioned from Milton by the council of state, which had recently appointed him its Latin secretary. *Eikon Basilike* (1649) was ostensibly an autobiographical record of the pious meditations of Charles I during his last years and almost of his last hours. On the basis of this work royalists acclaimed the executed king as a saint, and several English churches to this day are named for Charles the Martyr. Authorship of the *Eikon* is disputed, but it is usually assigned to Bishop John Gauden; its immediate popularity caused the perturbed council to authorize Milton's rejoinder. In the manner of 17th-century controversialists Milton tediously refutes each section of the twenty-eight parts of the *Eikon*. Accepting the work as genuine, Milton meticulously indicts the king's private life. One of his most damaging points is showing that a famed prayer of the *Eikon* was a blatant plagiarism from that "vain and amatorious poem," the *Arcadia* by Sidney.

His sources were numerous parliamentary declarations, *The History of the Long Parliament* (1647) by Thomas May, and the anonymous *Eikon Alethine* (1649).

OFFICIAL LATIN CORRESPONDENCE. From his appointment as Latin secretary to the council of state in 1649 until the end of the Protectorate in 1659, Milton composed the official state communications to foreign powers, couched in Latin, the standard international and diplomatic tongue of the era. Extant are 156 such letters. Apparently the substance came from sessions of the council, the letters were prepared in English by Milton for the approval of the council and/or parliament, and Milton then translated them into Latin. Throughout, the Latin is impressive and scholarly. The most eloquent letters are logically those where Milton felt most strongly, as in the protests to foreign sovereigns against the massacre of the Protestant Waldensians by the Duke of Savoy (occasion of sonnet XVIII).

POLITICAL TRACTS IN LATIN. *Ioannis Miltoni Angli Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio* ("Defense of the English People by John Milton, Englishman") (1651) started Milton's last and greatest pamphleteering battle and established him throughout western Europe as the champion of the Commonwealth. The exiled Charles II had engaged Claude Saumaise (Latinized as Claudius Salmasius), a noted French scholar, to excoriate the Commonwealth government before all Europeans through the Latin pamphlet, *Defensio Regia Pro Carolo I* ("Royal Defense of Charles I") (1649). Milton's vitriolic rejoinder attempts a point-by-point refutation of Salmasius, justifying the regicide by authority and precedent of many peoples, by English law and practice, by the character of Charles I, and by public need. Seldom rising to principles, Milton scathingly probes into the personality of Salmasius, hounding the scholar, according to reports, from the Swedish court in disgrace. Work upon this tract ruined Milton's eyesight. The material is largely drawn from *Of Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes.*

Ioannis Miltoni Angli Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda ("Second Defense of the English People by John Milton, Englishman") (1654) rebutted the anonymous *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos* ("Cry of the King's Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides") (1652). The actual writer was Peter Du Moulin, but Milton erroneously ascribed the work to the Scottish-French scholar, Alexander More (Latinized as Morus), an associate of Salmasius, who wrote the preface. Milton's "Second Defense" is stained by more personal attacks, but in many respects it contains his noblest prose: a lengthy autobiographical portion of high artistry and a ringing defense of the Commonwealth ideals of liberty.

Ioannis Miltoni Angli Pro Se Defensio contra Alexandrum Morum ("The English John Milton's Defense of Himself against Alexander More") (1655) is a retort to More's *Fides Publica* ("Public Testimony") (1654) in which More disclaimed authorship of *Regii Sanguinis* and attacked Milton. The

Englishman's vilification in reply is not pleasant reading. Milton's attempt in this tract to excuse gross language in the interest of correcting public abuses shows his own uncertainty about such billingsgate. Milton can be partly excused in this and in the attack upon Salmasius by the vicious assaults upon him that preceded his replies in kind.

HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN ENGLISH. *The History of Britain* (1670) was presumably written between 1646 and 1660. Its late publication probably meant that for some years Milton was hoping to complete the work, which breaks off at the Norman Conquest. Milton aimed at accuracy, conciseness, and readability. He displayed more critical scholarship toward the early source materials than did any of his predecessors, such as Stow and Speed. Milton separates the mythical and fanciful material, which he proffers not as fact but as raw material for poetry. The author's strong prejudices are apparent, however, as he applies his moral yardstick to the English past. He writes with contemporary problems always in mind, and he displays a decidedly Protestant bias.

THEOLOGY IN LATIN. *De Doctrina Christiana* (pub. 1825) was probably written between 1655 and 1661, though possibly with revisions up to his death. It contains daring heresy, born of the fermenting religious brew of the Commonwealth, hopefully contemplated as the basis for a new Christian unity. Too controversial for publication, it lay undiscovered in ms. until 1823. Its first printing evoked the famous essay on Milton by Macaulay. Here actually is Milton's mature theology undraped by the poetry of *Paradise Lost.* Almost nothing in the later verse contradicts *De Doctrina Christiana,* but Milton never proclaims in verse the unorthodoxy of the prose work.

The tone of this piece is coldly, calmly logical. Milton proudly asserts that the entire volume is derived solely from the Holy Scriptures. Book I is "Faith, or the knowledge of God" (33 chapters), and Book II is "Love, or the worship of God" (17 chapters). Most of the work is orthodox Christian doctrine, "catholic" in its agreement with most Christians of later centuries. Milton asserts free will, disagreeing with Calvinistic predestination. The chief heretical elements, not emphasized combatively, are:

(a) Arianism, i.e., a denial of trinitarianism, and a belief in the inferiority of Christ to God the Father, as Christ is begotten of the Father.

(b) God is infinitely extended in space and must therefore retire from any area where he creates. Source is Jewish *Zohar,* a cabalistic commentary on the Pentateuch.

(c) Matter is part of God. Milton denies the orthodox concept that God made the universe out of nothing; he thus tries to avoid the dualism of spirit and matter.

(d) Polygamy is theoretically lawful on the basis of the Old Testament patriarchs.

(e) Mortalism ("the sleepers"), i.e., that the soul and the body both perish at death and are both recreated at the Day of Judgment.

LATE POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL TRACTS IN ENGLISH. *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) urges complete separation of church and state, and universal religious toleration, except for Roman Catholics, who are deemed subversive agents of a foreign power.

Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church (1659) advises withdrawal of state support of the Established Church and the financing of every sect solely by its believers.

The Readie & Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth (1659), after the death of the Lord Protector, urgently pleads against the Restoration of Charles II and for the centering of government in a grand or general council chosen by the electorate. Plato's *Republic* and the contemporary Netherlands government are his models.

Of True Religion, Haeresie, Schism, Toleration (1673) asks for the acceptance of any faith based upon the word of God. The only heresy, states Milton, is a religion based on human traditions, e.g., Roman Catholicism.

PARADISE LOST

Paradise Lost (1667 in ten books, 1674 in twelve books by dividing Books VII and X each into two separate books). The 18th century witnessed over one hundred editions of this work, more than twice the number of editions for Shakespeare's plays.

GENESIS. The "Vacation Exercise" written in 1628 contains Milton's first promise to write an epic poem; he sketches the whole scene of epic poetry without specifying any topic. In the Latin "Ode to Manso" (c. 1639–40) he states his intention to write a British epic poem based upon Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Shortly after his return from Italy, Milton listed in "The Cambridge Manuscript" (c. 1640–42) a long series of possible subjects for an epic drama, selected from the Bible and from the history of England and Scotland. The fall of man chiefly engrossed his attention, and the ms. contains four drafts for such a drama. The longest and fullest is the last draft, calling for a five-act play entitled "Adam Unparadised." The exact reasons for Milton's turn from the drama back to his original epic poem are unknown, but it seems obvious that the nature and scope of his jelling idea could not possibly be represented upon a stage.

DATE OF COMPOSITION. Edward Phillips, his nephew, asserts that c. 1642 Milton read to him the proposed opening lines of the drama on the fall of man. These lines appear in *Paradise Lost* incorporated in the famous apostrophe to the sun by Satan (Book IV). The kindred spirit of mature prose works such as the *Second Defense* (1654) suggests active composition of the poem shortly after Milton's blindness had lessened his arduous political life. Aubrey, on the oral testimony of Edward Phillips, gives c. 1658 as the time when writing of the poem began and 1663 as the date of completion.

The invocation starting Book VII is clearly Milton's condition after the Restoration. The poem was certainly finished by 1665 when Thomas Ellwood in his autobiography reports reading the full draft.

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES. *Paradise Lost* is an encyclopedic compendium of the knowledge of the Renaissance fused from voluminous reading by a great mind and spirit. All of Milton's vast studies exerted some influence. The following by no means complete list is given as an indication of that vast learning, and also to establish some of the more important influences on the work.

(1) The Bible. Michael's prophecy is virtually a résumé of Old and New Testaments. Milton draws upon the entire Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, even the Apocrypha (Azazael comes from the Book of Enoch in the pseudepigrapha, and the mission of Raphael is derived from the Book of Tobit).

(2) Talmudic writings. Many of the details, such as Satan's envy of sex and his persuasive arguments to Eve, come largely from the Jewish rabbinical commentaries. Milton ranges to the medieval Moses Maimonides.

(3) Patristic writers, notably St. Augustine (*City of God*) and Lactantius. Understandably Milton makes little use of medieval Roman Catholicism.

(4) Greek and Latin epics. The structural pattern of the poem is clearly indebted to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*. Classic Greek drama was an influence, as in the "hybris" of Adam and Eve immediately after eating the forbidden fruit.

(5) "Fall of Man" in medieval literature. *Genesis*, ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon poet Caedmon, was published in 1655 by the Dutch scholar, Francis Junius, who lived in England until 1651. From Milton's *History of Britain*, however, it appears unlikely that Milton was adept at reading Anglo-Saxon.

(6) "Fall of Man" in Renaissance literature. Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas had already influenced the earlier poetry of Milton. Two dramatic versions—the Latin *Adamus Exul* (1601) by Hugo Grotius and the Italian *Adamo* (1613) by Giovanni Andreini—seem clearly lurking behind the rough drafts of the Cambridge ms.

(7) Italian epic poems. Parallels are discernible to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*.

(8) Spenser was a potent influence not so much in incident or phrase but in overall method and purpose. The influence of Giles and Phineas Fletcher is indistinguishable from that of their master. Marlowe's great blank verse and Shakespeare's dramatic characterization also influenced *Paradise Lost*.

COSMOLOGY. Milton lived in an exciting intellectual era when modern ideas were still battling with age-old concepts. Although well acquainted with the Copernican heliocentric theory, Milton for poetic and traditional reasons chose the ancient Ptolemaic geocentric theory. Roughly, this was Milton's imaginative concept of the entire universe:

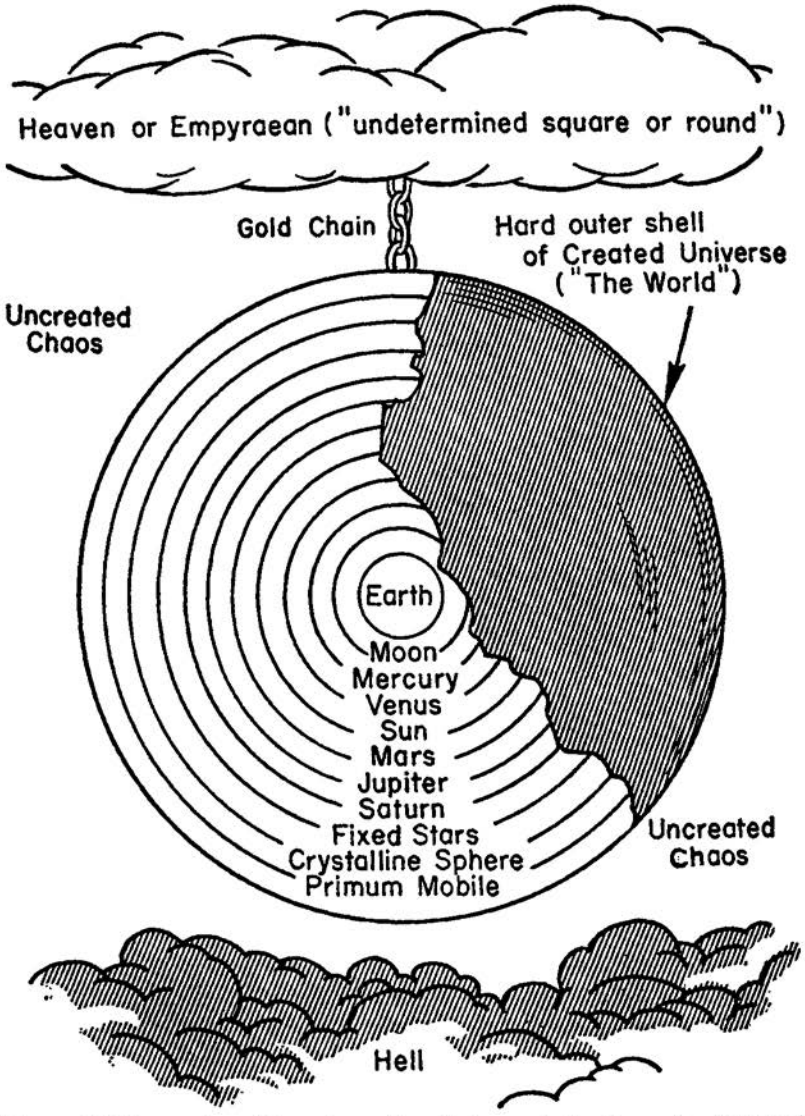

Figure 6. Diagram is not to scale as the whole created universe is a tiny pendant amid enormous chaos.

The new astronomy affected Milton's imagination by the awe-inspiring grandeur of space that it unfolded. Until the 17th century, men thought of the universe as cozily small, centered about the earth. The astronomical discoveries of the age suddenly expanded the universe to breathtaking dimensions. Even though 20th-century astronomy has given far vaster size to the

universe than Milton knew, no other author in world history has so felt and so conveyed the sense of the abyss of space. Specifically, in *Paradise Lost* Milton mentions Galileo's four significant observations: the topography of the moon, sunspots, the satellites of Jupiter, and the actual nature of the Milky Way.

DOCTRINE. The intellectual theology of *Paradise Lost* is most clearly comprehended by a study of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana.* Subsequent generations, however, have not found in the poem the heterodoxy of the prose work. Political considerations may have caused Milton to subdue his heretical views, as well as a desire to appeal more widely by not propagandizing for disturbing doctrines. But most important is Milton's concept of *Paradise Lost* as myth. In *De Doctrina* he states that the actual nature of God transcends human comprehension, and all the Scriptures are accommodations to man's limited faculties. The poem therefore makes no pretense of portraying objective events. The reader must deem Milton an inspired prophet like the Hebrews of old, to whose waiting soul God spoke directly in divine fictions. The reader shares with Milton not an argumentative discussion of theology but a psychic and mystic contemplation of the Divine Will. Milton is a revealer of truth in the Platonic sense.

With all orthodox Christians, Milton shares a belief in: special creation of man, Satan's role in temptation, man's original sin and fall from grace, the incarnation of Christ, the salvation through Christ's atonement, the resurrection of Christ, the last judgment, and angels as intermediaries between God and man. Milton rejects certain Roman Catholic doctrines: intercession of saints, papal authority, purgatory, the confessional. Milton disagrees with certain Anglican contentions: prescriptive ritual and prelacy. Milton denies the Puritan (Calvinistic) assertion of predestination and follows the Protestant theologian Arminius in the assertion of free will; God's foreknowledge is sure but does not necessitate the event, for each man is responsible morally for his choice of belief or disbelief.

Fundamentally, Milton's is the Protestant plea for gospel liberty. The word of God is writ not merely in the Bible but in the heart of each individual believer. The personal conscience of the individual is the final earthly arbiter. This conscience recognizes within the self the contest of passion and reason. To yield to passion is to yield to sin, as did Adam and Eve. The dictates of right reason will cause the individual to withstand temptation and gain heavenly beatitude.

The fully constituted sacred writings of Christianity should consist of: Old Testament (Hebrew), New Testament (Greek), Dante's *Divine Comedy* (medieval Roman Catholicism), and *Paradise Lost* (Protestantism).

STYLE. Milton fascinatingly reflects all the movements of his century. The early Milton manifests High Renaissance and Mannerist tendencies. The Milton of *Paradise Lost* displays the Classical Baroque spirit. The Early Baroque attitude originated in early 17th-century Italy as part of the Counter

Reformation. Stemming from Mannerism, it sought to resolve the tensions warring in Mannerism.

The Mannerist preoccupation with the terrors of death is replaced by the anticipation of everlasting life and joy. Doubt is overwhelmed by the gigantic, the lavish, the ecstatic of confident belief. To contend that *Paradise Lost* does not logically "justifie the wayes of God to men" is to miss the entire point of Baroque art. Baroque so inundates with massive splendor as to render logical argument superfluous.

Paradise Lost is conceived in Baroque magnitude from the initial weltering of the Fallen Angels upon the vast fiery lake of Hell until the monumental expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Milton's overpowering description of the Garden of Eden is perhaps the summit of Baroque poetry. The vagueness of Milton's epic descriptions is not primarily a fault of his physical blindness, as some critics would suggest; it is the Baroque attempt to portray the infinite that cannot be perceived by the senses and to reconcile the infinite with the finite. Another Baroque characteristic is Milton's constant repetition of word or synonym, verbally paralleling the repetitions of a Bach fugue. The elaborate diction again suggests the Baroque music of Bach.

Crashaw is the greatest English representative of the Early or Catholic Baroque. Milton represents the Northern, Protestant, or Classical Baroque. The major difference in the Classical Baroque is the rigid emphasis upon classic form. The symmetry of *Paradise Lost* resembles Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" (in the Sistine Chapel) more than it does *The Faerie Queene.* The sense, therefore, of control and discipline in Milton supersedes the luxuriant extravagance of Crashaw.

To achieve the Baroque effect Milton consciously developed a stately "organ tone" language, which T. S. Eliot labels "poetry at the farthest possible remove from prose." A number of its outstanding characteristics are:

(1) Highly Latinized vocabulary (*nocent, congratulant*) and employment of familiar English words in their original Latin meaning (*success* means "outcome").

(2) Sonorous and exotic proper nouns:

> A gulf profound as that Serbonian Bog
> Betwixt *Damiata* and mount *Casius* old.

(3) Inversion of normal word order:

> Him the Almighty Power
> Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Skie.

(4) Omission of words not needed for the sense:

> Pretending [that they were] so commanded to consult.

(5) Appositives and parentheses:

> Witness this new-made World, another Heav'n
> From Heaven Gate not farr, founded in view
> On the cleer *Hyaline*, the Glassie Sea.

(6) Linguistic conversion, i.e., using one part of speech as another: "the palpable obscure." Also, in describing the universe in the process of creation Milton uses adjectives rather than nouns.

(7) Elaborate compound epithets: "Heaven-banished Host."

(8) Long periodic sentences holding the reader in suspension until the long drawn-out conclusion.

(9) Rich allusiveness. The great breadth and depth of Milton's learning loads almost every line with extensive connotations of the Bible, classic myth and legend, medieval romance, Renaissance thought and speculation.

(10) The Homeric simile extending a comparison often for many lines.

None of these effects is unique to Milton. It is their pervasive, integrated pattern in *Paradise Lost* that gives the distinctive flavor to the work. The maintenance of the grand style, never slacking through twelve long books is one of the great stylistic feats of all literature. While the "organ tone" is fittingly associated with Milton, it must be noted that within the long stretches of *Paradise Lost* he displays other styles: a calm and subdued gravity, and even a bare simplicity, such as Wordsworth was later to advocate.

VERSIFICATION. "The Measure is *English* Heroic Verse without Rime," i.e., blank verse or unrimed iambic pentameter. In writing 10,565 lines of such verse in *Paradise Lost* Milton called upon every poetic resource of the language. Having established the fundamental rhythm of five beats to a line, he plays upon it every melodic variation from the light "In the Visions of God: It was a Hill" to the heavy "Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and shades of Death." Other variations are employed in enjambment, position of caesura or pause, position of accent, and addition or reduction in number of syllables.

Dictating this poem in his blindness, Milton was forced to hear his verse, not see it. Perhaps this accounts for a subtlety and fitness of sound unsurpassed in English, and unmatched except for the best in Shakespeare, and later in Pope and Tennyson. Almost every passage in *Paradise Lost* discloses not merely a perfect employment of onomatopoeia but a symphony of binding consonantal clusters and chiming vowel sounds. Succeeding English poets have found *Paradise Lost* an invaluable guide to the art of poetry.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS. The central theme of *Paradise Lost* is Love. Milton was a stern, unlaughing, unsentimental man, and the modern reader may therefore tend to doubt that Love is his topic. Nonetheless, Love is his unifying concept. We can appreciate this better, perhaps, if we examine, although in an oversimplified form, some of his ideas of Christianity. God created angels and men in omnibenevolence and loved them enough to give them free will, not automation. Misdirected Love caused Satan and man to

sin. God chastened both as a loving father must chastise his loved ones. Salvation is possible for all, as even Satan realized, from a loving Lord. The Love of God provided his own son, the Christ, to wash away all sins of natural man, and whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved by the Divine Love. Thus does Milton "justifie the wayes of God to men."

The central theme develops from four sub-themes: the universality of God's Providence, the potent reality of evil, the assured redemption from evil, and the essential unity of mankind. All four sub-themes are intertwined and interwoven in circular fashion throughout the poem. *Paradise Lost* is not a novel to be read for the story but a prayer to be read for spiritual contemplation and uplift.

SUMMARY OF PARADISE LOST

BOOK I

Satan, vanquished leader of the Fallen Angels, regroups his followers in Hell and summons a council to renew "Vain Warr with Heav'n."

Beginning *in medias res* in proper epic fashion, Milton presents Satan and his Fallen Angels weltering in Hell in pain from God's thunderbolts. Leading victorious troops is easy, but revivifying defeated forces is the supreme test of leadership. Satan proves an indomitable general, whipping his dejected demons into discipline and injecting into them some of his own determination. Milton's Satan has often been deemed the greatest and mightiest characterization of literature. Dryden suspected that Satan was the poem's hero, and the later Romantics were certain of it, Blake stating, "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it."

Many have felt that Milton identified himself with Satan as a rebel against Charles II. Unquestionably the poet felt freer to imagine Satan than he did God or Christ, but Satan is not the hero. Milton knew from bitter experience how powerful in this world is the force of evil, and he had to create a being capable of defying God himself. Our admiration for the courage of Satan should not blind us to his moral error. Satan is the embodiment of all the selfish pride that fails to comprehend that submission to a loving God is not bondage but true freedom and joy. The worse corruption is the corruption of the best, and the most dangerous evil is that which appears noble. Milton realized that the Satan whose dominion is so widespread on earth is infinitely greater than the horned and tailed devil of the Mystery dramas brandishing a pitchfork.

BOOK II

After discussion by the devils, Satan's plan is adopted to plague God by annexing the newly created World. Satan preempts the mission of reconnaissance and journeys through chaos toward the World.

The surroundings for the parley in Hell recalled to Milton those of the Caroline court. The Latin secretary of the council of state had heard much political oratory by men in high places. To the demons he assigns incomparable speeches in what are perhaps his most astute characterizations. Satan dominates the meeting by his massive personality, insists upon his leadership in continued strife, flatters the vanquished demons, and allows a release of tension in debate. Moloch is impetuous, demanding immediate action to retrieve their lost position, while Belial is unctuous and glib, his advice amounting to: "Do nothing." Mammon is the practical type, without illusions or ideals, and his suggestion of making a good thing out of the physical resources of Hell appeals to the demons and threatens Satan's preeminence. Beelzebub is the subservient politician, a mouthpiece for his master. He persuades them to accept Satan's plan. Satan will let no one share the glory of his errand and sets off in what Tennyson considered the most magnificent simile of all. However, Dr. Samuel Johnson objected to Satan's colloquy with Sin and Death at the gates of Hell, as the incongruity of a real being thrown in with allegorical fictions. The first two books have remained the most popular of the entire poem.

BOOK III

From his Heavenly throne God perceives the path of Satan and informs His Son of Satan's future success in seducing mankind. The Son of God offers himself as ransom for man. Satan lands on Mt. Niphates.

Although a superb lyric on Milton's blindness opens this book with light in contrast to the murky splendors of Books I and II, by general agreement this is the least effective of all twelve books—as Pope said, God talks like a schoolmaster. Milton falters, for here he posits not a poetical but an argumentative and logical answer to man's questions. He does his best, and probably theology's best, with two problems—how God's foreknowledge can be reconciled with free will, and how an all-merciful deity can demand interminable pounds of flesh because of one error of judgment by Adam and Eve; but even the most sympathetic of readers will start arguing back, and that response is not right for poetry.

BOOK IV

Satan contemplates the beauty of the Created World. Eavesdropping, he learns of the Forbidden Fruit from the conversation of Adam and Eve. At night in the form of a toad Satan whispers temptation to Eve.

In the opening apostrophe to the Sun, the lone Satan searches his soul as he never could amidst his fellow demons. He realizes the supremacy of God and the justice of his submission to the deity, but his pride will not let him submit. What will his fellow demons think? Even more, he comprehends his own obduracy and knows that if he submitted to God now, he would again rebel. With artistic genius, Milton has us see the Garden of Eden and Adam

and Eve through Satan's eyes. The devil is awed by the loveliness and innocence before him and ashamed that he intends to wreck God's sublime creation. The low subterfuge of Satan in whispering to Eve begins his debasement.

BOOK V

On the morrow Eve relates her dream to Adam and is comforted. After morning prayers they attend to their pleasant duties in the Garden. The angel Raphael is sent by God to warn Adam and Eve; he explains how Lucifer, jealous at the promotion of Christ, incited angels to rebel against God.

After one of the most glorious prayers ever written, Raphael's narrative is a letdown. The device, however, is superior to the direct report of God in Book III. This book interestingly balances two opposing poetic pictures: the morning prayer scene depicts perfectly ordered earth and man before the fall; Raphael's report of Lucifer-Satan depicts the extraordinary spectacle of divine order in Heaven disrupted.

BOOK VI

Raphael recounts the three days' war in Heaven: the surge of the Son of God against the rebels, the casting of the rebels out of Heaven to Hell's torment, and the triumphant return of the Son to the throne of God.

Here is an epic battle transferred from the windy plains of Troy or the fields of Latium to the realm of Heaven. Milton can easily match the heroics of other epic poets (and adds modern cannon for good measure), but the elaborately staged conflicts are really pointless since all-knowing and all-powerful God can cause anything to happen simply by willing it. Poetically, Raphael's narrative in this and the preceding book is the least original section of the poem.

BOOK VII

Raphael details the six days of creation, following Satan's downfall.

The first six books have, except for brief intervals, ranged across the vast depths of space and the supernatural world. This and the subsequent books will be earthbound. In contrast to the simple and majestic account of creation in Genesis, Milton strokes a stupendous Baroque canvas.

BOOK VIII

Adam inquires from Raphael about the structure of the universe, receives some answers, and is told to concern himself with his own affairs. Adam tells Raphael what he remembers about his own creation, and also about his first meeting and nuptials with Eve. After admonishing Adam against passion, Raphael departs.

Raphael's cosmography is ambiguous, Milton suggesting both the Ptolemaic and Copernican schemes, although they are contradictory. Good neoclassic

sentiment insists with Raphael that before man starts wandering amidst the stars, he should settle his own problems.

The actual hero of *Paradise Lost* is mankind, and mankind includes, with all the rest, Milton and the reader. Thus, in a sense, we are all heroes of the poem. All mankind is symbolized by the first man, Adam, the personification of our species and the sum of all humanity in one being. In this book, really for the first time, Milton tries to interest us in the personality of Adam. It is a difficult task, for here is a supposedly mature and intelligent man as innocent as a babe, knowing nothing of evil. Milton emphasizes the intellectual curiosity of Adam and his love for Eve. In these very human attitudes repose the causes for the fall. In the process of reasoning begins Adam's dissatisfaction with his lot and carnal affection for Eve. Milton must demonstrate internal as well as external causes for the fall.

Eve is gloriously beautiful and feminine, but also weak and lacking in sharp intelligence. Satan has already diagnosed her as the soft spot for his penetration. Womanly vanity and ambition will make her sin.

BOOK IX

Encountering Eve alone, Satan persuades her to eat the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Adam, knowing better, eats of the fruit in his loving resolve to share her fate. "They seek to cover their nakedness; then fall to variance and accusation of each other."

Although warned by Raphael of the Tempter, Eve femininely insists on gardening alone. Milton achingly dwells on the parting of the innocents, never again to be innocent. Eve really doesn't want to go alone; she just wants to win her point in female fashion.

Satan in a superb revery hates himself for his contemplated crime. Here are the last shreds of the glorious archangel, remorseful but trapped by his own sinful pride. His enticements to Eve are the suave blandishments of the skilled orator to the simple mind. Her credulity traps her, but how could she do otherwise, unacquainted as she is with cunning and falsehood? Adam recognizes her sin and with open eyes joins her in a mistaken sense of loyalty and love. Again innocence is at fault, for he does not realize that properly he should remain innocent and intercede for her instead of sharing her sin and thereby rendering both of them helpless.

The first domestic spat now occurs (how many had Milton experienced with Mary?). Sex now becomes guilty, shame sweeps over self-consciousness, and the pair exchange mutual and conventional recriminations. One of the greatest books, this ends with bitter disillusionment and quarreling.

BOOK X

God sends His Son to pronounce judgment and in pity to clothe the pair. Sin and Death invade the Created World, and Satan returns to Hell nastily

to boast of his triumph. After lamentations, Adam and Eve are reconciled and plead to God for mercy.

This book charts the changes in Hell and especially in the World after the Fall and the entry of Sin and Death. Most important, however, is the hard and painful process of recovery by Adam and Eve. The prelapsarian divine order has been destroyed by man's misguided self-love. After attempts to evade his responsibility, Adam (unlike Satan) assumes his responsibility and, endowed with a clear moral sense granted by divine love, is contrite. A new order is being constructed by which man can achieve divine grace no longer through ignorance but through knowledge. The love of God can turn evil to good and rescue every sinner.

BOOK XI

Sent to dispossess Adam and Eve from Paradise, the angel Michael reveals to Adam the course of history up to the Flood.

Michael presents an essentially gloomy picture from the first murder by Cain through the dire malignity of man that induces the Flood. The diapason's close, however, with its rainbow covenant majestically sounds Milton's calm confidence in man's labor to give deep satisfaction and meaning to life amid the rhythm of this now fallen world.

BOOK XII

Michael reveals to Adam the mission of the Son of God and the attendant means whereby Adam's descendants may regain Paradise within themselves. He conducts our first parents out of Eden, "the fiery Sword waving behind them, and the Cherubim taking thir Stations to guard the Place."

The resolution takes two directions. From Michael our first parents learn of the second Adam, the Son of God, who, sinless himself, will bear the burden of man's sin and redeem mankind. Disillusioned by his own vicissitudes, Milton sees man's hope as not the achievement of a perfect society but of individual salvation for the believer in Christ.

The second direction lies in Adam himself. By the conclusion of the poem he has become a conscious tragic hero, fully accepting man's position. He is the mythic hero reborn, now completely a man with human experience. Before him lies the world of labor and all mankind's trials. Paradise is no longer really inhabitable for the newly and fully formed man. He must, in these calm closing lines, face the real world of man and nature, always with Divine Providence his guide.

PARADISE REGAINED

Paradise Regained was published together with *Samson Agonistes* in 1671.

GENESIS. Milton's Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood, in his autobiography, tells of returning the ms. of *Paradise Lost* to Milton in 1665, remarking, "Thou has said much of Paradise lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise

found?" Ellwood further states that the poet showed him part of *Paradise Regained* the next year and credited him with the inspiration. In *The Reason of Church Government* (1642) Milton specified the long epic, the brief epic, and the drama as the literary genres sanctioned by Biblical and classical precedent; his three major poetical works follow this analysis. The Cambridge ms. (c. 1641) suggests a drama, "Christus Patiens." Ellwood notwithstanding, the cue to *Paradise Regained* seems wholly explicit in *Paradise Lost.*

DATE OF COMPOSITION. Probably 1666–67 with possible revisions before printing.

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES. The poem follows the incidents of Christ's temptations as presented by the Gospel of St. Luke (Matthew employs a different order). Its structure is clearly influenced by the Book of Job, recognized by Milton as a model for the short epic. Classic literature is far less influential upon this poem's form than was true of *Paradise Lost,* but even more impressively has Milton here digested the whole of available knowledge of ancient culture up to the time of Christ. Perhaps the major debt is to Spenser for the temptation of the Temperance Knight, Sir Guyon, in Book II of *The Faerie Queene.* While *Christ's Victory and Triumph* by Giles Fletcher specifically relates the temptation of Christ, it is less influential than Spenser. Most of the elaboration of the details is purely Miltonic.

STYLE. Every reader notes how little Baroque splendor shines from *Paradise Regained.* Some years apparently separated the writing of the first part of *Paradise Lost* from the writing of *Paradise Regained.* The result is no diminution of Milton's poetic power but a change in the poet's attitude from Baroque to neoclassic. Broadly, the neoclassic spirit was a reaction to the Baroque, countering massiveness with life size, ornateness with clean simplicity, overpowering emotional grandeur with calm reason. In particular for the English, neoclassicism was a desire to thrust away the tumultuous chaos of the mid-17th century. Energy and excitement had gone too far, and moderation and restraint seemed eminently more desirable. The term should not blind us to the realization that classic influences were artistically dominant all the way from the opening of the Renaissance to the triumph of the middle class in the 19th century. The neoclassicists of the late 17th century and the 18th century emphasized what they deemed the "classic" elements of clarity, serenity, and rationality in the writings of antiquity. Of course, ancient writers did not realize that they were "classicists," and they sometimes embarrassed neoclassicists (who found Homer's talking horses irrational and some of the plays by Euripides entirely too emotional). Actually the neoclassicists were more "classical" than the ancient "classicists," as Milton is for most of *Paradise Regained.* The neoclassic tone is especially appropriate for this work, since its dominant theme is the triumph over emotion and appetite by reason.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS. The Temptation of Christ in the wilderness is a ritual reenactment of the original fall of Adam, but this time temptation

is withstood, not yielded to. Christ faces the wiles of Satan as Man, not as God, thus as a human foiling the Tempter and redeeming mankind. Milton again attempts an almost impossible task. His hero is a perfect man, therefore completely beyond our experience and perhaps our interest, for perfect heroes are usually unbelievable and frequently boring. To compound his difficulty, Milton offers a hero who displays no activity. His role in the poem is negative; Christ's action throughout virtually all of the poem consists simply of refusing the solicitations of Satan. The reader must recognize, however, the exaltation here of Temperance as the great virtue. Milton conceives of Temperance as not a mere denier but a positive moral courage, like Chastity in "Comus." The contrast with the High Renaissance is clear, as Spenser makes Magnanimity the great virtue in *The Faerie Queene,* while Milton in this neoclassic work proclaims Temperance the great virtue. The verse itself is austere in renunciation of Renaissance and Baroque extravagance.

Book I opens with Satan addressing his fellow demons and announcing his twofold purpose in tempting Jesus: (1) to find out if this is truly the prophesied Messiah, and (2) to tempt him to destruction of his virtues. This Satan is a shabby fellow compared to the fallen archangel at the outset of *Paradise Lost.* Here Satan sounds hollow, as though he has largely lost confidence in his own power to wreak evil. Meanwhile the subject of Satan's concern has been meditating and fasting in the wilderness for forty days. Satan appears to Christ as "an aged man in rural weeds" and persuasively asks Christ to change the stones to bread. It is a bold stroke, seemingly offhand, but Christ recognizes Satan, spurns the request, and awaits God's purpose. The pretemptation is not a temptation to gluttony but a temptation to distrust God's intents.

Book II has Satan report his initial failure to the devils and quickly dismiss Belial's sniggering counsel to "set women in his eye." In courtly raiment Satan reappears before Christ and tempts him with a sumptuous Roman banquet in the one genuinely Baroque passage of this poem. This first temptation, to luxury and sensualism, is quickly and contemptuously dismissed by Christ. Satan then proffers the second temptation, riches as a means to power. Christ rejects this temptation, for the true ruler reigns within himself, ruling his own passions. The supreme leadership guides men in the way of truth and frees them from servitude to their passions. The political power struggle that Milton had formerly engaged in vigorously now seems meaningless to him.

Book III offers the third temptation—power as the means to glory. In un-Christlike fashion Christ is disdainful of the rabble, whose huzzahs spell fame. Christ sees traditional fame as based upon destructive and nonsensical wars, and he denounces militarism. But to liberate Israel from Roman tyranny and regain David's throne? Coldly Christ insists upon waiting for God's will instead of following man's desires. The former Latin secretary of the council of state is thoroughly disillusioned with public life.

Book IV presents the last temptation, Satan's desperate attempt to seduce

Christ with the lure of Roman and Greek civilization. Milton skilfully pictures the brilliance and fascination of the ancient cultures. The physical splendor of Rome is summarily thrust aside by Christ, but the wisdom and art of Greece cannot be so brusquely dismissed. Satan's tribute to the glory that was Greece is in the best and most eloquent humanistic tradition. But, says the aging Milton, true wisdom is not to be secured by human means, but by divine means only. Frustrated, Satan pelts Christ with a night of storm and "hellish furies," but without avail. Lifting Christ to a pinnacle of the temple, Satan forlornly hopes that Christ will summon angels to support him, thus revealing his identity and losing it by seeking divine intervention. It is Satan not Christ who falls. Angelic voices hail Christ's triumph over temptation, and angels bear him safely to earth. Quietly the poem closes with Christ's return to his mother's home; she is viewed as a normal mother without any of the medieval cult of the adoration of the Virgin.

SAMSON AGONISTES

Samson Agonistes. ("Agonistes" = "one who participates in athletic contests") was published in 1671 in the same volume with *Paradise Regained.* According to Edward Phillips, the drama was written after 1667. It may be the last work by Milton.

SOURCES FOR CONTENT. *Samson* (1660), a poetical drama by the Dutch Vondel, shows no remarkable resemblance to Milton's work. Both are based upon the account in Judges 13–16. Some details Milton used may have come from the fifth book of Josephus. There are striking parallels to *History of Samson* (1632) by Francis Quarles. The Cambridge ms. (c. 1640–42) lists three Samson topics for dramas: Samson Pursophorus or Hybristes, Samson Marrying or Rameth-Lechi, and Dagonalia (corresponding in theme to *Samson Agonistes*).

SOURCES FOR FORM. This is the first great "closet drama" in English, following a tradition already established by Fulke Greville. In his preface Milton specifically states that his work is not intended for the stage. Atterbury suggested to Pope that he revise and "polish" the Milton drama for stage presentation, but Pope wisely refused.

This is the only truly successful "Greek" tragedy composed in English. Milton deprecates the contemporary drama as "common Interludes" and boldly points out the divergency of his work from the Renaissance drama, scrupulously following "antient rule, and best example":

(1) Strict adherence to the unities of time, place, and action;

(2) Classic employment of chorus and messenger;

(3) Undeviating tragic tone and exalted language;

(4) Aristotelian catharsis purposely the intent of the drama. The pity and fear aroused by the play are conceived of as a homeopathic purgative to remove unwholesome passions from the spirit. The concluding chorus explicitly underlines this concept.

Milton cites Biblical and Christian precedent for the drama, but admittedly his great dependence is upon the tragic dramatists of Greek antiquity. Samson's torture and giant woe suggest *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. The weakness that destroyed Samson through a woman parallels the experience of Heracles in the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles. Perhaps the strongest indebtedness is to *Oedipus at Colonnus* by Sophocles, in which the blind Oedipus is successively visited by friends and foes. Through the influence of Euripides are derived some of the reflections on women and the magnificent and classically calm ending.

The tragic flaw (*hybris,* "overconfidence") of the Greeks is applied to Samson, but Milton's insistence upon Divine Providence instead of Blind Fate as the governor of human lives requires a Christian rather than pagan interpretation. Sophoclean irony suffuses the work. The verse follows the classic precedent in iambic pentameter for the major speeches and lyric measures for the chorus, also in the stichomythia (alternating dialogue with a single line to each speaker).

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS. The Renaissance ends with this poem, the last great work by a Christian humanist, attempting to synthesize classic, Hebraic, and Christian traditions. The autobiographical element is obvious. Like the blind Samson, Milton had thrown himself into national effort only to witness his own devastating loss and the triumph of a culture he detested. Of all Milton's major works only *Samson* contains this portrait of a wholly human figure, one that recapitulates Milton's own spiritual odyssey. Through the drama Samson gradually recovers from his previous despair. He is subjected to twofold temptation: (1) to blame God for his blindness and slavery, (2) to seek to decide his own fate. In the end God's purpose is revealed, and Samson triumphantly and righteously proceeds to his divinely ordained destiny. Though undivided, the drama unfolds in five sections or acts, patterned after the Greek tragedy:

(1) Samson alone and with the chorus of Hebrews (Prologos, 1–114; Parados or entering chorus, 115–75; First Episodon, 176–292; First Stasimon or stoppage for meditation, 293–325). The blinded Hebrew champion has a holiday from slave labor in Gaza because this day celebrates Dagon, the fish god of his Philistine captors. Samson and the chorus bitterly contrast his former career as a hero and dedicated servant of God with his present misery and the downfall of his people. Samson discriminates (as Milton would about himself) between his own sins for which he accepts blame, and the sins of Israel's rulers which are the real reasons for the suffering of God's chosen people. The chorus earnestly debates God's justice.

(2) Samson and his father Manoa (Second Episodon, 326–651; Second Stasimon, 652–709). Well intentioned, Manoa hurts further with his "I told you so" attitude. Perhaps in understandable paternal fashion, he is entirely too optimistic and bustles off to offer ransom obsequiously. Samson passion-

ately vents his sense of hopelessness, and the chorus ponders the baffling ways of God.

(3) Samson and his treacherous wife Dalila (Third Episodon, 710–1009; Third Stasimon, 1010–60). The siren coos to the imprisoned giant. He shouldn't blame her, for she is only a weak woman; he should blame himself for yielding to frivolous femininity. But actually she did it all for love of him. She thought the Philistines would only cut his hair and thereby diminish his strength. He then would be "Mine and Love's prisoner, not the Philistines' "; and he still can be. It actually is better that he is blind, for now she can mother him. Samson takes the blame on himself, but he, nevertheless, vehemently orders her off. Hers is not Samson's or Milton's concept of marriage as sex bondage. Samson's savage dismissal demonstrates his fear of yielding if they establish physical contact. The chorus shakes its collective head over the strange power of physical love.

(4) Samson with Harapha, a giant Philistine, and a "Publick Officer" (Fourth Episodon, 1061–1267; Fourth Stasimon, 1268–99; Fifth Episodon, 1300–1426; Fifth Stasimon, 1427–40). Harapha is bluster and bravado, chortling over the great man's downfall; a pretended motion by Samson chases off the cowardly gloater. When the Philistine officer first summons Samson to give an exhibition of strength for the amusement of the celebrants of Dagon, the captive contemptuously refuses. Then feeling a surge of superhuman strength and divine purpose within him, he agrees.

(5) Samson at the feast (Exodos, 1441–1659; Kommos or lament, 1660–1758). Manoa hastens in, joyful at his success in ransoming Samson and eager to bring his boy back to his people. Cries from the temple of Dagon are followed by a messenger, who, in the fullest Greek tradition, relates the offstage violence. Samson pulled down the pillars supporting the structure and involved in his own death all the chief Philistines. Manoa and the chorus realize the fitting heroic end, willed by God. Though the ways of God seem oft to bewilder men, following His dictates will cause right to prevail.

OTHER POETS OF THE COMMONWEALTH ERA

The poets of this era may be divided into the two opposing camps of the political world: the parliamentarians, those supporting the Commonwealth; and the royalists, those supporting the king, even in exile.

Andrew Marvell is really the only one great poet after Milton on the parliamentarian side. He served under Milton in the Commonwealth government and produced a number of remarkable lyric poems in various styles.

The poets in the royalist camp, Abraham Cowley, John Cleveland, Edmund Waller, and Sir John Denham, may also be considered precursors as well as royalists. In them we find the beginnings of the neoclassic tone and spirit that dominated the Restoration. They "refined" English verse; that is, they concentrated on neat, well-phrased, often witty lines setting forth as

often as not a rationalistic view of life. Taken as a group they are closer to Dryden and Pope than to Donne and Milton.

THE PARLIAMENTARIAN CAMP

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678). Born at Winestead in Holderness, Yorkshire, Andrew Marvell was educated at Cambridge. In 1653 he became tutor of Cromwell's ward, William Dutton, and in 1657 he was named Milton's colleague in the Latin secretaryship. During the last twenty years of his life he was a member of parliament for Hull. The 19th century chiefly remembered Marvell as a public figure, a moderate Puritan supporting individual liberty and tolerance. Interest in his verse in this century coincided with the renewed interest in the metaphysicals. Although Marvell's poetical output was small, it was of high quality and remarkable diversity. Like his greater associate, Milton, he was touched by all the major literary currents of the era and gave each his own expression.

Miscellaneous Poems (1681) contains virtually all Marvell's remembered verse and leaves dubious the dating of much of his work.

"To His Coy Mistress" is the greatest Mannerist poem in English. Its subject is the *carpe diem* theme of Catullus. The first portion of this poem of rimed octosyllabics smilingly and banteringly suggests how extravagantly and lengthily he would celebrate his mistress' charms, if time permitted. The second portion abruptly changes to a solemn and majestic discourse on life's brevity and the necessity of immediately tasting life's pleasures. The last section again alters, now to a fervid, passionate plea to live and love today.

"The Definition of Love" matches the metaphysical skill of Donne. Puns, ambiguities, and paradoxes are part of the intellectual pyrotechnics extolling Platonic love. Though poles apart physically, the lovers are spiritually and mentally like two heavenly bodies in proximity.

"Thoughts in a Garden" probably arose from Marvell's post as tutor (1650) to the twelve-year-old daughter of Lord Fairfax, the parliamentarian general, at Nun Appleton near York. The poem is apparently a translation of *Hortus*, his own Latin poem. The garden is opposed in every fashion to ambition and the coarser amusements. It is the proper abode for the thoughtful solitary man. In contemplation the poet can regain mankind's lost Eden of pure innocence. The garden and its growths are symbols of triumph over time and decay.

"An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" (1650) has been deemed the finest reproduction in English of the Horatian ode. The four-line stanza—a couplet of rimed tetrameter followed by a couplet of trimeter—is Marvell's own devising. The poet sides with Cromwell from essential acceptance of principles, not from enthusiasm. Cromwell's rustic origin and countryman's viewpoints are more attractive than his present triumphs. With remarkable dispassion Marvell sees the dignity and regality of the executed Charles I.

"Bermudas" arose from Marvell's tutorship of Dutton in 1653, residing in the home of the Rev. John Oxenbridge, former leader of nonconformist settlers in the Bermudas. The simple rimed octosyllabics have an Elizabethan flavor in their praise of the god-fearing colonists devoutly thankful to God for a rich and lovely land.

"The Death of His Highness the Lord Protector" (1658) appraises Cromwell's personality and regime in rational, sober eulogy. The heroic couplets technically anticipate the mastery of Dryden.

Poems on Affairs of State (pub. 1689) reprinted numerous political satires published during the previous ten years, many of which are attributed to Marvell. Some of these relate events after the poet's death, but many in their wit, polish, and brilliant intellectuality probably belong to Marvell. Occasionally these exhibit a vehemence not otherwise associated with Marvell, but their general tenor is a demand for liberality and public virtue. The earlier metaphysical has become a father of 18th-century satire.

The Rehearsal Transpos'd (1672) is Marvell's chief prose work, wittily attacking the degeneracy of the Restoration and especially the Anglican champion, Samuel Parker (later Bishop of Oxford) for intolerance towards nonconformists. A sequel the next year defended *Paradise Lost* against detractors.

THE ROYALIST CAMP

Abraham Cowley (kou'li) (1618–1667). A stationer's son, Abraham Cowley was educated at Westminster and Cambridge. A royalist, he followed Queen Henrietta Maria into exile in France in 1646. For a decade he performed secret service work for the exiled Stuarts, slipping in and out of England with coded messages. He settled back in England after 1656 and spent his remaining years in country retreat, studying botany and experimental science, writing essays in English and poetry in Latin and English. His immense contemporary reputation, never since regained, insured his burial in Westminster Abbey. Poetically he shows the wit of Donne changing to the wit of Dryden.

In prose he was the important disciple of Montaigne in the age. *Select Discourses by Way of Essayes in Verse and Prose* (1688) treats virtues and vices such as solitude, greatness, obscurity, and avarice, in a highly personal manner, especially in the famous essay "Of Myself." Cowley supports the simple, conversational style instead of the earlier declamatory rhetoric. Like the later Dryden's, Cowley's style is the "modern" English style.

Cowley's precocity produced *Poetical Blossoms* (1633) at the age of fifteen, while still at Westminster School. His fame was established by *The Mistress* (1647), whose love poetry superficially resembles that of Donne in striking conceits and bold vigor. Nonetheless, Cowley lacks the hard intellectuality of Donne, essentially employing the "metaphysical" style to ornament simple sentiments and ideas. *Miscellanies* (1656) contained fifteen "Pindarique Odes," properly termed the Cowleyan Pindaric or the pseudo-

Pindaric. Ben Jonson wrote true Pindaric odes, imitating the elaborate structures of the ancient Greek poet, Pindar, who never employed the same ode pattern twice but in each ode followed a meticulous arrangement of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. Misunderstanding, Cowley conceived of the Pindaric ode as utter freedom, permitting any mixture of verse lines and rimes agreeable to the poet. This loose and undisciplined form was seized upon by Dryden and haunted English poetry down to the pseudo-Pindaric ode by Tennyson on the death of the Duke of Wellington. Cowley's odes include strongly rationalistic tributes to Hobbes and to the Royal Society. The neat similes, precise meter, and smooth phrasing of Cowley's later pieces display far more kinship with Pope than with Donne. Cowley was particularly good in trifling little rococo pieces on such subjects as a grasshopper, a swallow, or a glass of wine.

John Cleveland (or **Cleiveland**) (1613–1658). A Cambridge graduate, John Cleveland rose to be a judge-advocate of the royalist army. During the Commonwealth he was imprisoned until released by Cromwell's orders in 1655. Poetically he shows the dashing Cavalier wit changing to the political satirist of the next age. At his best he was a scintillating attacker of the parliamentarians in verbal tricks that Samuel Butler would imitate. His most popular satires appeared in *The Character of a London Diurnal, with Several Select Poems* (1647), which went through at least fifteen editions by 1669.

Edmund Waller (1606–1687). Edmund Waller entered parliament at fifteen and was a member of the Long Parliament that favored the king. In 1643 he was responsible for "Waller's plot," an attempt to keep London loyal to Charles I. Apprehended by the parliamentarians, Waller apparently gave evidence against his fellow conspirators, some of whom were executed while Waller escaped with fine and banishment. He resided in France, toured Switzerland and Italy with John Evelyn, and returned to England in 1652 upon the revocation of his banishment. From 1661 until his death he again sat in parliament.

Waller's most famous poem is "Go, lovely Rose," first printed in 1655, and following the best tradition of Cavalier poetry. Half his extant verse, however, belongs to the Restoration period, written during advanced years when most poets fall silent; and here his forte is the heroic couplet, witty and epigrammatic. The trimness of his couplets, the easy conversational language, the "smoothness" and "sweetness" of his diction caused a wide chorus of neoclassic poets to eulogize, "Waller refined our numbers." "Of the Danger His Majesty (Being Prince) Escaped in the Road at St. Andere" (1645) has been declared the first English poem to employ the closed couplet of meticulous precision that would be the model for Dryden and numberless subsequent poets. Few poets with such limited ability have received such praise or have exerted such influence.

Sir John Denham (den'am) (1615–1669). Royalist governor of Farnham Castle during the civil wars, Sir John Denham was later imprisoned by

the parliamentarians. In 1667 he was falsely accused of murdering his second wife through a poisoned cup of chocolate. His significance rests upon one work, *Cooper's Hill* (pub. 1642), which founded the "loco-descriptive" poem. Its heroic couplets combine description of landscape with historical and moral reflections. The poem spawned numerous imitations, most notably "Windsor Forest" by Pope. Distantly it is the ancestor of the romantic nature description coupled with meditation such as Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." With Waller, Denham was given credit for refining English verse toward the neoclassic ideal.

OTHER PROSE OF THE COMMONWEALTH ERA

The prose writings of this period will be divided into three categories: secular prose, religious prose, and religious allegory.

The secular prose will include: the works of James Harrington in political science; the writings of Anthony à Wood and John Aubrey in biography and autobiography; and a discussion of various antiquarians and travel accounts.

The religious prose is devoted to Puritan or nonconformist (in the sense of non-Anglican) writers. The authors discussed in this category are Richard Baxter, George Fox, and William Penn. While it might be argued that the works of Penn and Fox could be treated as autobiography, it is clear that the overriding interest of both men was religious, and hence their works have more importance as religious documents than as autobiographical material.

The works of John Bunyan make up the section on religious allegory. The great popularity of these works and the casting of them in an allegorical mold make them unique creations of the period.

SECULAR PROSE

James Harrington (or **Harington**) (1611–1677). James Harrington was the eldest son of Sir Sapcotes Harrington. After a brief Oxford career—Chillingworth was one of his tutors—he was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1631. Wide observations on the continent as well as in England made him a political scientist and a confirmed republican. Most of his life was spent privately. Imprisonment after the Restoration caused him suffering from which he never fully recovered. Milton, Hobbes, and Harrington were the three most notable writers during the Commonwealth period.

The Commonwealth of Oceana (pub. 1656) is a Utopian work, advocating an ideal aristocratic republic. Dedicated to Cromwell, it looks to "Olphaus Megaletor," the strong man, as the creator of the republic. Realizing how the breaking apart of great church lands and of holdings by noblemen had shifted the economic strength to landowners of moderate means, Harrington saw this new class as the logical rulers of Oceana. The basis of his ideal state was an "agrarian law" prohibiting any one person in England from owning real estate valued at more than £2000. A Senate of mature property holders

with an annual rotation of one-third of its members (the method used for the American Senate) would debate and legislate. An Assembly, elected by universal suffrage through the ballot, would pass upon measures of the Senate.

He advocated a national church on a voluntary basis with elected clergy. Harrington sought to construct a social order essentially on democratic principles but with aristocratic republicanism to prevent mass rule and instability. Superior to all other current proposals, Harrington's scheme seemed on the way to Commonwealth reality, Milton sympathizing with many of its concepts. Though the Restoration brushed it aside, *Oceana* was to come close to fulfillment in its influence upon the founders of the United States. Harrington's dry, uninspired prose has resulted in the eclipse of one of the most influential works in English.

Anthony à Wood (1626–1695). Anthony à Wood, born just plain Anthony Wood, was more completely an Oxonian than even Robert Burton. Wood was born, lived, and died at Oxford; his entire existence revolved about the University and the city of Oxford and most of his writings were antiquarian lore about the storied past of Oxford.

Athenae Oxonienses (pub. 1691–92, 2 vols.) is the first important biographical dictionary in English. It attempts to treat of all literary and ecclesiastical figures from 1500 through 1690 who were in some fashion connected with the University. Wood is our source for much biographical information of these two centuries that otherwise would be lost. The style is undistinguished, and the manner is too often quarrelsome and biased. Wood was expelled from Oxford for a libel in the work on the first Earl of Clarendon.

John Aubrey (1626–1697). A feckless collector of anecdotes, John Aubrey was a failure in his financial and amatory adventures who acted as Wood's assistant.

Lives of Eminent Men (Selections were published in 1813; complete text in 1898 gave title *Brief Lives*, now the accepted title) is interesting though not always reliable memorabilia of literary men from the time of Shakespeare through the 17th century. In comparison to the "noble Romans" that Edward Hyde Clarendon portrayed, Aubrey presents relaxed and pleasantly mundane pictures of his century's notables.

Biography had its first significant development in English during this age. Roger North (1653–1734) wrote racy accounts of his three brothers: Francis, Baron Guilford, keeper of the Great Seal (pub. 1742); Dudley, a merchant in the Near East; and John, a cleric and master of Trinity College, Cambridge (both pub. 1744). These works and his autobiography provide invaluable pictures of royalists and their age. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (c. 1623–1673) wrote a warmly affectionate biography of her royalist husband, William Cavendish (pub. 1667). Comparable was the account of Colonel Hutchinson (pub. 1806), a prominent Commonwealth Puritan who signed Charles I's death-warrant, by his devoted wife, Lucy Hutchinson (1620–c. 1675).

ANTIQUARIANISM AND TRAVEL ACCOUNTS. Sir William Dugdale (1605–86) in *Monasticon Anglicanum* (3 vols.: pub. 1655, 1661, 1673) prepared the monumental study of the English medieval church, passing on to us much otherwise unknown information. His son-in-law, Elias Ashmole (1617–92), prepared an elaborate treatise on the Order of the Garter (1672) but is chiefly famed for his assembly of historical objects, upon which he founded at Oxford the Ashmolean Museum (c. 1679), England's first great museum.

The great Renaissance days of initial exploration were over, and with them the halcyon days of Hakluyt. Interesting, however, is the 1681 account by Robert Knox (c. 1640–1720) of his shipwreck upon the coast of Ceylon in 1659 and his living for twenty years by his wits among the natives of the island's interior. Defoe may have found in Knox the simple first-person narrative and the shrewd will to survive that later appeared in *Robinson Crusoe.* Certainly Defoe's work owed more to the 1697–99 report by William Dampier (1652–1715) of his voyages. On the first voyage Alexander Selkirk, a sailor, was marooned on Juan Fernández Island to remain there until Dampier rescued him on the second voyage four years later; here is the veritable prototype of Crusoe. Decorously Dampier overlooks in his account his notorious acts of piracy.

RELIGIOUS PROSE

Richard Baxter (1615–1691). Richard Baxter was born at Rowton in Shropshire. He was ordained in 1638 and was appointed lecturer at Kidderminster in 1641. About 1645 he became a chaplain in Cromwell's army. Although a moderate Presbyterian, he supported the Restoration in 1660 and was designated chaplain to Charles II. The Act of Uniformity in 1662 caused him to leave the Established Church. He was imprisoned in 1685 and 1686 for alleged attacks upon Anglicanism.

Baxter is credited with 168 published works from pamphlets to giant folios. *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650) was probably the most popular volume, next to the Bible, during the Commonwealth, and long continued as a monument of Puritan piety. If he will be remembered today, it will be for *Breviate of the Life of Margaret Baxter* (1681), a biography of his dead wife, noted for its picture of a passionately spiritual woman who nonetheless manifests a wifely, humorous, realistic spirit, and his *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), a fervently religious but unpriggish autobiography of a Puritan. The frequently unsympathetic attitude of today toward Puritanism is hard to maintain against the genial, honest nature of Baxter. In the spirit of Latitudinarianism, Baxter was one of the great voices for tolerance and religious freedom.

George Fox (1624–1691). Born at Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire, George Fox was the son of a Puritan weaver. At an early age he was apprenticed to a Nottingham shoemaker and received virtually no formal education. At about the age of twenty-five he became an itinerant lay preacher, promul-

gating the doctrines which became the basis of the Society of Friends, and exemplifying those principles in his own life. His missionary journeys took him to Scotland in 1657, Ireland in 1669, the West Indies and North America in 1671–72, and Holland in 1677 and 1684. He was frequently imprisoned and grossly mistreated for his beliefs. In 1669 he married Margaret Fell, a highly intelligent widow, who greatly assisted him in the formal organization of the sect c. 1669.

To the most fertile and exciting age in English religious history, Fox added the dimension of mysticism. Of course, mysticism was old to Roman Catholicism, with saints like Francis of Assisi and John of the Cross, but Protestantism had cast its lot essentially upon the Holy Scriptures, and its strong individualism demanded incessant justification of all religious and all human activities solely on the basis of the Bible. This untutored saint proclaimed the Inner Light, the life of God in the soul of man, "enthusiasm" (literally "God within"). To orthodox Protestantism, rock-ribbed upon sacred theology, mysticism was repugnant, especially as this Protestant mysticism was intended for all men, not just for a few lonely ascetics. The preachings of Fox seemed insane destruction of all social stability: contempt for public authority, complete elimination of formal church organization, unpaid volunteer preachers, disavowal of the literal truth of Holy Writ, complete pacifism, universal freedom of conscience, universal brotherhood and equality of mankind.

Though annoyed that Friends would never bear weapons in his armies, the Lord Protector zealously prevented religious persecution of the Quakers (originally a term of opprobrium) during his regime. In a famous interview Fox detailed his faith to Cromwell, and the Lord Protector urged, "Come again to my house! If thou and I were but for an hour of the day together, we should be nearer one to the other. I wish no more harm to thee than I do to my own soul." Rough handling by the populace and persecution after the Protectorate strengthened the Quakers instead of silencing them. Scoffers and oppressors were themselves converted by the courage and spirituality of the Quakers. For the generations of Fox and Penn it looked as though Quakerism might seize the hearts of Englishmen and those of the American colonists. However, the inherent moderation and pragmatism of the English, together with the rationalism and skepticism of the Age of Enlightenment, diminished a fervor probably unparalleled since the early Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons. Quaker enthusiasm poured out millions of words in journals, histories, memoirs, but the greatest was the spiritual autobiography of the founder of the Society of Friends.

Journal, or Historical Account of the Life of George Fox (1694) is essentially Fox's own record to 1675, with the concluding years of his life detailed by Thomas Ellwood with the assistance of a committee. Ellwood and the committee improved the poor grammar and spelling of Fox but left undiluted the spontaneity and burning sincerity of one of the world's greatest

spiritual confessions. A humble and realistic man knows the power of sin, but unlike orthodox flamings of hell-fire, Fox feels the mystic hand of God upon him to bring peace and joy. Unlike *Grace Abounding,* the despair and gloom of Fox's early life is not fear of divine wrath but an aching sense of deprivation from the Holy Spirit. Relief came not "by the help of man, nor by the letter" but "by His immediate Spirit and power."

William Penn (1644–1718). William Penn was remarkable proof of the dynamic appeal of Quakerism. A scion of wealth and son of a distinguished English admiral, Penn was expelled from Oxford and disinherited by his father because of his beliefs. His intelligence, education, and qualities of leadership made him a foremost representative of the Quakers. He suffered imprisonment and persecution but in 1681 obtained from Charles II the charter of Pennsylvania, where he meant to gather together the "Children of Light" and live in peace. He beggared himself for his colonial project and was briefly immured in debtor's prison. While writing and preaching for the cause, he was struck down in 1712 by paralysis from which he never recovered. Although writing extensively, Penn's most popular work was his best.

No Cross, No Crown (1669) was written while Penn was imprisoned in the Tower of London for the sake of conscience, 1668–69. Penn's position is unqualifiedly Protestant. Retiring from the world into a monastery he deems "a lazy, rusty, unprofitable self-denial." The pervasive call is for every man to take up the cross of Christ and bear it in the midst of life to earn the crown of mystic joy; to be in the world but not of it. "True godliness don't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it." Calvinism like its Roman Catholic precursor accepted poverty and misery as the visible signs of God's displeasure, but Penn forcefully advocates the reform spirit of Quakerism. He envisages a time when human brotherhood will make this a world where no one will permit another to suffer if help can be given. The work is valuable as a documentation of Restoration injustice and immorality depicted by a self-alienated member of the highest class of society. The indecency of much Restoration literature makes Penn wish to eliminate the aesthetic arts altogether in favor of the arts of practical achievement and true brotherhood. To the Baroque splendors of Milton and the imaginative visions of Bunyan he counters the quiet inner radiance and outer humanitarianism of the Quakers. Lamb commended the book to Coleridge: "Good thoughts in good language."

RELIGIOUS ALLEGORY

John Bunyan (1628–1688). John Bunyan was born at Elstow near Bedford. He followed his father's trade of tinker and served as a trooper in the parliamentarian army (1644–46). He married in 1648 or 1649. In 1653 he joined a Baptist group at Bedford and was appointed a preacher in 1657. At the Restoration he was a center of nonconformist resistance to Stuart op-

pression and preferred jail to relinquishing his spiritual principles. Except for a brief interval in 1666 he was in prison from 1660 until 1672. He spent his imprisonment studying and writing. During another imprisonment in 1675 he wrote *Pilgrim's Progress.* During his lifetime Bunyan published forty-three books, and several others appeared posthumously. Bunyan sprang wholly from the people, and his voice is that of a proletarian like Langland in an era when literature was deemed the prerogative of the aristocracy. He unites the homey realism of the folk with intense religiosity and the noble cadences of the Authorized Version of the Bible.

Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1666), written during his first incarceration, is Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, the nearest Protestant equivalent of St. Augustine's *Confessions.* His strange youth fascinates modern psychologists with its vivid imagination and terrifying hallucinations. Today's reader will smile at the youthful sins—ringing the church bells, dancing on the green, playing tip-cat on Sunday—that caused Bunyan such bitter remorse. Affecting is the poverty of his domestic life; he and his wife were "without so much household stuff as a dish or a spoon between them." Through some pious literature of his wife's, Bunyan started the road to religious conversion. The light of inward faith brought humble joy to the Bedford brazier, psychotherapeutically cleansing a troubled soul and steeling it to endure every persecution. For his right to believe he suffered physically but felt overpowering spiritual compensation. His naive determination carried him through battles with church and state that seem incomprehensible to a freer age. No other work in English portrays steadfast faith and noble humility so effectively.

The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come (1678), written during his second incarceration, has been termed the best syllabus of evangelical Protestantism, and the most successful attempt to do for Protestantism what Dante did for medieval Catholicism.

Carrying a heavy burden of sins and terrified by the Biblical warning of coming Judgment, Christian flees the City of Destruction to find Zion, the City of God. Directed by Evangelist to the Wicket-Gate of Conversion, he is mired in the Slough of Despond and beguiled by Mr. Worldly-Wiseman to seek salvation in the village of Morality. Appalled by thunder from nearby Mt. Sinai (the Law), he is rescued by Evangelist and passes through the Wicket-Gate.

At the house of the Interpreter he is graphically instructed in the central doctrines of Christianity, especially justification by faith. At the cross of Christ he is relieved of his burden, dressed in new raiment, sealed on the forehead, and issued a roll of advice and instruction. In his journey he encounters other pilgrims, most representing errors in the Christian life. Climbing the Hill Difficulty and tremblingly passing lions in the way, he is entertained in the House Beautiful. In the Valley of Humiliation he must fight the giant Apollyon (the angel of the bottomless pit in the Book of Revelation).

In the Valley of the Shadow of Death he is joined by Faithful, and both are imprisoned by the frivolous society of Vanity Fair. After the martyrdom of Faithful, Christian is joined by another companion, Hopeful. In Bypath Meadow he is trapped by Giant Despair but escapes from Doubting Castle by the key of Promise. From the Delectable Mountains he gazes upon the Holy City of God. The final stage of the journey is over Enchanted Ground, through the Country of Beulah, and across the River of Death into the Celestial City.

Pilgrim's Progress seems the culmination of medieval allegory in the uncultured mind as *The Faerie Queene* was its culmination among the polished and well educated. Wholly Protestant, the work nonetheless stems from many centuries of simple preaching and allegorizing in country churches and at cottage hearths by devout parents. The power of a born storyteller is manifest in its robust true-to-life pictures. Christian is simultaneously Everyman and a humble Bedfordshire peasant. Language and incidents have the smack of the English countryside and the everyday Englishman. The spiritual struggles of the author make the book ring with emotional sincerity. Theologically the work is Calvinistic. Christian is one of the Lord's elect; those who oppose him are reprobates, doomed to eternal damnation. Calvin divided all men into two groups, the saved and the damned. For the saved was the Convenant of Grace, the atonement of Christ, the visa to Heaven; for the damned was the Covenant of the Law, and the consignment to Hell for the unredeemed.

In England only the Bible and Shakespeare have exceeded the popularity of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Although the work was admired by Swift, Johnson, and Cowper, it was not deemed literature until Southey's edition in 1831 and Macaulay's "Essay on Bunyan" reviewing it.

The second part of *Pilgrim's Progress,* published in 1684, is inferior, as sequels often are. Christiana, Christian's wife, along with her four sons, Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, and James, and her friend Mercy, follow Christian's pilgrimage to the Holy City. Some fascinating characters light this work —that valiant fighter, Mr. Greatheart, leader of the party and probably drawn from Bunyan himself, and Mr. Brisk, Mercy's breezy beau; and there are some fascinating episodes—Matthew gets a fearful and completely realistic stomach colic from eating fruit in Beelzebub's orchard. Apparently Bunyan felt that the spiritual adventure was not so complex for women and children; but, most especially, he could not portray another's experience as grippingly and profoundly as he did his own in the first part of *Pilgrim's Progress.*

The Life and Death of Mr. Badman (1680) is the most "modern" of Bunyan's writings. In dialogue Mr. Wiseman minutely dissects Vanity Fair for his friend, Mr. Attentive. Mr. Badman is a trader indulging in every vice: fake bankruptcy, false weights, adulterated products, personal depravity. Restoration society is indicted for all its wickedness and chicanery in a searching social document. A host of appropriate anecdotes and parallel episodes enlivens each devilment examined. The picaresque tradition is a

remote source for the style of the work, but Bunyan roundly condemns his subject constantly instead of asking our sneaking sympathy. The road ahead to Defoe, however, is perfectly clear.

The Holy War Made by Shaddai upon Diabolus (1682) is Bunyan's greatest work after *Pilgrim's Progress,* and Macaulay rated it the greatest allegory in English except for its noted predecessor. It narrates the conflict of God against the Devil "for the regaining of the Metropolis of the World, or the losing and taking again of Mansoul." Bunyan now consciously realized his literary vogue among the faithful, and the allegory is far more complex and subtle than in *Pilgrim's Progress.* Mansoul is not a person but a town, torn against itself in all human divisions, not the merely individual ones of Christian. Theological and political controversies make it far less interesting today than the psychological struggles of *Pilgrim's Progress.*

With Milton and the later Commonwealth writers, we come to the end of the Renaissance. England, during the 17th century, moved from a country whose roots were deep in the past, in medieval learning and in Renaissance optimism and love of the ancients, to a country that had been shaken by religious doubt and civil warfare, and which at the Restoration was ready to usher in the modern secular and industrial world.

Throughout this century there runs the unifying thread of the quest for order—order in man, in the state, in the universe. Order of one sort or another had been the concern of such various men as King James and Cromwell, Bacon and Hobbes, Bunyan and Milton. The literature of this period therefore is troubled, but troubled in a new way.

The universe in Dante's *Divine Comedy*—perfectly spherical, balanced, harmonious, closed—was a comfort and a promise. But Milton's universe—infinite, awesome, with the world a frail pendant above the surging chaos—displays a different mind, a different time. Man's position is no longer central, no longer secure.

Yet for all its seeking it was a time of great literary activity, too. As the age was full of questions, so it produced a myriad of answers presented in a variety of styles and attitudes that clearly indicate how learned and many-sided this century was. But it is Milton's genius above all others that represents a true culmination of the age. He, as an activist in the Commonwealth government, and later as a poet in loneliness, made attempts at—and in part succeeded in—bringing some resolution to the chaos of doubt and fanaticism that plagued his time. Our own time, which has been equally troubled and disordered, may well find itself in an analogous position to that doubt-filled, strife-ridden age, and it may yet derive a like comfort from that great "organ voice" with its refusal to despair.

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