HVLC.01.074

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO ROMANTICISM

Course book 1

Required reading:

Course books 1 and 2

***An Outline of English Literature*. Ed. By Pat Rogers. Oxford University Press, 1998** (in course book 1):

Chapter 1. Old and Middle English

***Myths and Legends of the Middle Ages*. Senate, 1994** (in course book 1):

Chapter 11. Titurel and the Holy Grail

Chapter 12. Merlin

Chapter 13. The Round Table

Roy Strong. *The Spirit of Britain. A Narrative History of the Arts*. Pimlico, 2000:

Chapter 12. Classical Interlude (in course book 1)

Chapter 13. Cultural Revolution (in course book 1)

Chapter 25. Babylon (in course book 2)

Chapter 26. The Grand Tour and After (in course book 2)

Chapter 27. Forging a Culture (in course book 2)

Chapter 28. Sensibility (in course books 2)

Plus extracts from the book included in your course books

Andrew Sanders. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

Chapter 3. Renaissance and Reformation

Chapter 4. Revolution and Restoration

Chapter 5. Eighteenth-Century Literature

All the materials are available electronically at my homepage

Schedule

Week 1:

In class: Old English poetry. *The Dream of the Rood. The Wanderer*

Homework: revision questions 1 and 2

Week 2:

In class: Middle English poetry. Harley lyrics. The medieval and Elizabethan world picture. *Essay on Man. Orchestra.* Various texts.

Homework: revision questions 3 and 4

Week 3:

In class: Chivalry and courtly love. *The Thrush and the Nightingale.*

Homework: revision questions 5 and 6

The last lecture of the month:

Progress test (30 min) on revision questions 1-6

Week 4:

In class: The Elizabethan sonnet. Various texts. *The Shepheardes Calender.*

Homework: revision questions 7 and 8

Week 5:

In class: *The Faerie Queen.* Metaphysical poetry. *The Flea. Love's Alchemy. Elegy XIX.*

Homework: revision questions 9, 10 and 11

Week 6:

In class: Metaphysical poetry. *Hymn to God My God, The Altar. The Collar. The Pilgrimage. Canticle. The Countess of Denbigh. The World. The Definition of Love. To His Coy Mistress. The Garden.*

Homework: revision questions 12, 13 and 14

Week 7:

In class: Classicism. *To Penshurst.* Cavalier poets. *The Argument of His Book. To Althea. The Constant Lover. Delight in Disorder. The Grasshopper.*

Homework: revision questions 15 and 16

The last lecture of the month:

Progress test (30 min) on revision questions 7-16

Week 8:

In class: Restoration. *Paradise Lost*. Restoration verse (texts). Science. *To The Memory of Sir Isaac Newton*.

Homework: revision questions 17 and 18

Week 9:

In class: Palladianism. *To Richard Boyle*.

Homework: revision questions 19 and 20

Week 10:

In class: Neoclassicism. *An Essay on Criticism*.

Homework: revision questions 21 and 22

Week 11:

In class: Augustan reflective poetry. *Cooper's Hill. Windsor Forest. Grongar Hill. Ode on Solitude. A Thought in a Garden. The Petition for an Absolute Retreat. A Nocturnal reverie.*

Homework: revision questions 23 and 24

The last lecture of the month:

Progress test (30 in) on revision questions 17-24

Week 12:

In class: Augustan reflective poetry. *The Choice*.. Augustan satire. *A Description of a City Shower. London*.

Homework: revision for the exam

NB! The schedule is provisional and will be adjusted to the progress made in class each week.

ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO ROMANTICISM

Revision questions (pay special attention to names in the brackets)

1. The general characteristics of Old English poetry and prose:

   the definition of what constitutes the Old English period, issues with chronology, alliterative patterns used, the *scop's* word-hoard, the mingling of pagan and Christian elements (for instance in *Beowulf*), the sophisticated 'rhythmical prose' of Wessex (Rogers, Chapter 1)

2. The general characteristics of Middle English poetry and prose:

   the definition of what constitutes the Middle English period, the trilingual culture of Norman England, the advent of the short 'lyric' and rhyme, the 'Alliterative Revival' (Rogers, Chapter 1)

3. Chivalry and courtly love:

   the evolution and essence of the chivalric code of good manners, the evolution and essence of the culture of courtly love, Roman literature and Neoplatonic philosophy underpinning them, the cult of the lady as a means of the knight's moral refinement (handout)

4. Medieval literature in the romance mode:

   the fusion of epic action and Ovidian sentiment, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a representative English romance of chivalry, brief synopses of the stories related to King Arthur and the Round Table and the Quest for the Holy Grail) (handout; Myths and Legends; Rogers, Chapter 1)

5. The 'courtly maker' Chaucer and his fifteenth-century imitators (Rogers, Chapter 1)
6. The medieval and Elizabethan world picture (handout)
7. The Humanist movement in England:

   origins of humanism, the humanist curriculum, humanism at the universities and the Tudor court, humanism and Reformation (Strong, Chapter 12)

8. The impact of Reformation on English culture:

   the Protestant reasoning behind iconoclasm, the destruction of shrines and religious houses under Henry VIII, the destruction of images and books under Edward VI, the effect of the vernacular Bible and The Book of Common Prayer on English letters, the translations of the Bible (Tyndale, Coverdale, the 'Bishops' Bible' and the 'Geneva Bible', the King James Bible of 1611) (Strong, Chapter 13; Sanders, Chapters 3 and 4)

9. Chivalry in the service of Tudor monarchy:

the cult of Elizabeth I, Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, the cult of the emblems and imprese (Strong in the course book; Sanders, Chapter 3)

10. The evolution of English renaissance poety:

    Wyatt and Surrey as early imitators of Petrarch, Sidney's role in advocating the need for modern vernacular poetry in *Defence of Poesie*, the fashion for the Neoplatonic sonnet sequences in the 1590s (Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare) (Sanders, Chapter 3)

11. The experimental nature of Elizabethan prose:

    the pastoral romances of Sidney, Greene and Lodge, Lyly's experiments with style in his Euphues-books, Leland as a pioneering antiquarian historian, Haklyut and Raleigh as chroniclers of the age of exploration (Sanders, Chapter 3)

12. The Elizabethan and Jacobean drama:

    comedy (the influence of Terence and Plautus at schools and universities, Lyly, Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, Dekker); tragedy (the influence of Seneca, Sackville and Norton, Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman, Marston, Heywood, Tourneur, Webster); tragi-comedy and romantic tragedy (Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ford) (handout; Sanders, Chapter 3)

13. Shakespeare's histories, comedies and tragedies (Sanders, Chapter 3)
14. The Jacobean and Caroline court culture:

    the masque as an instrument of court propaganda, the arrival of classicism in England, the impact of the art collections of Arundel and Charles I, the Caroline 'the beauty of holiness', Cavalier poetry (Strong in the course book; Sanders, Chapter 4)

15. Metaphysical poetry of the first half of the 17th century:

    its general character, Donne, Quarles, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Marvel (Sanders, Chapter 4)

16. The political prose of the Civil War and Interregnum:

    the general overview of the wide spectrum of opinion, both Puritan and Royalist; Milton as a polemicist (Sanders, Chapter 4)

17. The Restoration ethos:

    the baroque style as a reflection absoluute monarchy, the libertine court culture of Charles II, Restoration poetry and drama, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, diarists Evelyn and Pepys, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Behn as the first professional woman writer in England (Strong in the course book; Sanders, Chapter 4)

18. Science and the emergence of the neoclassical/Augustan style:

natural philosophy and the discoveries of Newton, the periodization and general character of neoclassical/Augustan writing, the emergence of the polite society, Dryden, Burlington's Palladianism as a reincarnation of the grandeur of Rome (handout; Strong in the course book; Sanders, Chapter 4)

19. The Augustan publishing explosion and expansion of literacy (Strong, Chapter 25)
20. The Grand Tour and its impact on British culture (Strong, Chapter 26)
21. Augustan patriotism and the forging of distinctive national culture, including the literary canon and the cult of Shakespeare (Strong, Chapter 27)
22. The Augustan reappraisal of nature, the landscape garden and the culture of sensibility (Strong, Chapters 27 and 28)
23. Augustan poetry:

    satire (Swift, Pope, Johnson), reflective and nature poetry (Denham, Pope, Dyer, Winchilsea, Thomson, Pomfret) (handouts; Sanders, Chapter 4)

24. The evolution of the novel in the 18th-century:

    the contributions made to the genre by Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Goldsmith (Sanders, Chapter 4)

An Outline of English Literature. Ed. by Pat Rogers. Longman Oxford UP, 1998

OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE : PLACES OF INTEREST

1. Old and Middle English

*c.*700–1485

J. A. BURROW

Introduction

THE periods of English literature assigned to this first chapter are together more than half as long again as all those covered by the other eight chapters taken together. They extend from 700 to about 1500, a stretch of roughly eight hundred years. For this gross disproportion in our History there are three main reasons. First, the quantities of English verse and prose actually produced during these centuries were, relatively speaking, small. The population of England in 1377, the year of the poll tax, was probably something less than three million—as against more than forty-six million in 1976. Such a great quantitative difference cannot be ignored, even though the incidence of literary talent does not rise and fall in any fixed proportion to the general population, as is sufficiently proved by the example of London in 1377, whose perhaps forty or fifty thousand inhabitants included Chaucer, Langland, and Gower. It must also be remembered that the literary efforts of this relatively small population were by no means confined to the English language. Authors who aspired to address the larger learned world regularly wrote in Latin; and Chaucer was perhaps the first Englishman deliberately to write for posterity in his native tongue. A History of Literature in England would include such Latin writers as Bede, John of Salisbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Richard of Bury; but a History of Literature in English must exclude these men, together with all those subjects of the English Crown who, after the Norman Conquest, wrote in Anglo-Norman or continental French. It can therefore give only a partial account of such writers as

Chaucer's friend John Gower, who wrote in all three languages: French (*Mirour de l'Omme*), Latin (*Vox clamantis*), and English (*Confessio Amantis*).

A second consideration, also quantitative in character, concerns lost literature. The amount of this can never be determined, but it is certainly much greater than in later periods. A literary work in a medieval vernacular might never get written down at all, or else, if it did, the copies may have been lost. Admittedly, one should not draw too sharp or simple a distinction between the age of manuscript, with which this chapter is concerned, and the age of print, which begins for English with William Caxton's *History of Troy* (1473 or 1474). Habits of writing and reading in Anglo-Saxon England were indeed largely confined to monastic centres; but from the twelfth century onwards the production and consumption of manuscript material increased greatly, and some vernacular works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries survive in numerous copies. Yet even Geoffrey Chaucer is known from his own testimony to have composed works of which no copy survives (he mentions a 'book of the Leoun', for instance); and many more such losses are certainly to be reckoned with in earlier centuries. Furthermore, since verse could be composed and remembered without the use of writing, poems would not necessarily achieve even the doubtful permanence of a single manuscript copy. This consideration applies with particular force to Anglo-Saxon verse. Here, indeed, the problem for the literary historian is insurmountable, since most of the available corpus (of little more than 30,000 lines in all) survives in just four manuscript books. There is no way of estimating the number of other books which have been lost, let alone the number of poems which never got written down; nor can one assume that the contents of the four main manuscripts, all of which were compiled in monasteries, offer a representative sample of the whole.

The third consideration concerns the character and quality of what does survive. The ancient tradition that English literature begins with Geoffrey Chaucer does more than simply pay tribute to that great poet. It also recognizes an essential fact about the history of our literary language, whose modern form descends from an ancestor very like the London English which Chaucer used. A modern reader who works his way back from, say, Wyatt and Surrey through Malory to Chaucer will encounter no break in continuity, despite the undoubted linguistic difficulties which Chaucer presents. But it was only towards the end of the Middle Ages that this standard literary language emerged. Anglo-Saxon England had developed in the later tenth century its own remarkably consistent form of written English, based on the dialect of Wessex, and it is in this language that most of its literary monuments survive; but Late West Saxon is first accessible to the modern reader only as a foreign language, whose grammar and vocabulary have to be learned from books. Furthermore, when after the Norman Conquest Wessex and its language forfeited the predominance which they had enjoyed in the times of Alfred and his successors, English writers were once more reduced to using whatever form of the vernacular was current in their own part of the country. Thus, up to the fifteenth century, Middle English writings exhibit a diversity of linguistic forms which can be almost as daunting as the more remote, but also much more regular, language of Old English literature. As late as Chaucer's day, we find a great contemporary, the *Gawain*-poet, employing the vocabulary and forms of the Staffordshire or Cheshire region in which he was brought up.

It is these linguistic difficulties, more than any other factor, which prevent those medieval writers who deserve to do so from taking their rightful place, along with Chaucer, in the larger canon of living English literature. In this chapter I can attempt only to indicate who some of these deserving writers are, and what claim each may have to a place in this volume. I shall consider first Old English poetry, then Old and Middle English prose, and finally Middle English poetry.

Old English Poetry

Even if space permitted, it would not be possible to write a history of English poetry in the period before the Conquest—to display, that is, the development of a poetic tradition, tracing influences, marking changes, identifying movements and schools. The evidence is lacking. All that we have is a small and probably unrepresentative sample, most of which survives in copies made towards the end of the period. The

four major poetic codices mentioned earlier all date from about fifty years either side of the year 1000: the *Beowulf* manuscript in the British Library, the Bodleian manuscript of biblical poems (including those known as *Genesis* and *Exodus*), the Vercelli manuscript (which contains *The Dream of the Rood*), and the Exeter manuscript (which includes the *Advent Lyrics*, the so-called 'elegies', and the riddles). Many of the poems were certainly written many years before these books were copied; but there is very little solid evidence for dating them and so arranging them in a chronological sequence. *The Battle of Maldon* must be late, because the event which it describes occurred in the year 991; and *The Dream of the Rood* must (in part, at least) be quite early, because some lines corresponding to the Vercelli text are to be found inscribed in runic letters on an eighth-century stone cross; but most Anglo-Saxon poetry stands grandly aloof from current affairs, and there are very few such early witnesses as the Ruthwell Cross.

In any case, considered as the product of perhaps three hundred years of poetic activity, the remains exhibit relatively few of those large variations in subject and style which might prompt literary historians to construct at least a hypothetical chronology and attempt to distinguish, as art historians are able to do with certainty, between eighth-century and tenth-century work. Indeed, reading through the surviving verse, one's first impression is of marked homogeneity. This is most obviously, and most fundamentally, a homogeneity of metrical form. All known Old English poems observe, though with some variations, the principles of alliterative verse. Such verse continued to be written in English, as we shall see, to the end of the Middle Ages, and it has been revived in modern times by poets such as W. H. Auden; but its principles, derived from a common Germanic tradition of oral poetry, present difficulties to the reader of Chaucer, Pope, or Tennyson. He must learn to forget three considerations which he has been taught to regard as fundamental: syllable count (decasyllabic lines, etc.), recurrent patterns of stress (iambic feet, etc.), and rhyme. In their place, alliteration must be recognized as a basic formal requirement, not an optional expressive extra. The Anglo-Saxon verse line consists of two parts bound together by alliteration. Variation in the number of syllables in each half-line is (within limits) a matter of

indifference, but each half will normally have two stressed or heavy syllables; and it is upon these stressed syllables that the essential binding alliteration falls. Thus:

Þá com of móre under místhléoþum
Gréndel góngan, Gódes yrre bær.

(*Beowulf*, 710–11)

[Then came from the moor under the mist-slopes Grendel walking, he bore God's anger. *þ*, 'thorn', is pronounced like *th*.]

In the first half-line the alliteration may fall on either of the two stressed syllables (*more* in the first line quoted) or else on both (*Grendel* and *gongan* in the second line), but in the second half-line it must fall on the first and not the second, by a strict self-denying ordinance: a x a x, or x a a x, or a a a x, but not a a a a. The lines quoted also illustrate characteristic variations of rhythmic pattern from half-line to half-line, depending upon the positioning of the two stressed syllables in relation to the unstressed ones. These patterns represent a selection from the basic stock of two-stress phrase rhythms which spoken English still favours; and each phrase or half-line, in poetry as in common speech, is free to vary at will from the rhythm of its neighbour. Hence, in the absence of any principle of rhythmical recurrence, the Anglo-Saxon verse line approaches more nearly to the movement of conversational English than does, say, the iambic pentameter of later ages.

Yet the verse is generally far from conversational in manner. On the contrary, it displays, as archaic poetry often does, a highly elaborate and conventional language of its own, distinct from common vocabulary and idiom, such that the listening ear can clearly distinguish it as the product of a mastered art—the art of the bard, or, as Anglo-Saxons called him, the *scop*. Comparison with the alliterative verse of other Germanic peoples (German and Icelandic, for instance) shows that this poetic idiom must go back, in many of its essential features, to an early preliterate age, when the poet, exercising his skills in the very presence of his audience, relied on a stock of ready-made formulaic expressions and poetical synonyms in order to satisfy his listeners' demand for an unhesitating flow of well-formed alliterative verses. Few scholars now believe that any of the surviving Anglo-Saxon

texts directly represent such an act of 'oral composition'; yet similar considerations of metrical convenience still play a large part in their poetic diction. Thus, special compounds such as *misthleoþ*, 'mist-slope', are commonly employed, as in the line from *Beowulf* quoted above, in forming a half-line of the clashing-stress type (x x // x). That instance also shows how the first element in such a compound could be varied to provide a link with different alliterating sounds in the other half-line, for elsewhere in *Beowulf* we meet 'under fenhleoþu' ('under the *fen*-slopes') functioning as the second half of an f-alliterating line. One typical fault in Anglo-Saxon poetry is that such variations will serve *only* their metrical purpose; but the *Beowulf*-poet's characteristically massive compounding of *mist* (not 'misty') and *hleoþ* achieves, in the eerie context of the monster Grendel's approach from the moor, much more than just a convenient alliteration.

It would, in any case, be wrong to speak as if the demands of a common metre imposed on Anglo-Saxon poets a single unvarying manner of utterance. The style of *The Battle of Maldon* is much less ornate than that of *Beowulf*, while the poet of the so-called *Later Genesis* achieves, in his version of the fall of Satan and the temptation of Adam and Eve, a remarkable freedom in the rendering of passionate speech. Here his Satan, raging in Hell, breaks off with an unspoken threat:

> 'Þæt me is sorga mæst
> Þæt Adam sceal, þe wæs of corþan geworht,
> Minne stronglican stol behealdan,
> Wesan him on wynne, ond we þis wite þolien,
> Hearm on þisse helle. Wala, ahte ic minra handa geweald
> Ond moste ane tid ute weorþan,
> Wesan ane winterstunde, þonne ic mid þys werode . . .'
>
> (*Later Genesis*, 364–70)

['The greatest of my sorrows is that Adam, who was made of earth, is to occupy my mighty throne and live in bliss, whilst we suffer this torment, pain in this hell. Alas, if I only had the use of my hands and could get out of here for a time, even for just one winter's hour, then I with this company . . .']

The one unusual compound here, *winterstund* or 'winter hour', is loaded with relevant meaning—winter hours being shorter than summer ones if, as was customary, you divide daylight time into twelve. Furthermore, the common *scop*'s trick of repeating an idea in different words at the start of a following line, and so establishing a new alliteration without advancing the sense, here creates just the right effect of resentful brooding: 'ond we þis wite þolien, / Hearm on þisse helle'.

Other poets can create quite different effects. In the beautiful *Advent Lyrics* of the Exeter manuscript, for instance, the author catches in the very fullness of his English poetic idiom something of the ecstatic strangeness of an Advent invocation to Christ ('Come out by the garden gate, visit those you have redeemed'):

> Þu þisne middangeard mildc geblissa
> Þurh þinne hercyme, hælende Crist,
> Ond þa gyldnan geatu, þe in geardagum
> Ful longe ær bilocen stodan,
> Heofona heahfrea, hat ontynan.
>
> (*Advent Lyrics*, 249–53)

[Graciously bless this earth through your coming hither, saviour Christ, and command, high lord of the heavens, that those golden gates be opened which had formerly for so long stood locked.]

These lines provide another example of the characteristic technique known as 'variation'. The two expressions 'hælende Crist' and 'heofona heahfrea' do not have the same meaning, any more than do 'wite' and 'hearm' in Satan's speech; but they both denote the same referent. Such a play of varied expressions about a single referent serves, among other purposes, to distance the language of the *scops* from ordinary language by making room for abnormal, even enigmatic, modes of expression. The set of riddles in the Exeter manuscript shows how readily and effectively the Anglo-Saxon poetic manner could be turned to the purpose of actual riddling. The skilled *scop* was adept at 'varying his words' ('wordum wrixlan', *Beowulf*, 874) and drawing on his 'word-hoard', beyond the limits of ordinary language—and even, sometimes, of ordinary comprehension. To what do the following lines refer?

> Dægscealdes hleo
> Wand ofer wolcnum; hæfde witig God

Sunnan siþfæt segle ofertolden,
Swa þa mæstrapas men ne cuþon,
Ne þa seglrode geseon meahton,
Eorþbuende ealle cræfte,
Hu afæstnod wæs feldhusa mæst.

[A protecting shield by day, it passed across the skies. God in his wisdom had screened the sun's course with a sail, so that men could not perceive the ropes of its mast, nor could earthdwellers for all their skill see the spars or understand how that greatest of field-houses was made fast.]

The author of *Exodus* is here describing the pillar of cloud by day that led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Provoked by a subject for which the traditional word-hoard would provide no expressions, the poet refers to the pillar, riddle-fashion, as a shield, a sail, and a 'field-house' (that is, a tent).

We can see what Anglo-Saxon poetry is like at its best by looking in rather more detail at three poems: *Beowulf*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Dream of the Rood*.

The dating of *Beowulf* is still a matter of controversy. Some scholars put it as early as 700, others as late as 1000. On any possible dating, however, the poem is one of the earliest as well as one of the grandest monuments of the Germanic literatures. It is therefore not surprising that earlier scholars (many themselves Germans) looked in it chiefly for testimonies of Germanic antiquity. The main stories of the poem—Beowulf's fights against Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon—yield no such testimony, for they are no more (and no less) than versions of common folk-tales; but the poet introduces many incidental stories, some of which, such as that of Sigemund, belong to the world of ancient Germanic legend. He also entangles his folk-tales and legends in a web of other events, mainly set in the Baltic kingdoms of Denmark, Geatland, and Sweden; and at least one of these events (the raid against the Franks led by Beowulf's lord Hygelac, king of the Geats) can be shown actually to have occurred, in the sixth century. Furthermore, the poet's rich and leisurely portrayal of this Baltic world provides many instances of customs going back to pre-Christian times: the close relationship between lord and man in the war-band or *comitatus* (observed by Tacitus in his *Germania*), the institutions of the

beot, or vow before battle, and the blood-feud, and the burning of the bodies of the dead. Scholarly interest in such matters naturally encouraged the supposition that the unknown author of the poem was himself a bard of the ancient type portrayed within the poem—a lord's *scop*, deep-versed in pagan tales and traditions, reciting his 'hall-entertainment' to the accompaniment of the harp (so *Beowulf*, 867 ff. and 1063 ff.).

More recent scholarship has been inclined to dismiss this image of the author as a romantic fantasy, and to substitute for it the image of a Christian poet, perhaps a monk, versed not only in old native traditions (as he must have been) but also in the culture and literature of the Latin Church, writing a poem whose chief purpose is, if not pious, at least highly moral. When *this* poet speaks of 'wyrd' or fate, he has in mind, not some archaic pagan force, but that *providentia* of which Boethius wrote in *De consolatione Philosophiae*; and his monster Grendel is not only, as the poet himself says, a descendent of Cain the first murderer, but also an embodiment, even an allegorical representative, of that evil against which the militant Christian perpetually fights.

The contrast between such views corresponds, in part, to a deliberate dichotomy within *Beowulf* itself. Medieval writers are sometimes represented as confirmed anachronists, lacking any sense of historical perspective; but this is certainly not true of *Beowulf*, any more than of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Like Chaucer, the Anglo-Saxon poet is well aware of looking back from his own Christian times to an old society with different customs and beliefs. The poem is set, as its very first line announces, 'in days gone by' ('in geardagum'); and this setting is kept actively before the reader throughout. It is, for instance, the poet and his fellow Christians who can know that Grendel and his mother belong to the race of monsters descended from Cain. For the Danish king Hrothgar, who suffers their ravages, they are totally mysterious creatures of the moor: not knowing the Bible, he cannot know their ancestry (*Beowulf*, 1355–7). Again, when the aged Beowulf is killed by the dragon, the poet can observe that his soul departs from the body to 'seek the judgement that awaits just men' ('secean soþfæstra dom', 2820). Yet the hero's people, the Geats, perform his obsequies in the pagan manner—burning his body on a funeral pyre, and burying his

ashes with much treasure in a great barrow. This is what Beowulf himself commanded, in a dying speech which has all the dark pathos, but also all the grandeur, of a pagan who cannot hope for anything more than earthly remembrance after death:

> 'Hataþ heaþomære hlæw gewyrcean
> Beorhtne æfter bæle æt brimes nosan;
> Se scel to gemyndum minum leodum
> Heah hlifian on Hronesnæsse,
> Þæt hit sæliþend syþþan hatan
> Biowulfes biorh, þa þe brentingas
> Ofer floda genipu feorran drifaþ.'
>
> (*Beowulf*, 2802–8)

['Command renowned warriors to build a bright mound after my burning at the sea headland. That will tower high on Whale Cape as a reminder to my people, so that seafarers who drive their tall ships from afar over the dark waves may thereafter know it as Beowulf's Barrow.']

A noble passage such as that is itself enough to show that the Christian poet by no means adopts a polemical or derogatory attitude towards his pagan hero. The distinction between Christian and pagan could never be a matter of complete indifference; but *Beowulf*, like *Troilus*, concerns itself chiefly with human issues to which that distinction is irrelevant. The characters in the poem do not possess the Christian hope, but neither are they represented as benighted 'heathens'—a word which (with one notable exception in line 179) the poet associates with monsters not men. The men are generally portrayed as natural monotheists, who can thank God for a successful journey and live a virtuous life according to their lights. This life is overcast with regret for the past and fear of the future—it is in fact, despite bright moments, an unhappy life—but this is not because the men lack consolations available to the Christian poet. On the contrary, it is represented as a universal human condition; and the heart of the poem lies precisely in its vision of the uncertainty of all existence and in its exploration of men's responses to the changes and reversals which are their lot in any age.

It is these concerns which justify the extraordinary manner in which the *Beowulf*-poet conducts his narrative: the 'rambling, dilatory

method—the forward, backward, and sideward movements' of which Klaeber speaks in what is still the best edition of the poem. In a straightforward narrative such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, neither narrator nor character will refer to past or future any more than the immediate demands of the story require; but in *Beowulf* both the characters and the narrator continually look before and after; and these digressions are so extensive, especially in the second half of the poem, that the reader sometimes finds it difficult, as the reader of Proust often does, to be sure what in the narrative present is actually happening. Hence, although the main story of the monster-fights is simple, and the thoughts and reactions of the characters are also generally straightforward, the poem as a whole presents a complex pattern, which has been compared to the intricate 'interlace' of illuminated manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels. By juxtaposing past, present, and future in this fashion, the narrative creates frequent opportunities for displaying the ups and downs of fame and fortune. Thus, after his defeat of Grendel, young Beowulf receives from his grateful Danish host Hrothgar the gift of a rich collar. Instead of describing what the collar looked like, as the author of *Sir Gawain* might have done, the *Beowulf*-poet first compares it to a collar in ancient legend (the 'Brosinga mene'), and then, looking forward, observes that it was later to be carried by Beowulf's lord Hygelac and lost by him on his disastrous raid against the Franks: 'hyne wyrd fornam' ('fate carried him off', 1205). Thus the recollected past and the anticipated future press upon and almost overwhelm the narrative present. One may see the same pattern again in the structure of the whole poem, which passes straight from the triumphs of young Beowulf in Denmark to his last battle as an old man against the dragon. The fifty winters and more which come between constitute, as it were, the poem's largest missing present, in relation to which Grendel represents a glorious past and the dragon a terrible future.

Man can come to terms with the uncertainties of life by trying to keep both past and future in view:

> Forþan biþ andgit æghwær selest,
> Ferhþes foreþanc. Fela sceal gebidan
> Leofes ond laþes se þe longe her

On þyssum windagum worolde bruceþ.

(*Beowulf*, 1059–62)

[So understanding is always the best thing, forethought of mind. A man who is to experience life for long here in these days of strife will encounter much joy and much sorrow.]

To ignore the past or the future is at best folly, at worst wickedness. To bear them always in mind is wisdom. But true understanding, and especially a correct anticipation of future events (*foreþanc*), are things not easy to achieve in an uncertain world. Thus Hrothgar, a wise old king, who has suffered a terrible reverse of fortune at the hands of Grendel and knows from experience how cruel life can be, has long since given up all hope of relief (932–9); but he is wrong, for the hero brings relief. These ironies of *foreþanc* are most fully displayed in the case of Beowulf himself. As a young man of little experience he determines to give the unarmed Grendel a sporting chance by himself using no weapons—an imprudent decision, which proves to be a fortunate one nevertheless, since the poet reveals that Grendel, unknown to the hero, is protected by magic against all weapons. Things are going Beowulf's way. Conversely, as an old man preparing to confront the dragon, Beowulf prudently equips himself with an iron shield to resist its fiery breath; and he draws, from prolonged reflection on what he has survived in the past, the reasonable expectation that he can survive this test also. But he too is wrong: both he and the dragon are *fæge*, doomed to die. This is what the poet means when he has Beowulf say, 'Gæþ a wyrd swa hio scel' ('Fate goes ever as it must', 455). The course of life cannot be predicted with any certainty. One can hope only to foresee the foreseeable and meet the unforeseen with dignity and resolution. Such seems to be the poem's deepest wisdom.

A similar view of life is to be found in other Old English poems. In *Deor*, for instance, the speaker, a *scop* who has lost the favour of his master, recalls old stories of life's reverses and so derives from the past the wisdom to be uncertain about the future, concluding each instance with the laconic refrain, 'Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg' ('That passed over, and so may this'). *Deor* is not a pagan poem, any more than *Beowulf* is: it simply confines itself, as *Beowulf* mostly does, to the wisdom of the secular man. Other poems, while taking a similar view

of life's uncertainties, reach out to express the hope of solid joys and lasting pleasures in a life to come. The Exeter manuscript contains, besides *Deor*, six other poems which are sometimes classified as elegies. Three of these are remarkable free-standing monologues, two for women's voices and one (in effect) for a man's, concerned with separation and loss: *The Wife's Lament*, *The Husband's Message*, and the mysterious *Wulf and Eadwacer*. None of these poems, however, offers the Christian consolation which crowns, somewhat uneasily, the two best-known 'elegies': *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.

The Seafarer, known to many modern readers in the vigorous but free-wheeling translation by Ezra Pound, plunges directly into a first-person account of the hardships of life at sea:

Mæg ic be me sylfum soþgied wrecan,
Siþas secgan, hu ic geswincdagum
Earfoþhwile oft þrowade,
Bitre breostceare gebiden hæbbe,
Gecunnad in ceole cearselda fela,
Atol yþa gewealc.

(*The Seafarer*, 1–6)

[I can make a true song about myself and speak of my journeys, how I have often suffered times of hardship in laborious days, endured bitter breast-sorrow, and experienced afloat many sorrowful places, the terrible tossing of the waves.]

The speaker's attitude to his experiences at sea seems unequivocal enough: they are bitter and terrible, a matter of hardship, labour, and sorrow. Yet as the poem progresses, his attitude complicates to the point of paradox. He continues to portray the hardships of sailing in graphic detail: 'Þær ic ne gehyrde butan hlimman sæ, / Iscaldne wæg' ('There I heard nothing but the pounding of the sea, the ice-cold wave'). However, he also comes to contrast sea-life with land-life in a fashion which increasingly glorifies the rigours of the former at the expense of the easy and dubious pleasures of dry land. It turns out, in fact, that the life of solitude and hardship is here, in sharp contrast to the other elegies, voluntarily undertaken, not imposed by fate. The speaker even confesses to a passionate longing for the sea:

Forþon cnyssaþ nu

Heortan geþohtas, þæt ic hean streamas,
Sealtyþa gelac, sylf cunnige.

(*The Seafarer*, 33–5)

[So now the beating thoughts of my heart urge that I should myself venture on the deep seas, the play of the salt waves.]

The expression 'sealtyþa gelac', 'the play of the salt waves', makes the sea sound more friendly than did the earlier 'atol yþa gewealc', 'the terrible tossing of the waves'; but in the brilliant passage of sea-fever which follows, the poet minimizes neither the hardships of the sea nor the delights of land. Spring on land is beautiful, even though the voice of the cuckoo sounds a warning of sorrow to come; and the call of the sea, though irresistible, is also harsh and frightening, like the voice of a lone-flying seabird. It is at this point that the poem takes its religious turn, with these lines:

Forþon me hatran sind
Dryhtnes dreamas þonne þis deade lif,
Læne on londe.

(*The Seafarer*, 64–6)

[So the joys of the Lord are more delightful to me than this dead and transitory life on land.]

Here 'land' enters into a new opposition, not with sea but with heaven; and the rest of the poem is devoted to amplifying this: on the one hand, the uncertainties and miseries of earthly life, on the other, eternal joys in a heavenly home. There is no reason to suspect here, as some scholars have done, the hand of a monkish reviser. The earth/heaven opposition is linked to what has gone before by more than a piece of word-play on 'land'. Yet this last part of the poem, despite fine things such as the description of bodily powers failing in old age, is undoubtedly inferior to what has gone before, partly because it has few of the graphic touches to be found in the sea passages, but mainly because the earth/heaven contrast, as presented here, lacks the complexity and richness of the earlier contrast between land and sea.

Not that Anglo-Saxon religious poetry is always lacking in vividness or complexity. Indeed, the last poem to be considered in this section

stands supreme in both respects. The peculiar boldness and brilliancy of *The Dream of the Rood* derives in part from the fact that, unlike other Old English poems on biblical themes, it describes not the biblical event itself but a vision or dream in which that event, the Crucifixion, is both symbolically represented and narrated by a participant. The functions of both symbol and narrator are performed by the rood, Christ's Cross. This appears first to the dreamer as a visionary symbol of overpowering mystery and grandeur. It is a towering tree, at one moment covered in gold and jewels, at the next soaked in blood. The dreamer, himself lonely and depressed, can only prostrate himself before such supernatural strangeness: 'Syllic wæs se sigebeam, ond ic synnum fah' ('Wonderful was the tree of victory, and I stained with sins'). The opposition between the natural and the supernatural, expressed in the two contrasting halves of this alliterative line, seems unbridgeable; but then the Cross begins to address the dreamer, not as a wonderful *sigebeam* but as an ordinary tree which got involved long ago in events which passed its own comprehension. The Cross's narrative of the Crucifixion (passages from which were inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross) conveys even more forcefully than the earlier alternations of gold and blood the paradox of a death which is also a victory. Using the old language of heroic poetry, the Cross represents itself as the loyal follower of a lord who inexplicably wills his own death. In a normal battle such as that described in *The Battle of Maldon*, to obey your leader's command to 'stand fast' is to help defend his life; but for this follower, to stand fast is to serve his lord's absolute will for death by remaining rigidly upright:

'Geseah ic þa frean mancynnes
Efstan elne mycle þæt he me wolde on gestigan.
Þær ic þa ne dorste ofer dryhtnes word
Bugan oþþe berstan, þa ic bifian geseah
Eorþan sceatas. Ealle ic mihte
Feondas gefyllan, hwæþre ic fæste stod.'

(*The Dream of the Rood*, 33–8)

['Then I saw the lord of mankind hurrying with great eagerness, wishing to mount me. I did not dare to bend or break there against the lord's command, when I saw the earth's surface tremble. I could have felled all the enemies—yet I stood fast.']

Thus the Cross speaks for the bewildered humanity of the dreamer; but it also, in an entirely convincing conjunction, speaks for the suffering humanity of Christ: 'Þurhdrifan hi me mid deorcan næglum; on me syndon þa dolg gesiene' ('They drove me through with black nails; the wounds are still to be seen on me'). These words are spoken not by Christ but by the Cross. It is because the Cross so participates in Christ's suffering that it can also participate in his glory. After the Crucifixion it is first buried, like Christ, and then (in a reference to the finding of the true Cross by St Helena) raised up and honoured. The vision has come full circle back to the *sigebeam* or tree of victory of its opening; but now the dreamer can also hope to participate, as one ordinary tree has done, in that victory. The poem therefore ends in a mood of confidence which contrasts with the dreamer's prostration at the outset. He can bear solitude and the loss of friends on earth now that he sees the way open to a 'heavenly home'.

Old and Middle English Prose

The distinction between verse and prose is by no means always clear in either of the periods covered by this chapter. Anglo-Saxon scribes wrote prose and verse alike continuously to the margins of their parchment; and the metrical rules of alliterative verse (Middle as well as Old English) were such as to allow various half-measures to flourish in the no man's land between formal verse and plain prose. Yet the distinction is important to the literary historian. The study of Old and Middle English prose has lagged behind that of the poetry, and a considerable number of texts still remain unedited; but it may be possible one day to write a continuous and fairly comprehensive history of English medieval prose, such as could never be made out for the verse. Anglo-Saxon verse is the product of a tradition which, on the one hand, reached far back into pre-literate times and which, on the other, was challenged and eventually replaced after the Conquest by a quite different tradition; so the history of English poetry may be said to begin, awkwardly enough, with something more like an end than a beginning. By contrast, the earliest monuments of English

prose, dating from the time of King Alfred, can claim to represent the true beginnings of a tradition of written prose (and what is prose without writing?). This tradition, furthermore, can be traced, through however many turnings, in a continuous line thereafter. The scholar R. W. Chambers wrote boldly of 'the continuity of English prose from Alfred to More'. His arguments have been justly criticized for understating the new influence of French on Middle English prose; yet they contain an essential truth, as may be appreciated by anyone familiar with the King James Bible who will read the following words aloud in almost any pronunciation:

Ælc þara þe þas min word gehierþ and þa wyrcp, biþ gelic þæm wisan were, se his hus ofer stan getimbrode. Þa com þær regen and micel flod, and þær bleowon windas, and ahruron on þæt hus, and hit na ne feoll; soþlice hit wæs ofer stan getimbrod.

This West-Saxon version of Matthew 7: 24–5 was made in the late tenth century, nearly one thousand years ago; yet the sentences still go to a familiar tune.

But how many works are there, in the long and comparatively well-documented history of Old and Middle English prose, which can justly claim a place in a general history of English literature? The one kind of prose that is today universally admitted to the category of literature is prose fiction; and prose fiction is hardly to be found in the English Middle Ages. The Old English *Apollonius of Tyre* barely qualifies; nor do we find in Middle English any equivalent to the great prose compilation of Arthurian romances, the Vulgate Cycle, which occupies such a commanding position in medieval French literature—not, that is, until the work of Malory, which will be described in the following chapter. Nor, even if the chronicling of current events can count as literature, are there any English rivals to Joinville or Froissart. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is a remarkable document; but the more sophisticated historians and chroniclers of post-Conquest England wrote in Latin or French, not in English. Indeed the only work of secular prose before Malory's *Morte Darthur* which can claim a foothold in the canon of English literature is *Mandeville's Travels*—and that entertaining work is translated from the French. But with religious prose the picture is different. Works of

religious instruction bulk much larger than any other type of writing in the prose corpus; and although most such writers are no more than competent at best, there are some who deserve to stand alongside Thomas More, Jeremy Taylor, and the rest. Of these I shall refer to Ælfric, Brian of Lingen(?), and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

The main tradition of vernacular prose makes a remarkably early start in England in the reign of King Alfred of Wessex (871–99), not only with *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but also with the group of translations made or inspired by the king himself for the instruction of his subjects, including versions of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Augustine's *Soliloquies*, and Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*. However, the best of Anglo-Saxon prose was produced a century later in the age of the Monastic Revival of liturgy and learning, by the monks Wulfstan (d. 1023, best known for his *Sermon to the English*) and most notably Ælfric. Ælfric (*fl. c.*1000) spent his whole life in houses of the Benedictine order, rising in 1005 to be Abbot of Eynsham in Oxfordshire. He left a large body of vernacular writings, all devoted to the exposition of Christian faith and learning for English congregations and readers. These include two sets of homilies known as the *Catholic Homilies*, completed in 992, and a set of Saints' Lives, completed about ten years later. Ælfric's work may be judged monastic in the most general sense, by virtue of its sober and self-abnegating (though not uncritical) concern for the propagation of orthodox belief and sound learning; but it also bears the specific impress of the great monastery at Winchester where Ælfric received his training, under one of the leaders of the English Monastic Revival, St Æthelwold. It is now believed that Winchester monks were chiefly responsible for developing that quite meticulously standardized form of written English known as Late West Saxon; and that development testifies to just the same diligent concern for correctness in vernacular writing which characterizes Ælfric's own work. Ælfric was himself a grammarian, for he wrote the first Latin grammar in English; and his own language is, as one eighteenth-century scholar put it, 'purus, suavis et regularis': 'pure, sweet, and well regulated'. The numerous manuscripts of his work bear witness to a process of authorial revision which extends to

minutiae of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax; and it is typical of Ælfric, as it is of Chaucer, that he should have expressed concern lest his work be spoiled by careless copying: 'Now I beg and pray in God's name that, if anyone wishes to copy this book [the *Catholic Homilies*], he should follow his exemplar diligently, lest we be corrupted through negligent copying.'

The distinctive excellence of Ælfric's writing is both easy and difficult to illustrate: easy because almost any passage from his mature work will display his qualities, difficult because these qualities do not appear to advantage in short extracts. Here is one of his more elevated passages, from the *Lives of Saints*:

Hwæt þa, ure Hælend, þæs heofonlican Godes sunu, cydde his mycclan lufe þe he to us mannum hæfde, swa þæt he wearþ acenned of anum clænan mædene butan weres gemanan, and mann wearþ gesewen, on sawle and on lichaman soþ God and soþ man, to þy þæt he us alysde þa þe gelyfaþ on hine fram þam ecan deaþe mid his unscyldigan deaþe. Be þam we magon tocnawan Cristes eadmodnysse, þæt se healica God hine sylfne swa ge-cadmette þæt he þam deape underhnah and þone deofol oferswyþde mid þære menniscnysse, and mancynn swa alysde.

[So then our Saviour, son of the heavenly God, showed the great love which he had to us men, when he was born of a certain pure virgin without man's company, and was seen as a man, true God and true man in soul and in body, in order that he might release those of us who believe in him from the eternal death by his own guiltless death. By this we can understand the humility of Christ, in that the high God so humbled himself that he stooped to that death and overcame the Devil by that incarnation, and so released mankind.]

The mastery of sustained syntax in these sentences lends them an air of naturalness and ease. Yet, like most of Ælfric's mature work, this is in fact a highly artificial 'rhythmical prose', operating under metrical constraints similar to those of alliterative poetry, but looser. It consists, in fact, of a continuous series of two-stress phrases, linked together in pairs by alliteration much as are the two halves of the verse line. This pairing serves to point up the pervasive word-play, thus: 'þæt he þam deaþe *under*hnah / and þone deofol *ofer*swyþde // mid þære *menni*scnysse / and *man*cynn swa alysde.' The linking of opposites in the first pairing (Christ gets the upper hand by lowering himself) and

of similars in the second (Christ saves humanity by becoming human) both give felicitous expression to orthodox thoughts in a way entirely characteristic of this unobtrusive master, who was deservedly the first of the Anglo-Saxons to be printed, in 1567.

Turning to the first of the Middle English pieces, we find some significant differences. *Ancrene Wisse* belongs to a group of writings, also including the allegorical *Sawles Warde*, which were probably composed in the early thirteenth century at Wigmore Abbey, in that area of Norman England now known as Hereford-and-Worcester. This was the part of the country which most tenaciously preserved pre-Conquest traditions of prose and verse. There exist, for instance, manuscripts of Ælfric in which a thirteenth-century West Countryman, pleasingly known as 'the tremulous hand of Worcester', has glossed the difficult words. The fact that such glossing was necessary, however, itself shows how the Late West Saxon literary language had by this time become a thing of the past. The language of the *Ancrene Wisse* group already exhibits most of those simplifications in grammatical form and many of those changes in vocabulary (especially the introduction of French loan-words) which distinguish Middle from Old English. The best manuscripts of the group do indeed exhibit a consistency in forms characteristic of a written standard, regulated like Ælfric's; but this Wigmore English, unlike the earlier Winchester English, seems never to have achieved more than local currency. In this it is typical of the Middle English period, when, up until the fifteenth century, linguistic diversity and local use are the order of the day.

Comparison between Ælfric's homilies and *Ancrene Wisse* also serves to illustrate another difference between Old and Middle English writings. *Ancrene Wisse* ('The Anchoresses' Rule') is a treatise for female recluses, offering regulations for their daily life and also more general advice on resisting temptation, making confession, and the like. The book became widely popular, and was even translated into French and Latin; but modern research suggests that it was written by a canon of Wigmore Abbey, perhaps called Brian of Lingen, for certain anchoresses of his acquaintance living within a very few miles of

Wigmore. This origin helps to account for the familiarity and colloquial ease of the book's manner, in comparison with which Ælfric appears very formal and impersonal. No doubt the difference also reflects changes in religious sensibility between 1000 and 1200, general changes which favoured personal devotions and spiritual friendships between individual devotees, as against the more communal and liturgical spirituality of the older Benedictines. Yet it is also true that readers who turn, as we are now doing, from Old to Middle English literature find themselves in a world where prose-writers and poets alike do address their audience in a more familiar fashion and in a style much more hospitable to colloquial and proverbial idiom. The available sample of Anglo-Saxon work is no doubt heavily biased in this respect as in others, given the circumstance of its survival mostly in rather grand monastic copies; but it does represent a period when English writing evidently enjoyed, in some circles at least, a dignity and esteem which Chaucer and his successors were to regain only slowly towards the end of the Middle English period. In the intervening centuries the English language, always in unequal competition with Latin as the language of the learned, faced the added competition of French as the language of the powerful and the polite. The West-Saxon King Alfred was an author and sponsor of writings in English; but the Angevin King Henry II (reigned 1154–89) bestowed his patronage, so far as we know, exclusively on writers in French and Latin. The English literature of about this time frankly addresses itself to persons of less consequence — including often, as in the case of *Ancrene Wisse*, women.

The author of *Ancrene Wisse* was a scholar and a rhetorician; but his English, even at its more elevated, is lively and idiomatic, in the best Middle English manner:

> For hwet makeþ us stronge forte drehe derf i Godes servise ant ine fondunges to wreastli stealewurþliche toyein þe deofles swenges, bute hope of heh mede? Hope halt te heorte hal, hwetse þe flesch dreche; as me seiþ, 'Yef hope nere, heorte tobreke'. A Jesu, þin are! Hu stont ham þe beoþ þer as alle wa ant weane is wiþuten hope of utcume, ant heorte ne mei bersten?
>
> [For what is it that makes us strong to suffer hardship in God's service and to wrestle valiantly in times of temptation against the Devil's assaults, but the

hope of a high reward? Hope keeps the heart in health, whatever the flesh suffers; as they say, 'If hope were not, heart would break'. But Jesu, mercy! How stands it with those who are in the place of all grief and misery with no hope of escape, and yet heart cannot burst?]

Here the proverbial 'If hope were not, heart would break' takes its place without incongruity in a context of rhetorical questions and high alliterative ornament. It provides the second of three couplings of *hope* with *heart* and prepares for the marvellous third, where the breaking of the heart, treated in the proverb as the feared consequence of loss of hope, becomes in hell something to be hoped for, and hoped for in vain. Heart *cannot* burst. The verb here is just a little stronger than the earlier 'break', carrying an added suggestion of intolerable pressure from within. This is one of many examples that could be given of the author's ability to convey physical sensation in a word.

The same ability is to be found, rather more surprisingly, in the mystical treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The unknown author of this work, evidently a contemporary of Chaucer, belongs to a remarkable group of late Middle English mystical writers which also includes Richard Rolle (d. 1349), Walter Hilton (author of *The Scale of Perfection*, d. 1396), and Julian of Norwich (b. 1342). Of all their works, *The Cloud* is the most esoteric, in so far as it is concerned exclusively with that advanced stage of contemplation which lies beyond devout meditations of the life of Christ, and indeed beyond all human knowledge. God himself is hidden in an eternal cloud of 'unknowing', which can only be pierced by 'a loving stirring and a blind beholding unto the naked being of God'. This 'blind beholding' of a being who cannot be known is the supreme act of the contemplative, to be achieved only by special grace; but he or she can prepare for such moments by the discipline of the *via negativa* or road of negation, which requires the blotting out of all creaturely images and categories in a 'cloud of forgetting'. Yet this demanding programme is expounded in a language which teems with creaturely images, for the author's insistence on the utter transcendence of divinity by no means involves any denial of the physicality of the created world. On the contrary, trying to be 'spiritual' in the things of this world involves essentially the same mistake as trying to conceive the spiritual in creaturely terms: both

end up in the same fantastic, twilit half-way house, neither truly physical nor truly spiritual, against which the author utters many warnings. He addresses his book to a spiritual friend who, at the age of twenty-four, is embarking on the life of the solitary; and it is his unremitting effort to alert this young man to the dangers of misdirected effort ('crooked intent') and false spirituality which provides the drama of the work. In a familiar and often conversational manner, he labours to anticipate and avert the many misunderstandings to which any human being (himself included) will be exposed in such an enterprise. In the following passage, for instance, he warns against the seductively spiritual-seeming imagery of 'inwardness'. Other people, he says, might advise you to turn your attention inwards and worship God there:

Bot thus wil I bid thee. Loke on no wyse that thou be withinne thiself, and schortly withoutyn thiself wil I not that thou be, ne yit aboven, ne behynde, ne on o syde, ne on other. 'Wher than,' seist thou, 'schal I be? Nowhere, by thi tale!' Now trewely thou seist wel; for there wolde I have thee.

The simple vernacular sequence 'nowhere? . . . yes, *there*' makes the author's point with an immediacy that is characteristic of Middle English prose at its best.

Middle English Poetry

The circumstances of writers in the English vernacular changed greatly in the years after the Norman Conquest. The collapse of the written standard established by West-Saxon monks and the exclusion of English writings from the main centres of power and patronage were both developments characteristic of a period when native traditions lost much of the status which they had enjoyed under Anglo-Saxon kings and were to recover later. By comparison with the tenth or fourteenth centuries, in fact, the intervening period is one in which English poetry and prose appear to have flourished mainly towards the margins of society—in the remoter counties, or among the humbler classes. One of the two poems which must here represent this Early Middle English period, Laȝamon's *Brut*, illustrates clearly the relative marginality of English in the cosmopolitan 'Channel Kingdom' of the Normans and

Angevins. Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote a Latin *History of the Kings of Britain* in the 1130s and dedicated it to the Norman earl Robert of Gloucester, bastard son of Henry I. The work quickly achieved popularity and was translated into French octosyllabic couplets by one of Henry II's Jersey subjects, Wace, and presented by him (according to Laȝamon) to Henry's French queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine. The English *Brut*, by contrast, is dedicated to no patron. Its author, Laȝamon (*fl.* late twelfth century), was a simple priest in the remote parish of Areley Kings, on the banks of the Severn. He made his version of Wace, about the year 1200, in the English of his Worcestershire parish. His work survives in only two manuscripts—as against the 20 manuscripts of Wace and the 190 of Geoffrey.

Yet Laȝamon's *Brut* is far from being a mere slavish provincial imitation. The English poet writes a long line of two balanced halves. Where these halves are linked by rhyme or assonance, the effect sometimes approaches that of Wace's couplets: 'Ærneþ ævere vorþ and vorþ; Hengest is ifaren norþ' ('Hurry as fast as you can; Hengest has gone north'). But Laȝamon's basic rhythmical unit is the two-stress phrase; and where these are linked together not by rhyme but by alliteration, as they often are, the result unmistakably recalls the manner of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The history of alliterative verse after the Conquest is obscure. Laȝamon's Worcestershire probably still had a living tradition of alliterative composition, and the poet may also have found older models in a library such as that of Worcester Cathedral; but whatever he knew, and however he knew it, it must at any rate have included something not unlike the Anglo-Saxon poetry known to us. His battle scenes in particular recall that poetry, not only in the actual fighting ('heowen hardliche, hælmes gullen': 'they strike hard, helms clang') but also in the heroic speeches of resolution and scornful defiance which precede and follow the fighting. Thus the greatest of the kings of Britain, Arthur, sends a taunting message to the Romans after killing their emperor in which he speaks ironically of having now paid them the 'gavel' or tribute that they demanded, just as Byrhtnoth did two hundred years before when addressing the Viking messenger in *The Battle of Maldon*.

Laȝamon is an uneven writer, and his poem belongs to a type

unattractive to present-day readers. The *Brut* is a long verse chronicle, following the line of British kings from its foundation by Brutus to its final defeat by the Saxons. Undoubtedly the most interesting part is the long account of King Arthur's reign, which occupies more than a quarter of Laȝamon's 16,000 lines. Here Arthur appears for the first time in English. Following the quasi-historical tradition established by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Laȝamon portrays Arthur as a conqueror, whose triumphs over foreign powers are brought to an end only by the treachery of his nephew Modred. The adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, as described by the French poet Chrétien de Troyes and his successors, are not Laȝamon's concern. The fictitious succession of victories over Saxon, Scot, Irish, Scandinavian, French, and Roman lacks variety as well as credibility; but it inspires Laȝamon to some of his best writing. Here, for instance, he describes how Arthur imagines his defeated enemy, the Saxon Baldulf, looking down at the corpses of his men which lie in the river Avon:

> 'Nu he stant on hulle ond Avene bihaldeþ
> Hu ligeþ i þan stræme stelene fisces
> Mid sweorde bigeorede; heore sund is awemmed.
> Heore scalen wleoteþ swulc gold-fage sceldes,
> Þer fleoteþ heore spiten swulc hit spæren weoren.'

['Now he stands on a hill and looks into the Avon, seeing how there lie in that stream steel fishes girt with swords; their swimming is at an end. Their scales gleam like gold-plated shields, their fish-spines float as if they were spears.']

Here, as often happens in heroic verse, the warrior's scorn for his adversaries finds expression in grotesque and extravagant imagery: 'steel fishes girt with swords'. Instead of comparing the soldiers to fish, Arthur treats them as though they were indeed fish and compares them with soldiers: 'their scales gleam like gold-plated shields'. The passage has no parallel in Wace. It displays an imaginative violence which is almost as remote from twelfth-century France as it is from twentieth-century England.

The Owl and the Nightingale, probably composed about 1200, like the *Brut*, is a poem of a quite different sort. It belongs to the genre of debate or *conflictus*, much practised by medieval Latin poets and their vernacular followers. As is customary in such works, the two

disputants, an owl and a nightingale, represent diametrically opposed positions, and they use every possible argument to attack each other and defend themselves. The two birds agree only in admiring the man who is to judge between them, Nicholas of Guildford, and in deploring the fact that such a wise and good cleric should be condemned to waste his talents in an obscure Dorset parish. If Nicholas wrote the poem himself, as seems likely, then it can be read as a witty and roundabout plea for preferment, addressed to some bishop who could be trusted to enjoy it. Certainly the poem is a sophisticated and cosmopolitan piece. Unlike his Worcestershire contemporary, the Surrey poet employs the French octosyllabic couplet (very well handled), and he draws on a variety of French and Latin sources, including the fashionable poetess, Marie de France. The debate itself touches on a number of serious topics, such as the nature of divine worship; but it touches on them lightly. The balance of advantage shifts to and fro, amusingly, between the owlish owl and the amorous nightingale, as they think up ingenious arguments in their own defence and rude things to say about each other; and it is hard to know what one is meant to expect when, at the very end of the poem, the birds fly off to Portesham to receive Nicholas's judgement:

> Ah hu heo spedde of heore dome
> Ne can ich eu na more telle
> Her nis na more of þis spelle.

[But how they fared in their judgement I cannot tell you any more. Here is no more of this story.]

The Owl and the Nightingale is, in fact, a comic poem—one of the first in English—and the wealth of bird-lore and human experience which it displays may be taken as testifying to that mature and impartial 'wisdome' which the birds both acknowledge in the man who was probably its author.

In the writings of La3amon and Nicholas of Guildford one can see for the first time England itself emerging as a subject of English poetry. There is very little sense of specific place in Anglo-Saxon poetry: *Beowulf* is set in the Baltic kingdoms, *The Ruin* describes Bath (if that is what it does) in a generalizing style, and the local topography of *The Battle of Maldon* is minimal. By contrast, *The Owl and the Nightingale*

evokes an English countryside which is already recognizably that of Samuel Palmer and Rudyard Kipling. The debate is set in a secluded corner of a field in a 'summer valley', where the owl is perched on an ivy-clad tree-stump and the nightingale in a flowering hedge. The perches are none the less vividly imagined for being symbolically apt:

> Þe nightingale bigon þe speche
> In one hurne of one breche,
> And sat up one vaire boghe—
> Þar were abute blosme inoghe—
> In ore vaste þicke hegge
> Imeind mid spire and grene segge.

[The nightingale began the exchanges in the corner of a fallow field. She sat upon a beautiful bough, surrounded by masses of blossom, in an impenetrably thick hedge intertwined with reeds and green sedge.]

There is nothing like this lush southern landscape in the *Brut*. La3amon does not so much describe Britain as mythologize it, following Geoffrey of Monmouth. He tells how Stonehenge was built by the magic powers of Merlin, how London was founded by King Lud, how Cornwall took its name from the Trojan Corineus who killed the giant Geomagog, and many other similar toponymic fancies. False etymology helped Geoffrey, and La3amon after him, to imagine a legendary Britain, whose towns and rivers and hills were to recall, for poets as late as Spenser, Milton, and Pope, stories of the heroic past. Leicester recalls King Leir and his three daughters, the river Humber recalls the evil King Humber who drowned in its waters, and Britain itself recalls its Trojan founder, Brutus.

The trilingual literary culture to which La3amon and Nicholas belonged survived them by several generations. More than a hundred years later, in the 1330s, a great anthology of prose and verse made in Herefordshire, MS Harley 2253 in the British Library, includes French alongside Latin and English. The English contents of this book provide a sample of native poetry as it was towards the eve of its finest medieval flowering later in the fourteenth century. For the first time in this survey we encounter here short poems which may without incongruity be called 'lyrics'. Some are poems of romantic passion, such as is expressed in the haunting refrain of 'Blow, Northern Wind':

Blow, northerne wynd,
Send thou me my swetyng!
Blow, northerne wynd,
Blow, blow, blow.

These 'Harley lyrics' also include religious poems, and poems on moral and political subjects. Indeed, the only English narrative poem of any note in the collection is *King Horn*, a story of love and adventure which may be taken to represent that very loosely defined genre of romance, originating in continental and insular French writings of the twelfth century, which by this time had been thoroughly naturalized. Another huge manuscript anthology contemporary with the Harley manuscript, the Auchinleck manuscript, provides a much more generous sample of the secular narrative verse of the time. It includes the two very popular English romances referred to by Chaucer in his 'Tale of Sir Thopas', *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*, the fairy lay of Sir Orfeo, the polished historical romance *Kyng Alisaunder*, and much else besides. Yet it may be doubted whether even a reader of the Auchinleck collection could have anticipated the developments which were to occur in English poetry in the later years of Edward III (reigned 1327–77) and especially in the reign of his successor Richard II (1377–99). This is the remarkable 'Ricardian' period, in which, in the lifetime of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower, alliterative poetry flowered again in England.

The term 'Alliterative Revival' is commonly used to denote a body of mainly unrhymed alliterative verse, much of it composed to the north and west of a line running from the Wash to the Severn Estuary, which survives from the period beginning about 1350 and ending in the earlier part of the fifteenth century. This very large body of work, which is many times greater than the whole surviving corpus of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, includes many notable poems, among them *Winner and Waster* and *Piers Plowman*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *Pearl* and *Patience*, *St Erkenwald*, and *The Wars of Alexander*. The sheer contrast in quantity between this and the scanty remains of alliterative verse from the previous three centuries no doubt owes much to two quite general developments. The accelerating decline of French in the England of Edward III meant

that readers and listeners whose tastes might previously have been satisfied by writings in that language were now increasingly turning to English. So the audience, and the market, for English poetry grew significantly both in numbers and in importance. The same period also sees a continuing increase in literacy; and the consequent development towards what is almost the mass production of manuscript copies means that poems stand a progressively better chance of surviving into modern times. Yet these general changes, which between them go a long way towards explaining why there is simply so much *more* English literature of all sorts in this late medieval period, cannot completely account for the very sudden florescence of alliterative writings after 1350.

The word 'Revival' implies a deliberate and perhaps concerted effort to compose poems in a manner recently neglected but known to have been practised in the more distant past. If such an effort was ever made, we do not know by whom. Indeed, the whole question of the relation of fourteenth-century alliterative verse to what had gone before remains obscure. Alliteration itself is a pervasive feature of earlier Middle English writings, prose as well as verse; and not infrequently, as in La3amon's *Brut*, it is found in conjunction with the two-stress rhythm characteristic of the Old English half-line. But the poems of the Revival, surprisingly, approach nearer than La3amon to the classical Old English type in two important respects: they do not allow rhyme as an alternative or supplementary way of linking the two half-lines; and they generally observe the ancient ban on alliteration in the last stressed syllable of the line. Their most common pattern of alliteration is a a a x, thus:

Ner sláyn wyth þe sléte — he sléped in his ýrnes
Mo nýghtes þen innóghe — in náked rókkes
Þeras cláterande fro þe crést — þe cólde borne rénnes.

(*Sir Gawain*, 729–31)

These technical resemblances, together with similarities of diction and phrasing, make it probable that the poets of the Revival inherited more of the pre-Conquest tradition than materials surviving from the years between would suggest—whether through writings which no longer survive, or through oral tradition, or a mixture of both.

In other ways, too, the Alliterative Revival is an obscure and tantalizing moment in the history of English literature. Almost everything that can be known about the authors, their circumstances, and their readers has to be inferred, more or less securely, from the texts themselves and the manuscripts (often only one) in which they survive. A case in point is the manuscript, copied in about 1400, which preserves the only surviving texts of *Cleanness*, *Patience*, *Pearl*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. These four poems were all composed in the same dialect, located by philologists in north-west Staffordshire or south-east Cheshire; and many readers believe that they are the work of a single author—a not unreasonable conviction, given the presence of many common thematic, structural, and verbal features. But attempts to identify this '*Gawain*-poet' have not succeeded, and nothing is known about the circumstances in which he wrote. Where and what was his audience? Is it to be looked for in the area to which his own dialect belongs? Such questions may one day be answered; but in the mean time one can only say that the poetry implies an author, and probably also an audience, of more than provincial culture and learning, acquainted with a quite wide range of Latin and French writings, including such modern European classics as the prose *Lancelot* and the *Roman de la Rose*.

Whoever he was, the *Gawain*-poet ranks as one of the most brilliant representatives of that remarkable generation of English poets which may be called 'Ricardian' (after Richard II, who reigned from 1377 to 1399). His chief contemporaries were Gower, Langland, and Chaucer. With the exception of Chaucer and Gower, these writers were not, so far as we know, aware of each other's work, and they therefore cannot be said to form a true 'school'. But their poetry has certain features in common. Like so much medieval poetry, it is concerned first and foremost with narrative; but it is distinguished from earlier English narrative verse by a greater sophistication of technique and by a more articulate concern with the thematic point of stories—a moral or theological significance, often quite explicitly stated. Certainly these Ricardian poets were not too sophisticated to engage whole-heartedly in the business of story-telling (a function which in more recent times verse has largely yielded up to the novel, drama, film, and television);

but their stories are controlled and directed by that kind of clear thinking about moral and religious matters which was the legacy, for educated men in the later fourteenth century, of the strenuous moral philosophy and scholastic theology of the previous two hundred years.

A perfect, though minor, example of this art is the *Gawain*-poet's *Patience*. Unlike his *Cleanness*, which labours with only imperfect success to organize several disparate Bible stories into a continuous demonstration of its moral theme, *Patience* takes a single biblical episode, of Jonah and the whale, for its narrative subject. The art of re-imagining Bible stories and retelling them in amplified form is an ancient one, going back in England to the Anglo-Saxon versions of stories from Genesis, Exodus, and other books of the Bible. Indeed, the first English poet whose name is known, Cædmon, did just this, according to Bede: having learned and pondered a scriptural story, he 'converted it into the sweetest poetry'. Seven centuries later the *Gawain*-poet does the same, converting the story of Jonah, laconically told in the Bible, into a vivid, lively, and humorous verse narrative. After the great storm at sea, for instance, Jonah is dropped overboard and falls into the whale's mouth 'as mote in at a munster dor, so mukel wern his chawles': 'like a speck of dust going into a cathedral door, his jaws were so huge': The comic shrinkage of Jonah in this simile is in keeping with the treatment of him throughout as a type of petty impatience, contrasted with the majestic long-suffering of God, both towards him and towards the Ninevites. The whole story is retold as an example or *exemplum* of the virtue which gives the poem its (modern) title and of that virtue's opposite, exemplified by Jonah. Such a formal and explicit subordination of story to theme occurs often in Ricardian poetry. The use of *exempla* was a favourite didactic device of the medieval Church in pulpit and confessional, as Chaucer's 'Pardoner's Tale' and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* both indicate; but those two poems also show how variously the poets could turn the device to their own purposes. *Patience* is more simply and seriously didactic than either; but a reader prepared to take a sympathetic interest in such a largely neglected moral idea as patience will find that this poem, like Langland's treatment in *Piers Plowman* and more than Chaucer's in 'The Clerk's Tale', can expand and enrich his sense of it, as it was no doubt

intended to do. One may notice, for instance, how the narrative associates Jonah's inability to accept God's commands in patience with his inability to tell the truth, even to himself.

Pearl is in many ways very different from *Patience*. Like several poems of the period, including Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* and Langland's *Piers Plowman*, it is a dream-poem; and the author therefore enjoys the freedom, allowed to dream-poets but otherwise rare enough at the time, to construct his own story rather than deriving it from old books. *Pearl* describes how the narrator, in his other-worldly vision, encounters a damsel who, like Beatrice in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, sets out to explain the mysteries of Paradise. The damsel, Pearl, reveals that she is the dreamer's daughter, who died in infancy and is now one of the brides of the Lamb. It is likely, though not certain, that the poem refers to an actual loss suffered by its author; and one may see in its extreme formal complexity, combining alliteration with rhyme in stanzas themselves linked together by repeated words into groups of five, something analogous to the painful intricacy of the funerary monuments of the time. Yet whatever his personal involvement may have been, this poet is also deeply interested in general truth. The case of Pearl, like that of Jonah, has a wider bearing. *Pearl* is concerned with the theology of salvation: What heavenly rewards are enjoyed by those who die as infants after baptism? The poet addresses himself seriously to this somewhat controversial question, recalling the relevant biblical passages—the Parable of the Vineyard and St John's vision of the New Jerusalem—and reasoning from them in the approved fashion. The result, even if one denies the autobiographical nature of the case, is far from frigid. The dialogue between the damsel, who, like Beatrice, has perfect knowledge as a blessed spirit, and the dreamer, who does not, is rich in the comedy and pathos of human incomprehension. How can Pearl be a queen of heaven? the dreamer asks. Is not Mary queen of heaven? Pearl explains, but the dreamer never really understands; and the dream ends as, in a final act of incomprehension, he tries to cross the stream which separates him from his daughter as if it were ordinary water.

The chronology of the works of the *Gawain*-poet is impossible to fix;

but it is tempting to suppose that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may be the last of them, for here the moral theme (if it can be called anything so definite) is not so much stated as suggested, most subtly and artfully, in a story of incomparable richness and verve. The poem opens by introducing Arthur as the greatest of the line of British kings descended from Brutus; but this is not to be a sprawling chronicle-poem in the manner of La3amon's *Brut*. It belongs rather to that species of Arthurian writing ('lay', the author calls it) which picks out a single adventure from among the annals of the Round Table. In this case, it is the Adventure of the Green Chapel, undertaken by Sir Gawain in response to the challenge of the Green Knight, who rides into the hall at Camelot and offers his green head to be struck off on the sole condition that he may strike a return blow (if he survives) at the Green Chapel in a year's time. There is more to this outlandish affair than meets the eye, as the poet gradually reveals; but the restriction to a single adventure and a single year allows him a fullness and delicacy of narrative detail matched only in his day by Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Does any other romance writer, for instance, show what it might actually feel like to wake up on the morning of a perilous tryst, as Gawain does on the stormy New Year's Day when he is due at the Green Chapel to receive the return blow?

> Now neghes þe Nw Yere and þe nyght passes.
> Þe day dryves to þe derk, as Dryghtyn biddes,
> Bot wylde wederes of þe worlde wakned þeroute.
> Clowdes kesten kenly þe colde to þe erþe,
> Wyth nye innoghe of þe norþe þe naked to tene;
> Þe snawe snitered ful snart, þat snayped þe wylde;
> Þe werbelande wynde wapped fro þe hyghe
> And drof uche dale ful of dryftes ful grete.
> Þe leude lystened ful wel, þat ley in his bedde—
> Þagh he lowkes his liddes ful lyttel he slepes;
> Bi uch kok þat crue he knwe wel þe steven.
> Deliverly he dressed up er þe day sprenged,
> For þere was lyght of a laumpe þat lemed in his chambre.
>
> (*Sir Gawain*, 1998–2010)

[Now the New Year approaches and the night passes. Day comes upon the dark, as the Lord commands, but wild weather was blowing up out of doors.

Clouds dropped bitter cold on the earth, with enough of a sharp north wind to hurt the unprotected flesh; snow fell fast, stinging the wild beasts; and a whistling wind swept down from the high ground, filling every valley full of deep drifts. The man listened hard, as he lay in his bed—for though he shut his eyes tight, he did not sleep much; every time the cock crew, he recognized the appointed day. He got up promptly before daybreak, for he had the light of a lamp that shone in his chamber.]

If it seems that the heroic resolution of the knight (he gets up 'deliverly', promptly and briskly) coexists somewhat uneasily with the sleepless apprehension so vividly evoked in these lines, that is no more than the deeper significance of the case requires. For in this Arthurian romance as in no other, knightly courage is exposed to something like the full strength of those forces which turn most people into cowards—and is shaken by the impact.

Gawain's integrity and honour, symbolized by his heraldic device of a pentangle, are at stake in the Adventure of the Green Chapel, and what chiefly threatens to impair them is fear of the Green Knight's axe. By arriving at the Chapel on time and submitting to the return blow, Gawain fulfils his part in the original contract and so vindicates the honour of the Round Table, challenged by the Green Knight at Camelot; but in the mean time he has pledged his word a second time on his own account, and in this second contract his good faith or *trawthe* has failed him. Staying over Christmas with a genial local lord (his adversary, unrecognized), he enters into an agreement to 'exchange winnings' at the end of each of three days; and on the last of these days he conceals from his host a green belt which has been given to him in secret by his hostess with the assurance that its magic powers can save his life. It is therefore the hero's fear of imminent death which leads him to commit his one act of cowardly *untrawthe*—a dishonourable act for which, once he understands it, Gawain reproaches himself with a ferocity of shame and remorse which takes most readers by surprise. His mortified return to a rejoicing Camelot brings the poem to a somewhat unsettled conclusion. Certainly the poet does not dissociate himself from the closing celebration at Camelot of Gawain's heroic courage and integrity. Yet it cannot be a small thing for a knight to yield to fear and break his pledged word: how could Gawain not be ashamed of that? This double view of the

case is at last symbolized and fixed in the emblem of the green belt, worn henceforth by Gawain as a 'token of untruth' and a mark of shame, but adopted by the Round Table as a new badge of honour. Thus the story offers, not like *Patience* quite clearly contrasted positive and negative examples of its moral theme, but a single dubious example, in which are to be seen at one and the same time both the weakness and the strength of human nature at its best.

No other alliterative poet can match the *Gawain*-poet in his ability to meet the demands of both story and theme, sacrificing neither intellectual lucidity nor narrative richness. *The Wars of Alexander* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure* are fine and vigorous narrative poems; but in both the extended chronicling of feats of arms makes it difficult for the poet to develop his ideas. Other alliterative poets favour ideas at the expense of story. One of the best examples *is Winner and Waster*, a remarkable allegorical dream-poem probably dating from the 1350s. Here as in *The Owl and the Nightingale* two diametrically opposed adversaries engage in lively but inconclusive debate. Through the mutual recriminations of prudent Winner and big-spending Waster, the anonymous poet presents a vision of English social and economic life which anticipates, in its vivid detail and trenchant observation, the poetry of Ben Jonson more than two centuries later. But *Winner and Waster* must yield place, in a survey such as this, to the greatest and most comprehensive of its successors: Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

William Langland was a minor cleric with connections in Oxfordshire and Worcestershire who came up to London and at one time lived with his wife, according to his own account, in a cottage in Cornhill—not many hundred yards from Geoffrey Chaucer's more comfortable accommodation over Aldgate. Langland's representation of himself as an awkward character, gaunt, poorly dressed, and 'loath to reverence lords and ladies', no doubt owes something to the literary tradition of the satirist as uncompromising outsider or bitter fool; but his life on the fringes of the London Church, earning his bread as a kind of clerical odd job man saying prayers on commission, did make him acquainted with impoverished and irregular people such as find no place in Chaucer's work, not even *The Canterbury Tales*. So far as is known, Langland wrote only one poem; but the varying states of *Piers*

Plowman in the manuscripts suggest that he could never leave it alone. Modern scholars have distinguished three main versions: the unfinished A Text composed in the 1360s, the much longer B Text completed towards the end of the 1370s, and the incomplete C revision known to one unfortunate reader who was beheaded in 1388. The differences between these versions are substantial, and some scholars still believe that more than one poet had a hand in them; but most now accept that they represent the developing thought and art of a single, and a very remarkable, poet.

Considered from almost any point of view, indeed, *Piers Plowman* is a singular creation. It is an alliterative poem unlike any other in that it survives in more than fifty manuscripts, and a dream-poem unlike any other in that it consists of a long series of dreams (ten in the B Text) linked by short waking interludes. As an allegorical poem, too, it is peculiar, especially in the conduct of its action. Most allegories tell a single story, however long drawn out, and arrive at a foreseeable conclusion, as do the *Roman de la Rose* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. But in Langland's poem each of the dreams has its own narrative structure. The dreamer, Long Will, is the same in each case; but Will makes no steady progress in spiritual awareness, such as might have been looked for to provide some narrative unity for the whole. The poem's titular hero is Piers the Plowman; but he puts in only sporadic appearances at unpredictable moments: ' "Peter!" quod a plowman, and putte forth his hed.' Indeed, in the mysterious abruptness of his arrivals and in his equally mysterious departures, Piers represents the poem's narrative method at its most characteristically disrupted. These disruptions serve to express Langland's deepest sense of the elusiveness of that inner goodness and truth for which Piers himself stands.

The search for these qualities, continually frustrated and continually renewed, persists throughout the poem as a kind of pilgrimage. In the first phase of this search (the 'Visio', Prologue and Passus I–VII in the B Text), Will has two dreams of how contemporary England might be reformed, in the administration of justice and in the conduct of all classes of society, by living and acting 'truly' in accordance with the dictates of reason and conscience. But this ideal of conduct, which comes to be called 'Do Well', presents many difficulties, both because

human nature is deeply perverse and also because the ideal itself seems difficult to grasp. In the second phase of the poem (Passus VIII–XIV) these problems are explored. Long Will sets out in search of Do Well. His experiences in the course of the search serve to expose the intellectual puzzles which arise when one tries to understand God's plan of salvation, and also the difficulty of submitting in patience to the apparent injustices of life. As this theme of patience modulates into that of charity, the poem enters its third and final phase (Passus XV–XX). This is primarily concerned with the history of man's salvation, and especially with God's supreme act of charity in Christ. The life of Christ, culminating in the Harrowing of Hell and the founding of the Church, leads on to the prolonged anticlimax of the last two passus. Here the charismatic beginnings of the Church under St Peter, with whom Piers now comes to be identified, are painfully contrasted with its present corrupt condition. The poems ends as it began, with a bleak view of fourteenth-century realities.

But to see *Piers Plowman* in this way one has to stand back from it so far that many of its most characteristic features are lost. Langland does not distinguish between social, moral, intellectual, and theological issues in the way that my summary suggests. For him, the Church and society are ideally coterminous; both depend for their health upon the condition of individuals; and for the individual, intellectual and moral 'truth' are inseparable. This comprehensive, though far from untroubled, vision of the world finds expression, in Langland's best passages, in a poetry which is at once sublime and ridiculous—ridiculous, that is, in its accommodation of the most commonplace images and unelevated thoughts. Here, for instance, is Lady Holy Church speaking in praise of the power of love:

> For Truþe telleþ þat love is triacle of hevene:
> May no synne be on hym seene þat þat spice useþ.
> And alle his werkes he wroughte with love as hym liste,
> And lered it Moyses for þe leveste þyng and moost lik to hevene,
> And also the plante of pees, moost precious of vertues:
> For hevene myghte nat holden it, it was so hevy of hymself,
> Til it hadde of þe erþe eten his fille;
> And whan it hadde of þis fold flessh and blood taken,
> Was nevere leef upon lynde lighter þerafter,

> And portatif and persaunt as þe point of a nedle,
> That myghte noon armure it lette ne none heighe walles.
> Forþi is love ledere of þe lordes folk of hevene,
> And a meene, as þe mair is, betwene þe kyng and þe commune.
>
> (B Text, I. 148–60)

[*triacle* medicine; *spice* remedy; *lered* taught; *leveste* dearest; *fold* earth; *lynde* linden tree; *portatif and persaunt* light and piercing; *lette* stop; *meene* intermediary]

In this passage the sublime paradox of a love which falls from heaven by its own weight and becomes light only by eating its fill of the earth reaches its conclusion in the exquisitely delicate images of the linden leaf and the needle; but it is also highly characteristic of Langland that this brilliant imagistic *tour de force* should be followed by a plain political analogy: love is like a medicine, a plant, an eater, a leaf, a needle—and a mayor.

Piers Plowman is the first poem in this survey of medieval writing which can be said to have held a place, continuously though not always conspicuously, in the canon of English poetry from the time of its composition to the present day. Whereas poems such as *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain* had to wait to be rediscovered by scholars and antiquaries after being quite forgotten, sixteenth-century printed editions made *Piers Plowman* known to successors of Langland such as Spenser and Milton. The 'satire called *Piers Plowman*' accordingly finds a place in the first historical account of English poetry, sketched by George Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie*, published in 1589. For Puttenham, however, the great tradition of English poetry begins not with Langland but with Chaucer and Gower. These latter are the 'courtly makers' from whom a Tudor poet can trace his descent with pride, and before whose time 'there is little or nothing worth commendation to be found written in this art'.

Chaucer and Gower

Chaucer's life is much better documented than Langland's. He was born probably in 1343 or 1344, son of a prosperous London wine merchant. His early education is obscure, but by 1357 he had joined the household of the earl and countess of Ulster. In the French

campaign of 1359–60 he was captured and ransomed. From 1367 onwards he appears frequently in records of the household of Edward III as one of the king's gentleman attendants. Between 1374 and 1386 he served as Controller of Customs in the Port of London. He was Justice of the Peace for Kent in 1385–9 and represented that county in Parliament in 1386. From 1389 to 1391 he acted as Clerk of the King's Works. He died in 1400. Historians agree that there is nothing in this career to suggest that Chaucer was anything other than a moderately successful London gentleman. Even his burial in Westminster Abbey, though it marks the beginning of 'Poets' Corner' there, was evidently no more than a common privilege for courtiers and royal officials. Chaucer was not a professional poet: indeed, one may suspect that, like T. S. Eliot and Philip Larkin in our own time, he took a secret pleasure in keeping his profession distinct from his poetry. He refers to his official career only once in his writings, with a passing allusion to his 'rekenynges' (presumably at the Customs House, *The House of Fame*, 653); and the only events in that career which can be said to have left a definite mark on his poetry are his two visits to Italy on royal business in 1372–3 and 1378, for it was presumably on those visits that he acquired his knowledge, most uncommon for an Englishman at that time, of the writings of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

Yet this is not to say that the reader of Chaucer's poetry fails to encounter him there. On the contrary, few English poets speak more freely and (it would appear) artlessly in the first person. Chaucer speaks so, not only in short epistolary poems such as the delightful *Envoy to Scogan*, but also in every one of his major narrative pieces. The dreamer in the four dream-poems, the narrator in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the pilgrim-narrator in *The Canterbury Tales*, all speak of what they have dreamed, read, or seen in a manner which the reader soon learns to recognize as characteristic. The Chaucer of all these poems is a retiring, bookish man, with little firsthand experience of life, least of all in the great matter of love. He can therefore do no better than report faithfully what he dreams, reads, or observes of the world and its ways. Often he is puzzled by what he finds, and at times he feels called upon to apologize for what he is obliged (for some reason) to report. Since the 'matter' of his stories is not of his own making, it

cannot always be to his taste. It pains him to describe the infidelity of Criseyde, but female readers must not blame him for that: 'Ye may hire giltes in other bokes se.' It embarrasses him to report the lewd tale of the Miller, but he cannot omit it from his faithful record of the pilgrims' performances:

> for I moot reherce
> Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
> Or elles falsen som of my mateere.

These are, of course, jokes; but such a comic routine has deeper implications. For one thing, it powerfully fosters the illusion of free-standing, independent reality which so many of Chaucer's poems create—a reality which surpasses the poet's own knowledge and understanding. The same illusion is created by the simple line which concludes the portrait of the Merchant in *The Canterbury Tales*: 'But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.' How can this pilgrim be a figment of Chaucer's imagination, if the poet 'does not know what he is called'? It is not surprising that scholars have been inspired to search for the missing name in mercantile documents of the time, as if the Merchant were indeed real. Chaucer encourages the confusion, just as when in *Troilus* he claims not to be able to say whether the therefore presumably historical Criseyde had any children: 'I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon.' Such disavowals can have a further consequence, as may be seen later in Criseyde's story, at the point when, having left Troilus in Troy, she takes pity on his Greek rival Diomede:

> And for to helen hym of his sorwes smerte,
> Men seyn—I noot—that she yaf hym hire herte.

'Men say—I do not know—that she gave him her heart.' The evasion leaves a gap in the story for the reader to fill. Are we to understand that Criseyde obviously did give her heart to the abominable Greek, only Chaucer is too fond of the female sex to say so? Or perhaps that she really did not? Such uncertainties serve to hold final judgement back, allowing the events to unfold and characters to reveal themselves with a minimum of that authorial comment which might 'falsen som of my mateere'.

Chaucer's earliest major poem, *The Book of the Duchess*, shows him already master of such obliquities. He probably wrote it soon after the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, in 1368. The poem's elaborate structure allows him to celebrate the dead duchess and even hint at consolation for her husband with perfect grace and courtesy. He avoids the obsequious and the sententious by the characteristic device of saying nothing, or almost nothing, in his own person at all. Setting out on a hunt in his dream, he comes upon a man in black in a forest glade lamenting the death of his beloved. In the long conversation which ensues, the dreamer is restrained by a scruple of courtesy from admitting that he has accidentally overheard such a deeply personal utterance; and it is only when the man in black at last tells him directly of his loss that a response is called for—to be cut off at once by the sound of horns, summoning the hunt home from the forest and heralding the poem's end:

> 'She ys ded.' 'Nay!' 'Yis, be my trouthe.'
> 'Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe!'
> And with that word ryght anoon
> They gan to strake forth, al was doon,
> For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.
>
> [*routhe* pity; *strake forth* sound the recall]

It is a beautiful moment. Chaucer's single articulated response to the tragedy leaves, for all its inadequacy, nothing more that can be said without impertinence: 'Be god, hyt ys routhe.' And the message of the horns, capping that response with dreamlike inevitability, suggests in a pun of the utmost delicacy the only human remedy for such grief: 'al was doon, / For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.'

The Book of the Duchess displays Chaucer's command of the subtle, refined manner of contemporary French poets such as Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart; but it suffers, like the poems of Froissart and Machaut, from a thinness of texture. Perhaps Chaucer felt its limitations. He seems, at any rate, to have responded enthusiastically to the richer possibilities offered by Italian poetry when he first encountered it, perhaps on his first Italian journey shortly after writing *The Book of the Duchess*. In what is probably his next dream-poem, *The House of Fame*, the influence of Dante's majestic *Divine Comedy* makes

itself felt for the first time in English poetry. Yet this is essentially a light and fantastic poem, in which a bookish and reclusive Geoffrey is transported, in a dizzy space flight, to the *domus Famae* described by his favourite author Ovid, so that he may learn some 'tidings of Love's folk' in that great clearing-house of news and gossip. Chaucer represents himself here as a keen servant of Cupid and Venus, lacking experience but anxious to learn about Love's folk and to serve them by his writings. He adopts the same role throughout the main poems of his middle period: *The Parliament of Fowls*, *Troilus*, and *The Legend of Good Women*. *The Parliament of Fowls*, probably written in the early 1380s, is an altogether more finished piece than *The House of Fame*; but it professes no greater knowledge of love's mysteries:

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
> The dredful joye, alwey that slit so yerne:
> Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
> Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
> So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke,
> Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.

Having newly abandoned the octosyllabic couplet of his two earlier dream-poems, Chaucer here displays his immediate mastery of the more spacious rhyme-royal stanza. The verse moves easily from the stately antitheses of the opening to the anticlimax of the final couplet, which expresses the poem's prevailing mood of bewilderment about the 'wonderful working' of love. After reading a book of Cicero's which represents sexual love as a lawless and selfish passion, the poet falls asleep and dreams of a licentious Venus who appears to bear out Cicero's adverse judgement. Wandering further into the garden of love, he comes upon a rival goddess, Nature, presiding over the assembly at which, every St Valentine's Day, birds choose their mates. But even love according to Nature is no simple thing. Indeed, the different orders of birds, ranging from the noble eagles to the ignoble cuckoo, display such a contentious variety of attitudes to life and love that their 'parliament' can be seen to anticipate the later assemblage of Canterbury pilgrims.

Troilus and Criseyde is one of the great poems of the European Middle

Ages. Chaucer completed it in about 1385. Its main source is *Il Filostrato*, Boccaccio's youthful poem about the love-struck Troilus composed some fifty years before; but it also draws on a wide range of other writings, French, Latin, and Italian—most notably Boethius's treatise of Christian stoicism, *De consolatione Philosophiae*, a work which Chaucer was engaged in translating at about the same time. Chaucer makes no attempt to disguise the bookish origins of his 'book of Troilus'. On the contrary, frequent phrases such as 'as myn auctour seyde' and 'as I rede' plainly characterize the narrator as here not a dreamer or a pilgrim but a *reader*, retelling for the benefit of modern lovers as much of this story of ancient love as he can discover in his 'olde bokes'. Yet this most avowedly bookish of all Chaucer's works is also his most immediately vivid and absorbing—so much so that it has been described as 'the first modern novel'. What chiefly prompts this description, wildly anachronistic as it must be, is Chaucer's method of telling the story in a series of big scenes, each of which displays something of that detailed notation of setting and behaviour (benches and garden walks, coughs and glances) which we look for in Jane Austen or George Eliot. Here for instance is the beginning of the scene in which Pandarus first tells his niece Criseyde of Troilus's love:

> Whan he was come unto his neces place,
> 'Wher is my lady?' to hire folk quod he;
> And they hym tolde, and he forth in gan pace,
> And fond two othere ladys sete, and she,
> Withinne a paved parlour, and they thre
> Herden a mayden reden hem the geste
> Of the siege of Thebes, while hem leste.
>
> Quod Pandarus, 'Madame, God yow see,
> With al youre fayre book and compaignie!'
> 'Ey, uncle myn, welcome iwys,' quod she;
> And up she roos . . .
>
> (*Troilus*, II. 78–88)
>
> [*geste* story; *hem leste* they pleased]

Chaucer here anticipates what Henry James calls the 'scenic art' of the novelist. He first selects and then extravagantly 'does' a few

key scenes, whilst making the necessary economies by treating the intervening matter in summary fashion. Only *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* among medieval English poems can rival *Troilus* in mastery of this art.

Yet Chaucer is not a novelist, least of all in that avowed dependence on old books which forces him to leave tantalizing gaps in his story: 'I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon.' This combination of the novelistic close-up with the complete blank produces peculiar effects, especially in the case of Criseyde. The motives of the poem's hero, 'that trewe man, that noble gentil knyght', are never in doubt, but those of Criseyde, both in accepting Troilus and in deserting him, are complex and partially undisclosed. What is in her mind, for instance, when she accepts Pandarus's invitation to dinner—an occasion that ends with her and Troilus in bed together? The invitation, delivered in her uncle's typical style of bullying jocosity, exerts real social pressure: 'certeynly she moste, by hire leve, / Come soupen in his hous with hym at eve.' But she is not obliged to go (she *must*, but *by her leave*), nor is she obliged to accept her uncle's assurances that Troilus is out of town. Perhaps, indeed, she sees right through them:

> Nought list myn auctour fully to declare
> What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,
> That Troilus was out of towne yfare,
> As if he seyde therof soth or no;
> But that, withowten await, with hym to go
> She graunted hym, sith he hire that bisoughte,
> And as his nece obeyed as hire oughte.
>
> (III. 575–81)
>
> [*list* pleases; *await* further ado]

The closing couplet of this rhyme-royal stanza serves to foreclose further speculation (a device unavailable to novelists): Criseyde, we are assured, is simply acting as a dutiful niece should. It is not surprising that many readers, especially women, find this protective and gentlemanly handling of the heroine profoundly equivocal. Ironies there certainly are; but the ironies do not exclude sympathy, and in the end that sympathy receives the powerful sanction of philosophic truth. For after Troilus's death an epilogue invites us to see his love for

Criseyde as doomed to disappointment in any case, however she had behaved, since permanent satisfaction is not to be looked for anywhere in the sublunary world of change and decay. Only of Christ can it be said that 'he nyl falsen no wight'.

Yet women readers evidently were offended (or professed to be so), for Chaucer's next poem, *The Legend of Good Women*, offers itself as an act of reparation for this and other offences against the sex. Appearing to the poet in a mock-religious vision, the God of Love imposes upon him the penitential task of compiling a series of legends (*legenda*, saints' lives) of good women who died as martyrs for love. However, Chaucer got no further than the ninth of these legends, perhaps because his imagination had already been captured by a new idea—a setting for stories which, so far from condemning him to harp continually on a single string, allowed him the greatest possible freedom to explore the wide range of narrative genres current in his time. He began *The Canterbury Tales* in about 1387 and probably continued to work on it until the end of his life. The plan was grandiose: some thirty pilgrims, each to tell two tales on the road to Canterbury and two on the way back to London, giving a total of 120 tales in all. Of these Chaucer's literary executors found only twenty-four among the poet's papers after his death in 1400; yet the work which they evidently pieced together at that time proved an instant and lasting success, not only because of the beauty of individual tales, but also because the imaginative power of Chaucer's original idea of the Canterbury pilgrimage makes itself so commandingly felt even in the fragments that are all he left.

Even though Chaucer composed less than a quarter of his projected tales, these are enough to display his intention of matching the variety of his pilgrim company—'sondry folk, by aventure yfalle / In felaweshipe'—with a corresponding range of narrative genres, secular and religious, high and low. The two tales which follow the General Prologue, thrown together as if 'by aventure' or accidentally, stake out the range for the secular tales: at the upper end, courtly romance, represented by the Knight's tale of Palamon and Arcite, and at the lower end, the Miller's comic tale of Nicholas and Absolon. 'Romance' must be a loose term in this context. Chaucer took no creative interest

in the mainstream of French courtly romance, which is Arthurian; and the burlesque 'Tale of Sir Thopas', which he assigns to himself as pilgrim-narrator, implies a critical view of the more popular English type. 'The Knight's Tale' itself is adapted from Boccaccio's neo-classical romantic epic, *Il Teseida*; 'The Franklin's Tale' is a much elaborated Breton Lay; 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', though set in 'th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour', reads more like a moralized fairy-tale than an Arthurian adventure; and 'The Squire's Tale', left unfinished, has mainly oriental affinities. Yet in their different ways all these tales offer what Chaucer calls 'storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse'—examples of noble conduct and fine feeling set in a past of heroes and marvels—and so they contrast with the 'cherles tales' for which the poet disingenuously apologizes in the Miller's Prologue. The latter group, which includes the tales of the Miller, the Reeve, the Cook, the Shipman, the Merchant, and the Summoner, may appear to represent a departure from literary tradition; but these tales have in fact a formal pedigree quite as respectable as that of the 'romances', for they all more or less closely follow the tradition of the French *fabliau*. *Fabliaux* were poetic, and often highly polished, versions of comic tales. The genre was popular with French poets in the previous century, and Chaucer evidently saw in it, not only a kind of story suitable for the churls on his pilgrimage, but also an opportunity to paint contemporary life and manners. The plots of his *fabliau* tales are generally farcical and fantastic; but the people and settings are observed with minute and loving fidelity: town and gown in the Oxford of 'The Miller's Tale' and the Cambridge of 'The Reeve's Tale', merchant and monk in the suburban Paris of 'The Shipman's Tale', friar and peasant in the Yorkshire of 'The Summoner's Tale'.

Besides 'storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse' and 'cherles tales', Chaucer also speaks in the Miller's Prologue of another kind of 'storial thyng' concerned not with 'gentillesse' but with 'moralitee and hoolynesse'. Here too one can observe a loosely organized hierarchy of genres, headed in this case by the Prioress's Miracle of the Virgin and the Second Nun's Life of St Cecilia. The prologues to these holy tales, like the epilogue to *Troilus*, display Chaucer's mastery of a high

religious style which owes more to Dante than to his English predecessors. To pass from the Shipman's *fabliau* of the monk and the merchant's wife to the Prioress's miracle of the murdered innocent which immediately follows it is to experience the 'sundriness' of *The Canterbury Tales* at its fullest stretch. However, not all those pilgrims who have something to do with the Church speak of 'moralitee and hoolynesse' in such exalted terms. The tales of the Friar, the Pardoner, and the Nun's Priest all draw on the clerical tradition of exempla—everyday stories told by preachers to illustrate moral points. These fables and anecdotes take us into worlds much like those of the *fabliaux*; and Chaucer's evident scepticism about their moral authority allows him to accommodate them easily to the prevailingly comic mood of the *Tales*. Few readers, it may be suspected, clearly remember what the stated moral of the Nun's Priest's fable of the Cock and the Fox is, and fewer still care. Yet it must be recalled that, although the plan of the *Tales*, as announced by the Host in the General Prologue, called for a festive ending back at his inn in Southwark, the work as we have it ends with a religious 'meditacioun' in plain prose—'The Parson's Tale', a formal treatise on the Sacrament of Penance.

These examples are enough to suggest the range, if not the quality, of the stories to be found in *The Canterbury Tales*. Yet it may be argued that Chaucer's most remarkable achievement of all is to be looked for not in the tales the pilgrims tell but in the narrative of the pilgrimage itself. To speak of this as if it provided merely a 'frame', or a series of 'links', for the tales is grossly to undervalue it. Even readers well acquainted with the brilliant series of pilgrim portraits in the General Prologue may fail to appreciate just how much Chaucer makes of his company of sundry folk once the pilgrimage gets under way. The introductory description of the Host, Harry Bailly, does no more than sketch a character who, once he has been appointed 'governour' of the pilgrims and judge of their tales, emerges as the central figure of the cavalcade. William Blake rightly observed that Harry 'is a first rate character, and his jokes are no trifles'. As the appointed master of mirth, he embodies the holiday spirit that is abroad in the *Tales*, genially exerting his authority whenever social or professional differences between the pilgrims break out into open hostility. Nothing in

Chaucer was more original, or proved more inimitable, than the scene in the Manciple's Prologue where the Host intervenes to stop the Manciple's cruel public baiting of the Cook. All three participants in these exchanges are hauntingly vivid: the pale and stinking cook, so drunk that he can express his anger only in wordless nods; the spiteful Manciple, responding to the Host's pacific intervention by offering the Cook what he can least do with, a 'friendly' drink; and Harry himself, who knows all about drink and drunks:

> Thanne gan oure Hoost to laughen wonder loude,
> And seyde, 'I se wel it is necessarie,
> Where that we goon, good drynke with us carie;
> For that wol turne rancour and disese
> T'acord and love, and many a wrong apese.
> O thou Bacus, yblessed be thy name,
> That so kanst turnen ernest into game!'

Reading such a scene, one can endorse the judgement of one of Chaucer's many fifteenth-century admirers:

> His langage was so fayr and pertynente
> It semeth unto mannys heerynge
> Not only the worde, but verely the thynge.

The other 'courtly maker' besides Chaucer from whom Puttenham traced the lineage of English poetry, as he saw it in the age of Elizabeth I, was John Gower (d. 1408). Little is known for certain about Gower's life. He was evidently a gentleman of means, associating both with the landed gentry of Kent and with the lawyers, civil servants, and courtiers of London and Westminster. In the latter part of his life he took up residence at St Mary's Priory in Southwark. By the middle 1380s, when Chaucer submitted his *Troilus* to the correction of 'moral Gower', his friend had already produced two long didactic poems, both much concerned with the ills of contemporary society, *Mirour de l'Omme* in French and *Vox clamantis* in Latin; but much his best work is the English *Confessio Amantis* or 'Lover's Confession', first completed in 1390. Gower had evidently come to share Chaucer's interest in ways of articulating short stories into a larger whole. The broad human comedy of *The Canterbury Tales* was beyond his powers; but *Confessio*

Amantis certainly rivals *The Legend of Good Women*. The setting of both poems is a mock-religious vision in which the poet confronts a love divinity: Cupid in the *Legend*, Venus and her priest Genius in the *Confessio*. In Gower's poem the tales are told, not by the penitent narrator, but by his confessor Genius, as illustrations of the seven deadly sins. Since Gower's stories are all *exempla*, his work does not, any more than Chaucer's *Legend*, offer the pleasures of generic variety to be had in *The Canterbury Tales*. He deals mostly in 'storial thyng' drawn from the myth, legend, and history of classical antiquity, and especially from the poems of Ovid, whose *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses* were among his chief models, as they were Chaucer's. Gower has been described as 'the first English transmitter of so many of the classical themes which Renaissance poets and painters were to embroider'. Thus the confessor's first exemplary tale, illustrating sin of the eyes, is the Ovidian story of Actaeon and Diana, narrated in a mere forty-six lines yet with delicately applied touches of descriptive detail which testify to the poet's fastidious art. Gower is the first English poet who could be called 'correct'. Shakespeare's imitation of his octosyllabic couplets in the prologues of 'ancient Gower' in *Pericles* (a play drawn in part from the story of Antiochus in Book VIII of the *Confessio*) does less than justice to their polish and fluency. Ben Jonson recognized Gower's claims as an exemplar of good English by quoting frequently from the *Confessio* in his *English Grammar*; and in the eighteenth century Thomas Warton spoke admiringly of how 'by a critical cultivation of his native language, he laboured to reform its irregularities, and to establish an English style'.

Yet *Confessio Amantis* should not be read for its stories alone, admirable examples though these are of 'an English style'. The finest moments in the poem come in its closing pages, when the lover's confession is completed. Having told his last story, Genius declares that he will now turn from 'trifles' to 'truth', and advises the lover to abandon sublunary loves and 'tak love where it mai noght faile'. This priestly impulse towards a pious ending like that of Chaucer's *Troilus* is resisted by the lover, who observes that such a willed renunciation of love will seem possible only to one who has not felt its force. To this experience the lover's confessions have already done full justice; but

they have failed to disclose one crucial fact, which now at last emerges when the goddess Venus herself confronts the lover with the realization that he is *old*. Hence the renunciation of love can be for him no more—and no less—than an acceptance of the natural course of things. As Venus says:

> ' "Min herte wolde and I ne may"
> Is noght beloved nou adayes;
> Er thou make eny suche assaies
> To love, and faile upon the fet,
> Betre is to make a beau retret . . .'
>
> [*upon the fet* in the act]

It is with a 'beau retret' or dignified withdrawal from love that the poem ends, breathing an autumnal air of passion spent.

The Fifteenth Century

The dominant tradition of fifteenth-century English poetry is that established by Chaucer and Gower—a dynasty of 'courtly makers' represented by Lydgate and Hoccleve, Charles d'Orléans and James I of Scotland, Henryson, and Dunbar. For the literary historian the existence of such a lineage of nameable poets, each related in demonstrable ways to his predecessors, means that this century presents a picture more like that of later than of earlier times. In particular, this is the period when the condition of anonymity begins to assume something like its modern significance. Whereas anonymity is simply the normal condition of earlier English poems, to call a fifteenth-century poem anonymous is already to say something substantial about it—to mark it as popular, or folkish, or alliterative, or non-metropolitan, or non-Chaucerian, or even non-literary. Such verse merits more attention than it can be given here. One manuscript in the British Library, for instance, preserves a gathering of anonymous poetry in which the voice of English folk-song makes itself clearly heard, as in the haunting riddle-chant which begins as follows:

> I have a yong suster fer beyonden the sea;
> Many be the drowryes that she sente me.

> She sente me the cherry withouten ony ston,
> And so she did the douve withouten ony bon.
>
> [*drowryes* keepsakes]

This poem lived on in sub-literary tradition (ballad and nursery rhyme) until modern times, as did the mysterious 'Corpus Christi Carol', a version of which was recorded from oral tradition as late as 1908:

> Lully, lulley, lully, lulley,
> The faucon hath born my mak away.
>
> He bare him up, he bare him down,
> He bare him into an orchard brown.
> Lully, lulley . . .

This is also the century in which the traditional ballad emerges as an established popular form, distinct from the metrical romance. Among the earliest are the ballads of 'Robin Hood and the Monk' and 'Robin Hood and the Potter'. That 'old song of Percy and Douglas' which so moved Sir Philip Sidney, 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' (known in its later form as 'Chevy Chase'), also took shape in this period:

> The Perse out of Northomberlond
> An avow to God made he
> That he wold hunte in the mountains
> Of Cheviat within days three . . .

Fifteenth-century writers also played an important part in the development of vernacular drama. Like other anonymous works for which no single author is to be sought, the verse plays on biblical subjects commonly known as mystery plays cannot be satisfactorily dated. They already existed in Chaucer's day, for the parish clerk in his 'Miller's Tale' 'pleyeth Herodes on a scaffold hye'; but the four surviving cycles, from Chester, York, Wakefield, and 'N-town', seem to be mainly fifteenth-century work. These cycles present the whole history of mankind from the beginning to the Last Judgement in a selection of biblical episodes, centring on the life and passion of Christ. They were performed at the summer feast of Corpus Christi, either on

pageant wagons drawn through the streets or in a playing area with fixed 'scaffolds' (as in the Oxford of 'The Miller's Tale'). Local clerics generally wrote them, but they were put on by the craft guilds, each of which took responsibility for one play. The results of such joint ecclesiastical and municipal enterprise are naturally very uneven, considered from a literary point of view. The verse is too often either flat or over-inflated; and the presentation of character and event rarely offers anything that might escape the attention of an open-air audience on a summer's day. But some of the authors had real talent, most of all the so-called 'Wakefield Master'. The two shepherds' plays which he contributed to the Wakefield cycle are justly celebrated, especially the second. This play vividly represents the world of 'sely shepardes that walkys on the moore', first in their complaints about oppressive 'gentlery men', nagging wives, and rain, and then in the farcical sub-plot of Mak the sheep-stealer. The scene where the shepherds cluster round the cradle of Mak's 'baby'—a stolen sheep, in fact—provides an original and telling counterpart to the final scene in the play, in which they worship the Christ child. In general, however, the mystery plays offer less opportunity for dramatic invention than do the morality plays. These allegorical dramas take as their subject not biblical history but the life history of an individual considered as typical, 'Humanum Genus' or 'Everyman'. The best of the surviving examples are the *Castle of Perseverance* (early fifteenth century) and *Everyman*, the latter translated from the Dutch in the early sixteenth century. *Everyman* gains greater unity by concentrating on the last days of its hero: T. S. Eliot provocatively described it as perhaps the only English example of 'a drama within the limitations of art'. The more comprehensive *Castle of Perseverance*, however, creates an equally powerful effect in performance, representing a whole life from birth to death and beyond, somewhat in the sprawling 'epic' manner of Bertolt Brecht.

The chief poets of the first generation of 'courtly makers' after Chaucer and Gower are Thomas Hoccleve (*c.*1366–1426) and John Lydgate (*c.*1370–1449). Although Lydgate was a monk of the Benedictine house of Bury St Edmunds and Hoccleve a civil servant in the office of the Privy Seal at Westminster, their literary worlds were

much alike: both addressed poems to King Henry V and his brother Humphrey of Gloucester, and both acknowledged Chaucer as master. Yet they are writers of a very different sort. Lydgate's voluminous works (running to well over 100,000 lines) gained for him a public standing not unlike that of poets laureate in later times. He wrote for great occasions, and also produced gala versions of great historical subjects in his *Troy Book* (1412–20), *The Siege of Thebes* (1420–2), *The Fall of Princes* (1431–8), and *The Life of Our Lady*. These poems were read and admired long after Lydgate's day: *The Fall of Princes* was four times issued by early printers and inspired a continuation in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1555). Lydgate, it has been observed, 'saw his role as the systematic consolidation of Chaucer's achievement in establishing a high-style poetic for English', and in this he may be said to have succeeded; yet his writing has all the faults one would expect of a one-hundred-thousand-line poet. It is diffuse and often, especially in its syntax, negligent; and the numerous Chaucerian echoes too often create effects similar to those experienced in the worst kind of concert-hall. Hoccleve wrote less and wrote better. Though he cannot be called concise, his English is generally plain and sinewy, and he displays a real command over the poetic syntax of the rhyme-royal stanza. Unlike Lydgate, he claims to have been instructed by Chaucer himself in the art of English poetry; but he recalls the master much less often than Lydgate does. Indeed he is, at his best, an idiosyncratic writer. By far his best-known work was *The Regement of Princes* (1411–12), a conventional treatise of moral counsel addressed to the future Henry V; but even this eminently public work displays Hoccleve's special aptitude for personal, autobiographical writing in its long introductory scene between the poet and an old beadsman. This aptitude is most evident in his two most interesting works: 'La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve' (*c.*1405), and the so-called 'Series' of linked pieces, beginning with Hoccleve's 'Complaint' and his 'Dialogue with a Friend', composed a few years before his death in 1426.

Neither Hoccleve nor Lydgate shared Chaucer's preoccupation with the subject of love. In this respect two poets of the next generation, Charles duke of Orleans (1394–1465) and King James I of Scotland (1394–1437), are more like Chaucer and also, as might be expected of

two members of foreign royal houses, more specifically courtly. As prisoners of the English king, both came into contact with the new English poetry and were inspired to emulate it. The book of English love poetry which Charles composed during his twenty-five-year captivity consists mainly of ballades and rondeaux, but these courtly lyrics are loosely organized into a narrative, rather like later sonnet sequences. The first series of ballades, ending with the death of the lady, is followed by a vision which warns the poet, now in middle age, that the time has come for him to 'depart with honour' from love. The French duke had evidently read both *The Book of the Duchess* and the closing pages of *Confessio Amantis* with sympathetic attention. In the following section, which is more in the continental manner, the poet, now retired from love, offers other lovers a feast of 'quails and larks'—delicate rondeaux—for their delight and comfort; but a second vision, of Venus and Fortune, heralds his own renewed submission to love, which is narrated in a concluding series of ballades. Whereas the predominantly lyric character of Charles's book reflects continental taste, *The Kingis Quair* (King's Book) of James subordinates lyric to narrative in the English way. Its account of how the imprisoned poet first saw his beloved walking in a garden below his tower derives from the scene in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale' where Palamon and Arcite first see Emily; and the vision of Venus, Minerva, and Fortune that follows belongs, like Charles's similar episode, to the tradition of philosophical love-vision represented by Chaucer's dream-poems and Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*. Yet James writes, evidently out of his own experience, with a distinctive delicate intensity, as in his description of the heart-shaped ruby which hung on a slender gold chain round the lady's neck: 'That, as a spark of lowe, so wantonly / Semyt birnyng upon hir quhyte throte' [*lowe* fire; *quhyte* white].

The two best 'English' poets of the last part of our period also belong to Scotland: Henryson and Dunbar. The term 'Scottish Chaucerian' often applied to them registers an indisputable debt (especially in the case of Henryson) but does scant justice to their individual excellence. Little is known about the life of Robert Henryson. He graduated, probably with a degree in canon law from Glasgow University in 1462, and became master of the grammar school in the

important Benedictine abbey of Dunfermline. Henryson's two major poems both have their roots in books: *The Testament of Cresseid* in Chaucer's *Troilus*, and the *Fables* in the Latin Aesop which the 'scolmaister of Dunfermling' must often have laboured over with his pupils. The *Testament* supplements Chaucer's poem by telling the 'wofull end' of Cresseid, taking up her story at a point which Chaucer would never have wished to reach:

> Quhen Diomeid had all his appetyte,
> And mair, fulfillit of this fair ladie,
> Upon ane uther he set his haill delyte.

The Roman severity of that characteristically laconic 'and more' prepares the reader for the harsh fate that Henryson invents for Chaucer's heroine: a life of promiscuity, followed by leprosy, destitution, and death. Yet the poem does more than simply avenge Troilus. A last encounter between the hero and Cresseid, now begging at the roadside, brings her to the dignity of self-realization and remorse. This is manifested in her dying 'testament' and recognized by Troilus in the inscription he composes for her tomb:

> 'Lo, fair ladyis, Cresseid of Troy the toun,
> Sumtyme countit the flour of womanheid,
> Under this stane, lait lipper, lyis deid.'

Fine as the *Testament* is, Henryson surpassed it in his *Fables*, a series of thirteen animal fables, including versions of the Cock and the Fox (reworking 'The Nun's Priest's Tale') and the Town and Country Mouse. This work is one of the masterpieces of medieval literature. The 'moralities' which conclude each story match their models, the moral ballades of Chaucer, in grave and polished eloquence; and the stories themselves, derived from Aesopic tradition and medieval tales of Reynard the Fox, are told with incomparable skill and verve. The small world of the animals, overshadowed by the fear of injury and sudden death, presents to the human reader a spectacle in which he can contemplate with some steadiness both the comedy and the horror of his own condition. Here, for instance, is a mouse in mortal fear explaining to a lion how she came to be caught dancing on his sleeping form:

'We wer repleit, and had grit aboundance
Off alkin thingis, sic as to us effeird;
The sweit sesoun provokit us to dance
And mak sic mirth as nature to us leird;
Ye lay so still and law upon the eird
That be my sawll we weind ye had bene deid;
Elles wald we not have dancit over your heid.'

[*effeird* was proper; *leird* taught]

Henryson's successor in the line of Scots 'makars', William Dunbar, died not long, perhaps, after the battle of Flodden (1513) in which his patron James IV of Scotland was killed. Dunbar was a graduate and became a priest. The range of his poetry reflects the variety of occasions, especially at the Scottish court, that prompted it: there are religious and liturgical poems, moral pieces, allegories of love and of state ceremony, petitionary poems, comic poems, and poems of abuse and insult. Dunbar's well-justified pride in his craft as a 'makar' finds expression in one of his poems addressed to James, in which he complains that his work is not rewarded like that of the king's other servants:

Als lang in mynd my work sall hald,
Als haill in everie circumstance,
In forme, in mater and substance,
But wering or consumptioun,
Roust, canker or corruptioun,
As ony of thair werkis all.

[*haill* whole, complete; *But wering* without wearing out]

The purely medieval, scholastic terms in which Dunbar claims that his poems will be long-lived, if not 'immortal', apply with precision to his own work, as they do to Henryson's. Fullness and perfection of both 'forme' and 'mater' could hardly be better illustrated than in the stanza just quoted from the latter's *Fables*, where the mouse's three excuses are effortlessly condensed into six lines of rhyme royal and clinched by the incisive rhyme of the last line. In medieval poetry, comprehensive 'wholeness' of matter is often achieved at the expense of form; but some of the best poems of the period are indeed 'haill in everie circumstance': *Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Sir Gawain*,

Chaucer's *Troilus*, Henryson's *Fables*.

Dunbar's *Lament for the Makers* speaks of the power of death over all men (not just the 'makaris' or poets, though it is they who are listed by name). Its exhaustive catalogue of 'all estatis' is shaped and unified, like so much in Dunbar's poetry, by the metrical form—in this case, a simple stanza of two short couplets:

I se that makaris amang the laif
Playis heir ther pageant, syne gois to graif;
Sparit is nought ther faculte:
Timor mortis conturbat me.

He has done petuously devour
The noble Chaucer of makaris flour,
The monk of Bery, and Gower, all thre:
Timor mortis conturbat me.

[*laif* rest]

In each stanza the rhyme of the second couplet is fixed by the refrain; so every stanza reaches a moment of truth, as it were, at the end of its third line when, after the free rhyming of the first couplet, an ominous 'e' sound (faculté, thre) heralds the return of the refrain, as inevitable as death itself. It is a remarkable and characteristic union of 'forme' with 'mater'. So too, in 'Surrexit Dominus de Sepulchro', Dunbar's poem on the empty tomb, fullness of matter—in this case, the traditional imagery of the Resurrection—combines with perfection of form, metrical and syntactic, to produce what C. S. Lewis called 'speech of unanswerable and thundering greatness':

He for our saik that sufferit to be slane
And lyk a lamb in sacrifice wes dicht
Is lyk a lyone rissin up agane
And as a gyane raxit him on hicht;
Sprungin is Aurora radius and bricht,
On loft is gone the glorius Appollo,
The blisfull day depairtit fro the nycht:
Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro.

[*dicht* made ready; *gyane* giant; *raxit* stretched]

The Wanderer[1]

"Often the lone-dweller lives to find favor, mildness of the Lord, though long over the water-way, troubled in heart, he has had to stir with his arms the frost-cold sea, tread the tracks of exile. Fully fixed is his fate."

So spoke the earth-walker, mindful of hardships, of cruel war-slaughters—and the fall of dear kinsmen.

"Often before the dawn of each day, alone, I have had to speak my cares: there is now none of the living to whom I dare clearly say my heart's thought. I know for truth that it is an excellent custom in a man that he lock fast his heart's coffer, keep his mind's hoard-case closed, purpose what he will. The weary-hearted may not withstand fate, nor the torn spirit bring help. Therefore those eager for fame often bind sorrowful thought fast in their breast-coffer.

"So I, often wretched with care, deprived of my homeland, far from dear kinsmen, had to fasten my heart's thought with fetters—after the time, in years long past, that I covered my gold-friend in the darkness of earth; and thence downcast I crossed over the woven waves, winter-sad, yearning for a hall, sought a giver of treasure—where, far or near, I might find one who should know of my people or would comfort me friendless, receive me with gladness. He who has felt it knows how cruel a companion is sorrow to him who has no beloved protectors. The path of exile attends him, not twisted gold—frozen are the thoughts in his heart-case, no joy of earth. He remembers the hall-warriors and the taking of treasure—how in his youth his gold-friend made him accustomed to feasting. All delight ends.

"Indeed, he who must long forgo the counsel-words of a beloved lord knows how it will seem to him in his mind, when together sorrow and sleep often bind the poor lone-dweller, that he is embracing and kissing his liege lord and laying his hands and head on his knee, as in the old days when sometimes he shared in the gift-giving. Then the lordless man wakens again, sees before him the yellow waves, the sea-birds bathe, spread their feathers, frost and snow fall, mingled with hail.

"Then the wounds of his heart are deeper, sore for want of his dear one. Sorrow is made new as memory of kinsmen moves through his mind: he greets them with glad words, eagerly looks on them, a company of warriors. They fade again, moving away over the water: such fleeting ones' spirit brings there no well-known voices. Care is renewed in him who many and often times must send his weary heart over the woven waves."

"Therefore I cannot think why my heart's thought should not grow dark when through this world I consider all the life of men—with what terrible swiftness they forgo the hall-floor, bold young retainers. So each day this middle-earth fails and falls. Indeed, no man may become wise before he has had a share of winters in the kingdom of this world. The wise must be patient, must never be too hot-hearted, nor too hasty of speech, nor too weak of wars, nor too wanting of thought, nor too fearful, nor too glad, nor too greedy for wealth, nor ever too eager of boast before he has clear knowing. A man must wait, when he speaks boast, until, sure-minded, he knows clearly whither the thought of hearts will turn.

"The wise warrior must observe how ghostly it will be when all the wealth of this world stands waste, as now here and there through this middle-earth walls stand blown by the wind, covered with frost-fall, the dwellings storm-beaten. The wine-halls totter, the lord lies bereft of joy, all the company has fallen, bold men beside the wall. Some war took away, bore them on their way forth; one a bird carried off over the deep sea, one the gray wolf shared with death, another a man with sad face hid in an earth-pit.

"So the Creator of men's generations laid waste this dwelling-ground until the old works of giants stood idle, empty of the sound of the stronghold's keepers. Therefore the wise in heart thinks deeply on this wall-place and this dark life, remembers the great number of deadly combats long ago, and speaks these words: 'Where has the horse gone? Where the young warrior? Where is the giver of treasure? What has become of the seats for the feasts? Where are the joys of the hall? Alas, the bright cup! Alas, the mailed warrior! Alas, the prince's glory! How has that time gone, vanished beneath night's cover, just as if it had never been! The wall, wonderfully high, adorned with snake-images, stands now over the old traces of the beloved company. Might of the ash-spears has carried away the earls, weapons greedy for slaughter—Fate the mighty, and storms beat on the stone walls, thick-falling snow binds the earth; winter's roar, when darkness comes, the night-shadow falls, sends from the north harsh hailstones in hatred of men. All the kingdom of earth is wretched, work of the fates changes the world under the skies. Here wealth is fleeting, here friend is fleeting, here man is fleeting, here woman is fleeting—all this resting place of earth shall be emptied.' "

So spoke the wise in heart, sat apart at the council. Good is he who keeps his pledge, must never man utter too quickly the passion of his breast, unless he knows first how to achieve remedy, an earl with his valor. Well will it be with him who seeks favor, support from the Father in heaven, where for us the only stronghold stands.

THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

The *Dream of the Rood* (i.e., of the Cross) is the finest of a rather large number of religious poems in Old English. Neither its author nor its date of composition is known. It appears in a late 10th-century manuscript located in Vercelli in northern Italy, a manuscript made up of Old English religious poems and sermons. The poet Cynewulf, about whom nothing is surely known except that he wrote four Old English homiletic poems (two of them found in the Vercelli manuscript), has sometimes been credited with the *Dream*, but on no very convincing evidence. The poem may antedate its manuscript by almost three centuries, for some passages from the Rood's speech were carved, with some variations, in runes on a stone cross early in the 8th century: this is the famous Ruthwell Cross, which is preserved near Dumfries in southern Scotland. The precise relation of the poem to this cross is, however, uncertain.

The homiletic tone of the Dreamer's meditation may seem anticlimactic after the intensity, so terse and exciting, of the Rood's address to him, but the former is nevertheless an admirable frame for the latter. The experience of the Cross—its humiliation at the hands of those who changed it from tree to instrument of punishment for criminals, its humility when the young hero Christ mounts upon it, and its pride as the restored "tree of glory"—has a suggestive relevance to the condition of the sad, lonely, sin-stained Dreamer. In the Cross's experience, hope has replaced torment; when, at the end of the poem, the Dreamer describes Christ's triumphant

1. I.e., "established the beginning of every one of wonders."
2. The later manuscript copies read *eorþan*, "earth," for *ælda* (West Saxon *ielda*), "men's."

progress from hell to heaven, the verse recaptures some of the excitement of the Cross's address, reflecting the Dreamer's response to the hope that has been brought him.

The Dream of the Rood[1]

Behold, I shall tell of a most marvelous dream—what I dreamed at midnight, when men and their voices were at rest. It seemed to me that I saw a tree, more wonderful than any other, reach high aloft, bathed in light, brightest of wood. All that beacon[2] was covered with gold. Four gems were set where it met the earth, and five more stood on it high about the crosspiece. There looked upon it many hosts of angels, fair in the form God gave them of old. This was surely no felon's gallows, for holy spirits beheld it, men upon earth, and all this glorious creation. Wonderful was the triumphant tree, and I stained with sin, wounded with wrongdoing. I saw the tree of wonder, adorned with clothes, shine brilliantly, decked with gold; splendidly had jewels covered the Lord's tree. But through that gold I might see wretches' ancient agony, for now it began to bleed upon the right side. I was sadly troubled, afraid of that fair sight. I saw that beacon, changeable, alter in clothes and in color: now was it wet with moisture, drenched with blood's flowing, now adorned with treasure. But I lay there a long while looking upon the Saviour's tree, troubled in mind, until I heard it give voice; the noblest of trees began to speak.

"It was long ago—still I remember it—that I was hewn down at the wood's edge, taken from my stump. Fierce foes seized me, shaped me into the spectacle that they wished, bade me lift their felons. Men carried me on their shoulders to a hill where they set me down; foes enough fastened me there. Then I saw the Master of Mankind hasten with all his heart because he wished to climb upon me. I did not dare against God's word bow or break, though I saw earth's surface tremble. All foemen I might have felled, but I stood fast. The young hero stripped himself—he who was God almighty—strong and stouthearted. He climbed upon the high gallows, valiant, in the sight of many, for he would redeem mankind. I shook when the warrior embraced me, yet I dared not bow to earth, fall to the ground's surface: I must stand fast. A cross was I raised; I lifted up the Mighty King, Lord of the Heavens; I dared not bend. They pierced me with dark nails—on me are the wounds seen, open hateful gashes. Nor did I dare do harm to any of them. They mocked

1. This prose translation, by the present editor, has been based in general on the edition of the poem by J. C. Pope, *Seven Old English Poems* (1966).
2. The Old English word *beacen* means also "token" or "sign" and "battle standard."

us both together. I was all wet with blood shed from the sides of that man by the time that he had sent forth his spirit. Many bitter things I had endured on the hill. I saw the God of Hosts cruelly racked. Darkness had covered with its mists the Ruler's body, the bright splendor. Shadow came forth, dark under the clouds. All creation wept, bewailed the King's fall: Christ was on Cross.

"Yet from afar, ready and willing, there came some to the Lord.[3] I saw all this. Sore was I troubled, yet I bent to the hands of the men, with all my heart humble. They took Almighty God, lifted him from his great torment. The warriors let me stand, stained with blood. I was all wounded with arrows. They laid him down, limb-weary, stood at his body's head, gazed upon Heaven's Lord; and he rested him there a while, exhausted after the great struggle. In the sight of his slayer[4] warriors began to build him an earth-home, carved it out of bright stone, set therein the Wielder of Triumphs. Then they began to sing for him a song of lament, sad in the evening. Then would they depart, tired, from the great Lord. He rested with small host; yet we[5] stood in our places a good while, weeping. The song of the men rose up. The body grew cold, the spirit's fair dwelling. Then they began to fell us to the earth—that was a fearful fate. They buried us in a deep pit. Yet thanes[6] of the Lord, friends, heard of me there[7] . . . decked me with gold and silver.

"Thou might now understand, man beloved of me, that I had endured suffering of evils, of grievous sorrows. Now is the happy time come that far and wide men upon earth adore me, and all this glorious creation prays to this beacon. On me the Son of God suffered for a while; therefore now I tower glorious under the heavens, and I may heal every one of those that hold me in awe. Once I was made the hardest of torments, most loathsome to men, before I made open the true road to life for all who have voices. Lo, the Lord of Glory honored me above all the trees of the wood, the Ruler of Heaven, just as his mother also, Mary herself, Almighty God for the sake of all men honored above all woman's kind.

"Now I bid thee, man beloved of me, that thou tell this vision to men. Reveal with thy words that it is the tree of glory on which Almighty God suffered for mankind's many sins and for the deeds done by Adam long ago. Death he tasted there; yet the Lord rose again in his great might to help mankind. Then he ascended into Heaven; but he will come again hither to seek mankind on doomsday, the Lord himself, Almighty God, and his angels with him, that at that time he who has the power to judge may judge each one as in

3. According to John xix.38–39, it was Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus who received Christ's body from the Cross.
4. I.e., the Cross.
5. I.e., Christ's Cross and those on which the two thieves were crucified.
6. Members of the King's body of warriors.
7. A number of lines describing the finding of the Cross have apparently been lost here.

this transitory life he deserves. Nor may any be unafraid of the word that the Ruler will speak. Before his multitude he will ask where the man is who in the name of the Lord would taste bitter death as he did on the Cross. But then they will be afraid and will little know what they may begin to answer to Christ. Yet there need not any be afraid who bears on his breast the best of beacons. For through the Cross shall every soul who thinks to dwell with the Lord seek his kingdom[8] in his earthly journey."

Then blithe-hearted, confident, I prayed to the Cross, there where I was alone, without company. My heart was drawn away from earth's paths. Often I endured weariness of spirit. Now is there hope of life, that I may seek the tree of triumph, honor it more often than other men, since I am alone. Great is the desire of my heart for the Cross, and my hope of protection rests in it. I have not many powerful friends on earth, for they have gone from the joys of the world, sought for themselves the King of Glory; now they live in Heaven with the High Father, dwell in glory. And every day I expect the time when the Lord's Cross that I beheld here on earth shall fetch me in this transitory life and bring me where bliss is great, joy in Heaven, where the Lord's folk are set at the feast, where bliss is eternal. And may it place me where I may thereafter dwell in glory, enjoy with the saints their delight. May the Lord be my friend, who here on earth suffered for man's sins on the gallows tree. He redeemed us and granted us life, a heavenly home. Hope was restored, with glory and bliss, to those who suffered in fire.[9] The Son was victorious in that foray, mighty and successful. Then he came with many, a host of spirits, into God's kingdom, the All-Powerful Ruler, and the angels and all the saints who then dwelt in Heaven rejoiced when their Ruler, Almighty God, came where his home was.

8. I.e., the Lord's.
9. This and the following sentences refer to the Harrowing (i.e., pillaging) of Hell: after His death upon the Cross, Christ descended into hell, from which He released the souls of certain of the patriarchs and prophets, conducting them triumphantly to heaven.

'HARLEY LYRICS' (1)

Now sprinkes the spray

Now sprinkes the spray,
Al for love ich am so seek
That slepen I ne may.

Als I me rode this endre day
  O my playinge,
Seigh I whar a litel may
  Bigan to singe,
  "The clot him clinge!
  Way es him i love-longinge
Sal libben ay!"

Son ich herde that mirye note,
  Thider I drogh.
I fonde hire in an herber swot
  Under a bogh,
  With joye ynogh.
  Son I asked, "Thou mirye may,
Why sinkestou ay?"

Than answerde that maiden swote
  Mid wordes fewe,
"My lemman me haves bihot
  Of love trewe:
  He chaunges anewe.
  Yif I may, it shal him rewe,
By this day."

'Now blossoms the spray:
All for love I am so sick,
My sleep has gone away.'

On horseback as I rode one day
    Adventuring,
I chanced to hear while on my way
    A maiden sing:
    'Clod to him cling!
Alas to love in suffering
    My life away!'
      'Now blossoms the spray, etc.'

And hearing that delightful tune,
    I went to see;
And in a glade I found her soon
    In ecstasy
    Beneath a tree.
I asked, 'Why sing so ceaselessly,
    O maiden gay?'
      'Now blossoms the spray, etc.'

And then replied that lovely she,
    (Her words were few)
'My lover swore on oath to me
    His love was true:
    He's changed for new.
May it bring him grief and rue
    This very day!
      Now blossoms the spray:
      All for love I am so sick,
      My sleep has gone away.'

Alisoun

Bitwene Mersh and Averil,
  When spray biginneth to springe,
The lutel fowl hath hire wil
  On hire lud to singe.
  Ich libbe in love-longinge
For semlokest of alle thinge;
He may me blisse bringe:
  Ich am in hire baundoun.
An hendy hap ichabbe yhent;
Ichot from hevene it is me sent;
From alle wimmen my love is lent,
  And light on Alisoun.

On heu hire her is fair ynogh,
  Hire browe browne, hire eye blake;
With lossum chere he on me logh,
  With middel smal and wel ymake.
  Bote he me wolle to hire take,
  For te buen hire owen make,
  Longe to liven ichulle forsake,
    And feye fallen adown.

Nihtes when I wende and wake,
Forthy min wonges waxeth won;

Levedy, al for thine sake
  Longinge is ylent me on.
  In world nis non so witer mon
  That al hire bounte telle con;
  Hire swire is whittore then the swon,
    And feirest may in towne.

Ich am for wowing al forwake,
  Wery so water in wore,
Lest eny reve me my make;
  Ichabbe y-yirned yore:
  Betere is tholien while sore
  Then mournen evermore.
  Geinest under gore,
    Herkne to my roun:
  An hendy hap ichabbe yhent;
  Ichot from hevene it is me sent;
  From alle wimmen my love is lent,
    And light on Alisoun.

Between March and April,
  When sprays begin to spring,
The little bird in bird-song
  Delights and longs to sing.
  And lost in love, I cling
  To the fairest, sweetest thing.
  Blisses may she bring
    To me, her bonded one!

      Grace and glorious luck are mine,
      And sure, their sending is divine;
      My love has left all womankind,
        And lights on Alison.

Bright hair and body slender,
  Tawny eyebrows sweet;
Her eyes of black show tender
  When my own they meet.
  Unless she takes me straight
  To be her own true mate,
  I shall be felled by Fate,
    My earthly life fordone.

      Grace and glorious luck, etc.

At night-time, tossing, waking,
  (My cheeks turn pale for you)
For your sake, lady, aching,
  I feel desire anew.
  No wizard's words will do
  To give her praises due:
  Ah, neck of swan-like hue,
    Fairest beneath the sun!

      Grace and glorious luck, etc.

I weary like milling water,
  With sleepless longing sore,
And lest my love be stolen,
  I languish in her lure.
  But better a while to endure
  Than mourn for evermore.
  Sweetest whom I adore,
    Hear my orison!

Grace and glorious luck are mine,
And sure, their sending is divine;
My love has left all womankind,
  And lights on Alison.

HARLEY LYRICS (2)

Spring Song

Lenten is come with love to towne,
With blosmen and with briddes roune,
  That al this blisse bringeth.
Dayeseyes in this dales,
Notes swete of nightegales,
  Uch fowl song singeth.
The threstelcok him threteth oo,
Away is huere winter wo,
  When woderove springeth.
This fowles singeth ferly fele,
Ant wliteth on huere winne wele,
  That al the wode ringeth.

The rose raileth hire rode,
The leves on the lighte wode
  Waxen al with wille.

The mone mandeth hire bleo,
The lilye is lossom to seo,
  The fenil and the fille.
Wowes this wilde drakes:
Males murgeth huere makes,
  On strem that striketh stille.
Mody meneth, so doth mo:
Ichot ich am on of tho
  For love that likes ille.

The mone mandeth hire light;
So doth the semly sonne bright,
  When briddes singeth breme.
Deawes donketh the downes;
Deores whisperes dernes rounes,
  Domes for te deme;
Wormes woweth under cloude;
Wimmen waxeth wounder proude,
  So wel hit wol hem seme.
Yef me shal wonte wille of on,
This wunne wele I wol forgon,
  Ant wight in wode be fleme.

2 *briddes roune*, birds' voice — 4 ***this***, these — 6 ***uch***, each
7: i.e., The song-thrush chides constantly — 8 ***huere***, their
9 *woderove*, woodruff — 10 *ferly fele*, wondrous many
11: i.e., ? and warble on their wealth of joy
13 *raileth hire rode*, puts on her hue — 15 ***wille***, delight

Spring's about with love again,
With blossom and with birds' refrain
  The top of pleasure bringing.
Daisies whitening all the dales,
The lovely notes of nightingales –
  Every bird is singing.
The song-thrush endlessly trills on,
For winter's misery is gone
  When the woodruff's springing.
A host of birds profusely sing
The joy and blessing of the spring,
  And set the woodlands ringing.

The rose puts on her reddening hue,
The leaves with ardour sprout anew,
  In the bright woods glowing.
The moon sends down her radiant light,
While lilies, lovely to the sight,
  Fennel and thyme are blowing.
Wild and wanton drakes abound;
Their mating calls to lovers sound
  Like stream serenely flowing.
The passionate man and others sigh,
And of that company am I,.
  Distraught with love and wooing.

The moonbeams shed their lovely light,
And when the glorious sun shines bright,
  The sounds of bird-song swell.
The moistening dew on uplands falls,
Creatures utter secret calls,
  Their loving tales to tell.
Worms beneath the ground make love;
Women flaunt their pride above –
  The spring becomes them well.
If none of them can burn for me,
Then, lost to fortune, I shall flee
  And in the wild wood dwell.

16 *mandeth hire bleo*, sends forth her radiance
17 *lossom to seo*, lovely to see — 19 ***wowes***, woo; ***this***, these
20 *males*, ms: *miles; murgeth huere makes*, gladden their mates
21 *on*, ms: *ase; striketh*, flows
22: i.e., passionate (lovers) complain, so do others
23 *ichot*, I know; *ich*, I; *tho*, those — 24 ***likes ille***, i.e., are troubled
27 *breme*, clearly — 28 ***donketh***, moisten
29: i.e., animals whisper dark secrets; ***whisperes***, ms: ***with huere***
30: i.e., in order to settle their affairs
31 *woweth*, woo; *cloude*, ground — 32 ***wounder***, wondrous
33: i.e., ? so well it (their pride) will suit them
34: i.e., if I must do without my delight in one of them
35 *wunne wele*, wealth of joy; *wol*, will
36 *wight*, creature; *fleme*, fugitive

CHAUCER

From The Canterbury Tales

The General Prologue

Whan that April with his° showres soote° — *its / sweet*
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veine[1] in swich° licour,° — *such / liquid*
Of which vertu[2] engendred is the flowr;
Whan Zephyrus[3] eek° with his sweete breeth — *also*
Inspired hath in every holt° and heeth° — *grove / field*
The tendre croppes,° and the yonge sonne[4] — *shoots*
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye
That sleepen al the night with open yë°— — *eye*
So priketh hem° Nature in hir corages[5]— — *them*
Thanne longen folk to goon° on pilgrimages, — *go*
And palmeres[6] for to seeken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, couthe° in sondry londes; — *known*
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr[7] for to seeke
That hem hath holpen° whan that they were seke.° — *helped / sick*
  Bifel that in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk[8] at the Tabard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with ful° devout corage, — *very*
At night was come into that hostelrye
Wel nine and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure° yfalle — *chance*
In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle
That toward Canterbury wolden° ride. — *would*
The chambres and the stables weren wide,
And wel we weren esed° at the beste.[9] — *accommodated*
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,[1]
So hadde I spoken with hem everichoon° — *every one*
That I was of hir felaweshipe anoon,° — *at once*
And made forward[2] erly for to rise,
To take oure way ther as[3] I you devise.° — *describe*
  But nathelees,° whil I have time and space,[4] — *nevertheless*
Er° that I ferther in this tale pace,° — *before / pass*

1. I.e., in plants.
2. By the power of which.
3. The west wind.
4. The sun is young because it has run only half-way through its course in Aries, the Ram—the first sign of the zodiac in the solar year.
5. Their hearts.
6. Palmers, wide-ranging pilgrims—especially those who sought out the "straunge strondes" (foreign shores) of the Holy Land. "Ferne halwes": far-off shrines.
7. St. Thomas à Becket, murdered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170.
8. Southwark, site of the Tabard Inn, was then a suburb of London, south of the Thames River.
9. In the best possible way.
1. Had set.
2. I.e., (we) made an agreement.
3. "Ther as": where.
4. I.e., opportunity.

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE WORLD PICTURE

DEGREE or ORDER or (DIVINE) LAW

Hooker "Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity":

Above all earthly and cosmic laws or orders there is Law in general, "that Law which giveth life unto all the rest which are commendable just and good, namely the law whereby the Eternal himself doth work". God created his own law both because he willed it and because it was right. Though voluntary it was not arbitrary, but based on reason. That divine reason is beyond our understanding, yet we know it is there. God's law is eternal, "being that order which God before all ages hath set down with himself, for himself to do all things by". God chose to work in finitude ~~in~~ of some sort to show his glory and having so chosen he expressed the abundance of his glory in variety.

SIN

Pauline (St Paul's) scheme of sin and salvation: the revolt of the bad angels under Lucifer because of their pride, the creation, the temptation and fall of man, the incarnation, the atonement, the regeneration through Christ. There is the everpresent glory of God's creation in the world, his Providence keeps the whole system running smoothly. When God had made the world he found it good and he created man in his own image but with the Fall of Man both man and the universe were corrupted. Thus disorder or chaos, the product of sin, is perpetually striving to come again. Man's way to salvation is through God's grace and Christ's atonement but contemplation and meditation also help as by the Fall man was alienated from his true self and he can regain true self-knowledge through contemplating the works of nature of which he is part.

THE CHAIN OF BEING

This metaphor served to express the unimaginable plenitude of God's creation, its unfaltering order and its ultimate unity. The chain stretched from the foot of God's throne to the meanest inanimate objects. Every speck of creation was a link in the chain, and every link except those at the two extremities was simultaneously bigger and smaller than the other, there could be no gap. The precise magnitude of this chain could not be ascertained but it was safe to say that it was short of infinity though of a finitude quite outside man's imagination.

First there is mere existence, the inanimate class: the elements, liquids, and metals. But in spite of this common lack of life there is vast difference in virtue: water is nobler than earth, the ruby than the topaz, gold than brass. Next there is existence and life, the vegetative class, where again the oak is nobler than the bramble. Next there is existence, life and feeling, the sensitive class. In it there are three grades. First the creatures having touch but not hearing memory or movement. Such are shellfish and parasites on the base of trees. Then there are animals having touch memory and movement but not hearing, for instance ants. And finally there are the higher animals, horses, dogs, etc., that have all these faculties. The three classes lead up to man, who has not only existence, life and feeling, but understanding: he sums up in himself the total faculties of earthly phenomena. (For this reason he was called the little world or microcosm, the created universe being the macrocosm). But as there had been an inanimate class, so to balance it there must be a purely rational or spiritual one. These are the angels, linked to man by community of the understanding, but freed from simultaneous attachment to the lower faculties. There are vast numbers of angles and they are as precisely ordered along the chain of being as the elements or the metals. Now, although the creatures are assigned their precise place in the chain of being, there is at the same time the possibility of change. The chain is in fact a ladder. There is a progression in the way the elements nourish plants, the fruits of plants beasts, and

the flesh of beasts men. All this is one with the tendency of man upwards towards God. The chain of being is in this way educative both in the marvels of its static self and in its implications of ascent. If the chain is to be whole, the top of one class must link with the bottom of another. Every class in the chain is allowed to excel in a single particular. Stones may be lowly but they exceed the class above them, the plants, in strength and durability. Plants, though without sense, excel in the faculty of assimilating nourishment. The beasts are stronger than man in physical energy and desires. Man excels the angels in his power of learning, for his very imperfection calls forth that power, while the angels as perfect beings have already acquired all the knowledge they are capable of holding. Only the angels, through their peculiar gift, the faculty of adoration, cannot claim to go beyond the class of being above them.

Another form of excellence is that within every class there is a primate, the most excellent specimen of that class: the dolphin (sometimes the whale) among fishes, the eagle among birds, the lion (sometimes the elephant) among the beasts, the emperor among men, God among the angels, the sun among the stars, justice among the virtues and the head among the body's members.

The four elements (earth, water, air, fire) formed a ladder of their own, the earth being the lowest and the fire the highest in it. Still, all things in the created world were compounded of all the four elements direct. The elements in them being represented in various proportions. The highest perfection achievable in this chain was a being made of the purest of fires - heavenly fire, i.e light. This being is God as a being of pure light.

The four elements were the material for the whole universe, but they were differently mixed in the two regions: below the moon (in the sublunary world) ill, above it perfectly. Hence the heavens were eternal, the sublunary region subject to decay because in it the elements were mixed unequally. Also the air below the moon was thick and dirty, above it it was pure and known as ether. Also ether could be considered as the fifth element and the substance of all creation from the moon upward. In this case it would be only natural that the farther the distance from the earth and the nearer to heaven, the purer and more brilliant the atmosphere. Contrarywise the earth itself was gross and heavy and the more so towards its own centre. In fact the earth in the Ptolemaic system was the cesspool of the universe, the repository of its grossest dregs.

ANGELS

The most influential account of the angels has been that of Dionysius the Areopagite, a Christian Neo-Platonist of the fifth century A.D. given in his work "On the Heavenly Hierarchy" and it is widely known because Aquinas and Dante used it. The angels are arranged in a definitive order according to their natural capacity to receive the undivided divine essence. Knowing themselves and being without sin, they are utterly content with the full measure of what they can assimilate, and will not envy those above them. Those of inferior capacity will receive divine knowledge through the medium of their superiors. There are three main orders of angels. The highest is contemplative and consists of Seraphs, Cherubs and Thrones. Thus the highest link in the chain of being would be the chief Seraph. The second order is more active but rather potentially than in deed: their psychological state is rather of an attitude than of an action. They are divided into Dominations, Virtues and Powers. More active still is the third order, divided into Principalities, Archangels and Angels. It is the lowest rank, the Angels, who form the medium between the whole angelic hierarchy and man. They go on man's errands. These nine orders of angels echo the Trinity, secondly they correspond to the ninefold division of the material heavens. From heaven in descending order the spheres were those of *primum mobile*,

the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon; and the nine hierarchies of angels were thought each to regulate one of these spheres in the order given above, the seraphs regulating the *primum mobile* and so on. The celestial sounds the spheres make while in constant movement are called "the music of the spheres". Angels were supposed to direct the turning of the spheres. To Neo-Platonists these angels were identical with the heavenly sirens of Plato who sit upon their spheres and, each singing their different note, compose a harmony of ravishing beauty. Humans cannot hear this music because of their corruptible and sinful body.

NATURE

according to the orthodox view worked unswervingly by a set of rules applicable to her alone, she is a direct and involuntary tool of God. The Neo-Platonists viewed nature as an intellectual being, "Soul of the world", standing on the ladder of creation above man but below the angels.

THE ELEMENTS

were primarily viewed as certain qualities attributable to all matter: hot and cold, dry and moist. Heaviest and lowest was the cold and dry element, the earth. Its natural place was the centre of the universe, of which it was the dregs. Outside earth was the region of cold and moist, the water. Outside water was the region of hot and moist, the air. Noblest of all is fire which next below the sphere of the moon enclosed the globe of air that girded water and earth. It was hot and dry, rarefied, invisible to human sight, and was the fitting transition to the eternal realms of the planets. In this region meteors and other transient fires were generated. These, as transient, could not come from the eternal region of the stars. The elements were always mixed in infinitely varied proportion and they were perpetually at war with each other. For instance, fire and water are opposed, but God in his wisdom kept them from mutual destruction by putting the element of air between them, which, having one quality of both the others, acted as a transition and kept the peace. Also the elements were in a constant flux of transmutation, one into the other.

MAN's

very anatomy corresponded with the physical ordering of the universe. His frame was compounded of the four elements, and on the same principles as was the sublunary world. Man's physical life begins with food, and food is made of the four elements. Food passes through the stomach to the liver, which is lord of the lowest of the three parts of the body. The liver converts the food it receives into four liquid substances, the humours, which are to the human body what the elements are to the common matter of the earth. Each humour has its own counterpart among the elements:

Element:	Humour:	Common quality:
Earth	Melancholy	Cold and dry
Water	Phelgm	Cold and moist
Air	Blood	Hot and moist
Fire	Choler	Hot and dry

In normal operation all the humours together are carried by the veins from the liver to the heart, a proper mixture of the humours being as necessary to bodily growth and functioning. The four humours created in the liver are the life-giving moisture of the body. They generate a more active life-principle, vital heat, which corresponds to the fires in the centre of the earth. This vital heat is mediated to the body through three kinds of spirit, which are the executive of the microcosm. These *natural* spirits are a vapour formed in the liver and carried with the humours along the veins. As such they have to do with the lowest or vegetative side of man and are under

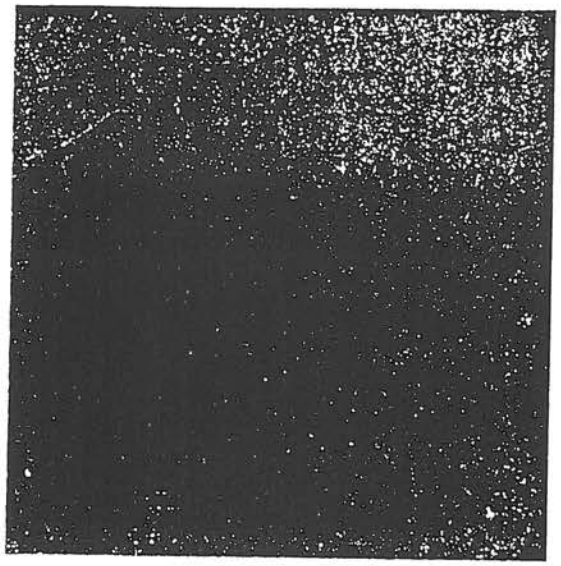
the dominion of the liver. But, acted on in the heart by heat and air from the lungs, they assume a higher quality and become *vital* spirits. Accompanied by a nobler kind of blood, also refined in the heart, they carry life and heat through the arteries. The heart is king of the middle portion of the body. It is the seat of the passions and hence corresponds to the sensitive portion of man's nature. Some of the vital spirits are in due course carried through the arteries into the brain, where they are turned into *animal* spirits. The brain rules the top of man's body and is the seat of the rational and immortal part. The animal spirits are the executive agents of the brain through the nerves and partake both of the body and soul. The word *temperament* or *complexion* meant the tempering of one humour (or element) by another, or the intertwining of the humours that was the cause of character. If man was of a phlegmatic temperament, it meant that the four humours were mixed in a way that allowed phlegm, the cold and moist humour, to be the most emphatic. Usually one humour was a little more prominent than the rest in a man's body, thus giving the man his distinctive mark. Besides the normal conditions of the humours, there were the abnormal. Abnormally the humours would ascend straight from the stomach or other abdominal organs to the brain in a vapour, like vapour ascending from the earth to the air. Catarrh comes from these evil vapours. There was also the terrible possibility of a humour not merely existing to excess, as in a perfectly sane man with some marked idiosyncracy, but going bad. A humour could both putrefy or be burnt with excessive heat. The most famous kind of corrupt humour was the burnt or adust, and *melancholy adust* was the name usually given to it even if it was one of the other humours that had been impaired.

Like the body, the brain was divided into a triple hierarchy. The lowest contained *five senses*. The middle contained first the *common sense*, which received and summarized the reports of the five senses, secondly the *fancy*, and third the *memory*. This middle area supplied the materials for the highest to work on. The highest contained the supreme human faculty of *reason*, by which man is separated from the beasts and allied to God and the angels, with its two parts, the *understanding* (or *wit*) and the *will*. It is on these two highest human faculties, undestanding and will, that the Elizabethan ethics are based.

Man's understanding, though allied to the angelical, operates differently. The angels understand intuitively, man by the painful use of the discursive reason. The angels know all they have to know. Man, though he can rival the angels in knowledge, begins his life in ignorance. What marks man from angel and beast is his capacity for learning: both his 'erected wit' in perceiving perfection and his aptitude for 'nurture' or education in his raising himself towards it. Hence learning is an ethical and religious matter. To learn was to exercise one of the greatest human prerogatives. Man is different from other living creatures in that he seeks perfection through knowledge of things external to himself. One of man's highest faculties is his gift for disinterested knowledge. It is through this gift that he might learn something of God. But there was another subject of understanding which was paramount and that was yourself. This was again a particularly human task, irrelevant to the angels because they knew themselves already and to the beasts because it was utterly beyond them. Not to know yourself was to resemble the beasts, if not in coarseness at least in deficiency of education. To know yourself was not egoism but the gateway to all virtue. It was the great condition of success in the spiritual warfare. For the chief enemy is within ourselves and if we do not understand him we cannot be victorious.

E.M.W. Tillyard "The Elizabethan World Picture"

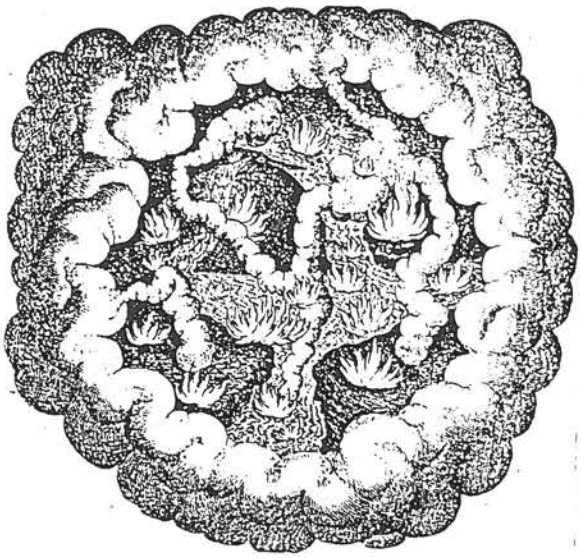
MACROCOSMI:
Genesis



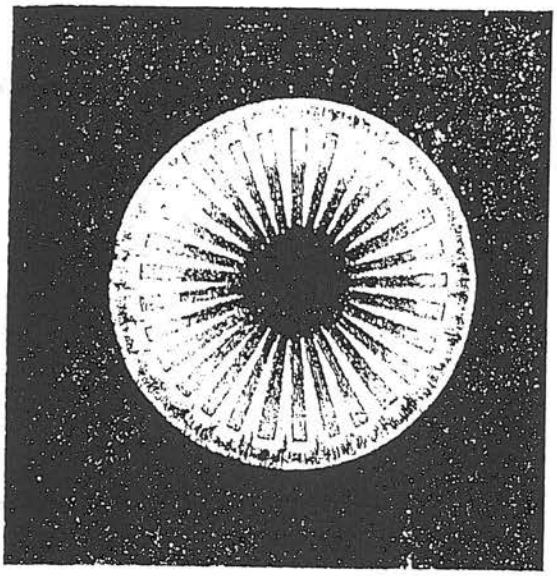
For the Paracelsian Robert Fludd, the divine act of creation took on concrete and visible form as an alchemical process, in which God, as a spagyrist, divided primal, dark chaos, the *Prima Materia*, into the three divine, primary elements of light, darkness and spiritual waters. These waters, in turn, were the roots of the four Aristotelian elements, of which earth is the coarsest and the heaviest, comparable to the dark sediment, the "raven's head" that is left on the bottom of the retort in the process of distillation.

No wonder, wrote Fludd, that our planet is such a vale of tears, given that it has emerged from the sediment of creation, where the devil dwells.
"When the secret of secrets wished to reveal himself, he began to produce a point of light. Before that point of light broke through and became apparent, the infinite (en soph) was entirely hidden and radiated no light." (Zohar)

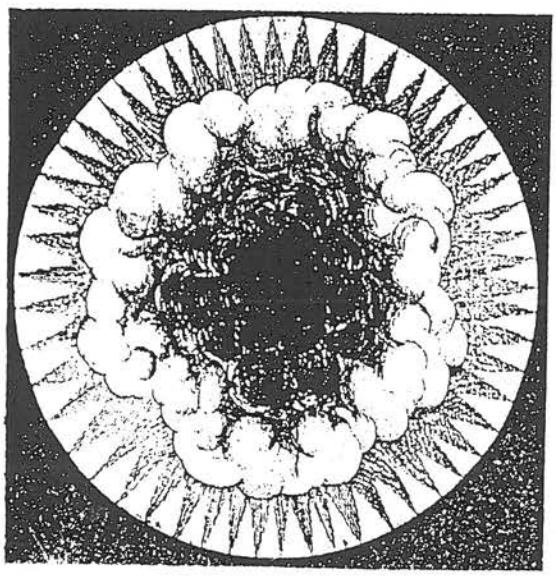
R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617



The chaos of the elements from the lower waters "is a confused and undigested mass in which the four elements fight against each other."

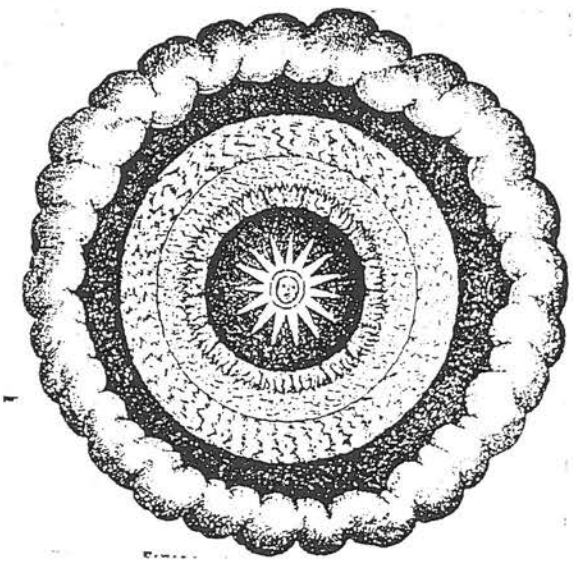


Light, the inexhaustible source of all things, appears in the darkness and with it the watery spirits that begin to divide into near (bright) and far (dark).



In the centre are the dark waters, far from the light, forming the source of matter; at the edge are the upper waters, from which the divine fiery heaven (Empyreum) will unfold. The bright cloud in between is a state "called variously the Earth-spirit, the Spirit of Mercury, the Ether and the Quintessence."

R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617



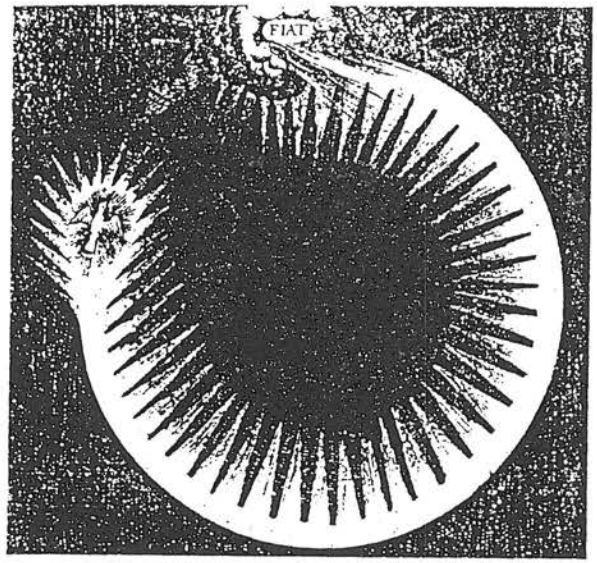
The ideal final state of material is achieved when the elements are arranged according to the degrees of their density: (from outside to inside) Earth, Water, Air and Fire. In the centre appears the Sun, gold.

The first day of creation

Fiat lux

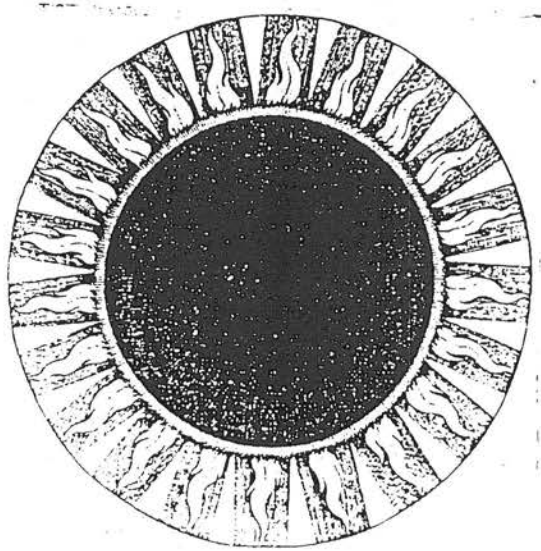
The first day of creation:

"Let there be light, said God; and forthwith Light/(...) Sprung from the deep; and from her native east/ To journey through the aery gloom began,/ Sphered in a radiant cloud, for yet the sun/ Was not (...)."
(John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1667)



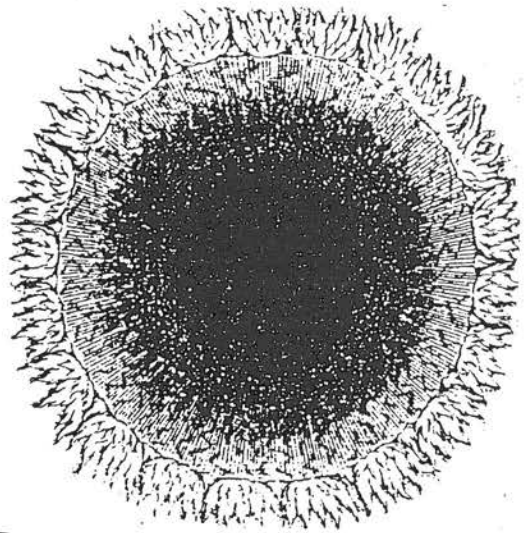
The dove is the spirit of God.

"The uncreated light of the spirit reflected in the sphere of the fiery firmament as in a mirror, and the reflections in their turn, are the first manifestations of created light."

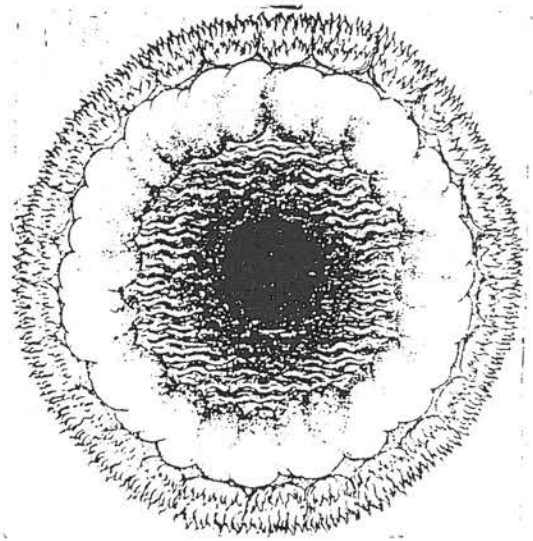


R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

The earth belongs to the lowest level of the elements, the sediment of creation.



According to the proportions, the grossest element couples with the most subtle when the elements of air and water are produced.



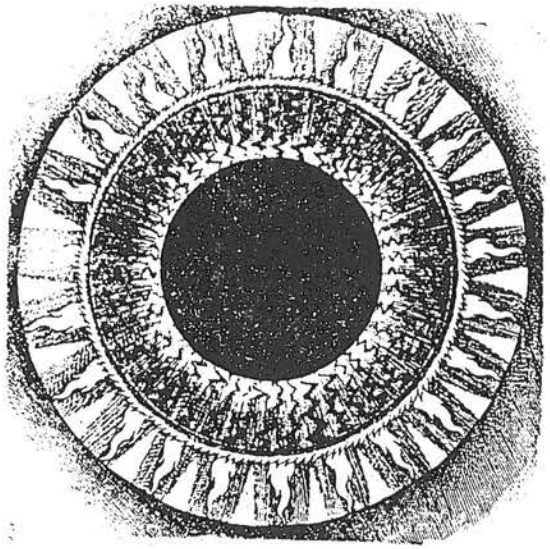
94

The second and the third day

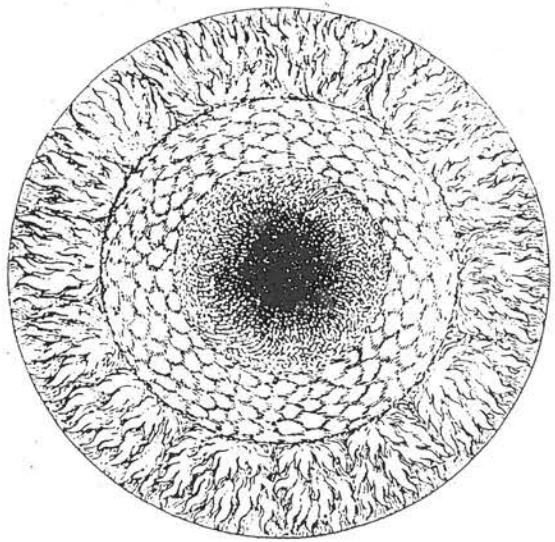
The second day

"And God said, Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water (...) And God called the vault Heaven." (Genesis 1, 6 and 8)

The ethereal sphere with the fixed stars and planets divides the upper waters (Empyreum) from the lower. In this sphere the upper heavenly quality (form) is in balance with the lower heavenly quality (material).



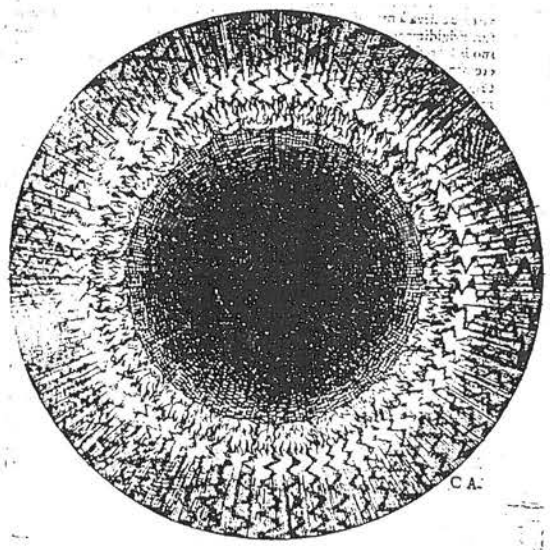
The sequence by which the elements are ordered in an ascending degree of purity – earth, water, air and fire – is repeated in the structure of the entire cosmos from the sublunary, elemental heavens, the ethereal heaven to the empyrean.



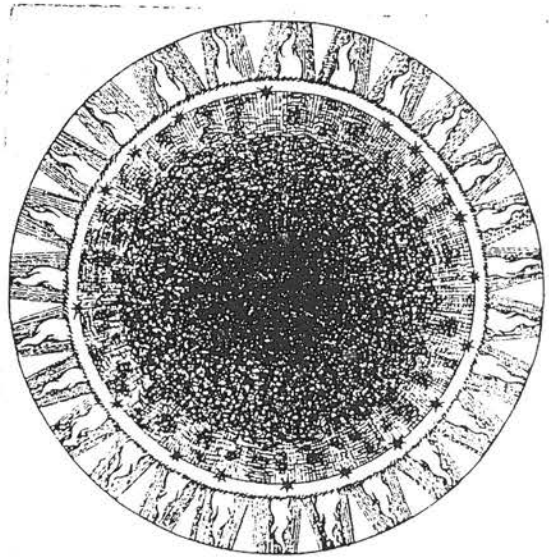
The third day

Fire arises as the first and most subtle element.

This is not, as Fludd stressed, the 'invisible fire' of the alchemists, but the material fire that Paracelsus called the 'dark' fire, which leads everything alive to destruction. Life in the Paracelsian sense is a process of destruction by fire.



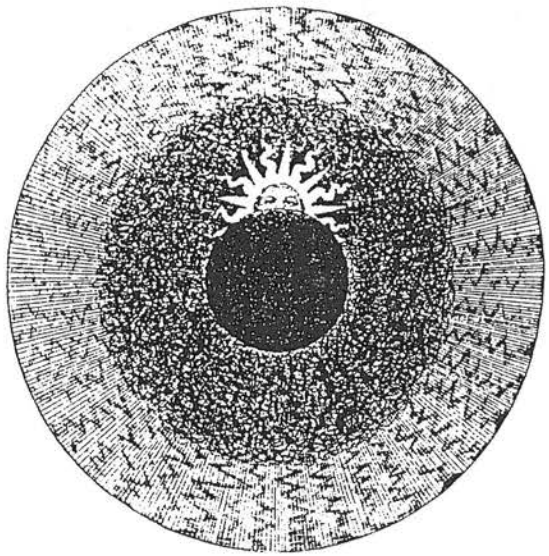
The stars on the outer edge of the ethereal sphere only became visible with the creation of the sun, for they store its light and after a space of time emit it again like phosphorous.



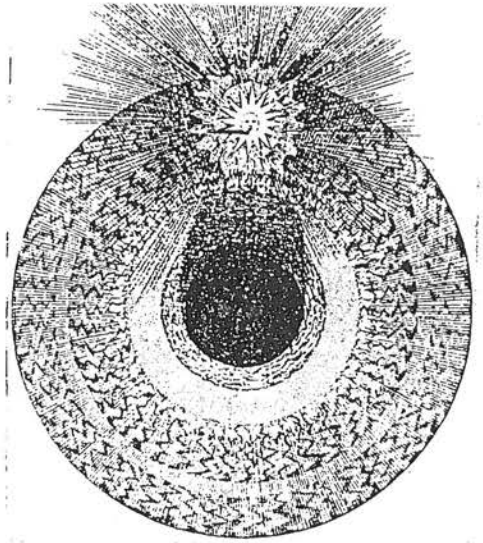
R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

"The perturbations attendant on creation had caused some of the celestial light to be trapped in the cold mass of the central earth. Obeying the law of gravity, this celestial substance began to rise towards its rightful place in the heavens, and it was thus that our sun was formed."

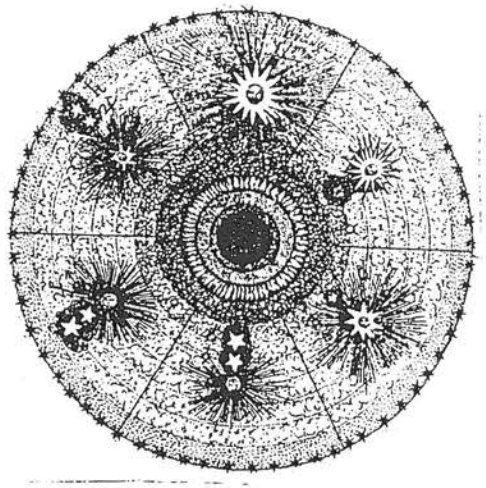


In the firmament the sun is the visible representative of the divine fire and of love. Its corresponding part in the human body is the heart, "which emits its vital rays (*the veins*) in a circle from the centre, and thus animates each individual limb". (Robert Fludd, *Philosophicall Key*, c. 1619)

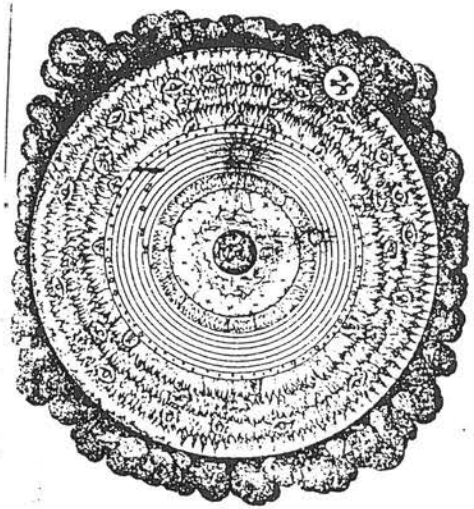


R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

When the sinking, hot rays of the sun encounter rising, watery steam, they condense and give rise to the planets.



The spirit of God hovers as a dove above perfect creation, which is already menaced by the Fall. In the 'Tractatus apologeticus', Fludd emphasized that the chief goal of macrocosmic study must be to study the role of the divine spirit in creation, for without the light emanating from this spirit, life is not possible.



R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

The theory of the harmony of the spheres dates back to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (570–496 B.C.).

According to a legend told by Iambilochos, when Pythagoras heard the different sound made by hammers in a forge, he realized that tones can be expressed in quantitative relationships, and hence in numerical values and geometrical measures. Using stringed instruments, he then discovered the connection between vibration frequencies and pitch. The whole world, according to Pythagoras' theory, consisted of harmony and number. Both the microcosmic soul and the macrocosmic universe were assembled according to ideal proportions, which can be expressed in a sequence of tones.

F. Gaffurio, Theorica musica, Milan, 1492

The pitches of the individual planetary tones of the celestial scale were derived from their orbital speeds, and the distances between them were placed in relationship to the musical intervals. Kepler complicated the system somewhat by assigning a whole sequence of tones to each planet. The series that he believed he had found for the earth (Mi Fa Mi) came to represent for him, shortly after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, the fact "that *Mi*sere and *Fa*mes (hunger) rule in our vale of tears".

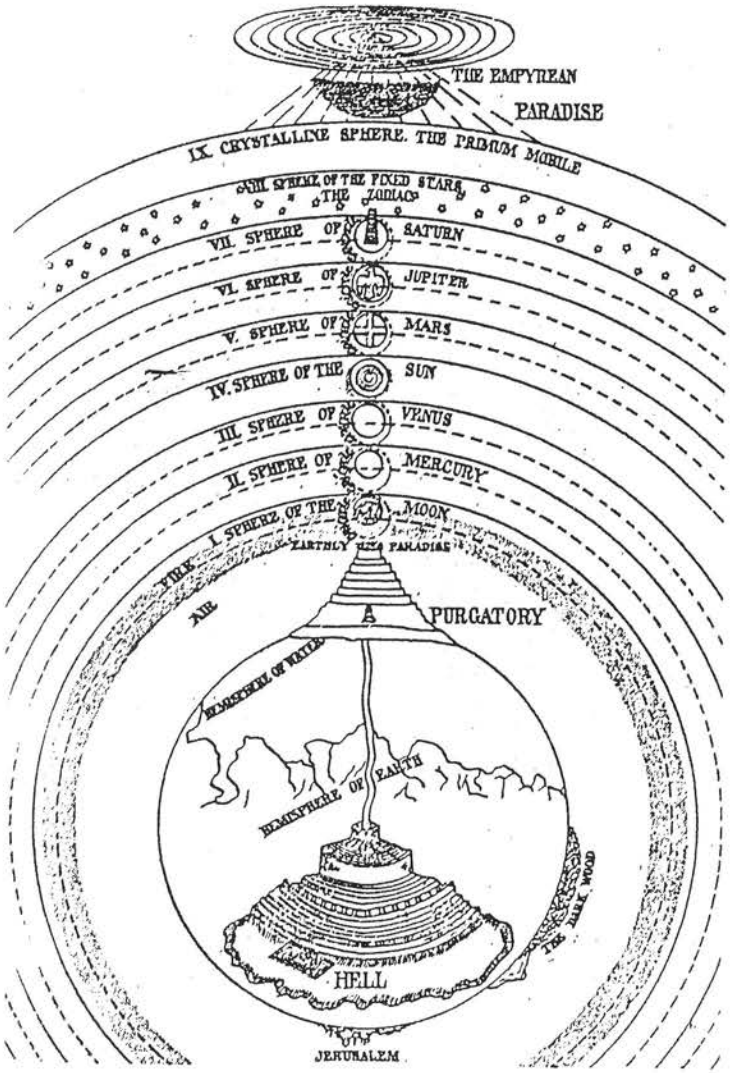
According to Genesis 4, 21, Jubal (ill. top left), a descendant of Cain, was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ". For Kepler, this figure is none other than Apollo, and Kepler also believed that Pythagoras was Hermes Trismegistus.

In the bottom left-hand corner, Pythagoras is pointing to the smiths who had inspired him. Here they are at work inside an ear. Kircher goes into great detail about its 'wonderful anatomical preparation', with hammer and anvil.

According to the theorist of Neoplatonic music, Boethius, (5th century A.D.), terrestrial 'musica instrumentalis' is but a shade of the 'musica mundana', the music of the spheres represented by the sphere at the centre. This in turn is merely a faint echo of the divine music of the nine choirs of angels.

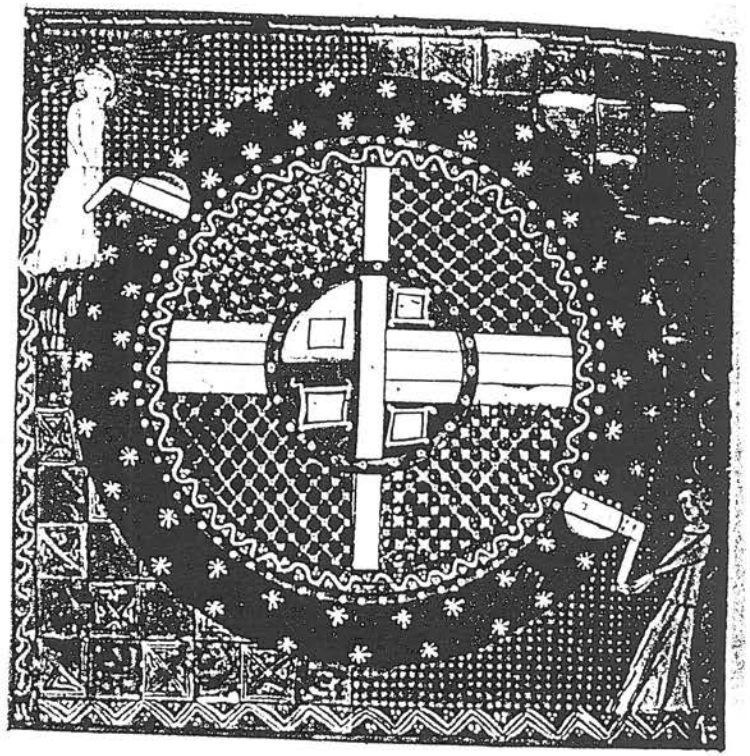
A. Kircher, Musurgia universalis, Rome, 1650

THE PTOLEMAIC UNIVERSE



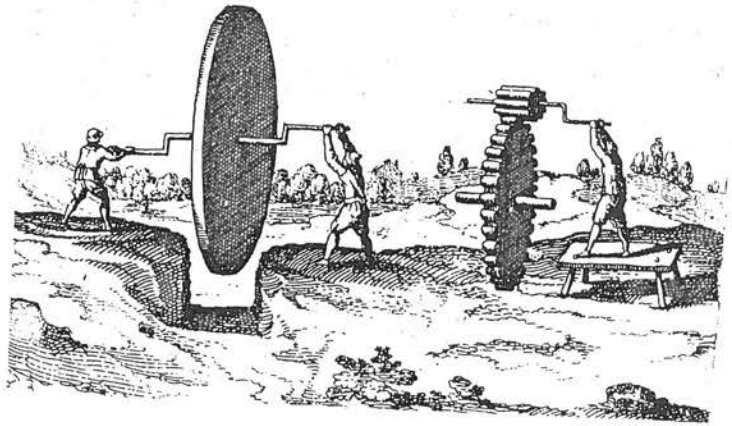
In Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1307–1321), the soul on its pilgrimage rises from the realm of Hell, which projects spherically into the earth, via the mountain of Purgatory and the nine spheres of the planets, the fixed stars and the crystalline sphere, all of which are kept in motion by angels, up to Paradise, where it finds its home in the white rose of heaven, illuminated by the divine light.

Michelangelo Cactani, La Materia della Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri, 1855



Angels set in motion the sphere of fixed stars, which in turn drives all the other spheres.

Miniature, France, 14th century

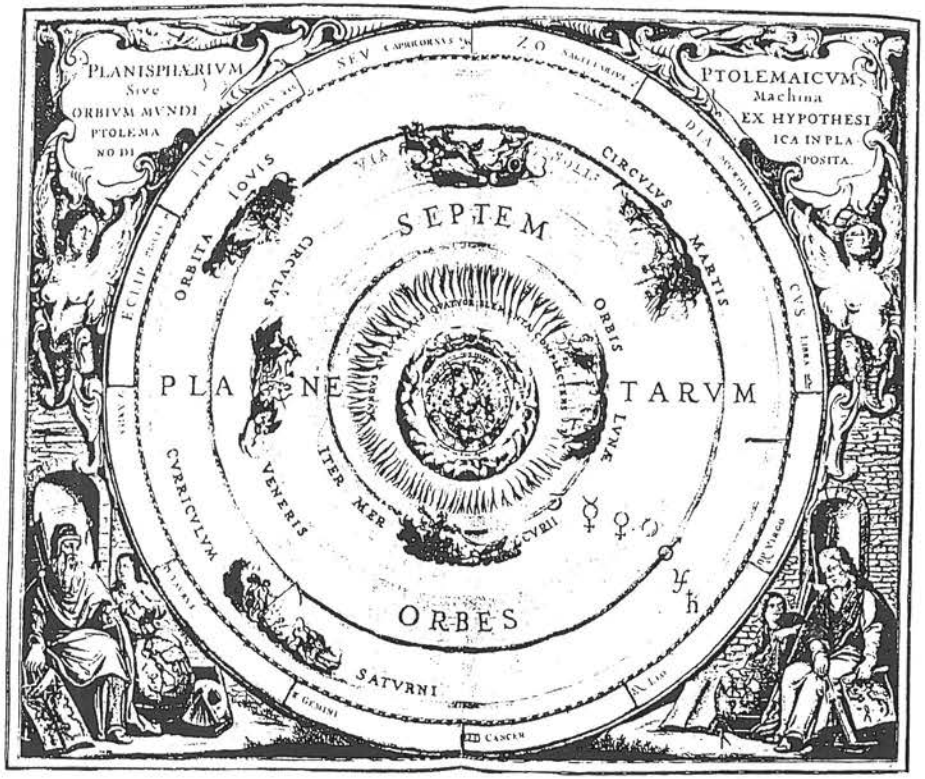


Here, Fludd is defending the geocentric concept of the world against the new theory of Copernicus, which he considered illogical on the grounds that it would be much simpler for the prime mover or God the creator to rotate the wheel of the spheres from the rim than for a sun to do so from the centre.

For Fludd, the mechanical centre of the universe remained the earth, while the spiritual centre was the sun.

R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

THE PTOLEMAIC SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSE

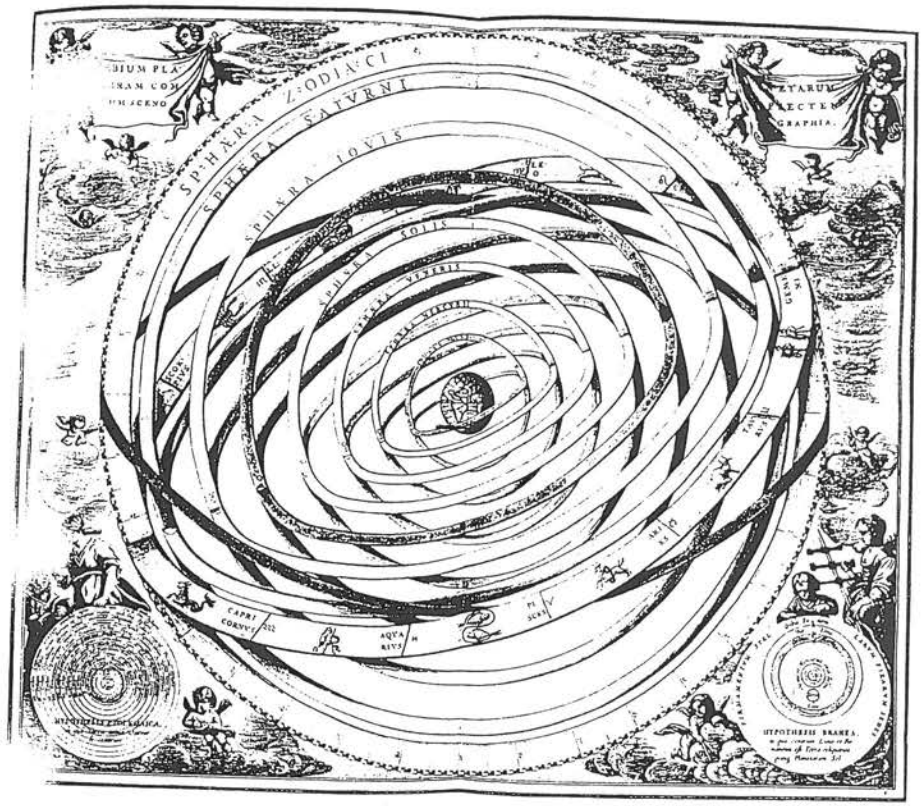


Planispheric depiction of the Ptolemaic system.

"The eye of man, who stands on the earth (...) organizes the structure of the entire universe in the sequence that he perceives, and in a sense places himself at the centre of the whole of space. Wherever he sends the rays of his gaze, he marvels at the work of the heavens, curved with admirable roundness (..) and believes that the globe is set at the centre of this great work." (Andreas Cellarius)

The illustration shows the Aristotelian stratification of the four elements in the sublunary region: the globe of the earth consists of the heaviest and most impure elements of earth and water, then comes air, and finally, adjacent to the sphere of the moon, is the lightest and purest element, fire.

A. Cellarius, Harmonia Macrocosmica, Amsterdam, 1660



Spatial depiction of the Ptolemaic system

"Most ancient philosophers (...) believed that the superlunary world, i.e. the ethereal heavens, consisted of several circles or spheres, solid and diamond-hard, the ...ner of which contained the smaller. And ... the stars, like nails set in the wall of a ...p or some other movable object (...), were set in motion by them." (A. Cellarius)

The outermost, opaque sphere of the fixed stars was known as the *Primum Mobile*, the "first moved", because, driven by divine love, it caused the motion of all other spheres.

A. Cellarius, Harmonia Macrocosmica, Amsterdam, 1660

Typical Pre-Copernican Diagram of the Universe. [Reproduced from Petrus Apianus, Cosmographia, Antwerp, 1574. Courtesy of Stanford University Libraries.]

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

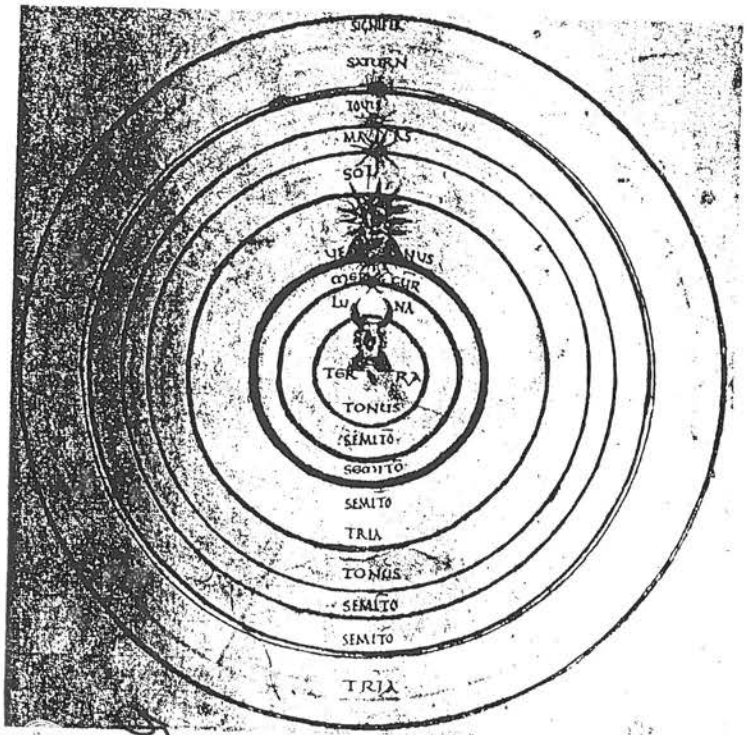
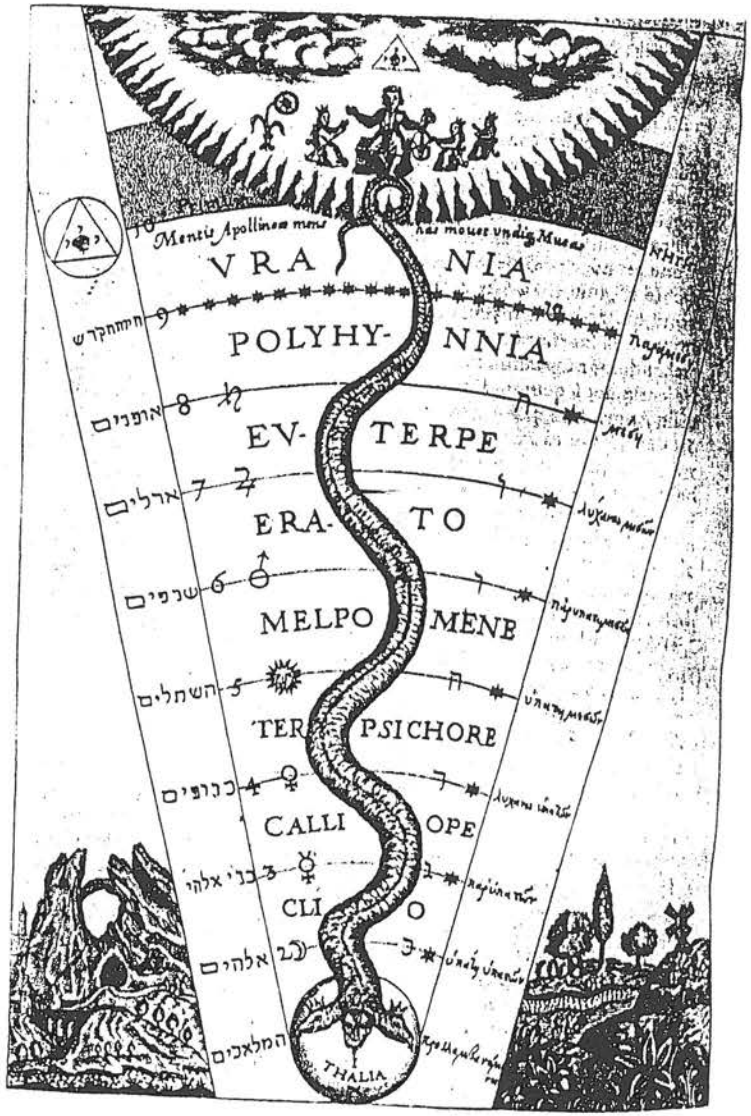


Diagram of the Ptolemaic cosmos giving the intervals meant to correspond to the distances between the heavenly bodies and their various speeds: Earth – Moon: a whole tone, Moon – Mercury – Venus: a semitone each, Venus – Sun: three semitones, Sun – Mars: a whole tone, Mars – Jupiter – Saturn: a semitone each, Saturn – fixed stars: three whole tones.

Astronomical manuscript anthology, Salzburg, c. A.D. 820



The assignment of the nine spheres to the nine Muses was the result of a harmonic vision by the Neo-Pythagorean, Martianus Capella (5th century A.D.). The scale covers a full octave.

The concord is conducted by Apollo, the Prime Mover. Flowing rhythmically through the spheres is the Egyptian serpent of the life-force. Its three heads represent the divine trinity in the three dimensions of space and the three aspects of time.

Tragedy is assigned to the sun, comedy to the earth.

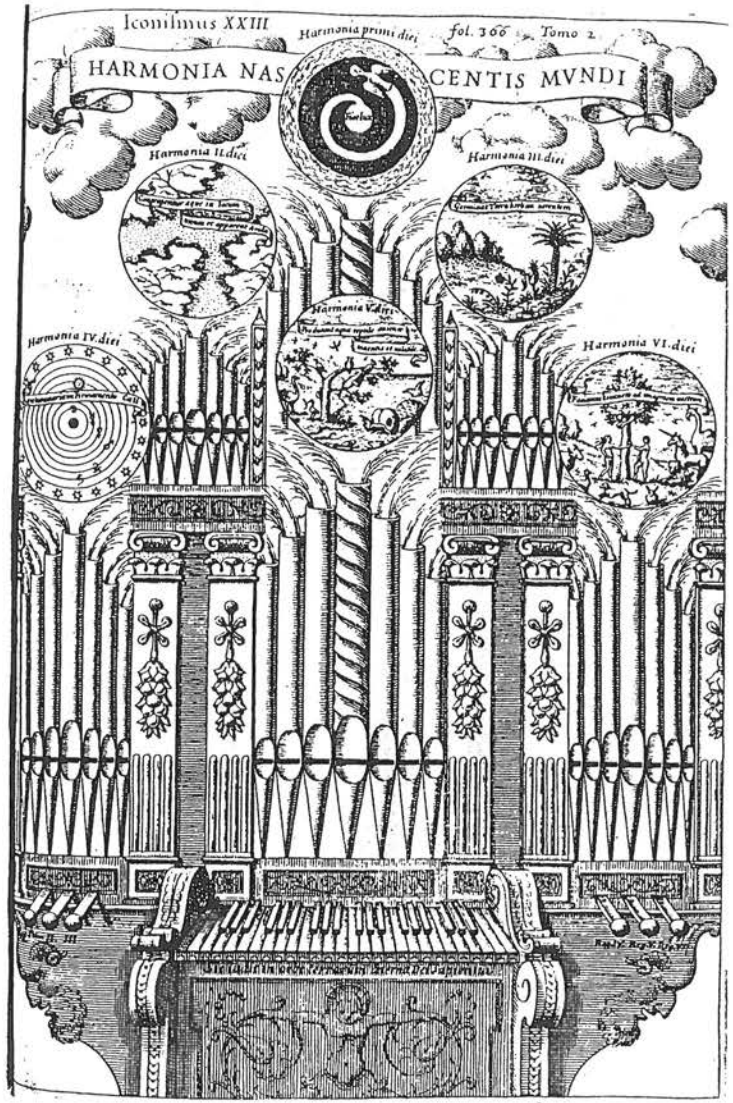
A. Kircher, Ars magna lucis, Rome, 1665

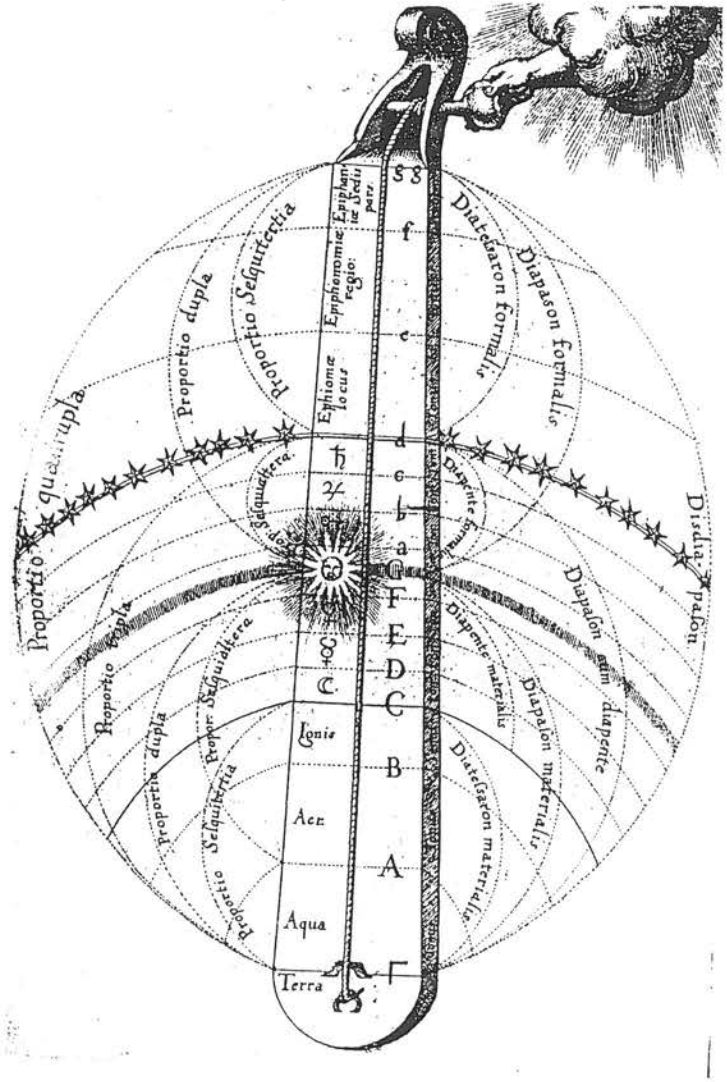
MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

In his *Musurgia universalis* (of the miraculous power and effect of consonances and dissonances) Kircher developed the idea of God as an organ-builder and organist, and compared the six-day labour of creation with the six registers of a cosmic organ.

Like Fludd, Kircher divided the various zones of Heaven and Earth into octaves. The organist's art appeared primarily in the accord of the four elements.

A. Kircher, Musurgia universalis, Rome, 1650





According to Fludd, "the monochord is the internal principle which, from the centre of the whole, brings about the harmony of all life in the cosmos."

By altering the tension of the strings, God, the "Great Chord", is able to determine the density of all materials between Empyreum and Earth.

The instrument is divided in half into an upper, ideal, active octave and a lower, material, passive octave, and these are in turn divided into fourths and fifths. On these intervals the upper, principle of light moves down into dark matter, and at their intersection the sun assumes the power of transformation.

R. Fludd, Utriusque Cosmi, Vol. I, Oppenheim, 1617

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETAN WORLD PICTURE (1)

Edmund Spenser "Hymn of Love" (1596)

The earth the air the water and the fire
Then gan to range themselves in huge array
And with contrary forces to conspire
Each against other by all means they may,
Threat'ning their own confusion and decay:
Air hated earth and water hated fire,
Till Love relented their rebellious ire.

He then them took and, tempering goodly well
Their contrary dislikes with loved means,
Did place them all in order and compel
To keep themselves within their sundry reigns
Together linkt with adamantine chains:
Yet so as that in every living wight
They mix themselves and show their kindly might.

So ever since they firmly have remained
And duly well observed his behest,
Through which now all these things that are contained
Within this goodly cope, both most and least,
Their being have.

Richard Hooker "Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie" (1594-7)

Now if nature should intermit her course and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE (2)

Alexander Pope "Essay on Man" (1733-4)

Chain of Being:

VIII

See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
Above, how high, progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing. – On superior powers
Were we to press, inferior might on ours;
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth, or tenth thousandth, breaks the chain alike.
And, if each system in gradation roll
Alike essential to the amazing whole,
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth, unbalanced, from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurl'd,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world;
Heaven's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And Nature trembles to the throne of God.

Providence:

IX

What if the foot, ordain'd the dust to tread,
Or hand, to toil, aspired to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repined
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this general frame;
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains
The great Directing Mind of all ordains.
All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, changed through all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent;
Spreads undivided, operates unspent!
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, He bounds, connects, and equals all.

man's place:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great.
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

man's pride:

IV

Go, wiser thou! and in thy scale of sense,
Weigh thy opinion against Providence;
Call imperfection what thou fanciest such,
Say, here He gives too little, there too much:
Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
Yet cry, If man's unhappy, God's unjust;
If man alone engross not Heaven's high care,
Alone made perfect here, immortal there:
Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge his justice, be the god of God.
In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies;
All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,
Men would be angels, angels would be gods.
Aspiring to be gods, if angels fell,
Aspiring to be angels, men rebel:
And who but wishes to invert the laws
Of Order, sins against the Eternal Cause.

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE (3)

Alexander Pope "Essay on Man (1733-4)

Providence is just and benevolent:

VI

What would this man? Now upward will he soar,
And little less than angel, would be more;
Now looking downwards, just as grieved appears,
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.
Made for his use all creatures if he call,
Say what their use, had he the powers of all?
Nature to these, without profusion, kind,
The proper organs, proper powers assign'd;
Each seeming what compensated of course,
Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;
All in exact proportion to the state;
Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.
Each beast, each insect, happy in its own:
Is Heaven unkind to man, and man alone?
Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
Be pleased with nothing, if not blest with all?
The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
No powers of body or of soul to share,
But what his Nature and his state can bear.
Why has not man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, man is not a fly.
Say what the use, were finer optics given,
To inspect a mite, not comprehend the heaven?
Or touch, if trembling alive all o'er,
To smart and agonise at every pore?
Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
If Nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that Heaven had left him still
The whisp'ring zephyr, and the purling rill?
Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
Alike in what it gives and what denies?

II

Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less?
Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
Taller and stronger than the weeds they shade?
Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove?
Of systems possible, if 'tis confess'd,
That Wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must fall, or not coherent be,
And all that rises, rise in due degree;
Then in the scale of reas'ning life, 'tis plain,
There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong?
Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.
In human works, though labour'd on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce;
Yet serves to second too, some other use.
So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.
When the proud steed shall know why man restrains
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains;
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's god:
Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend
His actions', passions', being's use and end;
Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why
This hour a slave, the next a deity.
Then say not man's imperfect, Heaven in fault;
Say rather, man's as perfect as he ought:
His knowledge measured to his state and place;
His time a moment, and a point his space.
If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or here or there?
The blest to-day is as completely so,
As who began a thousand years ago.

III

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state:
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh blindness to the future! kindly given,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heaven:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.
Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore.
What future bliss, He gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never Is, but always To be blest.
The soul, uneasy, and confined from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE (4)

Milton "Arcades" (1633)

But els in deep of night when drowsines
Hath lockt up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial *Sirens* harmony,
That sit upon the nine enfolded Sphears,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the Adamantine spindle round,
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in music ly,
To lull the daughters of *Necessity*,
And keep unsteddy Nature to her law,
And the low world in measur'd motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould with grosse unpurged ear.

John Dryden (1687)

A Song for St. Cecilia's Day,

I

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame° began:
When Nature underneath a heap°
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high:
'Arise, ye more than dead.'
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations° leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason° closing full in Man.

GRAND CHORUS

As from the power of sacred lays°
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the blest above;
So, when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant° shall devour,
The Trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune° the sky.

1687

Shakespeare "The Merchant of Venice" (1596)

Lorenzo. How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE (5)

Shakespeare "Troilus & Cressida" (1602)

Ulysses on Order:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree priority and place
Insisture course proportion season form
Office and custom, in all line of order;
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
In noble eminence enthron'd and spher'd
Amidst the other, whose med'cinable eye
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil
And posts like the commandment of a king,

Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
Commotion in the winds, frights changes horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture. Oh, when degree is shak'd,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns sceptres laurels,
But by degree stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows. Each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
And make a sop of all this solid globe.
Strength should be lord to imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead.
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
Follows the choking.

THE MEDIEVAL & ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE (6)

Sir John Davies "Orchestra" (1594)
The cosmic dance:

"Dancing, bright lady, then began to be,
When the first seeds whereof the world did spring,
The fire, air, earth, and water, did agree
By Love's[3] persuasion, nature's mighty king,
To leave their first discorded combating,
And in a dance such measure to observe,
As all the world their motion should preserve.

"Since when they still are carried in a round,
And changing come one in another's place;
Yet do they neither mingle nor confound,
But every one doth keep the bounded space
Wherein the dance doth bid it turn or trace.
This wondrous miracle did Love devise,
For dancing is love's proper exercise.

"Like this he framed the gods' eternal bower,
And of a shapeless and confuséd mass,
By his through-piercing and digesting power,
The turning vault of heaven forméd was,
Whose starry wheels he hath so made to pass,
As that their movings do a music frame,
And they themselves still dance unto the same."[4]

* * *

" 'Behold the world, how it is whirléd round!
And for it is so whirled, is naméd so;
In whose large volume many rules are found
Of this new art, which it doth fairly show.
For your quick eyes in wandering to and fro,
From east to west, on no one thing can glance,
But, if you mark it well, it seems to dance.

" 'First you see fixed in this huge mirror blue
Of trembling lights a number numberless;
Fixed,[5] they are named, but with a name untrue;
For they all move and in a dance express
The great long year[6] that doth contain no less
Than threescore hundreds of those years in all,
Which the sun makes with his course natural.

" 'What if to you these sparks disordered seem,
As if by chance they had been scattered there?
The gods a solemn measure[7] do it deem
And see a just proportion everywhere,
And know the points whence first their movings were,
To which first points when all return again,
The axletree of heaven shall break in twain.[8]

" 'Under that spangled sky five wandering flames,[9]
Besides the king of day and queen of night,
Are wheeled around, all in their sundry frames,
And all in sundry measures do delight;
Yet altogether keep no measure right;
For by itself each doth itself advance,
And by itself each doth a galliard[1] dance.

" 'For that brave sun, the father of the day,
Doth love this earth, the mother of the night;
And, like a reveler in rich array,
Doth dance his galliard in his leman's[4] sight,
Both back and forth and sideways passing light.
His gallant grace doth so the gods amaze,
That all stand still and at his beauty gaze.

" 'But see the earth when she approacheth near,
How she for joy doth spring and sweetly smile;
But see again her sad and heavy cheer,[5]
When changing places he retires a while;
But those black clouds he shortly will exile,
And make them all before his presence fly,
As mists consumed before his cheerful eye.

" 'Who doth not see the measure of the moon?
Which thirteen times she danceth every year,
And ends her pavan[6] thirteen times as soon
As doth her brother, of whose golden hair
She borroweth part, and proudly doth it wear.
Then doth she coyly turn her face aside,
That half her cheek is scarce sometimes descried.

" 'For lo! the sea that fleets about the land,
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,
Music and measure both doth understand;
For his great crystal eye is always cast
Up to the moon, and on her fixéd fast;
And as she danceth in her pallid sphere,
So danceth he about the center here.

" 'Sometimes his proud green waves in order set,
One after other, flow unto the shore;
Which when they have with many kisses wet,
They ebb away in order, as before;
And to make known his courtly love the more,
He oft doth lay aside his three-forked mace,
And with his arms the timorous earth embrace.

" 'Only the earth doth stand forever still:
Her rocks remove not, nor her mountains meet,
Although some wits enriched with learning's skill
Say heaven stands firm and that the earth doth fleet,
And swiftly turneth underneath their feet;[5]
Yet, though the earth is ever steadfast seen,
On her broad breast hath dancing ever been.

CHIVALRY AND COURTLY LOVE

CHIVALRY

'Chivalry' in it **narrow sense** denotes **collectively all those warriors who had formally and ceremonially taken up knighthood**. In its **wider and more ambiguous sense** it is used to describe **"the obligations, estate and style of life of those entitled, on account of their birth, to aspire to knighthood, but who may or may not be knights in fact"**.

Maurice Keen, whose definition this is, has remarked on the elusive nature of the term, which is rather "an evocative word, conjuring up images in the mind", than a precise term:

> One can define within reasonably close limits what is meant by the word knight, the French *chevalier*: it denotes a man of aristocratic standing and probably of noble ancestry, who is capable, if called upon, of equipping himself with a war horse and the arms of a heavy cavalryman, and who has been through certain rituals that make him what he is – who has been 'dubbed' to knighthood. But chivalry, the abstraction from *chevalier*, is not so easily pinned down. It is a word that was used in the middle ages with different meanings and shades of meaning by different writers and in different contexts. Sometimes, especially in earlier texts, it means no more than a body of heavy armed horsemen, a collective of *chevaliers*. Sometimes chivalry is spoken of as an order, as if knighthood could be compared to an order of religion: sometimes it is spoken of as an estate, a social class – the warrior class whose martial function, according to medieval writers, was to defend the *patria* and the Church. Sometimes it is used to encapsulate a code of values apposite to this order or estate. Chivalry cannot be divorced from the martial world of the mounted warrior: it cannot be divorced from aristocracy, because knights commonly were men of high lineage: and from the middle of the twelfth century on it very frequently carries ethical or religious overtones. But it remains a word elusive of definition, tonal rather than precise in its implications.

The classic virtues of good knighthood are predictably qualities which were already highly esteemed in the Germanic war band – **honour, prowess, courage, hardiness, truthfulness, loyalty, generosity and the free and frank bearing which bespoke of good birth and virtue**. As the warrior rose on the social scale, **nobility** and **courtesy**, **administrative ability** and his role as **the protector of the community** became pronounced.
His first duty was **to defend the faith of Christ against unbelievers**, which would win him honour in this world and the next, but a close **second** was his **duty to protect his temporal lord and the territories entrusted to him**, where he was to pursue all malefactors and defend the weak. He had to be **wise** and **able to mete out justice**, **administer his estates well**, so that he could **support his rank** and **keep an open house befitting his station in life**. He was expected to be **in constant training**, hunting wild beasts and seeking jousts and tournaments to test and improve his skills. He should be **valorous** and **charitable** and his **motives for seeking knighthood should be pure**. He must **prize honour above all** and take care his **reputation was not tarnished by 'reproach'**. His **greatest achievement** was **renown won among his peers for feats of arms** and here a gradation evolved on the principle of **'he who achieves more is the more worthy'**. One could start one's career by winning acclaim at jousts and tournaments, then go on to winning greater honour in war in one's own land and then as a crusader in distant and foreign parts.

The blemishes. **A *chevalier sans reproche***, a knight without blemish **should eschew pride, false-swearing, idleness, lechery and treason. Treason** was the darkest of crimes, the ultimate treason being **slaying one's lord**, but equally heinous was **adultery with his wife** or **surrendering his castle**. **Cowardice in the field** was another grave offence, gross cowardice, like treason, punishable by death and lesser instances involving loss of status and removal of insignia. Public disgrace was likewise the punishment for **breach of faith**, the failure to pay ransom when taken prisoner and freed to return home to raise it. **Dishonourable conduct**

toward women involved **marrying below one's estate**, **slandering women** and **raping them**. Access to the company of honourable knights was barred to **hardened excommunicates, violators of churches, murderers of malice prepense, arsonists, robbers and pirates.**

COURTLY LOVE

The knight striving for ever greater fame in his profession of arms could find an added spur to his ambition and solace in the harsh male world of constant competition in the **favour to be found with ladies**. With the advances in building techniques and improved standards of living, the members of the rough and ready war band had to rethink their attitude to women. A way had to be found to protect the few noblewomen now living amidst the ever-increasing armies of retainers in what amounted to barrack-room conditions in the new castles and baronial halls. As the prime functions of marriage were dynastic aggrandizement and the preservation of the purity of the lineage, sexual relations between the seigneur's wife, daughters or female wards were out of bounds for the socially inferior retainers. A means had to be devised to channel the sexual energies of the hot-headed young men growing up or serving in the household into socially acceptable behaviour which would not harm their own career prospects nor damage the marriageability of the ladies.

The culture of courtly love, which came into being as a response to this need, **removed the lady from within the reach of her social inferiors by putting her on a pedestal**, yet allowed the men around her **to focus their desire on her person in an asexual and rigidly controlled way**. She could be **worshipped from afar**, **respectfully** and **secretly**, her favour could be sought **discreetly** yet **publicly** by becoming her **champion** in jousts and tournaments, she could be **the object of agonized outpourings of the heart in poetry and song,** yet her reputation would not be tarnished if all this was done according to established conventions.

The cult of the lady, **the knight's service of the object of his secret desire in a spirit of feudal submission and near-religious fervour**, took centuries to develop and owed its evolution to a number of powerful influences working together. Its sources are varied and still a matter of debate, so below only the main currents shaping it are indicated.

The **term 'courtly love'** itself is an **unhistorical** one, having been invented in the 19th century. Despite its sometimes problematized nature, it aptly describes **the shift in cultural attitudes concerning human emotions and sexuality** which found its expression in the **chivalric romances of love**, the chief vehicles of formulating and expounding the new ideal which came into being as a result of **a revolution in sensibility in Europe in the twelfth century**. Human emotion, no longer regarded as a disease of the will and an enemy of reason, started to be viewed as having the potential of inspiring nobility of behaviour. The Church, in the process of overhauling itself, seized upon this potential to encourage a more personal attitude to religion. **Human love in its various forms – sexual, conjugal, maternal, filial – could be seen as a preliminary image of what it meant to love God**. Patterns of devotion were changing. Christ Pantokrator, the Ruler of the Universe of Byzantine art, staring forbiddingly down from church apses, was supplanted by **the tortured Son of God in extremis** on the Gothic crucifix, an object of loyalty and compassion. Similarly, **the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin, a gracious lady and loving mother**, could be worshipped in her own right. It had not always been so. The early church fathers had seen woman as the serpent's ally and tool in man's fall from grace. The dogma which set chastity at a premium was highly suspicious of the female sexual allure and went to extremes trying to curtail it.

Mariolatry first emerges in the **sixth** and **seventh** centuries, but as a cult it developed slowly, the Virgin remaining on a par with the other saints until the sea-change of the late eleventh and early twelfth century. The cult of Mary emerges and runs parallel with the chivalric idealization of women and eventually takes over many secular expressions of chivalric love.

For the refinement of sexual passion into a cult of an idealized woman to take place the rough warrior of the primitive war band had to undergo **a cultural transformation**. This became possible when his new administrative duties took him to the king's or a great nobleman's court where he came into contact with a far superior culture than his own. The courts were run by well-educated clerics who around the year **1000,** when the world did not come to an end as many had feared, had largely abandoned their contempt of the world to embrace the new ideal of carving out a career at the rapidly growing courts of great men. A system of education came into being for training these new administrators which laid a heavy stress on ***elegantia morum***, the so necessary for the courtier sophistication of manners and morals. The 'courtly' virtues these men prized – "**affability, friendliness, a benign countenance; moderation and measured conduct, gentleness, temperate moods and reticence about [one's] accomplishments**" - have ever since formed an integral part of courteous behaviour.

Courtly manners are the essential prerequisite for seeing love as an elevated form of service, the word **'courtly'** (*curialis*) characteristically emerging around **1060-80**, being coincidental with 'chivalry'. The appearance of the chivalrous cult of the lady was greatly facilitated by the **by-product of the eleventh-century monastic reform and revival – a new emphasis on education**. Intellectual currents at work inside and outside the Church in Christendom brought into fresh focus **the legacy of ancient Rome**. The new enthusiasm first manifested itself in a spate of **Rome-inspired law-making** but soon the re-creation and transmission of the example of Rome permeated almost all spheres of thought and art**. In monastic and episcopal schools** the **secular literature of imperial Rome** was used to improve the students' Latin skills. The works of **Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal and others** were read aloud at meal times or privately in the hours of recreation. The schools' graduates, depending on their means and ability, went on to careers both in Church and State ranging from high officialdom at the court to the stewardship of some humble manor. **Trained in the classics**, but due to the nature of their employment **in touch with the aspirations and realities of medieval secular society**, the **clerks** were ideally placed to formulate the new attitude to women which makes its appearance in **the second half of the twelfth century** and transforms **the *chanson de geste***, the epic song of manly deeds, into **the chivalric romance of love**.

The chivalric romance of love

The new type of courtly narrative which emerges **after 1150** fuses **epic action and Ovidian sentiment**. The ***chansons***, reflecting **the values of the war band**, had **ignored the relationship between the sexes**. The occasional women who find mention in them remain shadowy figures in the background to the action, cast in the minor roles of mothers, sisters, brides or prizes of war. However, the classical epics which had inspired these songs of deeds had also celebrated noble women with a far wider range of roles available to them. Moreover, whether passive or active, these women were passionately involved with the men who often wronged but could not ignore them.

When the clerks undertook to revitalize the epic in the changed emotional climate of the twelfth century, they looked for inspiration chiefly to the works of **Ovid**. Little known in the West before the twelfth-century renaissance of learning, Ovid spoke directly to men who after

centuries of self-abnegation had found new pride and pleasure not in the hereafter but in the here and now.

Ovid became **the favourite Latin poet of the Middle Ages**. In ***Ars amatoria* (*Art of Love*)** and ***Remedia amoris (Remedies of Love)*** he had dissected ironically the psychology and physiology of love and in the ***Metamorphoses*,** his encyclopaedic masterpiece, given the Europeans their most inspirational collection of fabulous tales with miraculous transformations at the end. Yet this slick **cynic** and imaginative storyteller was also a **romantic** and a **moralist** who alone among the major poets since Homer had written with such sympathetic interest about married love. The Ovidian lover, as he appears in *Ars amatoria* though, is **a slave of passion who worships god Amor and his lady whose every whim he tries to gratify in order to win sexual favours**. Ovid's attitude to love is **mock-reverent** and **wholly pragmatic** and as such could not serve as the lone model for the highly serious cult of love of the troubadours.

The philosophy of courtly love, which perceives **sexual love as intrinsically ennobling**, while undoubtedly borrowing from Ovid, owes its idealism to **Plato** and his **Neoplatonic followers**. Plato's doctrine of the **two worlds**, one **eternal** and intelligible where "**ideas**" or "**forms**" dwell, and the other the **sense-world of time and change**, and the **soul**, **simultaneously cosmic and human**, acting as an **intermediary** between them, was elaborated further in the third century by **Plotinus**, the founder and supreme exponent of Neoplatonism. At the heart of Plotinus's teaching is **contemplative desire**, the soul's progress through a hierarchy of spheres back to its original source – the One and the Good – from which all spheres originally emanate in descending order down to the world of sense. The hierarchy of reality has also two principles below their ineffable source**.** The divine mind**,** which is identical with Plato's forms or ideas, is the level of purely intuitive thought, at once perfect intelligence and true reality. The second principle is the soul, which extends from the world of the intellect down to material bodies, and its principal characteristic is discursive reasoning. **The soul is constantly striving, while the intellect is changeless and eternal. The soul can reach up into intellect, and fully illuminated, ascend to the One and the Good** which, as its first principle, fills the whole universe and is accessible to all, depending on the capacity of the individuals to receive it. **It is a philosophy of the constant striving of the soul to be reunited with its original source**:

> The sole object of the good and wise man, the supreme goal of human endeavour, is to return to the Good and be united to it in the union of love which is beyond and above the contemplation of intellect, by the power coming from the Good, the impulse of return which is constitutive of his very being. First he must detach himself from the worldly desires and concerns of his lower self, the composite being of body and soul, by rigorous intellectual and moral discipline, inspired always by love and helped on his way at first by contemplation of the beauty of the world of the senses – which, rightly contemplated, will lead him back to the intelligible beauty of which it is a reflection. As he becomes perfect in intelligence and virtue (for Plotinus the two kinds of perfection are inseparable), the philosopher will rediscover his true and eternal self, which is intellect, or rather soul perfectly conformed to intellect, and wake to its life. Then he is ready to go on to the One when the One manifests itself and brings him to union.

Neoplatonism came into Christian theology above all through the writings of **St Augustine**, the early Cappadocian theologians and the mystical theology of the

pseudonymous **"Dionysius the Areopagite"**. It became diluted and diffused in traditional Christian theology and can be detected in early European metaphysics, moral philosophy, logic, science and art.

From the twelfth century onward its influence was reinforced by the **Europeans' contact with Islam.** The first mass encounter of Christians with the Muslim world occurred in the second half of the eleventh century with the **crusaders' advance in Spain, Sicily and the Holy Land**. Both religions were aware of their common origin in the same Near Eastern monotheistic tradition and borrowed from each other extensively, though selectively. Having examined and tossed aside their common religious inheritance with the Muslims, Western Christianity held on to their shared intellectual one. The impact on the development of Christian philosophy of **the Greek metaphysical and scientific thought**, transmitted through **the commentaries of the ninth-century philosophers of Baghdad** and made accessible to Western scholars through **translations from the Arabic in the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries**, is so great that it cannot be quantified. The corpus of Greek Platonic and Neoplatonic texts thus made available revitalized Augustinianism in the twelfth century and inspired the great flowering of scholastic philosophy in the thirteenth. The Neoplatonic doctrine of love also entered European literature through contact with the **mystical philosophy and poetry of Muslim Spain** which sought **to discover spiritual significance in passionate relationships**. Treatises like the Andalusian religious philosopher **Ibn Hazm**'s *Tawq alhamamaw*, drawing upon eastern textbooks on love and Platonic philosophy, can be shown to have influenced the troubadours of southern France in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.

Courtly love as a set of ideas, but not yet a doctrine, appears in the songs of the **troubadours** of eleventh-century **Provence** which was ideally placed to benefit from the cross-currents of ideas due to its location between east and west, north and south. The courts of Provence were small, yet wealthy, the sporadic warefare of the nobles was not too devastating, the atmosphere was relaxed and beneficial to cultivating personal relationships with women who enjoyed greater freedom and a higher legal and social standing than was customary in the harsher and more pragmatic north. High-born ladies of considerable personal power may have become bored with the monotonous eulogy of martial deeds and desired something which would also interest them. **The troubadours took the courtly virtues of imperial Germany and infused them with personal immediacy.**

From early on courtly love was claimed by its proponents as the **privilege of the knightly class**, brushing aside as rivals the monks and clerics who had taught the knight his manners. The **relationship between the lover and his lady** in troubadour poetry is **akin to feudal service** from which it borrows its language, yet it is seen as **transcending established conventions**. The lover may pledge himself to his lady as her vassal, in the hope of a reward for his service, but he seeks his lady's love **not for personal enrichment or dynastic considerations**, as he would in marriage, but **because he desires her as a person and hopes to be judged by her by his own achievements, not his rank or wealth**. The **lover's suit** is **long** and **arduous** and he has to **earn his favour by noble deeds**. As this is not courtship leading to marriage, the lovers being either already married or socially incompatible, **secrecy** is vital. Nevertheless, despite his love remaining a close-guarded secret, **the lover should love one lady only and not diminish his own worth by being promiscuous**. Love has to be **reciprocated** and **freely given** and **might sometimes be rewarded by physical joys**. The **ennobling element** in such relationships would be the **suspense** and the **unalleviated emotional turmoil** which, intensified by **restraint** the lover **imposes on himself**, either to

heighten his ecstasy or for fear of destroying his desire by its consummation, would **refine his feelings** so that he could **aspire to the lofty heights were his lady dwelt**. Though seemingly overwhelmed by his lady's charms, the **chief concern** of the troubadour poet is not extolling the woman he loves but **the progress of the lover's moral self**. Love is seen as **enhancing virtue** and **helping to suppress vice**, thus **contributing to nobleness of conduct.** A courteous knight in his courtship was expected to display the already familiar knightly virtues of **largesse, humility, valour, noble and frank manners, loyalty, honour and truthfulness**. **Courtesy (*cortesia*)** meant **courtly behaviour** but also the awareness on the part of the knight of what constitutes **good measure (*mezura*)**. He was to avoid extremes of behaviour and display and aspire to **the golden mean** in all his undertakings. If he was accomplished enough in his pursuits and suit, winning the esteem of his lady and admiration for his correct behaviour from his peers, he was seen as capable of ***pretz* or prowess**. His accomplishments, whether rewarded by the lady or not, were seen as capable of inducing in the knight a special state of mind, ***jovens*,** meaning a combination of **youthful joy, lightness of heart and generosity**, which is a reward in itself**. The lover's ultimate prize** would be ***joy d'amour***, which could **range from physical satisfaction to an almost mystical ecstasy**, but it chiefly signified the lover's **moral improvement** which he has attained through the spiritual love of his lady. In its purest form *joy d'amour* meant **self-imposed restraint to postpone or forego consummation**, both to prolong the enjoyment of anticipation and not diminish the worth of the loved one by harming her reputation. **The almost indefinite suspense and sublimation of erotic desire, known as *fin' amors***, was too high an ideal for most men who aspired to improve themselves through love and they could fall victim to ***amars* (faithless love)** and **commit adultery**. Their human weakness does not discredit the high ideal though. The troubadour love is not by nature adulterous, designed to wreck marriages. It saw itself as above social conventions, disregarding marital ties which had nothing whatsoever to do with love, and claimed as its ideal **the truest union of two souls**.

The doctrine of courtly love soon spread to northern France, Italy, Germany, Spain and England. It was absorbed by the emerging genre of chivalric romance which combined the epic action of the chansons and the cult of the lady with the dark mysticism of the Celtic heritage of Britain. The service of the lady becomes an integral part of the adventures of the questing knight as he journeys from engagement to engagement. The huge popularity of the best of them, Lancelot, whom Chrétien de Troyes had originally called into being at the behest of Countess Marie of Champagne to provide a courtly lover for King Arthur's queen Guinevere, attests to the pertinence of the ideal to his admirers and indicates the wide possibilities of identification. Lancelot, the dedicated lover of his queen and the most exemplary vassal of his king, embodies all the conflicting loyalties and emotional tribulations of a knight enamoured of a lady who reciprocates his love but who has to be worshipped from afar in order not to disrupt the bonds of vassalage which bind him to her and her husband, his liege lord. That the tensions in such relationships could all too often become insurmountable and lead to socially disruptive behaviour is recognized by the unhappy end of this most cherished of medieval love stories. Despite his best intentions, Lancelot's love will lead to civil war, the dispersal of the Round Table and his king's death. His penance will be madness and his punishment the denial of the attainment of the Holy Grail, the symbol of spiritual contentment.

ROMANCE

romanz - the vernacular/vulgar form of Latin ∌ secular texts written in it ∍ particular types of literature favoured by the lay aristocracy

Aristotle *Poetics* about fiction:

1) **mythic** - the hero is superior in kind to other men and their environment because he is divine;
2) **romantic** - the hero is superior to other men in degree;
3) **mimetic/realistic** - the hero is superior to neither men nor the environment.

Literature in the romance mode is poised between the mythic and the mimetic (it represents life as it is and as it might be; i.e. as imperfect reality and imagined perfection).

* With the coming of Christianity to western Europe (with its own oriental mythology) **Roman, Celtic and Teutonic myths** (stories in the mythic mode) lost their original religious significance;

* the discarded myths turned into **folk-tales** and **fairy-stories** (a subdivision of the romantic mode); they have a dream-like quality of wish-fulfilment (their disturbing and violent subject matter, their repetitions, magical transformations and changing identities express the unvoiced desires of the unconscious mind) and their universal appeal testifies to the universal nature of the emotions and experiences they express (maturation through struggle, gaining independence from parental influence, self-realization, integration with society); their surface symbolism expresses very real and fundamental realities (the fantastic adventures that befall the hero are there to test his powers and provide a variety of experiences necessary for his maturation; the material rewards at the end of his quest symbolize his achievements);

* to the folk-tale the **romance** proper adds a social ideal based not upon life as it is but upon a vision of what life could ideally be like if men were better than they are; this unattainable vision itself is projected into the past (the Golden Age) or into the distant future (sci-fi fiction); the special brand of this escapism depends on the social realities of the age in which a particular romance is written (selfless chivalry inspired by courtly love in the Middle Ages served to refine the naked brutality of the warrior class; the allegorical and pastoral romance of the Elizabethan age helped to educate courtiers for the service of the state; Gothic romances in the period of Enlightenment challenged the rule of reason and provided escape from a narrow bourgeois existence, especially for women forced to remain within the confines of their homes; modern sci-fi projects dreams of a happier society into the future and other worlds.)

Values expressed: **love, honour, valour, fear, self-knowledge**

Medium: **adventure**

Underlying structure: **quest**

Characters: **two-dimensional, stereotypical, representational rather than individual** (they are judged on the grounds of how close is their conduct to the ideal; good characters forward the ideal of the quest, bad characters work against it); the lack of the psychological dimension is compensated by the external events happening to the hero during his quest which are metaphors for his inner development.

Conventional motifs: **the court gathered round an archetypal feudal monarch who is the embodiment of chivalric values** (i.e. King Arthur, Charlemagne), **the mysterious challenge to those values which its reputation provoked** (i.e. the Holy Grail), **the solitary quest of the hero in hostile territory to answer that challenge, the temptations which beset him in welcoming wayside castles, the lovely woman**

wooed and won among a maze of adventures, the single combat against overwhelming odds or a monstrous opponent, the eventual victory against the challenger and triumphant return to court.

Origins:

* **C11 monastic revival**, its aim spiritual and theological enlightenment; the classical inheritance of history, grammar and logic used for the analytical study of the Latin language; for style and technique the secular literature of imperial Rome (Virgil, Ovid, Terence, Juvenal, Horace et al) was studied and also read for pleasure; clerics, literate in Latin and native speakers of *romanz* potential producers of vernacular literature; men from the lower orders of clerics, too ill-educated or lacking patronage (the wandering clergy - *clerici vagantes*) may have become trouvéres.
* c. 1100 ***Chanson de Roland*** , the first French epic , provides the ideal of the loyal service of the King in times of civil and political trouble, revives the old imperial dream of the Golden Age when Christian Europe had been united under a political and military genius (Charlemagne) to drive back forces of paganism. This epic and its derivatives, the *chansons de geste*, are not romances proper as they ignore the idealized love between the sexes; women, when they appear at all, are either mothers, chaste wives or prizes of war.
* 1160 ***Roman d'Eneas***, an adaptation of Virgil's *Aeneid* introduces two passionate women in love with Aeneas: Dido, Queen of Carthage, and Lavinia, Aeneas' future wife. The matter of romantic love and the manner of its treatment are obviously borrowed from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Love), *Remedia amoris* (Remedies of Love) and *Metamorphoses.*
* After 1150 **a new type of courtly narrative** emerges **fusing epic action and Ovidian sentiment.**
* 1170 **Marie de France's "lais" in imitation of Breton minstrels** introduce the concept of love as a fatal power defying social conventions and accepted morals.
* Contact with **Islam** (crusades in the Holy Land, Moors in Spain) - women as unattainable, unapproachable, to be worshipped from afar
* Emergence of **chivalric orders**: 1096-99 the First Crusade, Latin kingdoms established in the Holy Land, including Jerusalem; 1099 the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ (Hospitallers); 1119 the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon (Templars); 1143 the Teutonic Knights of St Mary's Hospital at Jerusalem;

1344 Edward III of England founds the Order of the Garter, the modern version of King Arthur's Round Table

The Matter of Britain: King Arthur and the Brotherhood of the Round Table:

* **Arthur** first appears in **Nennius**'s (?) ***Historia Brittonum,*** a C9 Latin manuscript: "There it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain fought against the Saxons. And though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and as often conqueror." Nennius enlists twelve battles fought by Arthur, the most impressive of them having taken place in 518 at Mons Badonicus, a Mount Baddon, unidentifiable today.
* Arthur's contemporary **Gildas**, writing in the first half of C6, does not mention Arthur and dates a major British victory at Mons Badonicus around 500.
* A cautious modern opinion allows that Arthur may well have been a historical figure, a legendary military leader who led his people in their struggle against the invading Anglo-Saxons in the C5.

* **Geoffrey of Monmouth** (c. 1100-1155), an archdeacon in a Benedictine monastery in Wales, posing as a true chronicler, let his imagination run wild under the pretext that he was really translating an ancient Welsh history of Britain, found in Brittany and brought to him by a man who knew his reputation as an elegant writer of Latin verse and prose, when he produced his ***Historia Regum Britanniae*** (A History of British Kings). Inventing whole lists of kings hitherto unknown, he provided them with exact genealogies, wonderful deeds and place-names to associate them with. **King Arthur** emerges in this fable of history as a national hero of awesome magnitude, a powerful ruler who brings under his sway, beside the whole Britain, also Ireland, Iceland, Scandinavia and Gaul, challenges the Roman emperor himself, triumphantly crushes him and makes Romans his slaves. Going from victory to victory, he lives until the end of the C7.

* 1470 **Thomas Malory,** in his rambling prose compilation ***Le Morte d'Arthur*** gave individual stories of the Matter of Britain a definitive form and a fixed sequence.

* 1485 **William Caxton** printed Malory's book, editing and reordering it (Malory's original version was found only in 1934).

*1485 **Henry Tudor** defeats Richard III at Bosworth Field and claims the English crown. The **merging of Arthurian and Tudor identities** was encouraged all through the Tudor period, culminating at the end of C16 in **Edmund Spenser's** epic ***The Faerie Queen***, a medievalized romance of knight errantry in which Prince Arthur is on a quest through Faerie Land (Britain) in search of Gloriana, the Faerie Queen (Elizabeth I) whom he seeks to wed. On one level this marriage would symbolize the marriage of the past and present of Britain, both glorious, on others this union would symbolize the merging of the spirit of British monarchy with that of the eternal justice, Christian faith and the inner spirituality of man, all embodied by the different aspects of idealized Eliza.

Chrétien de Troyes
"The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)"
a typical challenge:

(1)

They rode straight on until night started to fall, reaching the Sword Bridge after the hour of nones, near vespers. At the foot of that very dangerous bridge they dismounted and saw the treacherous water, black and roaring, swift and swirling – as horrifying and frightening as if it were the Devil's stream – and so perilous and deep that there's nothing in the whole world that, were it to fall into it, would not be lost as surely as if it had fallen into the frozen sea. The bridge across was unlike any other: there never was and never will be another like it. I'd say, were you to ask me for the truth, that there has never been such a treacherous bridge and unstable crossing. The bridge across the cold waters was a sharp and gleaming sword – but the sword was strong and stiff and as long as two came at once: courteous and handsome boys, and knights, and comely daughters. Some she asked to unsaddle and groom the horses, which they willingly did without a word of protest. At her request the girls hastened to help the knights remove their armour; when they were disarmed, they were each given a short mantle to wear. Then they were led directly into the magnificent house. The lord of the manor was not there, for he was out in the woods hunting with two of his sons. But he soon returned, and his household, showing proper manners, hastened to welcome him at the gate. They untied and unloaded the venison he was carrying and said as they reached him: 'Sir, you don't know it yet, but you are host to three knights.'

'May God be praised!' he replied.

The knight and his two sons were delighted to have this company, and even the least member of the household did his best to do what had to be done. Some hastened to prepare the meal, others to light the tapers; still others fetched the towels and basins and brought generous amounts of water for washing their hands. They all washed and took their places. Therein, nothing could be found that was unpleasant or objectionable.

While they were partaking of the first course, there appeared before them at the outside door a knight who was prouder than the proudest bull. He was armed from head to toe and sat upon his charger, with one foot fixed in the stirrup but the other, in a jaunty style, thrown over his steed's flowing mane.

No one noticed him until he was right in front of them and said: 'I want to know which one of you was so proud and foolish and so empty-headed as to come into this land, believing he can cross the Sword Bridge? He is wasting his strength; he is wasting his steps.'

Unruffled, our knight answered with great assurance: 'I am he who wishes to cross the Sword Bridge.'

'You! You? Whatever gave you that idea? Before undertaking such a thing you should have thought of how you might end up; and you should have recalled the cart you climbed into. I don't know whether you feel ashamed for having ridden in it, but no one with good sense would have undertaken such a great task having first been shamed in this manner.'

To these insults our knight did not deign to reply a single word; but the lord of the manor and all those with him rightly were astounded beyond measure at this.

'Oh God! What a misfortune!' thought each to himself. 'Damned be the hour when a cart was first conceived and constructed, for it is a vile and

despicable thing. Oh God! What was he accused of? Why was he driven in the cart? For what sin? For what crime? It will always be held against him. Were he innocent of this reproach, no knight in all the world could match him in boldness; and if all the world's knights were assembled in a single place, you'd not see a fairer or nobler one, if the truth be told.' On this matter, everyone spoke with one voice.

The intruder continued his haughty words, saying: 'Knight, hear this, you who are going to the Sword Bridge: if you wish, you can cross over the water quite safely and easily. I'll have you taken swiftly across in a boat. However, if I decide to exact the toll once I have you on the other side, then I'll have your head if I want it; or, if not, it will be at my mercy.'

Our knight answered that he was not seeking trouble: he would never risk his head in this manner, no matter what the consequences. Whereupon the intruder continued: 'Since you refuse my aid, you must come outside here to face me in single combat, which will be to the shame and grief of one of us.'

'If I could refuse, I'd gladly pass it up,' said our knight to taunt him, 'but indeed, I'd rather fight than have something worse befall me.'

Before rising from where he was seated at table, he told the youths who were serving him to saddle his horse quickly and to fetch his armour and bring it to him. They hurried to do as he commanded. Some took pains to arm him; others brought forward his horse. And you can rest assured that, as he was riding off fully armed upon his horse and holding his shield by the arm-straps, he could only be counted among the fair and the good. The horse suited him so well that it seemed it could only be his own – as did the shield strapped to his arm. The helmet he had laced upon his head fitted him so perfectly that you'd never have imagined it was borrowed or on loan; rather you'd have said – so pleasing was the sight of him – that he had been born and bred for it. I trust you will believe my description of all this.

Beyond the gate, on a heath where the battle was to be held, the challenger waited. As soon as the one saw the other, they spurred full speed to the attack and met with a clash, striking such mighty thrusts with their lances that they bent like bows before flying into splinters. With their swords they dented their shields, helmets, and hauberks; they split the wood and broke the chain-mail, and each was wounded several times. Every blow was repaid by another, as if in their fury they were settling a debt. Their sword blows often struck through to their horses' cruppers: they were so drunk in their blood-thirst that their strokes even fell on the horses' flanks, and both were slain. When their steeds had fallen, they pursued one another on foot. In truth they could not have struck more mightily with their swords had they hated one another with a mortal passion. Their payments fell more swiftly than the coins of the gambler who doubles the wager with each toss of the dice. But this game was quite different: there were no dice cast, only blows and fearful strokes, vicious and savage.

Everyone – the lord, his lady, their daughters and sons – had come forth from the house and assembled to watch the battle on the broad heath. When he saw his host there watching him, the Knight of the Cart blamed himself for faintheartedness; then, as he saw the others assembled there observing him, his whole body shook with anger, for he was convinced he should have defeated his adversary long since. With his sword he struck him a blow near the head, then stormed him, pushing him relentlessly backwards until he had driven him from his position. He forced him to give ground and pursued him until the intruder had almost lost his breath and was nearly defenceless.

Then our knight recalled that the other had reproached him most basely for having ridden in the cart; he pummelled and assailed him until no strap or lacing remained unbroken around his neckband. He knocked the helmet from his head and the ventail flew off. He pressed and beleaguered him, compelling him to beg for mercy. Like the lark, which is unable to find cover and is powerless before the merlin that flies more swiftly and attacks it from above, the intruder to his great shame was forced to plead for mercy, since he could not better his adversary.

When the victor heard his foe pleading for mercy, he did not strike or touch him, but said: 'Do you want me to spare you?'

'That's a smart question,' he retorted, 'such as a fool would ask! I've never wanted anything as much as I now want mercy.'

'Then you shall have to ride in a cart. Say anything you wish, but nothing will move me unless you mount the cart for having reproached me so basely with your foolish tongue.'

But the proud knight answered him: 'May it never please God that I ride in a cart!'

'No?' said the other. 'Then you shall die!'

'Sir, my life is in your hands. But in God's name I beg your mercy, only don't make me climb into a cart! Except for this, there is nothing I wouldn't do no matter how painful or difficult. But I believe I'd rather be dead than suffer this disgrace. No matter what else you could ask of me, however difficult, I'd do it to obtain your mercy and pardon.'

Just as he was asking for mercy, a girl came riding across the heath on a tawny mule, with her mantle unpinned and hair dishevelled. She was striking her mule repeatedly with a whip, and no horse at full gallop, to tell the truth, could have run faster than that mule was going. The girl addressed the Knight of the Cart: 'May God fill your heart with perfect happiness and grant your every wish.'

Delighted to hear this greeting, he replied: 'May God bless you and grant you happiness and health!'

Then she announced her purpose: 'Sir knight, I have come from far off in great distress to ask a favour of you, for which you will earn the greatest reward I can offer. And I believe that a time will come when you will need my assistance.'

'Tell me what you wish,' he answered, 'and if I have it, you will receive it at once, so long as it is not impossible.'

'I demand the head of this knight you have just defeated. To be sure, you have never encountered a more base and faithless knight. You will be committing no sin, but rather will be doing a good and charitable act, for he is the most faithless being who ever was or ever might be.'

When the defeated knight heard that she wanted him killed, he said: 'Don't believe a word she says, because she hates me. I pray you to show mercy to me in the name of the God who is both Father and Son, and who caused His daughter and handmaiden to become His mother.'

'Ah knight!' said the girl. 'Don't believe this traitor. May God give you as much joy and honour as you desire, and may He give you success in the quest you have undertaken!'

Now the victorious knight hesitated and reflected upon his decision: should he give the head to this girl who has asked him to cut it off, or should he be touched by compassion for the defeated knight? He wishes to content them both: Generosity and Compassion demand that he satisfy them both, for he is both generous and merciful. Yet if the girl carries off the head, Compassion will have been vanquished and put to death, and if she must leave without it, Generosity will have been routed. Compassion

and Generosity hold him doubly imprisoned, with each in turn spurring him on and causing him anguish. One wants him to give the head to the girl who asked for it; the other urges pity and kindness. But since the knight has begged for mercy, should he not have it? Indeed he must, for no matter how much our knight hates another, he has never refused one application for mercy – though only one – when a knight has been defeated and forced to plead with him for his life. So he will not refuse mercy to this knight who now begs and implores him, since this is his practice. Yet will she who desires the head not have it? She will, if he can arrange it.

'Knight,' he said, 'you must fight with me again if you wish to save your head. I will have mercy enough on you to let you take up your helmet and arm yourself anew as best you are able. But know that you will die if I defeat you again.'

'I could wish no better and ask no other mercy,' replied the knight.

'I shall give you this advantage,' added the Knight of the Cart: 'I will fight you without moving from this spot I have claimed.'

The other knight made ready and they soon returned hotly to the fight, but he was defeated now with more ease than he had been the first time. The girl immediately shouted: 'Don't spare him, sir knight, no matter what he says, for he would certainly never have spared you even the first time! If you listen to his pleas, you know he'll deceive you again. Cut off the head of this most faithless man in the whole kingdom and give it to me, brave knight. It is right that you give it to me, because that day will yet come when I shall reward you for it. If he could, he would deceive you again with his false promises.'

The knight, seeing that his death was at hand, cried out loudly for mercy, but his cries and all the arguments he could muster were of no avail to him. Our knight grabbed him by the helmet, ripping off all the fastenings; the ventail and white coif he struck from his head.

The knight pleaded again, for he had no choice: 'Mercy, for the love of God! Mercy, noble vassal!'

'Having once set you free, I'll never again show you mercy, even if it were to ensure my eternal salvation.'

'Ah,' said he. 'It would be a sin to believe my enemy and slay me like this!'

All the while the girl, eager for him to die, was urging the knight to behead him quickly, and not to believe his words. His blow fell swiftly; the head flew out on to the heath; the body crumpled. The girl was pleased and satisfied. The knight grasped the head by the hair and presented it to her. She was overjoyed and said: 'May your heart find great joy in what it most desires, as my heart has now in what I most hated. I had only one sorrow in life: that he lived so long. You will be repaid at a time when you most need it. Rest assured that you will be greatly rewarded for this service you have done me. I am going now, but I commend you to God, that He might protect you from harm.' With that the girl took leave, and each commended the other to God.

"The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)"
a Tournament:

(5)

Already the crowds had assembled on every side:[22] the queen with all her ladies and the knights with their many men-at-arms. The most magnificent, the largest, and the most splendid viewing stands ever seen had been built there on the tournament field, since the queen and her ladies were to be in attendance. All the ladies followed the queen on to the platform, for they were eager to see who would do well or poorly in the combat. The knights arrived by tens, by twenties, by thirties – here eighty and there ninety, a hundred or more here, two hundred there. The crowd gathered before and around the stands was so great that the combat was begun.

Knights clashed whether or not they were already fully armed. There seemed to be a forest of lances there, for those who had come for the pleasure of the tourney had brought so many that, looking in every direction, one saw only lances, banners, and standards. Those who were to joust moved down the lists, where they encountered a great many companions with the same intent. Others, meanwhile, made ready to perform other deeds of knighthood. The meadows, fields, and clearings were so packed with knights that it was impossible to guess how many there were. Lancelot did not participate in this first encounter; but when he did cross the meadow and the herald saw him coming on to the field, he could not refrain from shouting: 'Behold the one who will take their measure! Behold the one who will take their measure!'

'Who is he?' they all asked. But the herald refused to answer.

When Lancelot entered the fray, he alone proved a match for twenty of the best. He began to do so well that no one could take their eyes from him, wherever he went. A bold and valiant knight was fighting for Pomelegoi, and his steed was spirited and swifter than a wild stag. He was the son of the king of Ireland, and he fought nobly and well, but the unknown knight pleased the onlookers four times as much. They were all troubled by the same question: 'Who is this knight who fights so well?'

* * *

Then the queen returned to the window to observe the knights. Without a moment's hesitation Lancelot thrust his arm through the shield-straps, for he was inflamed with a burning desire to show all his prowess. He neck-reined his horse and let it run between two ranks. Soon all those deluded, mocking men, who had spent much of the past night and day ridiculing him, would be astounded: they had laughed, sported, and had their fun long enough!

With his arm thrust through the straps of his shield, the son of the king of Ireland came charging headlong across the field at Lancelot. They met with such violence that the king of Ireland's son wished to joust no more, for his lance was splintered and broken, having struck not moss but firm dry shield-boards. Lancelot taught him a lesson in this joust: striking his shield from his arm, pinning his arm to his side, and then knocking him off his horse to the ground. Knights from both camps rushed forward at once, some to help the fallen knight and others to worsen his plight. Some, thinking to help their lords, knocked many knights from their saddles in the mêlée and skirmish. But Gawain, who was there with the others, never

(6)

entered the fray all that day, for he was content to observe the prowess of the knight with the red shield, whose deeds seemed to make everything done by the other knights pale by comparison. The herald, too, found new cause for happiness and cried out for all to hear: 'The one has come who will take the measure! Today you will witness his deeds; today you will see his might!'

At this moment Lancelot wheeled his horse and charged towards a magnificent knight, striking him a blow that laid him on the ground a hundred feet or more from his horse. Lancelot performed such deeds with both his lance and sword that all the spectators marvelled at what they saw. Even many of the knights participating in the jousts watched him with admiration and delight, for it was a pleasure to see how he caused both men and horses to stumble and fall. There was scarcely a knight he challenged who was able to remain in the saddle, and he gave the horses he won to any who wanted them. Those who had been mocking him now said: 'We are ashamed and mortified. We made a great mistake to slander and vilify him. Truly he is worth a thousand of the likes of those on this field, since he has so vanquished and surpassed all the knights in the world, that there now remains no one to oppose him.'

The young women who were watching him in amazement all said that he was destroying their chances of marriage. They felt that their beauty, their wealth, their positions, and their noble births would bring them little advantage, for surely a knight this valiant would never deign to marry any one of them for beauty or wealth alone. Yet many of them swore that if they did not marry this knight, they would not take any other lord or husband in this year. The queen, overhearing their boastful vows, laughed to herself. She knew that the knight they all desired would never choose the most beautiful, nor the fairest among them, even if they were to offer him all the gold of Arabia. Yet the young women had but one thing in mind: they all wanted to possess that knight. And they were already as jealous of one another as if they were married to him, because they believed him to be so skilled in arms that they could not conceive of any other knight, no matter how pleasing, who could have done what he had done.

'The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)' courtly love:

ARTHUR, the good king of Britain whose valour teaches us to be brave and courteous, held a court of truly royal splendour at that most costly feast known as Pentecost. The king was at Carlisle in Wales.[1] After dining, the knights gathered in the halls at the invitation of ladies, damsels, or maidens. Some told of past adventures, others spoke of love: of the anguish and sorrows, but also of the great blessings often enjoyed by the disciples of its order, which in those days was sweet and flourishing. But today very few serve love: nearly everyone has abandoned it; and love is greatly abased, because those who loved in bygone days were known to be courtly and valiant and generous and honourable. Now love is reduced to empty pleasantries, since those who know nothing about it claim that they love, but they lie, and those who boast of loving and have no right to do so make a lie and a mockery of it.

"The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)"
a courtly lover.

(7)

The Knight of the Cart was lost in thought, a man with no strength or defence against love, which torments him. His thoughts were so deep that he forgot who he was; he was uncertain whether or not he truly existed; he was unable to recall his own name; he did not know if he were armed or not, nor where he was going nor whence he came. He remembered nothing at all save one creature, for whom he forgot all others; he was so intent upon her alone that he did not hear, see, or pay attention to anything. His horse carried him swiftly along, following not the crooked way, but taking the better and more direct path. Thus unguided it bore him on to a heath. On this heath was a ford, and on the other side of the ford was an armed knight who guarded it; with him was a girl who had come on a palfrey. Though by this time it was nearing the hour of nones, our knight had not grown weary of his unceasing meditations. His horse, by now quite thirsty, saw the good clear water and galloped towards the ford. From the other side the guardian cried out:

'Knight, I guard the ford and I forbid you to cross it!'

Our knight did not hear or pay attention to this, for he was still lost in his thoughts; all the while his horse kept racing towards the water. The guard cried out loudly enough to be heard: 'You would be wise not to take the ford, for that is not the way to cross!'

And he swore by the heart within his breast to slay him if he entered the ford. Yet the knight heard not a word, and so the guard shouted to him a third time: 'Knight, do not enter the ford against my order, or by my head I'll strike you the moment I see you in it!'

The knight, still wrapped in his thoughts, heard nothing. His horse leapt quickly into the water, freed himself from the bit, and began to drink thirstily. The guardian swore that the knight would pay for this and that neither his shield nor the hauberk on his back would ever save him. He urged his horse to a gallop, and from the gallop to a run; he struck our knight from his steed flat into the ford that he had forbidden him to cross. The knight's lance fell into the stream and his shield flew from round his neck. The cold water awakened him with a shock; startled, he leapt to his feet like a dreamer from sleep. He regained his sight and hearing and wondered who could have struck him. Then he saw the guardian and shouted to him: 'Varlet, tell me why you struck me when I didn't realize you were in front of me and had done you no wrong?'

'Upon my word, you have indeed wronged me,' he answered. 'Were you not contemptuous of me when I shouted to you three times, as loudly as I could, not to cross the ford? You certainly must have heard at least two of my warnings, yet you entered in spite of me, and I said that I would strike you as soon as I saw you in the water.'

To that the knight replied: 'May I be damned if ever I heard you or if ever I saw you before! It's quite possible you did warn me not to cross the ford, but I was lost in my thoughts. Rest assured that you'll regret this if I ever get even one hand on your reins!'

The guardian of the ford replied: 'What good would that do you? Go ahead and grab my reins if you dare. I don't give a fistful of ashes for your haughty threats!'

'I'd like nothing better than to seize hold of you right now,' he retorted, 'no matter what might come of it!'

At that the guardian advanced to the middle of the ford. The unknown knight grabbed the reins with his left hand and a leg with his right. He pulled and tugged and squeezed the leg so hard that the guard cried out, for it felt as if his leg was being yanked from his body.

He implored him to stop: 'Knight, if it pleases you to fight me on equal terms, then remount your horse and take your lance and shield and come joust with me.'

'Upon my word, I won't do it. I think you'll try to run away as soon as you're free from my grasp.'

When the other heard this, he was greatly shamed, and answered: 'Sir knight, mount your horse and have no fear, for I give you my solemn oath that I'll not flee. You have cast shame upon me and I am offended.'

The unknown knight replied: 'First you will pledge me your word: I want you to swear to me that you will not flinch or flee, and that you will not touch or approach me until you see me remounted. I shall have been very generous indeed to set you free, when now I have you.'

The guardian of the ford had no choice but to give his oath. When the knight heard his pledge, he went after his lance and shield, which had been floating in the ford, going along with the current, and were by now a good distance downstream. Then he returned to get his horse; when he had overtaken it and remounted, he took the shield by the straps and fewtered his lance.

Then the two spurred towards each other as fast as their steeds could carry them. The knight responsible for guarding the ford reached the other knight first and struck him so hard that he shattered his lance at once. The other dealt him a blow that sent him tumbling flat beneath the water, which closed completely over him. Then the Knight of the Cart withdrew and dismounted, confident that he could drive away a hundred such before him. He drew his steel-bladed sword from his scabbard, and the other knight sprang up and drew his fine, flashing blade. Again they engaged in hand-to-hand struggle, protected behind their shields, which gleamed with gold.

Their swords flashed repeatedly; they struck such mighty blows and the battle was so lengthy that the Knight of the Cart felt shame in his heart and said that he would be unable to meet the trials of the way he had undertaken, since he needed so long to defeat a single knight. Had he met a hundred such in a valley yesterday, he felt certain they would have had no defence against him, so he was exceedingly distressed and angry to be so weak today that his blows were feeble and his day wasted. Thereat he rushed the guardian of the ford until he was forced to give way and flee; though loath to do so, he left the ford's passage free. Our knight pursued him until he fell forward on to his hands; then the rider of the cart came up to him and swore by all he could see that he would rue having knocked him into the ford and disturbed his meditations.

Wolfram von Eschenbach
"Parzival"
courtly love:

9

This was the oath, as you have heard it. Now will you hear where his journey has taken Parzival the Waleis? That night fresh snow had fallen thick upon him. Yet it was not the time for snow, if it was the way I heard it. Arthur is the man of May, and whatever has been told about him took place at Pentecost or in the flowering time of May. What fragrance, they say, is in the air around him! But *here* this tale is cut of double fabric and turns to the color of snow.

Arthur's falconers from Karidoel had ridden out in the evening for hawking along the Plimizoel and had suffered the misfortune of losing their best falcon. It had suddenly taken flight and remained in the woods all night. This came of overfeeding, for it spurned the food put out to lure it. All night it stayed near Parzival, for the forest 282
was strange to both, and they very nearly froze.

When Parzival saw the daylight, he found his pathway covered over with snow and rode then at random over fallen tree trunks and stones. The day steadily shone brighter, and the forest began to thin out into a meadow, level except for one fallen tree toward which he slowly rode, Arthur's falcon following along. Resting there were perhaps a thousand geese, and a great cackling went up. Like a flash the falcon darted among them and struck at one so fiercely that it barely managed to escape under the branches of the fallen tree. Pain no longer let it fly.

From its wounds there fell upon the snow three red drops of blood. These brought Parzival great distress, from the trueness of his love. When he saw the blood-drops on the snow which was so white, he thought, "Who created this color so pure? Condwiramurs, this color does in truth resemble you. God must wish to give me fullness of bliss, since I have found here something which resem- 283
bles you. Honor be to the hand of God and to all His creatures! Condwiramurs, here lies your image, for the snow offered the blood its whiteness, and the blood reddens the snow. Conwiramurs, your *beau corps* is like these colors. That you must confess."

From the way the drops lay on the snow, the hero's eyes fancied two as her cheeks and the third as her chin. His love for her was true and knew no wavering. And thus he mused, lost in thought, until his senses deserted him. Mighty Love held him in thrall. Such distress did his own wife bring him, for she had the very same colors, the Queen of Pelrapeire. She it was who robbed him of his senses.

So he remained still as if he were sleeping. And who came running up to him there? A squire of Cunneware's had been sent out on an errand to Lalant. Just then he saw a helmet with many wounds and a much-battered shield.

And there was a warrior in armor—in the service 284
of the squire's lady[1]—with spear erect, as if he were waiting to do combat. The squire quickly retraced his steps. If he had recognized him as his lady's knight, he would not have raised such a hue and cry. He urged the people out to attack him as if he were an outlaw. He wanted to do him harm, but he lost thereby his name for courtesy. Never mind, his lady was also thoughtless.[2]

"Fie upon you, fie, you cowards," cried the squire. "Do Gawan and the rest of this company of knights deserve knightly honor, and Arthur the Briton?" So cried the lad. "The Round Table is disgraced. Someone has ridden your tent ropes down."

Then there was a great clamor among the knights. They all began to ask whether a battle were going on. When they heard that a single man was there ready for combat, many a one regretted the oath he had given to Arthur. Quick as a flash, not walking, up leaped Segramors, always eager for a fight, and broke into a run. Whenever he sus- 285
pected a fight, they had to tie him hand and foot or he would be in the midst of it. Nowhere is the Rhine so wide but if he saw combat on the opposite shore there was no feeling if the bath were warm or cold—in he plunged, the reckless warrior.

Speedily the youth arrived at court in Arthur's circle of tents. The worthy King was fast asleep. Segramors ran in among the tent ropes, burst through the doorway of the tent, and snatched off the sable cover from the King and Queen as they lay there sleeping sweetly. They were awakened, yet they could not help laughing at his impudence.

"Ginover, my lady the Queen," he said to his mother's sister, "everyone knows we are kin, and far and wide it is known that I can count on your favor. Now help me, Lady, speak to Arthur your husband and say he must grant me this—there is an adventure nearby—that I be the first to the joust."

Arthur replied to Segramors, "You promised 286
me on your oath that you would abide by my will and hold your folly in check. If you engage in a joust here, then many another man will ask me to let him ride out to combat and seek for fame in battle, and my own defense will be weakened. We are nearing the host of Anfortas which rides out from Munsalvaesche to defend the forest in combat. Since we do not know where the castle lies,[3] things might well go hard with us."

But Ginover pleaded with Arthur so well that Segramors' wish was granted. When she won him this adventure, he would have done anything in return—except perhaps die for joy. Not for the world would he have given anyone a share in the adventure and his coming glory, that proud youth, still beardless.

Both he and his horse were armed, and away rode Segramors *le roi*. Galloping *par le jeune bois*, his horse leaped over tall underbrush, and many a golden bell rang on the horse's trappings and on the man. One could have

thrown him into the briars like a falcon to start 287
the pheasant. If you wanted to look for him in a hurry, you would find him by the loud jingling of the bells.

So the reckless hero rode toward him who was so completely in thrall to love, but refrained from blow or thrust until he had given him his challenge. Parzival remained rooted to the spot, lost to all around. Such was the power of the three blood drops and of that relentless love—which often robs me also of my senses and disquiets my heart. O, the grief one woman is causing me! If she wants to vanquish me thus and seldom give me succor, then she may take the blame and I shall flee from any solace she may offer.

Now hear about those two knights, how they met and how they parted. This was what Segramors said, "You behave, Sir, as though you were pleased that a king with his following is encamped so near. For all that you take it so lightly, you will have to pay him dearly for that, or I shall lose my life. In your search for combat you have ridden too close to us. Yet for courtesy's sake will I beg you to give yourself into my power, else you will make me such swift restitution that your fall will make the snow fly. 288
You would do better to make an honorable peace before."

Parzival made no response in spite of the threat. Lady Love was speaking to him of other cares. The bold Segramors wheeled his horse around to gain the proper distance for the charge. At that Parzival's Castilian also turned, and the eyes of the fair Parzival, who had been sitting there in a trance, staring at the blood, were turned away from the drops. Whereby his honor was restored. When he saw the drops no longer, Lady Reason gave him his senses back again.

Here came Segramors *le roi*. Parzival lowered his spear, the spear from Troyes, firm and tough and gaily colored, which he had found outside the chapel. He received one thrust through his shield, but his return thrust was so aimed that Segramors, the noble warrior, was forced to quit the saddle. But the spear which taught him what falling was remained whole. Without a word Parzival rode back to where the blood drops lay, and when his eyes found them, Lady Love drew her chains tightly about him and 289
he spoke no word at all, for he had parted again from his senses.

Segramors' Castilian set off for its stall, while he himself had to stand up to rest, that is, if he wanted to go and rest at all. Most people lie down to rest, you have heard that often enough. But what rest could he get in the snow? —I, for one, would find it very uncomfortable. It has always been thus—the reward for the loser is scorn, for the victor the help of God.

The army was encamped so near that they saw Parzival halt and stay motionless as before. He had to acknowledge the triumph of Love, which vanquished even Solomon. It was not long before Segramors returned to camp, as amicable to those who hated him as to those who wished him well—he rewarded them all with abuse.

"You know very well," he said, "that fighting is a game of chance and that a man can fall in a joust. A ship can sink, too, in the sea. I tell you there is no doubt he would never have dared to face me if he had recognized my shield. But then he was too much for me, he who is still 290
waiting there for combat. Well, even he is worthy of praise."

The brave Keie straightway brought this news to the King, how Segramors had been unhorsed and how a sturdy youth was waiting out there, still intent on combat. "Sir," he said, "I shall always regret it if he gets away without being punished. If you think me worthy, let me attempt what he wants, since there he waits with spear erect, and that in the presence of your wife. I can remain no longer in your service, and the Round Table will be dishonored, if he is not checked in time. His challenge is a threat to our fame. Give me leave to fight. If we were all blind or deaf, you would have to defy him yourself—and that very soon."

Arthur gave Keie permission to fight, and the seneschal was armed. He meant to use up the forest for spears against the unbidden guest. Yet the stranger already bore the heavy burden of love; snow and blood had laid it upon him. It is sinful to harass him further now. And Love gains but little fame thereby, for she had long since set her mighty seal upon him.

Lady Love, why do you so? Why do you 291
make the unhappy man glad with a joy so briefly enduring and then leave him all but dead?

Is it fitting for you, Lady Love, to cause manly spirits and courage bold and high to be so humiliated?

Whatever on earth opposes you in any way, be it contemptible or noble, you have always quickly vanquished.

In all truth, without deception, we must grant that your power is great.

Lady Love, you can claim but one honor, and little else beside: Lady Affection is your companion, else your power would be riddled for fair.

Lady Love, you are disloyal in ways that are old, yet ever new. You rob many a woman of her good name, you urge upon them lovers blood kindred to them. And it is by your power that many a lord has wronged his vassal, friend has wronged friend, and the vassal has wronged his lord. Your ways can lead to Hell. Lady Love, you should be troubled that you pervert the body to lust, wherefore the soul must suffer. Lady Love, since you have the power to 292
make the young old, whose years are yet so few, your works are insidious treachery.

Such words would be seemly only for one who never received consolation from you. Had you been of more help to *me,* I would not be so slow to praise you. To me you have allotted privation, and have thrown me

such luckless dice that I have no trust in you. Yet you are far too highly born that my puny wrath should bring a charge against you. Your thrust has so sharp a point, and on the heart you lay a heavy burden.

Heinrich von Veldeke, with true artistry, fitted his tree to your nature.[4] If he had only taught us more of how to keep you! He has given us only a splinter from the tree—how one can win you. From ignorance many a fool must lose his precious find. If that was my lot in the past and is still to be my lot in the future, I blame you, Lady Love, for you keep Reason under lock and key.

Neither shield nor sword avails against you, nor swift horse, nor high fortress with stately towers—your power transcends any defense. What can 293
escape your attack, by land or by sea, swimming or flying? Lady Love, you proved your power when Parzival, the warrior bold, took leave of his wits because of you, as his fidelity directed him. His noble, sweet, and lovely wife, the Queen of Pelrapeire, sent you as messenger to him. And Kardeiz, *le fils de* Tampenteire, her brother, you killed. If one must pay you such a price, it is well for me that I have nothing from you—unless you gave me something more pleasant. I have spoken for all of us.

Now hear what was happening there. The mighty Keie came riding out in knightly armor, as if he would do battle. And battle, I think, the son of King Gahmuret gave him. All ladies who know how to vanquish men should wish him safekeeping now, for a woman brought him to such a pass that love chopped away his wits.

Keie withheld his charge, first saying to the Waleis, "Sir, since it has so happened that you have insulted 294
the King, if you will take my advice, I think your best course is to put a hound's leash about your neck and let yourself be led like that before him. You cannot escape me, I shall take you there by force in any case, and then they will deal with you in a rather unpleasant fashion."

The power of love held the Waleis silent. Keie raised his spear shaft and gave him such a blow on the head that his helmet rang. "Wake up!" he said. "You shall sleep, but not between sheets. I am aiming at something quite different—on the snow you shall find your bed. Even the beast that carries the sack from the mill would rue his indolence if he got such a beating as I have given you now."

Lady Love, look here, this is an insult to you. Only a peasant would speak so about what has been done to my lord. And Parzival would also protest if he could speak. Lady Love, let him seek revenge, the noble Waleis. If you set him free from your harshness and the bitter burden of

your torment, this stranger would defend himself well, I think.

Keie charged hard against him and in so doing 295
forced his horse to turn around so that the Waleis lost sight of his bitter-sweet distress, the image of his wife the Queen of Pelrapeire—I mean the red against the snow. Then Lady Reason came to him as before and gave him his senses back. Keie set his horse at a gallop, and the other came on for the joust. Both knights lowered their spears as they charged. Keie aimed his thrust as his eyes directed and drove a wide breach in the Waleis' shield. This blow was repaid. At the countercharge Arthur's seneschal Keie was thrown right over the fallen tree where the goose had taken refuge, so that horse and man both suffered harm. The man was wounded, his horse lay dead. Caught between the saddle-bow and a stone, Keie's right arm and left leg were broken in this fall. Saddlegirth, bells, and saddle were shattered by the crash. Thus did the stranger avenge two beatings; the one a maiden had suffered for his sake, the other he had endured himself.

Once more Parzival, the uprooter of falseness, 296
was shown by his fidelity where to find the three snowy drops of blood that set him free of his wits. His thoughts about the Grail and the Queen's likeness here—each was a painful burden, but heavier lay on him the leaden weight of love. Sorrow and love can break the strongest spirit. Can these be called adventure? They both should better be called pain.

Courageous men should lament Keie's misfortune. His manly spirit sent him bravely into many a fight. Far and wide it is said that Arthur's seneschal Keie was a rogue. *My* tale acquits him of this charge and calls him honor's companion. Though few may agree with me—Keie was a brave and loyal man—this I do maintain.

The Thrush and the Nightingale

Summer's here with love again,[1]
With blossom and with birds' refrain
From hazel bushes springing.
Dew is dropping in the dale
And, longing like the nightingale,
The birds are gladly singing.
I heard a wordy battle flow –
On one side joy, the other woe –
Between two birds I knew.
One praised women for their good.
But shame the sex the other would:
Their strife I tell to you.

The one was Nightingale by name,
And he would shield them all from shame
And safe from injury.
The thrush declared that night and day
Women go the Devil's way
And keep him company;

For every man who would believe
And trust in women, they deceive,
Though fair and mild of mien;
False and fickle, everywhere
They bring distress, and better it were
If they had never been.

NIGHTINGALE: 'To censure ladies is a shame,
For they are kind and fair of fame:
Desist, I beg of you.
For there was never breach so strong
That man pursuing right or wrong
Could not at last break through.

'They cheer the angry, noble or base,
With pleasing pastime and with grace.
Woman was once created
As man's companion: how could earth
Be anything without her birth,
Or man so sweetly mated?'

THRUSH: 'No praise of women I report,
For I affirm them false in thought
And know that they will cheat;
For though they're beautiful, their mind
Is false and faithless, and I find
Them prone to act deceit.

'King Alexander censured them –
He the prince of stratagem
And first in wealth and fame;
And I could tell a hundredfold

Of rich and powerful men of old
Whom women brought to shame.'

This speech enraged the Nightingale.

NIGHTINGALE: 'You seem most loath to tell the tale
Of all those heroes' shame!
A thousand ladies I could show
And none there sitting in a row
Would be of evil fame.

'Modest and mild of heart are all;
And shielded by their bower wall,
They're safe from shame and snare;
The sweetest things to fold in arms
For men delighting in their charms! –
Bird, are you not aware?'

THRUSH: 'What! Me aware, my gentle bird?
I've been in bower and often stirred
Those ladies to my will.
They'll do a sinful secret deed
For slight reward, and so with speed
Their souls they help to kill.

'I think you're lying now, my bird,
For though you're meek and mild of word,
Your wilful utterance palls.
I name to you the primal man,
Adam, who our race began:
He found women false.'

NIGHTINGALE: 'Thrush, it seems you're either mad
Or know of nothing else but bad
To slander women so!
They have true courtliness at heart,
And sweetly use love's secret art,
Most wonderful to know.

'Man's highest bliss in earthly state
Is when a woman takes her mate
And twines him in her arms.
To slander ladies is a shame!
I'll banish you for laying blame
On those who have such charms.'

THRUSH: 'Nightingale, you do me wrong
To banish me when all my song
Was urging of the right.
I testify to Sir Gawain,
Whom Jesus Christ gave might and main
And valour for the fight.

'However far and wide he went,
He never failed in true intent
By day or yet by night.'

NIGHTINGALE: 'Bird, for that untruthful word,
Your utterance shall be widely heard,
So off with you! Take flight!

'I sojourn here by lawful right,
In orchard and in garden bright,
And here my songs I sing.
Of women I've known but kindly word
Of grace and courtesy, and heard
Of blisses that they bring.

'Delight is theirs without an end,
They tell me: I tell you, my friend,
They live in sweet desire.
Bird, you sit on hazel bough:
You slandered them, you'll suffer now!
I'll spread your tales, you liar!'

THRUSH: 'They're spread abroad, I know it well;
Who doesn't know them, go and tell:
My tales are hardly new.
Listen, bird, to my advice:
You haven't noticed half their vice;
I'll tell you what they do.

'Think how the queen of Constantine
Found something filthy fair and fine:
(Regret she later knew!)
She loved a cripple whom she fed[1]
And hid within her royal bed.
Just see if women are true!'

NIGHTINGALE: 'Thrush, your tale is wholly wrong,
For as I always say in song,
And men know far and wide,
When women to shady woods are drawn,
They're brighter than the brilliant dawn
At height of summer-tide.

'If you come here to hostile ground
They'll shut you up, in prison bound,
And there you shall remain.
The lying tales your lips let fall,
There you shall unsay them all,
And live in utter shame.'

The Thrush and the Nightingale (4)

THRUSH: 'Nightingale, your speech is free:
You say that women'll ruin me –
Curse them, young and old!
The holy book is swift to show
How women brought so many low
Who once were proud and bold.

'Think of Samson, brave and strong,
To whom his wife did such a wrong;
For him she took a price.
Jesus said ill-gotten gain
Was worst for one who would attain
To bliss of paradise.'

Then said to him the Nightingale,

NIGHTINGALE: 'Well, bird, that sounds a likely tale!
Attend to what I say.
Woman's a flower of lasting grace,
And highest praised in every place,
And lovely her array.

'There's not on earth a better leech,
So mild of thought and fair of speech,
To heal man's aching sore.
Bird, you pull apart my thought,
But shall not win with your retort.
Such evil, do no more!'

THRUSH: 'Nightingale, you are unwise
To put on women such a price;
Your profit will be lean;
For in a hundred, hardly five
Of all the wives and maids alive
Continue pure and clean,

'And do no harm in any place,
And bring no men to vile disgrace,
We know with certainty.
But though we sit in wordy strife
About the fame of maid and wife,
The truth you'll never see.'

NIGHTINGALE: 'Your words have now confounded you!
Through whom was all this world made new? –
A Maiden meek and mild,
Who bore in Bethlehem a Son.
He sprang from her a holy one
Who tames all beings wild.

'She knew of neither sin nor shame,
And truly, Mary was her name:
  May Christ be all her shield!
Bird, for slanders that you wove,
I ban you from this wooded grove,
  So go into the field!'

THRUSH: 'Nightingale, my mind was mad,
Or else I thought of only bad
  In this our wordy war.
I see that I am overcome
Through her who bore that holy Son;
  Five wounds he suffered sore.

'I promise by his holy name
That of a wife's or maiden's fame
  No harm I'll ever say.
I'll leave your land at once, I swear,
And where I go, I do not care:
  I'll simply fly away.'

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CHAPTER XI: TITUREL AND THE HOLY GRAIL

The Origin of the Legend

OF all the romances of chivalry the most mystical and spiritual is undoubtedly the legend of the Holy Grail. Rooted in the mythology of all primitive races is the belief in a land of peace and happiness, a sort of earthly paradise, once possessed by man, but now lost, and only to be attained again by the virtuous. The legend of the Holy Grail, which some authorities declare was first known in Europe by the Moors, and Christianised by the Spaniards, was soon introduced into France, where Robert de Borron and Chrestien de Troyes wrote lengthy poems about it. Other writers took up the same theme, among them Walter Map, Archdeacon of Oxford, who connected it with the Arthurian legends. It soon became known in Germany, where, in the hands of Gottfried von Strassburg, and especially of Wolfram von Eschenbach, it assumed its most perfect and popular form. The "Parzival" of Eschenbach also forms the basis of the much-discussed last opera of the great Wagner.[1]

The story of the Grail is thus naturally confused, owing to the many changes made by the different authors. The account here given, while mentioning the most striking incidents of other versions, is in general an outline of the "Titurel" and "Parzival" of von Eschenbach.

The Holy Grail

Thus it happened that when Lucifer was cast out of Heaven one stone of great beauty was detached from the marvellous crown which sixty thousand angels had tendered him. This stone fell upon earth, and from it was carved a vessel of great beauty, which came, after many ages, into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea. He offered it to the Saviour, who made use of it in the Last Supper. When the blood flowed from the Redeemer's side, Joseph of Arimathea caught a few drops of it in this wonderful vessel. Owing to this circumstance it was thought to be endowed with marvellous powers. "Wherever it was there were good things in abundance. Whoever looked upon it, even though he were sick unto death, could not die that week; whoever looked at it continually, his cheeks never grew pale, nor his hair grey."

Once a year, on the anniversary of the Saviour's death, a white dove brought a fresh host down from Heaven, and placed it on the vessel, which was borne by a company of angels, or by spotless virgins. The care of it was at times entrusted to mortals, who, however, had to prove themselves worthy of this exalted honour by leading unblemished lives. This vessel, called the "Holy Grail," remained after the crucifixion in the hands of Joseph of Arimathea. Then the Jews, angry because Joseph had helped to bury Christ, cast him into a dungeon, and left him there for a whole year without food or drink. Their purpose in doing so was to slay Joseph, as they had already slain Nicodemus, so that should the Romans ever ask them to produce Christ's body they might declare that it had been stolen by Joseph of Arimathea. Yet they little suspected that Joseph, having the Holy Grail with him, could suffer no lack.

By-and-by Vespasian, the Roman emperor, heard the story of Christ's passion as related by a knight who had just returned from the Holy Land. The story greatly excited him, and he sent a commission to Jerusalem to investigate the matter and bring back some holy relic to cure his son Titus of leprosy.

In due time the ambassadors returned, giving Pilate's version of the story, and bringing with them an old woman who after her death became known as St. Veronica. Full of reverent awe, Veronica drew forth the cloth with which she had wiped the Lord's face, and upon which His likeness had been plainly left. Eagerly the king hastened to bear it before his stricken son, who instantly recovered at the mere sight of the holy relic. Then, together with Vespasian, Titus proceeded to Jerusalem. There they vainly tried to compel the Jews to produce the body of Christ, until one of them revealed, under pressure of torture, the place where Joseph was imprisoned. Determined to get at the truth, Vespasian himself went to the dungeon, where he was hailed by the saint, who was perfectly well and strong. Amazed at this miracle, Vespasian had Joseph set free, who, fearing further persecution from the Jews, soon departed with his sister, Enigée, and her husband, Brons, for a distant land. The pilgrims found a place of refuge near Marseilles, where the Holy Grail supplied all their needs until one of them committed a sin. Then Divine displeasure became manifest by a terrible famine.

As none knew who had sinned, Joseph was instructed in a vision to discover the culprit by the same means with which the Lord had revealed the guilt of Judas. Still following Divine commands, Joseph made a table, and directed Brons to catch a fish. The Grail was placed before Joseph's seat at table, where all who implicitly believed were invited to take a seat. Eleven seats were soon occupied, and only the place of Judas remained empty. Then Moses, a hypocrite and sinner, attempted to seat himself in the empty place, but the earth opened wide beneath him and engulfed him.

[1] *See* "Stories from Wagner," by J. W. McSpadden.

In another vision Joseph was now told that the vacancy would only be filled on the day of doom. At the same time he was also told that a similar table would be constructed by Merlin. Here the grandson of Brons would honourably occupy the vacant place, which is designated in the legend as the "Siege Perilous," because it proved fatal to all for whom it was not intended.

In the "Great St. Grail," one of the longest poems on this theme, there are countless adventures and journeys, "transformations of fair females into foul fiends, conversions wholesale and individual, allegorical visions, miracles, and portents. Eastern splendour and Northern weirdness, angelry and devilry, together with abundant fighting and quite a phenomenal amount of swooning, make up a strange medley of Celtic, pagan, and Christian legends, which alternate in a kaleidoscopic maze that defies the symmetry demanded by modern æsthetic canons in every artistic production."

The later history of the Holy Grail is variously related. But it is held by many that it was carried by Joseph of Arimathea to Glastonbury, where it long remained visible, and whence it vanished only when men became too sinful to be permitted to retain it in their midst.

Birth of Titurel

Another legend relates that a rich man from Cappadocia, named Berillus, followed Vespasian to Rome, where he won great estates. He was a virtuous man, and his good qualities were inherited by all his descendants. One of these, called Titurisone, was full of sorrow because he had no son to continue his race. Then, following the advice of a wise soothsayer, he made a pilgrimage to the holy sepulchre, and there laid

a crucifix of pure gold upon the altar. To his great joy, on his return he was rewarded for his pilgrimage by the birth of a son, whom he called Titurel.

By-and-by this child grew to manhood, and spent all his time in warring against the Saracens, which was the name given to all pagans in these metrical romances. The booty he won he gave either to the Church or to the poor, and his courage and virtue were only equalled by his piety and extreme humility.

One day, when Titurel was walking alone in the woods musing upon holy things, he suddenly saw an angel standing before him. In musical tones the heavenly visitant announced that he had been chosen as the guardian of the Holy Grail, which he would find upon Montsalvatch. Therefore the angel warned him to set a watch over his lips and guard well his way of living, since none but the pure might even catch so much as a glimpse of the holy vessel.

The thought of the great charge to be put in his hand filled Titurel with awe, and he hastened home, pondering as to where Montsalvatch might be. For he did not know; neither to this day has any one discovered the exact spot of the mystical place, though some assert it to have been in Spain. Meanwhile Titurel, obeying the voice of the angel, sold all that he possessed, save only his armour and his sword. Then he again returned to the place where he had first seen the vision, for he knew not what he was to do next.

But as he stood gazing up into the blue sky and longing earnestly to follow his Master a mysterious white cloud seemed to beckon him onwards. Instinctively the gazer turned to follow it, and so guided he passed through vast solitudes and impenetrable woods, till he began to climb a steep mountain, whose ascent

at first seemed impossible. Clinging to the rocks, and gazing ever ahead at the guiding cloud, Titurel came at last to the top of the mountain, where, in a beam of refulgent light, he beheld the Holy Grail, borne in the air by invisible hands. He raised his heart in passionate prayer that he might be found worthy to guard the emerald-coloured wonder which was thus entrusted to his care, and in his rapture hardly heeded the welcoming cries of a number of knights in shining armour, who hailed him as their king.

The vision of the Holy Grail, which was as evanescent as beautiful, soon disappeared. But Titurel, knowing that the spot was holy, guarded it with all his might against the infidels who would fain have climbed the steep slope. Several years went by without the Holy Grail coming down to earth; therefore Titurel conceived the plan of building a temple suitable for its reception. The knights who helped to build and afterwards guarded this temple were called "Templars." Their first effort was to clear the mountain-top, which they found was one single onyx of enormous size. This they levelled and polished until it shone like a mirror, and upon this foundation they prepared to build their shrine.

Temple of the Holy Grail

Then as Titurel was hesitating what plan to adopt for the building he prayed for guidance, and when he arose on the morrow he found the ground plan all traced out and the building materials ready for use. From morning till eve the knights laboured at their holy task, and when they ceased invisible hands continued the work till morning. Thus pushed onward, the building progressed rapidly, and the temple rose on

the mountain-top in magnificent splendour. Some idea of its unrivalled loveliness may be faintly gained from the description which tells that "The temple itself was one hundred fathoms in diameter. Around it were seventy-two chapels of an octagonal shape. To every pair of chapels there was a tower six stories high, approachable by a winding stair on the outside. In the centre stood a tower twice as big as the others, which rested on arches. The vaulting was of blue sapphire, and in the centre was a plate of emerald, with the Lamb and the banner of the Cross in enamel. All the altar stones were of sapphire, as symbols of the propitiation of sins. Upon the inside of the cupola surmounting the temple, the sun and moon were represented in diamonds and topazes, and shed a light as of day even in the darkness of the night. The windows were of crystal, beryl, and other transparent stones. The floor was of translucent crystal, under which all the fishes of the sea were carved out of onyx, just like life. The towers were of precious stones inlaid with gold; their roofs of gold and blue enamel. Upon every tower there was a crystal cross, and upon it a golden eagle with expanded wings, which at a distance appeared to be flying. At the summit of the main tower was an immense carbuncle, which served, like a star, to guide the Templars thither at night. In the centre of the building, under the dome, was a miniature representation of the whole, and in this the holy vessel was kept."

Descent of the Holy Grail

At last the work was finished, and the wonderful temple stood in all its peerless glory. Its consecration was then solemnly carried out by the priests, whose hearts glowed with reverent pride at the sight of the

holy edifice. Slowly they walked up and down, singing sweet psalms and waving their censers as they passed along the dim aisles and under the splendid arches. But suddenly one and all paused and gazed with quickened senses at the place where the altar stood. For there, on a beam of light, came the holy cup, stealing noiselessly through the air, till it hovered above the altar itself. Awestruck, the priests hushed their songs and looked rapturously at the marvel before them. Then as they gazed there fell upon their ears a sweet strain sung by a choir of angels, that chanted the praises of the Most High.

With fearful awe Titurel took charge of the vessel which had thus come down to earth. Nor did either he or any of his knights fail in the great undertaking they had vowed to perform: for when they were faint and hungry the holy cup sustained them; when they were wounded it healed them as they knelt in worship before this token of the favour of Heaven. Moreover, it also became as it were the voice of God himself; for upon its rim there appeared from time to time a Divine message, written in letters of fire, which burnt themselves into the hearts of the knights who were permitted to read them.

Meanwhile, so marvellous was the power of the Holy Grail, that though by this time Titurel was more than four hundred years old he seemed like a man of forty. Nevertheless he was startled one day when he beheld on the edge of the vessel a message in burning flame which bade him seek a wife, that his race might not be extinguished. Up till now, the care of his precious charge had so occupied his mind that he had given never a thought to any of the matters with which other men are concerned. Therefore the message made him suddenly realise that there were yet other things for

him to do. Quickly he summoned all the knights of the temple and bade them read in turn the message that was written. Then as each saw, an exclamation or wonder rose from his lips, for they too had been so absorbed in their work that they had quite forgotten everything else.

The Princess Richoude

Nevertheless the injunction was not to be disobeyed, so one and all set about trying to find a woman worthy to marry so great a knight as their leader. Their choice at last fell upon Richoude, the daughter of a Spaniard, and an imposing embassy was therefore sent to the maiden. The princess had long known of the great deeds Titurel had done, and she at once signified her willingness to become his queen. Joyfully the messengers led her to their king, and the marriage was straightway celebrated.

For twenty years Richoude was a faithful wife, and when she died she left two children—a son, Frimoutel, and a daughter, Richoude—to comfort the sorrowing Titurel for her loss. Both these married in their turn, the children of Frimoutel being two sons, Amfortas and Trevrezent, and three daughters, Herzeloide, Josiane, and Repanse de Joie. As these children grew up Titurel gradually aged, till he became too old to bear the weight of his armour. Therefore he spent all his days in seclusion in the temple watching the mystic verse. Then, one day, as he knelt gazing upon the holy cup he saw letters of fire suddenly flash round the rim, and he read the message that he should name his son Frimoutel king in his stead. Joyfully the old man obeyed, for he felt that the defence of the Holy Grail was a heavier burden than he could now sustain.

Birth of Parzival

Yet although he renounced the throne in favour of his son, Titurel still lived on. In time he witnessed the marriage of Josiane, and bitterly mourned for her when she died in giving birth to a little daughter, called Sigune. This child, being thus left without a mother's care, was entrusted to Herzeloide, who brought her up with Tchionatulander, the orphaned son of a friend. Herzeloide married a prince named Gamuret, and became the happy mother of Parzival, who, however, soon lost his father in a terrible battle.

Fearful lest when her son grew up he should want to follow his father's example and make war against even the most formidable foes, Herzeloide carried him off into the forest of Soltane (which some authors locate in Brittany), and there brought him up in complete solitude and ignorance.

> "The child her falling tears bedew;
> No wife was ever found more true.
> She teemed with joy and uttered sighs;
> And tears midst laughter filled her eyes.
> Her heart delighted in his birth;
> In sorrow deep was drowned her mirth."
>
> *Parzival* (*Wolfram von Eschenbach*) (*Dippold's tr.*).

While Herzeloide was still living in Soltane her father, Frimoutel, becoming weary of the monotonous life on Montsalvatch, went out into the world. Here he died far away from home beneath the thrust of a knight. Amfortas, his son, who was now crowned in obedience to the command of the Holy Grail, proved equally restless, and went out also in search of adventures. Like his father, he too was wounded by a poisoned lance; yet instead of dying he lived to return to the Holy Grail. But since his wound had not been received in

defence of the holy vessel, it never healed, and caused him untold suffering.

The Sickness of Amfortas

The aged Titurel, seeing his suffering, was touched with pity. Ardently he prayed that his grandson might be released from the pain which embittered every moment of his life. Then at last he saw with joy one day glowing letters on the rim of the Holy Grail which told him that before very long a chosen hero would climb the mountain and ask about the cause of the suffering of Amfortas. At this question the evil spell would be broken, Amfortas healed, and the newcomer appointed king and guardian of the Holy Grail.

This promise of ultimate cure saved Amfortas from utter despair, and all the Templars lived in constant anticipation of the coming hero, and of the question which would put an end to the torment which they daily witnessed.

Parzival's Early Life

Parzival in the meantime was growing up in the forest, where he amused himself with a bow and arrow of his own manufacture. But when for the first time he killed a tiny bird, and saw it lying limp and helpless in his hand, he brought it tearfully to his mother and inquired what it meant. In answering him she said it was God Who gave life, and thus for the first time the child heard the name of the Creator. Eagerly he asked her what she meant, whereupon she replied: "Brighter is God than e'en the brightest day; yet once He took the form and face of man."

Thus brought up in complete ignorance, it is no wonder that when young Parzival chanced to encounter some knights in brilliant armour in the forest he fell

down and offered to worship them. Amused at t
lad's simplicity, the knights told him all about the g
world of chivalry beyond the forest, and advised h
to ride to Arthur's court, where, if worthy, he wou
receive the order of knighthood, and perchance
admitted to the Round Table. Bewildered with joy
hearing of all these marvellous things, and dancing wi
eagerness to set out immediately, Parzival returned
his mother to relate what he had seen, and to implore h
to give him a horse, that he might ride after the knight

> "'I saw four men, dear mother mine;
> Not brighter is the Lord divine.
> They spoke to me of chivalry;
> Through Arthur's power of royalty,
> In knightly honour well arrayed,
> I shall receive the acolade.'"
>
> *Parzival* (*Wolfram von Eschenbach*) (*Dippold's tr.*).

Herzeloide sighed when she heard his words, fo
she feared she would lose her son for ever. Yet sh
comforted herself with the thought of the long year
they had passed together in the forest. Nevertheless
so reluctant was she to agree to his departure that sh
prepared for him the motley garb of a fool and gav
him a very sorry nag to ride. In this way she selfishl
hoped that the ridicule he was certain to meet witl
would drive him back home.

> "The boy, silly yet brave indeed,
> Oft from his mother begged a steed.
> That in her heart she did lament;
> She thought: 'Him must I make content,
> Yet must the thing an evil be.'
> Thereafter further pondered she:
> 'The folk are prone to ridicule.
> My child the garments of a fool
> Shall on his shining body wear.
> If he be scoffed and beaten there,
> Perchance he'll come to me again.'"
>
> *Parzival* (*Wolfram von Eschenbach*) (*Lazard Taylor's tr.*).

As for Parzival, he was quite careless about the fashion of his clothes, provided only he might set out to explore the wide world. His heart was merry as he mounted his shabby steed, and he never once gave a thought to the curious figure he cut in his odd clothes. Meanwhile his mother heaped upon him all sorts of unpractical advice, thus hoping to make him appear more foolish than ever. Gratefully Parzival accepted it all; for as yet he knew nothing of the wisdom of the world. Then, jerking his reins, he started his horse, feeling happy in his heart at the thought of the journey he was to go, yet sad at leaving his home. As for Herzeloide, with a heavy heart she accompanied her son part way; then, straining him to her bosom, she kissed him good-bye and stood aside to watch him set off. Gaily he rode to the bend in the forest, then laughingly turned and waved his hand as the thick trees hid him from view. Little did he think he had looked his last upon his mother. Yet it was even so, for as Parzival disappeared from view in the forest paths the sad heart of Herzeloide broke and she breathed her last.

However, Parzival rode onward till he came to a meadow, in which some tents were pitched. Here he saw a beautiful lady asleep in one of the tents, and, dismounting, he wakened her with a kiss. For this had been one of his mother's injunctions—a kiss for every fair lady he met. He was therefore not a little surprised when the maiden flushed with anger and rebuked him for his rudeness. Therefore he tried to pacify her by telling her that he had often thus saluted his mother, after which she slipped the bracelet from her arm, and bestowed it upon him as a proof that her anger had vanished. Thus rewarded, Parzival rode

happily on his way, fearing no evil. But soon Lord Orilus, the lady's husband, hearing from her that a youth had come up and kissed her, flew into a towering rage, and rode speedily after the offender, hoping to overtake the impudent varlet and punish him.

Parzival in the interval had journeyed on through the forest till he came upon a maiden weeping over the body of her slain lover. In answer to his inquiries she told him that she was his cousin, Sigune, and that the dead man, Tchionatulander, had been killed in trying to fulfil a trifling request she had made. For she asked him to recover her pet dog, which had been stolen, and in the encounter which followed he had been slain. Full of astonishment at such cruelty, Parzival promised to avenge Tchionatulander as soon as possible, and to remember that the murderer was a Red Knight.

By-and-by he came to a river, and called to a boatman to ferry him over. Having nothing with which to reward the ferryman, Parzival gave him the bracelet he had received from the wife of Orilus. Then, hearing that Arthur was holding his court at Nantes, he proceeded thither without further delay.

On entering the city Parzival encountered the Red Knight, who mockingly asked him where he was going. Quite unabashed, Parzival quickly retorted: "To Arthur's court to ask him for your arms and steed!"

Parzival at Arthur's Court

As he rode further into the town the youth's motley garb attracted much attention, and the town boys began to jeer at him, until Iwanet, one of the king's squires, came to inquire the cause of the tumult. Hereupon he took Parzival under his protection, and conducted him to the great hall, where, if we are to believe some

accounts, Parzival, in his ignorance, presented himself on horseback. Quite bewildered at the sight of the gay company, the inexperienced youth wonderingly inquired why there were so many Arthurs. With a good-natured laugh Iwanet told him that the wearer of the crown was the sole king. Then Parzival, boldly stepping up to him, asked for the arms and steed of the Red Knight.

Amazed at the request, Arthur turned and gazed at the rash speaker before he replied that he might have them provided he could win them. This was enough for the impetuous stranger, who darted from the hall and sped after the Red Knight. Then, overtaking him, he loudly bade him surrender his weapons and his steed. The Red Knight, thus challenged, had no choice but to fight, even with so ludicrous an enemy. Yet so bravely did Parzival wield his spear, in spite of his inexperience, that soon he slew his opponent. Far too eager to waste a thought in pity for the dead knight stretched at his feet, Parzival hastened to secure the steed. Then as he stood there puzzling as to how to remove the fallen warrior's armour, Iwanet came by. Recognising the odd-looking youth, the knight rode up and inquired into the matter. Then when he saw the Red Knight dead, and learned that he had fallen by Parzival's hand, he quickly helped to unfasten the armour, and assisted the conqueror to don it. Yet because his mother had sent him forth in motley garb Parzival would not have this removed, but pulled on the armour over it. Thus equipped he rode forth determined to do brave deeds.

Far and wide rode Parzival, till he came to the castle of Gurnemanz, a noble knight, with whom he remained for some time. Here he received valuable instruction in all a knight should know, so that when he left this place about a year later he was an accomplished knight,

clad as beseemed his calling, and ready to fulfil all the duties which chivalry imposed upon its votaries.

Parzival and Conduiramour

As he was thus longing for a mission upon which to go he heard that Queen Conduiramour was hard pressed in her capital of Belripar by an unwelcome suitor. Pledged by his word to defend all ladies in distress, Parzival immediately set out to rescue this queen. Single-handed he fought with the besiegers one by one, till at last he had overcome them all. Then the citizens of Belripar, to show their gratitude to their deliverer, offered him the hand of Conduiramour, which offer he gladly accepted. But even in this new home Parzival could not forget his sorrowing mother, and he soon left his wife to go in search of Herzeloide and fill her heart with gladness. For he knew not as yet of the death of his gentle parent. Thus he set off, promising his wife, however, that he would return soon, and bring his mother to Belripar to share their joy. In the course of this journey homeward Parzival came to a lake, where a richly dressed fisherman, in answer to his inquiry, directed him to a neighbouring castle, where he might find shelter.

Parzival on Montsalvatch

Now although Parzival did not know it, he had come to the castle on Montsalvatch. At his call the drawbridge was immediately lowered, and richly clad servants bade him welcome with joyful mien. They told him that he had long been expected, and after arraying him in a jewelled garment, sent by Queen Repanse de Joie, they conducted him into a large, brilliantly illumined hall. There four hundred knights were seated on soft cushions, before small tables, each

laid for four guests. As they saw him enter a flash of joy passed over their grave and melancholy faces, as if they saw in him a deliverer. Wonderingly Parzival gazed about him, till he noticed that the chief seat in the hall was occupied by a man wrapped in furs, who was evidently suffering from some painful disease. Seeing the gaze of the knight, the king (for he it was) made a sign to Parzival to draw near, and gave him a seat beside him. After this he presented him with a sword of exquisite workmanship, and bade him welcome, saying he had long been expected. Amazed by all he heard and saw, Parzival thought he had come into a palace of marvels. Yet he did not ask any questions, for he feared to seem inquisitive, and thus make himself unworthy of being a knight. So he sat and pondered, while all the time his eager eyes were searching the hall to find some explanation of the mystery. Soon, however, his amazement was deepened still further. For suddenly the great doors opened, and a servant appeared bearing the bloody head of a lance, with which he silently walked around the hall, while all gazed upon it and groaned aloud.

The servant had scarcely vanished when the doors again opened, and a company of beautiful virgins came marching in, two by two. They bore an embroidered cushion, an ebony stand, and sundry other articles, which they laid before the fur-clad king. Last of all came the beautiful maiden Repanse de Joie, carrying a glowing vessel; and as she entered and laid it before the king Parzival heard the assembled knights whisper that this was the Holy Grail.

"Now after them advanced the Queen,
With countenance of so bright a sheen,
They all imagined day would dawn.
One saw the maiden was clothed on

With muslin stuffs of Araby.
On a green silk cushion she
The pearl of Paradise did bear.

* * *

The blameless Queen, proud, pure, and calm,
Before the host put down the Grail;
And Percival, so runs the tale,
To gaze upon her did not fail,
Who thither bore the Holy Grail."
Parzival (Wolfram von Eschenbach) (*Bayard Taylor's tr.*).

The Miracle of the Grail

Full of awe and excitement, Parzival watched while the maidens slowly retired and the knights and squires drew near. And now he saw the greatest of all miracles. For from the shining vessel streamed forth a supply of the daintiest dishes and richest wines, each guest being served with the viands which he liked best. Nevertheless all ate sadly and in silence, while as for Parzival he sat and wondered what it might all mean. Yet desiring to be ever courteous he remained mute. The meal ended, the sufferer rose from his seat, gazed reproachfully at the visitor, who by asking a question could have saved him such pain, and slowly left the room, uttering a deep sigh.

The Disappointment of Amfortas

With angry glances the knights also left the hall, and sad-faced servants conducted Parzival past a sleeping-room, where they showed him an old white-haired man who lay in a troubled sleep. At this Parzival wondered still more, but still he did not venture to ask who it might be. Next the servants took him to an apartment where he could spend the night. The tapestry hangings of this room were all embroidered with gorgeous pictures. Left to himself, the young knight wandered round the

room looking at these pictures one by one, till at last he stopped. He was looking at a scene which represented his host borne to the ground by a spear-thrust in his bleeding side. At the sight of this Parzival's curiosity burned within him, and he longed to ask for an explanation. But, scorning to ask a servant what he had not ventured to demand of the master, he went quietly to bed, thinking that he would try to secure an explanation on the morrow.

When he awoke he found himself alone. No servant answered his call. All the doors were fastened except those which led outside, where he found his steed awaiting him. When he had passed the drawbridge it rose up slowly behind him, and a voice called out from the tower: "Thou art accursed; for thou hadst been chosen to do a great work, which thou hast left undone!" Then, looking upward, Parzival saw a horrible face gazing after him with a fiendish grin, and making a gesture as of malediction.

Parzival and Sigune

Quite unable to understand the meaning of all this, the knight journeyed on sadly till he came to a lonely cell in the desert, where he found Sigune weeping over a shrine in which lay Tchionatulander's embalmed remains. She too received him with curses, and revealed to him that by one sympathetic question only he might have ended the prolonged pain of Amfortas, broken an evil spell, and won for himself a glorious crown.

Horrified now that he knew what harm he had done, Parzival rode away, feeling as if he were indeed accursed. His greatest wish was to return to the mysterious castle and atone for his remissness by asking the question which would release the king from further pain. But

alas! the castle had vanished; nor could the knight find the least trace of its whereabouts. Only after many adventures did Parzival at last arrive again within its portals and see again the suffering king.

Meanwhile at times the longing to give up the quest and return home to his young wife was almost unendurable. For he loved her dearly, and his thoughts were ever with her. Everything that he saw about him reminded him of her fairness, till even a drop of blood fallen on the snow brought to his thought the dazzling complexion of Conduiramour, and her sorrow when he departed.

> "'Conduiramour, thine image is
> Here in the snow now dyed with red
> And in the blood on snowy bed.
> Conduiramour, to them compare
> Thy forms of grace and beauty rare.'"
>
> *Parzival* (*Wolfram von Eschenbach*) (*Dippold's tr.*).

In spite of countless temptations, Parzival remained true to his wife as he rode from place to place constantly seeking the Holy Grail, while his oft-reiterated questions concerning it caused him to be considered a madman or a fool by all he met.

In the course of his journeys he encountered a lady in chains, led by a knight who seemed to take pleasure in torturing her. Taught by Gurnemanz to rescue all ladies in distress, Parzival challenged and defeated this knight. Then only did he discover that it was Sir Orilus, who had led his wife about in chains to punish her for accepting a kiss from a strange youth. Aghast at the thought of the result of his carelessness, Parzival hastened to give an explanation of the whole affair, upon which the defeated knight was appeased, and readily promised to treat his wife with all kindness in future.

The Renown of Parzival

Meanwhile, as Parzival had ordered all the knights whom he had defeated to journey immediately to Arthur's court and tender him their services, the king had in this way won many brave warriors. Delighted by these constant arrivals, and pleased at the repeated accounts of Parzival's valour, he became very anxious to see him once more.

To gratify this wish several knights were sent in search of the wanderer, and when they finally found him they bade him come to court. Yielding to their entreaties, Parzival obeyed, and was knighted by Arthur's own hand, after which it is said by some that he occupied the "Siege Perilous" at the Round Table. Other versions state, however, that just as he was about to take this seat the witch Kundrie, a messenger of the Holy Grail, appeared in the hall. She vehemently denounced the knight, and related how sorely he had failed in his duty. Then, cursing him, as the gatekeeper had done, for his lack of sympathy, she fled from the hall. Recalled to a sense of his duty by her words, Parzival immediately left the hall to renew the quest, which had already lasted for many months. In this he was closely followed by Gawain, one of Arthur's knights, who greatly admired Parzival, and judged that his failure to release King Amfortas from pain had been caused only by ignorance.

Gawain's Quest

Four years now elapsed—four years of penance and suffering for Parzival, and of brilliant fighting and thrilling adventures for Gawain. Thus the two knights followed hard in the footsteps of each other; yet never did Gawain overtake his friend, though he met many

whom Parzival had helped or defeated. At last Gawain decided that his quest would end sooner if he too sought the Holy Grail, the goal of all his friend's hopes, and therefore he bent his energies towards discovering the holy vessel.

Pushing on, therefore, to Montsalvatch, Gawain fell in with a beautiful woman, to whom he made a declaration of love. In reply she merely answered that those who loved her must serve her, and bade him fetch her palfrey from a neighbouring garden. Hastening to do so, Gawain met the gardener, who told him that this lady was the Duchess Orgueilleuse, whose beauty had fired many a knight. He added that many had died for her sake; and that to win her favour Amfortas, King of the Holy Grail, had braved the poisoned spear which wounded him fatally. Nevertheless, undeterred by this warning, Gawain brought out the lady's palfrey, helped her to mount, and followed her submissively through many lands. Everywhere they went the proud lady stirred up some quarrel, after which she always called upon Gawain to fight the enemies whom she had thus wantonly made. After much wandering Gawain and his fair guide reached the top of a hill, whence they could look across a valley to a gigantic castle, perched on a rock, near which was a pine-tree. Pointing this out, the Lady Orgueilleuse now informed Gawain that the castle belonged to her mortal enemy, Gramoflaus. She bade him bring her a twig of the tree, and conquer the owner of the castle, who would challenge him as soon as he touched it. As a reward she promised that if he obeyed her exactly she would be his faithful wife.

Klingsor's Castle

Then Gawain, emboldened by this promise, dashed down into the valley, swam across the moat, plucked a

branch from the tree, and accepted the challenge which Gramoflaus promptly offered. The meeting was appointed to take place eight days later, in front of the castle of King Klingsor, whither Gawain immediately proceeded with the Lady Orgueilleuse. On the way she told him that this castle, which faced her father's, was occupied by a magician, who kept many noble ladies in close confinement, and had even cruelly laden them with heavy chains.

On hearing this Gawain at once vowed that he would punish the magician also. Then, having seen Orgueilleuse safely enter her father's palace, he crossed the river and rode toward Klingsor's castle. It was dusk as he rode, and therefore he noticed the more plainly the brilliant lights which lit up each of the windows of the palace in front of him. Startled, he saw outlined against the radiance pale, wan faces, which looked out into the darkness with wide, pathetic eyes, as if they were seeking a deliverer who never came. Stirred to fury at the thought of these hapless ladies, Gawain hastened on the more, till at last he came within reach of the palace. Then as he strode within the hall a great fear fell on his heart, for though he had been readily admitted, yet within he found both hall and court were deserted. From room to room he wandered, yet he met no one. Then, weary of his vain search, he prepared at last to occupy a comfortable couch in one of the chambers. To his utter amazement, however, the bed retreated as he advanced, until, impatient at this trickery, he sprang boldly upon it. A moment later a rain of sharp spears and daggers fell upon his couch, but they did him no harm, for he had not removed his heavy armour. Then when the rain of weapons was over a gigantic peasant armed with a huge club stalked into the room, closely followed by a fierce lion. Expecting

to find the knight dead, the peasant advanced boldly. But when he discovered his enemy was alive and unhurt he beat a hasty retreat, leaving the lion to attack him alone.

A fierce encounter now followed between the knight and the beast; yet in spite of its size and fury Gawain defended himself so bravely that finally he slew the monster, which was Klingsor in disguise. Then as the lion expired the spell was broken, the captives were released, and the exhausted Gawain was tenderly cared for by his mother and sister Itonie, who were among those whom his courage had set free. The news of this victory was immediately sent to Arthur, who now came to witness the battle between Gawain and a champion who was to appear for Gramoflaus.

Worn out by the terrible struggle he had gone through so recently, Gawain's strength and courage were about to give way before the stranger's terrible onslaught, when Itonie implored the latter to spare Gawain, since his name and valour were so well known. At the sound of this word the knight sheathed his sword, and, raising his vizor, revealed the sad but beautiful countenance of Parzival.

The joy of reunion over, Parzival remained there long enough to witness the marriages of Gawain and Orgueilleuse, and of Itonie and Gramoflaus, and to be solemnly admitted to the Round Table. Yet in the midst of the general gladness he himself remained sad and gloomy, for he thought ever of Amfortas and his grievous wound. As soon as possible, therefore, Parzival again departed, humbly praying that he might at last find the Holy Grail, and right the wrong he had unconsciously done. For the thought of the injury which he had occasioned Amfortas weighed heavily on the heart of the noble knight.

Parzival and the Hermit

Some months later, exhausted by constant journeys, Parzival painfully dragged himself to a hermit's hut. There he learned that the lonely penitent was Trevrezent, the brother of Amfortas, who, having also preferred worldly pleasures to the service of the Holy Grail, had accompanied him on his fatal excursion. Then when Trevrezent had seen his brother so sorely wounded he repented of his sins, and, retiring into the woods, spent his days and nights in penance and prayer. Ignorant of the identity of his visitor, Trevrezent poured out to Parzival the story of the expected stranger, whose question would break the evil spell, and related how grievously he and all the Templars had been disappointed when such a man had actually come and gone, but without fulfilling their hopes. Parzival then penitently confessed that it was he who had thus disappointed them, related his sorrow and ceaseless quest, and told the story of his early youth and adventures. No sooner had Trevrezent heard the name of his guest than he exclaimed that they must be uncle and nephew, since the name of his sister had been Herzeloide. Eagerly Parzival asked for news of his mother, only to hear of her death. Bitter sorrow surged in his heart at the words, and his face, always sad, grew yet sadder. Seeing this, Trevrezent tried to comfort the knight, and, laying his hands in blessing upon him, bade him go on in hope in his search for the Holy Grail. Grasping the hermit by the hand, Parzival bade him farewell; then, with his heart somewhat lightened, he went on his way, till he encountered a knight, who, laying lance in rest, challenged him to fight. In one of the pauses of the battle he learned that his brave opponent was his step-brother, Fierefiss. The two joyfully embraced and

flung their weapons aside, while Fierefiss declared his intention of following Parzival on his almost endless quest. In this way they came to a mountain, of a grim and frowning aspect. Painfully they climbed its steep sides, till at last, after much exertion, they found themselves in front of a castle, which seemed strangely familiar to Parzival.

Even as he gazed around him the doors opened, and willing squires waited upon both brothers, and led them into the great hall, where the pageant already described was repeated. Then when Queen Repanse de Joie entered bearing the Holy Grail Parzival, mindful of his former failure to do the right thing, humbly prayed aloud for Divine guidance to bring about the promised redemption. An angel voice now seemed to answer, "Ask!" Then Parzival bent kindly over the wounded king, and gently inquired what ailed him. At those words the spell was broken, and a long cry of joy arose as Amfortas, strong and well, sprang to his feet.

Amid a buzz of excitement and rejoicing a very aged man, who was none other than Parzival's great-grandfather, Titurel, drew near, bearing the crown, which he placed on the head of the knight as he hailed him as guardian and defender of the Holy Grail. Immediately the cry was taken up by all present, and shouted again and again till the castle itself shook with the sound. Then when the cries of the knights had died away there was heard a chorus of angelic voices singing sweetly:

"'Hail to thee, Percival, King of the Grail!
Seemingly lost for ever,
Now thou art blessed for ever.
Hail to thee, Percival, King of the Grail!'"
Parzival (*Wolfram von Eschenbach*) (*McDowall's tr.*).

But yet another happiness was in store for Parzival, for now the doors opened wide and admitted Conduiramour and her twin sons, summoned thither by the power of the Holy Grail, that Parzival's happiness might be complete. Then throughout the hall there stole a flood of light from the holy vessel, which bathed all present with its refulgent glow. Fierefiss alone remained untouched by the marvellous light, since it never rested on any save those of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, so impressed was he by all that he saw that he professed his faith in the creed of the knights and begged to be baptized.

Full of delight, the others hastened to have the ceremony performed, whereupon Fierefiss too was illumined with the glow from the sacred cup. His connection with the Templars was further strengthened by his marriage with Repanse de Joie, and they thus became the parents of a son named John, who was afterwards a noted warrior, and the founder of the historic order of the Knights Templars.

Hereupon Titurel, having lived to see the recovery of his son, called all his descendants round him and blessed them. He told them, too, that Sigune was happy, for she had joined her lover's spirit in the heavenly abode. Then, passing out of the great hall, the aged knight was never seen again. As for the witch Kundrie, it is said she died of joy on seeing the recovery of Amfortas.

Another version of the legend of the Holy Grail relates that Parzival, having cured his uncle, went to Arthur's court. There he remained until Amfortas died, when he was called back to Montsalvatch to inherit his possessions, among which was the Holy Grail. Arthur and all the knights of the Round Table were present at his coronation, and paid him a yearly visit. When he died, "the Sangreal, the sacred lance, and the silver trencher or paten which covered the

Grail, were carried up to the holy heavens in presence of the attendants, and since that time have never anywhere been seen on earth."

Other versions relate that Arthur and his knights sought the Holy Grail in vain, for their hearts were not pure enough to behold it. Still others declare that the sacred vessel was conveyed to the Far East, and committed to the care of Prester John.

Lohengrin

Yet another legend, the legend of Lohengrin, which is connected with the Holy Grail, tells the following story.

After the happy reunion of Parzival and Conduiramour on Montsalvatch, they dwelt with much happiness in the castle of the Holy Grail. Then when their sons had grown to man's estate Kardeiss, the elder, became ruler of his mother's kingdom of Belripar, while Lohengrin, the younger, remained in the service of the Holy Grail. The office of bearing the sacred cup had by this time passed from the hands of Repanse de Joie, who had married Fierefiss. Instead, it was borne by Aribadale, daughter of Parzival and his queen. The holy vessel was guarded as carefully as before, and the knights watched with eager vigilance for the fiery messages that enwreathed its rim. Moreover, when danger threatened a silver bell could always be heard pealing, as a sign to the knights to be on their guard.

One day the sound of the silvery bell was heard pealing ever louder and louder, till the knights came in haste to the hall. There they read on the vase that Lohengrin had been chosen to defend the rights of an innocent person, and would be conveyed to his destination by a swan. Never had one of the knights of the Grail disputed any of its commands; therefore the

young man immediately donned the armour of silver which Amfortas had worn, and, bidding farewell to his mother and sister, he left the temple. Parzival, his father, then accompanied him to the foot of the mountain, where they saw a snowy swan swimming gracefully over the smooth waters of the lake, drawing after her a little boat. Bidding his father farewell, Lohengrin received from him a horn, which he was told to sound thrice on arriving at his destination, and an equal number of times when he wished to return to Montsalvatch. Parzival also reminded him that a servant of the Grail must reveal neither his name nor his origin unless asked to do so, and that, having once made himself known, he was bound to return without delay to the holy mountain.

Thus reminded of the custom of all the Templars, Lohengrin sprang into the boat, and was rapidly borne away, to the sound of mysterious music.

Else of Brabant

While Lohengrin was thus being swiftly wafted over the waters, Else, the beautiful Duchess of Brabant, was spending her days in tears. She was an orphan, and as she possessed great wealth and extensive lands many were anxious to secure her hand. Among these suitors her guardian, Frederick of Telramund, was the most importunate. Angry at her repeated refusals, and feeling sure in his heart that she would never consent to marry him, he resolved to obtain her inheritance in a different way.

Meanwhile, one day while Else was wandering alone in the forest she rested for a moment under a tree, where she dreamed that a radiant knight came to greet her, and offered her a little bell, saying that she need but ring it whenever she required a champion. The

maiden awoke, and as she opened her eyes a falcon came fluttering gently down from the sky and perched upon her shoulder. Seeing that he wore a tiny bell like the one she had noticed in her dream, Else unfastened it. As if some special purpose had been accomplished, the falcon at once flew away.

Full of wonder, Else looked at the tiny bell in her hand, and then hung it on her rosary. Feeling happier than she had done for a long time, she returned home. Yet if she had known it a terrible misfortune was about to fall upon her. For before many days had passed she had been thrown into prison by Frederick of Telramund, who made several foul charges against her. Exactly what these were perhaps no one knows. Yet some say he charged her with the murder of her brother, and others with admitting the attentions of a man unworthy of her rank. Henry the Fowler, Emperor of Germany, hearing of these accusations, came to Cleves, where, as the witnesses could not agree, he ordered that the matter should be settled by a judicial duel.

Else and the Silver Bell

This decision was received with exultation by Frederick of Telramund, and, proudly confident in his strength, he challenged any man to prove him mistaken at the point of the sword. But no champion appeared to fight for the unhappy Else, who, kneeling in her cell, beat her breast with her rosary until the little silver bell attached to it rang loudly, while she fervently prayed, "O Lord, send me a champion." The faint tinkling of the bell floated out of the window, and was wafted away to Montsalvatch. As it travelled it grew louder and louder, so that this was the very sound that had called the knights into the temple, where Lohengrin received his orders from the Holy Grail.

Days went by, and at last the morning appointed for the duel dawned. Then just as the heralds were sounding the last call for Else's champion to appear, the swan boat glided up the Rhine, and Lohengrin sprang into the lists, after thrice blowing his magic horn.

Else Rescued by Lohengrin

Loud and long rang the cheers of the onlookers as they saw the brave knight prepare for combat. For the people loved Else the Duchess, and were sorely grieved at the accusations against her.

All craned eagerly forward as the two champions closed in battle. Before long the issue was decided and Frederick of Telramund lay in the dust. Here he confessed his guilt, amid the plaudits of the people, who hailed the Swan Knight as victor. Then Else, touched by his prompt response to her appeal, and won by his passionate wooing, consented to become his wife, though she did not so much as know his name. Yet this affected her happiness but little when their nuptials were celebrated at Antwerp, in the presence of the emperor, who had gone with them to witness their marriage.

Meanwhile Lohengrin had cautioned Else that she must never ask his name. For a time she carefully obeyed his order, till there came a day when, harassed by the envious whispers of people, the fatal question sprang from her lips. Regretfully Lohengrin led her into the great hall, where, in the presence of the assembled knights, he told her that he was Lohengrin, son of Parzival, the guardian of the Holy Grail. Then, embracing her tenderly, he told her that "love cannot live without faith," and that he must now leave her and return to the holy mountain. When he had thrice

blown his magic horn the sound of faint music again heralded the approach of the swan; Lohengrin sprang into the boat, and soon vanished, leaving Else alone.

Some versions of the story relate that she did not long survive his departure, but that her released spirit followed him to Montsalvatch, where they dwelt happily for ever. Other accounts, however, aver that when Lohengrin vanished Else's brother returned to champion her cause and prevent her from being molested ever again.

CHAPTER XII: MERLIN

The Origin of the Legends

AS Professor Saintsbury has so ably expressed it, "The origin of the legends of King Arthur, of the Round Table, of the Holy Grail, and of all the adventures and traditions connected with these centres, is one of the most intricate questions in the history of mediæval literature." Owing to the loss of many ancient manuscripts, the real origin of all these tales may never be discovered; and so diversified is the opinion of authorities that whether the legends owe their birth to Celtic, Breton, or Welsh poetry we may never know. These tales, apparently almost unknown before the twelfth century, soon became so popular that in the course of the next two hundred years they had given birth to more than a dozen poems and prose romances, whence Malory drew the materials for his version of the story of King Arthur. Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walter Map, Chrestien de Troyes, Robert de Borron, Gottfried von Strassburg, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Hartmann von Aue, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, and Wagner have all written on these legends in turn, and to these writers we owe the most noted versions of the tales forming the Arthurian cycle. They include, besides the story of Arthur himself, an account of Merlin, of Lancelot, of Parzival, of the love of Tristan and Iseult, and of the quest of the Holy Grail.

The majority of these works were written in French, which was the court language of England in the mediæval ages; but the story was "Englished" by Malory in the fourteenth century. In every European language there are versions of these stories, which interested all hearers alike, and by exerting a gentle influence upon

the rude customs of the age "communicated a romantic spirit to literature" and taught all men courtesy.

The Real Merlin

The first of these romances is that of Merlin the enchanter, written in old French, and ascribed to Robert de Borron. The following is a modified version of the story, supplemented from other sources. The real Merlin is supposed to have been a bard of the fifth century, who served first the British chief Ambrosius Aurelianus, and then King Arthur. The Merlin of this romance lost his reason after the battle of Solway Firth, broke his sword, and retired into the forest, where he was soon after found dead.

A more exciting and interesting career, however, marks the mythical figure, so familiar in all Arthurian stories. This Merlin was of fairy birth, and had magical powers from the first. Now it happened that King Constans, who drove Hengist from England, was the father of three sons—Constantine, Uther, and Pendragon. When dying this king left the throne to his eldest son, Constantine, who chose Vortigern as his Prime Minister. Shortly after Constantine's accession, Hengist again invaded England, and Constantine, deserted by his minister, was treacherously slain. As a reward for his defection at this critical moment Vortigern was offered the throne, which he accepted. In spite of the fact that the two other sons of Constans were still in existence, the usurping Vortigern still hoped to retain the crown.

To defend himself against any army which might try to deprive him of his sovereignty, Vortigern resolved to build a great fortress on the Salisbury plains. But although the masons worked diligently by day and built walls wide and thick, they always found them overturned in the morning. The astrologers, when consulted in reference to this strange occurrence, declared that the walls would not stand until the ground had been watered with the blood of a child who could claim no human father.

Meanwhile Satan, angry at the increasing number of Christian converts, was planning how he could contrive a counter-move. Therefore with hideous cunning he resolved to make a demon child spring from a human virgin. Thus he prepared to carry out his wicked plot by means of a beautiful and pious maiden. Nevertheless, as the maiden went daily to confess her every deed and thought to a holy man, Blaise, he soon discovered the intention of the demons, and resolved to frustrate it.

Birth of the Mythical Merlin

By his advice the girl was locked up in a tower, where she gave birth to her son. Blaise, the priest, more watchful than the demons, no sooner heard of the child's birth than he hastened to baptize him, giving him the name of Merlin. The holy rite annulled the evil purpose of Satan, but, owing to his uncanny origin, the child was gifted with all manner of strange powers, and from the first was marked as a fairy child.

> "To him
> Great light from God gave sight of all things dim,
> And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say
> What root should bear what fruit of night or day;
> And sovereign speech and counsel above man:
> Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,
> And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep."
>
> *Tristram of Lyonesse* (*Swinburne*).

Furious at the frustration of their plot, the demons fled back to Hell, while the babe in the tower lay and

smiled sweetly at his gentle mother. Seeing him smile, she caught him to her heart and covered him with kisses as she murmured that soon, very soon, she must leave her dear little son, for she would be put to death. Then as she rocked herself to and fro in her anguish she was startled by hearing her baby son speak and declare that she should not die, for he would prove her innocent of all crime. Frightened at the sound of his miraculous speech, his mother said nothing; but she hugged him the closer to her.

Merlin as a Prophet

Yet five days later, when the trial took place, another and more wonderful miracle happened, for Merlin, who was but a few days old, sat up boldly in his mother's lap and spoke so forcibly to the judges that he soon secured her acquittal. Once when he was five years old, while playing in the street, he saw the messengers of Vortigern. Warned by his prophetic instinct that they were seeking him, he ran to meet them, and offered to accompany them to the king. On the way thither he saw a youth buying shoes, at which sight he laughed aloud. When questioned concerning the cause of his mirth he predicted that the youth would die within a few hours.

> "Then said Merlin, 'See ye nought
> That young man, that hath shoon bought,
> And strong leather to do hem clout [patch],
> And grease to smear hem all about?
> He weeneth to live hem to wear:
> But, by my soul, I dare well swear,
> His wretched life he shall for-let [lose],
> Ere he come to his own gate.'"
>
> *Merlin* (*Ellis*).

The Fight of the Dragons

A few more predictions of an equally uncanny and unpleasant nature firmly established his reputation as a

prophet even before he reached court. There he boldly told the king that the astrologers, wishing to destroy the demon's offspring, since he was wiser than they, had demanded his blood under pretext that the walls of Salisbury would stand were it only shed. When asked why the walls continually fell during the night, Merlin attributed it to the nightly conflict of two dragons, one white and one red, which lay concealed underground. In obedience to his instructions, search was made for these monsters. They were soon discovered, and the whole court crowded to watch the fearful struggle which followed between the two horrible creatures. Up and down went the dragons, twisting now this way and now that as they trailed their hideous bodies over the ground. Fire broke from their mouths and flashed in and out as they darted at each other with venomous fury, till at last the huge white dragon slew the red one.

"With long tailis, fele [many] fold,
And found right as Merlin told.
That one dragon was red as fire,
With eyen bright, as basin clear;
His tail was great and nothing small;
His body was a rood withal.
His shaft may no man tell;
He looked as a fiend from hell.
The white dragon lay him by,
Stern of look, and grisly.
His mouth and throat yawned wide;
The fire brast [burst] out on ilka [each] side.
His tail was ragged as a fiend,
And, upon his tail's end,
There was y-shaped a grisly head,
To fight with the dragon red."

Merlin (*Ellis*).

Suddenly, as if aware of the presence of foes, the victorious dragon glared fearfully round and then dragged

its huge length quickly out of sight, so that in this way the king was rid of both the pests. The work of the castle now proceeded without further hindrance. Yet Vortigern was very uneasy, because Merlin had not only said that the struggle of the red and the white dragons represented his coming conflict with Constans' sons, but he had added that he would suffer defeat. This prophecy was soon fulfilled. Uther and his brother Pendragon landed in Britain with the army they had assembled, and Vortigern was burned in the castle he had just completed.

Shortly after this victory there arose a war between the Britons, under Uther and Pendragon, and the Saxons, under Hengist. Merlin, who had by this time become the Chancellor and chief adviser of the British kings, predicted that they would win the victory, but that one of them would be slain. This prediction was speedily verified, and Uther, adding the name Pendragon to his own, remained sole king. Anxious to show every respect to the memory of his brother, he implored Merlin to erect a suitable monument to his memory. Therefore the enchanter conveyed great stones from Ireland to England in the course of a single night, and set them up at Stonehenge, where they can still be seen.

"How Merlin by his skill, and magic's wondrous might,
From Ireland hither brought the Stonendge in a night."

Polyolbion (*Drayton*).

Merlin and the Round Table

From here Merlin went next to Carduel, or Carlisle, where he again showed his favour for Uther Pendragon by building him a splendid castle, in which he established a Round Table. In this he followed the example of Joseph of Arimathea, who had once maintained a similar

following. Round this board were places for a large number of knights, together with a special seat reserved for the Holy Grail, which had at this time vanished from Britain because of the sinfulness of the people. Nevertheless the knights still hoped to have it restored among them when they had become sufficiently pure.

"This table gan [began] Uther the wight;
Ac [but] it to ende had he no might.
For, theygh [though] alle the kinges under our lord
Hadde y-sitten [sat] at that bord,
Knight by knight, ich you telle,
The table might nought fulfille,
Till they were born that should do all
Fulfill the merraile of the Greal."

Merlin (*Ellis*).

When the Round Table was at last ready a great festival was announced, and all the knights came to Carduel, accompanied by their wives. Of these latter the fairest was Yguerne, wife of Gorlois, Lord of Tintagel, in Cornwall, and with her Uther fell desperately in love.

"This fest was noble ynow, and nobliche y-do [done];
For mony was the faire ledy, that y-come was thereto.
Yguerne, Gorloys wyf, was fairest of echon [each one],
That was contasse of Cornewail, for so fair was there non."

Robert of Gloucester.

Now Yguerne had already three or four daughters, who afterwards became famous in the Arthurian legends as mothers of illustrious knights, among whom were Gawain, Gravain, and Ywain. By-and-by one of the king's councillors, Ulfin, revealed the king's passion to Yguerne, upon which she told the news to her husband. Furious with indignation at the insult offered him, Gorlois at once left the court, and locked his wife up in the impregnable fortress of Tintagel; then, gathering together an army, he began to fight against Uther Pendragon.

Meanwhile Merlin, who was always eager to help Uther, changed him into the form of Gorlois, and himself and Ulfin into those of the squires of the Duke of Cornwall. This was on the eve of the day of battle, when Gorlois himself was busy with his troops, not suspecting any trickery. Immediately the three, confident in their disguise, made their way to Tintagel, where Yguerne threw the gates open at their call and received Uther as her husband, without ever suspecting the deception practised upon her.

Birth of Arthur

Nor did she ever discover the fraud. For on the morrow the battle took place, and Gorlois was slain. Then Uther, being free to marry Yguerne, speedily persuaded her to yield to his passion, so that she became his wife. By-and-by a son was born, whom they called Arthur, but who was commonly supposed to be the posthumous child of Gorlois. When the babe was only a few days old Uther handed the boy over to Merlin to be brought up. Then the wizard chose out Sir Hector to be the boy's guardian, and thus Arthur grew up in the company of little Sir Kay, the son of Sir Hector, and none suspected the truth, that he was really of royal birth.

Yet the lineage of the boy might be seen in his face, for by fifteen he was so fair to look upon, so brave in all warlike feats, and so accomplished in all the ways of knighthood, that none could see him without loving him.

"He was fair, and well agré [agreeable],
And was a thild [child] of gret noblay.
He was curteys, faire and gent,
And wight [brave], and hardi, veramen [truly].
Curteyslich [courteously] and fair he spac [spake].
With him was none evil lack [fault]."

Merlin (*Ellis.*)

By-and-by Uther died, leaving no heir, for no one counted Arthur as his son, nor did Arthur think that any but Gorlois had been his father. Merlin alone knew of the secret; but for the time he kept silence, saying that the true king would be at last revealed by a miracle.

When he judged that a fitting time had arrived he made known the real facts about Arthur's birth, and hailed him as king in Uther's stead. His example was quickly followed by the knights, who would have chosen no one more readily than Arthur, for he was beloved by them all. Thus Arthur ascended the throne and ruled over his people. In this he was greatly helped by Merlin, who made himself his chief adviser, and by his wisdom guided him in many a difficult place. Through his help Arthur was always successful in war, so that he conquered twelve kings one after the other, and thus covered himself with great glory.

Now as Merlin could assume any shape he pleased Arthur often used him as a messenger. In this way one of the romances relates that he once went in the guise of a stag to Rome to bear a challenge from the king to meet in single combat Julius Cæsar—not the great conqueror of Gaul, but the mythical father of Oberon. He was also renowned for the good advice which he gave, not only to Vortigern and Uther Pendragon, but also to Arthur, each of whom placed implicit faith in his gift of divination. Moreover, he made numerous predictions concerning the glorious future of England, all of which, if we are to believe tradition, have been strictly fulfilled.

"O goodly River! near unto thy sacred spring
Prophetic Merlin sate, when to the British King
The changes long to come, auspiciously he told."

Polyolbion (*Drayton*).

Merlin as a Builder

But apart from his great wisdom in prophecy, Merlin was also renowned as a builder and architect. Besides the construction of Stonehenge, and of the castle for Uther Pendragon, he is said to have built Arthur's beautiful palace at Camelot, together with not a few magic fountains, which are mentioned in other mediæval romances. One of these is referred to by Spenser in the "Faerie Queene," and another by Ariosto in his "Orlando Furioso."

"This Spring was one of those four fountains rare,
Of those in France produced by Merlin's sleight,
Encompassed round about with marble fair,
Shining and polished, and than milk more white.
There in the stones choice figures chiselled were,
By that magician's god-like labour dight;
Some voice was wanting, these you might have thought
Were living, and with nerve and spirit fraught."

Orlando Furioso (*Ariosto*) (*Rose's tr.*).

Many are the stories told about the different objects which Merlin made and invested with magic properties. Amongst these one of the most famous was a cup which never failed to reveal the true character of the drinker. For at the touch of unclean lips the liquid would overflow, no matter how small the drop which the vessel contained. Another of Merlin's triumphs was the manufacture of Arthur's armour, which nothing could pierce, while the magic mirror, in which was always reflected whatever the gazer wished to see, was often the subject of song.

"It Merlin was, which whylome did excel
All living wightes in might of magicke spell:
Both shield, and sword, and armour all he wrought
For this young Prince, when first to armes he fell."

Faerie Queene (*Spenser*).

Yet though Merlin knew so much and was so much wiser than other people, he was often beguiled by the enticements of his fair mistress, Vivian, the Lady of the Lake. Full of longing to learn all Merlin's secrets, Vivian followed him wherever he went, and made countless efforts to learn his arts and to discover his magic spells. Then, in order to inveigle the aged Merlin into telling her all she wished to know, Vivian pretended great devotion, so that she never left his side, but followed him coaxingly till "Merlin locked his hand in hers" and told her all that her heart desired.

Once, indeed, she even followed him as far as the fairy-haunted forest of Broceliande, in Brittany, where she finally beguiled him into revealing a magic spell by which a human being could be enclosed in a hawthorn tree, in which he would have to dwell for ever.

"And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
E'en to the wild woods of Broceliande.
For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
The which if any wrought on any one
With woven paces and with waving arms,
The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
From which was no escape for evermore;
And none could find that man for evermore,
Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm
Coming and going; and he lay as dead
And lost to life and use and name and fame."

Merlin and Vivien (*Tennyson*).

Then, having won from the wizard this last great secret, Vivian began to grow weary of her aged lover. Therefore she spitefully set about finding some means of ridding herself of him. The idea of the hawthorn bush flashed into her mind, and at once she resolved to make

use of Merlin's own art against himself. Coaxingly she lured him into the depths of a gloomy forest, her mind fixed on her unscrupulous purpose. Then, once in the depths of the trees, she uttered the magic words and imprisoned him in a thorn bush, whence, if the tales of the Breton peasants can be believed, his voice can still be heard issuing from time to time.

"They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,
And from her brown-lock'd head the wimple throws,
And takes it in her hand, and waves it over
The blossom'd thorn tree and her sleeping lover.
Nine times she waved the fluttering wimple round,
And made a little plot of magic ground.
And in that daisied circle, as men say,
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment day;
But she herself whither she will can rove—
For she was passing weary of his love."

Tristram and Iseult (*Matthew Arnold*).

Then, abandoning the imprisoned magician, Vivian turned lightly homewards.

This is one version of the story, but there is another which relates how Merlin, having grown very old indeed, once sat down on the "Siege Perilous," forgetting that none but a sinless man could occupy it with impunity. Scarcely had he seated himself, however, when he was immediately swallowed up by the earth, which yawned wide beneath his feet. Nor was he ever again seen upon earth.

Yet a third version says that Vivian, through love, imprisoned Merlin in an underground palace, where she alone could visit him. There he dwells, unchanged by the flight of time, daily increasing the store of knowledge by which he won such renown.

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CHAPTER XIII: THE ROUND TABLE

Questions of Fact

THE cold hand of history, which is for ever robbing us of some of our oldest and best cherished stories, points rigidly to the fact that no such person as King Arthur ever presided over a Round Table. Be this as it may, romance still hugs her heroes to her heart as possessions to be not willingly let die. Though Arthur may never have lived in real fact, yet his personality has become so vitally fixed in the mind of the people that he may at least be conceded a virtual existence as the figure who embodies the characteristics of the numerous smaller champions who may perhaps claim historic support. And, indeed, "the question of the actual existence and acts of Arthur has very little to do with the question of the origin of the Arthurian cycle."

So many places in Wales, Scotland, and England show traces of Arthurian influence that it is safe to say that, did he exist, Arthur was a Briton. But his fame spread far beyond the borders of his small kingdom, till at last all Europe was saturated with stories concerning his prowess, the popularity of which is evidenced by the fact that they were among the first works printed, and were thus brought into general circulation.

Upon the birth of Arthur, King Uther Pendragon, as we have already seen, entrusted his new-born son to the care of the enchanter Merlin, who carried him to the castle of Sir Hector, or Anton, where the young prince was brought up as a child of the house.

"Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;
And no man knew."

The Coming of Arthur (*Tennyson*).

The Magic Sword

Two years later King Uther Pendragon died, and the noblemen, not knowing whom to choose as his successor, consulted Merlin, promising to abide by his decision. By his advice, therefore, they all assembled in St. Stephen's Church, in London, on Christmas Day, prepared to hear what the wizard had to relate. Then when mass was over they were called to look at a large stone which had mysteriously appeared in the churchyard. This stone was surmounted by a ponderous anvil, in which the blade of a sword was deeply sunk. Drawing near to examine the wonder, they read an inscription upon the jewelled hilt, to the effect that none but the man who could draw out the sword should dare to take possession of the throne. Delighted at this solution of their difficulty, every knight in turn tried to wrench free the sword, but none succeeded.

Full of disappointment, they turned home, the question of the throne still unsettled. Meanwhile several years passed by ere Sir Hector came to London with his son, Sir Kay, and his foster-son, young Arthur. Sir Kay, who for the first time in his life was to take part in a tournament, was greatly chagrined on arriving at the lists to discover that he had forgotten his sword; so Arthur volunteered to ride back and get it. He found the house closed; yet, being determined to secure a sword for his foster-brother, he strode hastily into the churchyard, and easily drew from the anvil the weapon he had heard so much about, and which all had vainly tried to secure.

Arthur Made King

Then as he carelessly handed the famous sword to Sir Kay, Sir Hector saw it. Amazed at the sight, he

eagerly inquired how Arthur had secured it. "Even from the anvil in the churchyard," replied Arthur; "for, being in haste to secure a weapon, I drew this forth." Scarcely able to credit the fact, Sir Hector ran to tell his fellow knights what had happened. Then together they went with Arthur to the churchyard, and watched him first re-insert the weapon in the anvil and then easily draw it forth. Not till then would they be satisfied that he was really their chosen king. But seeing him accomplish both these feats they at once hailed him as their sovereign, and shouted with joy till the old churchyard rang with the noise.

But no sooner was Arthur on the throne than envious tongues began to be busy about the tale of his birth. Some declared that did Merlin choose he could tell them many things about the young king; for they asserted he was not, as he now declared, the son of Uther Pendragon and Yguerne, but a babe mysteriously brought up from the depths of the sea, on the crest of the ninth wave, and cast ashore at the wizard's feet. Hence many people distrusted the young king, and at first refused to obey him.

> "Watch'd the great sea fall,
> Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
> Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep,
> And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
> Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
> And down the wave and in the flame was borne
> A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
> Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried 'The King!
> Here is an heir for Uther!'"
>
> *The Coming of Arthur* (*Tennyson*).

The root of this disaffection was to be found in jealousy. For one look at Arthur was enough to show his kingly descent, so splendid was his bearing, so open his countenance.

Amongst those who nevertheless professed suspicion were some of the king's own kindred, and notably his four nephews, Gawain, Gaheris, Agravaine, and Gareth. Very unwillingly Arthur was therefore obliged to make war against them. The greatest of these foes was Gawain, whose strength increased in a marvellous fashion from nine to twelve in the morning, and from three to six in the afternoon. Yet the king, by following Merlin's advice and taking advantage of his comparatively weak moments, succeeded in defeating him.

Sir Pellinore

Having for the time being defeated his enemies, Arthur, aided by Merlin, ruled over the land wisely and well. He set himself strenuously to redress wrongs and re-establish order and security. For during the long interregnum since Uther Pendragon's death, confusion and rapine had become common. In all this Arthur proved successful, so that his people revered him greatly, and his knights willingly gave him their allegiance. Yet even Arthur sometimes made a mistake, as happened once with Sir Pellinore. For the king, being ill-advised, made a sudden and undeserved attack upon this knight. Whereupon the sword which he held in his hand failed him and broke. Left thus without any means of defence, the king would surely have perished had not Merlin used his magic arts and thrown Sir Pellinore into a deep swoon while he bore away his charge to a place of safety.

Thus deprived of his magic sword, Arthur bitterly bewailed its loss, for he knew not how to procure another like it. But while he stood by a lake wondering what he should do he beheld a white-draped arm rise out of the water, holding aloft a jewelled sword. Startled at the sight, Arthur watched it with

fascinated gaze till the Lady of the Lake appeared beside him and told him it was intended for his use.

"'Thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.'"

The Passing of Arthur (*Tennyson*).

Excalibur

Full of joy at her words, Arthur rowed out into the middle of the lake and secured the sword, which became known by the name Excalibur. The king was then told by the Lady of the Lake that the weapon was gifted with magic powers, and that as long as the scabbard remained in his possession he would suffer neither wound nor defeat.

Thus armed, Arthur went back to his palace, where, hearing that the Saxons had again invaded the country, he went to wage war against them, and won many victories. Shortly after this it also came to his ears that Leodegraunce, King of Scotland, was threatened by his brother Ryance, King of Ireland, who was determined to complete a mantle furred with the beards of kings, and wanted only one more to have what he desired. Indignant at the ferocious whim of the Irish king, Arthur hastened to the help of Leodegraunce. In the encounter that followed Arthur wielded his sword so valiantly that he not only killed the cruel Ryance, but appropriated his mantle and carried it away in triumph as a trophy of his success.

"And for a trophy brought the Giant's coat away
Made of the beards of Kings."

Polyolbion (*Drayton*).

Arthur's Marriage with Guinevere

Covered with glory and renown, Arthur then returned to the court of King Leodegraunce, where he fell in love with the latter's fair daughter, Guinevere. As for the princess, she no sooner saw Arthur than she thought him the bravest and most splendid king in the world, so that when he asked her to marry him she gladly consented. The marriage would have taken place at once had not Merlin decreed that the king must first fight in a campaign in Brittany. Therefore Arthur went off to war more eager than ever to win glory for the sake of fair Guinevere. At last he returned to claim his bride, and the wedding took place amid great pomp. Having received as the dower of the princess the Round Table once made for his own father, Arthur journeyed with his bride to Camelot, or Winchester, where he bade all his court be present at Pentecost for a great feast.

"The nearest neighbouring flood to Arthur's ancient seat,
Which made the Britons' name through all the world so great.
Like Camelot, what place was ever yet renown'd?
Where, as at Carlion, oft, he kept the Table-Round,
Most famous for the sports at Pentecost so long,
From whence all knightly deeds, and brave achievements sprong."

Polyolbion (*Drayton*).

So ended the first part of Arthur's reign, and the second and more glorious period began.

Knights of the Round Table

When Arthur had once more arrived in Camelot he conceived the idea of founding an order of knights, sworn to be loyal to him, who should sit at the famous table he had brought with him, and be known as the Knights of the Round Table. For this purpose he caused to be erected a magnificent castle, with a banqueting hall reserved especially for the magic board, round which were placed the seats to be accorded to the knights. How many there were of these is not certain; the most probable number is twelve, though it is sometimes asserted there were as many as several hundred. Be this as it may, the seats were eagerly coveted, and the knights who succeeded in being awarded a place always adopted a special device on their shields to proclaim the honour they had won.

At last the building of the hall was finished, and the renowned table was put into its place. Round it there stood, within twelve niches in the wall, huge statues of the twelve kings whom Arthur had already overthrown. In the hand of each was a taper, which Merlin foretold would shine brightly until the Holy Grail should appear. Striding into his hall, King Arthur looked about him, and was well pleased at the magnificent spectacle. Full of contentment, he turned to Merlin, saying: "Behold, the hall is made, the table is here, the seats are ready. Do thou now tell me the names of the knights worthy to fill those seats."

So Merlin named them in order one by one, till all the seats save two were occupied. A great banquet followed, and the chosen band sat down together in high ecstasy. Yet their thoughts were by no means fixed on anything save the doing of pure and noble deeds, for the desire of each was to see the Holy Grail.

Later, as the knights arose from their seats, when the banquet was ended, they saw that their names were inscribed in letters of gold on the places they had occupied. Moreover, one of the empty seats was marked "Siege Perilous."

Marvelling as to what this could mean, the nobles eagerly questioned Merlin, who told them that that seat was reserved for a knight who should be absolutely pure, so that did any other adventure himself upon it he would straightway be swallowed up by the yawning earth.

Soon the knights of the Round Table became famous everywhere for their brave and noble deeds, and the name of each one was revered. Yet amongst them all Sir Lancelot du Lac was most beloved by the people. Chrestien de Troyes, Geoffrey de Ligny, Robert de Borron, and Walter Map have all written about this brave warrior, while the fact that his name was given to one of the knaves on the playing-cards invented at about this time proves that he was widely known. Malory, too, in his prose version of the "Morte d'Arthur", has drawn principally from the poems treating of Lancelot.

The early childhood of Sir Lancelot is full of interest. He was said to be the son of King Ban and Helen, who were obliged to flee from their besieged castle in Brittany when their son was but a babe. Before they had gone far, however, the aged Ban, seeing his home in flames, sank dying to the ground. Helen, eager to minister to her husband, laid her baby boy down on the grass near a lake. But alas! when she again turned her attention to him she saw him in the arms of Vivian, the Lady of the Lake, who plunged with him into the waters.

"In the wife's woe, the mother was forgot.
At last (for I was all earth held of him
Who had been all to her, and now was not)
She rose, and looked with tearless eyes, but dim,
In the babe's face the father still to see;
And lo! the babe was on another's knee!

"Another's lips had kissed it into sleep,
And o'er the sleep another watchful smiled;
The Fairy sate beside the lake's still deep,
And hush'd with chaunted charms the orphan child!
Scared at the mother's cry, as fleets a dream,
Both Child and Fairy melt into the stream."

King Arthur (*Bulwer Lytton*).

Full of bitter anguish, Helen cried aloud in her grief; but to no avail, for the fairy soon floated out of sight. Thus bereft of both husband and child at one blow, Helen sorrowfully withdrew into a convent, while Lancelot was brought up with his two cousins, Lyonel and Bohort, in the palace of the Lady of the Lake. Here he remained until he was eighteen, when the fairy herself brought him to court and presented him to the king. Captivated by his appearance, Arthur at once made him his friend and confidant, and gave him an honoured place at the Round Table. His arrival was also warmly welcomed by all the other knights, whom he far excelled in beauty and courage.

"But one Sir Lancelot du Lake,
Who was approvèd well,
He for his deeds and feats of armes
All others did excell."

Sir Lancelot du Lake (*Old Ballad*).

Lancelot and Guinevere

Nevertheless, in spite or the fair beginning of his life at court, Lancelot was doomed to much sorrow. For he had no sooner beheld Queen Guinevere than he fell deeply in love with her. Flattered by his attention, the queen grew fond of her devoted knight, and granted him many marks of her favour. Then so strongly did passion get the better of her that she even encouraged him to betray his friend and king on more than one occasion. Lancelot, urged in one direction by passion, in another by loyalty, led a very unhappy life, which made him relapse into wild fits of frenzy, during which he roamed aimlessly about for many years. When the violence of the fits subsided he always returned to court, where he redoubled his energy in accomplishing unheard-of deeds of valour. In all these encounters he was successful, for he ever fought on the side

of right. Moreover, he never once wavered from his allegiance to the queen, although many fair ladies tried to make him forget her.

Some poets, anxious to vindicate the queen, declare that there were two Guineveres, one pure, lovely, and worthy of all admiration, who suffered for the sins of the other. Nevertheless all agree as to the unswerving fidelity of Lancelot to her.

Strange to say, though all the court knew of the queen's love for Sir Lancelot, Arthur himself was too pure-minded to suspect such a thing. Nor was it till some time had gone and the secret could by no means be concealed that he saw the truth. Full of sorrow, he bade his queen depart, and she thereupon took refuge with her lover in Joyeuse Garde (Berwick), a castle he had won at the point of his lance to please her. But by-and-by the king, having ascertained that the real Guinevere had been wrongfully accused, reinstated her in his favour, and Lancelot again returned to court, where he continued to love and serve her.

On one occasion, hearing that she had been made captive by Meleagans, her faithful follower rushed after her to rescue her, tracing her on her way by a comb and ringlet she had dropped as she went. But misfortune befell the anxious knight as he rode, for his horse was taken from him by enchantment, so that in order sooner to overtake the queen he rode on in a cart. This was considered a disgraceful mode of progress for a knight, as a nobleman in those days was condemned to ride in a cart in punishment for crimes for which common people were sentenced to the pillory.

Nevertheless, so eager was Lancelot to succour Guinevere that he never once thought of how he was carried thither. At last he succeeded in reaching the castle whither Guinevere had been borne. Eagerly he

rejoined the queen after he had slain her captor. But instead of receiving her thanks she turned upon him, and in a fit of anger taunted her lover about his journey in the cart. Frenzied at her taunts, Lancelot fled from her presence and roamed wildly about, until the queen recognised her error, and sent twenty-three knights in search of him. Yet so far had he gone that they journeyed for two whole years without finding him.

"'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them.'"

The Holy Grail (*Tennyson*).

Meanwhile a fair and pious damsel had taken pity upon the distraught knight, and seeing that he had atoned by suffering for all his sins she had him borne into the chamber where the Holy Grail was kept; "and then there came a holy man, who uncovered the vessel; and so by miracle, and by virtue of that holy vessel, Sir Lancelot was all healed and recovered."

Gareth and Lynette

Restored from his madness, Lancelot now returned to Camelot, where he was joyfully welcomed by the king, the queen, and all the knights of the Round Table, so much was he beloved. Here Lancelot knighted Sir Gareth, who, to please his mother, had concealed his true name and had acted as kitchen vassal for a whole year. Immediately the new-made knight started out with a fair maiden called Lynette to deliver her captive sister. Thinking him nothing but the kitchen vassal he seemed, the damsel insulted Gareth in every possible way. He bravely endured her taunts,

courageously defeated all her adversaries, and finally won her admiration and respect to such a degree that she bade him ride beside her, and humbly asked his pardon for having so grievously misjudged him.

"'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had added Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously.'"

Gareth and Lynette (*Tennyson*).

Marriage of Gareth and Lynette

Full of generosity, Gareth willingly granted her full forgiveness, for in spite of her wayward pride he had already come to love her dearly. At her request he now rode at her side, where he fought more bravely still. Then, after defeating many knights and delivering her sister from captivity, he secured Lynette's promise to become his wife as soon as he had been admitted to the Round Table. Hastening back to Arthur's court, he begged for this honour to be given him. Willingly Arthur agreed, for the prowess of the young knight had won the admiration of all. Therefore, full of gladness, he sought out Lynette, and the two were married.

Geraint and Enid

About the same time Gareth's brother, Geraint, had also become a member of the Round Table. He too gained renown for many deeds of valour, after which he married Enid the Fair, the only daughter of an old and impoverished knight, whom Geraint delivered from the tyranny of his oppressor and restored to all his former state. Taking his wife away with him to his lonely manor, Geraint so fulfilled the every wish of his fair

bride that at last he laid aside all his former high desires, and spent the days at home dallying in pleasure.

But this devotion was unpleasing to Enid; for her noble mind soon perceived that her husband was neglecting both honour and duty to linger by her side. One day while he lay asleep before her she, in an outburst of wifely love, poured out her heart, and ended her confession by declaring that since Geraint neglected everything for her sake only, she must be an unworthy wife.

Geraint awoke too late to overhear the first part of her speech; but, seeing her tears, and catching the words "unworthy wife," he immediately imagined that she had ceased to love him, and that she was receiving the attentions of another. In his anger Geraint (who is known in French and German poems as Erec) rose from his couch and sternly bade his wife don her meanest apparel and silently follow him through the world.

"The page he bade with speed
Prepare his own strong steed,
Dame Enid's palfrey there beside;
He said that he would ride
For pastime far away:
So forward hastened they."

Erek and Enid (*Hartmann von Aue*)
(*Bayard Taylor's tr.*).

Full of a desire to serve the husband whom she so dearly loved, Enid patiently did his bidding. Alone she watched him fight the knights who challenged him by the way; alone she bound up his wounds. Quite unable to understand the reason for his severe coldness towards her, she yet stood all his tests so nobly that at last he saw how greatly he had misjudged her. Full of eager repentance, he confessed his error, and restored her again to her rightful place.

As for the loving Enid, her heart overflowed with happiness, so that they dwelt together in the perfection of mutual love and trust until the day when Geraint fell gloriously while fighting the battles of his lord the king.

Sir Galahad

Now it befell one Whitsuntide, when all the knights were assembled at a great feast about the table at Camelot, that a distressed damsel suddenly entered the hall and implored Lancelot to accompany her to the neighbouring forest. Asking why it was she desired him to do this, he was told that a young warrior was there who greatly longed to receive knighthood from the hands of Sir Lancelot. Resolved to help the maiden if possible, Sir Lancelot rose from his seat and went with her into the wood. There he found her deliverer, whom he straightway knighted. This, indeed, was the knight who later, because of his noble life, became known as Sir Galahad the Pure. Some writers even say he was the son of Lancelot, while others declare that he was not of mortal birth.

Scarcely had Lancelot returned to the hall when he heard that a miracle had occurred, and together the whole company rushed down to the river-side. There they saw that the rumour was true, for they one and all beheld a heavy stone floating down the stream. Amazed at the sight, they gazed yet more earnestly, till they perceived that a costly weapon was sunk deep in the stone. At last the stone came to land, and as the knights crowded round it they saw on this weapon an inscription warning all that none but a peerless knight should attempt to draw it out, upon penalty of a grievous punishment. As they read, the knights of the Round Table modestly drew back from the task, for each in his heart was conscious of some sin.

When they returned into the hall, full of the sight they had witnessed, an aged man entered, accompanied by Galahad. Fearless in the strength of his innocence, Galahad sat down in the seat "Siege Perilous." For a moment the company watched in terror; then as they saw his name suddenly appear in letters of gold upon it all knew that he was the knight destined to win the honour. Full of joy, they acclaimed him till the rafters in the great hall shook. Suddenly they noticed that he wore by his side an empty scabbard. Whereupon he declared it had been prophesied that a magic weapon should be given to him. At once the miracle of the sword in the floating stone became clear. Quickly they took their comrade down to the river, and watched him as he gripped the shaft of the mysterious weapon. Immediately it yielded to his grasp, and he easily drew it forth. Whereupon he thrust it into his scabbard, which he found fitted it exactly.

That selfsame night, after evensong, when all the knights were seated about the Round Table at Camelot, they heard a long roll of thunder, and felt the palace shake. The brilliant lights held by the statues of the twelve conquered kings grew strangely dim, and behold! gliding down upon a refulgent beam of celestial light there came a dazzling vision of the Holy Grail. Covered by white samite, and borne by invisible hands, the sacred vessel was slowly carried round the great hall, while a delicious perfume was wafted throughout the huge edifice. Silent from awe, the knights of the Round Table gazed rapturously at this resplendent vision, till at last it vanished as suddenly and as mysteriously as it had come. A deep sigh floated through the hall as the knights felt the tension relax; then as each looked down on to the plate that stood on the table before him he saw there the food which he liked best.

Fearing to break the silence, the knights waited motionless until the light sprang bright and clear again from the tapers. Then solemnly they gave fervent thanks for the mercy which had been vouchsafed them, till Lancelot, springing impetuously to his feet, vowed that he would ride forth in search of the Holy Grail, and would know no rest until he had beheld it unveiled. "And I," "And I," cried each of the others in turn; and so the vow was registered by all the knights of the Round Table. Then, hearing these words, Arthur questioned them closely, and thus discovered that none had seen the vessel unveiled. Therefore, though he was sad at the thought of losing so many of his brave followers for so long, yet the king knew that as they had sworn the oath, they must carry it out. So, looking round upon them all, he gave them his blessing and bade them go.

An air of sadness hung in the air that night when the men rose from their seats. Long they lingered ere they turned to bid their leader good-night, for they felt that never again at any feast would they all meet together, an unbroken band. Yet they did not shrink from their resolve, nor wish in their hearts to take back their word.

Quest of the Holy Grail

Then on the morrow they rode forth on their noble purpose. Some went alone, but others chose a companion; yet never more than two journeyed in company. Thus separated the whole of that goodly band, to roam wide over the world and do many brave deeds in the name of justice and purity. But whether any of them ever saw the Grail save Parzival and Galahad is not known. Some declare that Lancelot saw it, through a veil, faintly; but others maintain that not even Parzival gained this glory; that Sir Galahad the Pure alone saw

the vision, and then only when, after years of prayer and fasting, his soul was being borne to Heaven.

After many years had gone by in vain, the majority of the knights realised that they were unworthy of so great a boon, and thus they returned to Camelot, where they were bidden to a great feast by the queen. While they were feasting at her table a terrible thing happened, for one of their number, having partaken of a poisonous draught, fell lifeless to the ground. Full of consternation at the deed, the knights sprang to their feet, while some cried out loudly that the queen was guilty of the murder, since the knight who had fallen had sat at her side. "Confess," they cried fiercely, "or prove your innocence in fight." Terrified at their fierceness, the queen consented to their terms, and sought a knight to defend her. Arthur himself was forbidden this, since he was her husband, and therefore debarred by law of the privilege of fighting for her in the lists of Camelot. But alas! no one was forthcoming, and the poor queen would have been condemned to be burned alive for lack of a champion had not Lancelot appeared in disguise and forced her accuser to retract his words.

One of the great features of Arthur's court had been the yearly tournaments he encouraged, where the victor's prize each time was a precious jewel. These jewels, which were highly prized, had come into the possession of the king in a peculiar way. While wandering as a lad in Lyonesse Arthur had found the mouldering bones of two kings. Tradition relates that these monarchs had slain each other, and that as they were brothers the murder seemed so heinous that none dared to touch their remains. There among the rusty armour lay a kingly crown studded with diamonds, which Arthur picked up and carelessly set upon his own head. At

that very moment a prophetic voice was heard declaring to him he should some day rule. Startled, but gratified, at the words, Arthur carefully kept the precious crown, and made each jewel set in it the object of a brilliant pageant when the prophecy had been fulfilled.

"And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn.
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs,—'Lo! thou likewise shalt be King.'"

Lancelot and Elaine (*Tennyson*).

Lancelot's Skill in Jousting

Now at every one of these knightly games Lancelot had been present, and had easily borne away the prize. For his very name was almost enough to secure him the victory. Knowing that some knights attributed his continual success to the lustre which ever surrounded his name, Lancelot pretended, when the last tournament drew near, that he was quite without interest in it. Then, riding off to Astolat, or Guildford, he asked Elaine, the fair maiden who dwelt there, to guard his blazoned shield and give him another in exchange.

Elaine, who had fallen in love with Lancelot at first sight, immediately complied with his request, and even timidly suggested that he should wear her colours in the coming fray. Up till now Lancelot had never worn any favours except those given him by Guinevere, but on this occasion, thinking that it would help to conceal his identity, he accepted the crimson, pearl-embroidered sleeve she offered, and fastened it in his helmet, after the manner of knights in those days. Then as he

drove the pin through the crimson silk he turned t Elaine and said:

"'Lady, thy sleeve thou shalt off-shear,
I wol it take for the love of thee;
So did I never no lady's ere [before]
But one, that most hath lovèd me.'"

Lancelot du Lac (*Ellis*).

Blushing with pleasure at seeing the knight decke out in her colours, Elaine stood watching her guest a he rode off with Sir Lawaine, her brother. Then wit a sigh she turned to the castle again as the two di appeared from view. Meanwhile, secure in his disguis Lancelot rode on to the tournament. Here it turne out as he had hoped; for, still unknown, he unhorse every knight and won the prize. His last encounte however, nearly proved fatal, for in it he received grievous wound. Then, feeling faint from the injur done him, and wishing still to be unrecognised, Lancelo did not wait to claim the prize, but rode immediatel out of the town. Scarcely had he passed the gate when he fell forward in a swoon, and was thus carrie to the cell of a neighbouring hermit. Here his woun was dressed, and he was carefully nursed by Elaine who had heard that a knight had been wounded, and recognising Lancelot in the description, had immediatel set out in search of him.

Lancelot and Elaine

Thus time went by, while Elaine, happy in nursing back to health the knight she loved, grew daily faire and brighter to look upon. But at last the time o Sir Lancelot's weakness passed, and he longed onc more to be out in the field. Therefore he claimed hi shield and turned to bid gentle Elaine good-bye Torn with grief at seeing him go, she unwittingly

let fall a hint of the love she bore him. A shadow passed over the knight's strong face at her words; for he too knew the bitterness of unfulfilled love. Very gently, therefore, he told her that his love was already another's, and so he left her to fight out her grief. But the woe of loving and not being loved soon robbed the cheek of Elaine of its colour, till it was plain to all that the end of the "lily maid of Astolat" was near. Then, feeling her death approach, broken-hearted Elaine dictated a farewell letter to Lancelot, which she made her father promise to clasp in her dead hand. She also directed that her body should be laid in state on a barge, and sent to Camelot in charge of a mute boatman. For she craved at least burial from the hands of Lancelot.

In the meantime the hero of the tournament had been sought everywhere by Gawain, who was the bearer of the diamond won at such cost. Coming to Astolat before Lancelot was cured, Gawain had learned the name of the victor, which in thoughtlessness he immediately proclaimed to Guinevere. The queen, however, hearing a vague rumour that Lancelot had worn the colours of the maiden of Astolat, and was about to marry her, grew so jealous that when Lancelot reappeared at court she received him very coldly. Unable to understand her mood, Lancelot humbly offered her the present he had brought, which was nothing less than a necklace studded with the splendid diamonds he had won at the different tournaments. Carelessly the queen handled the magnificent gift; then with a swift movement she flung it into the river that ran at the castle's base.

"She seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream.
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they passed away."

Lancelot and Elaine (*Tennyson*).

The Funeral Barge

Aghast at her deed, Lancelot leaned out of the window to trace the jewels in their fall, and as he did so he saw a barge slowly drifting down the stream. Its peculiar appearance attracted his attention, and he stood and watched as it drew near. He saw that it bore a corpse; a moment later with a start he had recognised the features of Elaine. The mute boatman paused at the castle steps, while Arthur directed that the body should be borne into his presence. Tenderly he took the letter from the stiff hand of the Lily Maid, and read it aloud in the midst of the awestruck court. Then Arthur, touched by the story of the girl's love, bade Lancelot fulfil her last request and lay her to rest. Willingly Lancelot accepted the task; and, turning to those who were assembled there, he told them the maiden's story. His voice quivered as he mentioned her death, and he cried:

"'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself.'"

Lancelot and Elaine (*Tennyson*).

Haunted by remorse for this involuntary crime Lancelot again wandered away from Camelot. Nevertheless, as before, he returned in time to save Guinevere from yet another false accusation. In his indignation at the treatment to which she had been exposed, Lancelot would listen to no one, but bore her off to Joyeuse Garde, where he swore he would defend her even against the king. This action roused Arthur, whose mind had been poisoned by envious courtiers, so that he besieged his recreant wife and knight. But although in the heat of his anger Arthur repeatedly challenged Lancelot to meet him, the knight ever refused to bear arms directly against his king.

Yet the difficulty was by no means settled, and at last it grew so notorious that the Pope himself interfered, and sent messengers to England to inquire into the matter. Then Lancelot, being assured that henceforward Guinevere would be treated with all due respect, surrendered her to the king and retreated to his paternal estate in Brittany. But as Arthur's resentment against Lancelot had not yet cooled he left Guinevere under the care and protection of his nephew Mordred, and then at the head of a large force, he departed for Brittany.

The Treachery of Mordred

Scarcely had Arthur gone than Mordred, the traitor immediately took advantage of his uncle's absence to lay claim to the throne. Knowing there was none who could contradict him, he loudly declared that Arthur had been slain, and tried to force Guinevere to marry him. Bitterly the queen repulsed him; therefore, in revenge, he seized her and kept her a close prisoner and set her free only when she pretended to agree to his wishes, and asked permission to go to London to buy herself wedding finery.

But the real intentions of Guinevere were quite otherwise. Thus, as soon as she arrived in the city she entrenched herself in the Tower, and sent word to her husband of her perilous position. Without any delay Arthur abandoned the siege of Lancelot's stronghold, and, crossing the Channel, encountered Mordred's army near Dover.

Furious at being out-tricked, Mordred marshalled all his hosts, till at last, after some discussion, it was decided that Arthur and a certain number of knights should meet Mordred with an equal number, and consider the terms of peace. It had been strictly enjoined on both parties that no weapon should be drawn, and all would have gone well had not an adder been lurking in the grass. Taken unawares by the sudden appearance of this reptile, one of the knights drew his sword to kill it, and this unexpected movement proved the signal for one of the bloodiest battles described in mediæval poetry.

"An addere crept forth of a bushe,
Stunge one o' th' king's knightes on the knee.
Alacke! it was a woefulle chance,
As ever was in Christientie;
When the knighte founde him wounded sore,
And sawe the wild worme hanginge there,
His sworde he from the scabbarde drewe;
A piteous case, as ye shall heare;
For when the two hostes saw the sworde,
They joyned in battayle instantlye;
Till of so manye noble knightes,
On one side there was left but three."

King Arthur's Death.

Arthur and Mordred Fight Together

On both sides the knights fought with the utmost courage till nearly every one had been slain. Then it happened that at last Arthur encountered Mordred. The eyes of each glittered as the two closed together in

deadly combat. "It is death for one of us," muttered Mordred. "Then for thee, traitor!" retorted the exhausted king as he dealt his opponent a fatal blow. Yet even as Mordred fell to the ground he thrust fiercely at the king, who reeled beneath his attack, and dropped, dying, to the earth. Thus fell King Arthur by the hand of his treacherous nephew, after a reign of unsurpassed greatness and renown. Yet even now his death would not have occurred had not his magic scabbard been stolen from him by his sister, Morgana the fay, who thus became really responsible for the slaughter of the brave sovereign. That was a terrible field! On all sides were strewn the dead bodies of gallant knights, while the groans of the dying tore the air. Of Mordred's men not one remained alive, while of all Arthur's noble host Sir Bedivere alone had escaped. Full of uncontrollable grief at the sight of his dying master, this knight hastened to kneel at his side.

In faltering accents Arthur now bade him take the brand Excalibur and cast it far from him into the waters of the lake, then return to report what he should see. The knight, thinking it a pity to throw away so valuable a sword, concealed it twice; but the dying monarch detected the fraud, and so besought Sir Bedivere that at last he fulfilled his wishes. Even as the magic blade touched the waters Sir Bedivere saw a hand and arm rise up from the depths to seize it, brandish it thrice, and disappear. Amazed at the sight, he hurried to Arthur, and declared how he had closed his eyes that the rich gems in the hilt should not turn him again from his purpose.

"'Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'"

The Passing of Arthur (Tennyson).

As Arthur heard his words he gave a sigh of relief, and after telling his faithful squire that Merlin had declared that he should not die he bade the knight lay him in a barge, all hung with black, which he would find floating in the care of Morgana the fay, the Queen of Northgallis, and the Queen of the Westerlands.

Choking with sorrow at the thought of saying farewell to his king, the knight made haste to obey. Easily he discovered the boat, and therein he laid the monarch in the charge of the three queens. Then, seeing his beloved king about to leave him, Bedivere implored permission to accompany him. This, however, Arthur could not grant, for it had been decreed that he should go alone to the island of Avalon, where he hoped to be cured of his grievous wound, and some day to return to his sorrowing people.

Arthur in Avalon

Thus the ominous barge set off, draped in black, with its strange burden, never to be seen again. Yet because of the hope of his return that Arthur had spoken of, his coming was long eagerly looked for. Nor did people venture to say whether he were living or dead. Yet for the most part it was believed that he was enjoying perpetual youth and bliss in the fabled island of Avalon, whence it was averred he would return when his people needed him. This belief was so deeply rooted in England that Philip of Spain, upon marrying Mary, was compelled to take a solemn oath whereby he bound himself to relinquish the crown in favour of Arthur should he appear to claim it.

"Still look the Britons for the day
Of Arthur's coming o'er the sea."

Brut (Layamon).

Other romances and poems relate that Arthur was borne in the sable-hung barge to Glastonbury, where his remains were laid in the tomb, while Guinevere retired into the nunnery at Almesbury. There she was once more visited by the sorrowing Lancelot, who, in spite of all his haste, had arrived too late either to save the king or be reconciled to him. This was a cause of great grief to the knight, for he still loved and revered the name of Arthur. Therefore in his sorrow and remorse he withdrew into a hermitage, where he spent six years in constant penance and prayer. Here he was warned in a vision that Guinevere was no more. Full of apprehension, he hastened to Almesbury, only to find his dream too true. With tender reverence Lancelot had her buried by Arthur's side in the chapel at Glastonbury, after which he again withdrew to his cell. Six weeks later, worn out by abstinence and night watches, the troubled spirit of this famous warrior peacefully passed away. As his spirit left its body a priest who was watching near him said that he had seen the angels receive and bear his ransomed soul straight up to Heaven, where it was greeted by a choir of angels.

But the body of Lancelot was laid at rest at the feet of Arthur, or, as some say, at Joyeuse Garde, where he and the queen had spent so many happy hours together. Beloved in his lifetime, he was bitterly lamented at his death, and Sir Ector de Moris spoke the thoughts of all the knights when he declared: "'Ah, Sir Lancelot, thou were head of all Christian knights; and now I dare say, that, Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, thou were never matched of none earthly knight's hands; and thou were the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that ever struck the sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou were the meekest man, and the gentlest, that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest.'"

Roy Strong. The Spirit of Britain.

Chapter Twelve

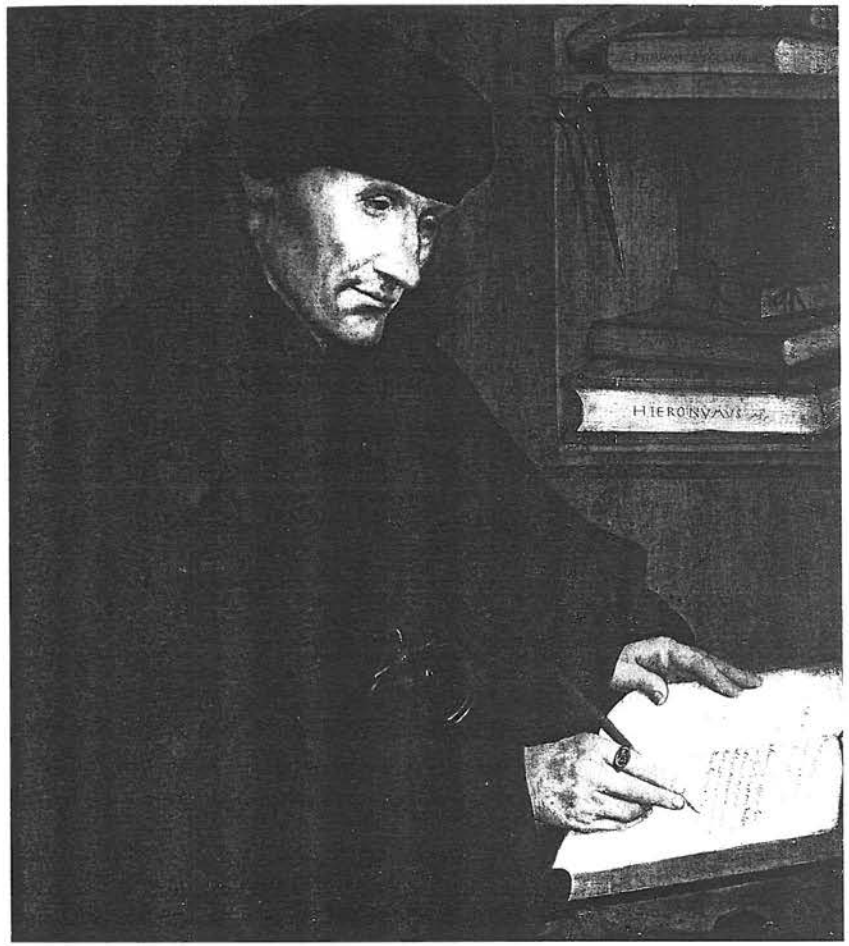
CLASSICAL INTERLUDE

In December 1499 the great Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, wrote of his delight at what he regarded as a flowering of learning in England:

> When I listen to Colet it seems to me that I am listening to Plato himself. Who could fail to be astonished at the universal scope of Grocyn's accomplishments? Could anything be more clever or profound or sophisticated than Linacre's mind? Did Nature ever create anything kinder, sweeter, or more harmonious than the character of Thomas More? But why need I rehearse the list further? It is marvellous to see what an extensive and rich crop of ancient learning is springing up here in England.

Erasmus was encapsulating in one paragraph the prime exemplars of what was one of the great revolutions of the sixteenth century, a new programme of education based on the humanities. In it he lists those who were to be the beacons of that change: John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's and founder of the famous school, the Greek scholars William Grocyn and Thomas Linacre, and Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII and author of *Utopia*. All four, like Erasmus, represented a new type of scholarship, humanism.

The humanist movement is at the heart of what we recognise as Renaissance civilisation. It sprang out of an existing tradition, the classical *studia humanitatis*. In one aspect this had been a continuous thread within Western European civilisation since classical antiquity. It was evident in what was the rhetorical tradition, which used classical authors as a basis for the theory and practice of letter and speech writing, as opposed to their customary use by the schoolmen of scholasticism solely as quarries for information. Such texts offered lessons in grammar, the writing of poetry, history, letters and speeches, as well as lessons in moral philosophy. But these studies were marginalised within the medieval curriculum, only moving to the centre in Italy when a new educational movement got under way in the fourteenth century with the advent of the humanist, who taught a curriculum which embraced the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. Gradually the medieval tension between Christian and pagan thought gave way to an approach which cast



Portrait of the great Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus seated in his study, by Quentin Massys, 1517. The portrait was sent as a memento to Thomas More.

antiquity as anticipatory of the Christian revelation. This was accompanied by a huge return to, and search for, classical texts, both ones unknown and ones which, although known, had been corrupted over the centuries.

What sets this humanist programme of study apart was that its focus was not necessarily clerical but lay. In Italy it was initially the product of a rich urban society anxious for a new and virtuous way whereby to express wealth and power, finding it in the patronage of men of letters, assembling libraries, and commissioning works of

art and architecture. Humanists were to depend for a living on patronage and it was not long before they migrated to what was to become the lodestar of the coming centuries, the court. Humanist scholars and writers became essential adjuncts of the courts of the new princely dynasties emerging in Italy during the fifteenth century, the Este of Ferrara, the Gonzaga of Mantua or the Sforza of Milan. The humanists in return endowed their patrons, by means of their poetry and prose, with the glories of the rulers of classical antiquity, which for the first time was seen as a separate civilisation, one whose letters and art now needed to be recaptured and recreated. This was to be the driving force which created the Renaissance, one which produced not only the new educational system but also new styles in painting, architecture and sculpture. All of these were to cross Europe and eventually make their way to Britain, where the educational thrust was the one to be more quickly absorbed than the aesthetic for the reason that it was perceived to be useful to the new political classes.

During the fifteenth century the clerical basis for administration in government had begun to crumble. Increasingly, offices passed into the hands of the laity. Already by 1400 literacy was required by the aristocratic and gentry classes, and often of their women too, in order to run their estates and households or exercise the offices of Justice of the Peace, Member of Parliament, or sheriff. But as time passed they, in turn, needed educated people to assist them and more and more they started to look towards lay people rather than clerics. The reason for this was a very simple one: clerics enjoyed a degree of immunity. A layman, on the other hand, could be made, or indeed broken, at the behest of a superior. On the lay aspirant's side, such a career began to offer a way up for the first time without taking holy orders and being bound to celibacy. Instead it could be a path to ennoblement and the founding of a dynasty. So through the fifteenth century the scene was gradually being set for the reception of the humanist educational programme by a laity which had already acquired a smattering of law necessary for a litigious society, plus sufficient arithmetic to engage in trade, commerce and estate management, and enough knowledge of letters to fit it for administrative service to the king, a great aristocrat, or a bishop.

So the impetus can be seen from the outset to have been above all utilitarian. But in the early stages the arrival of humanism was in the main confined to the closed world of learning. During the fifteenth century its percolation was to be piecemeal and cumulative, achieved in fits and starts by an erratic stream of patrons, with individual English and Italian scholars acting as the bridgeheads. It was Henry V's brother Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who was the first Englishman to appreciate humanism and to collect a library of both classical and neo-classical texts. That library included newly discovered classical works as well as those by more recent Italian authors who epitomised the new cultural energy, Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Duke Humphrey also employed Italians as Latin secretaries, who could write in the elegant new neo-classical style acquired through studying authors such as Cicero. Vain and ambitious, it is difficult to know what prompted the duke to pursue this path for he was no scholar, but the fact that he handed his library over in instalments to the University of Oxford ensured his lasting influence. On his death in 1447 the final volumes arrived to adorn, as they still do, that part of the Bodleian called Duke Humphrey's Library.

His successor within the aristocracy was John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. Unlike Duke Humphrey he had actually studied in Italy at the university of Padua and also under one of the great humanist teachers, Guarino of Verona. Tiptoft was to be a major patron but his notable library was dispersed on his execution in 1470. Duke Humphrey and John Tiptoft were princely luminaries in a firmament otherwise made up of lesser stars, individual scholars who made their way to Italy. The three most important ones also studied under Guarino: William Grey, later Bishop of Ely and Chancellor of Oxford, Robert Flemming, Dean of Lincoln, who was the first Englishman to learn Greek, and lastly Tiptoft's secretary, John Free, who was the most accomplished English, Latin and Greek scholar of the age. Simultaneously there was a steady stream of diplomatic exchange with the Papal Curia in the Vatican where the new humanist style reigned supreme. The standard of their Latin was such that it demanded an equal elegance of response, one which only a humanist could provide.

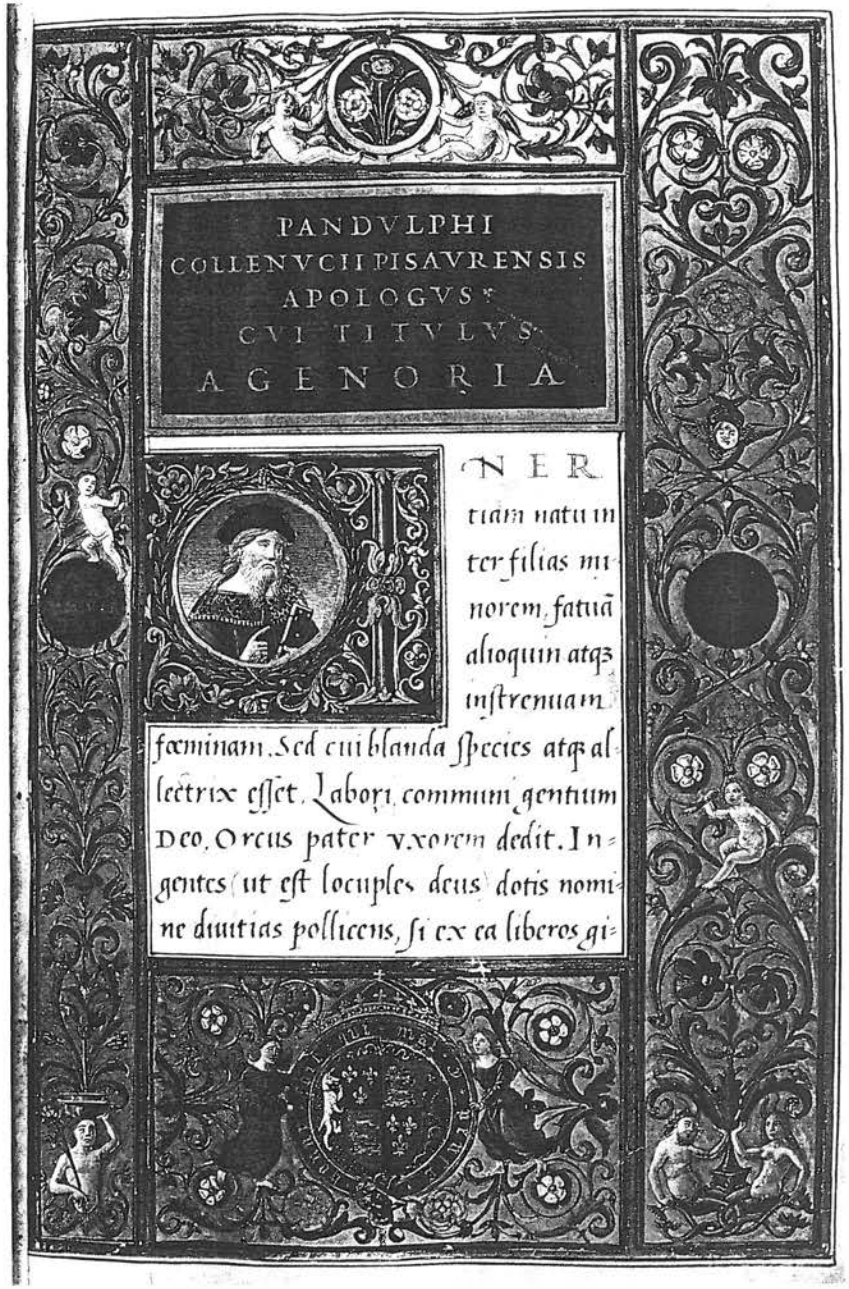
And it was that which prompted the entry of humanists into government service. Although the infiltration had begun under Edward IV, it was during the reign of Henry VII that the humanities really came to court for the first time. The king employed an Italian humanist, Pietro Carmeliano, as his Latin secretary and he was also to give his children a humanist education. The teachers of the eldest, Prince Arthur, included Thomas Linacre, those of the youngest, the future Henry VIII, the poet John Skelton. Henry VIII's accession in 1509 was indeed hailed by Erasmus as the advent of a humanist golden age: 'Heaven smiles, earth rejoices; all is milk and honey and nectar. Tight-fistedness is well and truly banished. Our king's heart is set not upon gold or jewels or mines of ore, but upon virtue, reputation and eternal renown.' His first queen, the Spanish Catherine of Aragon, was also humanist educated and so was their daughter, Mary, and the king's two other children by later marriages, Edward and Elizabeth, were to be likewise.

Until the close of the 1520s nothing was to disturb this alliance of the new humanism and the Tudor dynasty, ensuring its firm infiltration into both universities. At the outset it embodied no seeming threat to scholasticism but was viewed

rather as a means whereby it might be reinvigorated. Late medieval scholasticism had witnessed the divorce of reason and faith under the aegis of the two great Franciscan doctors, Duns Scotus and William Ockham. Scotus had argued that God was so free that he escaped from human reasoning. Ockham completed the separation by arguing that reason could no longer support or confirm belief. Scholasticism thereafter tore itself asunder in battles between adherents of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and those of Ockham. Out of this academic débâcle came a complex of currents of thought which included the logical and scientific work of William Heytesbury and Richard Swineshead, both fellows of Merton College, Oxford, as well as a retreat into anti-intellectualism typified by late medieval mysticism. Overall, scholasticism was in irretrievable decline.

The humanist invasion of Oxford and Cambridge was achieved by a whole series of new foundations which incorporated both the existing scholastic, and the new, humanistic, forms of curriculum. These included St. John's College, Cambridge, founded by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, assisted by Henry VII's mother, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, and Richard Fox, Bishop of Winchester's Corpus Christi, Oxford. The public lectures in Greek at the latter were to produce such a violent reaction from the schoolmen that Henry VIII called on Thomas More in 1518 to defend the new teaching. 'I need hardly mention,' he wrote, 'that the New Testament is in Greek or that the best New Testament scholars were Greek and wrote in Greek.' Cardinal Wolsey's great college had it proceeded would have been the crowning glory, ensuring a humanist education for the clergy of the whole country, but it was not to be. Instead as the 1530s progressed the events of the Reformation were to dislocate both universities, canon law as a result disappearing. But, by the close of the reign, lectures in Greek and Latin were an established fact and the education of the clergy was provided for by the two new royal foundations of Trinity College, Cambridge and Christ Church, Oxford.

The stars in the English humanist firmament were few and they all knew each other. William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre and John Colet all studied Greek and Latin and taught at Oxford. The greatest of these was Colet whose series of lectures on the New Testament in 1496, when he was barely thirty, inaugurated a revolution in biblical study and scholarship. The whole scholastic accretion of commentaries, notes and summas, was swept away; instead Colet went directly to the original Greek text, setting it into its historical context. Colet's influence as a teacher was to be



Presentation copy of Pandolfo Collenuccio's Apologues *and Lucian's* Dialogues *to Henry VIII. The manuscript was a gift from one Geoffrey Chamber who had commissioned the most famous of Italian scribes, Ludovico degli Arrighi, to execute it. The decoration is by the celebrated Florentine illuminator, Attavante degli Attaventi. Together they epitomise a new style, both humanist and Renaissance.*

A posthumous portrait of John Colet, founder of St. Paul's School, by William Segar, 1585.

immense. He brought to England the humanism of Renaissance Florence, where he had studied, taking it first to Oxford and then to London, where he refounded St. Paul's School. This was a landmark event in the history of education, for it was to be the model for every reformed grammar school that followed. Erasmus was involved in framing its constitution and its first High Master was William Lyly whose Latin grammar was in 1540 to be accorded the style of King's Grammar, and as such to be used in every school in the realm.

St. Paul's catered for the sons of courtiers, gentlemen, and city merchants. They had come already fluent in reading and writing, both in the vernacular and in Latin. The teaching was based solidly on classical texts, such as Terence, Virgil, Cicero, Horace and Ovid, and modern neo-classicists, such as Erasmus. In this way students were prepared for their encounter with scholasticism when they moved on to the universities. Colet's revolution was to sweep through Eton and Winchester and on through the lesser grammar schools of the country.

What was framed was a system of instruction which was based on the belief that training in virtue and good letters prepared a man for public service. It was to be the educational norm until the twentieth century, one which saw a thorough competence in Latin grammar and practice in using the language for speaking and writing as the foundation stone of an informed intellect. Its bedrock was the absorption of the classical rhetorical writings of Cicero and Quintilian with the aim of producing an elegance of literary composition. Piety and morality were instilled through the study of good literature, and the eloquence thus attained was to become one of the most cherished attributes of the new Renaissance gentleman.

One book was to sum up this new ideal for the layman, Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Called the Governour* (1531). This incorporated a humanist programme of study into one which also called for training in the other gentlemanly pursuits, the mastery of the art of war, the hunt, sport, and the social accomplishments of music and the dance. Elyot's book also incorporated the new qualities called for in two other publications which had a European impact on the refashioning of the educated layman, Erasmus's *The Institution of a Christian Prince* and the Italian Castiglione's *The Courtier*. By 1550 the ideal gentleman was expected to have a knowledge of Latin and Greek, have read the scriptures, the classics and modern humanist works, have studied eloquence, acquired a good and fluent literary style, and even to write poetry. As this study of the humanities began to influence the vernacular, the English Renaissance came into flower. This was instruction of a kind that was to produce Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare, the products of the Merchant Taylors' School in London, Shrewsbury School, and the grammar school at Stratford-upon-Avon respectively.

Not everything, however, was forward-looking about this revolution. It was in a sense strongly élitist and hermetic. Scholasticism had belonged to the hurly burly of the city, whereas humanism pertained to the solitary life of the study or to exclusive groups like academies or the glittering world of the court. It also led to a divorce between theory and practice, science and technology, increasing an already incipient divide even more sharply. But these shortcomings were not to evidence themselves until much later.

The humanist education which formed the Tudor upper classes (which could in this early phase include women) was deeply Christian, founded on a belief that the ancient Romans and Greeks had developed an ethical system compatible with the Christian faith. Its earliest exponents were all profoundly committed to a reform of the Church. They attacked scholastic theology as arid and denounced much of the paraphernalia of late medieval religion, the cult of saints and relics, pilgrimages and


EPISTOLAE PAVLI APOSTOLI, AD GRAECAM VERITATEM ET VETERVM LATINORVM CODICVM FIDEM RECOGNITAE PER ERASMVM ROTERODAMVM SACRAE THEOLOGIAE PROFESSOREM.

ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ

ΦΡΟΒΕΝΙ

ΠΑΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ Η ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

ΠΑΥΛΟΣ δοῦλος ΙΗ ΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ. κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις, περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει, κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης, ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολήν, εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς ἐστὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς, κλητοὶ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ. πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ρώμῃ, ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις. χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ κυρίου ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ.

πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου, διὰ ΙΗ ΧΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ, ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ. μάρτυς γάρ μου ἔστιν ὁ θεός, ᾧ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματί μου, ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἀδιαλείπτως μνείαν ὑμῶν ποιοῦμαι πάντοτε ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, δεόμενος, εἴπως ἤδη ποτὲ εὐοδωθήσομαι ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐλθεῖν

EPISTOLA PAVLI APOSTOLI AD ROMANOS.

PAVLVS SERVVS Iesu Christi, uocatꝰ apꝰs, segregatus in euãgeliũ dei, quod ante promiserat per ꝓphetas suos, in scripturis sanctis de filio suo, qui genitꝰ fuit ex semine Dauid, secũdũ carnẽ, qui declaratꝰ fuit filiꝰ dei, in potẽtia, secũdũ spiritũ sanctificatiõis, ex eo quꝰ resurrexit a mortuis Iesus christus dñs noster, per quẽ accepimꝰ gratiã & munus apostolatus, ut obediat fidei inter oẽs gentes, sup ipsius noie, quoꝝ de numero estis & uos, uocati Iesu Christi, omnibꝰ qui Romæ estis, dilectis dei, uocatis sanctis. Gratia uobis & pax a deo patre nostro, & dño Iesu Christo. Primũ qdẽ gratias ago deo meo, ꝑ Iesum Christũ, super oibus uobis, quod fides uestra annunciat in toto mundo. Testis enim meus est deus, cui seruio in spiritu meo, in euãgelio filij sui, quod indefinenter mentionẽ uestri faco, semp in orationibus meis deprecans, si quo modo tandem aliquãdo, prosperũ iter cõtingat uolente deo, a ut ueniã

Erasmus's translation of the Greek New Testament into Latin, the first to be published, printed in Basel in 1516.

indulgences. Their simple, if naive, belief was that if the scriptures were placed before the people in their pristine purity Christian renewal would automatically ensue.

All of this reflected the enormous impact of Erasmus, who had visited England on several occasions and secured major patrons. He was to lecture on St. Jerome at Cambridge and even write his celebrated *Praise of Folly* here. Colet was to point him in the direction of biblical translation which led, in 1516, to his new Greek text and Latin translation of the New Testament, a publication which was greeted with acclaim in England. Already, even by the 1520s, Erasmus's works were being translated into English and his particular brand of Christian humanism was to leave a lasting imprint.

Perhaps his closest English friend was Thomas More, whose life, which ended in tragedy, was to typify the early Tudor ideal, a man who combined legal and classical studies with a deeply spiritual existence. More was a brilliant Latinist with a persuasive, witty and subtle prose style. His *Utopia* (1516), which describes a visionary country without poverty, crime or injustice, was written in response to an economic and social crisis and also with the urgent need for a reform of the Church in mind. It received international acclaim and was printed in Paris, Basel and the Netherlands. Its format was the classic humanist one of the dialogue, with its sense of quest and

inquiry. More's life epitomised the humanist dilemma. Was the true good to be pursued in the solitude of the study and pious exercises, or was it to be found in government service and the conduct of public affairs? In 1517, when he became a member of the king's council, the die was cast in favour of the latter, although he was never quite to relinquish his contacts with the humanist world. Nothing was to disturb what was a brilliant career in royal service, culminating in his appointment as Lord Chancellor, until the king moved to divorce his wife and then, during the early 1530s, to go on and break with the universal Church of Rome, leading England into schism. More was opposed to both and on the day after the clergy, in May 1532, submitted to Henry VIII, acknowledging him as Supreme Head of the Church, he resigned the chancellorship. Nothing would shake More's commitment to the unity of the Church and to the validity of tradition. As a consequence, on 6 July 1535, he was executed.

He was not the only humanist to suffer this fate, for it was also meted out to the saintly John Fisher. It was to be the Reformation which was to split the humanist ranks. Initially many had shared the criticisms of the Church which the German reformer Martin Luther made but when, in 1521, Luther defied not only the pope but also imperial authority they began to draw back. The humanists during the opening phases of the Reformation attacked Luther. Then came the problem of Henry VIII's royal divorce, followed soon after by the Acts which set in train the English Reformation. The humanists divided down the middle. There were those, like More and Fisher, who remained loyal to the old scheme of things. The price they paid was obliteration. But there were others, evangelical humanists, who embraced the king's cause. Patronised by the new queen Anne Boleyn and her circle, they formed a network at court which was never quite dislodged. And it was to be these men who were to set the style of English humanism. It was to be Protestant and fiercely patriotic. But also, because of the break with Rome, it was to be cut off from the original source of its inspiration, Italy. That break was to last until the opening years of the next century, delaying thereby the reception of the fruits of the Renaissance revolution in the field of the visual arts. But its literary seeds, firmly planted within the new educational system, were to bear abundant bloom, heralding a civilisation whose focus henceforth was to be the word rather than the image. That obsession with the word was to be emphasised as never before because of another traumatic event precipitated by the Reformation, iconoclasm.

Chapter Thirteen

A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, was to die a prisoner in the Tower in 1595 for his adherence to what was by then the old pre-Reformation Catholic faith. Through four decades, from 1530 to 1570, the Tudor government set out to destroy a whole way of life in what was the greatest revolution of the century. It was one which was also profoundly cultural for it swept away, in successive tides of destruction, the art of centuries, not only physical artefacts, like statues or stained glass, but art as expressed through ritual and the spoken and sung word. In a lament for the passing of the great pilgrimage shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, traditionally written by Arundel, we catch the poignancy felt for what for most must have been an irretrievable loss:

O level, level with the ground
The towers do lie,
Which their golden glittering tops
Pierced unto the sky.
Where were gates no gates are now,
The ways unknown
Where the press of peers did pass
While her fame far was blown
Owls do shriek where the sweetest hymns
Lately were sung;
Toads and serpents hold their dens
Where the palmers did throng.
Weep, weep, O Walsingham . . .

This was a shrine to which Henry VIII had once walked barefoot. By the time that he died it had vanished, been stripped bare and demolished, reduced to a pile of stones and rubble silhouetted against the East Anglian sky.

When Arundel wrote this poem all the great shrines of medieval England had already gone, so had all the monasteries and the monks, so too had every sculpted and painted image from every parish church. So had the Latin mass, processions, the

cult of the saints, purgatory, and the cycle of saints' days which since time immemorial had framed the year for everyone. The ladder from earth to heaven by means of physical artefacts and symbolic acts had been swept away. The church as a holy place where God, under the form of the reserved sacrament, dwelt in the pyx suspended above the altar had gone. Instead the building stood as a whitewashed shell in which believers gathered to hear the word of God read from the lectern or expounded from the pulpit.

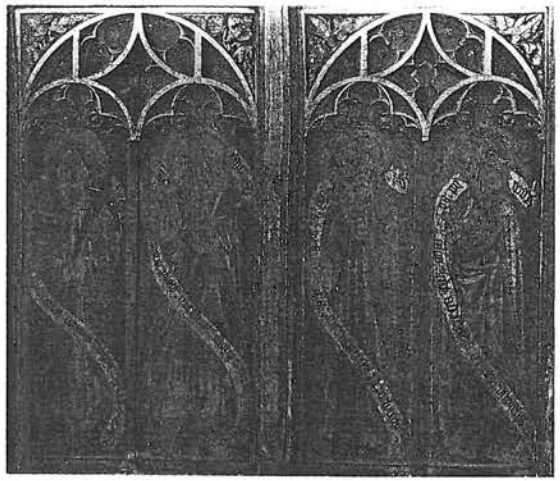
In the 1520s every aspect of late medieval traditional Catholicism was still in place. Through the rites of the Church, as administered by its priests, the Lord conveyed his life to the believing community through the seven sacraments. These marked the passages of each person's life: birth, confirmation, marriage and death. They also fixed the pattern of the year, which was punctuated by days like Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, besides a host of feast days and, in addition, the weekly Sunday mass. The dead remained at one with the living, their memory etched into the church both in its ritual and prayer life as well as in the very fabric of the structure in the way of memorials. This was a religion which called for the attributes of art, for images, pictures, books, vessels, vestments and banners. Everything worked from the premise that the spiritual world could be communicated with via the material. And it was that view of things which was to be obliterated, having in the long term a profound impact on the structure of people's minds and imaginations. All of this was to be cast aside not through popular demand but by order of government. Rebellions did occur but they were ineffective because of people's deep sense of obedience to higher authority. That, plus a progressive erosion over time, led finally to resignation to the inevitable.

This change of attitude to late medieval Christianity had been set in motion by the humanists, above all Erasmus. They had increasingly demanded the pruning of what they viewed as its unnecessary and corrupting externals. Their demands, however, over the veneration of relics and images or the practice of pilgrimage, were never for their total abolition but for their reform. But all of that was to change as reformers in the wake of the German Reformation movement of the 1520s began to articulate a far more radical approach. Already, in 1531, William Tyndale, the translator of the Bible into English, had written that since God is spirit he should be worshipped in spirit: 'Sacraments, signs, ceremonies, and bodily things can be no service to God in his person . . .' In just one line Tyndale had pronounced the death knell of traditional religion. Increasingly, to reformers, the text or word of God became everything and the sign or symbol nothing. In their view the sacramental world of late medieval Catholicism was opaque, bewildering and meaningless. In what was to form in the

coming decades the new Protestant ethic, real objects were to be preferred as against simulated ones, that is, true good works rather than works of art. In the reformers' view the superiority lay in God's own creation manifested in the world of nature and not in images made by man. Christ was to be the sole mediator between God and man, rendering obsolete not only the role of the Virgin Mary and the saints but all tangible signs and ceremonies. In its extreme form of Puritanism, Protestantism came to distrust all man-made objects of beauty. The new ethos was to have a profound effect on the cultural evolution of the country.

But the opening phases of the Reformation had seemingly little immediate effect on traditional religion. England went into schism and a new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, granted the king his divorce from his first wife and he married Anne Boleyn. The attack only gained momentum with the fall of the humanist chancellor, Sir Thomas More, in 1534. More had realised that if the onslaught increasingly mounted by the reformers on images in churches was successful the whole structure of traditional religion would in the end follow. And in this he was to be proved right.

Until 1547, when Henry VIII died, that attack went in two phases: the first, running to 1540, was to be savage with the evangelicals in the ascendant; the second, which lasted until the end of the reign, was to be ambiguous as reformers and conservatives were locked in a struggle to gain the king's support, either for further change or to maintain the status quo. In 1534 William Marshall's *Primer* in English was



Iconoclasm in action. The faces, hands and feet of the Apostles have been gouged off the wood on this rood screen in the church of St. Peter at Ringland in Norfolk.

published which contained an implicit assault on the cult of the saints, but that only affected the population when, in 1538, all shrines which were centres of pilgrimage were ordered to be destroyed. During these years the evangelical attack under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, by then the king's chief minister, was to reach its zenith. Down went the great shrines such as those of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury, St. Cuthbert at Durham and St. Edmund at Bury. The commissioners' carts took away the gold and jewels for the king's treasury where the gold was melted down while the structures themselves were razed to the ground. An example of what was destroyed is caught in an account by a former monk, written in the Elizabethan period, of the shrine of St. Cuthbert which had 'most curious workmanship of fine and costly marble, all limned and guilted with gold.' The cover or feretory which concealed the saint's body must have been a major work of medieval art, something to which those bidden to destroy it would have been totally oblivious:

> All gilded over, and eyther side was painted fower lively images curious to the beholders; and on the east end was painted the picture of Our Saviour sittinge on a rainbowe to give judgment, very lively to the beholders; and on the west end of itt was the picture of our Lady and our Saviour on her knees. And on the topp of the cover from end to end was most fyne carved worke, cutt owte with dragons and other beasts, most artificially wrought . . .

At the same time, the suppression of the monasteries was set in motion, some three hundred of the smaller ones going first, to be followed by the rest by 1540. A way of life which had existed for a thousand years was suddenly extirpated. The contents of the monasteries were carried away for the Crown, or sold. The buildings could be sold to be adapted for use as houses or tenements, or they were simply demolished. First the roofs would be stripped of lead, then the roof beams and choir stalls would be used to make a fire to melt it into pig. In the south-east of England few ruins are visible today as there was such a demand for the stone. In some places where the laity had a right to use the nave or an aisle, that was left standing. Sometimes townspeople would actually purchase the church building to act as their own parish church. Away from the south-east the ruins to this day are only too visible on the landscape. Two centuries were to pass before they were to be rediscovered and recast as romantic evocations of a lost medieval world.

Although the monasteries had long since ceased to be power-houses of learning they nonetheless retained some of the country's major libraries. These were now dispersed. Even monastic houses which became new cathedral priories lost their books. The Austin Friars at York, for example, had a library of nearly six hundred and

fifty volumes. Of these only three have ever been traced. Worcester, too, had six hundred volumes; only six found their way into the Royal Library. Worse depredations were to come in the next reign.

Ordinary parish churches remained at first unscathed, although there were verbal attacks on those customs which would in the end change their appearance. In 1536 Henry VIII's 'Ten Articles' dealt the first blow. The number of saints' days was drastically curtailed, decimating the ritual year. Holy images were reduced to powerless symbols: '. . . as laymen's books to remind us of heavenly things.' Cromwell meanwhile had staged public burnings of the major holy images, shipping them to London for that purpose. In 1538 a series of injunctions called upon the clergy to instruct their parishioners in the creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer in English. An English Bible was also to be placed to be read in every church and the people were to be exhorted 'not to repose their trust and affiance in any other works devised by men's phantasies besides Scripture; as in wandering to pilgrimages, offering of money, candles or tapers to images or relics, kissing or licking the same, saying over a number of beads not understood or minded on.' Orders went out that all cult images were to be demolished, that all external manifestations of the cult of the saints were to be removed, and that henceforth candles should only be lit by the rood, the sacrament, or Easter Sepulchre.

In this way a dramatic erosion of externals was decreed, but just how radical that erosion was to be depended entirely on the leanings of individual bishops across the country. In 1539 another set of Articles appeared, this time far more conservative in character, and Cromwell fell from power soon after, bringing to an end the first onslaught on traditional religion. Although nothing more was to happen while Henry VIII was alive, much had already gone or been undermined.

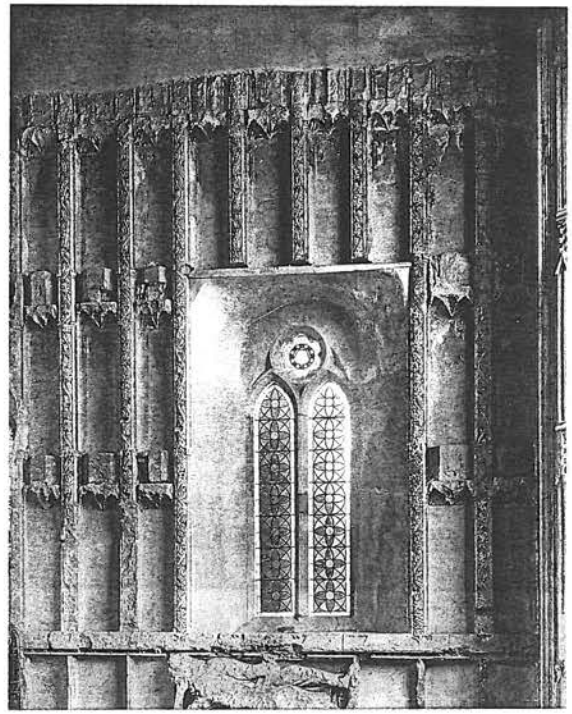
Until 1547 the belief that artefacts could provide an ascent to things spiritual was never officially challenged. With the accession of the boy king Edward VI came further changes and for the first time the fundamental belief that images were teaching aids for the illiterate was to be rejected. Indeed, images were to be wiped out in every church and parishioners were 'to do the like within their several houses'. The Epistle and Gospel were to be read in English, processions were abolished along with holy bread and holy water, and the only candles to be lit were the two on the altar. In 1548 the use of candles, ashes and palms was forbidden and the feast of Corpus Christi went, together with reservation of the sacrament. And then in the next year came Thomas Cranmer's first *Book of Common Prayer*. All the old feasts vanished, save Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, plus a handful of biblical saints' days. Everything a congregation would have remotely known or recognised as part of the weekly Sunday

mass effectively disappeared. It was now a truncated ritual performed in the vernacular in a whitewashed building adorned with texts from scripture. A centuries-old accumulation of visual artefacts vanished while the new service rendered the entire musical tradition obsolete.

None of these changes passed without upheavals. In Henry VIII's reign there had been the Pilgrimage of Grace, a rebellion from the north which was brutally put down. Under Edward VI there was an uprising in the south-west which was also cruelly suppressed. Everywhere those things which had held a rural society together as a community were violated. The chantries and guilds, lively vehicles of lay piety and a major source of church funds, were dissolved. In the reformed scheme of things the dead could no longer be helped by the living.

Then, in 1550, came an even more savage Act: 'For the defacing of images and the bringing in of books of old service in the church.' A holocaust of medieval liturgical books followed. John Bale, a reformer and also an early antiquary, records with horror the tide of destruction of books in a preface he wrote to a book published the year before:

> But to destroy all without consideration, is and will be unto England for ever, a most horrible infamy among the grave seniors of other nations. A great



A Tree of Jesse. c.1470, with twenty niches stripped of its statuary and the recumbent figure of Jesse hacked off, in the church of St. Cuthbert, Wells, Somerset.

number of them which purchased those superstitious mansions, reserved of those library books, some to serve their jakes, some to scour candlesticks, and some to rub their boots. Some they sold to the grocers and soapsellers, and some they sent overseas to the bookbinders, not in small number, but at times whole ships full, to the wondering of the foreign nations.

By the end of June 1550 it was ordered that all 'images of stone, timber, alabaster or earth, graven, carved or painted, which . . . yet stand in a nych or chapel' had to be smashed. In November all altars had to be demolished

The cultural revolution in action. At the top images are burnt and the churches emptied. Below Edward VI hands the Bible to his kneeling subjects. To the right there is a reordered church, devoid of images, in which the focus is the pulpit to which the congregation turns, the altar being reduced to a table placed in the body of the building.

and in the following year any remaining plate was confiscated. In 1552 came a second, far more Protestant, Prayer Book, bent on seeing that nothing should be left which might evoke even a reminiscence of what had been done away with. All that each church was now left with was a wooden communion table, two tablecloths, a cup for communion, a bell and a surplice, for vestments were thrown out too.

During seven years of devastation the mass went, as did books, breviaries, altars, vestments, banners, veils, hangings, candlesticks, images, pictures, along with the burning or defacing of images and whitewashing over of wallpaintings. Generations of private piety disappeared at the behest of radical reformers to meet the mid-Tudor war debt and the demands of an extravagant court. Injunction 28 of 1547 captures more than any other the merciless character of this assault with its instruction to '. . . take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables, candlesticks, trindles or rolls of wax, pictures, paintings and all monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition; so that there remain no memory of the same.'

For five years there was to be a reprieve during the reign of Edward's Catholic sister Mary. The grass roots resurgence for the old ways provides abundant evidence that had she lived longer or produced a child things would have taken a very different course. But the accession of her sister Elizabeth in 1558 was to decree otherwise. The new queen, as the daughter of Anne Boleyn, was born into the Reformation and however much her personal inclinations veered towards a return to 1547 or 1549, she was bound to the reformist cause. The Act of Uniformity of 1559 was to be the foundation stone of the Church of England. It was effectively to establish a liturgy and a form of church life which was to continue, albeit with breaks and modifications, until the close of the twentieth century. The Elizabethan settlement was as much about the future cultural direction of the country as it was about belief.

It went back to the Prayer Book of 1552 with elements from that of 1549. The result was ambivalent but just how ambivalent was only to emerge as time passed. The use of copes, bowing at the name of Jesus, the sign of the cross at baptism, and the ring at marriage were all retained. In its initial phases these did not impinge on the activities of the new reformist bishops and clergy who embarked on a vigorous suppression of any lingering externals of Catholic practice. This was intensified after 1570 when the pope excommunicated the queen, declaring her a heretic. As the 1570s progressed, any hopes that the clock could be put back began to vanish. And it was during this period that those prime vehicles of popular religious instruction, the miracle plays, were suppressed. The Norwich cycle was silenced in 1564, the York Corpus Christi plays in 1569 and the Chester cycle was last performed in 1575. The

Cornish miracle plays, which attracted audiences of up to two thousand, survived into the 1590s but by 1600 any form of religious drama had become a distant memory for both town and village. The new Protestant ascendancy made no attempt to inspire a drama for their own ends. Indeed they were soon to display a deep distrust of theatre. In addition, by the 1570s and 1580s, popular festivities like Plough Monday, Hocktide, May Day and the midsummer watch gradually ceased to be celebrated, victims to attacks on them as somehow containing Catholic vestiges and being events which could lead to public disorder, sexual licence, and lack of decorum, thus impairing the creation of a sober, orderly and godly society.

Within two generations most of the familiar rituals which had seen people through life had gone. Virtually everything had to start afresh, and yet, because of its ambiguity, Anglicanism gave birth to what by the close of Elizabeth's reign had become a new form of traditional religion. Gradually Protestantism took hold, above all devotion to the English Bible and to the words of the *Book of Common Prayer*. As Cranmer's sombrely magnificent prose was read out week after week it slowly permeated the minds and hearts of its hearers. It became the very fabric of their prayer life and gave verbal expression to life's most sacred moments. Instead of the weekly mass, it was morning prayer with its stately yet humane collects, prayers and responses which was to furnish the minds of the people and be their regular contact with something which in another sense was literature. Collects like the one for grace helped frame the style not only of the Elizabethan age but centuries beyond:

> O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day: Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do always that is righteous in thy sight . . .

The Prayer Book was a new traditional religion in the making and its texts were to have as incantatory a hold over its users as the Latin mass which had preceded it. This triumph of the vernacular in the liturgy heralded the great renaissance in the English language that was to follow.

The Bible and the Prayer Book were not the only books in each parish church which helped frame the minds of people. There was also Bishop John Jewel's *Apology*, a defence of the Church of England as being both Catholic and reformed. There were the *Homilies*, those texts read instead of a sermon which spelt out the necessity of obedience to higher powers. And then there was John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. This last volume propagated a new history for the country which was now seen as

having been rescued by the Tudor monarchs from the slavery and sin of the Church of Rome. The pope was cast as Antichrist, the mass as a mummery, and the Catholic past as corruption. The English were deemed God's chosen nation leading the struggle against the evil forces of the Church of Rome in an apocalyptic battle. The accession of Elizabeth was presented as the dawn of a new age which, as the reign progressed, was seen to be true.

So the scene was set for new departures. These were already being signalled during the Reformation decades as the pulpit replaced the altar and the church ceased to be a holy place. As a result churches began to fall into physical decay as laymen's priorities became secularised. Money once showered on chantries, church ornaments and maintenance now went into houses, even for the merchant, yeomen and non-gentry classes. By the 1570s their houses had already developed into buildings which were not only better lit but also beautified with wood carving, plasterwork and glass. The only money to be bestowed on the church interior was henceforth to be for tombs. For them a new imagery had to be found, one whose stress was no longer on the next world and release from purgatory but on the achievements in the present life. So while skulls, doused torches, and weeping cherubs spelt *memento mori*, obelisks of fame, trumpets, trophies and a phantasmagoria of armorial bearings proclaimed glories which were now purely secular.

Nonetheless a whole way of behaving and thinking is not so easily blotted out. Much lingered on, external gestures like kneeling, crossing oneself, or standing for the Gospel. The communion table stood where the altar had once been and the cleric wore a cope. The next century was to reveal that the settlement of 1559 left the door firmly open for images and ritual to return. In the meantime what had happened must have left an enormous gap in the minds and imagination of men and women. Evidence of wills indicates no immediate transfer from one form of the Christian faith to another, rather the broad mass of the population remained neutral and uncommitted. Catholicism had been a religion which accepted and made provision for the illiterate. Protestantism made seemingly none and most of the population was unlettered, relying on being read to. As they sat in their bare churches listening to the Word of God there was but one new image permitted that they could stare up at. Over the chancel arch, where there had once been the figure of Christ crucified, now hung the royal arms. By 1603, when Elizabeth I died, ritual had found a new expression in court spectacle and the festivals of State which apotheosised the success of her rule and images in her portraits. The cult of the Virgin Queen had successfully replaced that of the Queen of Heaven.

ELIZABETHAN

Cult of Elizabeth

Three years after the defeat of the great Armada sent by Catholic Spain to subjugate the tiny island kingdom of England the greatest poem of the age was published. Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1591) signals in one epic work that a new civilisation was already in full flower. No other English poem of comparable scope or literary structure has inspired so many later poets from Milton and Dryden down to Keats and the Romantics. Interwoven into it is every aspect of what was the apogee of the English Renaissance, which reached its climax during the last twenty years of the sixteenth century. And the poem's pivot is one which provides the key to this extraordinary resurgence of creativity, an unmarried woman, Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and his second queen, Anne Boleyn. She it was who dominated the culture of her age. *The Faerie Queene* is suffused with her multi-faceted presence, the poet indeed opening his epic, one designed to immortalise the Tudor dynasty, with an invocation addressed less to a human being than to a sacred icon:

> . . . O goddesse heavenly bright!
> Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine,
> Great Ladie of the greatest Isle, whose light
> Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine,
> Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,
> And raise my thoughtes, too humble and too vile,
> To thinke of that true glorious type of thine,
> The argument of mine affected stile . . .

It was recognised from the moment of publication that this was the supreme literary masterpiece of the age. The numerous dedicatory verses gather in virtually everyone of importance at court: the queen's glamorous new young favourite, the Earl of Essex; Lord Admiral Howard, who had commanded the fleet against the 'Castilian King'; Sir Walter Raleigh, 'the summer's nightingale'; the queen's Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, 'the great Maecenas of the age'; her First

Elizabeth I enthroned, supported by two of the virtues her rule personified to her subjects, Justice bearing the sword and Wisdom clasping her serpent. The illumination is by the queen's miniaturist, Nicholas Hilliard, and adorns the charter founding Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1584.

Cushion embroidered with the story of Diana and the hunter Actaeon. On the left Actaeon surprises the goddess and her nymphs while bathing, for which he is punished, right, by being transformed into a stag and torn to pieces by the goddess's hounds. The cushion bears the initials ES for Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, who embroidered it for her great house, Hardwick Hall. Such a scene would have been read as a warning against the violation of chastity.

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Minister, Lord Burghley; her Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton; her Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon. More are there but Spenser moves on to salute the ladies of the court including the sister of that flower of chivalry Sir Philip Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, and concludes with a valedictory tribute: 'To all the gracious and beautiful Ladies of the Court.'

This was a new culture which had reached a sudden astounding zenith, one which was to go on with a relentless explosive drive past the year 1600 and spill over into the opening years of the reign of the queen's successor, James VI of Scotland and I of England. What was it that triggered this breathtaking phenomenon, which, four centuries later, still fills the world with wonder? *The Faerie Queene* will give us our bearings. Its lodestar is the queen, not her reality but her carefully composed image. Secondly it is of significance that the poem takes the form of a romance, a genre which looks back to the Middle Ages. It is one peopled by knights whose quest is virtue and its exercise; in other words, it is art as a vehicle for moralising to the reader. The poem in addition is one gigantic allegory, stuffed with signs and symbols, all of which call for a highly educated mind able to unravel its often esoteric allusions. Ease of access is foreign to its concept. Its inner message is deliberately a hidden one purveyed in a luxuriance of rich images not, as in pre-Reformation times, rendered in two or three dimensions, but in words. And this is a touchstone.

The Elizabethan revival of chivalry. The new society of Protestant England clothed itself with the panoply of medieval knightly endeavour fused with the trappings of the Renaissance courtier. These aspirations are caught in Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of Sir Anthony Mildmay, painted about 1590.

It is the emergence of a society which no longer expresses its innermost convictions and ideas by way of the visual arts but by way of the pen. The complex images Spenser paints in his poetry assail our mental subconscious through the text and not by means of a painted or sculpted verisimilitude. Everywhere in the Elizabethan age one senses this fear of the visual image, at least fear of it in any deceptive optical sense. Images are now to be locked into the mind, into the visual imagination. If and when they took visual form, whether in architecture, painting or sculpture, they were to be abstract, diagrammatic, anti-naturalistic compilations, either pattern or symbols which called for reading. The visual image, in short, was turned into a text to be read. And this verbalisation of visual experiences was to become central to the island's culture until the television age. Even our landscape was to become literary.

The England of Elizabeth I was an insular nation state in the making. It was a country which for most of the reign was under siege, externally threatened by the mega-power of Catholic Spain and internally by those who remained either openly or covertly loyal to the old religion. But the incoming government in 1558 laid sure foundations both politically and economically. The new ruling classes consolidated their power, headed by great dynasties like the Cecils, the Russells and the Cavendishes. This was an élite society and an élite culture, which, through inter-marriage, spread its net not only across country but also across the social spectrum. The English aristocracy never became a caste, and never hesitated to indulge in lucrative trade and commerce or indeed to marry into it. And riches, the sure foundation of any aesthetic flowering, were well in evidence as almost half-a-century of peace brought a commercial boom. Never before had so many lay people been drawn into the creation of a new national identity, one in which the arts were seen to play a crucial role. Even then nothing could have quite prepared anyone for the explosive energy of creation which followed the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Elizabethan 3

This sense of cultural oneness reflected the unique alliance of monarch and people as expressed by the Crown in Parliament. In no other period of the nation's history was the role of the ruler to be so pivotal to a cultural renaissance. In Elizabeth I there occurred a unique fusion of art and power. Never a patron herself, she nonetheless dominated every form of literary and artistic endeavour. The vulnerability of the new state meant that it drew in the arts to affirm a vision of national unity expressed through a cult of the monarch both as sovereign and lady. In her, no dividing line could be drawn between her public ceremonial image and her private role. The two were as one. To achieve that, the arts paid a price for what in retrospect can be regarded as outright sycophancy on a scale far on the other side of idolatry which they paid the queen. In harnessing their creative powers to the State, artists inevitably had to forgo much that Renaissance art as it had evolved in Italy had been about. There was no such thing as freedom of expression in Elizabethan England. It was dominated by State-controlled censorship, but the price was worth the paying.

Art was thus in the service of the State sustaining and helping to establish the mythology of a new society. But of what kind? The irony was that this new society was rooted in a cult of history and antiquity, both real and manufactured. Central to finding its new identity was the necessity to re-invent the past. Everywhere one looks this aggressive *nouveau* culture vests itself in the garb of bygone eras. Chivalry, far from slipping into oblivion, was revived, or at least its showy outward trappings. It provided surface glamour to the new rich who spent untold sums establishing the antiquity of their descent, on scattering their coats of arms over absolutely every form of artefact, from a cushion cover to a tomb, and seeing themselves depicted as medieval knights in their portraits. Even Elizabethan architecture looks firmly backwards, a continuation in bizarre guise of late medieval Perpendicular. Castles continued to be built, albeit ones more suited to the knights of poetic romance than the realities of contemporary warfare. Chivalry also provided the ideal vehicle for the heroine of the age, the queen. Virginal and unattainable, she it was for whom knights fought on the field of battle or circumnavigated the globe. The chivalric convention was paramount at the court, indeed its greatest expression was to be its annual festival of chivalry, the fancy dress tournament staged each 17 November, the day Elizabeth ascended the throne, when her knights came in disguise as the heroes of romance to pay her homage. This living out the life of today in terms of the romantic make-believe of yesterday provides the key to the era, its literature, its architecture, its painting, even its music.

Emblems

Fear of the wrong use and perception of the visual image dominates the Elizabethan age. The old pre-Reformation idea of images, religious ones, was that somehow they partook of the essence of what they depicted. Any advance in technique which could reinforce that experience for the viewer was embraced. That was now reversed, indeed it may account for the Elizabethans failing to take cognisance of the optical advances which created the art of the Italian Renaissance, ones like scientific and aerial perspective which increased verisimilitude and placed the viewer directly into the spatial experience. They certainly knew about these things but, and this is central to the understanding of the Elizabethans, chose not to employ them. Instead the visual arts retreated in favour of presenting a series of signs or sym-

Elizabethan (4)

bols through which the viewer was meant to pass to an understanding of the idea behind the work. In this manner the visual arts were verbalised, turned into a form of book, a 'text' which called for reading by the onlooker. There are no better examples of this than the quite extraordinary portraits of the queen herself which increasingly, as the reign progressed, took on the form of collections of abstract pattern and symbols disposed in an unnaturalistic manner for the viewer to unravel, and by doing so enter into an inner vision of the idea of monarchy. As a result Elizabethan painting, apart from the miniature, may be unique but is a disappointment when set within a European context. This problem was not to arise in the case of either literature or music because their means of expression was through words and sounds. Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*, published in 1595 after his death, bills poetry along with painting in the classical canon as being sister arts, but this was never to happen in the Elizabethan period. Image-making was to be the prime function of the poet whose role was to purvey verbal images so compelling that they would remain stored within the memory, inciting the reader to virtue.

So images could exist in the mind but if they took two- or three-dimensional form they had to eschew reality for symbol. That explains why the Elizabethans had no difficulty in assimilating one crucial aspect of European Renaissance culture, the cult of emblems. Along with coats of arms, everywhere we look, from plaster ceilings to embroidered cushions, is covered with evidence of this lost language, one of the prime keys to the culture of the age. The approach is best summed up in Prospero's words when conjuring up the spectacle of a courtly masque in *The Tempest*: 'No tongue! all eyes! be silent!' This lost means of silent communication, which became a common language of the educated classes, continued and expanded for a new secular culture the medieval tradition of hidden meanings. Just as commentators had argued that the Bible had complex layers of symbolic and allegorical meaning so that approach was extended to the writings of the pagan philosophers, who were cast as having had glimmerings of the coming divine revelation. Fired by Renaissance fervour for antiquity these texts and others were studied with a view to uncovering a lost secret wisdom which stemmed down from Creation via the classical world. The turning point was the discovery in 1419 of a book supposedly written by an Ancient Egyptian priest, Hor Apollo, which gave meaning to hieroglyphs. It confirmed that ancient secret wisdom had been transmitted by means of symbol. In it the reader could learn, for example, that a swan represented a musical old man or that a serpent biting its tail was eternity. The result was an escalation and expansion of the belief that the role of images was to purvey deep philosophical truths. In 1531 this discovery was re-invented for the present by Andrea Alciati whose *Emblemata* ignited a mania for emblems. The formula was an image which was a collection of naturalistic objects arranged in an unnaturalistic way, accompanied by a Latin motto. Together image and word, which were inseparable, embodied some particular moral truth. Thus a swarm of bees making a helmet a hive symbolised peace, or someone trying to scrub a black man white the impossible.

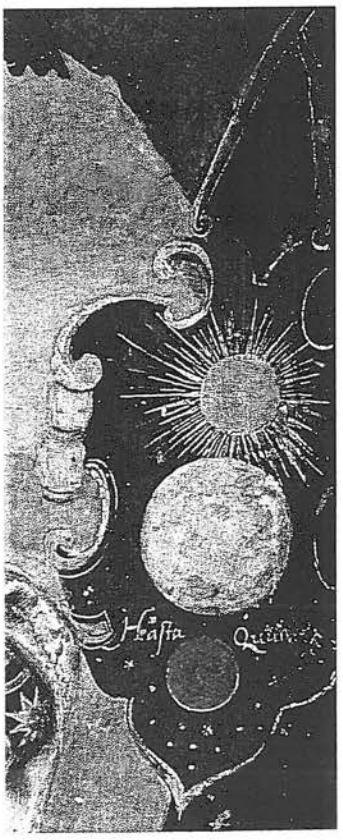
This initiated a flood of illustrated books of emblems which were to engulf Europe until the second half of the seventeenth century. Few were English, Geoffrey

Elizabethan 5

The passion for emblems dominated the art and literature of the age. This one, showing a helmet transformed into a beehive as an image of peace, comes from one of the few English emblem books, Geoffrey Whitney's Choice of Emblemes *(1586).*

Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (1586) being the most important, but the continental ones were known and devoured in Elizabethan England. We see their impact in the decoration of houses and even on costumes, let alone their appearance in portraits or on jewels. Everywhere the eye fell there was this new secular silent vocabulary. The queen herself was a monument to it. Her imagery embraced globes, sieves, the phoenix, the pelican, the eglantine rose, the column, the rainbow and the moon, allusions to a whole range of the virtues attributed to her, chastity, constancy, peace and the nurturing of both church and state.

Impreſe



Emblems were general imagery. More tantalising were the devices, or *impreſe* as they were called, adopted by individuals. These were again compilations of images with a motto embodying the aspirations and commitment of a particular person. They could be of extraordinary obscurity because their whole point was to hide, rather than to reveal, their meaning, except only to the intellectually initiated. Elizabeth I's sailor champion at the tilt, George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, had one which depicted the earth betwixt the sun and moon in total eclipse with the motto *Hasta quando* meaning that he would wield his lance in defence of his sovereign until such a celestial configuration occurred. Nor did this obsession with symbols end there, for the whole pantheon of the classical world, its gods and goddesses, myths and legends, was systematically codified and glossed with meaning in a series of iconographical textbooks which were on the shelf of every educated person, especially those who were creators in the world

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Elizabethan (6)

of the arts. For the educated, knowledge of this sign language of abstract symbols was as important as being able to read, more important in one sense for it was more fully in accord with the prevailing philosophy of the age, Neoplatonism.

Impresa *borne by the Queen's Champion at the tilt, the Earl of Cumberland. The earth is depicted on the pasteboard shield he would have presented to the queen in a state of total eclipse between sun and moon. The Latin motto,* Hasta quando, *means that the earl will wield his lance in his sovereign's defence until such an heavenly configuration occurs.*

Neoplatonism

This revived Platonism (for Plato's works were known to the Middle Ages) stemmed from fifteenth century Florence. Its two most influential figures were the philosophers Marsiglio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola (of whom Thomas More wrote a life), and it

Woodcut illustrating 'The March Eclogue' of Spenser's The Shepheardes Calendar, *published in 1579. 'Two shepherd boys taking occasion of the season, begin to make purpose of love and other pleasance, which to spring time is most agreeable.'*

predicated an immensely enhanced concept of man's place in the divine order of things. Man the microcosm, the mirror of the cosmos, was capable of rising to the stars or sinking to the level of the brute beasts. Through the exercise of reason and the will and the taming of the passions he could control his own destiny. More, because in the Platonic scheme of things the key to the universe lay in number. By attuning himself to its harmonious mathematical structure man could not only place himself at one with the universe, he could go further and control its workings. This endowed man, made in God's image, with tremendous power. Such beliefs not only account for the central place, for example, of music and dance, in the practice of which man placed himself in harmony with the music of the spheres, but also for the huge drive forwards in the realm of practical technology in which the mysterious forces of nature, which could, for example, make wheels move or water spurt, were harnessed.

Platonism rejected the material world as transient and believed in a higher eternal realm in which opposites could be reconciled in an ideal and ultimate truth. Everything in the arts reflects this preoccupation with the holding up for emulation of ideal types. Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, was made to approximate to heroic prototypes from both classical antiquity and the Christian tradition. The urge was always towards ideal types, abstract symbols in their human vesture. And nowhere was this impulse to be more clearly revealed than in the literature of the age.

(For further details, see, if you wish, R. Strong, The Spirit of Britain) 127

ELIZABETHAN NON-DRAMATIC VERSE

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) the greatest non-dramatic poet of the English Renaissance
Puritan, graduate of Cambridge (B.A. & M.A.), had series of positions in the retinues of prominent men, incl. the Earl of Leicester, the queen's favourite, in whose household came to know Sir Philip Sidney and his friend Sir Edward Dyer, courtiers who were interested in promoting English poetry. Inspired by them wrote his "**The Shepheardes Calender**" (1579) which he dedicated to Sidney ("Goe little book: thyself present/As child whose parent is unkent/To him that is the president/Of noblesse and of chevalree."). It consists of 12 pastoral eclogues, one for each month of the year. Commentator E.K. divided the eclogues into 3 groups: plaintive, recreative, moral. Archaic lg, partly out of homage to Chaucer (Tityrus, god of shepherds in the book), partly for rustic effect. Skillful use of many verse forms, a "word-musician" who inaugurated the "new poetry" of the Elizabethans. A prolific experimenter: in the "Calender" alone he used 13 different meters, some invented, some adapted, most of them novel; a special rhyme scheme of the Spenserian sonnet in his sonnet sequence "**Amoretti**", adaptations of Italian canzone forms for "**Epithalamion**" and "**Prothalamion**" and the nine-line stanza of "**The Faerie Queene**" (1590, first three books published). "FQ": interpretations range from: a romantic and moralistic yet highly topical epic of the Elizabethans, a verbal symphony for the Romantics, an esoteric poem full of complicated symbol-systems subject to highly personal interpretations for the New Critics, a cross-word puzzle for symbol-seekers, allusion-spotters, source-hunters. It is definitely: 1) a romance of knight-errantry, a romantic epic like Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso" (1516), 2) an allegory like Torquato Tasso's "Gerusalemme Liberata" (1575), 3) a "courtesy book" like Castiglione's "Courtier" (out of 12 planned books 6 were finished exhibiting virtues -Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, Courtesy), 4) it deals with contemporary politics and ideology (Gloriana, the Faerie Queen, Belphoebe - Elizabeth I, Duessa - Mary Queen of Scots but also the Church of Rome etc.), 5) it is also a series of psychological landscapes of both men and women.

Vogue for Neo-Platonic love sonnets 1591 (Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella") - 1593-4
Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) protege and neighbour of Lady Pembroke, Sidney's sister. Sonnet sequence "**Delia**" (1592)
Michael Drayton ((1536-1631) sonnet sequence "**Idea**" (1594)
Shakespeare's sonnets (1598?)

Age of Song
Anthologies published yearly between 1557 ("Tottel's Miscellany") to 1600 ("A Handful of Pleasant Delights", "A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions", "The Paradise of Dainty Devices", "The Phoenix Nest", "England's Helicon")
broadside ballad madrigal air
great Elizabethan song books **Thomas Campion** (1567-1620)

ELIZABETHAN FICTION/PROSE
best-sellers: ballads, jest books, chivalric and pastoral romances, long poems, short stories, Bibles, prayer books, religious tracts, Latin grammars, practical books like almanacs (calendars with lots of practical information)

John Lyly (1554-1606) grandson of the famous William Lily ("Eton Latin Grammar"), one of the most exquisite persons of his age. **"Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit" (Part I, 1578), "Euphues and His England" (Part II, 1580)** "euphuistic" style - a combination of laboured elegance, unnatural history, classical allusion, contrived antithesis, occasional flashes of genuine wit, verbal ingenuity, sententiousness, weighty learning lightly handled
Robert Greene (1560-1592) the literary chameleon of his age, a typical Elizabethan: rather poor, educated at Cambridge, travelled in Italy, lived a Bohemian's life in the London underworld. **20 "euphuistic" novels/romances**: "Gwydonius or the Card of Fancy", "Morando, the Tritameron of Love", "Arbosto, the Anatomy of Fortune", "Ciceronis Amor or Tully' Love". **Cony-Catching pamhlets**, "Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance"
Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) "euphuistic" romance **"Rosalinde"** (1590)
Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) successor of Greene as a pamphleteer, the author of the **first picaresque novel in England "The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton"**
Thomas Deloney (1543?-1600?) popular balladist, novelist of craftsmen **"Thomas of Reading"** (about clothiers), **"Jack of Newbury"** (ab. weavers), **"The Gentle Craft"** (ab. shoemakers)
"university wits" (common univ. background): Lyly, Greene, Lodge, Nashe, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA
John Heywood's interludes or farces in the reign of Henry VIII
after 1550 formation of the troops of professional players
public playhouses outside the corporate limits: in the Shoreditch suburb outside the city walls - **Theatre** and **Curtain** (1657), **Fortune** (1600), **Red Bull** (1605), on the south bank of the Thames opposite the City in the county of Surrey - **Rose** (1587), **Swan** (1595), **Globe** (1599), **Hope** (1614)
"private" playhouses: **Paul's Boys, Blackfriars, Inns of Court** ,
choristers of Chapel Royal, boy actors of London schools - St. Paul's, Westminster, Merchant Taylors'

COMEDY
Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.) Plautine - boisterous low comedy of middle and lower class life
Terence (c. 190-159 B.C.) Terentian - polished, humanitarian, psychologically motivated
Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Westminster public school **"Ralph Roister Doister"** (1553)
William Stevenson, master of Christ's College, Cambridge **"Gammer Gurton's Needle"** (1575)
translations and adaptations of contemporary Italian comedies
Lyly 7 comedies between 1581 and 1590 - witty and thinly disguised allegories intended to flatter Elizabeth
Peele Greene

THE ELIZABETHAN SONNET

A Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument, –
  Memorial from the Soul's eternity
  To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fullness reverent:
  Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
  As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
  The soul, – its converse, to what Power 'tis due: –
Whether for tribute in the august appeals
  Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

Loving in truth

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,
  I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.
  But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes,
And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes,
  Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,
  'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write.'

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

Coming to kiss her lips

Coming to kiss her lips, (such grace I found)
  Me seemed I smelt a garden of sweet flowers:
  That dainty odours from them threw around
  For damsels fit to deck their lovers' bowers.
Her lips did smell like unto gillyflowers,
  Her ruddy cheeks like unto roses red:
  Her snowy brows like budded bellamoures,
  Her lovely eyes like pinks but newly spread.
Her goodly bosom like a strawberry bed,
  Her neck like to a bunch of colombines:
  Her breast like lillies, ere their leaves be shed,
  Her nipples like young blossomed jessamines.
Such fragrant flowers do give most odorous smell,
  But her sweet odour did them all excell.

EDMUND SPENSER

× bellamoures = bellflowers
gillyflowers = carnations
jessamines = jasmines

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
  And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
  As any she belied with false compare.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sonnet 140

Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain;
Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express
The manner of my pity-wanting pain.
If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
Though not to love, yet, love, to tell me so;
As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
No news but health from their physicians know;
For, if I should despair, I should grow mad,
And in my madness might speak ill of thee:
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
Mad slanderers by mad ears believèd be.
  That I may not be so, nor thou belied,
  Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go wide.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sonnet 57

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your servant once adieu;
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are how happy you make those.
  So true a fool is love that in your will,
  Though you do any thing, he thinks no ill.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

130

Sonnet (2)

147

My love is as a fever, longing still[1]
For that which longer nurseth[2] the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,[3]
Th' uncertain sickly appetite[4] to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.[5]
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,[6]
And frantic mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
At random from the truth vainly expressed;[7]
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

Shakespeare

When men shall find thy flower

When men shall find thy flower, thy glory, pass,
And thou, with careful brow sitting alone,
Receivèd hast this message from thy glass,
That tells the truth and says that all is gone;
Fresh shalt thou see in me the wounds thou madest,
Though spent thy flame, in me the heat remaining:
I that have loved thee thus before thou fadest,
My faith shall wax, when thou art in thy waning.
The world shall find this miracle in me,
That fire can burn when all the matter's spent:
Then what my faith hath been thyself shalt see,
And that thou wast unkind thou may'st repent.
Thou may'st repent that thou hast scorned my tears,
When winter snows upon thy sable hairs.

SAMUEL DANIEL

5

It is most true that eyes are formed to serve
The inward light,[4] and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their own smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart
An image is, which for ourelves we carve,
And, fools, adore in temple of our heart,
Till that good god make church and churchman starve.
True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed.[5]
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country move.
True, and yet true that I must Stella love.

Sidney

Oh that my heart could hit upon a strain

Oh that my heart could hit upon a strain
Would strike the music of my soul's desire;
Or that my soul could find that sacred vein
That sets the consort of the angels' choir.
Or that that spirit of especial grace
That cannot stoop beneath the state of heaven
Within my soul would take his settled place
With angels' *Ens*, to make his glory even.
Then should the name of my most gracious King,
And glorious God, in higher tunes be sounded
Of heavenly praise, than earth hath power to sing,
Where heaven, and earth, and angels, are confounded.
And souls may sing while all heart strings are broken;
His praise is more than can in praise be spoken.

NICHOLAS BRETON

Like as a huntsman after weary chase

Like as a huntsman after weary chase,
Seeing the game from him escaped away,
Sits down to rest him in some shady place,
With panting hounds beguilèd of their prey:
So after long pursuit and vain assay,
When I all weary had the chase forsook,
The gentle deer returned the self-same way,
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook.
There she beholding me with milder look,
Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide:
Till I in hand her yet half trembling took,
And with her own goodwill her firmly tied.
Strange thing me seemed to see a beast so wild,
So goodly won with her own will beguiled.

EDMUND SPENSER

Sonnet 79

Men call you fayre, and you doe credit° it,	*believe*
For that your selfe ye dayly such doe see:	
But the trew fayre,° that is the gentle wit,	*beauty*
And vertuous mind, is much more praysd of me.	
For all the rest, how ever fayre it be,	
Shall turne to nought and loose that glorious hew:°	*form*
But onely that is permanent and free	
From frayle corruption, that doth flesh ensew.°	*outlast*
That is true beautie: that doth argue you	
To be divine and borne of heavenly seed:	
Derived from that fayre Spirit,[6] from whom al true	
And perfect beauty did at first proceed.	
He onely fayre, and what he fayre hath made:	
All other fayre, lyke flowres, untymely fade.	

Spenser

Sonnet (3)

I saw the object of my pining thought

I saw the object of my pining thought
Within a garden of sweet Nature's placing;
Wherein an arbour, artificial wrought,
By workman's wondrous skill the garden gracing,
Did boast his glory, glory far renownèd,
For in his shady boughs my mistress slept:
And with a garland of his branches crownèd,
Her dainty forehead from the sun ykept.
Imperious Love upon her eyelids tending,
Playing his wanton sports at every beck,
And into every finest limb descending,
From eyes to lips, from lips to ivory neck;
And every limb supplied, and t' every part
Had free ac'cess, but durst not touch her heart.

THOMAS WATSON

71

Who will in fairest book of Nature know,
How Virtue may best lodged in beauty be,
Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,
Stella, those fair lines, which true goodness show.

There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of reason, from whose light those night birds[2] fly;
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.
And not content to be Perfection's heir
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.
So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,
As fast thy Virtue bends that love to good:
"But ah," desire still cries, "give me some food."

Sidney

One day I wrote her name upon the strand

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But Came the waves and washèd it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay,
A mortal thing so to immortalise,
But I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wipèd out likewise.
Not so (quod I), let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall eternise,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

EDMUND SPENSER

How many paltry, foolish, painted things

How many paltry, foolish, painted things,
That now in coaches trouble every street,
Shall be forgotten, whom no poet sings,
Ere they be well-wrapped in their winding sheet?
Where I to thee Eternity shall give,
When nothing else remaineth of these days,
And queens hereafter shall be glad to live
Upon the alms of thy superfluous praise;
Virgins and matrons reading these my rhymes,
Shall be so much delighted with thy story,
That they shall grieve, they lived not in these times,
To have seen thee, their Sex's only glory:
So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng,
Still to survive in my immortal song.

MICHAEL DRAYTON

Let others sing

Let others sing of knights and paladins
In agèd accents and untimely words,
Paint shadows in imaginary lines,
Which well the reach of their high wits records:
But I must sing of thee, and those fair eyes
Authentic shall my verse in time to come,
When yet the unborn shall say, 'Lo, where she lies,
Whose beauty made him speak that else was dumb.'
These are the arks, the trophies, I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect
Against the dark and Time's consuming rage.
Though the error of my youth in them appear,
Suffice they show I lived, and loved thee dear.

SAMUEL DANIEL

55

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.[1]
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his[2] sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity[3]
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.[4]
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

60

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.[1]
Nativity, once in the main[2] of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish[3] set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
And yet to times in hope[4] my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

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Shakespeare

SPENSER
'The Shepheardes Calender'

1

Aprill[1]

Aegloga Quarta[2]

ARGUMENT

This Aeglogue is purposely intended to the honor and prayse of our most gracious sovereigne, Queene Elizabeth. The speakers herein be Hobbinoll and Thenot, two shepheardes: the which Hobbinoll being before mentioned, greatly to have loved Colin, is here set forth more largely, complayning him of that boyes great misadventure in Love, whereby his mynd was alienate and with drawen not onely from him, who moste loved him, but also from all former delightes and studies, aswell in pleasaunt pyping, as conning[3] ryming and singing, and other his laudable exercises. Whereby he taketh occasion, for proofe of his more excellencie and skill in poetrie, to recorde a songe, which the sayd Colin sometime made in honor of her Majestie, whom abruptely[4] he termeth Elysa.

THENOT HOBBINOLL

Tell me good Hobbinoll, what garres thee greete?[5]
What? hath some Wolfe thy tender Lambes ytorne?

1. When *The Shepheardes Calender* was published in 1579, each of the 12 eclogues was followed by a "Glosse," which contained explications of difficult or archaic words, together with learned discussions of—and disagreements with—Spenser's ideas, imagery, and poetics. The glosses are by one "E. K.," whom some scholars identify with one of Spenser's friends, others with Spenser himself. E. K.'s editorial apparatus is usually published along with the poems. In these notes, the editors have incorporated the glosses that are especially useful to the modern reader; they are marked [E. K.]. The original spelling is retained.
2. Fourth Eclogue. An eclogue ("aeglogue") is a short pastoral poem in the form of a dialogue or soliloquy. Spenser's spelling is based on a false etymology (*aix*-goat + *logos*-speech), satisfying, according to E. K., "Goteheards tales." The illustration portrays Colin Clout (the Shepherd persona assumed by Spenser) piping a song of Elizabeth, shown with the ladies of her court. The shepherds Thenot and Hobbinol are in the background, and the astrological sign for April, Taurus the bull, is at the top of the picture.
3. Learning.
4. With a sudden change.
5. "Causeth thee weepe and complain" [E. K.]

Or is thy Bagpype broke, that soundes so sweete?
Or art thou of thy lovèd lasse forlorne°? *forsaken*

Or bene thine eyes attempred to the yeare,[6]
Quenching the gasping furrowes thirst with rayne?
Like April shoure, so stremes the trickling teares
Adowne thy cheeke, to quenche thy thirstye° payne. *thirsty*

HOBBINOLL

Nor thys, nor that, so muche doeth make me mourne,
But for the ladde,[7] whome long I lovd so deare,
Nowe loves a lasse,[8] that all his love doth scorne:
He plongd in payne, his tressèd° locks dooth teare. *curled*

Shepheards delights he dooth them all forsweare,
Hys pleasaunt Pipe, whych made us meriment,
He wylfully hath broke, and doth forbeare
His wonted songs, wherein he all outwent.[9]

THENOT

What is he for a Ladde,[1] you so lament?
Ys love such pinching payne to them, that prove?
And hath he skill to make[2] so excellent,
Yet hath so little skill to brydle love?

HOBBINOLL

Colin thou kenst,° the Southerne shepheardes boye: *knowest*
Him Love hath wounded with a deadly darte.
Whilome° on him was all my care and joye, *once*
Forcing° with gyfts to winne his wanton heart. *striving*

But now from me hys madding° mynd is *foolish*
starte,° *broken away*
And woes the Widdowes daughter of the glenne:[3]
So nowe fayre Rosalind hath bredde° hys smart, *caused*
So now his frend is chaungèd for a frenne.° *stranger*

THENOT

But if hys ditties bene so trimly dight,[4]
I pray thee Hobbinoll, recorde° some one: *sing*

6. "Agreeable to the season of the yeare, that is Aprill, which moneth is most bent to shoures and seasonable rayne: to quench . . . the drought" [E. K.]. "Bene": are.
7. "Colin Clout" [E. K.]; "for": that.
8. "Rosalinda" [E. K.].
9. His usual songs, which surpassed those of all others.
1. "What maner of Ladde is he?" [E. K.].
2. "To rime and versifye" [E. K.]. "Maker" is the Greek word for "poet."
3. "He calleth Rosalind the Widowes daughter of the glenne, that is, of a country Hamlet or borough, which I thinke is rather sayde to concele the person, then simply spoken. For it is well knowen . . . that shee is a Gentle woman of no meane house" [E. K.]. "Woes": woos.
4. "Adorned" [E. K.].

V33

The whiles our flockes doe graze about in sight,
And we close shrowded in thys shade alone.

HOBBINOLL

Contented I: then will I singe his laye° *song*
Of fayre Elisa, Queene of shepheardes all:[5]
Which once he made, as by a spring he laye,
And tunèd it unto the Waters fall.

"Ye dayntye Nymphs, that in this blessèd Brooke
doe bathe your brest,
For sake your watry bowres, and hether looke,
at my request:
And eke you Virgins, that on Parnasse dwell,
Whence floweth Helicon the learnèd well,[6]
Helpe me to blaze[7]
Her worthy praise,
Which in her sexe doth all excell.

"Of fayre Elisa be your silver song,
that blessèd wight:° *being*
The flowre of Virgins, may shee florish long,
In princely plight.° *condition*
For shee is Syrinx daughter without spotte,
Which *Pan* the shepheards God of her begot:[8]
So sprong° her grace *sprung*
Of heavenly race,
No mortall blemishe may her blotte.

"See, where she sits upon the grassie greene,
(O seemely° sight) *pleasing*
Yclad in Scarlot like a mayden Queene,
And Ermines white.
Upon her head a Cremosin° coronet, *crimson*
With Damaske roses and Daffadillies set:
Bayleaves betweene,
And Primroses greene
Embellish[9] the sweete Violet.

5. "In all this songe is not to be respected, what the worthinesse of her Majestie deserveth, nor what to the highnes of a Prince is agreeable, but what is moste comely for the meanesse of a shepheards witte, or to conceive, or to utter" [E. K.].
6. "The nine Muses, daughters of Apollo and Memorie, whose abode the Poets faine to be on Parnassus, a hill in Grece" [E. K.]. According to Spenser and E. K., Helicon is a well or spring at the foot of Parnassus, but in fact it is a mountain itself sacred to the Muses.
7. A blason was a poem cataloguing and praising a lady's various physical features.
8. "Syrinx is the name of a Nymphe of Arcadie, whom when Pan being in love pursued. . . . By Pan is here meant the most famous and victorious King, her highnesse Father, late of worthy memorye K. Henry the eyght" [E. K.]. "Without spotte" qualifies Syrinx, not daughter, a covert repudiation of the scandals surrounding Anne Boleyn.
9. "Beautifye and set out" [E. K.], i.e., by contrast of colors.

"Tell me, have ye seene her angelick face,
Like Phoebe fayre?[1]
Her heavenly haveour,° her princely grace *bearing*
can you well compare?
The Redde rose medled with the White yfere,[2]
In either cheeke depeincten° lively chere. *depict*
Her modest eye,
Her Majestie,
Where have you seene the like, but there?

"I sawe Phoebus thrust out his golden hedde,
upon her to gaze:
But when he sawe, how broade her beames did spredde,
it did him amaze.
He blusht to see another Sunne belowe,
Ne durst againe his fyrye face out showe:[3]
Let him, if he dare,
His brightnesse compare
With hers, to have the overthrowe.[4]

"Shewe thy selfe Cynthia[5] with thy silver rayes,
and be not abasht:
When shee the beames of her beauty displayes,
O how art thou dasht?
But I will not match her with *Latonaes* seede,
Such follie great sorow to Niobe did breede.[6]
Now she is a stone,
And makes dayly mone,
Warning all other to take heede.

"Pan may be proud, that ever he begot
such a Bellibone,[7]
And Syrinx rejoyse, that ever was her lot
to beare such an one.
Soone as my younglings cryen for the dam,
To her will I offer a milkwhite Lamb:
Shee is my goddesse plaine,° *absolute*
And I her shepherds swayne,° *servant*
Albee forswonck and forswatt I am.[8]

1. "The Moone, whom the Poets faine to be sister unto Phoebus, that is the Sunne" [E. K.].
2. "Together" [E. K.]. "Medled": mingled. Elizabeth, like her father Henry VIII, descends from both the houses of Lancaster and of York (symbolized, respectively, by the red and the white rose), whose conflicting claims to the throne caused the Hundred Years' War.
3. Show abroad.
4. Be overthrown.
5. "The Moone" [E. K.].
6. When Niobe vaunted herself above Latona by reason of her seven sons and seven daughters, the goddess caused her two children, Apollo and Diana, to slay Niobe's entire progeny, after which her sorrow transformed her to stone.
7. A *belle bonne:* "homely spoken for a fayre mayde or Bonilasse" [E. K.].
8. "Overlaboured and sunneburnt" [E. K.].

"I see Calliope[9] speede her to the place,
where my Goddesse shines:
And after her the other Muses trace,° *step*
with their Violines.
Bene° they not Bay braunches,[1] which they doe beare, *are*
All for Elisa in her hand to weare?
So sweetely they play,
And sing all the way,
That it a heaven is to heare.

"Lo how finely the graces[2] can it foote
to the Instrument:
They dauncen deffly,° and singen soote,° *nimbly/sweet*
in their meriment.
Wants not a fourth grace, to make the daunce even?
Let that rowme° to my Lady be yeven:° *place/given*
She shalbe a grace,
To fyll the fourth place,
And reigne with the rest in heaven.

"And whither rennes° this bevie° of Ladies bright, *runs/company*
raungèd in a rowe?
They bene all Ladyes of the lake[3] behight,
that unto her goe.
Chloris,[4] that is the chiefest Nymph of al,
Of Olive braunches beares a Coronall:° *crown*
Olives bene° for peace, *are*
When wars doe surcease:
Such for a Princesse bene principall.° *princely*

"Ye shepheards daughters, that dwell on the greene,
hye° you there apace:° *come/quickly*
Let none come there, but that Virgins bene,
to adorne her grace.
And when you come, whereas shee is in place,
See, that your rudenesse doe not you disgrace:
Binde your fillets° faste, *hair ribbons*
And gird in your waste,° *waist*
For more finesse, with a tawdrie lace.[5]

9. The muse of epic poetry.
1. "Be the signe of honor and victory . . . and eke [also] of famous Poets" [E. K.].
2. "Be three sisters, the daughters of Jupiter, whose names are Aglaia, Thalia, Euphrosyne . . . whom the Poetes feyned to be Goddesses of al bountie and comelines" [E. K.]. "Foote": dance.
3. Nymphs. E. K. records the ancient view that every spring and fountain had a goddess as its sovereign. "Behight": called.
4. According to E. K., the nymph of flowers and green herbs; her name signifies greenness.
5. I.e., to present a finer appearance, with a band of lace bought at the fair of St. Audrey (Etheldreda).

"Bring hether the Pincke and purple Cullambine,
With Gelliflowres:
Bring Coronations, and Sops in wine,
worne of Paramoures.° *lovers*
Strowe me the ground with Daffadowndillies,
And Cowslips, and Kingcups, and lovèd Lillies:
The pretie° Pawnce, *pretty*
And the Chevisaunce,[6]
Shall match with the fayre flowre Delice.

"Now ryse up Elisa,[7] deckèd as thou art,
in royall aray:
And now ye daintie Damsells may depart
echeone° her way. *each one*
I feare, I have troubled your troupes to° longe: *too*
Let dame Eliza thanke you for her song.
And if you come hether,
When Damsines° I gether, *plums*
I will part them all you among."[8]

THENOT

And was thilk° same song of Colins owne making? *this*
Ah foolish boy, that is with love yblent:° *blinded*
Great pittie is, he be in such taking,° *plight*
For naught caren, that bene so lewdly bent.[9]

HOBBINOLL

Sicker° I hold him, for a greater fon,° *surely/fool*
That loves the thing, he cannot purchase.
But let us homeward: for night draweth on,
And twincling starres the daylight hence chase.

Thenots Embleme[1]
O quam te memorem virgo?
Hobbinolls Embleme
O dea certe.

1597

6. All these are names of flowers common in pastoral poetry. "Coronations" are carnations; "sops in wine" are clove pinks; "paunce," the pansy; "daffadowndillies," daffodils; "flowre Delice (fleur de lis)," a kind of iris; "chevisaunce" may be a species of wallflower.
7. "Is the conclusion. For having so decked her with prayses and comparisons, he returneth all the thanck of hys laboure to the excellencie of her Majestie" [E. K.].
8. Among you all.
9. I.e., for they that are so foolishly inclined are heedless of everything.
1. An "embleme" is a motto or relevant quotation. Both emblems are from *Aeneid* 1.327–8, in which Aeneas is overwhelmed by the appearance of Venus in the guise of one of Diana's maidens and cries out: "By what name should I call thee, O maiden? . . . O goddess surely." E. K. notes that Hobbinoll and Thenot are similarly struck with amazement by the "divine" Elizabeth.

SPENSER
"The Faerie Queen"
Canto XII
[The Bower of Bliss]

42
Thence passing forth, they shortly do arrive,
Whereas the Bowre of Blisse was situate:
A place pickt out by choice of best alive,[2] *i.e. the best living artists*
That natures worke by art can imitate:
In which what ever in this worldly state
Is sweet, and pleasing unto living sense,
Or that may dayntiest fantasie aggrate,° *please, satisfy*
Was pouréd forth with plentifull dispence,° *liberality*
And made there to abound with lavish affluence.

43
Goodly it was encloséd round about,
Aswell their entred guestes to keepe within,
As those unruly beasts to hold without;
Yet was the fence thereof but weake and thin;
Nought feard their force, that fortilage° to win, *fortalice, fort*
But wisedomes powre, and temperaunces might,[3]
By which the mightiest things efforcéd bin:° *were*
And eke the gate was wrought of substaunce light,
Rather for pleasure, then for battery or fight.

44
Yt framéd was of precious yvory,
That seemd a worke of admirable wit;
And therein all the famous history
Of Jason and Medaea was ywrit;
Her mighty charmes, her furious loving fit,
His goodly conquest of the golden fleece,
His falséd faith, and love too lightly flit,
The wondred° Argo, which in venturous peece *admired*
First through the Euxine seas bore all the flowr of Greece.

45
Ye might have seene the frothy billowes fry° *foam*
Under the ship, as thorough them she went,
That seemd the waves were into yvory,
Or yvory into the waves were sent;
And other where the snowy substaunce sprent
With vermell,° like the boyes bloud therein shed, *vermilion*
A piteous spectacle did represent,
And otherwhiles° with gold besprinkeléd; *elsewhere*
Yt seemd th' enchaunted flame, which did Creüsa wed.[4]

4. Jason, in his ship the *Argo*, sought the Golden Fleece of the king of Colchis; the witch Medea, the king's daughter, fell in love with him and used "her mighty charmes" to help him obtain it (lines 392–93). The "boyes bloud" (line 402) refers to Absyrtus, Medea's younger brother, whose body she cut into pieces and scattered, to delay her father's pursuit by making him stop to collect the fragments. Later, Jason deserted Medea for Creüsa; in revenge, Medea gave the girl a dress which burst into fire when she put it on; the flame consumed and thus "wed" her (line 405). This tale of unnatural "furious loving," with all its attendant violence, is appropriate to the Bower.

46
All this, and more might in that goodly gate
Be red; that ever open stood to all,[5]
Which thither came: but in the Porch there sate
A comely personage of stature tall,
And semblaunce° pleasing, more than naturall, *appearance*
That travellers to him seemd to entize;
His looser° garment to the ground did fall, *too loose*
And flew about his heeles in wanton wize,
Not fit for speedy pace, or manly exercize.

47
They in that place him Genius° did call: *guiding spirit*
Not that celestiall powre, to whom the care
Of life, and generation of all
That lives, pertaines in charge particulare,
Who wondrous things concerning our welfare,
And straunge phantomes doth let us oft forsee,
And oft of secret ill bids us beware:
That is our Selfe, whom though we do not see,
Yet each doth in him selfe it well perceive to bee.

48
Therefore a God him sage Antiquity
Did wisely make, and good Agdistes call:
But this same was to that quite contrary,
The foe of life, that good envyes° to all, *grud*
That secretly doth us procure to fall,
Through guilefull semblaunts,° which he makes us see. *illusic*
He of this Gardin had the governall,
And Pleasures porter was devizd° to bee, *conside*
Holding a staffe in hand for more formalitee.

49
With diverse flowres he daintily was deckt,
And strowéd round about, and by his side
A mighty mazer° bowle of wine was set, *drink*
As if it had to him bene sacrifide;
Wherewith all new-come guests he gratifide:
So did he eke Sir Guyon passing by:
But he his idle curtesie defide,
And overthrew his bowle disdainfully;
And broke his staffe, with which he charméd semblants sly.[6]

50
Thus being entred, they behold around
A large and spacious plaine, on every side
Strowed with pleasauns,° whose faire grassy ground *garc*
Mantled with greene, and goodly beautifide
With all the ornaments of Floraes pride,
Wherewith her mother Art, as halfe in scorne
Of niggard Nature, like a pompous bride
Did decke her, and too lavishly adorne,
When forth from virgin bowre she comes in th' early morne.[7]

51
Thereto the Heavens alwayes Joviall,° *propit*
Lookt on them lovely,° still in stedfast state, *lovi*
Ne suffred storme nor frost on them to fall,
Their tender buds or leaves to violate,
Nor scorching heat, nor cold intemperate
T' afflict the creatures, which therein did dwell,
But the milde aire with season moderate
Gently attempred, and disposd so well,
That still it breathéd forth sweet spirit and holesome smell.

52
More sweet and holesome, then the pleasaunt hill
Of Rhodope, on which the Nimphe, that bore
A gyaunt babe, her selfe for griefe did kill;
Or the Thessalian Tempe, where of yore
Faire Daphne Phoebus hart with love did gore;
Or Ida, where the Gods loved to repaire,
When ever they their heavenly bowres forlore;[8]

8. Deserted. The nymph Rhodope, who had a "gyaunt babe," Athos, by Neptune (lines 460–62), was turned into a mountain; Daphne, another nymph, charmed Apollo so that he pursued h until she prayed for aid and was turn into a laurel tree; Mount Ida was t scene of the rape of Ganymede and t judgment of Paris, and the gods watch the Trojan War from its heights. The are all allusions to violent and unhapp passion—and yet the Bower is also co pared to Mt. Parnassus, home of t Muses, and to the Garden of Eden.

Or sweet Parnasse, the haunt of Muses faire;
Or Eden selfe, if ought with Eden mote compaire.

53
Much wondred Guyon at the faire aspect
Of that sweet place, yet suffred no delight
To sincke into his sence, nor mind affect,
But passéd forth, and lookt still forward right,° *straight al*
Bridling his will, and maistering his might:
Till that he came unto another gate;
No gate, but like one, being goodly dight
With boughes and braunches, which did broad dilate° *spread*
Their clasping armes, in wanton wreathings intricate.

54
So fashionéd a Porch with rare device,
Archt over head with an embracing vine,
Whose bounches hanging downe, seemed to entice
All passers by, to tast their lushious wine
And did themselves into their hands incline,
As freely offering to be gatheréd:
Some deepe empurpled as the Hyacint,
Some as the Rubine, laughing sweetly red,
Some like faire Emeraudes, not yet well ripenéd.

55

And them amongst, some were of burnisht gold,
So made by art, to beautifie the rest,
Which did themselves emongst the leaves enfold,
As lurking from the vew of covetous guest,
That the weake bowes, with so rich load opprest,
Did bowe adowne, as over-burdenéd.
Under that Porch a comely dame did rest,
Clad in faire weedes,° but fowle disorderéd, *garments*
And garments loose, that seemd unmeet for womanhed.° *womanhood*

56

In her left hand a Cup of gold she held,
And with her right the riper° fruit did reach, *overripe*
Whose sappy liquor, that with fulnesse sweld,
Into her cup she scruzd,° with daintie breach *crushed*
Of her fine fingers, without fowle empeach,° *hindrance*
That so faire wine-presse made the wine more sweet:
Thereof she usd to give to drinke to each,
Whom passing by she happenéd to meet:
It was her guise,° all Straungers goodly so to greet. *custom*

57

So she to Guyon offred it to tast;
Who taking it out of her tender hond,
The cup to ground did violently cast,
That all in peeces it was broken fond,° *found*
And with the liquor stainéd all the lond.° *land*
Whereat Excesse exceedingly was wroth,
Yet no'te° the same amend, ne yet withstond, *knew not how to*
But suffered him to passe, all° were she loth; *although*
Who nought regarding her displeasure forward goth.

58

There the most daintie Paradise on ground,
It selfe doth offer to his sober eye,
In which all pleasures plenteously abound,
And none does others happinesse envye:
The painted flowres, the trees upshooting hye,
The dales for shade, the hilles for breathing space,
The trembling groves, the Christall running by;
And that, which all faire workes doth most aggrace,° *add grace to*
The art, which all that wrought, appearéd in no place.

59

One would have thought (so cunningly, the rude,
And scornéd parts were mingled with the fine)
That nature had for wantonesse ensude° *imitated*
Art, and that Art at nature did repine;° *complain*
So striving each th' other to undermine,
Each did the others worke more beautifie;
So diff'ring both in willes, agreed in fine:[9]
So all agreed through sweete diversitie,
This Gardin to adorne with all varietie.

60

And in the midst of all, a fountaine stood,
Of richest substaunce, that on earth might bee,
So pure and shiny, that the silver flood
Through every channell running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious imageree
Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
Of which some seemd with lively jollitee,
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,° *sports*
Whilest others did them selves embay° in liquid joyes. *drench*

61

And over all, of purest gold was spred,
A trayle of yvie in his native hew:
For the rich metall was so colouréd,
That wight, who did not well avised it vew,
Would surely deeme it to be yvie trew:[1]
Low his lascivious armes adown did creepe,
That themselves dipping in the silver dew,
Their fleecy flowres they tenderly did steepe,
Which° drops of Christall seemd for wantones° *on which/wantonness*
to weepe.

62

Infinit streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample laver° fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
That like a little lake it seemd to bee;
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
That through the waves one might the bottom see,
All pavéd beneath with Jasper shining bright,
That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle upright.

63

And all the margent round about was set,
With shady Laurell trees, thence to defend° *wa*
The sunny beames, which on the billowes bet,
And those which therein bathéd, mote offend.
As Guyon hapned by the same to wend,
Two naked Damzelles he therein espyde,
Which therein bathing, seeméd to contend,
And wrestle wantonly, ne cared to hyde,
Their dainty parts from vew of any, which them eyde.

64

Sometimes the one would lift the other quight
Above the waters, and then downe againe
Her plong, as over maisteréd by might,
Where both awhile would coveréd remaine,
And each the other from to rise restraine;
The whiles their snowy limbes, as through a vele,
So through the Christall waves appearéd plaine:
Then suddeinly both would themselves unhele,° *u*
And th' amarous sweet spoiles to greedy eyes revele.

65

As that faire Starre, the messenger of morne,
His deawy face out of the sea doth reare:
Or as the Cyprian goddesse,[2] newly borne
Of th' Oceans fruitfull froth, did first appeare:
Such seeméd they, and so their yellow heare
Christalline humour[3] droppéd downe apace.
Whom such when Guyon saw, he drew him neare,
And somewhat gan relent his earnest pace,
His stubborne brest gan secret pleasaunce to embrace.

66

The wanton Maidens him espying, stood
Gazing a while at his unwonted guise;° *r*
Then th' one her selfe low duckéd in the flood,
Abasht, that her a straunger did avise:°
But th' other rather higher did arise,
And her two lilly paps aloft displayd,
And all, that might his melting hart entise
To her delights, she unto him bewrayed:° *re*
The rest hid underneath, him more desirous made.

67

With that, the other likewise up arose,
And her faire lockes, which formerly were bownd
Up in one knot, she low adowne did lose: °
Which flowing long and thick, her clothed arownd,
And th' yvorie in golden mantle gownd:
So that faire spectacle from him was reft,
Yet that, which reft it, no lesse faire was fownd:
So hid in lockes and waves from lookers theft,
Nought but her lovely face she for his looking left.

68

Withall she laughéd, and she blusht withall,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall:
Now when they spide the knight to slacke his pace,
Them to behold, and in his sparkling face
The secret signes of kindled lust appeare,
Their wanton meriments they did encreace,
And to him beckned, to approach more neare,
And shewd him many sights, that courage cold could reare.[4]

69

On which when gazing him the Palmer saw,
He much rebukt those wandring eyes of his,
And counseld well, him forward thence did draw.
Now are they come nigh to the Bowre of blis
Of her fond favorites so named amis:
When thus the Palmer: "Now Sir, well avise;° *tak*
For here the end of all our travell is:
Here wonnes° Acrasia, whom we must surprise,
Else she will slip away, and all our drift° despise." *plan,*

137

"The Faerie Queen" (3)

72

There, whence that Musick seemed heard to bee,
Was the faire Witch her selfe now solacing,
With a new Lover, whom through sorceree
And witchcraft, she from farre did thither bring:
There she had him now layd a slombering,
In secret shade, after long wanton joyes:
Whilst round about them pleasauntly did sing
Many faire Ladies, and lascivious boyes,
That ever mixt their song with light licentious toyes.

73

And all that while, right over him she hong,
With her false eyes fast fixéd in his sight,
As seeking medicine, whence she was stong,
Or greedily depasturing° delight: *feeding on*
And oft inclining downe with kisses light,
For feare of waking him, his lips bedewd,
And through his humid eyes did sucke his spright,
Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd;
Wherewith she sighéd soft, as if his case she rewd.° *pitied*

— 11 —

77

Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,[6]
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alablaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Arachne° cannot spin, *the spider*
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th' aire more lightly flee.° *float*

78

Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n'ote° therewith be fild, *could not*
And yet through languor of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare than Nectar, forth distild,
That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild,° *trickled*
And her faire eyes sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenchéd not; like starry light
Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright.

79

The young man sleeping by her, seemd to bee
Some goodly swayne of honorable place,° *rank*
That certés it great pittie was to see
Him his nobilitie so foule deface;° *disgrace*
A sweet regard, and amiable grace,
Mixed with manly sternnesse did appeare
Yet sleeping, in his well proportioned face,
And on his tender lips the downy heare
Did now but freshly spring, and silken blossomes beare.

80

His warlike armes, the idle instruments
Of sleeping praise, were hong upon a tree,
And his brave shield, full of old moniments,
Was fowly ra'st,[7] that none the signes might see; the removal of emblems from his shield
Ne for them, ne for honour caréd hee,
Ne ought, that did to his advauncement tend,
But in lewd loves, and wastfull luxuree,
His dayes, his goods, his bodie he did spend:
O horrible enchantment, that him so did blend.° *blind*

81

The noble Elfe,[8] and carefull Palmer drew knight of Fairyland
So nigh them, minding nought, but lustfull game,
That suddein forth they on them rusht, and threw
A subtile net, which onely for the same
The skilfull Palmer formally° did frame. *scientifically*
So held them under fast, the whiles the rest
Fled all away for feare of fowler shame.
The faire Enchauntresse, so unwares opprest,
Tryde all her arts, and all her sleights, thence out to wrest.

82

And eke her lover strove: but all in vaine;
For that same net so cunningly was wound,
That neither guile, nor force might it distraine.°
They tooke them both, and both them strongly bound
In captive bandes, which there they readie found:
But her in chaines of adamant he tyde;
For nothing else might keepe her safe and sound;
But Verdant[9] (so he hight) he soone untyde, ie. 'green'
And counsell sage in steed thereof to him applyde.

83

But all those pleasant bowres and Pallace brave,
Guyon broke downe, with rigour pittilesse;
Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
But that their blisse he turned to balefulnesse:
Their groves he feld, their gardins did deface,.
Their arbers spoyle, their Cabinets° suppresse, *summerh*
Their banket houses burne, their buildings race,°
And of the fairest late, now made the fowlest place.

84

Then led they her away, and eke that knight
They with them led, both sorrowfull and sad:
The way they came, the same retourned they right,
Till they arrivéd, where they lately had
Charmed those wild-beasts, that raged with furie mad.
Which now awaking, fierce at them gan fly,
As in their mistresse reskew, whom they lad;°
But them the Palmer soone did pacify.
Then Guyon askt, what meant those beastes, which there did ly.

85

Said he, "These seeming beasts are men indeed,
Whom this Enchauntresse hath transformed thus,
Whylome her lovers, which her lusts did feed,
Now turned into figures hideous,
According to their mindes like monstruous."[10]
"Sad end," quoth he, "of life intemperate,
And mournefull meed of joyes delicious:
But Palmer, if it mote thee so aggrate,° *p*
Let them returnéd be unto their former state."

86

Streight way he with his vertuous staffe them strooke,
And streight of beasts they comely men became;
Yet being men they did unmanly looke,
And staréd ghastly, some for inward shame,
And some for wrath, to see their captive Dame:
But one above the rest in speciall,
That had an hog beene late, hight Grille by name,
Repinéd greatly, and did him miscall,° *a*
That had from hoggish forme him brought to naturall.

87

Said Guyon, "See the mind of beastly man,
That hath so soone forgot the excellence
Of his creation, when he life began,
That now he chooseth, with vile difference,° *ch*
To be a beast, and lacke intelligence."
To whom the Palmer thus, "The donghill kind
Delights in filth and foule incontinence:
Let Grill be Grill, and have his hoggish mind,
But let us hence depart, whilest wether serves and wind."

EARLY JACOBEAN DRAMA

Despite their 'civility' (Lily's *Euphues*!) the Elizabethans retained a strong liking for vigorous speech, as Eliz. lit. was predominantly a literature of the spoken word - the spoken literary forms of preaching and acting prevailed over the printed forms of journalism and fiction and poetry was still very closely related to song. This gave an unequalled racy vigour to common prose and the language of the stage, a unique combination of racy tang and majestic stateliness, characteristic of Shakespeare and the Authorized Version of the Bible. Dryden: "their wit was not that of gentlemen; there was ever somewhat that was ill-bred and clownish in it and which confessed the conversation of the authors."

The Elizabethans loved mockery, irony (the 'dry mock') and sarcasm (the 'bitter taunt') The popular tendency to ridicule and burlesque came to a head in the writings of

THOMAS NASHE (1567-1601) the pamphleteer

A university wit like Greene and Lodge, an admirer of Lily, Spencer and Sidney, he maintained throughout his career the pose of a humanist indignant at the follies of the age. He "railed" both against the ill-educated ballad-mongers and the eloquence and civility of the learned, so his satiric attitude combined the caustic mood of a disgruntled scholar and the mockery of the rustic Fool in folkgames or the clown of the popular stage. N. **revived satire in the 1590s** which, in turn, stimulated the creation of the "humour" comedies at the end of the decade.

The emerging professional men of letters, frustrated in their hopes, turned to satire to give vent to personal discontent, which gave rise to **generalized satire** where the righteous scholar-poet is surrounded by his friends and enemies - the **wit**, the **would-be wit**, the **melancholy gallant**, the **malcontent**, the **professional charlatan**, the **seedy adventurer**, the **travelled and Machiavellian sceptic**, the **usurer**, the **sycophant.** A slightly younger group of wits modelled themselves directly on the conventions of **Latin poetic satire, in harsh rhythms, scornful invective** and **grotesque character portraits** (Donne c. 1593-7, Hall *Virgidemiae* 1598, Marston *The Scourge of Villainy* 1598).

In DRAMA some of the qualitites labelled 'Jacobean' were already in place in Eliz. plays: **sophisticated violence** (Shakespeare *Titus Andronicus*, Kyd *Spanish Tragedy*), the tendency for **tragedy and satire to converge in dark comedy leading to death** (Marlowe *The Jew of Malta*), the **uncertainty about the universe** (Donne: "the new philosophy calls all in doubt" etc.)

NEW DEVELOPMENTS which make Jacobean drama distinctive were: in **verse style: a new freedom of movement, a more sustained conversational tone; an intense concentration on the present moment; preoccupation with money, property, class and sex;** there is a good deal of **overt moralizing** but it is accompanied by a **gleeful fascination with the vice and folly** under attack; **virtue** does not just exist naturally, it is there to be **displayed, goaded, if possible corrupted**, **virtue** is **under attack** and **passive** while **evil** is **vigorous** and **energetic**; playwrights work for **the effect of the moment**, even if it means being **flippant** or **sensational**.

GEORGE CHAPMAN (1559?-1634)

was famous for his **translation of Homer** (*The Whole Works of Homer Prince of Poets in His Iliads and Odysseys*, 1616). He wrote 6 comedies and 6 tragedies. All his tragedies may be described as **dramatic studies of the interaction between a great man and his society, viewed from the neo-Stoic perspective.** There are 4 main elements at work in this interaction: in the hero his **moral nature** (his goodness or badness), and his **outward role**

(as soldier, rebel or servant to the king); ranged opposite to him in society are two kinds of men, the **mouthpieces of Chapman's ideas** on the social order, or the **personifications of** various instances of **social corruption.** The plays are built up from the innumerable conflicts which arise amongst these elements. His heroes are great men flawed by their inability to control their inner passions and resist the outward temptations to which this inner disorder exposes them. The other positive characters are meant to be exemplars of men capable of achieving the inward peace of Stoic teaching. Dryden brilliantly sums up the weaknesses of Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*: "a dwarfish thought, dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, uncorrect English and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense."

JOHN MARSTON (1575?-1634)

began his career as a writer of **scurrilous satires** and ended it as a priest. Like Chapman, he was heavily influenced by Marlowe and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. By temperament he was inclined to **romantic drama** and he too adopted the Senecan ghost and his conceptions of atrocious vengeance and the horror of crime. In his tragedies, like in his satires, he seems to wish to attract attention by the most **tumultous violence**, by using **more furious and eccentric language** and **greater coarseness** than any other writer. He **declaims more violently than Marlowe, describes with metaphors as foggy and disjointed as Chapman's, piles up pedantic, trivial and mouth-filling words, his vocabulary is full of ear-grating novelties.** He is the Crispinus caricatured by Jonson in *The Poetaster* to whom "a light vomit" is administered and who vomits up a fantastic rigmarole. Yet there is something impressive in his very inflatedness, his bombastic and turgid language, as his most detestably emphatic passages are interspersed with nervous eloquence, his tragedies also have flashes of true poetry in them. The tragedies *Antonio and Mellida, Antonio's Revenge* and the bitter comedy *The Malcontent* are his best known works. He seems to have been the man who **introduced the fashion of railing against society and life in a mood of lyrical irony.** He attempts to outdo other fashionable playwrights by shouting louder than they and he often recalls or anticipates Shakespearean subjects, and for moments at a time he does not loose too much by the consequent comparison.

BEN JONSON (1572-1637)

is the playwright who in his own time and ever afterwards provided the typical antithesis to Shakespeare. If Sh. accepted the existing conditions of the stage, then J. was **in angry and arrogant opposition to the Eliz. stage and set up his own taste, ideas and theories, all derived from the ancients, against the popular taste.** As a self-appointed disciple of the ancients, he **set out to reform the English stage.** The stepson of a simple bricklayer, J. **constructed a literary career for himself** with a self-conscious effort for which there is **no parallel in any other playwright of the period.** A pupil at Westminster school of William Camden, the famous antiquary, and a graduate of Cambridge, J. was **truly learned**. His career took him into the highest circles. He wrote **masques** for the court of James I like many great dramatic writers of the period but in his hands they reached their **highest degree of elaboration**. The great architect, Inigo Jones, designed the machinery and decorations for some of them. The addressees of his non-dramatic work included important members of the aristocracy and the learned. Yet he remained always **an outsider, guarding his independence, standing on his dignity, trying as much as possible to depend on his own abilities** and not the precarious favours of the great. We can see a certain academic self-

consciousness in the way he presented his work: the first edition of his Roman tragedy *Sejanus* includes notes on the sources, and *Every Man Out of His Humour* includes a scientific discussion of the natures of "humours". J. took unusual pains to shape his career as a whole, including publishing his **collected works in the Folio of 1616.**

Temperamentally J. was a satirist and **his education made him a realist.** His first celebrated and really personal work *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) revealed his true tendencies, introducing a set of **English eccentrics**, each of whom has his particular **"humour" - his prevailing mood** or rather his **oddity, mental habit or fad.** Popular handbooks on psychology like Robert Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" (1621) pictured man as a little state wherein the **bodily fluids** could break out in disease and unruly passion if not temperately governed by the faculties of the soul, with its agents the vital spirits. The 4 bodily fluids (**blood, phlegm, spleen, choler**) each, if in excess, cause 4 kinds of temperament (**sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholy, choleric**). While other playwrights made stereotyped oddity the characteristic only of the secondary characters, J. makes humour the capital characteristic of all his characters, especially the principals (an excessively worried old gentleman, a jealous husband, 2 young self-confident and foolish fops, a magistrate with a drinking problem, a blusterer). In that J. **excludes romanticism** and is **careful to sustain the comic tone** of his comedy J. shows himself the **disciple of the ancients** but he did not fully observe the classical unities, assimilating them only gradually, one by one, in his plays. With his inclination to **notice only obvious individual peculiarities** and **violent actions of exceptional persons**, his **almost total disregard for fundamental feelings common to mankind** and his **ignorance of love**, J. never got near to nature in the classical meaning of the word as to find in his plays a character who is merely a man or a woman is almost impossible. In this essential respect J. is far less classical than Shakespeare.

In his **later comedies** J.'s **satirical attitude is accentuated**. In *Every Man Out of His Humour* J. himself is Asper, the harsh and pitiless judge of whatever is ridiculous, a cynic descended from Diogenes. More than one character in this play is probably the caricature of an actual person who was recognized by a section of the public. The superiority which J. constantly claims for himself and his ill-will to everyone and everything grows tedious. J. thinks his personal quarrels interesting enough to furnish scenes for his plays or even whole plays. He, the representative of reason, morality and knowledge does not fear to bring his enemies upon the stage. *Cynthia's Revels*, and even more *The Poetaster* are so many acts of homage to himself, not to mention the prologues and epilogues to his plays. In *The Poetaster* he is Horace, whose friend is Virgil, whose admirer is Augustus, and to whom the bad poets Crispinus (i.e. Marston) and Demetrius (i.e. Dekker) are jealous enemies.

The **great comedies of his maturity** - *Volpone*, *Epicoene*, *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair* are among the **most remarkable of the dramatic works of the English Renaissance** and stand **at the peak of Jacobean comedy**, *Volpone* being the greatest comedy in English. In them J. invents everything - the matter, plot and characters, the plays are of very sound construction. *Volpone* is **a violent attack on cupidity/avarice and Machiavellism.** Volpone the Venetian magnifico (the Fox), the lawyer Voltore (Vulture), the dying Corbaccio (Old Crow), the merchant Corvino (Little Crow), the intermediary Mosca (Fly) all display such irredeemable vice that the play is a ferocious satire, totally lacking any fun. In *Epicoene* J. aims at producing merriment. Yet, even when he is writing farce, J. is weighed down with his learning and his fondness for scrupulous realism in details. As a result of this J. lacks spontaneity, he is too industrious and too learned to evoke light laughter.

Ben Jonson made two attempts at **historical tragedy** - *Sejanus* (1603) and *Catiline* (1611). In contrast to Shakespeare's inaccurate knowledge of Roman customs and manners, J.'s tragedies are **completely historical**. J. studs "S" with translated quotations, small incidents and curious touches borrowed directly from Suetonius, Juvenal, Tacitus, Seneca. Historical details in the long run overshadow the play's character-drawing.

THOMAS DEKKER (1572-1632)

Although Jonson associated **Marston** and **Dekker** in his attacks, they are no less different from each other than they are from him: **M's habitual cynicism** connected him with J., while in **Dekker's** work there is **a vein of poetry and optimism, a tenderness and charm**, which the other two playwrights lack. Like Greene D. had to write pot-boilers for which he found material in the London streets. He carefully **observes the low life of the town with its misery, vice and eccentricities**, but also notices **amusing scenes** and collects **good-tempered jokes**. He had also read the **satirists.** His **art** is **composite:** there is his **inherent romanticism, homely realism** and **rebellion against all laws**. He also recalls Greene by the **freshness of some of his scenes, his joy in life, his ability to create gentle, feeling women.** He is an **improviser, alive and spontaneous**. his trademark is his **cheerfulness.** He addressed his plays to the London **cockney** public. He dramatized Deloney's novel "The Gentle Craft" about Simon Eyre, a shoemaker's apprentice who became lord mayor and the founder of leather-market in Leadenhall in the reign of Henry VI as *Shoemaker's Holiday* over which spreads the **spirit of heartiness and merriment, trivial, unthinking gaiety**. Always in financial difficulties, D. was all his life obliged to collaborate with other playwrights like Jonson, Middleton, Drayton, Webster, Rowley, Ford and Massinger. Only some 8 or 9 play written by him alone are preserved.

THOMAS HEYWOOD (1574-1641)

It is H's **tenderness** and **pity** which bring him nearest to Dekker but he lacks Dekker's **lyricism, fancy, gaiety**. His **strength** lies in **creating dramatic, moving situations rather than strongly individualized characters**. Because he found it easier than D. to do without romance, he was, in some of his plays, **more successful** than D. **in realizing the ideals of citizen drama**. His work constantly betrays his great desire **to minister to the tastes and vanities and prejudices of the citizens of London and their guilds.** Like Shakespeare he was both an actor and a playwright. He was also **the most prolific of the Elizabethans**: he claims to have been the chief author of 220 plays of which 24 have reached us. This copious writer is **never stopped by artistic considerations - at his best he achieves clarity and fluency** and he desires no more. H's acknowledged masterpiece is *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), a **domestic drama. Gentleness, deep sympathy, moral loftiness** and **poignant melancholy** in conveying the deep suffering of all principal characters, especially the wife's remorse and the pity of the husband, was then exceptional.

THOMAS MIDDLETON (1580-1627)

Like Dekker and Heywood, M. depicted the life of the citizens of London. Instead of flattering them, however, he was amused by them. It pleased him **to show up their oddities and vices**. He thus connects with Jonson, with the difference that he seems less anxious to point to a moral. He has a **taste for cynical pictures** and a **natural tendency towards the most licentious implications**, although as a rule he **abstains from the more brutal obscenity** of such of his contemporaries as Marston. M. tried several paths before he found his right one - **light comedy**. He produced from 1604 to 1612 a series of highly flavoured **farcical comedies**, distinguished by the **vivacity of their scenes, their skilful construction**

and the very close acquiantance with the least desirable circles of London society. M's London is a place where people **make deals** which involve commodities, human beings and sex. M. points to a moral, but he is usually **ambiguous in his condemnations**, though a strong feeling of moral disgust permeats his comedies and tragedies. Like in Jonsons's comedies, M's characters are also **dehumanized, but** while Jonson is passionate in exposing vice and consequently his personifications of evil have vigour and vitality and acquire almost epic dimensions, M's **characters engage in role-playing coolly** and **their appetites are meaner**. They engage in intrigues for money, property and sex.

M. is a **careful observer of realities**, he paints the manner of his time with great accuracy and his **realistic psychological portraits** and the way he builds up intrigues with utmost logicality and assurance show a master craftsman.

At the height of his career M. turned to tragedy. The only tragedy he wrote without a collaborator was *Women Beware Women*, a tragedy about an Italian courtesan Bianca Cappello. M.'s other tragedies and tragi-comedies were all written in collaboration with William Rowley (1585-1642). It is only because he had no high ambition that M. is not in the first rank of writers. He had neither Fletcher's poetry nor the artistic scrupulousity of Webster, nor the humanity of Heywood and Dekker. The **tone** of his tragedies, as of his comedies, is generally **hard and dry**. But **in his power to convey the impression of reality** he surpasses them all.

CYRIL TOURNEUR (1575?-1626)

and Webster put new life into MELODRAMA. Like Kyd's, Marston's and Chettle's work before them, their plays are revenge tragedies of the Senecan school. Most of these revenge plays are set in Italy. ITALY was appropriate to an exotic love story (like Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1599)), but it was also the land of poisoning Cardinals (Barnabe Barnes's lurid melodrama of the Borgias *The Devil's Charter* (1607)), the land of duelling and vendetta (Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*), the land of the 'atheist' Machiavelli, ancestor of all the villains who flaunt their 'policy' and manipulate the intrigue with the aid of the needy subordinates. Above all, Italy stood for the two extremes of 'civility' and corruption. The Italian revenge plays, accordingly, dwell on lust and moral corruption in place of the political theme of Shakespeare, Jonson and Chapman. Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Jonson's *Volpone*, Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* accustomed the public to see Italy as the natural home of voluptuous pleasure, bloodshed and death. None, however, Italianized his scenes more exclusively and intesively than Webster who specialized in Italy at a time when Fletcher and his collaborators were beginning to turn their attention to Spanish heroism. The **principal contrast** in these plays is no longer between the machiavellian and the stoic (as in Kyd) but **between the empty glitter of the Italianate grandees and the discontented poverty of the gentleman-scholars** who were forced to sell their honour and whom the dramatists advance as spokesmen. The portrayal of wealth and patronage by Marston, Tourner and Webster indicates the decay of the Tudor aristocracy and the disenchantment of Elizabethan men of letters. The Italian setting is used for **social complaint** and for **a generalized satire** which is the main contribution of Marston, Tourneur and Webster to a form of drama which had originated with Kyd as tragedy (or melodrama) illustrating the moral law.

There is no certainty about the authorship of the sombre masterpiece *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606-7). It is attributed to Cyril Tourneur on the grounds that its imagery and moral tone are consistent with an obscure verse allegory on religion (*The Transformed Metamorphosis*,

which was published by Tourneur in 1600). However,T.'s one surviving play which is undoubtedly his, *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), though interesting and unusual, is so much inferior that many scholars deny them a common author. Whoever the author of *The Revenger's Tragedy* may be, the play is unique in its **unremitting sardonic fury** and **compression of language**. The characters are the **bearers of abstract qualities of good and evil rhetorically heightened** and endowed here with a **burning intensity of passion.. Human justice is irretrievably corrupt and evil tramples on goodness.**

JOHN WEBSTER (1575?-1624?)

W. wrote for the stage from 1602 onwards, serving for 5 years a sort of apprenticeship as collaborator with Heywood, Middleton, Marston and Dekker. His two masterpieces, *The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona*, played about 1611, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, about 1614, have been responsible for his survival as playwright.

The White Devil is one of the series of studies of COURTESANS which appeared one after another within a few years. It seems to have been Marston who broke the ice with his *Dutch Courtesan*, a comedy which introduces an intriguing and calculating courtesan who is willing to go to any lengths, even murder her lover who plans to marry somebody else, in order to keep him for herself. At the end she is condemned to the whip and gaol. Dekker answered with a domestic drama *The Honest Whore* where the whore is very different. She falls in love with a young lord who opens her eyes to the shamefulness of her trade. Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* tells the story of a king's mistress who, having been shown the enormity of her crime and that of her lover (adultery), kills the king and herself. Bianca in Middleton's *Women Beware Women* and Webster's Vittoria in *The White Devil* are closely analogous characters. Even Shakespeare's Cleopatra is a variation on the theme. All of them appreared round about 1611. Webster's and Middleton's plays are closely related with their atrocities, their Italian atmosphere and the equally brilliant and criminal careers of the historic courtesans they portray.

Melodramatic devices abound in W.'s tragedies, his characters meet with singularly atrocious adventures. His plays are full of colourful pageants and ceremonies. He achieves a **perfect fusion of pure drama** (by truthfully representing vigorous characters and great passions) **and melodrama** (with its emphasis on the horror of physical impressions and on spectacular strangeness).

The Duchess of Malfi makes the same appeal. The theme is **persecuted virtue and vengeance**. The avengers are moved by blind fury and greed, the victim (the Duchess of Malfi (Amalfi)) is driven to madness and death because she has married, out of virtuous love, her steward, a low-born but equally virtuous Antonio. W. aims at **showing the pathos inherent in situations**, using for this purpose different effects meant to highlight the horror and suffering in such scenes. It is this search for the most powerful effects which is proper to real melodrama and W. has a strange **power of evoking shudders.** Like Jonson, W. distrusted spontaneous improvisation and looked to other authors for inspiration - modern scholarship has found a literary source for nearly every phrase and concept in his plays. But what he made of his reading is distinctly his own - **a regular, sententious tragedy which makes the utmost of the contrast between virtue - stoic, noble, unblemished - and vice - irredeemably corrupt, base and irresistible.**

FRANCIS BEAUMONT (1584/5-1616) & JOHN FLETCHER (1579-1625)

Shakespeare's successors as principal writers for the King's Men were B. & F., who together set their stamp on playwriting for the rest of the century. The ROMANTIC

TRAGEDIES and TRAGI-COMEDIES of B. & F., and after them Massinger, Ford and Shirley and the courtly amateurs under Charles I, developed consistently into the Heroic Drama of the age of Dryden. They mark at once a **decisive change in the social outlook of the theatre** and striking **artistic decadence**. In tragic, even more than in comic, writing, what the late Jacobean and Caroline stages offered was no longer a representative national art but a **diversion for a single class** - the court aristocracy. Middleton's work apart, it was **theatrical in the most limiting sense, emotionally shallow, arbitrary and the world it presents lacks a central principle** which would prevent the plays from sliding into banality. This new phase might be dated from **1609**, for in that year the King's Men began to concentrate on their newly acquired 'private' playhouse, **the Blackfriars**. The Blackfriars audience was supplied with plays by a kind of play-factory/syndicate headed by B. & F. B., the younger son of a judge, and F., the younger son of a bishop, were themselves typical members of the new and self-conscious Stuart aristocracy gravitating to London and the Jacobean court. They worked together from about 1608 to 1613 when B. married an heiress (and died in 1616), and at least 54 plays are connected with their names; 2 of these are now attributed solely to B., the better poet; 7 to their partnership and 15 solely to Fletcher who prolonged his success until 1625, and the remainder to Fletcher with some distinct collaboratos, principally Massinger from 1613 onwards. This group of B. & F. plays captured the lead in fashionable taste after Shakespeare's retirement, as stage records indicate: in 1616-42 the King's Men alone gave 43 productions of B. & F. at court, i.e. 1/3 of their 113 identified court performances, as against 16 of Shakespeare and only 7 of Jonson. The general repertory for the same years, with 170 plays known on their active list, contained 47 of B. & F. beside only 16 of Shakespeare and 9 of Jonson. **The 1647 Folio of B. & F.**, with its chorus of courtly tributes, contains a preface by a Caroline playwright Shirley, which reveals the nature of their success; theirs, he says, was *"the wit that made the Blackfriars an academy ... usually of more advantage to the hopeful young heir than a costly, dangerous foreign travel. The young spirits of the time, whose birth and quality made them impatient of the sourer ways of education, have from the attentive hearing of these pieces, got ground in point of wit and carriage of the most severely-employed students, while these recreations were digested into rules, and the very pleasure did edify."*

Very little remains in B. & F. tragedies of the national consciousness that Shakespeare had brought to tragedy from the history plays; on the contrary, their heroes and heroines are dwellers in a **charmed circle**, defensive towards their privileges but free from any responsibility outwards. While their **manner is more relaxed and open**, and on the surface, at least, there is **dignity and smoothness**, foreign to the temper of writers like Marston and Webster, **spiritually, the horizons of drama have begun to shrink**. The probing of the unseen world, the questioning of gods, even of God, that runs from Marlowe through to Webster, the problem of divine justice - the main basis of the older tragedy - has given place to **ethical motifs that are more purely social**. It is not that the great questions have been answered - they are no longer being asked. **Class, breeding and behaviour** are becoming more important than salvation and damnation. There is **a conscious appeal to gentlemanly values: courage, honour, friendship**. B. & F. combine **a high heroic style** with **a low view of human nature** like Webster, Marston and Chapman before them. The difference is that **the contrast no longer seems shocking: it is obscured, reported, accepted** - the urgency has gone. The humanist gravity and the note of exited speculation have gone, and with them the tension and the stoic grandeur of the individual profoundly at odds with his universe.

Instead, the later heroes conform to a single type - they are all **Cavalier gallants idealized**, and their adventures move invariabley on the plane of **love and honour**. The sense of place has also undergone a change. In early Jacobean drama we may not be able to tell one Italian court from another, but the sense of Italy is quite sharp, as is the sense of London in Middleton and Dekker. In B. & F. the setting may be called anything but it is really **a place of the 'imagination'**, a precursor of the world of heroic drama of Dryden where characters live in perspective sets and wear ostrich feathers in their helmets.

Fletcher and his associates brought into the theatre qualities of **glamour and easy-going wit** that would feed the drama for generations to come. While there are touches of pity, admiration and even kindliness in their work, they did not, in the end, replace the scepticism of earlier Jacobean drama with a more positive vision. They simply **expressed this scepticism** with **a new, studied casualness**. Honour, friendship, loyalty, wit - these are the values of their **genteel, self-contained world**. They are expressed as **gestures**: in moments of crisis the characters are concerned to find the right gesture for the occassion. B. & F. **characters live for the moment**, the court being the only world for them as both the city and the country are simply caricatured. Yet even court settings suffer from vagueness: while Shakesperian and early Jacobean courts were held together by benevolent, or more often, corrupt rulers who provided a strong focus for their courts, the rulers of B. & F. are weak and trivial even in their crimes. It becomes the private responsibility of the courtiers to decide how gentlemen ought to behave. **Improvising their behaviour around a missing centre**, the characters are still not altogether free, for they are **gripped by simple and straightforward passions**. The ways in which they react to these simplified stimuli, improvising, indulging in gestures, are **dispassionately and complacently observed** and **recorded** by B. & F. Quite often the result of such a treatment is sheer **banality**. These banal **characters are invariably inflated, their sentiments are lofty, arbitrary and chaotic**. Their **passions are irresistible**, their **honour unshakeable**, they are **driven by extravagant impulses** and are frequently saved by **the whim of the Fate** alone.

With *Philaster* (c. 1609) and *A King and No King* (1611) B. & F. introduced a new kind of TRAGI-COMEDY which came to characterize a whole generation: the action of these plays commonly passes from a mysterious quarrel or disappearance, through episodes of concealed identity and mistaken purpose, to the moment of discovery that brings about the triumphant dénouement, i.e. they go back to Sidney's *Arcadia* or to more recent French or Spanish variants. The whole series of tragi-comedies from *Philaster* onwards is made up of the **chivalric adventures and the love-dilemmas of *Arcadia* transposed into terms of Stuart gallantry** and the whole series adopts the tone of **flattery towards its public**, whether the playwright is nominally exalting or reproving or merely providing a day-dream. Moreover, the formal tragedies of B. & F. and their followers are barely to be distinguished from their tragi-comedies - the same romantic style pervades all of their writing.

Fletcher's second associate

PHILIP MASSINGER (1583-1639)

was a serious and skilful playwright, but his tragedies and tragi-comedies, the bulk of his work, are **at best coldly impressive, at their worst simply dull**. They suffer from the influence of B. & F. in their **wilful romanticism** and the **over-contrived plots**. M.'s constant **aim is to instruct**, to drive home **a lesson in morality**. His verse rhetoric has developed away from emotion towards driving home an argument (T.S. Eliot: "impoverishment of feeling")

M. could never really decide between his conservative ethics and the romantic values of Fletcher. Consequently the feelings and even the actions of his plays fall apart.

JOHN FORD (1586-1639?)

is the first, and by far **the best, of the Caroline tragic playwrights**. He can be regarded as a successor to Webster, but a Webster whose power has been **diluted with B. & F. romanticism.**

Ford is the most delicate poet of his day, but he is a poet of **passive suffering and frustrated fortitude**. Although he follows Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and although he stresses the conflict between desires of the heart and the laws of conscience and of civil use, his real aim is **pathos**. Though he lets his protagonists suffer mental anguish because they sin and break sexual taboos (adultery, incest), he does not explore the possibilities such topics yield for psychological analysis and all sorts of arguments. The heroes suffer stoically, but this is not the older stoicism of Chapman or Webster, but **a new stoicism, entirely self-pitying and theatrical. Melancholy resignation** forms the core of his drama - silent grief eats away at the heroes, they pine and die.

By **1625** most of the major figures of the earlier period were gone. Ford tried to hold up heroic drama but the **dramatic style of** his younger rivals, **the 'Cavalier' playwrights, sinks to incredible levels of dreariness and boredom**.

By **1642** by **Order of Parliament the theatres were closed.** The reason given was that drama, being a frivolous pastime, was inappropriate in a time of national turmoil. The **1647 Ordinance Against Playing** was a much more principled statement of the fundamnetal Puritan opposition to drama. Playing was not just wrong for the present time, it was wrong altogether.

There was not really much to destroy. Only the King's Men had survived through the entire period, other companies had struggled and died. Yet this break in the development of English drama is not as drastic as it might seem. Though playing was prohibited, printing was not, so old plays were kept alive on the pages of books and survived in the general currency. A number of theatres were pulled down but playing continued in private houses. From **1656** onwards **William Davenant** stages spectacles with music, as this could be classified as something other than 'plays' and his *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656) is traditionally taken to be **the first English opera**. When the theatres were reopened at the Restoration, it became apparent that the tradition had never been broken, it only returned in a new guise.