

**GEORGE VOLCEANOV**

**A SURVEY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
FROM BEOWULF TO JANE AUSTEN**

Third Edition

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e-mail: [contact@edituraromaniademaine.ro](mailto:contact@edituraromaniademaine.ro)

**UNIVERSITATEA *SPIRU HARET***  
FACULTATEA DE LIMBI ȘI LITERATURI STRĂINE

Conf.univ.dr. GEORGE VOLCEANOV

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## PREFACE

The course has been designed as a study into the evolution of literary forms and styles throughout various historical ages. It is intended to provide a basic introduction to a number of major critical-interpretative perspectives on literature. The formalistic and stylistic approaches as well as the historical-biographical and generic approaches are accompanied by comparative references to various national literatures; frequent cross-references mark analogies between two writers, two works or two trends in an attempt to attain a synthetic perspective on English literature.

Writing literary history is an activity which might most suitably be defined as a mixture of plagiarism and editing, i.e. of plundering and compressing other authors' works. Molière is considered to be the most plundered foreign author in English literature and I daresay that David Daiches is perhaps the most plundered literary historian in the scholarly works of Romanian academics. I am indeed indebted to Daiches's literary history for much of the information contained in this book; but Andrew Sanders, with his excellent comments on canon and his introductory chapters, as well as Leon Levițchi, with his textual-linguistic analyses, have also offered reliable guidance in various matters.

Tom Stoppard, the famous present-day British dramatist, is the author of a *15 Minute Hamlet*, an edited version of Shakespeare's masterpiece. The most difficult part of my assignment in concocting this series of lectures has not been the search for sources, for bibliography, but the problem of editing, of squeezing together thirteen centuries of literary history in about one hundred and fifty pages. Stoppard's aim in editing Shakespeare was to attain an irresistible comic effect. My purpose differs from Stoppard's and yet, the effect may be the same.

**G.V.**



## THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

Literary history is one of the several branches generally known as literary science. Its scope and aims can be better defined by contrasting its related branches:

1) literary criticism deals with the description, interpretation and evaluation of a literary work; it is highly subjective in its assessment and its “diagnoses” often prove to be erroneous in the long run;

2) literary theory provides a set of general patterns concerning the making, the structure and the reception of a literary work; it deals with aesthetic categories such as genre, character, plot; it also theorizes the place held by literature among other arts;

3) comparative literature analyzes literary works, literary trends and movements that belong to different cultures; it studies the transnational circulation of ideas, themes, motifs, conventions and forms in an attempt to detect sources of inspiration, influences, models or mere similarities;

4) literary history has a *selective* function, it lists the works and the authors that make up the *canon* of a national literature. The canon is prone to changes; every new generation brings forth its own reassessments: literary tastes and fashions evolve, the fashionable becomes outdated and the previously unknown may suddenly become fashionable. Somerset Maugham and J.B. Priestley, for instance, are no longer part of the canon despite the tremendous success they enjoyed during their lifetime. On the other hand, more or less obscure writers may be raised to the status of cultural heroes in the postmodern age, in which “political correctness” ostentatiously demands the reevaluation of woman-writers, Blacks, homosexuals and authors belonging to various minorities.

Literary theory is by far the most objective, while literary criticism has always been an outrageously subjective concern. Literary history comes in-between; it cannot be devoid of personal opinions and feelings, in so far as every historian is a reader with his/her own likes and dislikes. Or, as Andrew Sanders once put it during a lecture delivered in Bucharest, the historian simply refers to authors and works he has never read, relying on the legacy of his predecessors, taking for granted their viewpoints.

Teaching literary history implies the same subjective attitude; concentrating thirteen centuries of literary history in only twenty-eight lectures obviously presupposes skipping a number of important authors or even periods while favouring others.

\*

When we come to speak about Elizabethan drama, we shall resort to specific categories such as plot, subplot, character, language, play-within-a play, prologue etc. Speaking about the development of the eighteenth-century English novel, we shall make use of theoretical terms such as point of view, narrative level, telling, showing, implied author etc.

The history of English literature begins with the Anglo-Saxon poetry and poetry is present throughout the evolution of English literature. We shall, therefore, open our series of lectures with a not quite theoretical but rather pragmatic pattern of poetic text analysis.

### **1. The Content of the Poem**

a) *Understand* the poem by taking out all the unknown words and looking them up in the dictionary (*denotative level*).

b) State the *subject* of the poem (it is about...).

c) *Summarize* it in one sentence. Next, develop the sentence into a paragraph and a short essay.

d) Discover – the *familiar* elements in the poem and explain why they seem so (because of personal experience, through reading, or contact with other arts).

– the *unfamiliar* elements (the novelty) and analyze if they seem vivid or if they offer a lively imaginative experience.

### **1. The Theme and Ideational Values of the Poem**

a) State the *theme* that is illustrated in the poem.

b) Comment if the theme is made *explicit* by the author or it is left *implicit*.

c) See if there are passages in the poem that are irrelevant or superfluous.

d) Describe: – the tone of the poem;

– the attitude of the speaker;

– the ethical and philosophical values suggested by the poet.

### **1. The Structure of the Poem**

a) If the structure of the poem is *narrative (epic)*, make an analysis of its exposition, development, turning point, climax and denouement.

b) If the poem is *descriptive*, discuss the basic pattern and the relationship of the details to the basic pattern.

c) If the poem is *expository*, discuss the feelings and emotions presented (their number, order of presentation, the reasons for their order etc.) or the ideas presented (their number, etc. etc.).

d) If the poem is *argumentative*, state the thesis and discuss the number and order of arguments, the reasons for this order and the persuasiveness with which the argument is conducted.

### 1. Prosody and Style

a) Identify the meter:

- scan the poem;
- mark the stressed and unstressed syllables, the division between feet, and indicate the feet and the meter of the poem;

Types of metrical feet:

- trochaic (made up of trochees)  $\_ / \_ \_$
- iambic (made up of iambs)  $\_ \_ / \_ \_$
- dactylic (made up of dactyls)  $\_ / \_ \_ \_$
- anapaestic (made up of anapaests)  $\_ \_ \_ /$
- amphibrachic (made up of amphibrachs)  $\_ \_ / \_ \_$

Types of lines (quantitative classification):

- trimeter; tetrameter; pentameter; hexameter.

Types of lines (qualitative classification):

- run-on lines (more flexibly wrought), e. g. Shakespeare;
- end-stopped lines, e. g. Fletcher;
- amphibious broken lines (in dramatic dialogues);
- stichomythia – one line-cues (in Shakespeare's early comedies, in verbal duels such as in *The Taming of the Shrew* or *The Comedy of Errors*).

a) *Sound Pattern* – mark the alliteration, assonance, musical effects;

- see the *rhyme* and *stanza pattern*:

- \* blank verse, cross rhymes (a b a b), framing rhymes (a b b a), rhyming couplets (a a b b);

\*\* strophic patterns: couplets, tercets, quatrains, rhyme-royal, Spenserian stanza etc.

Discuss whether the sound pattern of the poem has any effectiveness at all.

a) *Imagery*

The imagery of the poem should be analyzed in terms that refer to colour, size, shape, movement, sound, touch, taste, smell (all related to perceptions).

b) *Figures of speech*

- the simile (introduced by *as* or *like*);
- the metaphor, an *implied analogy*, consists of two concepts:
  - *the tenor* (the subject of the comparison)
  - *the vehicle* (the image by which the idea is conveyed).

The tenor is always present; the vehicle is usually absent: “the yellow fog that rubs its back against the window-pane” (the fog is implicitly compared with a cat);

- the epithet;
- the personification implies giving the attribute of a human being to an animal, object or idea;
- the apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a character or an abstract quality is directly addressed as if present;
- the allegory is an elaborate metaphor in which the tenor is never expressed;
- the antithesis is a strong contrast between words, clauses, ideas;
- the paradox is an apparent contradiction that is nevertheless somehow true;
- Figures of repetition:
  - epizeuxis: “Words, words, words”;
  - anadiplosis: (.....x/x.....);
  - anaphora: (x...../x.....);
  - epiphora: (.....x/.....x);
  - chiasmus: (.....AB/BA.....);
- the oxymoron is the antithetic use of an epithet (e. g. deafening silence; swiftly walk);
- nonce-words: lexical inventions such as Joyce’s “galluph” (to gallop in triumph) or “funferal” (funeral and fun);
- asyndeton: the use of juxtaposition with the deliberate omission of conjunctions;
- polysyndeton is the serial use of prepositions and conjunctions in connecting parts of speech and clauses;
- aposiopesis is the sudden interruption of speech, an instance of broken syntax graphically represented by a dash or dots;
- variants of metaphors:
  - the *kennings* is a stereotypically repeated phrase used by the Anglo-Saxon poets as standard metaphors;
  - the *synecdoche* is a form of metaphor in which a part signifies the whole or the whole signifies the part;
  - the *metonymy* is the substitution of a thing with something closely associated with it (e. g. the Romanian sayings “de la vâdică la opincă”; “cu cățel, cu purcel”)

### **1. Psychological Values of the Poem**

- a) Follow the emotions and feelings you experience when reading the poem;
- b) See to what extent you can accept as your own the attitudes and ideas expressed in the poem. Explain why.
- c) If not, state the reasons why you reject the poet’s experience.

## ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

An unavoidable question is “when does the history of English literature start?” According to David Daiches, the founders of what we can properly call English culture and English literature are the Anglo-Saxon invaders. The same opinion is shared by Sefton Delmer, the author of a history of English literature “from *Beowulf* to T. S. Eliot”; Emile Legouis titled his work “a history from 650 on”.

Other historians, Leon Leviçhi included, consider the Celtic myths to be the beginning of English literature. These myths were either rediscovered or reinvented during the Middle Ages. They deal with the heroic deeds of Arthur, dux Britonum (“dux” meaning “military leader”), with the love of Tristram and Iseult, the ancient hero Ossian (later revived by W. B. Yeats); the Celtic utopias also precede the English ones, while the Welsh bards precede the English minstrels.

\*

In 410 A. D. the Romans finally withdrew from England. 449 A.D. is the year in which the first Germanic warriors led by the hero Hengest settled down in England. They had been initially asked by the Britons to come and help them in their fight against the invading Scots and Picts who kept attacking them from the North. The Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes founded Saxon, Anglian and Jutish small kingdoms. Their language was essentially the same. They all considered themselves part of “Germania” and they had a common set of heroes. The most sophisticated European culture during the nine centuries separating the decline and fall of the Roman Empire from the birth of the Renaissance was that of the Anglo-Saxons.

Half of the words used in spoken English are Anglo-Saxon in origin; it was the Anglo-Saxons who turned England into a land of little villages. If the English are stoic, or nostalgic and disposed to melancholy, or have a love of ritual implying a strong conservatism, these are characteristics inherited from the Anglo-Saxons.

The migrating Germanic tribesmen brought with them a code of values typical of a heroic society. Its axis was the bond between a lord and his retainers and its stress was on the importance of physical and moral courage, on the blood feud (corresponding to the Greek and Latin *lex talionis*), and on loyalty. They were also possessed of an acute sense of fate.

\*

About 30,000 lines of Anglo-Saxon poetry have survived. The fact that most of it is religious, ecclesiastical, and has been carefully preserved is due to the flourishing Northumbrian monasteries of Lindisfarne, Jarrow and Whitby, the very hub of the Christian world (before the Danish invasions). Religious poetry consisted mainly of translations of Books from the Bible.

On the other hand, very few scarcely preserved manuscripts of heroic poems have survived. The Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry is close in mood and purpose to its old Germanic and Scandinavian origin. Its main feature was the orality; it was recited by the *scop*, the itinerant minstrel. This is proved by the use of stress and alliteration. The blank verses were made up of long, irregular lines, each with at least four stressed syllables and at least three alliterative syllables.

The heroic poems present a pagan world of superstitions, fears, beliefs and ignorance, in which the runes have magic powers, while the stones, the trees and the wells are held in veneration. Nature is generally perceived as a hostile force. It is “a man’s world” in which only the strongest and the fittest survive, a world allowing no room for women.

*Widsith*, consisting of 143 lines, dates from the late 7<sup>th</sup> or early 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is the story of a scop, of a “far wanderer”. The scop was a crucial member of a tribe or a society; he was its living memory. His visits from one ruler to the other cover the whole Germanic world and a list of rulers whose lifetimes extend over two hundred years (hence their fictional character). Some heroes mentioned in this poem also appear in *Beowulf*. They are Huns, Goths, Franks, Burgundians, Danes, Swedes, Angles, Saxons, Langobards etc. This is another proof that the heroes of the Anglo-Saxon poetry were not regional or national, but common to all the Germanic world. *Widsith* is a primitive combination of historical memories and heroic traditions, a catalogue of rulers comparable with Homer’s catalogue in the *Iliad*.

\*

*Beowulf* was composed by an anonymous poet sometime between 680 and 800. The reader is told in 3,182 lines about the rise and fall of a hero, about the three fights against supernatural enemies (a man-eating

monster, his mother and a dragon). It is an epic poem concerned with a main plot to which several digressions and allusions are added. They are stories of murder and vengeance supposedly known by the scop's auditors, episodes in Germanic history and legend (Beowulf is compared to the dragon-slayer Siegemund).

Although composed in England, the poem refers to the period of Germanic history long before the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

The main theme of the poem is the celebration of a great warrior's deeds. Certain similarities with Homer's *Odyssey* reside in the delineation of human characters. The old king Hrothgar, the young hero Wiglaf and Beowulf himself are the three protagonists and the three representatives of different generations who embody and proclaim a pronounced and coherent set of values. In their actions and words, they repeatedly express a belief in the importance of generosity of spirit and a self-awareness that makes them responsible members of the society to which they belong. The generosity of the rulers and the loyalty of the retainers, the solemn boasting of the warriors, the pride in noble heredity, the thirst for fame through the achievement of deeds of courage make up the world of the heroic age.

The mood and the atmosphere of the poem is varied, combining moments of slow terror and suspense with elegy. Underlying the poet's appetite for life is his acute sense of the transitoriness of life: man's days are numbered and it is a good name that constitutes immortality on earth; the final lines approve of Beowulf's desire for worldly fame.

Few Christian elements such as God's creation or Cain's murder of Abel seem to have been added later to a genuinely pagan text.

Cyclical in movement, unified by striking contrasts – youth and old age, success and failure, bravery and cowardice – *Beowulf* mingles dramatic speeches, battle action, elegiac evocation of place and aphoristic comment in the greatest surviving masterpiece of the Old English Literature.

Another extant heroic poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, tells the story of Byrhtnoth, an Anglo-Saxon nobleman who fought an army of Danish invaders on the bank of the river Blackwater in 991. The poem appears to be the work of a man who had firsthand information about the battle, perhaps from a wounded survivor.

Before the battle begins, the poet offers a generalized view of the two armies. Then, the poet's eye fastens on Byrhtnoth and, after his death, on a succession of individual Anglo-Saxon warriors. Some of them take flight, while others seek to avenge their dead lord or die in the attempt. This narrow concentration of heroic tragedy has been often

compared with the twelfth book of the *Iliad*. The poet successfully achieves the detailed description of the words and efforts of single protagonists.

The contrast between the muted landscape and the violent action; the interplay between the cowardice of those who fled and those who stayed; the energetic use of conventional motifs, such as the need for men to take their boasts and stick to them (a tradition that is also found in *Beowulf*), the brilliant use of direct speech all point to a quite exceptional poet.

*The Battle of Brunanburh* describes the defeat of Anlaf, the Norse king of Dublin, and Constantine, King of the Picts and Scots, by Athelstan, King of England, and his brother Eadmund. Conservative in both vocabulary and imagery, this poem is concerned from first to last with king and country; it is one of the first Anglo-Saxon texts imbued with vigorous nationalism.

\*

The lyric mood in the Anglo-Saxon poetry is almost always the elegiac. The six surviving so-called elegies are poems where the topic itself is loss – loss of a lord, loss of a loved one, the loss of fine buildings fallen into decay.

- *Deor* (*'s Lament*) presents in 42 lines the complaint of a *scop* who, after years of service to his lord, has lost his position, being replaced by a rival. Allusions to four legendary events precede the description of his own misfortunes. This is the only surviving Old English poem composed in stanzas with a variable number of lines and with a refrain (“That passed away, this also may”).

- *The Wanderer* is the lament of a solitary man, once happy in the service of a loved lord, who now, after the death of his lord, has lost his place in society and has become an outcast in exile, across the icy sea. The wanderer’s best source of comfort lies within himself. Some elements may suggest Christian consolation; it is hard to infer whether the author was a pagan or a Christian poet. The main theme of the poem might be related to the Latin *ubi sunt?* or the favourite medieval “mais ou sont les neiges d’antan?” to be later produced by Villon.

- *The Seafarer* was translated into modern English by Ezra Pound. Some critics consider it to be a dialogue, a “for and against” debate between an old sailor and an eager young man willing to take to the sea.

Others consider it to be the monologue of an old sailor who mingles regret and self-pity while speaking about the loneliness and hardships of a life at sea, of self-imposed exile, on the one hand, and the fascination

and rewards of such a life, on the other hand. Life at sea is equated with the renunciation of worldly pleasures and with the life dedicated to God. The transience of life is visible on the land, but the seafarer – on his symbolic journey – is sailing to eternal bliss.

• *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message* are devoid of sufficient frame of reference. One of the very few female characters and speakers in an Anglo-Saxon poem, the wife of an outlawed man complains about her being kept in an earth-cave, the captive of her husband's relatives. The second poem has a more optimistic tone, the exiled husband has become a retainer in a foreign country and he hopes to get reunited with his wife. They are among the very few poems which survived an age of severe religious censorship.

• *The Ruin* is the 8<sup>th</sup> century poem describing the stone buildings of a ruined city – the Roman Bath. The art of building in stone was unknown in early Anglo-Saxon England and the ruins of Roman towns and roads are referred to as “the work of giants”. The poet is aware that everything man-made will perish. And yet, there is no sense of loss, but rather of admiration and celebrations.

The main stylistic devices characteristic of Old English poetry are:

- the lexical repetition;
- the syntactic parallelism;
- the alliteration;
- the kennings, the stereotypical concentrated metaphors: e. g.  
life = a sea travel;  
the world = moonlight;  
the warrior = helm-bearer;  
the ship = the sea-steed;  
the sea = the swan-track; the ship's road; the whale's path.

The religious poetry produced by Northumbrian monks during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries consists of retellings of books and episodes from the Old Testament and it often has a heroic emphasis. Monks used these poems in the course of their missionary work: therefore, it is no wonder that Satan was portrayed as an arrogant and faithless retainer.

This period of the Old English Poetry is called ‘Caedmonian’ after Caedmon, a cowherd at the monastery of Whitby, who wrote religious songs in Anglo-Saxon. None are extant, but they are described by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*, which contains the Latin version of Caedmon's first work, a hymn. Caedmon was the very first to apply the Germanic heroic poetic discipline of vocabulary, style, and general technique to Christian matter and story. Thus, he preserved for Christian art the great verbal inheritance of Germanic culture.

Bede (673-735), better known as the Venerable Bede, studied, taught and wrote at the monastery of Jarrow. He wrote himself in Latin, but one epigrammatic poem in the vernacular, *Bede's Death Song*, is also attributed to him. It reads as follows:

Before he leaves on his fated journey  
No man will be so wise that he need not  
Reflect while time still remains  
Whether his soul will win delight  
Or darkness after his death-day.

The second phase of Old English Christian poetry is the product of early 9<sup>th</sup> century Mercia. The anonymous author of *The Dream of the Rood* presents Christ in Germanic heroic terms as the leader of a warrior band; the Cross is one of His followers and the dreamer. Much of the drama of the first part of the poem derives from the paradox that, in order to be loyal to its Lord, the Cross has to be disloyal and, in fact, to crucify Christ.

The tone of the second part of the poem is homiletic. At the end the dreamer speaks of his own life and aspiration. The whole poem is a remarkable fusion of old and new. In its use of the dream vision, so much favoured by medieval poets, and in its prosopopeia (i.e. putting words into the mouth of an inanimate object) it stands alone in Old English poetry, as a work of great originality and passion.

\*

Although much the most charming poems in the canon of Old English literature, the ninety-six *riddles* preserved in the *Exeter Book* are rarely mentioned by literary historians. The whole body of Old English literature is packed out with mini-riddles, the condensed metaphors known as kennings and already referred to earlier in this lecture. The riddles vary enormously in subject matter and tone. Some are concerned with instruments of war, such as sword and shield and bow and helmet. Others describe ideas and objects associated with the Christian faith (e.g. Creation and Soul and Body).

What the riddles reflect above all, though, are not aspects either of the Germanic heroic world or of the Christian faith but simply the everyday life of the working man; they describe household objects, man's artefacts, natural phenomena, animal life. A few of the riddles are witty and obscene *double entendres*; their sense of humour is something not

to be found anywhere else in Old English literature. Here is an example of a riddle displaying all the subtlety of a Japanese *haiku*:

On the way a miracle: water become bone.

\*

The Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain brought with them their own poetry; there is no evidence of any literary prose tradition during their stay on the continent. This means that the development of prose occurred strictly in England, much later in time.

The prose is represented by laconic chronicles, travelogues, letters of kings and bishops, sermons, legal documents etc. etc.

King Alfred the Great (871-899), king of Wessex, a remarkable statesman, military strategist, patriot, and man of letters was strongly influenced by the cultural achievements of the Frankish Empire. Alcuin of York had helped Charles the Great found his famous Academy in Aachen. It was now Alfred's turn to gather at his court some of the most learned men of his time, setting up schools for the Anglo-Saxons. He himself translated into vernacular religious and historical works (e. g. *The Consolation of Philosophy* by the Roman philosopher Boethius). Among the first theorists of translation, Alfred admits that a translation must adapt itself to the demands of the original text. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* sponsored by him is *the first original narrative prose in any European vernacular*. Alfred also set out a Christian code of laws.

## MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

The Norman Conquest put an end to the evolution of Anglo-Saxon literature. According to F. W. Bateson, “the change from Old to Middle English was rapid and drastic, a linguistic revolution”. A proper historical parallel can be drawn with the similar, though slower, transitions on the Continent from Latin into French, Italian and Spanish. At one end of the process there is what is now a dead language. Fact is that Old English, as standardized in the West-Saxon of Alfred and his successors, possessed a system of genders, case-endings, and verb conjugations almost as elaborate and inflexible as those of classical Latin. A gap appears between the Old English linguistic and cultural ties, which almost collapse under the successive impact of the Scandinavian and the Norman invasions, and the dawn of the so-called Middle-English literature. The Norman conquerors bring to England a distinctive cultural heritage which gradually supersedes the Anglo-Saxon literary forms and styles. The age of Middle English literature (1066 – approx. 1500) is closely connected to the evolution of French medieval literature both in form and content. The Anglo-Saxon heroic and lyrical poems are replaced by different species such as:

- *the romance* – a chivalrous tale concerned with the psychology of courtly love, with adventures and female characters raised to the status of worshipped idols; Chrétien de Troyes (the 12<sup>th</sup> c.) offered the most remarkable model; he deals with the concept of honour and the relationship between man and woman as a married couple; with *Erec et Enide*, the medieval literature is no longer a “man’s world”, the woman acquires an equal status.

Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, defines romance as a projection of the ideals of the ruling classes. It is an aristocratic genre in which the hero is superior in degree to other men. He usually embarks upon a journey of adventures in which archetypes such as the dragon or the sea-monster recur. Centuries older than the realistic novel, the romance is concerned with psychological archetypes, while the novel deals with social masks;

- *the allegory* becomes the most often employed device in poetry and drama: the personification of vices versus virtues becomes the most

frequent topic. The so-called “dream allegory” is a story told in the form of a dream. The most influential model was provided by *Roman de la Rose*, written by two authors in two distinct stages:

1) Guillaume de Lorris (1227) wrote over 4,000 short couplets dealing with true courtly love; the qualities of the heroine are personified in his work;

2) Jean de Meung (1268-1277) added a sequel of over 22,000 lines. He proved to be clumsy in handling allegory but he had a keen insight into the political, social and religious problems of his age. A realistic poet, he turned his sequel into a satire.

The poem was translated all over Europe;

- *the fabliau* is an obscene kind of poetry, overtly dealing with sex and immorality. It reflects the mentality of the rising bourgeoisie. Its realism and humour contrast with the artificial language and atmosphere of the romance;

- *the ballads*, although anonymous and collective, only appear after the Norman Conquest. (No French influences have been traced in this respect).

### THE ANONYMOUS POETRY

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century it is best illustrated by *The Owl and the Nightingale*. This *fable* consisting of 1,800 lines imitating the French octosyllabic couplet has been preserved in two manuscripts.

It is a lively dialogue between the two birds, an exchange of mutual insults and recriminations.

It combines the features of the French *débat* (debate) and the bestiary.

The author assumes the role of a neutral spectator: each opponent defends its own views.

The OWL represents a poet of the religious type, being a representative of the *cloister*; whereas the NIGHTINGALE is a poet busy with writing love poetry.

The poem actually mirrors the conflict between the traditional ANGLO-SAXON religious poetry and the modern French lay literature. The language of the poem is not artificial; the words naturally follow the train of thought; and for the first time, the metaphor as a main device is replaced by unexpected similes such as: “you chatter like an Irish priest” (the owl about the nightingale) or “you sing like a hen in the snow” (the nightingale about the owl).

\*

The popular ballads are another kind of anonymous poetry which was to have a great effect on English writing centuries later. The ballads

flourish in the 14<sup>th</sup> century England, but the extant texts were preserved in manuscripts or printed texts dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The word “ballad” seems to be derived from the Latin “ballare”, i. e. “to dance”. Towards the end of the Roman empire the songs known as “ballistes” were in fashion; the Italian poetry of the 12<sup>th</sup> century brought forth the “ballata” and the French borrowed it as “balade”; originally, these poems had a lyrical character.

The ballads are *orally* transmitted *narrative* poems which are not made and sung *for* the people, but made and sung *by* the people (i. e. collective authorship is implied).

Two facts cannot be established for sure:

a) one is the “original” version of a ballad;

b) the other is the date when a ballad was composed.

As a rule, this literary form appeared after the end of the great migrations on the European continent; it belongs to a settled group and it deals with the affairs of that group.

Here are the characteristic features of the English popular ballads:

- they have a narrative kernel;

- they present a dramatic story;

- they display simplicity of vocabulary and grammar;

- they are written in iambic meter;

- their “ideal” pattern is the 8/6/8/6 quatrain later employed by Sir Walter Scott, John Keats, Oscar Wilde, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Rudyard Kipling, John Lennon;

- the events described in the ballads have a local character;

- nature is only mentioned as an external background (unlike in the Romanian popular ballads);

- the early ballads have a *refrain* (*burden*), i. e. a repeated line or half-line;

- the rhythm of the narrative is either (a) *lingering*, i. e. slow, insisting on significant details and resorting to repetitions, or (b) *leaping*, i. e. avoiding details and resorting to an abrupt manner of story-telling;

- repetition, interior rhyme and syntactic parallelism are specific devices;

- sometimes several ballads were turned into a coherent whole, in an epic poem such as *The Gest of Robin Hood*.

Literary historians have produced several possible classifications of the popular ballads. Here is Furnivall’s classification:

a) ballads of domestic relations;

b) ballads of superstition;

c) humorous ballads;

d) ballads of love and death;

e) historical ballads;

f) ballads of outlawry.

Daiches proposes the following taxonomy:

a) themes derived from romances;

b) popular class heroes;

c) historical events;

d) domestic tragedy;

e) themes common to international folk song (such a theme closer to our culture is the theme of building, recurrent in Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Greek and Serbo-Croatian folklore).

- *The Two Sisters* is the story of a jealous girl who murders her sister by drowning; the dead body is discovered by a miller who takes it to the king's harper; the latter strings his harp with the dead girl's hair and the song played in front of an audience reveals the murder.

- *Tam Lin* is a ballad of metamorphoses and witchcraft. The hero is carried away, bewitched, and he is redeemed when the heroine, following his instructions, holds him tight while he undergoes a series of terrifying transformations. Similar changes occur during a fight between Menelaus and Proteus in Homer's *Odyssey*.

- *Sweet William's Ghost* narrates the return of a dead lover who forces his fiancée to follow him to the Realm of the Dead.

- *King John and the Bishop* is one of the few humorous ballads.

- *Chevy Chase* presents the border fight between Percy of Northumberland and Douglas the Scot. This episode was centuries later described by Shakespeare in *1 Henry IV, I, 1*.

- Thirty-six ballads were dedicated to the legendary figure of Robin Hood. According to some sources he was a contemporary of King Richard the Lion-Heart; according to others, Robert, Earl of Huntingdon (d. 1247) was the real Robin.

## THE 14<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (RICARDIAN) POETRY

The second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century is also known as Chaucer's age. Four major names essentially contributed to the development of English poetry during the troublesome reign of Richard II: Langland, Gower, Chaucer and "the *Pearl* poet".

With *Piers Plowman* (1377), *Troilus and Cryseyde* (1385), the *Canterbury Tales* (1387-94) and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1390), English literature suddenly came of age. These four superb poems, each of epic length and achievement, are among the classics of world literature, and they were all written within twenty years of each other. According to some historians, it cannot be a coincidence that this literature belongs

to the generation immediately succeeding the repeated waves of Black Death (1348, 1361 and 1369): in a way, the generation of Langland, Chaucer and the Gawain-poet was the response to the challenge of the Black Death. And they all wrote in an age in which English finally replaced French and Latin, and became the official language.

♦ William LANGLAND is the author of *Piers Plowman*, an impressive “dream allegory” dealing with the religious, social and economic problems of his time. The work as a whole belongs to a religious idealist genuinely distressed by the social and moral condition of England. The author fights against corruption in the Church, against false religion, criticizes the evils of his age, looking for solutions that might lead to improvement.

*Piers Plowman* is an enlarged or extended proverb. Piers, the honest yokel, gradually and imperceptibly grows into Do-well, Do-better and Do-best; he becomes the symbol both of mankind and of Christ. The poet-reader relationship is not that of preacher and congregation so much as a conspiracy of author and audience, who are exploring the nature of reality simultaneously and together. John Trueman alias John Ball, executed in 1381 for his part in the Peasants’ Revolt, used a combination of Christian Utopianism, proverbial wisdom and cryptic references to *Piers Plowman* in a letter to his followers.

♦ John GOWER is the author of three poems, each written in a different language (French, Latin and English). This proves the coexistence of various medieval traditions.

• *Mirour de l’ Omme* or *Speculum Meditantis* was lost for centuries and found only in 1895.

• *Vox Clamantis* is a “dream allegory”, a gloomy picture of violence and disorder; it depicts the general corruption of the age, which finally led to the deposition and murder of King Richard II.

• *Confessio Amantis* is a 33,000 line “dream allegory” in which the time of the action is the usual May morning. Gower used Greek and Latin sources to make up a collection of tales about illustrious lovers. Gower’s narrative is fluent, but he is preposterous in moralizing all the time and analyzing sin in its various aspects. Gower lacks Chaucer’s vivacity and humour. His love stories are intermingled with digressions on a great variety of subjects. He shares and mirrors the conventional views of his age. Gower’s perfect rhythm and rhyme turn his work into monotonous reading. A skilled poet with a perfect handling of style and an innovator of the English literary language, Gower is dull.

He was, nevertheless, praised by his contemporaries. Chaucer called him the “moral Gower” in his dedication to *Troilus and Cryseyde*.

Philip Sidney praised him in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in Ben Jonson's *English Grammar* of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Gower was quoted as an authority more often than any other writer. Shakespeare uses Gower as a stage character in the prologues to *Pericles*, where he plays the part of the chorus.

♦ The anonymous 14<sup>th</sup> century poet known as the PEARL poet is Geoffrey Chaucer's equal in literary art and talent. His only surviving texts are *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

• *Pearl* is an elegy of 1,200 lines arranged in twelve-line stanzas; it combines rhyme and alliteration. The poet also employs the *catch-word* (i. e. the first word in the first line of each new stanza is the last word of the previous stanza). The poet laments the loss of a little girl who died before she was two years old. Her name (the Middle French *Margarite*, derived from the Latin *margarita*, i. e. *pearl*, the equivalent of the Romanian *mărgăritar*) gives the title of the poem.

The lost daughter appears in the poet's dream as a shining maiden dressed in white with ornaments of pearl. She is in New Jerusalem, in a land of great beauty, divided from her father by a river. He wants to cross the river, but she warns him that the time has not yet come for him to do this, because the river can only be crossed in death. The girl preaches salvation. Thus, a matter of personal grief is turned into a religious poem. There is no mention about the mother; this made certain critics wonder whether the lost daughter was a love-child.

• *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a romance in verse dedicated to King Arthur's nephew, the embodiment of chivalrous ideals. The general structure of a romance contains three moments in the evolution of the plot: the quest (i. e. the initiation of the hero), the test and the rite de passage (i. e. a major change in his life or status).

Written in the Lancashire dialect, the poem tells of the knight Gawain and the various temptations to which he is subjected by a lord's wife on his way to the Green Chapel, where he was to meet the Green Knight. He resists the main temptations but he conceals from the lord of the castle the girdle of invulnerability the lady had given him. The lord turns out to be the Green Knight who had himself planned the temptations. Gawain is partly punished and partly forgiven for partly staining his honour with an excusable lie.

Gawain is the only hero of the Arthurian romances to become the hero of a whole cycle of romances, eleven in all. The poem has 2,530 lines arranged in variable stanzas, combining long alliterative lines and short rhyming ones. It has been named the jewel of English romance and of medieval literature.

## GEOFFREY CHAUCER

The greatest English poet of medieval times and one of the greatest English poets of all times was born in London in 1340 (?). The son of a vintner, Chaucer was educated at Cambridge and Oxford. His connections with the royal court began when he was assigned page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of King Edward III. He lived an eventful life: in 1359 he was taken prisoner in France, but he was ransomed in 1360. In 1366 he married Philippa, whose sister, Blanche, later became the wife of John of Gaunt, the king's fourth son. Later on he was sent on several diplomatic missions to France, Italy, Flanders. He died in 1400 and, since he lived in the neighbourhood, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, in what was to become the so-called Poets' Corner (see Sanders).

As a man, Chaucer knew the ups and downs of life, he experienced both the joys and disappointments of human existence.

Chaucer's literary career has been conventionally divided into three periods:

1. *The French period* includes the years in which the young poet writes love poems imitating French models. He also endeavours to produce an "augmented" translation of *Roman de la Rose*, which is left unfinished.

*The Book of the Duchess or The Death of Blanche* (1369) is a narrative poem written in the dream allegory convention. Composed in octosyllables, the poem tells about the vision of the poet who meets a black knight in the wood; the latter laments the death of his beautiful lady.

2. *The Italian period* marked a great step forward in the poet's career. During his missions in Italy, Chaucer may have met Petrarch and Boccaccio. From Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, Chaucer learnt (a) the real vigour of poetical genius, (b) an exquisite sense of form and (c) the art of story-telling.

- *The House of Fame* was written under the influence of *Divina Commedia*.

Book I is a discussion on dreams; the poet finds himself in a temple of glass; on its walls the story of Aeneas is engraved. "Then I saw" is the leitmotif of Book I, reminiscent of Dante's cliché.

Book II tells how a golden eagle seizes the poet and bears him to the House of Fame. The poet is a dull man who must learn what love is and the self-important bird has a didactic tone.

Book III presents the House of Fame which is located on a rock of clear ice. The place is furnished with the statues of Homer, Statius, Virgil and Ovid. The Goddess of Fame grants her favour on a crowd of petitioners begging for fame. Then, the poet is taken to the house of Rumours. The conclusion of the poem is that Fame is as important as Love.

Chaucer's novelty in handling the conventional pattern of allegory is his irony and self-irony.

- *The Parliament of Fowls* is a dream allegory written in a seven-line stanza rhyming *ababbcc*. This strophic pattern is known as *rhyme royal*, due to James I of Scotland, the king-poet. The poem is written in celebration of St. Valentine's Day. The birds gather at Venus's temple to choose their mates in accordance with Nature's rule.

Elements of social satire appear in the parallel between various kinds of birds and the representatives of various social strata: the goose embodies the practical bourgeois, while the falcon embodies the proud courtier.

- *The Legend of Good Women* is a collection of nine stories about famous and unhappy ladies. The stories are borrowed from Ovid and Boccaccio. *The Prologue* explains the punishment inflicted on the poet by Venus for his having written about a faithless woman in *Troilus and Cryseyde*.

- *Troilus and Cryseyde* is not the last in chronological order but the most important work of Chaucer's "Italian period". It deals with an episode taken from the Greek mythology via Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. The characters are no longer abstract concepts with allegorical function, but psychological entities. The actions and the plot evolve according to their reasons, their desires. That is why *Troilus and Cryseyde* is considered to be the first English psychological novel, and Chaucer is often compared with Shakespeare as a great explorer of man's psyche.

Cryseyde is a faithless lover and yet she is aware of her weakness; Troilus evolves from carelessness to fervent love and then to disappointment and self-destruction. The poem was later used by Shakespeare as a source for his *Troilus and Cressida*.

### 3. The English period: *The Canterbury Tales*

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* follows a pattern known as "frame-story" which had already been used by Boccaccio in his *Decameron* and which was later used by Margaret of Navarre in her *Heptameron*, too. At a time when the plot had not yet been discovered as a literary device, the "frame" was a pretext for grouping together several stories. The work is made up of a "general prologue", in which the characters are introduced

to the readers, and of the tales of the pilgrims, preceded by their own prologues, called “lesser prologues”.

The English custom of organizing yearly pilgrimages to the tomb of Thomas-à-Beckett (murdered in 1170) in Canterbury suggested to Chaucer a broad plan for his tales. The pilgrims were twenty-nine in number, Chaucer himself being the thirtieth. They met at Tabbard Inn at Southwark quite accidentally. The inn-keeper proposed that each pilgrim should tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and another two stories on the way back; the best one was to receive a square dinner at the expense of the others. Out of the 120 tales planned only twenty-four were written.

◆ In a way, Chaucer is the first modern English creator: he has a special way of handling IRONY, which is definitely a modern feature. His characters are described one by one; the details are those that would strike the eye of a fellow-traveller. The deliberately contrived disorder, giving an air of naturalness and spontaneity, is another proof of Chaucer’s originality. The author as a fellow-pilgrim naively notes what he sees or learns about the others in casual order. It is Chaucer’s assumed naivety as an observer that turns him into a great ironist.

Chaucer had already experimented two different tones of voice in *The Parliament of Fowls*. His two voices (i.e. the anonymous voice, the conventional literary man’s voice, on the one hand, and the voice of a vividly present persona calling itself Chaucer, on the other hand) exploit the dramatic effects of the most serious technical limitation of Middle English literature: its dependence on oral recitation.

The frontispice to the Cambridge manuscript of *Troilus and Cryseyde* shows Chaucer reading the poem to Richard II, the royal family and other members of the English Court. Some of the younger courtiers are chatting or flirting, and they do not seem to be paying much attention to what Chaucer is saying. A public reading of any length tends to be monotonous at any time. Chaucer’s brilliant solution of the problem was to include his audience in the narrative by direct appeals to them to confirm or assist his own interpretations. Next, Chaucer complemented his pseudo-chorus of an oral audience by gradually evolving his own pseudo-narrator – well meaning, a little thick in the head, without any personal experience of sexual love, who was and was not Chaucer himself. (Langland, in *Piers Plowman*, had also exploited the literary convention of the pseudo-narrator that originated in the practice of oral delivery).

◆ Chaucer’s characters belong to almost all the social strata and classes:  
- the Knight and the Squire represent the nobility;  
- the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, the Parson and the Nuns represent the clergy;

- the Merchant, the Clerk of Oxford, the Doctor of Physics, the Wife of Bath, the Cook, the Sailor, the Dyer, the Weaver and the Miller represent the middle-class and the townsfolk;

- the Sergeant of Law and the Summoner represent the law.

All these individuals representing every class from Plowman to Knight recreate the social scene of Chaucer's age. They are more than a framework: the poet minutely presents their habits of thinking, prejudices, professional bias, familiar ideas, personal idiosyncrasies.

Chaucer also gives us a vivid description of the chromatic elements in the garments of various characters:

- the Knight is dressed in black and white;

- the Squire is dressed in red and white;

- the Yeoman is dressed in green and white.

The embroideries on the Squire's shirt resemble a "meadow bright".

Each and every character is a coherent entity: the *outer* appearance of the characters is in accordance with their *inner* disposition and with their *stories*. The characters are portrayed by means of physical details, the language they speak and the content or type of the tale they tell. The Summoner, for instance, has both a very ugly character and a repulsive outer appearance; the Miller has a wart on his nose and on top of that wart he has a tuft of hair. He has a reddish skin and hair and, at his sight, the children usually run away.

The Knight is a wise and distinguished man. He praises truth, honour, courtesy, generosity. His romance about Palamon and Arcite was later used as a source by Shakespeare and John Fletcher in their collaborative play *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613).

The Monk is fat, he likes worldly pleasures, he likes to eat much; he is a man of fashion, his coat is trimmed with fine grey fur, and he has greyhounds swift as birds.

The Wife of Bath, Alison is one of Chaucer's most original contributions to the portraits of the pilgrims. Married five times, she is still exuberant, healthy, enjoying life to the maximum.

The Pardoner who sells indulgences is Chaucer's greatest masterpiece of character drawing, implying a whole world of moral hypocrisy, but Chaucer's irony is best expressed in the portrait of the Prioress. Her portrait is built in sentences going in pairs and the second sentence is always introduced by the conjunction *but* in a dichotomy of appearance versus essence:

- she had a perfect command of French, but not the French of Paris;

- she was well-bred, but her good breeding meant that she let no morsel fall from her lips;

- she was very piteous, but her pity concerned mice and dogs (not men);
- she had a small mouth, but a large forehead;
- she was a nun, but her brooch was engraved with the Latin proverb

*Amor vincit omnia* (instead of *Labor vincit omnia*).

Only three characters are treated without any touch of irony, namely:

- the Knight, who embodies the highest ideals of chivalry and courtesy;
- the Poor Parson, who displays genuine Christian behaviour;
- the Plowman, who is an honest, good-hearted, hard-working fellow.

The tales go in pairs. The Friar, for instance, tells a story in connection with the corrupt character of the Summoner. Taking the Friar's story as an offence, the Summoner tells a story about a corrupt Friar.

◆ In the twenty-four tales, Chaucer employed several literary species such as:

- the courtly romance (in the Knight's tale);
- the fabliau (in the Miller's tale and in the Reeve's tale);
- the hagiographic legend of saints' lives (the Second Nun's tale and the Prioress's tale);
- the fable (the Nun's Tale);
- the sermon (the Parson's tale).

According to Bateson, in a country that suddenly finds itself depopulated, procreation becomes one of the essentials of the society's survival. That is why the topic to which the pilgrims keep on returning is love and marriage. That is why the General Prologue includes a hymn to the regenerative power of sun and the rebirth of the dead year. Human love thus carries with it remnants of the half-buried pre-Christian fertility cults. As for Chaucer's characters, William Blake rightly noticed that they "remain forever unaltered", i.e. prototypes or archetypes.

◆ In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer established the prosodic pattern of decasyllabic couplets, i. e. rhyming iambic pentameters, which was later used by Marlowe in *Hero and Leander*.

◆ Chaucer's style can be described as simple, natural, direct, ironic. Chaucer's self-irony is obvious when the author himself is hushed by the other pilgrims when he wants to tell a story in the form of an epic romance.

◆ Chaucer's language is extremely rich. He used words from both Norman-French and Anglo-Saxon. This mingling of the two languages led to the birth of modern English. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that Chaucer "found the English language brick and left it marble". He made a great step ahead in combining conventional medieval literary patterns and traditions with a profound interest in the men and women of the society of his time.

## ENGLISH MEDIEVAL DRAMA

The history of English drama begins with the elaboration of the ecclesiastical liturgy in mutually answering dialogues. Other sources are considered to be:

- the pre-Christian festivals;
- the Saint George and Robin Hood plays;
- the Maypole dances;
- various folk activities.

This means that English drama has both religious and secular origins. As for its religious origins, the ritual of the Christian church – with its two festivals of Christmas and Easter, with Christ's career from birth to resurrection – was inherently dramatic.

The liturgy or biblical story contributed to the development of simple plays with characters from both the New and the Old Testament.

It is not quite a paradox that the first two dramatic poems in the French language, namely *Adam* and *Resurrection* were written in England in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. After the Norman Conquest, drama had been performed in Latin by the pupils of monastery schools. The English Hilarius, a pupil of Abelard's, is one of the first dramatists of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, who wrote in Latin.

In 1264 the Corpus Christi festival was started by the Roman-Catholic church; it was a procession in which various crafts or guilds acted resorting to *pageants*.

The plays were originally performed in the closed space of a church, which was a difficult task to accomplish; therefore, they moved out into the churchyard, next into the market-place of towns and, further on, into a convenient meadow. Latin was gradually replaced by vernacular.

Three species are characteristic of English medieval drama:

A. The *mysteries* (the word has a French etymology) were originally dumb-shows concerned with the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

B. The *miracles* presented the lives of Christian saints and martyrs. These biblical stories were performed on wagons known as 'pageants'.

Each pageant belonged to a certain craft and presented just one scene of a whole cycle; the wagons followed one another and halted at certain spots where the crowds gathered to see their performance. 'The Slaughter of the Innocent' was followed by 'The Raising of Lazarus' which, in turn, was followed by 'The Last Supper', and so on.

C. The *moralities* (or *morality plays*) emerged some time later; they did not deal with biblical stories and characters, but with personified abstractions of virtues and vices who struggle for man's soul. The battle for soul as a literary theme had its origin in the allegorical epic *Psychomachia* written by the Latin poet Prudentius (c. 400 A. D.). Here virtues and vices appear in pairs: Ira versus Patientia; Superbia versus Humilitas; Libido versus Pudicitia etc.

*The Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1425) presents the fight between the Good Angel versus the Bad Angel and the Seven Deadly Sins, throughout a man's life, from birth to the Last Judgment.

*Everyman*, possibly the adaptation of a Dutch text, treats the hour of death. Knowledge is Everyman's faithful friend to the last moment of his life, while Good Deeds will stay with him even after his death. The philosophical depth of this text accounts for its universal echoes and frequent comparisons with Oedipus, King Lear, Arthur Miller's *Loman*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Bunyan's *Christian* or various characters of the theatre of the absurd.

John Skelton, considered by Andrew Sanders to be the first *rap* poet of all times (the 15<sup>th</sup> c.), is also known as the author of *Magnificence*, another outstanding morality play.

Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century a new dramatic form emerges: the *interlude*. It abounds in realistic and comic details and has a secular character. This kind of farcical show was best illustrated by the works of John Heywood.

## THE RENAISSANCE SONNETEERS

The 15<sup>th</sup> century, from a literary viewpoint, is dominated by Chaucer's imitators (such as John Lydgate, still in fashion at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century); by the vogue of the popular ballads; by the development of the medieval drama; by Thomas Malory's prose romance *Morte Darthur*; by the activity of William Caxton – the first English printer.

The gap between the age of the Ricardian poetry and the golden generation of Elizabethan sonneteers and dramatists is filled in by one hundred and fifty years of almost continuous wars against France and Scotland, of civil wars, uprisings, anarchy, dynastic changes. Political stability is achieved only during the reign of successive Tudor rulers. The reformation of the church during the reign of Henry VIII, the economic growth and the political stability of the country were followed by military victories against Spain abroad and sheer dictatorship at home, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

This is the general background of the flourishing Elizabethan literature, represented by poetry, prose and drama.

The first English poet to write a sonnet was Thomas Wyatt in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; he introduced the Petrarchan sonnet (two *abba* quatrains and two tercets rhyming *cdc cdc* or *cde cde*). Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Wyatt's great admirer soon changed this pattern into three quatrains plus a couplet later used by Shakespeare as well.

### EDMUND SPENSER (1552 - 1599)

Spenser accomplished the synthesis of all Latinist Renaissance and of the French and Italian developments of the last few centuries. He was regarded as the New Poet of a revolutionary age. The strongest influence exerted on the English sonnet was not Petrarch's influence, but that of his French imitators such as Clément Marot, Joachim du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard. The latter was the leader of the so-called 'La Pléiade' and claimed the Vlach origin of his ancestors.

Spenser started as a poet by rendering du Bellay's sonnets literally, without rhyme. His first important work, *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is a collection of twelve eclogues corresponding to the twelve months of the year. (The eclogue is a poem in the form of a pastoral dialogue. Its origin is the Sicilian folk song; the Greek poet Theocritus – who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C. – was later imitated by Vergil in his *Georgics*). Spenser proved to be a great innovator, using 13 verse patterns in his twelve poems, 5 of which (patterns) were his own inventions.

*Amoretti* is Spenser's collection of 88 love sonnets. His love is called "sweet warrior", in imitation of Petrarch's "dolce guerrierra". In two sonnets he identifies his heroine with the Petrarchan or Neo-Platonic *idea* of beauty. Spenser's sonnets also deal with the conceit of immortality through art (Sonnets 27, 75, 79). The sonnet cycle is concluded with *Epithalamion*, a poem written in celebration of his own wedding, combining beautiful imagery and spiritual joy.

In 1596 he wrote *Four Hymns* in honour of Love, Beauty, Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty. (The Platonic doctrine had been revived during the Renaissance by Giordano Bruno and Marsilio Ficino. It says that one ascends from a specific embodiment of beauty to a contemplation of beauty as an end in itself; the idea is divine and its contemplation is religious.) Spenser speaks in a specifically Christian manner of divine love made manifest by the career on Earth of Christ and of the beauty and wisdom of God which transcends anything visible on Earth.

*The Faerie Queene*, composed between 1589 and 1596, remained an unfinished project. It was an attempt to bring together in one rich pattern a vast set of cultural traditions such as:

- medieval allegorical tradition;
- medieval romance;
- Plato's and the Italian Neo-Platonic doctrines;
- Renaissance Humanism;
- Protestant idealism;
- Malory's *Morte Darthur*;
- English history, geography, folklore;
- Elizabethan patriotism and political thought.

Spenser's immediate model was Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, the masterpiece of knight-errantry.

Twenty-four books were planned, but only six were completed. The seventh book contains only the first two "Mutability Cantos".

*The Faerie Queene* is a story of chivalrous adventure in a world of marvels, with a plot slowly moving, with stanzas which are both pictorial and musical. Book I is an allegory of the relationship between Man and

God; Book II – an allegory of the relationship between Man and himself; Book III – an allegory of the relationship between Man and mankind.

The allegory is interwoven on several levels – moral, religious and political. The unfinished seventh book was to deal with Constancy, thus paying a tribute to the motto of Queen Elizabeth *semper eadem* ('always the same'). The queen herself is identified with Gloriana, the epitome of virtue and wisdom. Spenser further identifies Elizabeth with Astraea, the Virgin Goddess of the Spring, with Cynthia or Diana, the Goddess of chastity, and with Britomart, the martial maiden. The latter identification echoes the 1588 episode in which Elizabeth appeared clad in armour in front of the English troops gathered at Tilbury during the battle against the Spanish armada. It is no wonder that recent Neo-Marxist critics have termed Spenser 'the Queen's arse-kissing poet'. Although a remarkable synthesis of Elizabethan culture, *The Faerie Queene* is considered by David Daiches a "blind alley" of English literature. Its content has never had imitators; however, the Spenserian stanza, more complex than Chaucer's 'rhyme royal' (eight iambic pentameters and an alexandrine rhyming *ababbcbcc*) was later used by Milton, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and others.

#### PHILIP SIDNEY (1554 - 1586)

Sidney was the embodiment of the perfect knight and lettered courtier; he knew the Ancients; he spoke French, Italian, Spanish. He wrote both prose and poetry.

In order to better understand the poetry both of Spenser and of Sidney, one should not overlook the impact of dozens of 'courtesy books' teaching young people the way to success in life. The most interesting was Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (translated into English in 1561). Among the qualities required of a courtier, along with horsemanship, fencing, dancing and the like, was the ability to write a love song. George Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie* (1589) is the most elaborate English textbook of this aspect of courtliness. Puttenham's object was 'to make of a rude rimer, a learned and a Courtly Poet'. In Puttenham's opinion, poetry was a craft, like that of the musician or an accomplishment like that of horsemanship. Sidney was clearly influenced by Castiglione and Puttenham. He became the embodiment of *decorum*, i.e. the conscious cultivation by the individual of a behaviour appropriate to the nuances of each social occasion. 'Style is a garment', 'the image of man', said Puttenham; hence, the English sonneteers of the court both adopted and mocked at the clichés of Petrarchan descriptions.

*Arcadia* is a prose romance written to amuse the poet's younger sister, the Countess of Pembroke.

Although Spenser was an incomparably greater poet, Sidney was the one who wrote better sonnets, because Sidney was a court poet in the full sense a living part of the life he celebrated, while Spenser described it from the outside.

*Astrophel and Stella* is a collection of 108 sonnets plus various songs dedicated to Penelope Devereux, the sister of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. It speaks about a hopeless love.

In Greek, “astrophil” means *star-lover* and in Latin “stella” means *star*. This very difference between the two classical languages from which the names of the lovers are derived suggests the irreconcilable nature of their relationship (comparable with the situation of Ion Barbu’s characters in *Riga Crypto și Lapona Enigel*).

Sidney acknowledges that he is working in a well-trying Petrarchan tradition, but sometimes he is ironic; unlike Petrarch who, at the end of the cycle, feels as if he has passed through a purifying spiritual experience, Sidney is aware of his failure. Sidney’s sonnets mingle natural tenderness and humour which plays over the surface of his despair and the colloquial phrase, giving an impression both of sincerity and control. *Astrophel and Stella* is an extended dialogue with the conventions of the Italian sonneteers and the Elizabethan narrative (from the latter Sidney had learnt the technique of constantly changing viewpoint).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century critics wrongly thought that all these poets had to be really in love and addressing to a real mistress. In fact, everything was a mere illusion or convention: Sidney’s marriage to Frances Walsingham in 1583, before the Astrophil cycle of sonnets had even been completed, seems to have been a happy one.

*The Defence of Poesie* answers the Puritan objections to imaginative literature. Sidney draws his arguments from the Italian Humanist critics; he also frequently quotes Aristotle and Horace. It is the first attempt in English to build a coherent system of arguments about a) the nature, b) the function, c) the possibilities, d) the future of poetry.

Sidney’s defence of poetry contends that where there is no pretence in truth, there can be no imposture: ‘now for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lies’. The poet is the maker of a better, ideal world. Poetry is a better moral teacher than philosophy or history. The lively image created by the poet is contrasted with the dullness of historians and philosophers. According to Sidney’s theory of form and style the poet’s purpose is not to create a “golden world” but to “move” his readers. Various forms and styles attain variable degrees of persuasion and “moving”.

## SHAKESPEARE'S NON-DRAMATIC POETRY

Shakespeare's career as a poet starts in 1593, with *Venus and Adonis*, "the first heir of my invention", dedicated to the young Earl of Southampton. Written in sixain stanzas (*ab ab cc*), it combines the influence of the classics, of Italian and of recent French literature.

Marlowe and Spenser precede Shakespeare in the handling of classical themes. Spenser borrows Lucretius's idea of Mutability, of the transience of love and earthly happiness and Ovid's answer to Mutability, which was Metamorphosis. The gods themselves are subject to change in Spenser's Mutability Cantos: the ancient gods of the pagan world become to the Elizabethans great natural forces. The Ovidian theme of Protean change is also tackled by Christopher Marlowe in *Hero and Leander*, and Shakespeare's debut poem is apparently written as a response to and in imitation of Marlowe's Ovidian romance.

The subject-matter of *Venus and Adonis* is borrowed from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book X. the poem is made up of two contrasted halves: the wooing and the hunt. Adonis is compared with a snared bird, a dabchick, a deer, a hunted roe: he is the hunted quarry. Venus is compared with an eagle, a vulture, a wild bird, a falcon: the love-hungry goddess appears as a bird of prey. The lily, the snow, the ivory and the alabaster, all suggesting chilly whiteness, are used as symbols of Adonis's chastity. Though a goddess, Venus has no supernatural powers: she is as helpless as any country lass to save Adonis or even reach him quickly. She is not even responsible for his metamorphosis into a hyacinth.

The pace of Shakespeare's poem is slower than Marlowe's, the ornament more elaborate and the comedy not so sustained.

*The Rape of Lucrece* deals with a stock-theme. The subject is more serious. Written in Chaucer's "rhyme royal", it is a better exercise, but still an exercise. Lucrece herself is pathetic and beautiful, but not a *person*. It is a carefully worked out poem, but not the spontaneous work of a genius. As a literary species, *The Rape of Lucrece* is a complaint. (The complaint was a late medieval form). The combat between Lucrece and

Tarquin represents the combat between saint and devil. According to M.C. Bradbrook, the soliloquies of Tarquin are like a first cartoon for the study of Macbeth, while Lucrece anticipates Lavinia, the ravished heroine of *Titus Andronicus*. The poem clearly shows the idea of tragedy in Shakespeare's early period: the blind, senseless horror of purely physical outrage. The final part is brought to an abrupt end, briefly summing up the contents presented in the poet's dedication to the same Earl of Southampton.

*The Sonnets*, first published in 1608, were written in the 1590s as a fashionable literary exercise. The 154 sonnets fall into three distinct groups:

a) Sonnets 1-126 are addressed to a fair youth, possibly Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Sonnet 126 is actually a *douzaine* (a twelve-line poem);

b) Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to a mysterious Dark Lady;

c) Sonnets 153 and 154 are adaptations of a well-known Greek epigram, the story of Cupid and the loss of his brand.

According to Jan Kott, Shakespeare's sequence of sonnets may be regarded as a drama with four characters and a plot. The *dramatis personae* are a man (who is the first-person narrator), a young man, a woman and Time.

Time as a major theme in Shakespeare's sonnets is not necessarily an original one. Time and mortality are as old as the first recorded pieces of world literature (from Gilgamesh to Spenser's "mutability cantos" in the unfinished Book VII of *The Faerie Queene*).

Time is ubiquitous in the sonnets as it is in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:

CRESSIDA. When time is old and hath forgot itself  
When water drops have worn the stones of Troy  
And blind oblivion swallowed cities up... (III.2)

or

TROILUS. Injurious time, with a robber's haste  
Crams his rich thievery up. (IV.4)

In *Sonnet 64*, each quatrain begins with "When I have seen", followed by the misdeeds of Time and the obsessive image of Death.

Similar thoughts and images coincidentally occur in the writings of Leonardo da Vinci.

In *Sonnet 71*, line 1, "No longer mourn for me when I am dead" introduces an increasingly overwhelming atmosphere.

Andrew Sanders also comments on two thematic subgroups: one encouraging the youth to marry and to procreate (1-17) and one about the threat represented by a rival poet.

Procreation is viewed as the only defence against death; life can be perpetuated by means of progenies.

*Sonnet 3* describes the youth as a son who is the mirror, the repetition, the copy of his parents, a copy annihilating time:

Thou art thy mother's glass and she in thee  
Calls back the lovely April of her prime.

*Sonnet 71* abounds in mutability imagery of a 'vile world, with vilest worms.'

*Sonnet 66*, a favourite text of Marxist critics, is considered by some critics the most artificial sonnet. It is made up of successive images of the wrong way of the world, each comprised in a line beginning with "and", in an accumulation.

In *Sonnet 63* and *Sonnet 107*, immortality is bestowed upon the beloved:

His beauty shall in these black lines be seen  
And they shall live, and he in them still green. (63)

I'll live in this poor rhyme (...)

And thou in this shalt find thy monument... (107)

This conceit of immortality, previously employed by Edmund Spenser, is also known as *exegi monumentum*.

Speaking about the sexuality of the sonnets, Andrew Sanders refers to the ambiguous relationship between the narrator, the young man and the Dark Lady, which takes the nature of an emotional triangle.

Jan Kott has developed an entire theory of the erotic ambiguity of Shakespeare's sonnets. The young boy is a type of a female beauty, cf. "thy mother's glass" (*Sonnet 3*). The ambiguity consists in choosing either a male or a female partner as a lover. The same ambiguity is detected by Jan Kott in Shakespeare's early comedies (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*) and in his later so-called romantic comedies (*Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*). It is the ambiguity of the line drawn between friendship and love.

The Humanistic Academy of Florence (represented by Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino) had proclaimed that *eros socraticus*, the pure love felt by a male for a male youth, represented the highest form of spiritual affinity.

*Sonnet 39*, with "let us divided live /And that thou teachest how to make one twain", echoes the Platonic myth of the androgyne, first recorded in Plato's *Banquet*. According to this myth, the human beings were originally endowed with four arms, four legs, two faces and two sexes. The gods punished them by separating them into two distinct entities,

longing for each other, that is, for completion, reunion, oneness. The same hesitation, dilemma in choosing between a male and a female occurs in Michelangelo's sonnets.

Shakespeare's sonnets also display the influence of the Renaissance painting, in which the angels have androgynous features, a blending of male and female characteristics; the nymphs have boyish features, while David has a girlish pose and girlish gestures in sculptures by Donatello, Verrocchio and Michelangelo. Here is the description of the youth in *Sonnet 20*:

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted  
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart...(/...)  
And for a woman wert thou first created.

In *Sonnet 53* he is compared with Helen of Troy.

In the Dark Lady sequence, Shakespeare questions the use of conventional similes, hyperboles and metaphors, in *Sonnet 130*. Jan Kott considers Rosaline in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alter-egos of the Dark Lady. Most of Shakespeare's biographers, however, have chosen the faithless Cressida as the dramatic counterpart of the mysterious sonnet-heroine.

The dramatic situation in the *Sonnets* resembles that in *Twelfth Night*, a comedy of erotic ambiguities, in which Duke Orsino loves Countess Olivia, Olivia loves Cesario (i. e. Viola disguised as a boy, hence the danger of lesbianism), and Viola herself loves Orsino. Within this triangle, Orsino is also attracted by Cesario.

In Shakespeare's age, female parts were performed by actors. Female characters in disguise were actually young actors disguised as women who, in turn, were disguised as boys.

In a famous elegy, one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, the "metaphysical" poet John Donne, advises his beloved not to travel in disguise for fear the Italians might take her for a page and make a pass at her.

Worst of all, the narrator is betrayed by both lovers. However, as Andrew Sanders warns us, the *Sonnets* should not be necessarily read as an autobiographical confession.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS: Shakespeare's originality is not to be looked up in the themes and imagery of his sonnets. His originality resides in the exploration of a new emotional range: the idea of being torn between two lovers; the oscillation between idealizing and rejecting love. Shakespeare is no longer concerned with the conventions of courtly love, he is rather, interested in the exploration of the psychological inner self.

## SHAKESPEARE'S PREDECESSORS (1)

The second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century mostly coincides with the reign of Queen Elisabeth I, hence its labelling as the Elizabethan age.

*Gorboduc* by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, c. 1561-1562, is the first remarkable English tragedy. It is the tale of a divided kingdom, civil war and the awful consequences of split authority. The theme was derived from the mythical region of early English history (later explored by Shakespeare in *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*).

The increasing interest in dramatic performances is mirrored by the activity of the professional companies of actors. The first such company was set up in 1583 and, being employed in the queen's service, it was known as the Queen's Men; in 1603 it became the King's Men under the rule of James I. A rival company was known as the Lord Admiral's Men. Several theatres were successively opened in London in the 1580s: The Theatre, The Curtain, The Rose, The Swan; The Globe – in 1595 and Blackfriars after 1600.

Most of Shakespeare's immediate predecessors belonged to the group of so-called "university wits", professionals with academic degrees.

**John Lyly** (1553-1606) got B. A. and M. A. degrees in Oxford and an M. A. in Cambridge.

In 1579 he published *Euphues and his Anatomy of Wit*, a successful novel written in a complicated, highly artificial style derived from the Latin syntax of Cicero.

Lyly replaced the "fourteeners" of his predecessors and he established artificial prose as the means of expression in comedy. His most important contribution is the fact that he was the first to bring together on the English stage the elements of high comedy, thereby preparing the way for Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As You Like It*.

High comedy deals with cultivated people, aristocratic people with subtle, refined feelings. Love is *not* the intense passion leading to chains of murders; it is not physical appetite, either. Love is sublimated, mere wishful thinking, as in *Campaspe*.

Lyly's *Euphuism* has its continental counterparts in *Gongorism* (in Spain) and *Marinism* (in Italy). Shakespeare parodied his artificial style in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet* in the speech of characters such as Don Armado, Holofernes and Osric.

**George Peele** (1558-1597) got his B. A. and M. A. in Oxford. He started writing for money (and he only wrote when he was in need of it!).

*The Old Wives' Tale* (1589) is a fairy-tale at first narrated by the wife of a blacksmith; the stage is then populated by the characters and the story is turned into a play. The passage from reality to fiction and illusion will be later employed by Corneille in *L' Illusion comique*. The invasion of real life by fiction and viceversa was also tackled by Tom Stoppard in his parody *The Real Inspector Hound* in the 1960s. Peele's play is a clever satire on the romantic plays of the day criticized by Sidney in his *Defence of Poesie* for their confusing, tangled plot, their lack of cause and their excessive use of surprise. It is the first play of dramatic criticism (or theatre of theatre) and it is as confusing as any one of the plays which it ridicules.

Peele is also remembered for his fine poetry of *The Arraignment of Paris*.

**Robert Greene** (1558-1592) got his B. A. in Cambridge followed by an M. A. in Cambridge and Oxford. A natural-born bohemian spirit, Greene ran away from home, from a wife who had been trying to reform him; he got into various troubles at the universities he graduated; and he died because of too much wine and salted fish.

Greene travelled extensively (to Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Poland and Denmark). He read Castiglione, Ariosto and Machiavelli at first hand. He was a novelist, a pamphleteer and a playwright.

His plays are a skillful mixture of a realistic native background and an atmosphere of romance. Thomas Nashe called him "a master of his craft" in the art of plotting. Greene also had the ability to portray a heroine who is both charming as a personality, attractive as a woman and convincing as a human being.

*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was written in answer to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. The main character has been suggested by Roger Bacon (1214-1292). Bacon, the famous Franciscan friar, was a philosopher, linguist and visionary scientist with modern views such as the much quoted "Theory without practice is useless, practice without theory is blind". Greene's play is a science-fiction text *avant la lettre*. According to 13<sup>th</sup> century rumours, Bacon succeeded in creating a robot, a talking head, by means of magic and science. The subplot is taken from the old romance of Mellisant, a maid who had two suitors and who preferred

the gentleman to the knight. In Greene's play, the fair maid Margaret prefers Lacy, the Earl of Lincoln, to the King. Greene cleverly creates interest and suspense in binding together stories and episodes which occur in Oxford, Suffolk and at the Court.

In *James IV* and *Alphonsus* he turns historical characters into fictional ones, inventing romantic episodes.

In *George-a-Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield*, the historical background of the plot is a revolt of the treacherous lords helped by the Scots against the king; characters such as Robin Hood, Maid Marian and the pinner express the democratic views of the lower classes.

Robert Greene had an essential contribution to the development of English drama. In his plays the love story becomes the central element of drama (everything else revolves around it). His female characters are as complex as Shakespeare's Rosalinde or Imogen – and Nashe called Greene the "Homer of Women". The main features of Greene's plays are the perfect plot, their verisimilitude and, above all, their simple human feeling. Finally, Greene is the father of the lower romantic comedy.

Although Greene bitterly attacked Shakespeare in a famous pamphlet (*A Groat's Worth of Wit*), calling him a "Shake-scene", an "upstart crow" and a "Johannes factotum", Shakespeare paid a tribute to Greene's memory by using Greene's pastoral romance *Pandosto* as a source of his *The Winter's Tale* (1611).

**Thomas Nashe** (1567-1601) was a Cambridge graduate. As an active pamphleteer he was involved in all the political scandals of the age. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* was jointly written by him and Marlowe. He also wrote *The Isle of Dogs*, now a lost play, for which he was censured and imprisoned.

Nowadays, Nashe is mostly remembered for the rich information stored in his pamphlets concerning his contemporaries and for what is usually considered the first English picaresque and realistic novel: *Jack Wilton or the Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). It tells the humorous adventures of a page who travels across Europe; he accompanies Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey to Italy. In Rotterdam, they meet Erasmus and Sir Thomas More; in Wittenberg, they meet Martin Luther and the famous magician Cornelius Agrippa. At Venice, Jack elopes with a magnifico's wife. In Florence, he meets his master again, the latter entering a tournament. In Rome, the page is horrified by the atmosphere of plague, robbery and murder, sodomy and rape; Castiglione's ideal "courtier" is considered the epitome of Italian hypocrisy.

Nashe was not indebted to the Spanish *Lazarillo de Tormes*, written at about the same time. In mingling history with fiction, Nashe proves to

be original; his style is natural, familiar. Nashe did not aim at refinement; sometimes he was even too vulgar in his colloquialism.

Shakespeare parodied this big-mouthed, arrogant *enfant terrible* of his age in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in which the page seems to embody Nashe.

**Thomas Lodge** (1558-1625), an Oxford graduate, is the author of several pamphlets (defending the stage), poems, sonnets, two historical romances, some unimportant plays, and a novel, *Rosalynde*, the main source of Shakespeare's romantic comedy *As You Like It*.

Lodge brought his own literary career to a sudden end and gave up writing. Perhaps he was aware of his lack of talent and preferred to earn his living as a physician.

### THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE

The main idea underlying the Elizabethan world picture is that of *order* or "degree". Edmund Spenser views order as opposed to mutability; Shakespeare and his fellow-dramatists view order as opposed to chaos.

Order was perceived in three different ways. First, as "the Great Chain of Being". This concept derives from Plato's *Timaeus* via Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists. Arthur O. Lovejoy in his study *The Great Chain of Being* was the first to theorize this universal concept which survived from Plato up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century: "no element can be understood or, indeed, be what it is apart from its relation to all the other components to which it belongs". The links in the chain are displayed on the vertical, in the following order:

1) The angels, despite Copernicus's revolutionary theories, were regarded as the inhabitants of the heavens as opposed to the sublunary regions. They had a hierarchy of their own, which had been discussed by Dante. Plato and *Genesis* stated that man could hear the music of the celestial spheres before the Fall.

2) The stars and fortunes. The stars conditioned man's fortune. Fortune was perceived as a wheel.

3) The four elements: fire, air, water and ground (earth);

4) Man as the result of the four humours corresponding to the four elements:

melancholy-earth  
phlegm-water  
choler-fire  
blood-air

Man's brain contained:

- the five senses;
- common sense, fancy, memory;
- reason (the combination of wit, i. e. understanding, and will).

According to this pattern, Shakespeare's *Lear* and *Othello* lack wit, while *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* lack will.

5) Animals, plants and minerals.

The Great Chain of Being is discussed by Ulysses in his famous speech on 'degree' in *Troilus and Cressida* by Shakespeare; it is also referred to by Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Man*. It was minutely depicted in E.M.W. Tillyard's book *The Elizabethan World Picture*. Tillyard's view, much discredited nowadays, promoted the image of Shakespeare as an entirely conventional thinker, whose plays necessarily express the political, moral and philosophical outlook of those who ruled his world.

Secondly, the corresponding planes, displayed on the horizontal, connected:

- celestial powers to other creations;
- macrocosm to body politic (as in Shakespeare's chronicle plays);
- macrocosm to microcosm (as in *King Lear*);
- body politic to microcosm (as in *Macbeth*).

Thirdly, creation was viewed as a dance, the cosmic dance, another metaphor for cosmic order and cosmic harmony.

## SHAKESPEARE'S PREDECESSORS (2)

### CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Marlowe (1564-1593), the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, took his M. A. in Cambridge. He lived an adventurous life: he was a soldier in the Netherlands, and a secret agent of the English crown. He was murdered for his would-be heretical or atheistic views, at the order of the Privy Council (the Queen's secret police).

Marlowe's minor works include:

a) the translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Ovid's *Amores*;

b) *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage* – a joint effort, with Nashe as a co-author, is written in a bombastic language later parodied by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. The heroine appears to have a true-to-life psychology anticipating Shakespeare's female characters. The play tackles the theme of *pity* as the first step towards love, also developed by Shakespeare in the love story of Miranda and Ferdinand, in *The Tempest*;

c) *The Massacre at Paris*, of which only fragments have survived, deals with the bloody events of St. Bartholomew's Night (1572).

Marlowe's great tragedies present titanic characters with whom many literary critics have tried to identify Marlowe himself and his aspirations.

◆ *Tamburlaine the Great* (Part I and Part II) presents the exploits of a great conqueror. The play has an epic structure, it is a sequence of successive scenes without a plot. Tamburlaine is a proud, ambitious, selfish, paranoid, cruel tyrant, who does not hesitate to kill even his own son. Tamburlaine calls himself the "scourge of God". This phrase had been first used by Europeans during the Hunic invasion led by Attila in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A. D. People regarded him as a punishment inflicted by God. Tamburlaine's only human feelings concern Zenocrate (who evolves from being a captive to becoming his wife). Her evolution reminds us of Chrétien de Troyes's Lodinia in *Yvain* and Shakespeare's Princess Anne in *Richard III* (both widows of the slain knights become the wives of their former husbands' murderers).

Tamburlaine, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, is "a machine, a desiring machine that produces violence and death...once set in motion, this thing cannot slow down or change course; it moves at the same

frenzied pace until it finally stops”. He is “proud, arrogant and blasphemous; he lusts for power, betrays his allies, overthrows legitimate authority, and threatens the gods; he rises to the top of the wheel of fortune and then steadfastly refuses to budge.(...) The slaughter of thousands, the murder of his own son, the torture of his royal captives are all without apparent consequence”. Tamburlaine’s violence reduces the world to a map, the very emblem of abstraction. Tamburlaine constructs his own identity out of phrases picked up or overheard:

‘I that am term’d the Scourge and Wrath of God’  
(Part I, II.3).

Like the gold taken from uncautious travellers or the troops lured away from other princes, Tamburlaine’s identity is something appropriated, seized from others. He can finally be defeated only by illness and death.

*Tamburlaine*’s unequalled success made many envious detractors attack his “bombast” and “brag”.

◆ Marlowe’s next success was *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe’s immediate source was the German *Faustbuch* by an anonymous author, published by Johann Spiess in 1587. The same story was later used by Goethe. Faustus, a German quack, first appears in literature in a brief poem by Hans Sachs. With Marlowe, the “tragical history of Doctor Faustus” is a boldly drawn study of the pride of intellect. Marlowe’s Faustus is a learned man thirsting for absolute knowledge and power (John Keats will later assert, too, that “knowledge is power”). Faustus signs a contract with the devil; the latter will become the master of Faustus’s soul after the lapse of 24 years during which he must satisfy Faustus’s requests. As Stephen Greenblatt has noticed in his essay *Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Power*, the hero concludes the signing of the fatal deed with the words ‘Consummatum est’. The Gospel of John in the *New Testament* describes Christ’s death as follows: ‘When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said it is finished (consummatum est): and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost’. Christ’s thirst is not identical to the body’s normal longing for drink, but an enactment of that longing, so that he may fully accomplish the role darkly prefigured in the *Old Testament*. The drink of vinegar is the final structural element in the realization of his identity. Faustus’s use of Christ’s words evokes the archetypal act of role-taking. His blasphemy is an ambiguous equation of himself with Christ, first as God, then as dying man.

Faustus begins a course of restless wandering, but at the close of twenty-four years, he feels a compulsion to return to Wittenberg. Nothing in the signed agreement or in any of the devil’s speeches requires that Faustus has to pay his

life where he originally contracted to sell it; the urge is apparently in Faustus, as if he felt there were a fatality in the place he had undertaken his studies, felt it appropriate and even necessary to die there and nowhere else. Marlowe closely sticks to the plot of his German source. The battle of the angels is reminiscent of the morality plays and their psychomachia. Faustus is ultimately a prototype of the man of science (hence Robert Greene's response with his *Friar Bacon*). In Leon Levičič's opinion, "book" is the key-word of a play dealing with books of magic, books of science and the Scriptures.

The first edition of the play was published long after Marlowe's death, which makes it impossible to establish the extent of interpolations (i. e. additions), deletions and revisions by other authors. The comic scenes must have been added by someone else in an attempt to meet the taste of the audience and to mitigate Marlowe's challenging attitude.

♦ *The Jew of Malta* is Marlowe's only "revenge play". The action takes place in the enclosed space of an island. The plot evolves around the evil scheming of a strong, ambitious character: Barabas. Like Tamburlaine, he, too, kills his progeny (his daughter) without a bit of remorse. Barabas's fortune is seized by the governor of Malta and paid as a tribute to the Turks. His revenge mirrors Machiavelli's principle that "the aim justifies the means". Machiavelli himself appears in the Prologue. Barabas is subtler than Tamburlaine, he can subdue his fury and plot quietly, he is intelligent. Barabas exalts the power of gold; Timon (in Shakespeare) will later curse it, but Volpone will share Barabas's views (in Ben Jonson's comedy). The father-daughter relation (Barabas vs. Abigail) was again a source of inspiration for Shakespeare (see Shylock vs. Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*).

Beyond Barabas's personal revenge, *The Jew of Malta* also depicts Renaissance international relations as a kind of glorified gangsterism, a vast "protection" racket, in which the Turks exact tribute from the Christians, the Christians expropriate money from the Jews and the religious orders compete for wealthy converts. Thus, Barabas's very identity is determined by the Christian society around him. His actions are always responses to the initiatives of others: not only is the plot of the whole play set in motion by the Governor's expropriation of his wealth, but each of the Jew's particular plots is a reaction to what he perceives as a provocation or a threat.

An interesting parallel might be drawn between the language of Barabas and that of Shakespeare's wicked Richard III. M. C. Bradbrook has noticed that Richard's language, 'like his person, is diametrically opposed to the main pattern of the play. It is proverbial, full of old saws, the "diction of common life" used as disguised', while Greenblatt suggests that proverbs in *The Jew of Malta* are recurrently used by Barabas 'to de-individualize him', to render him more and more typical.

◆ *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II* is based on Raphael Holinshed's chronicle. This play came to be considered a "tragedy without a hero". The gay king is deposed by Queen Isabella, his wife, and Young Mortimer, her lover; then, he is imprisoned and murdered. These events are also told by Maurice Druon in *Les Rois maudits*. *Edward II* is the first important English *chronicle play*, with the main features of this dramatic species, namely:

- the didactic intention;
- the patriotic motif – awakening a strong national consciousness;
- the romantic intention (the artistic relief from contemporary conditions).

The chronicle play is an effort to analyze, by dramatic means, the development of character. It is a study of character. Unlike Marlowe's previous characters, Edward II is not a titanic figure, but a weak man. He has been often compared with Shakespeare's Richard II. Marlowe's chronicle does not reach the imaginative range of *Tamburlaine* or *Faustus*; nor does it reach the height of great tragedy; and, yet, as an effort to interpret history on the stage, it is one of the best in genre.

Marlowe's heroes, perhaps like Marlowe himself, fashion themselves not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition: Tamburlaine against hierarchy, Barabas against Christianity, Faustus against God, Edward against the sanctified rites and responsibilities of kingship, marriage and manhood. For Marlowe, all objects of desire are fictions, theatrical illusions shaped by human subjects.

◆ Marlowe's non-dramatic poetry is best represented by his last work, *Hero and Leander*, often compared with Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (exit Marlowe, enter Shakespeare!) and John Keats's *Endymion*.

Written by a professed mocker and scorners, this Ovidian romance may be regarded as an anti-Spenserian manifesto. The two lovers are human in a way unknown to the earlier writers: they are real-life human beings engaged in the warring of love and discord. Marlowe avoids the presentation of the denouement, but Ovid in *Heroides* also skips the tragical conclusion. The lovers are included in the circle of comedy: they are both beautiful and absurd, sympathetic yet also ridiculous. In this, as in their battle of wits, they anticipate the lovers of Shakespeare's comedy. Not only did Shakespeare imitate Marlowe's poem in *Venus and Adonis*, but he also repeatedly referred to in *As You Like It*, in which Rosalind, Orlando and Phoebe all quote *Hero and Leander*.

◆ Marlowe's style appears as compact, continuous. Unlike Shakespeare, Marlowe did not have time enough to evolve as an artist. One cannot distinguish several phases of his style, a "youthful" phase from a "mature" one. His style is characterized by the persistent use of hyperbole, the weak construction of his plays, the lack of humour, the one-man and no-woman limitations.

And yet, Marlowe's art (despite all its exaggerations and lack of empathy) is a proof that the fundamental structure of Elizabethan drama lies not in the narrative or in the character, but in the words. Marlowe's verse is epic, at times lyrical, rarely dramatic. Ben Jonson wrote about Marlowe's "mighty line". Marlowe's vigorous verse is the iambic pentameter, the blank verse inherited from Henry Howard. He transformed it from a stiff and monotonous into a flexible and varied meter; he reduced the number of end-stopped lines in favour of the run-on lines; he mingled iambic feet with various other feet. Shakespeare and Milton further contributed to the flexibility of the blank verse.

♦ Many critics claim that Marlowe may have had a hand in the composition of Shakespeare's early plays *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI* (Part II and Part III) and *Richard III*.

### THOMAS KYD

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) was the son of a city scrivener. In school, he was Edmund Spenser's fellow and later on he shared his London lodging with Marlowe. He was involved in the dubious circumstances that led to Marlowe's death and he himself mysteriously disappeared one year later, never to be seen anymore.

Together with Marlowe, Kyd was the most popular pre-Shakespearean dramatist of his age.

*The Spanish Tragedy* follows the Senecan pattern of revenge play as established in *Thyestes*. Kyd inaugurates the *blood-and-thunder* type of tragedy, the main elements of which are LOVE, CONSPIRACY, MURDER and VIOLENCE. The theme of revenge frequently occurs in two types of tragedies:

- a) the rise and fall tragedies of ambition;
- b) the Italianate tragedies of intrigue.

Kyd's play inaugurated a long series of Elizabethan revenge plays including, among others, Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*, etc.

In spite of its long rhetorical outbursts, the speed of action in *The Spanish Tragedy* is tremendous, event following on event. The play abounds in so-called "purple passages" of good poetry. The speedy dialogue is achieved by the frequent use of stichomythia, the rapid firing of one-line cues. As for the characters, they are sketchy, simply divided into positive and negative, good and bad ones.

- The Spanish Tragedy* is *Hamlet*'s direct forerunner in many respects:
- the revenge theme is introduced by the appearance of a ghost;
  - the staging of a play-within-a play, with the characters acting as audience;
  - the real or feigned madness of the hero;
  - the Machiavellian malicious plotting;

- Hieronimo and Hamlet as revengers have become a commonplace of academic studies.

Kyd's style is also detectable in the style of Shakespeare's early tragedies, characterized by the use of schemata and patterned speech (i.e. repetition and parallelism, Senecan rhetoric not typical of Marlowe and Greene, but highly developed in Kyd). Compare Hieronimo's outburst

O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears!  
O life, no life, but lively form of death!  
O world, no world, but mass of public wrongs,  
Confused and filled with murder and misdeeds!

with Queen Margaret's lament in Shakespeare's *Richard III*:

I had an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
I had a Harry, till a Richard kill'd him;  
Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him;  
Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard kill'd him.

Unlike Kyd, Shakespeare was influenced by Senecan philosophy rather than Senecan tragedy. *Hamlet* is no longer a mere blood-and-thunder play. It is also a tragedy of power, a historical play, a political play, a philosophical play. Hamlet's philosophy resembles in turn that of Montaigne, Sartre, Camus, Kafka or Malraux. His revenge becomes a tragic dilemma; he is overwhelmed by his assignment, by his responsibility:

"The time is out of joint. O, cursed spite!  
That ever I was born to set it right."

The old Hieronimo, on the other hand, moves fast in settling his accounts with the murderers of his son.

One of the fascinating mysteries of English literature is the still unsolved "Ur-Hamlet" controversy. Could Thomas Kyd be the author of an unpublished, now lost play entitled *Hamlet*? Thomas Nashe, in his 1589 Preface to Robert Greene's pastoral novel *Menaphon*, alludes to a Hamlet in his attack against Kyd. This means that Shakespeare's play might be just an extensively revised version of an older text. Ben Jonson, in turn, made additions to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (perhaps in a vain attempt to compete with Shakespeare). In my opinion, *Hamlet* could be interpreted as an <<inverted mirror>> of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Ten characters die in both plays and each character in one play has his or her counterpart in the other play; these characters going in pairs belong to different generations. *The Spanish Tragedy*, with its abrupt, horrible ending lacks two essential characters: one who should tell the "story to the dissatisfied" (i. e. a Horatio) and one to set things right (i. e. a Fortinbras).

## SHAKESPEARE THE PLAYWRIGHT

### ◆ Biographical data:

- the son of a glover, W. Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford;
  - in November 1582, he married Anne Hathaway (who was eight years older than Will);
  - his first daughter, Susanna was born in May 1583;
  - the twins, Judith and Hamnet are born in 1585;
  - cca. 1586: Shakespeare leaves for London; he starts working as a holder of the horses of theatre-goers;
  - by 1592 he has become a playwright competing with the “university wits” (see Robert Greene’s pamphlet);
  - after 1598 he becomes the main associate and shareholder of The Globe;
  - about 1610 his success is surpassed by that of Beaumont and Fletcher; his last plays are collaborative plays jointly written with Fletcher (*Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*);
  - in 1612 Shakespeare retires to Stratford and there he dies on April 23, 1616.
  - the first Folio edition of Shakespeare’s works is published by his former fellow-actors John Heminge and Henry Condell in 1623;
  - the second issue of the 1664 third edition of the Folio also included *Pericles* (first printed in 1609 and five more times before 1635) as the thirty-seventh play of the Shakespeare canon;
  - the 1994 Oxford edition of the Folio removes *The Two Noble Kinsmen* from the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon and includes it into the Shakespeare Canon;
  - the 1996 Yale University and the 1998 New Cambridge editions of *Edward III* claim the extension of the Shakespeare Canon to thirty-nine plays;
  - Shakespeare’s fortieth play, *Cardenio*, is lost.
- ◆ The text of Shakespeare’s plays poses a number of difficult questions. What we read today is not exactly what Shakespeare himself wrote centuries

ago. The dramatists used to sell their plays to theatrical companies; the author regarded himself as having no further rights in them. The so-called Quarto editions were pirated editions with mutilated versions, missing passages, and misspellings causing serious alterations in meaning. *Richard III*, for instance, was published in six quarto editions between 1597 and 1622, while *Richard II* was published in four quarto editions between 1597 and 1615.

Many texts were compiled from stenography, from note-takers in the theatre and even from the actors who used their memory to reconstruct a text. This process explains the great differences between the texts of various editions, their lack of coherence, the verse written as prose and the prose written as verse, the interpolations, and the loss of many valuable texts such as Nashe's *The Isle of Dogs* and Shakespeare's *Cardenio*.

Several great editors contributed throughout the centuries to the present-day form of the Shakespeare Canon.

- Nicholas Rowe published Shakespeare's plays in six octavo volumes in 1709. One of his famous emendations turned the following cue in *Twelfth Night*, "Some are become great" into "Some are born great".

- The neo-classical poet Alexander Pope, despite his pretentious preface, proved to be a mediocre editor: he purged the "irrelevant" passages from the text, transforming them into footnotes (1725).

- Lewis Theobald, with his 1734 edition, remains Shakespeare's most important emendator.

- Dr. Samuel Johnson, in his 1765 edition, proved to be skilled in interpreting obscure passages.

- Edward Capell (1768) elaborated stage directions and improved the previous correction of disarranged meter. He was the first to ascribe *Edward III* to Shakespeare (in 1760).

- George Steevens (1773) granted *Pericles* a place in the canon for good; he was the first to write an essay on the chronology of Shakespeare's plays.

- The process of emending is an on-going process; every new edition of a Shakespeare play brings in new conjectures, new explanations, new readings. That is why editing Shakespeare requires both much knowledge and plenty of time.

- ♦ In his famous *Eulogy*, Ben Jonson wrote that Shakespeare knew "small Latin and less Greek". The allusions in his plays show that Shakespeare was a reader rather than a scholar. And yet, his readings were varied and vast. He read translations rather than original versions. He was acquainted with the works of Latin authors such as Ovid (the most popular Latin poet during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, especially due to his *Amores* and *Metamorphoses*), Vergil, Terence, Plautus (whose *Menaechmi* he adapted in *The Comedy of Errors*) and

Seneca. As for the latter's influence, Polonius's speech to Laertes, "This above all", is inspired by Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius*.

Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek" also refers to the fact that he extensively used the translations of Plutarch's *Lives* and Homer's *Iliad* (the former by North, the latter by Chapman).

As for French, Shakespeare spoke it well. This fact is proved by the long passages in *Henry V* written in French. Montaigne's *Essays* influenced Shakespeare's philosophy of life and Rabelais's *Gargantua* is explicitly mentioned in *As You Like It*.

The Italian *novella* (or short-story) exerted a strong influence on the content of Elizabethan drama. As for Shakespeare, he borrowed the subject of *Cymbeline*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Merchant of Venice* from Boccaccio; the subject of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night* from Bandello; the subject of *Measure for Measure* and *Othello* from Giraldi Cinthio.

English literature also provided literary forms and authors worth learning from. The English popular ballads, the medieval romances, Chaucer, Gower, Lodge and Greene are part of a literary tradition that helped Shakespeare emerge as the greatest literary creator of all times. Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* offered Shakespeare the subplot of *King Lear*; while Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* offered him a version of the story of Lear. It is hard to say that Shakespeare plagiarized his contemporary fellow-dramatists, but he often quoted Kyd, Lyly and Peele line by line, and was also plundered, in turn, by his colleagues.

One cannot overlook *The Bible* as a major source of inspiration for all authors in all ages.

◆ "Shakespeare – Our Contemporary" has become a commonplace, a stock phrase. It was coined by Jan Kott in the late fifties in an attempt to prove that Shakespeare's art transcends all trends and all fashions.

"Rewriting" Shakespeare has always been a challenging task for dramatists throughout the centuries: Dryden wrote an "improved" version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, in 1680 entitled *All for Love*; it was a complete failure. *King Lear* was thoroughly "mended" by Nahum Tate in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; Tate endowed it with a happy ending in which the surviving Cordelia married Edgar; Edward Bond, in his *Lear* (1980), changed the names of the elder sisters and politicized the plot. A convinced socialist with Marxist views, Bond populated the world of the play with workers and soldiers; it is these anonymous low class heroes that ultimately decide the outcome of events; George Bernard Shaw, obsessed with Shakespeare's leading position in English drama, wrote *Caesar and Cleopatra*; Tom Stoppard parodied *Hamlet* rewriting it in

Beckett's style, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Arnold Wesker has recently accused Shakespeare of anti-Semitism; in his *Shylock*, the Venetian usurer is turned into a kind-hearted, generous Jew at odds with circumstance. Michael Hamburger's brief poem *The Tempest – An Alternative* replaces Shakespeare's happy ending and chooses a gloomy, pessimistic, cynical denouement.

Several great novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*This above All* by Eric Knight, *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *The Winter of Our Discontent* by John Steinbeck ) quote Shakespeare in their titles.

In *Prospero's Cell*, an autobiographic book and a monograph of the island of Corfu, Lawrence Durrell tackles the hypothesis of Shakespeare's possible voyage to Corfu in 1608 – the year when his *Sonnets* were published seemingly without his consent. This voyage may have helped him visualize the setting of the plot in *The Tempest*. Durrell's theory is supported by the fact that Sycorax (the name of Caliban's mother) is the anagram of Corcyra (Corfu).

◆ Sister Miriam Joseph wrote in *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* that Shakespeare used no less than 297 figures of speech. Shakespeare's favourite stylistic devices were the antonyms and the linguistic repetitions.

Here is a famous pair of antonyms characteristic of Shakespeare's style:  
"Fair is foul and foul is fair" (The Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, I.1);  
HUBERT. Can you not read it? is it not fair writ?  
ARTHUR. Too fairly, Hubert, for so foul effect.

(*King John*, IV. 1. 37-38)

Several types of linguistic repetition occur in Shakespeare's plays:

a) Epizeuxis, as in

"Words, words, words" (Hamlet and Troilus);

"To die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream"

(in Hamlet's famous soliloquy).

b) Homonymy, i. e. repetition of form with change of content:

MESSENGER. And a good soldier, too, lady.

BEATRICE. And a good soldier to a lady. (...)

(*Much Ado about Nothing*, I. 1. 49-50)

c) Synonymy, i. e. repetition of content with change of form:

COSTARD. Which is the greatest lady, the highest?

PRINCESS. The thickest and the tallest.

(*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. 1. 44-45)

d) Syntactic parallelism, as in

GREMIO. O, this learning, what a thing it is!

GRUMIO. O, this woodcock, what an ass it is!

(*The Taming of the Shrew*, I. 2. 157-8)

or

PLANTAGENET. Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?

SOMERSET. Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?

(*1 Henry VI*, II. 4. 68-69)

e) The echo-words and the echo-phrases, harder to detect, occur in *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Richard II* and the two parts of *Henry IV*.

The combination of linguistic repetition and antonymy results in frequent puns or wordplays. More than 200 puns occur in *Love's Labour's Lost* and more than 100 in *All's Well that Ends Well*.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was actually exasperated by Shakespeare's exaggerated use of puns: "a quibble (i.e. a pun) is to Shakespeare what luminous vapours are to the traveller (...) A quibble, poor and barren as it is gave him such delight that he was content to purchase it by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it".

Although Voltaire and Tolstoy, among others, vehemently contended that Shakespeare's characters all speak alike and are not linguistically differentiated, Samuel Johnson, in his famous *Preface* of 1765 showed that 'perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other', while M.C. Bradbrook never misses the opportunity to show that Shakespeare's characters are defined by their individual accent and idiom; 'the tone and imagery of their speech constitutes the characters'; in *Love's Labour's Lost*, for instance, 'the varieties of speech...are more sharply differentiated than elsewhere: style is a garment, indeed, and each character dresses in his own fashion', while in *Richard II* each character is 'contrasted not only in function but in temper and idiom'.

## SHAKESPEARE'S GREAT TRAGEDIES

◆ *Hamlet* has been the subject of more than 40,000 critical works. It is an extremely complex text which can be analyzed and interpreted in the light of various critical methods.

• The HISTORICAL-BIOGRAPHICAL approach advocated by A. L. Rowse considers *Hamlet* highly topical and autobiographical. Ophelia's famous characterization of Hamlet is intended to suggest the Earl of Essex. Claudius's observation on Hamlet's madness and his popularity with the masses also points to Essex. Elizabeth's old Lord Treasurer Burghley appears in the guise of Polonius. In Shakespeare's age, Gertrude's marriage to Claudius would have been considered incestuous (the way Hamlet regards it). Laertes said that he would "cut

throat in church” in order to deprive Hamlet of the possibility to repent and confess his sins, thus sending him to Hell. Recent research has pointed out that Hamlet’s Denmark is not entirely Shakespeare’s England, but a world ruled by Scandinavian elective principles. This means that Claudius is not necessarily a usurper and hence the confusion in Hamlet’s mind.

- According to the MORAL-PHILOSOPHICAL approach supported by some critics, Hamlet is an idealist temperamentally unsuited for life; a soul shattered by successive devastating discoveries (he finds himself surrounded by ambitious, oversexed people; his fiancée and his former schoolmates become tools in the hands of his murderous uncle).

Other critics consider Hamlet to be a man of action. Some critics have labelled him as a manic-depressive neurotic or psychotic.

“The heart of my mystery”, as Hamlet describes it to Guildenstern (III.2.368) has remained an unsolved riddle for centuries. The French philosopher Jacques Lacan has called Hamlet an *hommelette* rather than a fully-rounded homme, whose identity is a vacuum waiting to be filled with modern interiority. At the centre of Hamlet, in the interior of his mystery, there is, in short, nothing. This is why in order that the play may end, a second Hamlet must be introduced: the man of action and the Hamlet who delays is replaced by one who simply waits.

The idea of Hamlet’s subjective “hollowness” is not new; dr. Samuel Johnson precedes Lacan’s ideas and, indirectly, excuses Shakespeare’s shortcomings when he writes that in the Elizabethan age “speculation had not yet attempted to analyze the mind, to trace the passions to their sources (...) or sound the depths of the heart for the motives of action. (...) Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet”.

- The FORMALISTIC approach places emphasis on the detection and the discussion of key-words such as “world”, “nature”, man’s place in the great chain of being (cosmos – state – nature – man). Denmark is a “prison”. The critical distinction between “seem” and “be” is another structural key. In a world full of uncertainties, is the Ghost an evil force? Hamlet *seems* to be mad and the people surrounding him *seem* to be hostile, to be his enemies (which is not quite true). “Night” is another key-word that emphasizes the dark side of the plot. Taking Hamlet’s words “maimed rites” (V. 1. 215.) as the key-phrase of the play, Roger Sales has convincingly argued that *Hamlet* is a political play made up of a series of broken ceremonies. The splendour and the glamour of Claudius’s court continuously invite to festive events and yet, all these events appear truncated, broken, “maimed”. Hamlet, on first meeting his uncle who has crowned himself a king, spoils the ceremony of his reception. Claudius, by interrupting the Players’ performance of *The*

*Murder of Gonzago*, spoils another festivity. His prayer for redemption is again a broken ceremony, since he fails in his attempt to reach atonement. Polonius is buried in haste, without proper funeral, while Ophelia's funeral lacks a priest and prayers (because of her alleged suicide). The skull of the dead Yorick implies the absence of a jester in office at the court which again is something abnormal. The duel between Laertes and Hamlet in the final scene is a broken ceremony because of the gap between essence and appearance, substance and show. An odious attempted murder is turned into a theatrical or sporting event for the on-stage audience. Hamlet's death speech is left unfinished and so is the entire play, which ends with the announcement of the preparation for Hamlet's funeral but not the funeral itself.

Sales regards the Danish court as the scenery of a cold war in which the opponents ambush one another by subtly devising scripts which are then stage-managed and acted. Hamlet assumes the risks of this invisible duel; in a theatrical world he often appears as an author, stage-manager, actor, impresario, prompter and spectator. It is his taste for theatricality that makes him go to death with his eyes open.

• A famous and perhaps not very convincing example of PSYCHOLOGICAL approach is Ernest Jones's diagnosis according to which Hamlet presents a case of manic-depressive hysteria combined with abulia (an inability to exercise will power and come to a decision), a case of neurotically repressed Oedipus complex. Jones sees Hamlet as a little Oedipus who cannot bring himself to kill Claudius because he stands in the place of his own desire, having murdered Hamlet's father and married his mother. The difference between Oedipus and Hamlet is that Oedipus unknowingly acts out of his fantasy, whereas for Hamlet it is repressed into the unconscious, revealing itself in the form of inhibition and the inability to act. The repression of his incestuous impulses explains his misogyny and latent homosexuality. For Jones, "Get thee to the nunnery" means "Get thee to a brothel". Ernest Jones, one of Freud's disciples, launched this theory back in 1910. Freud himself includes *Hamlet* in that group of plays which rely for their effect on the neurotic in the spectator, inducing in him or her the neurosis watched on the stage, crossing over the boundaries between onstage and offstage. More recently, in 1982, André Green defined *Hamlet* as an "act of exorcism which enabled its author to give his hero's femininity – cause of his anxieties, self-reproaches and accusations – an acceptable form through the process of aesthetic creation... (...) to reconcile himself with the femininity in himself". Which is as much as to say that Shakespeare was a hermaphrodite. The Romanian psychiatrist Al. Olaru

has compiled a synthesis of psychiatric interpretations of character and plot. The second edition of *Shakespeare si psihiatraia dramatica* was printed in 1997.

- MYTHICAL and ARCHETYPAL approaches view the story of Hamlet not as the playwright's invention, but as an illustration of a myth. Gilbert Murray compares Hamlet with Orestes, who revenges his father's death. (Murray refers to the plot of *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus). Hamlet acts a magic old rite of self-sacrifice in which he becomes the saviour of his own people. In ancient myths, good is life, vitality, propagation, health; evil is death, impotence, disease. Social disorder and chaos are associated with disease. (Anarchy, civil wars and political instability are viewed by Shakespeare as diseases of the body politic: in *Richard III* and *2Henry IV* "time's sick" and the "body" of the state suffers from "burning fever" and "incurable" maladies).

*Hamlet* is the archetypal mystery of the life cycle itself. Claudius, whom the Ghost identifies as "The Serpent", bears the primal blood-curse of Cain. Hamlet's role is that of the Prince-Hero who must offer himself up as a royal scapegoat. The bloody climax of the tragedy is not merely spectacular melodrama, but an essential element in the archetypal pattern of sacrifice-atonement-catharsis. The archetypal imagery employed to convey this motif is darkness and blood. The hero appropriately wears black, the colour of melancholy.

- For T. S. Eliot *Hamlet* is "the Mona Lisa of literature". Eliot theorizes the concept of the "objective correlative", the aesthetic matching of emotion to object by referring to Gertrude; in his opinion, Gertrude is not sufficient as a character to carry the weight of the affect which she generates in Hamlet.

Dr. Johnson's characterization of Polonius, as a blend of much wisdom and much folly, is one of the best to the present day: "a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage (...). Such a man excels in general principles but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory and can draw from his repositories of knowledge he utters weighty sentences and gives useful counsel; but as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties, he loses the order of his ideas and entangles himself in his own thoughts (...)"

Samuel Johnson also comments on Claudius's drunkenness, a feature permanently emphasized by Shakespeare to Voltaire's disapproval.

The submissive Ophelia who equally reveres her king, father and fiancé is, in Coleridge's view, a girl who feels too much, who drowns in

feeling. Her madness has been interpreted in terms of hysteria, schizophrenia, and more recently, revolt against family and social order.

♦ *Macbeth* has been considered Shakespeare's most Senecan tragedy. It has a quick movement of the plot and condensed action. The rhythm of this movement alternates courage-fear-and again courage (this time a desperate courage). Fear is the pervading feeling throughout the play. The supernatural framework, the Weird Sisters, the spirits, apparitions, fiends, "couriers of the air" create a gloomy atmosphere.

*Macbeth* is the tragedy of the rise and the fall of an individual rather than a chronicle play, since Shakespeare does not stick to the historical truth. (The real Macbeth usurped Duncan's throne by killing him in single combat). The movement of the plot is that of a wheel swinging a full circle: old order-disorder-new order. Macbeth is in this case the rider of the wheel of Fortune. Banquo, his best friend, later turned into one of his victims, plays the part of Macbeth's conscience or alter-ego. He is said to be the Dr. Jekyll side of the hero's conscience, while Lady Macbeth is the Mr. Hyde side of his ego. She is one of Shakespeare's very few negative female characters (the other two are Goneril and Regan). Even so, she is a faithful, good wife. The Romanian counterpart of Shakespeare's regicides are Hasdeu's Răzvan și Vidra, the heroes of a Moldavian tragedy of rise and fall. Macbeth's first murder triggers a whole chain of murders. Friends, women, children are mercilessly slaughtered. Macbeth becomes a murder-addict and this addiction seeks its justification in each and every new encounter with the Weird Sisters. More than any other Shakespearean tragedy, this one is forward rather than backward-looking. Macbeth scrutinizes the future more intently in his soliloquies than any other tragic hero (including Hamlet). The tragedy of Macbeth deals with a man who tries to control the future – which, ironically, invades his imagination and turns tables on him. Greek tragedy had partly anticipated this idea (see Oedipus's attempt to cheat on his future). The "future" in *Macbeth* seems to be less defined than Greek "fate" or "destiny" and it is a potent presence in the play. Shakespeare's tragic heroes are endowed with heightened awareness in their central scenes. Some are driven to the verge of madness or beyond it (Othello, Lear), yet Macbeth never loses his wits. Macbeth differs from Lear in understanding clearly – he only chooses badly.

Macbeth's final conclusion is that "life is a walking shadow ... it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". With Macbeth's death, "the time is free" again, in Macduff's words.

Traditionally considered a morality play or a play about "evil", *Macbeth* is also highly topical. M. C. Bradbrook suggests that it registered the impact

of two powerful and incompatible events – Shakespeare’s introduction into the royal service at the coronation of James I and the Gunpowder Plot of 5 November 1605. “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!”, the famous cue uttered by Macduff after the murder of Duncan, reflects the mood of 1605. King James’ *Demonologie* (1591) and royal theory of sacred kingship also account for the witch episodes and Duncan’s portrait. As in *Hamlet*, succession was not necessarily hereditary; Macbeth seems to be elected by the thanes. As Alan Sinfield suggests, Macbeth displays many negative traits formerly attributed to Mary Stuart.

Sinfield also comments on the cyclic structure of *Macbeth*: Macduff at the end stands in the same relation to Malcolm as Macbeth did to Duncan in the beginning. He is now the king-maker on whom the legitimate monarch depends, and the recurrence of the whole sequence may be thus anticipated. (This is an arguable viewpoint, though).

- ◆ *King Lear* is completely different from other Shakespearean tragedies:
  - it has a fully developed double plot;
  - it has a tragic hero who suffers but hardly initiates action at all;
  - “physical disguise”, involving “disguised speech”, is much more prominently used;
  - it is Shakespeare’s only mature tragedy to resemble *Titus Andronicus* as regards madness and stage violence.

The play lacks forward-looking suspense since the hero has no plans for the future and is given no task to perform, as are Brutus, Hamlet or Macbeth; equally, the villains have no clearly defined intentions, such as Iago’s.

Jan Kott has drawn a parallel between *King Lear* and Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame*. Both plays have their roots in a larger tradition that goes back to the Greeks – the drama of the man who wants to understand the universe. He tries to understand the injustice of gods, man’s inhumanity to man, and sometimes embarks on a journey leading to redemption, or self-knowledge. (Such is the case of *Oedipus*, *Peer Gynt*, *Everyman*). In such works the hero is, characteristically, a sinner who becomes a thinker. He suffers rather than initiates action.

G. Wilson Knight similarly compares *King Lear* with *The Book of Job*, in which the hero raises the question: is Justice an universal principle? According to E. A. J. Honigmann, the main concern of the play is “not hearing properly”. While the audience finds everything Lear says fascinating, the characters on stage do not listen to him any longer, when he loses his grip on things. During the encounters of Lear, the Fool and Edgar disguised as Poor Tom, each of the three seems to speak from inside a private world. They all talk to themselves. During these

storm-scenes, the speakers are further insulated from each other by the noise of wind and thunders. The loss of the communicative function of language anticipates the 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre of the absurd. The “outer” storm seems to emerge from Lear’s “inner” storm; it insulates him from human contact. It symbolizes the chaos of the moral universe that Lear tries to understand.

*King Lear* resembles Shakespeare’s romance plays, where symbolism and mythic resonances also compete with the mere plot. The storm-scenes prepare the “resonant” silences of the Lear-Cordelia scene, where, again, so much is said without words.

Another meaningful resonance is the sub-plot (Gloucester’s story) which clearly echoes the main plot: two fathers, their children, nature, ingratitude, patience, blindness. Lear kneeling to Cordelia reminds of Gloucester’s kneeling to Edgar. *King Lear* is not necessarily the story of Cinderella: Goneril and Regan may be beautiful as well.

The play is a tragic version of mankind: the equal number of good vs. evil characters (i. e. Cordelia, Albany, Kent, the Fool, Edgar vs. Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, Oswald, Edmund) is true to life; in a way, it suggests Purgatory. Nature is ubiquitous and the play abounds in descriptions of the various links of the Great Chain of Being. It also abounds in elements of folklore: the plot advances against a background of rural customs, legends, ballads and superstitions. Lear and Edgar, turned vagrants, undergo a purifying experience of return to Nature, while Edmund, Gloucester’s bastard, calls Nature his guardian goddess.

*King Lear* is a pagan play. The plot occurs a hundred years before the founding of Rome, in a world of legend in which the archaic mode permits an archaic level of relationships, archaic fears and needs to come to surface. The final battle between the two sons of Gloucester belongs not to the archaic tribal society of the main action, but to a medieval society of knights and heraldry.

*King Lear* is, together with *Julius Caesar*, the play with the greatest number of stoic characters (Kent, Lear, the Fool, Edgar). Edmund, Lear and Cordelia correspond to the three stages in the evolution of man: primitive; civilized; ideal.

Lear’s lines

You do me wrong to take me out o’ th’ grave  
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire... (IV. 7. 45-7)

offer the concentrated metaphors of Cordelia as an angel and Lear as an eternally tormented Ixion (the latter, possibly, an echo of Pindar’s *Odes*).

The death of Cordelia at the end comes as a hazard of blind chance. It is gratuitous and Shakespeare's *Lear* is the only version in which Cordelia dies. M. C. Bradbrook draws a parallel between the language of Ben Jonson's masques performed at the court and the language of court flattery commanded so readily by Regan and Goneril. What they say to Lear was similar to what the masquers regularly said to James.

◆ In *Othello* Shakespeare used the convention of "the slanderer believed" which is as old as the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife. The unnatural plot of the play, the only possible motive for Iago's behaviour in destroying Othello and Desdemona is explained by Dr. Ernest Jones through the rancour of the rejected and jealous lover of the Moor. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the academic dispute between A. C. Bradley and F. R. Leavis as regards Othello's character. Bradley supports the idea of "the noble Moor"; Leavis, on the contrary regards Othello as a "brutal egotist", claiming that Othello does not really love Desdemona, that Othello's supposed love is rather "a matter of self-centered and self-regarding satisfactions – pride, sensual possessiveness, appetite, love of loving".

Both critics recognize *two* Othellos in the play: "the real Othello" and another. According to Bradley, the "real Othello" appears at the beginning of the play. Leavis claims that the "real Othello" emerges in the temptation scene.

Iago's power, to quote Leavis, "is that he represents something that is in Othello... the essential traitor is within the gates".

Recent criticism has questioned the notion that dramatic characters develop; it is sometimes urged that they do not so much develop as gradually reveal themselves.

The most convincing interpretation of *Othello* (at least in my opinion) is that of Alessandro Serpieri. The play is defined as a *private* and *psychological* drama evolving around a continuous game of assertion and negation played by Iago. Iago affirms through irony and emphasis in order to negate, while he negates through litotes and *detractio* in order to affirm. This technique of hidden persuasion engenders the great scene of private and psychological seduction. Iago resorts to litotes, a figure which insinuates an affirmation by emphasizing it under the guise of a negation, an unreal affirmation which therefore cannot be expressed directly: that Desdemona has betrayed Othello.

There is a social opposition, of rank, which also turns out to be an anthropological and racist opposition between the white Iago and black Othello. Blackness used to be an outward symbol of someone's diabolic nature; see the figure of Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. Othello is a

remarkable innovation in this respect. The play poses the problem of discrimination and of the clash between 'I' and the others, framed within the anthropological and historical category of *extraneity*, in which the individual finds himself in continual struggle with the others for his own survival.

The strategy of Iago is not that of open confrontation but of indirect attack. Like Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Iago admits that "I am not what I am". This may be interpreted both as a game between appearance and reality, and as the possible loss of identity. Iago is tormented by unspeakable desires originating in his frustrated sexual impulses. The obscenity of his language is constantly designed to deny the positiveness of Eros, to represent Othello as the repulsive black champion of a degraded hyperbolic sexuality, and to expose Desdemona as an insatiable whore. He is jealous of Othello, who is supposed to have betrayed him with his wife Emilia; he is jealous of Cassio for the same reason; he is in love with Desdemona...In the courtroom of his puritanical and schizophrenic mind, Iago accuses himself of "as great a sin".

Othello, on the other hand, is a cultured barbarian, used and subtly discriminated against by Venetian society. He represents himself as a humanistic and epic hero. What dominates in him is self-representation. Othello is not able to represent himself *in* the flow of the present. While Iago is condemned to a continuous mental present – of thinking, of projecting, of seducing, Othello tends to elude the present in symbolic certainties. He cannot escape the weakness of the precariously cultured alien, of the "stranger". To conclude, "if Iago is therefore the perverse rhetorician of the profound, Othello is the fragile bard of an idealized reality". Or, to quote Serpieri again, "the two characters look at each other as in a mirror, as the negative or positive image of the same tragic cultural mask".

### SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

Shakespeare's comedies may be regarded as the result of blending long established literary tradition with genuine innovation.

Of all Latin authors of comedy, Plautus and Terence exerted a strong influence on the comedy of the English Renaissance. The first English regular comedy *Ralph Royster Doyster* is largely indebted to Plautus. (Classical comedies had not been acted in Europe during almost the whole period of the Middle Ages, and the original texts of the representatives of Greek and Latin comedy had been at best studied at school, Terence being "one of the favourites.")

Four main trends precede the first regular English comedy:

1) the fragments of humorous dialogue inserted between the serious parts of mysteries or miracles stand proof of the gradual secularization of the religious dramatic forms;

2) the interludes, originally short humorous episodes or farces acted between the acts of a morality play (best represented by John Heywood);

3) folk dramas were, probably, current in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. William Langland had already mentioned the tumblers and jesters who used to perform ballads;

4) the dramatic elements and dramatic dialogues found in various medieval literary productions such as debates, popular ballads, Chaucer's poems, etc.

Lyly, Greene and Peele are Shakespeare's immediate predecessors.

◆ According to N. Coghill, Vincent de Beauvais' formula best describes the true basis of Shakespearean comedy: "a tale of trouble that turns to joy"; with the implication that it is "not only the shape of a human comedy, but also of ultimate reality". There are many controversies as to the number and the chronology of Shakespeare's comedies. Some critics include his romance plays and so-called "problem plays" among his comedies.

◆ In *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye discusses comedy as a literary form inherited from the Greek New Comedy. It implied *anagnorisis* or discovery, i.e. the crystallization of a new society around the hero. Comedy is characterized by movement from one social center to another, in which the blocking characters are either repudiated or reconciled. There are two ways of developing the form of comedy:

- either by throwing emphasis on the blocking characters (resulting in studies of manners);

- or by throwing emphasis on the scenes of discovery and reconciliation (which is the case with Shakespeare and the romantic comedy).

The blocking character's absurdity was explained by Ben Jonson's theory of "humours".

Characterization depends on function; the dramatic function of a character depends on the structure of the plot, whereas the latter depends on the category of the play. Northrop Frye distinguishes six phases of comedy between the extremes of irony and romance. The movement from the world of experience into the ideal world of innocence and romance belongs to phase 4. The action is performed on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently idealized. It is the case of Shakespeare's "drama of the green world".

*As You Like It*, with its atmosphere of English countryside, is a complete picture of the communion between man and Nature. Shakespeare's deep interest in external nature as well as in the relationship

between it and man brings to the foreground the idea of Nature as a possible remedy for social and moral deterioration. The forest is a favourite environment and it solves problems. The Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* is a consistent illustration of external nature being a place both for refuge and of moral improvement. In spite of its pastoral setting, *As You Like It* departs from previous superficial pastoral literature, as well as from its direct source, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*. The wood is described by Duke Senior with a peasant's realism – it is a hard school where men can “drop their vices” by learning “the sweet uses of adversity”.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the conflicts between children and parents, between the rigours of the Athenian law and normal human emotions, or between rulers and ruled are solved in a “forest near Athens”. But all this has been possible only through the influence of the Athenian forest with its fairy-world on men's imagination, and on their selves or identities.

Frye labels phase 5 of comedy as a less Utopian and more Arcadian world corresponding to Shakespeare's “romances” and “sea-comedies”. External nature sometimes has a retributive or punitive function. This is obvious in *The Tempest*, where the sea storm raised by Prospero with the help of Ariel and the magic art finally ends in the metaphorical storm raging in the souls of men.

◆ The world “as it is” in Shakespeare's comedies comprises many evil aspects such as

- wars (indirectly condemned in *All's Well that Ends Well*);
- the corruption of the ruling classes and
- usurpation (in *As You Like It*);
- hypocrisy of magistrates (in *Measure for Measure*);
- the rulers' lack of interest in urgent state problems (in *Love's Labour's Lost*);
- racial discrimination (*The Merchant of Venice*);
- lack of real love, mutual respect and trust in the relations between man and woman (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*);
- the unnatural relations between parents and children, the latter being often considered as mere “objects” or “commodities” by the former (in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*);
- drunkenness (*The Taming of the Shrew*).

◆ The problem of change or loss of identity is amply dealt with in Shakespeare's comedies. In *The Comedy of Errors* (much more than a simple extension of Plautus' *Menaechmi*) mistaken identity, i.e. *qui pro quo*, determines the whole development of the plot.

In his next comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare reverts to the fundamental idea that there are human beings who, in accordance

with the proverb “Appearances are deceptive”, are considered to be “negative” by their fellows although their inward reality is “positive” and, on the other hand, there are those who, very much appreciated by others, are characteristically “wicked” at the bottom. It is the case of Kate vs. Bianca, with the outer social manifestation of the two sisters, so very contradictory to their real selves. Christopher Sly’s problem of identity is much more serious. “The drunken tinker”’s transformation into another self has been long a topic of psychological approaches.

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is another comedy in which identity occupies a central place. The pairs of lovers can easily change their affections as a result of “imagination”. (Here, Shakespeare draws the famous parallel between “the lunatic, the lover and the poet” who “are of imagination all compact”.)

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* derives much of its fun from the deliberate change of identity to which the jealous Mr. Ford resorts in order to spy on his wife by disguising himself as Mr. Brook. Disguise, with all its humorous consequences is also used by Falstaff.

*Twelfth Nights* takes up disguise as an important agent in the further development of the plot, the mistakes it causes bringing about both troubles and happy endings.

The dark comedy *All’s Well that Ends Well* resumes the problem of identity: this time disguise is connected with tragic issues and it takes the form of the “bed-trick” (later employed in another dark comedy, *Measure for Measure*, too), a device derived from folk-tales.

*All’s Well that Ends Well* tackles the question of true nobility and the relation of birth to merit. Bertram’s high birth is opposed to Helena’s native merit. The theme of unrequited love (the rejected lover) is also present in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Proteus and Julia), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius) etc.

- ◆ Revenge, as a motive force in Shakespeare’s tragedies is also present in the comedies. The theme of revenge is strongly emphasized in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

- ◆ *Troilus and Cressida* has been considered one of the most controversial Shakespearean texts for centuries. The interpretations of this problem-play differ from one critic to another.

- G. Wilson Knight’s thematic approach suggests the dichotomous presentation of human values vs. human weakness, intellect vs. intuition, reason vs. emotion.

The Trojans, heroic and chivalrous, are dominated by intuition. They somehow belong to the world of medieval romance. The Greeks,

on the other hand, live in the world of Renaissance disillusionment and satire. The Trojans' main concern is love; the Greeks' is war; and Thersites is the character who reveals the futility and stupidity of both these irrational occupations.

- In Leon Levičiči's opinion, *Troilus and Cressida* implicitly illustrates Bacon's ideas contained in his philosophical essay *On Love*. The main theme of the play (as in *Othello* or *King Lear*) is the gap between essence and appearance. The dichotomous aspects of love are selfless love vs. self-love. Human values are the author's main concern and almost one third of the entire text consists of characterizations, assessments, evaluations, opinions concerning both brothers-in-arms and enemies. Both armies are populated by "idols" (i. e. illusions, errors, misjudgments). Achilles and Ajax are male idols indulging in self-love and egotism; they always overestimate their own worth; Helen, Polixena and Cressida are female idols. Unlike the paranoid male idols, Cressida is an intelligent, self-aware human being. The conclusion of Leon Levičiči's approach is that Shakespeare seeks real human values beyond the veil of appearances and fiercely attacks the idea of hero worship.

- According to a traditional interpretation, *Troilus and Cressida* was intended as Shakespeare's most topical play, bringing to stage his contribution to the on-going war of the theatres waged by fellow-dramatists Jonson, Dekker and Marston. Contemporary sources identify the boastful Ajax with Ben Jonson and the cynical, infirm Thersites with John Marston.

- Jane Adamson's formalistic approach of this...tragi-comedy, satirical comedy, heroic farce, satirical tragedy and problem play focuses on *conflict* as a key-word. The conflicts manifest in the style and design of the play are neither reconciled nor reconcilable. The war between the Trojans and the Greeks, the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles, the conflict between the two factions of Troy (those willing and those unwilling to continue the war for the sake of Helen), the conflict within Troilus's heart suggest an impasse, a stalemate. The title characters appear in extremely few scenes, they are not the real protagonists (like Romeo and Juliet, or Antony and Cleopatra). Troilus's complaint about the fact that "the will is infinite and the execution confin'd; that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit" (III.2.78-80) mirrors the inevitable failure of human aims and the futility of all aspirations. The sudden death of Patroclus and Hector exposes the terrible frailty of the human body, the rude brevity of human life. The ambushed spectator is discomfited in the end by the annihilation of every heroic ideal.

- In my opinion, this most incoherent plot of a Shakespearean play (as appears in *Troilus and Cressida*) can be interpreted as a theatrical

experiment, as a chain of more or less conscious plays-within-a play. The structural unity of the play is provided by a series of “happenings” (as defined by the American artists of the 1960s), in which the characters on stage become both actors and spectators, spectators involved in carrying out plays designed by other characters. Ulysses complains about Patroclus, who, “with ridiculous and awkward action/, which, slanderer, he imitation calls/ (...) pageants us”(I. 3. 151-3).

Patroclus imitates, in turn, Agamemnon and Nestor while Achilles “cries ‘Excellent’! ‘tis Agamemnon right!”

Now play me Nestor...(161-5)

“Tis Nestor right! Now play him me, Patroclus

Arming to answer in a night alarm”(169-70).

Paradoxically, Ulysses has to mimic Achilles and Patroclus while he relates their mimicry of various Greek commanders. Thus, the actor performing Ulysses’ role actually performs five roles implying a high degree of psychological mobility.

Ulysses’ reported mimicry is later substituted by performed mimicry. This time it is Thersites who, at Patroclus’s demand, starts mock-mimicking Ajax in a “pageant” of his own. Thersites is the stage manager and performer of several “happenings” in which accidental passers-by become involved as supporting actors. Ulysses also sets up a play with the help he gets from Agamemnon and Nestor for a special spectator: Achilles. The continuous change of scenic status of characters (who, in turn, act as stage-managers, leading or supporting actors, spectators), life lived theatrically and theatre perceived as everyday responses in everyday situations turn *Troilus and Cressida* into an unexpectedly modern text.

- According to a recent study by E. A. J. Honigmann, *Troilus and Cressida* was Shakespeare’s only censored and suppressed text. The play was suppressed (the 1609 quarto edition almost entirely destroyed, with only four surviving copies; the play performed only once, not in London, but in Cambridge – in 1601) because of its unintended “Essex allusions” which turned it into one of Shakespeare’s most topical plays ever. After the 1609 obstruction of the quarto, a more extraordinary obstruction followed in 1623, when the text of the play had to be brutally removed from the Folio; however, it was included at the last moment, due to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, to whom the Folio had been dedicated. The unintended “Essex allusion” (soon after the Earl’s execution) consisted of having Achilles among the *dramatis personae*. Chapman had called Essex “Achilles” not once, but twice in his books. Hugh Platt had named him “Achilles” in 1594 and Saviolo had called

him “the English Achilles” in 1595. Lord Burghley, Elizabeth’s sage, was described as England’s “Nestor” in his last years, and in the play *Ulysses* and “father Nestor” (II. 3. 247) work as a team, as Sir Robert Cecil and his father had seemed to do. Achilles and his opponents in the play, therefore, resemble Essex and his opponents. After Queen Elizabeth’s death, Robert Cecil became one of King James I’s favourites, strengthening his position in the much feared Privy Council and thus being able to suppress Shakespeare’s play for many years.

### SHAKESPEARE’S CHRONICLES

If Marlowe is the father of the English historical or chronicle play as such, Shakespeare is the one who invented the history cycle. *Henry VI* (Parts 1,2 and 3), to which Marlowe seems to have collaborated in Shakespeare’s early days, and *Richard III* make up a cycle depicting the evils of disorder and divided rule. They look back upon the chaos of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, to which Langland has apprehensively looked forward. These history plays are designed as moral *exempla*. History is interpreted morally, seen as a guide to the present. The structure of these plays is that of the secular morality play in which factions or troubles show a contention between order and chaos for the state of man.

♦ While the first part of *Henry VI* chronicles in a nationalistic tone and manner (much criticized by Bernard Shaw) the war with France and the capture of the witch of Orleans (i.e. St. Joan), the second and the third parts deal with the civil war waged between the houses of York and Lancaster. The monstrous Richard of Gloucester (the future King Richard III) emerges as the Machiavellian villain in 3 *Henry VI*, where he kills the king. His soliloquy in V.6 anticipates his future chain of horrible crimes.

York’s great tirade against Queen Margaret, the “she-wolf of France” and King Henry’s lament on the burden of kingship are the most memorable scenes of the play.

♦ The title character of *Richard III* is depicted as a monstrous monarch in an age when every other author endeavoured to flatter Queen Elizabeth (Gloriana, Astraea, Britomart, etc.) by all means. Richard’s language, like his person, is diametrically opposed to the main pattern of the play. It is proverbial, full of old saws, used as disguise. In this respect, he resembles Marlowe’s Barabas. He has a touch of Mark Antony’s oratory and at the base of his character there is a touch of Iago’s envy. Richard III is one of the earliest examples of Shakespeare’s particular skill in portraying the *development* of a character.

♦ *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (Parts 1 and 2) and *Henry V* make up Shakespeare's second history cycle.

In *Richard II*, the trampled garden is a central metaphor standing for the image of bad government. The play represents a great step ahead in Shakespeare's art; the previous use of schemata and patterned speech is replaced by the so-called "symphonic" or recurrent imagery. Richard appears as a withering rose or the setting sun in the trampled garden of his land. The mirror, or the looking-glass, is another essential metaphor. The play begins with the banishment of Bolingbroke, the king's cousin.

"Uncle, even in the glasses of thine eyes  
I see thy griev'd heart" (III.1.208-9)

says Richard to the lamenting John of Gaunt, Bolingbroke's father. Richard's long journey from carelessness and serenity to grief and self-knowledge reaches its climax in the famous deposition scene, or "mirror scene" (IV.1.253-300) in which the "flatt'ring glass" refuses to show his "wrinkles", "blows", "sorrow" and "deeper wounds". Richard breaks the glass while the "shadows of unseen grief" remind us John of Gaunt's pain in the early scenes. Richard's melancholy foreshadows Hamlet and Brutus. Bolingbroke, the man who deposes him and is responsible for his death, is largely built as a character from what he does *not* say.

♦ Bolingbroke, crowned as Henry IV, has a guilty conscience: he is famous for his soliloquy on sleeplessness. The illegitimate deposition of Richard has resulted in feudal anarchy and civil war, hence Henry's insomnia. However, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* are about human relationships and heroic acts, not about politics. The main characters are Hotspur, Falstaff, Prince Hal and Henry IV seen in relation to each other. The action takes place in the tavern (at "The Boar's Head"), at the court and in the country. Hal, the Prodigal Prince turned into a Perfect Governor as King Henry V, is one of Shakespeare's great "actors" who (like Hamlet) displays an infinite number of masks or selves in relation with the characters he meets. He is a great observer of human nature, hence his versatility as an actor. His alleged inconsistency as a character and his miraculous metamorphosis (the underground idler turned a skillful politician and military leader) has been the topic of many academic disputes. The title of William Babula's essay *Whatever Happened to Prince Hal?* sums up the tone of these disputes. Stephen Greenblatt describes his career as that of an agent provocateur who spends his time among the thieves of London only to better control them in due time. M.C. Bradbrook also notices that Hal "is reformed from the beginning. His notorious first soliloquy announces a policy of moral disguise akin to physical disguise, which the ruler so often assumes in

Elizabethan drama, not only for the purpose of revelry, but also for the purpose of attaining knowledge”, knowledge about his future subjects.

Falstaff, the most popular Shakespearean character throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, has been labelled as a *miles gloriosus*, *diabolus in loco parentis*, a clown, a medieval grotesque, the Devil, the Vice, the Lord of Misrule. Some critics have, therefore, interpreted *Henry IV* as a morality play. Dr. Samuel Johnson characterizes Falstaff as follows: “...a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt. He is a thief and a glutton, a coward and a boaster, always ready to cheat the weak and prey upon the poor; to terrify the timorous and to insult the defenceless. At once obsequious and malignant, he satirizes in their absence those whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the Prince only as an agent of vice...” etc.

Hal’s reformation and the subsequent rejection of Falstaff is a painful moment for both readers and spectators, but Johnson justly remarks that “the fat knight has never uttered one sentiment of generosity and with all his power of exciting mirth has nothing in him that can be esteemed”.

♦ *Henry V* presents Hal as a charismatic leader and national hero. National solidarity and good fellowship, the patriotic fervour, the bold subject and the popular king remind us of Robert Greene’s *George-a-Greene*. And yet, *Henry V* “is at once a celebration and a deeply disturbing study of the problems of rule and government” (M.C. Bradbrook), it is “only in one sense about national unity: its obsessive preoccupation is insurrection”(Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield). Although a play of monarchic propaganda, *Henry V* presents the unacknowledged anxieties of a ruler. Henry, “the mirror of all Christian kings”, the victor at Agincourt, walks disguised as a plain soldier in his camp, imitates “the action of a tiger” in battle, and woos the Princess in simple terms, like a “soldier” and a “plain king”, adapting himself to a great variety of situations. His taste for theatricality is only equalled by Hamlet.

♦ *Henry VIII*, written in collaboration with John Fletcher, is remembered for its rich and costly costumes and scenery which caught fire during a show leading to the destruction of the Globe. Like all the other later plays, *Henry VIII* resorts to the fashionable insertion of masques in its plot, the earthly masque in which the King woos Anne Boleyn being contrasted with the heavenly masque that comforts the dying Katharine.

♦ *Edward III* which has only recently been included into the Shakespearean dramatic canon is one of Shakespeare’s early plays. The play is concerned with a key Shakespearean theme: you think the danger will come from without (e.g. the Turk in *Othello*) but really it is within

(Iago). King Edward III is the forerunner of Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, in his attempt to seduce the Countess of Salisbury, whose husband at the time is fighting in France. His rhetoric of seduction is also very close to that of Tarquin in *The Rape of Lucrece*. If the Countess is precursor to Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, Edward III also anticipates Hal's career and evolution from idleness to political and military glory. Structurally speaking, the Countess scenes in *Edward III*, ending in the King's realization of the folly of his attempt to seduce the Countess ("I am awaked from this idle dream"), prepare the way for Hal's descent from a prince to a prentice. They make possible his encounter with Falstaff. The English victory at Crécy foreshadows the victory of Agincourt.

### SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN PLAYS

*Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* deal with the military and political career, with the public and the private life of ancient heroes. Shakespeare's immediate source was Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*: all his deviations from the original can be easily traced in Shakespeare's text, too.

◆ *Coriolanus* is a problem play concerned with the relationship between the leader (the embodiment of a strong personality) and the ordinary people. It invites the audience to take sides for or against the hero, leaving a wide variety of interpretations open. When acted at the Comédie Française in the nineteen-thirties, the Communists rioted because they thought it a satire on the plebs, and the Fascists because they thought it a satire on dictators. Whatever the reading, the central figure dominates.

The cynical Bernard Shaw was to term this play the best of Shakespeare's comedies. T.S.Eliot dedicated two poems to *Coriolanus*, applying his story to modern history.

◆ C.L. Barber has termed *Antony and Cleopatra* a festive tragedy: it presents an open situation, which has many elements of comedy; and Shakespeare explores the resources of the Elizabethan stage in the restless movement organized around the deep structural opposition of Rome and Egypt.

The idea of vast space is enhanced by the brevity and rapid succession of the scenes.

Antony is no longer a subtle politician and determined military leader as in *Julius Caesar*; he is a mixture of spiritual youth and physical decay. Cleopatra is considered by G.Wilson Knight to be the most complex female character in Shakespeare's plays. She displays an essential femininity; she is not afraid of death: for her, death and love are one and the same thing.

◆ Wilson Knight's traditional approach describes *Julius Caesar* as a play primarily concerned with the opposition of the strong spirit and the feeble body. Life is the main theme of the play despite all the instances of bloodshed, disease and physical decay.

In a more recent approach E.A.J. Honigmann has convincingly argued that in *Julius Caesar* "Shakespeare presents a Roman world highly conscious of the power of rhetoric, one where the skilled orator uses words as weapons that can change the course of events". It is Shakespeare's play of big speeches which make *will* triumph over *reason*. Shakespeare shows that a leader of men, whether Caesar or Brutus, may misunderstand people, arguments, and even the very situation in which he finds himself, and yet can dominate others, who see more clearly, by sheer *force of will*. Perpetually switching from speech-making to talk, from one register to another, Shakespeare draws attention to rhetoric as a basic fact of Roman life. Mark Antony, aware of the power of words, rubs his hands at the end of the famous Forum scene:

"Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,  
Take thou what course thou wilt." (III.2.261-2)

Much along the same lines, Alessandro Serpieri interprets *Julius Caesar* as a *political* and *public* drama that represents an exemplary clash of axiological and ideological models. As usual, Shakespeare does not commit himself directly to either ideological option. He limits himself, rather, to an attentive comparison of the ideologies in question.

The play begins and culminates with a persuasion of the crowd as force, as material, on which to try out the transformation of ideology into power (in the first scene the republican ideology of the tribunes; in Act III, the republican ideology with Brutus as its spokesman, and the Caesarian-monarchical ideology espoused by Antony).

Brutus, the real hero of the tragedy, the idealist dreamer is an imperfect man of noble grandeur. He commits various political errors such as sparing Antony's life and conceding to Antony himself the right to speak at Caesar's funeral. His oration in the Forum (III.2) is in fact a theorem, logical but tautological, brief but redundant. He requests the crowd's attention without interruptions: "Be patient till the last line". Antony will let himself be interrupted often, thus allowing the crowd to believe itself protagonist of the oratorical (emotional, ideological, political) event. Antony has to overturn the assertion according to which Caesar was ambitious and Brutus is honourable into an opposite assertion. Like Iago in *Othello*, Antony resorts to a technique of hidden persuasion in Shakespeare's greatest scene of public and ideological seduction. His discourse employs litotes (the constant negation of each and every

affirmation), the obsessive repetition of “honest”, “honourable” and “ambitious”, the implicit antonymy (contradicting the assertion that “Brutus is an honourable man”), and, as Roman Jakobson suggests, subtle paronyms such as “Brutus – brutish beasts”.

Antony’s speech is a triumph of oratory, it is the triumph of the Word that makes History. Antony’s brief remark when he is finally left alone exposes the mystification on which it is founded.

### SHAKESPEARE’S ROMANCE PLAYS

Although often included by critics among Shakespeare’s comedies, this group of late plays including *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* deserves a special attention. Often criticized for their departure from a naturalistic and mimetic treatment of their subject, these plays represent a special moment in Shakespeare’s art and in the evolution of Jacobean drama.

♦ *Pericles* marks Shakespeare’s turning away from realism and the exploration of human tragedy towards miracle, myth and symbol. The play is the story of an epic journey, both real and spiritual, undertaken by Pericles, Prince of Tyre, in his search for true happiness. This derives from an ancient tale of Greek origin told by the 14<sup>th</sup> century poet John Gower in his *Confessio Amantis*. The introduction of magic, folklore and mythology reinforces the atmosphere of a remote, fairy-tale world. The spectacular storm represents the tragic forces to which the hero must submit, while the sea is a symbol of purification. Like in *King Lear*, too, the relationship between father and daughter is a central theme.

Pericles loses both his wife and his daughter only to find himself reunited with his loved ones in a cyclical movement of birth, death and regeneration. By telling her own life history, Marina, his long lost daughter, revives Pericles from a state of death-in-life. By confessing his own life story at Diana’s altar he then regains his lost wife. Himself a musician, Pericles is revived first by Marina’s song, then by her tale. This leads up to his hearing the heavenly music of the spheres which heralds the appearance of the goddess Diana. “This, then, is a journey from Hell to Heaven”, is the conclusion drawn by M.C. Bradbrook.

♦ Dr. Samuel Johnson condemned the “unresisting imbecility” of the plot of *Cymbeline*, while the 18<sup>th</sup> century novelist Charlotte Lennox criticized “the absurdities in the plot and unnatural manners in the characters” of the same play. Indeed, in *Cymbeline* Shakespeare mingled a great variety of artificial scenes and times resulting in funny anachronisms; for instance,

- Cymbeline’s reign coincides with the birth of Christ;
- the Roman legions include an “Italian fiend”, brother of the duke of Siena;
- an innocent Elizabethan country gentleman is lost among super-subtle Italians;
- Jupiter appears on his eagle;
- Antony and Cleopatra appear depicted as history on Imogen’s mantelpiece;
- Imogen, disguised as a page, informs the Roman Lucius that she had been the servant of the good knight Richard du Champ.

The play is triple-centred; Imogen’s bedchamber, Rome, the Welsh mountains represent court, city and country, the threefold division of Jacobean England. *Cymbeline* displays extreme psychological inconsistencies in character delineation. Although Cymbeline declares himself Caius Lucius’s friend, he orders a general massacre of the Roman prisoners, only to throw away victory and concede the tribute due to Rome. The characters in *Cymbeline* carry round a certain atmosphere or quality of the sort of play in which their type occurs. Imogen and her brothers belong to romance, Lucius to Roman history and Iachimo to the Jacobean city comedy.

Despite its so many would-be flaws, *Cymbeline* brings to stage one of Shakespeare’s most brilliant female characters: Imogen. Like Rosalind and Viola, she is compelled to undergo a change of identity, but she does not participate in a wooing game. Imogen as the wife of Posthumus (a caricature of the jealous Othello) belongs in situation, rather, with Desdemona and Webster’s Duchess of Malfi.

♦ *The Winter’s Tale*, with its plot taking place in a Bohemia located somewhere at the seaside (!), was “with all its absurdities, very entertaining” in Samuel Johnson’s opinion.

*The Winter’s Tale* is a diptych in which Part I moves from court to country and the kings are replaced by shepherds. Part II moves from country back to court. The double structure used by Shakespeare in his romances – one half dark, the other bright – seems to imitate the double structure of Jonson’s masques. The climax of the plot shows how the statue of one thought dead might “be stone no more” (V.3.99). This metamorphosis and revival was not a novelty for the Elizabethan spectators: in one of Francis Beaumont’s masques acted at the Inner Temple, statues came to life, too. However, contrary to *all* precedents in Shakespeare, the audience could not foresee the miracle; they did not share the secret: this in itself is in the tradition of the masque rather than the theatre, for in masques an element of shock and wonder was integral to the effect.

◆ *The Tempest* was undoubtedly written after the wreck of the *Sea Venture* on the islands of Bermuda in 1609. The shipwrecked crew found themselves on an inhabited island, a utopian world in which life could be lived at leisure. Shakespeare's play tells the story of a usurpation followed by revenge, punishment through forgiveness, and the restoration of the old order and a new beginning granted by the marriage of the young Miranda and Ferdinand. As in the other romances, magic (Prospero's white magic), music and mythology (the wedding masque during which Juno, Ceres, Iris and "certain nymphs" are conjured by Prospero) hold an essential part. Like Hamlet and Henry V, Prospero is more than an actor and a stage-manager; he is the very author of the script according to which all the other characters in the play perform the ascribed roles.

A more traditional approach advocated by Frank Kermode suggests that in *The Tempest* "Shakespeare offers an exposition of the themes of Fall and Redemption by means of analogous narrative." Kermode's picture of Prospero is that of a self-disciplined, reconciliatory, white magician.

However, the latest cultural materialistic approaches read *The Tempest* as one of the first literary echoes of the English colonial ventures. Caliban, the monster turned Prospero's slave, astonishes Stephano and Trinculo with his bizarre appearance. "A strange fish!", they exclaim. The same astonishment had been experienced by the English colonists when they first met the Amerindians. The appearance of "the other" denies the coherence of the European order. That is why the Indians, the symbols of disorder and incoherence must be subdued and made to serve the European world. This is, incidentally, Caliban's story, too. He is the former master of Prospero's island. Prospero's misfortunes can be read as an illustration of "English colonialism". *The Tempest* deals with several actual or attempted usurpations of authority: 1) Antonio's usurpation of Prospero's dukedom; 2) Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda; 3) the conspiracy of Antonio and Sebastian against Alonso's life; 4) Caliban's insurrection, with Stephano and Trinculo, against Prospero's domination of the island. For Prospero, the beginning of the story is the usurpation of his office by Antonio; but for Caliban, the beginning of the story is the moment of his being enslaved by Prospero. The act of enslaving "the other" was something quite normal: the white man was born to rule, "the other" to supply food and labour force. This truth is acknowledged by Prospero himself:

"We cannot miss him : he does make our fire,  
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices  
That profit us". (I.2.313-15)

Caliban's revolt triggers off Prospero's only moment of disturbance in the play, and he has to suddenly interrupt the masque with goddesses and nymphs. Reinterpreted in the light of post-colonial discourse, and in terms of "otherness", Prospero is both usurped and usurper.

◆ Shakespeare's very last work, long neglected by critics, is *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, written in collaboration with John Fletcher. The plot is borrowed from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*; it is a humorous and moving dramatization of the conflicting claims of love and friendship. Palamon and Arcite love the same woman: Emilia, Theseus's sister-in-law. Their lifetime friendship turns to rivalry and hatred, and yet they never betray the ideals of chivalry. M.C. Bradbrook calls this play "Shakespeare's last and most ritualistic treatment of love, war and death". Despite its mythological setting, the play is one of Shakespeare's most topical works, the death of the warlike Arcite echoing the unexpected death of Henry, Prince of Wales. (Chapman's excellent translations of Homer's epics had been dedicated to the young warlike prince, too). The gallant, popular prince, only eighteen years of age died of typhoid fever at the beginning of his sister's wedding festivities. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* the joys of life and the sorrow of death often intersect one another: Theseus's wedding preparations are interrupted by the three mourning queens who ask for the revenge of their dead husbands, killed in the siege of Thebes; military action and funeral rites postpone the festivities. The end of the play again combines the wedding of the widowed bride Emilia, to Palamon, with the funeral of Arcite. Some critics read this romance as a tragic counterpart of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the comedy that also features Theseus and Hippolyta. The Jailer's daughter is a She-Fool and a parody of Ophelia, in her unrequited love for Palamon. Shakespeare's much debated authorship in this collaborative play is obvious in lines such as

"This world's a city full of straying streets  
And Death's the market place, where each one meets."  
(I.5.15-16)

### SHAKESPEARE IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

The past two decades have brought to the foreground a dozen or so new critical methods applied to the interpretation of Shakespeare's work (Neo-Marxism, New Historicism, cultural materialism, feminism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, etc.). The critics advocating these methods are no longer concerned with the traditional elements or "blocks" that make up a literary

structure (i.e. character, plot, language, genre and response). They usually invent a jargon of their own and encourage a tunnel vision of the text they interpret in terms of ideology, the state of society, the Renaissance, gender interrelationships, etc. The result of such an approach is often predictable, being no more than an ideological grid placed over the text.

Such a predictability makes one easily guess, even before reading a feminist essay on any of Shakespeare's comedies, that Shakespeare's heroines are dominated by men, being eternally persecuted in a patriarchal society. Moreover, the radical feminists contend that Shakespeare, too, is a perfect representative and supporter of the patriarchal world, i.e. a male chauvinist. (Some time ago, traditional criticism used to accuse Shakespeare of an insane "gynaecolatry", of exaggerated idealization of his heroines).

Here is another example of predictability: whenever one reads a Neo-Marxist study, one should expect his or her coming across the idea of Shakespeare's appropriation by the dominant classes and the interpretive manipulation of his texts for ideological purposes such as upholding the legitimacy of the ruling classes and the immutability of the given social order. Neo-Marxists and New Historicists usually start their approach by the fierce rejection of E.M.W. Tillyard's Elizabethan World Picture. Next, they reduce their interpretation to concepts such as *discourse* and *power*. The former implies that Shakespeare's works should be read as part of a larger corpus of texts produced during the Renaissance; the latter discusses all texts in terms of subversion and containment, opposition to governing forces and the strategies whereby the governing forces control and contain their opponents. Hence, Greenblatt's famous reading of Prince Hal as an agent provocateur.

In a famous essay on the deconstruction of Shakespeare's comedies, Malcolm Evans, a leading authority in the new wave of British post-structuralist critics has justly revealed the danger of placing a grid (actually one and the same grid) over several texts: "This is not only a brand new reading of an old text, but a brand new old reading".

Worst of all, post-structuralist readings frequently accuse Shakespeare of racism (because of *Othello*), anti-Semitism (because of *The Merchant of Venice*), reactionary colonialism (because of *The Tempest*). According to such "revolutionary" readings Shakespeare no longer deserves a central place in the canon of Western culture (his central position being the result of the systematic ideological activity of several generations of upper class representatives, boot-licking critics, academics, etc.). It is no wonder why the key-words of such readings are "deflating", "debunking", "desecrating", "decanonizing"; however, one should be more circumspect when reading the theoretical sources of these critical trends – for, while rejecting an entire

tradition of Anglo-Saxon studies in Shakespeare (the critical legacy of Tillyard, Bradley, Frye, Wilson Knight, J. Dover Wilson, etc.), post-structuralist critics most often refer to the enlightening texts of Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Lacan, or Todorov (who, incidentally, has recently asserted his creed: “there is nothing beyond structuralism”, thus rejecting his being associated with post-structuralist tendencies!), as if Shakespeare could no longer be discussed outside French thinking and French methodology. The denial of general and universal values endorsed by Shakespeare is another distinctive feature of post-structuralist criticism.

Charles R. Forker offers a synthetic round-up of the new critical perspectives:

“Obsessive class – and gender – consciousness make for a kind of inverse snobbery. One would never guess from reading these commentaries that sacrificial love, self-surrender, renunciation, forgiveness, chastity, unselfishness, chivalric courage, or Christian humility and submission could have any honourable place in Shakespeare’s complex of values. Power and oppression become exclusively and reductively the theme. Implicit also in this school of academic discourse is the arrogant assumption that the interpretative act, if it can be sufficiently startling and revisionist, somehow displaces and ought to displace the work interpreted, even if (or perhaps because) it comes from the pen of Western civilization’s supreme literary genius”.

Such voices are not singular. Harold Bloom, the best-known representative of a revived traditionalist trend, describes himself as “one of the few professors from Yale from a working-class background” who “can smell a hypocrite in these matters from a considerable distance. Who are these hypocrites? They are pseudo-Marxists, pseudo-feminists, watery disciples of Foucault and other French theorists”. In *The Western Canon* (recently translated in Romanian, too), Bloom finds it “absurd and regrettable that the current criticism, of Shakespeare (...) has abandoned the quest from his aesthetic supremacy and works at reducing him to the ‘social energies’ of the English Renaissance”.

Ironically enough, dr. Samuel Johnson offers us an excellent diagnosis of this on-going academic war, a diagnosis dated... 1765: “The first care of the builder of a new system is to demolish the fabrics which are standing (...) The opinions prevalent in one age, as truths above the reach of controversy, are confuted and rejected in another, and rise again to reception in remoter times. Thus the human mind is kept in motion without progress”.

As for my opinion, I hope my students will take my advice: read one book of post-structuralist Shakespearean criticism, and you have read them all.

## SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES

(Jacobean Drama)

◆ **Ben Jonson** (1572-1637) was the first and, perhaps, the greatest English literary dictator. A lifetime friend and rival of Shakespeare, Jonson has often been compared (mostly in the negative) with Shakespeare. In 1668, in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesie*, Dryden wrote: "Shakespeare was the Homer or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare".

Jonson was the more learned writer, obsessed by formula and pattern, by rules, by the imitation of the classics. Before becoming an actor and a playwright, Jonson was a bricklayer and a soldier. As a soldier, he fought on the side of William the Silent against the Spanish troops in the Netherlands. In 1598 he was imprisoned for murdering a fellow-actor (Gabriel Spencer) in a duel.

On his release, Jonson was accepted as a collaborator by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, in which Shakespeare was a prominent share-holder. His very debut play,

- *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), with Shakespeare in the cast, was his most successful play. It is a realistic and satirical comedy which offers a vivid picture of his age. It is a return to the common types of characters in Plautus. The original setting of the play was Italy, but it was later changed into London. The Prologue is an attack against the themes and conventions of contemporary drama, against the lack of unity of time, space and action (with obvious hints to Shakespeare's *Henry V*). Captain Bobadil – the *miles gloriosus* type – acts like Falstaff and speaks like Captain Fluellen. The play is written in prose, in John Lyly's fashion. The word "humour" had been employed in the Jonsonian sense by Chapman before Jonson's use of it.

The comedy of humours itself is a heightened variety of the comedy of manners which presents life viewed at a satirical angle. In Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* all characters are conceived in the spirit of humours, so is Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, but never a too important personage.

Jonson's successors degraded "the humour" into oddity of speech and eccentricity in a long series of works including the anonymous *Every*

*Woman in Her Humour*, George Chapman's *A Humorous Day's Mirth*, John Day's *Humour out of Breath*, John Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant* and, finally, Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humour* and *The Magnetic Lady or Humours Resuscitated*.

- *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599) shows Jonson as a conscious theorist fighting the conventions of romantic comedy. His characters are dominated and even obsessed by one particular quirk. Jonson's insistence on the humours contradicted his realistic intentions. His characters are actually caricatures (jealous husbands, hypocritical Puritans, affected courtiers, vainglorious knights). Jonson's comedy thus becomes satire. According to some literary historians, this play was Jonson's first contribution to what Thomas Dekker called the *poetomachia* or war of the theatres. The method of personal attack by actual caricature of a person on the stage is almost as old as drama. Aristophanes lampooned Euripides in *The Acharnians* and Socrates in *The Clouds*. The literary quarrel was started by John Marston who wrote a satire in imitation of the ancient poets; Jonson's epigrams frequently accused Marston of cowardice and plagiarism; Marston satirized Jonson in *Histriomastix*, *Jack Drum's Entertainment* and *What You Will*; Jonson, in turn, attacked him in *Every Man in His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels* (wherein Thomas Lodge and Samuel Daniels are also ridiculed), and *The Poetaster*. Dekker put an end to the quarrel with his victorious *Satiromastix* and Shakespeare himself took part in the war by satirizing Jonson in *Troilus and Cressida* (where Jonson appears in the guise of the stupid and boastful Ajax) and by staging Dekker's plays with his company.

- *Volpone, or the Fox* (1605) is Jonson's greatest comedy, exploiting the theme of *dupers* and *dupes*. The plot derives from Petronius, who had written about the *captatores* (i. e. legacy hunters). The very names of the characters reveal their moral portrait. Mosca proves to be the *superduper*, cheating Volpone in the end. The dupers are punished in the end. Leon Levičchi pointed out that Mosca's comments on gold are reminiscent of Timon's soliloquy.

- *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609) is a gigantic farce of the most ingenious construction, a huge joke. It is the story of an avaricious old man who cannot stand noise and marries a young girl who is supposed to be quiet all day long. She turns out to be an incessant talker and a boy in disguise, a friend of the old man's disinherited nephew.

- *The Alchemist* (1610) borrows ideas and details from Giordano Bruno's *Il Candelaio* and Plautus's *Mostellaria* in a way which made Dryden call Jonson "a learned plagiarist" and imitator. The *dupers and dupes* motif has a new setting this time: London. The duper is a quack alchemist, Subtle;

Face, his provider of gullible clients, is the superduper. Some critics have objected to the fact that the only honest person is discomfited and the greatest scoundrel of all is approved in the end (Face is pardoned by his master). Written in blank verse, with rapid dialogues, it satirizes both alchemy and the Puritans, offering a realistic picture of Jonson's London. Subtle's black magic apparently echoes Prospero's white magic in *The Tempest*.

- *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) is Jonson's most English play in atmosphere. It is inventive, full of life and colour. A happy comparison has been suggested between Ben Jonson and Charles Dickens:

- both were men of the people, lowly born and hardy bred;
- both knew the London of their time;
- both represented it intimately and in elaborate detail;

- both were at heart moralists, seeking the truth by the exaggerated method of humour and caricature.

In the Induction to his play, Jonson again criticizes Shakespeare, this time for the inconsistencies of his romance plays (such as the lapse of twenty years between two acts of *The Winter's Tale*; or the presence of ridiculous monsters, such as Caliban, in *The Tempest*). *Henry VI* is also criticized for its handling of time.

All in all, Jonson was one of the most prolific authors of city comedies, a dramatic species with London as the setting of its plots. Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Thomas Middleton and Philip Massinger also contributed to the flourishing of this particular species which never attracted Shakespeare's attention.

- *Sejanus's Fall* (1603) is Jonson's only remarkable tragedy. Jonson, as a scholar and classical antiquarian, wrote *Sejanus* strictly sticking to its sources: Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion Cassius, Juvenal and other authorities are often quoted line by line or word by word in order to reconstruct historical facts, setting and atmosphere. It is a tragedy of rise and fall, of ambition and power. The atmosphere during Tiberius's reign is that of a police state. Jonson's play precedes Camus's *Caligula* by four centuries and a half. Tiberius's reign is an age in which everyone is spying and informing on everyone else.

- Jonson's other works include:
  - his additions to the original version of *The Spanish Tragedy*;
  - *Eastward Ho*, a collaborative play written with Marston and Chapman (the three authors were imprisoned for openly mocking at Scots!);
  - several masques played at the court. The masques are syncretic shows combining poetry, music, choreography and stage design (the latter produced by the famous royal architect Inigo Jones). Masked actors performed such shows about heroes and heroines of classical mythology.

Jonson's flattering masques were dedicated to the royal couple, Jonson being the favourite court poet. King James was praised as the descendant of Troy and the great pacifier of two hostile kingdoms (England and Scotland), while Queen Anne herself held the leading role in *The Masque of Blackness*. Jonson's indoor performances and the technical opportunities provided by the closed theatre strongly influenced Shakespeare's latest works: masques are spectacular interludes in the plot of *The Tempest*, *Henry VIII*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The influence was, as usual, a mutual one: Shakespeare's witches in *Macbeth* contributed to Jonson's invention of the antimasque, a species featuring non-sublime characters such as witches, gypsies, etc.

• Jonson as a poet wrote epigrams, epistles, odes. His most often mentioned poems are *To Celia*, the egocentric *Ode to Himself* and especially *To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author* (also known as Jonson's Eulogy). Jonson is the father of the *cavalier* (neo-classical) trend of the English poetry opposed to the so-called *metaphysical* or baroque trend best represented by Donne and Marvell.

◆ **Thomas Heywood** (1570-1641) claimed to have written 220 plays out of which only 23 have survived. The small number of extant plays is explained by the fact that Heywood was one of the dramatists who opposed the idea of having their works published and who criticized pirate editions. A published play triggered the readership's lack of interest in a certain performance. Ben Jonson, on the other hand, defended the idea of having his plays published: he was the first dramatic author to have some of his plays collected in a folio edition, in 1616.

Heywood's most important play, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (played in 1603, published in 1607) is considered the best English domestic tragedy of his age.

The Elizabethan domestic tragedy as a distinct species had been established by the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (printed in 1592), often attributed to Kyd, Marlowe and/or Shakespeare. It tells the story of a gentleman murdered by his wife and her lover in 1551. The cool, detached, objective presentation of events allows the spectator to feel no pity for the murdered man.

Another famous play, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, is a 1605 story in which an insane father murders his children and injures his wife, and is finally executed by pressing to death.

The main plot in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is fictional, invented by Heywood himself: it is a story of adultery in which a sinful wife is forgiven by her cuckold husband and dies full of remorse. The title of the play may have been suggested by Petruccio's cue in *The Taming of The*

*Shrew*: “This is a way to kill a wife with kindness”. Punishment through forgiveness is a central theme in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, too. Nicholas, the faithful servant, plays the role that Iago merely assumes. He is the one who reveals his mistress’s infidelity to his master and the one who can never forgive her. The moment when Frankford, the cuckold husband, approaches the marital bed which is being defiled by his wife and his best friend, Wendoll, has been compared by critics with Faustus’s last hour: Frankford knows the irrevocable nature of the division to be made between him and Ann, the fact that their divorce will be eternal. The sub-plot, borrowed from a Bandello novella, contributes to an antithetic structure, presenting a virtuous maid who fights hard to preserve her honour. Her virtue is finally rewarded when her brother’s greatest foe falls in love with her, releases her brother from jail and marries her. This episode anticipates the bourgeois reward of virtue in Richardson’s 18<sup>th</sup> century novel *Pamela*. The subplot is also reminiscent of the medieval morality *Everyman*: the girl’s rejection by her rich kinsmen in times of trouble reminds us of Everyman’s pleas before his death.

◆ **John Webster** (1580-1625) with his two famous tragedies *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) best illustrates the Italianate type of Jacobean tragedy. Both plays have Italian novellas as sources, narrating real historical events. Both are episodic in structure and in both the author exploits with brilliant poetic effect the terror, the grandeur and the pathos of each and every moment.

In Webster’s plays, the theme of revenge undergoes complete changes: the revengers are no longer the heroes but the villains of the story; the sympathy of the audience goes with the victims rather than with the avengers. Nemesis also acts upon the avengers. This means that Webster is less interested in plot and rather concerned with his characters. Webster’s ‘principle of unity’ is the ‘atmosphere’ developing in the course of his tragedies. His characters are complex and the audience is made aware of their depths of consciousness and subconsciousness. The characters are made to reflect upon each other in antonymic pairs or groups.

*The White Devil* presents a world of villains with no moral characters in it. The characters acting as judges and executioners are corrupt and ambitious. Neo-Marxist critics contend that *The White Devil* deals with the demystifying of state power and ideology. It demolishes the myth of courtliness, the myth which disguises the real nature of the court. Vittoria, the “assertive woman” in the play utters this memorable cue:

O happy they that never saw the court  
Nor ever knew great men but by report.

Somewhere else she says:

Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright  
But look'd to near have neither heat nor light.

Flamineo is the dominant true villain who achieves dignity in dying. Brachiano's death closely resembles the final scene in Negruzzi's *Lapusneanu*.

*The Duchess of Malfi* displays the epitome of Jacobean mischievous characters (including Iago, Edmund, Flamineo) in Bosola's character. He is the master of the horror, of psychic torture and ordeal. Ferdinand's "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young" is one of the most often quoted lines in English literature.

F.W. Bateson called it a "single-sentence masterpiece", a "miniature-three-act play". "The face is to be covered in order that it may not be visible now, but before it is covered its dazzling beauty has already been revealed, and it is only after the revelation of her beauty that we discover the young Duchess is dead". Catherine Belsey has compared the Duchess with Lady Macduff in *Macbeth*, both are "loving mothers of families whose innocence and affection constitute evidence for the audience of the wanton tyranny of those who destroy them".

Webster's *characters* have more than ordinary human ambitions and lusts – they are Faustian, killing, betraying, scheming and plotting for very vague reasons.

As for Webster's *style*, Webster is second to Shakespeare only as a dramatic poet. His language shows influences of both Shakespeare's vocabulary (the use of somatic elements, words, comments on themes such as death, gold etc.) and Donne's baroque conceits and unexpected images. Webster's dialogue is loaded with similes, enumerations, apostrophes, antitheses, puns, rhetorical questions and many other figures of speech. Webster is the rare dramatist who is obviously literary without ceasing to be wholly dramatic. The gloomy atmosphere of Webster's plays anticipates that of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Gothic novel.

## EARLY 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POETRY

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the sonnet is still in flourish due to sonneteers such as Michael Drayton. Sir John Davies illustrates the didactic poem with his famous poem *Nosce Teipsum*. In *Orchestra*, another poem by Davies, the dance is the principle of order and pattern in the universe. (Later, Milton will write on divine harmony and the music of the spheres).

The satire resorts to Horace and Juvenal as models. Donne is considered the father of English satire.

The “songs” or mellifluous poems, poems written as lyrics were extremely popular. Thomas Campion, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nashe among others produced such songs. Shakespeare’s plays also contain songs which were in vogue at the time.

The first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is clearly dominated by the poetry of John Donne and Ben Jonson: their followers came to be labelled as metaphysical vs. cavalier poets.

### JOHN DONNE

John Donne (1573-1631) is the poet who challenged and broke the supremacy of the Petrarchan tradition.

Donne is the first important English satirist whose influence was acknowledged by Dryden and Pope decades later. His ancestors included the famous Thomas More (the author of *Utopia*) and John Heywood, the most famous dramatist of Queen Mary’s reign (1553-1558) – hence Donne’s Catholic heritage.

In 1592, after studies completed in Oxford and Cambridge, Donne becomes a lawyer in London. In 1596 he makes his début as a poet with *The Storm* and *The Calm*, two poems written during a military expedition against Spain. Then he becomes the secretary of the Lord Keeper of the great seal and elopes with Anne More, the lord’s niece. Hard times follow as a consequence of his runaway marriage. Persecuted, he has to earn his living by writing epitaphs, eulogies and letters, continuously looking for patrons. In 1615 his

friends finally persuade him to enter the Anglican Church and he becomes famous for his sermons delivered at St. Paul's Cathedral and abroad. His poems are first collected and published in a volume in 1633, two years after his death.

The term "metaphysical" was coined by the Scottish poet Michael Drummond of Hawthornden. It was used pejoratively by Dryden and Samuel Johnson. The latter complained that with Donne, Cowley and the metaphysical poets, 'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together'. Later on, it came to define "subtle means of expression" and "complex cosmic vision". Donne's metaphysical side is best perceived in his sonnets.

Donne's genius is manifest in various poetic patterns.

- His five *satires*, written in deliberately rough couplets, have a colloquial vigour combined with a strain of logical reasoning. They give some vivid glimpses of the London of his age.

- Donne's 20 elegies are poems about love, written in iambic pentameter couplets. Some are cynical, some are simply exercises in wit, while some celebrate a clandestine love with an uncomfortable realism.

The much quoted Elegy XVI humorously comments on the sexual ambiguity of lovers. Elegy XVII celebrates variety in love. Elegy XIX is a clever and lively piece of bawdry, a description of his going to bed with his mistress. Before Donne, in Petrarchan poetry the role of the wooer was defined by convention, but that of the lady had not been developed. It was masculine poetry. The woman's part was seen from outside, as

- the fair warrior who inflicted cruel wounds;
- the saint to be worshipped;
- the divinity to be appeased;
- the relenting mistress to be hymned.

Catherine Belsey, a fervent supporter of feminist studies has pointed out Donne's contribution to the refashioning of the relation between man and wife. Donne shares the opinion that the affective family involves marriage based on romantic love and co-operation, in which the woman is viewed as a partner and companion to her husband, 'not always like in complexion, nor like in years, nor like in fortunes, nor like in birth, but like in mind, like in disposition, like in the love of God, and of one another'.

- Donne's Songs and Sonnets are by far his most interesting works. David Daiches has pointed out that the opening of these poems captures the reader's attention, often in the form of a question. Donne's characteristic method is first the shock, then the ingenuous development of the thought. These poems display the perfect union of passion and logical thinking. The complex development of thought, which is twisted this way and that way, serves to embody rather than to cool the passion.

*A Valediction:of Weeping* combines protective tenderness with intellectual cunning:

O more than moon  
Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere;  
Weep me not dead in thine arms, but forbear  
To teach the sea what it may do too soon.

Donne's conceit turns astronomy and geophysics into pure poetry. Geometry also provides him with another famous conceit in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*:

Such wilt thou to be me who must  
Like the other foot, obliquely run;  
The firmness makes my circle just  
And makes me end where I begun.

In *Extasie*,

All day the same our postures were,  
And we said nothing all the day...

the lovers, simply by the incredible claim they make of one day's total immobility, invite us to contrast it with what must have preceded it as well as with what is to come next.

The surprising juxtapositions in *The Flea*, one of Donne's most popular poems, were a faithful reflection of a society in which the traditional hierarchies of church and state were in fact in dissolution and in which people were not afraid to believe in the ultimate beneficence of a reversal of values.

Religious tensions are conspicuous in *The Progress of the Soul*, a poem of 52 stanzas, each of ten lines. It is a symbolical history of heresy, in which metempsychosis allows the soul of the apple in Eden to get reincarnated in Mahomet, Calvin and, among others, Queen Elizabeth. The poem shows clear Catholic sympathies.

Donne's *Divine Poems* were written mostly in the last phase of his life, after his wife's death. The poet searches the right relation with eternity. The question as to which is the true Church is still present.

The 19 *Holy Sonnets* show the mixture of hope and anguish that characterizes the religious man searching for the right relationship with God, aware both of his own unworthiness and of God's infinite greatness.

H. J. Grierson has characterized Donne's "wit" as a corrective to the lazy thinking of the Elizabethan sonneteers, to their fashioning and refashioning of the same outworn conceits. Donne's form is the expression of an unique and intense individuality, a complex, imaginative temperament, a swift and subtle intellect, a mind stored with theology, science and jurisprudence.

## ANDREW MARVELL

Marvell (1621-1678) belongs to a different generation. He is actually the last metaphysical poet. He was a Puritan oscillating between Cromwell and the Stuarts. He wrote in couplets only. Marvell succeeded in combining true metaphysical wit with perfect classical grace to a greater degree than any other poet of the century. He wrote in the early 1650s. His poems were published posthumously, in 1681, and the volume appealed to a taste that was already out of fashion. We shall briefly discuss some of his best poems:

*Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, his first poem, has an ambivalent tone, praising the victor and the defeated alike. Marvell emphasizes King Charles' dignity on the scaffold.

*Bermudas* describes the experience of Puritan friends exiled.

*On a Drop of Dew* begins with the most accurate description of a dew drop on a rose and turns this picture into a symbol of the soul's relation to earth and to Heaven.

*The Garden* has often been compared with Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. It was first composed in Latin and then rendered into English. It is a poem full of imaginative intensity. In Marvell's view, Fair Quiet and Innocence are to be found among the birds and the flowers.

*To His Coy Mistress* is a masterpiece of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English poetry. It is a poem of emotion, imagination and subjectivity. The poem is a proposition suggesting sexual intercourse. The suggestion is not coarse, but sophisticated and even philosophical. It is supported by allusions to Greek mythology (Chronos), and the Bible (Noah's Flood, the conversion of the Jews, which is to happen just before the end of the world, and Joshua's order that the sun should stand still – Zeus, in Greek mythology, also bids the sun to stand still in order to lengthen his night of love with Alcmene).

The poem is metaphysical in its use of shocking, bizarre images, in mingling love and religion.

*Carpe diem* was a common theme with Marvell's contemporaries. Sensuality is a way of spitting in the face of his grand tormentor and foe, Time. A love poem on the surface, it is also a *poem about time*. "Devouring Time" can be conquered by the intensity of present passion:

Let us roll all our strength and all  
Our sweetness up into one ball

is the image of the sphere, the archetype of primal wholeness and fulfillment. Love transcends the inexorable laws of nature, the laws of decay, death and physical extinction. Once the coy lady's virginity is torn away, the lovers will have passed "through the iron gates of life". The birth canal of life and procreation is preferable to the empty vault and to the "deserts of vast eternity".

## JOHN MILTON

Milton (1608-1674) was given a Christian humanist education from the start; at St. Paul's school he studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew between 1615 and 1625. Here he was taught to apply the classical rhetoric to the analysis of Latin and Greek prose and verse.

In 1625 he moved to Cambridge, to study at Christ's College. In his essays he attacked the scholastic philosophy and the barren disputes to which it gave rise. He also wrote an oratorical essay in Latin on the music of the spheres, influenced by Plato and Pythagoras. Other major influences include Bacon's philosophy and the English translation of *La Semaine* by Guillaume du Bartas (and epic dealing with the Genesis).

He began his poetic career with verse paraphrases of Psalms and Ovidian Latin elegies. His first original poem written in English was *Ode on the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough*. The infant was his little niece; the poem was a mere literary exercise.

In 1628 Milton composed a number of Petrarchan sonnets dedicated to a foreign lady named Emilia. 1629 is the date of his first really important English poem, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. It has a remarkably pictorial quality, a combination of brilliant colouring and mingling of realistic and symbolic details comparable with a 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian painting of the Nativity.

The most important poems of Milton's early phase are *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. *L' Allegro* describes a day in the life of a cheerful man; mythological and pastoral images build up a mood of contented living; it is full of light and movement. The dawn is announced by the skylark's song. It is a world of plowmen, milkmaids, mowers, shepherds, agricultural labourers.

*Il Penseroso* deals with a different mood, the mood of contemplation and grave intellectual activity, describing a gloomy room, the midnight lamp of a lonely student in the tower etc. (This intellectual atmosphere has its Romanian counterpart in Eminescu's *Scrisoarea I*.)

Both *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are written in the octosyllabic couplets which were first used in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.

After the years spent in Cambridge, Milton settled down at Horton, near Windsor.

In 1634 Milton wrote *Comus*, a masque staged at the court. It is an aristocratic entertainment composed in the Elizabethan tradition, with detectable echoes from *The Faerie Queene*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, from Jonson, Fletcher etc. At last, the evil is defeated by the good. The dialogue is often accelerated by the use of *stichomythia*.

*Lycidas* is an elegy dedicated to a priest drowned in the Irish Sea, one of Milton's former fellow-students at Cambridge. Edward King is turned into the symbol of the young man of promise in any context. Milton's reference to Orpheus's death is meant to emphasize that only the good die young.

In 1638 Milton started on his 15 month travel to Europe. His travel to Italy is considered to be one of the great *Wanderjahre* of literary history, a moment of contact between cultures comparable with the Italian journeys of Erasmus and Goethe.

In 1642 Milton got married only to be left by his wife three weeks later; she came back to her husband in 1645, to put her royalist family under his protection. Between 1642 and 1652 Milton wrote mainly pamphlets, treatises and essays. His own experience made him write some essays defending the idea of divorce.

In 1652, a crucial year in his biography, Milton completely lost his sight while working as Latin secretary to the parliamentary committee for foreign affairs. His successor in office was Andrew Marvell. During the next ten years Milton produced no important literary piece of work except his memorable *Sonnet 23* (1658) dedicated to his dead second wife, "Methought I saw my late espoused saint".

Milton's blind years were to be the years of his greatest literary achievements.

- *Paradise Lost*, designed between 1663 and 1665, was written (i. e. dictated!) soon after the Great Plague had forced him to leave London. It was first conceived as a drama, then as an epic; it had four successive drafts, the last of which was titled *Adam Unparadized*. The poem was published in 1667.

*Paradise Lost* is a poetic rendering of the story of the Fall in such a way as to illuminate some of the central paradoxes of the human situation and to illustrate the tragic ambiguity of man as a moral being.

The plot develops on four great theatres of action: Heaven, Eden, Hell, and Our familiar world.

Milton uses the blank verse and the verse paragraph. The cosmic scenery of the epic and the world of ordinary men in their day-to-day activities are linked by means of epic similes.

*Paradise Lost* shows Milton as a Christian Humanist using all the sources of the European literary tradition that had come down to him – biblical, classical, medieval, Renaissance. Imagery from classical fable, medieval romance, allusions to myths, legends, stories of all kinds, geographical imagery deriving from Milton’s own fascination with the books of travel, biblical history and doctrine, Jewish and Christian learning make up this great synthesis of Western culture. Milton’s synthesis is more successful than Spenser’s because he places his different kinds of knowledge in a logical hierarchy, and never mingles, as Spenser often does, classical myth and biblical story on equal terms. (The description of Eden in Book IV is a fine example of Milton’s use of pagan classical imagery for a clearly defined Christian purpose.)

Milton describes ideal nature, which is neither purely decorative, nor solidly grounded in reality.

Book I shows us the fallen angels in Hell beginning to recover from their defeat. Satan’s speeches are magnificent and they prove that Milton had grown suspicious of rhetoric as the art of persuasion. These speeches represent the attractiveness of plausible evil.

As William Blake shrewdly said, ‘Milton was of the devil’s party without knowing it’.

In Book II Satan displays traces of true heroism, and yet a self frustrating spite is his dominant emotion. His most impressive heroic terms are just meaningless language.

Book III is the least effective part of the poem because of God’s continuous need of logically justifying the necessity of punishment, and hence the episode of the temptation. The *a priori* idea of justice to be done, of a scapegoat, is inconsistent.

Book IV presents Satan’s arrival in Eden.

In Book V Milton emphasizes the beauty of prelapsarian simplicity, he is fascinated by innocent nakedness, especially Eve’s. He opposes this attitude to perpetual celibacy and the courtly love tradition. With Milton, the conventional notions of heroism turn out to be diabolical, while conventional attitudes to sex are Puritan. The Garden of Eden is opposed to the Garden of the Rose tradition.

Book V and VI present Raphael’s account of the war in Heaven.

Book VII presents Raphael’s account of the creation (with imagery borrowed from *Genesis*, the *Psalms*, *Book of Job*, Plato).

In Book VIII Adam tells Raphael of his own experience after his creation.

In Book IX Milton lingers on the final moment before the temptation scene. Eve is fooled by the cunning serpent whose effort is compared to the speech “of some orator renowned/ In Athens or free

Rome". Eve's sin is disobedience, but also credulity, a paradox reminding us of Othello's trusting Iago.

The heroes' fall is followed by shame, guilt, disillusion, bitterness and, finally, prayer and repentance.

Book X shows Michael narrating the future history of the world to Adam. Among others things, Cain's murder is mentioned. Adam and Eve leave their former Paradise with quiet confidence, to face a world of work and endeavour, mutual help. The newly established procession of the seasons and the idea of labour give meaning and dignity to human life.

Anthony Burgess contends that Milton created a highly artificial language and blank verse. His sentences are long, like Latin sentences; he inverts the order of words, like a Latin author, and he talks about 'elephants endorsed with towers' instead of 'elephants with towers on their back'. However, the subject of the poem obviously justifies such a poetic diction.

- *Paradise Regained* (1671), a poem in four books, presents the temptation of Christ in the wilderness.

In Book I Satan first appears in the likeness of an "aged man in rural weeds". Unlike Eve, Jesus has the advantage of knowing who Satan is. Satan resorts to rhetoric, to oratory, while Christ's language is quiet, precise.

Book II deals with temptation through luxury, riches and sensuality.

Book III presents temptation through fame, glory and power.

In Book IV Satan evokes the civilization of Greece and Rome. Jesus rejects public life. Private life is identified with virtue.

The poem is dramatic rather than epic. Its psychological conflict is reminiscent of the "psychomachia" tradition (see the morality plays, Marlowe's *Faustus* etc.).

- *Samson Agonistes* (1671) dramatizes a biblical episode taking Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound* and *Oedipus at Colonus* as models. Dialogues, monologues, comments by the chorus, the final reported account of the hero's death in pulling down the temple, all those details make up a dramatic poem. The blind Milton has been identified with the blind Samson. Milton again attacks the courtly love tradition, according to which the man was regarded as "love's prisoner".

Despite the voices of several famous detractors, such as Voltaire or dr. Samuel Johnson, Milton's work stands as one of the ever greatest achievements of English poetry.

## JOHN BUNYAN

A baptist preacher of low descent, scarcely educated and yet most gifted in creative genius, John Bunyan (1628-1688) is considered to be the 17<sup>th</sup> century Milton of English prose. Written in two parts, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (I – 1677-78; II —1684) deals with the archetypal theme of man's life as a journey “from this World to that which is to come”.

It is a simple story, very traditional in its use of allegory and personification, suggesting morality plays like *Everyman* in its delineation of life as a pilgrimage to the next world. It is the story of Christian travelling to the Eternal City, having been warned that the town in which he and his family live – the City of Destruction – is to be destroyed by fire. His family will not go with him, so he goes alone. His story takes up the first part of the book. The second part tells of the journey of Christiana – his wife – and their children to the same celestial destination.

Unlike Spenser, who in *The Faerie Queene* had dealt mainly with abstract virtues and qualities, Bunyan drew personal portraits and gave concrete presentations of vices and virtues. In this respect, he comes closer to Chaucer's mingling of realism and allegory. Bunyan's characters are not shadowy abstractions moving about in a mystical world far away from us, but real men and women; his abstractions are said to be clothed in flesh and blood. On his way to Heaven, Christian is accompanied by two virtuous fellows, Faithful and Hopeful. The road is full of obstacles such as Vanity Fair (which was to become the title of Thackeray's best novel); it is populated by characters such as Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Love-lust, Live-loose, High-mind, Cruelty, Enmity, Blind-man, Liar, Hate-light, etc.

Bunyan had a natural story-telling gift, and despite the purely Christian and Puritan nature of the allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be read for the sake of its narrative skill, its humour, its intensity of observation and description: its religious moral can pass over the reader's head. Bunyan's work is the most perfect and complex of fairy-tales addressed both to children and adults. As for Bunyan's style, he is considered to be the most readable English prose writer due to his simple and fluent language.

## JOHN DRYDEN

After Ben Jonson and William Davenant, Dryden (1631-1700) is the third poet laureate of English letters. He was a prose writer, essayist, theorist, translator, dramatist and poet. Although the least original of all great English poets, Dryden became an influential model for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, being much praised by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

- Dryden the Theorist is mostly remembered for his *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668). It is written in the form of a debate on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays. Dryden's own views are expressed via Neander's cues, Neander being one of the three characters participating in the debate.

In Dryden's opinion, a play is "a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours and the changes of fortunes to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind". Dryden defends the English plays against the French ones: liveliness is better than cold formality; he praises the "variety and copiousness" of the English plays as opposed to the "barrenness of the French plots" and defends "variety, if well ordered".

- Dryden the Dramatist is the author of about 30 plays. As a playwright, he was deeply influenced by the French theatre, by Corneille, Racine and, especially, Hardy.

He wrote his early comedies in prose mingled with rare instances of blank verse. Later on he started writing tragicomedies in heroic couplets, a prosodic pattern previously employed by William Davenant and George Etherege. This did not prove to be a very happy idea, because it tended to operate against rather than in favour of theatrical illusion, shutting up the sense within fixed limits, imparting to dialogue a didactic rather than dramatic colouring. It ended up in conventionalism and artificiality.

Dryden then started writing his so-called *heroic plays*. Their plot has an exotic setting and they are written in heroic couplets because

they follow and imitate Ariosto's heroic romance with its supermen and superwomen. They are characterized by an exaggerated fancy in the realm of certain emotions and an exuberant use of language, a lack of any notion of verisimilitude. They are brilliant baroque artefacts, today regarded as a fact of literary history. Their characters are placed in almost impossible situations, amid incidents which are as extravagant as their emotions. The heroic play is designed to celebrate heroic virtues such as valour and love; all these conventions and the monotonous use of rhyme result in what we call *rant*.

Dryden's lack of originality made him borrow subjects from Madeleine de Scudéry (famous for her *Le Grand Cyrus*) and her brother Georges. *Aureng Zebe*; *The Conquest of Granada*, *The Indian Queen*, *The Indian Emperor or The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards* best illustrate Dryden's ludicrous heroic tragedies. The epilogue to *The Conquest of Granada* declares Dryden superior to all his predecessors in wit and power of diction.

Dryden was bitterly attacked and mocked in Buckingham's famous burlesque *The Rehearsal* (1670).

Dryden also refashioned and rewrote Shakespeare's plays *The Tempest* (with Davenant), *Troilus and Cressida* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Dryden's version of the latter is titled *All for Love*. The theme of Shakespeare's play is narrowed down to and concentrated on the conflict between love and honour, thus simplifying the heroes' psychology. Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida* is subtitled *Truth Found Too Late*. Cressida remains faithful to Troilus and she prefers rather to commit suicide than to betray her love. The didactic tone of the play is enhanced by Dryden's royalist sympathies and Ulysses closes the play with a less than subtle advice:

"Let subjects learn obedience to their kings".

Dryden as a dramatist is mostly remembered for his *Marriage à la Mode*, a comedy of manners modeled on the Spanish comedies of intrigue, combining Jonsonian humours, wit and immorality. It presents the implications of the Restoration attitude to sex, marriage, honour, virtue and society in a situation in which A's wife is B's mistress and B's fiancée is A's mistress.

Dryden's work as a dramatist purified and clarified his own style by teaching him precision in the use of words. In and by drama he learnt the art of political oratory and debate, and later he was to make superb use of the heroic couplet in his satirical poems.

• Dryden the Poet was appointed poet laureate (in succession to Davenant) in 1668; he was also appointed historiographer royal after he

had published *Annus Mirabilis* (1667). It is the account of the “wonderful year” which came to know a four day naval battle with the Dutch and the Great Fire of London. It is made up of 304 quatrains in alternate rhymes. The mood of the poem is patriotic and encomiastic.

In 1679 Dryden was brutally assaulted by the Earl of Rochester’s hirelings for supposedly being involved in the composition of an anti-Rochester pamphlet.

In 1681 Dryden wrote his best work, *Absalom and Achitophel*. It is a satire mixing serious intent with pleasant manner, in the vein of Lucian’s *Dialogues* or Erasmus’s *Encomium Moriae*. The political satire is veiled under the transparent guise of one of the most familiar episodes of the Old Testament, namely Absalom’s rebellion against David at Achitophel’s urge. In Dryden’s satire Absalom points to Monmouth, the king’s natural son; David stands for Charles II and Achitophel is Shaftesbury, Monmouth’s supporter and adviser. The satirical narrative is not complete; the poem was to lead up to the trial and conviction of the rebel. Dryden’s enemies (Buckingham among others) are ridiculed with sarcasm.

*The Medal* (1682), written at the king’s suggestion, was another attack directed against Shaftesbury’s hypocrisy.

*Mac Flecknoe*, written in the same year, is a short satirical poem against Thomas Shadwell, Shaftesbury’s literary supporter. It is a purely personal satire in motive and design, anticipating Pope’s personal attacks in *The Dunciad*. One of history’s many ironies is that in 1688, on their accession to the throne of England, King William and Queen Mary appointed Shadwell poet laureate long before Dryden’s death.

*Religio Laici* (1683) is a poem summing up Dryden’s views, who wanted to know where in the matter of religion he stood. In 1686 he became a Roman Catholic.

*The Hind and the Panther* is Dryden’s longest production in verse. It is a fable. Allegorical only in its *mise en scène* and distribution of characters (cast), it lacks verisimilitude, with the animals indulging in theological controversy and Biblical criticism.

- Dryden the Translator was a hard-working man who had to earn his living by translating classical poets. No longer a favourite court-poet, Dryden published the complete translation of Persius and Juvenal as well as Vergil’s *Georgics* and *Aeneis*. The Trojan hero on the title-page of the latter volume resembled King William’s face with his hooked nose, in an attempt to placate the king. Dryden also translated Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and fragments from Homer’s *Iliad* (without Chapman’s excellence).

A critic of imitators and plagiarists (see his opinion on Jonson), Dryden could not go beyond the limits of being an imitator himself.

## RESTORATION DRAMA

- *General Background*

After the flourishing Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, the decadent Caroline drama (produced during the reign of Charles I) was finally brought to a halt on September 2, 1642, when a Puritan ordinance commanded the closing down of theatres and the total suppression of stage plays. During the civil war, performances could still be seen secretly outside London or in the households of noblemen. Naturally, all the players were royalists. Immediately after the restoration of the Stuarts two companies of players were set up as the King's players and the duke of York's players, under the directorship of William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew.

Davenant, Shakespeare's godson, had been one of the most important Caroline playwrights. Davenant became the new poet laureate. His dramatic works include *The Wits* (a flamboyant comedy of manners), *The Tempest* (an adaptation of Shakespeare's text, with Dryden as a co-author) and *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656). The latter is particularly important in the history of English drama because it was the first dramatic performance to use scenery and to bring actresses onto the stage, thus breaking with the Elizabethan tradition of the empty stage and female roles being acted by disguised boys.

Michael Dobson ironically comments on Davenant's successful career: "Davenant, who as a poet laureate immediately before the Interregnum had been employed to produce court entertainments designed, in essence, to convince Charles I that the English Revolution would not take place, now found himself, immediately after the Interregnum, employing the same scenic and theatrical techniques to convince both Charles II and his theatre-going subjects that the English Revolution had indeed not taken place". Davenant's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* transforms Macbeth into an unsympathetic Cromwell.

The repertoire of the first year of the Restoration, however, included masterpieces of the earlier drama such as *Othello*, *Henry IV*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Epicoene* and *Bartholomew Fair*.

The return from the French exile (of the king, the court and several men of letters) meant bringing home a strong French influence. The Restoration comedians all borrowed from Molière at large, but no one ever succeeded in surpassing his genius. Molière is actually said to be the most plundered foreign author in the history of English literature! Plagiarism was a common way of producing play after play and it was only in 1710, during Queen Anne's reign that the first law defending the notions of authorship and copyright was issued.

Besides the French influences, the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century ideas of the English theatrical tradition are shaped by the three Folio collections of pre-Civil War drama, containing the works of Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, and Beaumont and Fletcher.

Ninety per cent of Restoration drama is comedy. It was generally characterized by sparkling wit, immoral and often obscene dialogue, artificial language and new types of characters such as the gallant, the coxcomb, the beau, the wit, the gull – all superficial, lacking the psychological depth of their Elizabethan forerunners.

The audience no longer represents a cross-section of the population, it is made up merely of aristocratic spectators; the texts are no longer addressed to both the monarch and the common people.

◆ **George Etherege** belonged to Rochester's select and dissolute circle. He married a fortune and, apparently, for no better reason, was knighted. He is the author of three plays which established his fame as a leading comedian of the age.

*The Comical Revenge*, his first play, is a tragicomedy that mingles rhyming couplets and prose.

*She Would if She Could* is an amoral, cynical and ironic comedy in prose. Lady Cockwood is a hypocritical country wife who wants to cuckold her husband. She is courted and finally cheated by Courtall and Freeman. Old women's affairs are mercilessly ridiculed.

*The Man of Mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* is Etherege's best play. It ridicules the preciousness of Francomaniacs.

The author's life was a tragicomedy itself. Etherege died by falling down the stairs in a drunken fit in Paris in 1690. His merits reside in the fact that after learning Molière's art, he returned to England with a new idea of what comedy ought to be and founded English comedy as it was successively understood by Congreve, Goldsmith and Sheridan. The customary occupation of his male characters is the pursuit of pleasure with-

out dignity and without reflexion. In a way, they are a mirror of himself. His women are fashionable, extravagant, as witty as the men and bold in their intrigues and amours; there is no maiden's blush among them.

◆ **Sir Charles Sedley** was the closest immediate follower of George Etherege. His most important comedy, *The Mulberry Garden*, is based on Molière's *L' Ecole des Maris*.

◆ **Aphra Behn** was a spy, possibly a traveller and female libertine as well as a writer. Daughter of a barber, she married a Dutch merchant. A widow since the age of 26, she had to earn her living by writing novels (such as *Oroonoko*, which makes her a forerunner of Defoe) and plays. As a dramatist, she "borrowed" a lot from Killigrew, Richard Brome, Thomas Middleton, Philip Massinger and both Etherege and Sedley. Charles II's government sent her to Antwerp as Agent 160. At the king's court Behn was known as "Astrea". She knew the libertine Rochester well enough to lament his death. Her sensational life has been dealt with by several gender biographers (Virginia Woolf and Maureen Duffy among others). In spite of some progress in the study of the archives, the person behind known events remains enigmatic.

◆ **William Wycherley**, the author of four comedies, and an aristocrat educated in France and at Oxford is nowadays considered to be second only to Congreve among Restoration comedians.

*The Country Wife* ridicules both jealousy and excessive faith. Horner's name is full of sexual allusions and it is a pun on "honour" in a world of vice and hypocrisy.

*The Plain Dealer*, Wycherley's last comedy is partly based on Molière's *Le Misanthrope*. Manly, the main character, is brutally honest with everybody around him. The wickedness and hypocrisy of the age has turned him blind to the real qualities of men and women. The play seems unpleasantly true-to-life. It mercilessly exposes the vice, social chicanery and hypocrisy of the age. Despite its success, Etherege stood as the standard to be followed.

◆ **John Vanbrugh** was a dramatist and architect of Flemish origin. His best-known play, *The Relapse or Virtue in Danger*, is a farce in which Lord Foppington is the true fop of the period, full of eccentricities. Sir John Brute in *The Provok'd Wife* is Vanbrugh's masterpiece, a caricature and yet so true-to-life. This boorish type of character was later revived by Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* as Sir Pitt Crawley.

◆ **William Congreve**, the greatest of all Restoration dramatists, has often been labelled as a spoilt child of life and literature. Born in 1670, Congreve completed his studies in Ireland, where his father commanded a garrison. Congreve met Swift in the Kilkenny school. He graduated Trinity

College in Dublin and became a lawyer at the age of 21. Congreve belongs to the second generation of Restoration dramatists and he appeared on the English stage at the right moment, during a period of decline of the previous generation. His debut was acclaimed by Dryden.

His first play, *The Old Bachelor* still shows the influence of Ben Jonson's comedy of humours.

Congreve's next play, *The Double Dealer*, classical in construction, is still conventional. Maskwell is the familiar villain of melodrama, anticipating Fielding's Blifil. His soliloquys let the audience know that he is a villain. The fact that all the characters are duped to the end is the proof of extreme irony reminiscent of Sophocles.

*Love for Love*, considered by some critics Congreve's best play, echoes Shakespearean situations. It ends with the lovers' triumph.

*The Mourning Bride*, Congreve's only tragedy, presents a Spanish plot treated in the Elizabethan tradition. It is written in blank verse. Obsolete as it seems today, it comprises some of the most frequently quoted English lines, such as

“Music hath charms to soothe a savage beast”

or

“Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned  
Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned”.

Although a failure on the stage, *The Way of the World* (1700) is the best Restoration dramatic text. Memorable characters are the aging Lady Wishfort, the most desperate of all characters, a lady fighting and unequal battle with time; and Millamant and Mirabell, whose warfare of their wits and hearts is the essence of the play. Millamant only appears in act II, scene 2, until then the audience only knows about her from Mirabell's words. Her appearance has been compared with Dalila's in *Samson Agonistes*: both heroines are compared with a ship in full sail (in English “ship” is a feminine noun). She is nonchalant, a three-dimension audible and visible character, consistent with herself: she loves but she will not submit. In act IV, the lovers discuss the terms of their future marriage; they want to have their own way, not the way of the world in concluding their social contract. For all its malice, all its irony, all its merriment, the play is as austere as a tragedy. Congreve carried to

its highest perfection what is known as the artificial comedy or comedy of manners. He regarded himself as the legitimate heir of Terence and Menander, and he claimed to paint the world in which he lived. Shakespeare, Jonson and Etherege were his acknowledged masters. The life he painted was not the life of common day. He lived in a world of cynicism and merriment.

Congreve had a natural love and respect for the English language; he was a master of the language of his day, and in point and concision, his style is still unmatched. He never uses a superfluous word or epithet. The rhythm and cadence of his speech appeals always to the ear rather than to the eye.

From the age of 29 to his death (at the age of 58), Congreve held various public offices, being popular and loved among men of letters. Swift, Richard Steele, Dryden, Voltaire were among his close friends. He died rich, leaving 10,000 pounds to the duchess of Marlborough.

◆ **George Farquhar**, the last important representative of Restoration drama, an author of Irish origin, carried Restoration comedy a step further towards realism. Indebted to Thomas Heywood in his treatment of countryside and to Molière in character delineation, Farquhar bridges the gap between the comedy of manners and the 18<sup>th</sup> century English novel, upon whose beginnings he had a profound influence.

*The Recruiting Officer* takes its plot from a broader world, not just that of the town gallants. Farquhar's soldiers are no longer embodiments of the *miles gloriosus* type.

*The Beaux' Stratagem* depicts the life of taverns and the highway. The atmosphere of boisterous merriment does not betray the fact that Farquhar wrote the play shortly before his death (at the age of 30).

## THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POETRY

Literary historians usually divide the span of the 18<sup>th</sup> century into three major periods:

1) the early 18<sup>th</sup> century or the age of Swift and Pope, lasting from 1700, the year of Dryden's death, to 1744-1745, the years when Pope and Swift died. This period was characterized by neo-classical attitudes in poetry and prose, represented by aristocratic courtliness, restraint and dignity, urbanity, conversational ease, gentility, symmetry, artifice, a taste for general effects, critical spirit and rationalism;

2) the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century or the age of Samuel Johnson, lasting from 1744-1745 to 1789, the year of the French Revolution. It was characterized by both a survival of classicism and a romantic revolt against old traditions;

3) the late 18<sup>th</sup> century or the beginnings of romanticism, between 1789 and 1800, characterized by an accentuation of sentimental and melodramatic elements.

More recent approaches no longer tackle the 18<sup>th</sup> century poetry as two distinct, separate trends, opposing neoclassical rationalism to preromantic sentimentalism. There is also a tendency of reassessing the classical poets' indebtedness to ancient models. It is true, indeed, that their works abound in references to Homer and Horace; the latter was the most fashionable, most translated and re-translated ancient author of the Augustan age.

The Augustan neo-classicists were adepts of the principle according to which Art mirrors Nature, hence Nature must be followed and imitated in their works. The meaning of Nature differs from one author to another, but it is generally interpreted as the Universe governed by laws, wherein the microcosm of this mechanical order is represented by man. Therefore, imitating Nature means revealing the eternal truth residing in various individual manifestations of man. It also implies a constant quest for harmony in life and art.

Longinus, the famous author of *On the Sublime*, was frequently referred to as well: he influenced Pope, according to whom order must be accompanied by creative genius.

◆ **Alexander Pope** (1688-1744), the most important English neoclassicist poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century started his literary career by imitating Chaucer and the ancients.

In his didactic poem *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) he defined the doctrine of neoclassicism.

The poem is not important for its originality; every thought in it is a commonplace. It summarizes the literary doctrines accepted by the best, the most cultivated minds of the age. It is, thus, less worth reading for its general ideas than for its illustrations of them. Pope tells us that to read poetry for the sound not for the sense is like going to church not for the doctrine but for the music; that Nature is the best guide of the judgement; that the poet must be skillful in his choice of words:

‘Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,  
The sound must seem an echo to the sense (...)  
When Ajax strives, some rock’s vast weight to throw,  
The line too labours, and the words move slow’.

*An Essay on Man* (1733-1734) summarizes philosophical speculations of the age. It expresses the rationalistic and deistic trends of an age in which man was placed in the centre of the Universe. Pope’s famous line “The proper study of mankind is man” sums up this view.

The structure of the poem presents a picture of man in relation to his universe, to the God created chain of being, ‘a mighty maze! but not without a plan’.

The poem is made up of four epistles. Epistle I praises Reason as the particular attribute that separates Man from other animals, and the faculty by which he can understand his true position in Nature.

Epistle II is concerned with Man’s abilities, weaknesses, emotions and his nature. Man is depicted as involved in a moral conflict between Reason and Passion.

Epistle III presents Man integrated in the chain that binds all things to one another in an interdependent society.

In Epistle IV, having considered Man in relation to (I) the Universe, (II) his individuality and (III) society, the poet turns to a study of Man in terms of happiness. His conclusion is that virtue alone can lead to happiness.

George S. Fraser has pointed out that *An Essay on Man* is a theodicy, a work that takes it for granted that there is a God, at once powerful and benevolent. (A parallel might be drawn, in this respect, between Pope’s poem and Dryden’s *Religio Laici*).

Pope also distinguished himself as a capable translator of Homer’s epics and as a less competent editor of Shakespeare’s work. When Lewis

Theobald promptly attacked him in his *Shakespeare Restored*, Pope's reply was *The Dunciad*, a satire on literary hacks which established Pope as one of the most venomously witty writers in literature.

Today, Pope is mostly remembered for his mock-heroic poem *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). It brings into focus a grotesque incident: it tells the story of Lord Petre, who stole away a lock from the hair of the beautiful Arabella Fermor. The poem combines the features of satire with those of parody.

The aim of a satire is to ridicule and to criticize contemptible persons or facts. Satire is made up of two elements: wit or humour and object of attack. Parody may be defined as a clash between form and content. The very title of the poem establishes the opposition between the trivial subject-matter and the elevated language, the "high" style to be employed. It mimics and parodies the title of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*. According to Linda Hutcheon, only parodies of what is either highly regarded or highly popular can ever work. Parody as a mixture of "reverence and irreverence" depends on recognition and repetition of approved cultural definitions and traditions introduced into a new context.

Pope parodies the works of great poets such as Homer, Vergil, Milton and Dryden. The use of the heroic couplet emphasizes the majestic tone superimposed on the trivial topic. Juxtaposing the conventional with the colloquial is the main stylistic device in any parody. A trivial social quarrel becomes a second Trojan War. The poem takes the form of a point-by-point miniature version of the *Iliad*. In Pope, Belinda's description, with the "heroine" sitting in front of her dressing-table mirror parodies the scenes in which Homer's heroes arm themselves for battle. Lord Petre prays to Love, builds an altar of French novels, lights it with torches made of love-letters, and sacrifices upon it the souvenirs of previous love-affairs. The feasting and ritual libations made to the gods in Homer reappear in *The Rape of the Lock* as ritual chocolate-and coffee-drinking. Pope's "Amazons" fight with their peculiar weapons, their fans, silk dresses and corset-whalebones. A fashionable drawing-room is turned into a battlefield. The language of the poem recalls the epic models continuously, but scriptural allusions also occur now and then (Belinda is compared to creative divinity during her game of cards: 'Let spades be trumps!') Besides the comic effects derived from parody, the value of Pope's poem resides in its satirical genius. *The Rape of the Lock* is ultimately a social satire, it discloses the falsehood of social conventions and exposes the false values of an age in which female beauty is used as a weapon, while reputation is a fortress worth defending. The poem reconstructs the world of fashion in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the ladies' sophisticated fashion, the walks along the banks of the Thames, the atmosphere of the coffee-houses, the favourite sources of entertainment.

A fervent supporter of the neo-classic principles defined by Boileau (clarity, order, reason, wit and balance), Pope endeavoured to attain perfection throughout his life.

◆ The Scottish poet **James Thomson** (1700-1748), author of the famous ode “Rule, Britannia”, announces a major change in English poetry. His most popular poetic work, *The Seasons*, preludes the romantic movement. In achieving impressive descriptive passages, Thomson relies on his senses in perceiving the beauty of the surrounding universe. Influenced by Spenser, he wrote *The Castle of Indolence* in Spenserian stanza.

◆ **Thomas Gray** (1716-1771) actually inaugurates a new lyrical trend. As one of the most learned men of his day he was appointed professor of modern history at Cambridge. His work, though classical in form, foreshadows the romantic movement. He was a meticulous craftsman and left a few poems, mostly odes, and the famous “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751).

The idea of Time inevitably passing and of the transience of life is not Gray’s invention. Shakespeare’s Hamlet and Melancholy Jaques have already tackled the image of man facing his cruel fate, his inescapable end. Gray leaves no room for grandiloquence; his words are musical, his syntax often most unusual. He has the same classical concern with perfection of form as Pope. The line ‘The ploughman homeward plods his weary way’ is said to have caused Gray hours of trouble in polishing it. He carefully avoids a melodramatic tone. Gray’s poem inaugurated a long series of “graveyard” poems in the European literature. Gray’s repetitive “No more” became “Nevermore” in Poe’s famous “The Raven”. Detectable echoes can still be traced in present-day English poems such as Charles Tomlinson’s *The Churchyard Wall*.

◆ **Edward Young** (1683-1765) is famous for his long didactic poem *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742-1745), generally known as *Night Thoughts*. It was inspired by the death of his wife. Written in blank verse, it is made up of 10, 000 lines that build up an atmosphere of profound sadness. This somber and melancholy poem made him a leading figure in the so-called “graveyard school” of English poets and exerted a serious influence on the more morbid aspects of Romanticism. The dramatic scenery of Young’s poems (the pervading darkness enveloping the moors, the leafy bushes, the shadows of the night sliding among the rocks and cliffs) precedes the romantic treatment of landscape. The 18<sup>th</sup> century descriptive poetry seems to have evolved from Milton’s *Il Penseroso*, as Louis Cazamian points out.

Young’s poems present the poet’s sensibility as it is, thus denying rationality, objectivity, order; they are written on impulse and reveal the

poet's inner life, his subjective thoughts and feelings. Still, Young does not innovate the form of his poems, too: he closely sticks to the strict rules of composition established by his classical predecessors. His novelty resides in intensity of feeling; his cosmic vision echoes Milton's epic.

◆ **William Collins** (1721-1759) achieved a remarkable synthesis between traditional and original elements. Like Gray and Young, Collins remained faithful to neo-classical patterns, writing eclogues and Pindaric odes. And yet, the range of themes in his poems (the medieval past, the popular superstitions, the supernatural, the exotic scenery) anticipates the world and sensibility of the romantic poets. His poems mingle neo-classical vocabulary with a modern subtlety of feeling.

◆ **Thomas Chatterton** (1752-1770) produced poems in a pseudo-medieval style that were supposedly written in the 15<sup>th</sup> century; their would-be author was the imaginary monk Thomas Rowley. Thomas Gray soon exposed this hoax. Chatterton committed suicide before he was 18 of age and he became a hero to the later generation of Romantic poets. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats in England, Alfred de Vigny in France regarded the defeated poet as an idealist at odds with the society of his age.

◆ The Scottish poet **James Macpherson** (1736-1796) gained much attention due to his alleged translations of ancient Gaelic epic poems. The success of his first volume, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands* (1760), encouraged him to publish two further volumes, containing the epic poems in prose – *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763), ascribed to Ossian, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century legendary Gaelic bard. Although exposed as a hoax, these works stimulated the imaginations of two generations of romantic writers throughout Europe. The mystery of a remote world, the atmosphere of misty shores and windy forests and stormy nights exerted a major influence not on literature alone, but on painting as well.

◆ **CONCLUSIONS:**

1) The shift from rationalism to sentimentalism, from neo-classicism to pre-romanticism and Romanticism is not an abrupt but a gradual process. The specific elements of both trends did coexist for a while in the works of major 18<sup>th</sup> century poets.

2) The 18<sup>th</sup> century pre-romantic poets established poetic patterns to be later followed not only by the English Romantic poets, but by the entire Europe.

3) Certain dominant features of the romantic attitude can be already traced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century poetry:

- the rediscovery and exploration of historical past;
- the return to mythology and folklore;
- the attraction exerted by exotic, richly coloured worlds;
- love of the wild and picturesque nature.

## THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAMA

The flourishing of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century coincides with a serious decline of interest in drama. The 18<sup>th</sup> century drama produces mostly plays of a very low quality, consisting mainly of simple melodramatic comedies and empty farces. Despite the obvious decline of original theatrical works, which, naturally, led to the rediscovery of Shakespeare's great tragedies and romantic comedies, a few 18<sup>th</sup> century dramatists still concern literary historians and the general public due to their contribution to the evolution of this literary genre.

- ◆ The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is dominated by the satirical verve of John Gay and Henry Fielding.

- John Gay's *The What D'ye Call It* (1715) is one of the last attacks launched against the heroic tragedy.

*The Beggar's Opera* (1728) is still included in the 20<sup>th</sup> century repertoire. It was conceived both as

- a parody of the Italian *opera seria*, borrowing popular songs and ballads,
- and as a social satire: the underworld in the play mirrors the entire society headed by the wicked prime-minister Robert Walpole.

This so-called "Newgate pastoral" draws an obvious parallel between the manners and mores of the robbers and those of the politicians, they are all a water, indulging in the same habits, i. e. theft, prostitution, begging, etc.

Two hundred years later, in 1928, Bertolt Brecht adapted Gay's text to the German political context of the day in his *Dreigroschenopera*.

- Although considered one of the greatest English novelists of all times, Fielding actually wrote more plays than novels. He used the stage in order to launch his bitter attacks against the political class. He adapted some of Molière's comedies, wrote farces and burlesque plays. *The Tragedy of Tragedies or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (written in 1730, revised in 1731) is an exuberant burlesque in blank verse, a parody full of literary allusions. In *The Grub Street Opera* (1731) Fielding openly attacked the royal family and his *Historical Register for*

*the Year 1736* (1737) led to the issue of the “Licensing Act”, a law stipulating the censorship of dramatic texts. This law led to Fielding’s conversion to novel-writing and to the tremendous development of the English novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- **George Lillo** continues the long-established tradition of the English domestic tragedy (inaugurated by the anonymous *Arden of Feversham* and Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness*) in *The London Merchant or the History of George Barnwell*. It is the story of an apprentice who murders his master, a rich merchant. Millwood, the wicked, cunning prostitute who has seduced him and urged him to commit the murder inaugurates the series of *femmes fatales* on the English stage. The criminals are sentenced to death; Barnwell repents, but the accused woman turns into the accuser of the social system in which she lives: it is poverty that has ultimately compelled her to become both a criminal and a victim at the same time.

Lillo’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Pericles* entitled *Marina* concentrates on presenting its heroine’s adventures; a newspaper advertisement describes it as ‘a remarkable instance of the triumphs and rewards of perseverance in virtue’. Adapted to the tastes and concerns of the middle classes, this play becomes a recognizable precursor of Samuel Richardson’s novels: the successful resistance to an aristocratic seducer who in the end offers marriage, and the imprisonment of a virtuous woman in a brothel, anticipates major plot motifs of *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, respectively.

- ◆ The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English drama is clearly dominated by two dramatists of Irish origin: Goldsmith and Sheridan. Their closest predecessors were Farquhar and Richard Steele (the latter was Joseph Addison’s famous co-editor of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* as well as a reputed author of sentimental, decent comedies opposed to the immoral, obscene texts of the Restoration comedy). The Irish vein of English comedy will later culminate in the works of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw.

- **Oliver Goldsmith** was a many-sided talent. Although he wrote most of his works under pressure, in perpetual need of money, Goldsmith brought major contributions to several literary genres, being, in this respect, the opposite of Dryden.

Goldsmith’s essays, published as *Chinese Letters*, were later collected in a volume entitled *The Citizen of the World* (1762). The “myth of the foreigner”, a device previously employed by Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels* and Montesquieu in *Lettrés persannes*, is just a pretext for satirizing the English manners of his age. His humour and criticism have often been compared with Voltaire’s.

As a poet, Goldsmith is mostly remembered for *The Deserted Village* (1770), a melancholy poem dedicated to rural England. It is a protest against the effects of the industrial revolution and the policy of enclosures.

Goldsmith is also remembered as the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, one of the most important 18<sup>th</sup> century English novels. It is a first person narrative, a domestic novel combining sentimentalism and realism. The novel displays a mixture of optimism and faith in man's intrinsic goodness on the one hand and humour, irony, sarcasm on the other hand. Primrose, the vicar is a gentle, kind-hearted, naive, idealistic day-dreamer; he is a so-called Quixotic character, resembling Fielding's Parson Adams (*Joseph Andrews*), Sterne's Uncle Toby (*Tristram Shandy*) and Dickens's Mr. Pickwick (*The Pickwick Papers*).

Goldsmith's most important play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), is an extremely complex comedy based on *qui pro quo* and *imbroglio*, but dealing with serious social aspects. It is an obvious attack against the sentimental literature and against the French "comédie larmoyante" of the age. The timid lover cured of his shyness by a "stooping" girl disguised as a maid takes us back to Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. The wit of the dialogue reminds us of Congreve, but, all in all, Goldsmith is an honest moralist and the play is one of the evergreens of the English comedy of manners.

• RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN (1751-1816), like Congreve, enjoyed rapid success and then gave up writing quite early. At the age of 25 he became manager of the Drury Lane Theatre as successor of the famous actor David Garrick. At 28 he stopped writing for the stage when he entered the Parliament. He became famous for his speeches delivered against Warren Hastings, the British governor of India. He had unusual personal charm and all kinds of people found his company delightful. (Byron was greatly impressed by Sheridan). Speaking of Sheridan, Samuel Johnson pointed out that "he who has written the two best comedies of his age is surely a considerable man".

If we look back fifty years from the time when Sheridan wrote his comedies and forward a century or more after it, we find no other comedies of the same value, except those of Goldsmith.

Three separate elements can be traced more or less distinctly in Sheridan's plays:

1) the first belongs to the artificial comedy or the comedy of manners as it was written by the Restoration dramatists. It works in a deliberately restricted field, confining itself to a small section of society and leaving out of account the general business of life. Within these limits, it can observe acutely. It is fond of wit, but makes no attempt to

explore the wide range of emotions or to see human nature in its wholeness. It can be true and brilliant and at its best is an admirable form of dramatic art, hence the frequent comparison with Congreve;

2) the second is derived from the sentimental comedy brought into favour by Richard Steele. It is good-humoured rather than witty and genial rather than penetrating; it appeals to the emotions rather than to the intellect. On the whole, this is artistically the weakest of the three ingredients;

3) the basic element of all comedy is the keen perception of the ludicrous and of the surprising contrasts in people's characters, as well as of the unexpected circumstances in which they reveal their various frailties and follies; hence, a strong light is thrown upon the condition of human life, so that laughter may be accompanied by understanding and sympathy.

◆ *The Rivals* combines biographical elements with various elements borrowed from Goldsmith, Fielding, and the Elizabethans. Lydia Languish illustrates the cheap romantic attitudes and the affected jargons. Bob Acres, the country squire, swears all the time, being extremely inventive as regards his language. Mrs. Malaprop is reminiscent of Molière's "précieuses ridicules". Her name is derived from the French mal-à-propos, but the word "malapropism" was, in turn, derived from the name of Sheridan's character. Mrs. Malaprop has a long series of comic forerunners in the same vein: Shakespeare's Bottom the Weaver (in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Dogberry (in *Much Ado about Nothing*) and Mrs. Quickly (in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), as well as Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop in *Joseph Andrews*. A similar comic character (Coana Chirița) will later appear in Vasile Alecsandri's comedies.

◆ *The School for Scandal* has its plot built on the contrast between the character of two brothers: the honest Charles Surface vs. the hypocritical Joseph Surface. Benjamin Backbite and Lady Sneerwell impersonate, as their names suggest, calumny and gossip. William Hazlitt wrote about *The School for Scandal* that "it professes a faith in the natural goodness as well as habitual depravity of human nature".

◆ *The Duenna*, a comic opera that surpassed the popularity of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* at the time, is considered a minor play today.

## THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL (1)

◆ *Fiction* represents things that did not occur. Literature deals with human experience as a possibility. According to a 20<sup>th</sup> century definition, fiction is “a work of the imagination often associated with prose narrative” (Rathbun, Cotraü).

Fiction is non-real, non-objective, and still we read a book for its truth, thus establishing a relation between life and fiction. A book is meaningful if it proposes a riddle to the reader. The truth of literature is a kind of potentiality. As readers, we fight our disbelief, we suspend our disbelief but not our critical judgement.

A book is meaningful if it provides, as in a laboratory, a sequence of reality. Fiction derives from life; fiction and life are in a mutual relation, being permanently linked and blended. Reality is infinite. Art is finite. Art means communication with the use of a specific code, be it either the language of colours or the language of shapes, of music, etc.

◆ The *novel* stands closest to life, to reality, because it diverges least from the general code which is everyday speech.

One should not expect solutions to his own life from a novel. It does not offer solutions, but it raises the question of empathy (identifying one's feelings or actions with those of a literary character).

Any work of art must be placed within the context which generated it in order to judge its effect. Writers attempt to translate ideas, symbols, images, memories into words. The material of fiction is speech.

Fiction and life are brought together by means of language. Language places the novel in the realm of linguistics. The novel is a *linguistic* item. A character in a book is made of words on paper. This view is upheld by David Lodge in *The Language of Fiction*.

But is the novel only linguistic? The novel deals with a certain level of human life, too. As a European phenomenon, it was born in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dealing with the life of the city-dweller, the middle-class man, the bourgeois. It pictured life as lived by the individual in society.

The novel of urban experience in a modern, industrialized society deals with man in the industrial world, a man who is alienated from the product of his work, from men and from himself.

A novel deals with alienation and integration as opposed tendencies in human experience. The problem of the individual is to transcend alienation and to seek integration. Integration is achieved by obeying moral rules. By disobeying norms, you start a conflict and attempt to destroy order.

Hence, the novel is no longer merely linguistic; it also belongs to the sphere of *ethics*. The morals of an age become palpable, real in terms of manners, of behavioural rules. The morals and the manners make up the content and form of society, providing content and form to the novel.

But the novel deals not only with human relations viewed institutionally; it also deals with the inner life of characters – hence, its *psychological* dimension.

Fiction and reality are to a certain extent interchangeable. Both in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the readers were women. Women were deprived of opportunities in actual life; slaves to a code of morality, they were considered just good for perpetuating the human species. Therefore, women found in fiction a surrogate of experience, they learned to live and experience indirectly what was denied to them. Thus, the novel had a therapeutic value, it was both a chief form of entertainment and a means of escaping into a denied reality. The 20<sup>th</sup> century “Sandra Brown” type of novels has obviously preserved this therapeutic value.

Umberto Eco, in chapter 6 of *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, warns us about the dangerous effects brought about by the interchangeability of reality and fiction. (One of the disastrous consequences of reading fiction as historical truth was the Holocaust).

The advantage of a novel over life is that in fiction you can know someone else’s mind and feelings. A novel shortens the way to essence. It may be defined as an experience of a possible life which lasts for a time, in which certain events and characters become detachable, to live with us.

Any truth possesses a meaning underlying it. Life is either meaningful (providing a coherent pattern for human understanding) or meaningless (appearing as chaos).

Truth and meaning are two distinct entities. Truth is more definite. Meaning is a segment of truth, a direction along which you might reach truth, a tool used in exploring truth.

In fiction, we can hope to reach truth for a moment. History is difficult to be lived and to be conceived as history at the same time. History is a matter of perspective, selection and interpretation. Thus, fiction is a reading of human experience, not human experience as such. Fiction has a patterning of experience by selection, by leaving out. Truth becomes possible by reducing reality to a proposition. Truth is relative, it is a matter of opinion and debates among people. Truth is valid for a limited period, for a given historical moment; then it becomes a starting point for further development. Such is the case of the perpetual conflict between the older and the younger generations, whereby an old truth is denied, rejected, refuted, and a new one is established. From the early decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, the novel is the literary form closest to life, acting as a moral guide for more than 150 years.

### **THE NOVEL AS A COMPLEX GENRE**

In *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye defines four major genres. The elementary genre (epic, lyric, dramatic) is established by a single dominant feature. The complex genre cannot be described just by one single feature.

The novel is a bundle of complex and various features. The generic approach of the ancient world preserved the purity of genres and the distinction among genres especially due to Aristotle. The novel is the most impure genre, accomodating any technique and every kind of experience.

The concept of genre implies a certain set of expectations to be satisfied by the writer. To read generically means to read with expectations partly confirmed and partly contradicted. The writer as a creator cannot ignore what others did before him. There is a tradition he has to take into account. He has to stay within a tradition and to depart from tradition, to discover previously unexploited elements, in order not to be a mere epigone. And he is generically conditioned as well.

According to Frye, in the modern world, in the urban middle-class society, the place of the hero, the leader, God and demi-god is taken up by the ordinary type who is not superior to ourselves. The novel dwells

in the realm of average human possibilities; there are in it no exceptional powers and passions, nothing depends on the character, he is not that high, he is just a humble man, not a tragic hero. The kind of human reality reflected by the novel is no longer the exceptional hero, but society at large and man in society.

According to Robert Scholes, the 18<sup>th</sup> century English writers can be placed on a genre diagram as follows:

- satire + picaresque = Swift;
- picaresque + comic = Smollett;
- closer to history, but comic = Fielding;
- sentimentalizing history = Boswell;
- sentiment + tragedy = Richardson;
- tragedy + romance = Scott.

There are writers who cannot be placed easily. Sterne and Jane Austen are not placed on the diagram; as for Fielding's works, they were characterized as follows:

- *Jonathan Wild the Great* = satire + picaresque;
- *Joseph Andrews* = picaresque + comic;
- *Amelia* = history + sentiment;
- *Tom Jones* = comic + history.

In ancient and medieval times there was no blend between satire (defined by Frye as low mimetic mode) and romance (high mimetic mode). During the Renaissance a certain attempt of blending them resulted in the form of the novel (as written by Greene, Nashe, Lodge). The result was an imperfect balance between the components. The same lack of balance is visible in Swift's satire. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century sentiment and comic were integrated in the works of Jane Austen. A possible definition of realism could be the perfect integration between laughter and tears, sentiment and comic, heart and reason.

A. Kettle traces two distinct lines of development followed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century novel:

1) The first line continued the medieval allegorical tradition of fables, sermons and exempla. It was followed by writers concerned with the *pattern* of the novel, because it could illustrate a moral truth with the help of parodic, fantastic or ironic elements. According to Kettle, this line included novels like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Fielding's *Jonathan Wild the Great*.

2) The second line, represented by the picaresque novel, was developed by writers like Defoe and Smollett, who were interested neither in pattern nor in morality. Their major concern was to render the life of the characters in a most realistic way.

According to Roman Jakobson, the former type of fiction was evidently *metaphoric* in character, one topic leading to another through similarity, while the latter type of fiction was dominantly *metonymic*, connecting actions contiguous in time and space.

In opposition to these two tendencies, a third direction appeared; it was characterized by anti-romantic and anti-picaresque or anti-sentimental and anti-realistic features. It included the satirical novel, the Quixotic novel and the anti-novel.

A more didactic taxonomy of the eighteenth century fiction consists of the following types of novel:

- 1) the picaresque novel;
- 2) the novel of adventures;
- 3) the novel of travels;
- 4) the epistolary novel;
- 5) the Gothic novel;
- 6) the satirical novel;
- 7) the Quixotic novel;
- 8) the anti-novel.

Two major features provide the prevailing pattern of British and American fiction: empiricism and Puritanism.

The empirical side consists in the people being deeply rooted in reality, with no speculations beyond the coat of things.

The Puritanical side preaches a religion of individualism, according to which man must be responsible towards his own conscience and a good member of the community.

## THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL (2)

◆ Any novel is made up of two types of texts:

1) *the paratext*, i. e. the titles, subtitles, prefaces, letters to the reader, foot-notes, or any other part of the novel that is exterior to it and usually comments upon it;

2) *the literary text* that imparts information about the world of the narrated events.

The title orients the interest of the reader, pointing to

- a) the name of the main hero or heroine;
- b) a certain qualification of the hero (*The Vicar of Wakefield*);
- c) the type of narrative;
- d) the parodic intentions of the text.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century titles are sometimes enormous, aiming at

- a) summarizing the content of the novel;
- b) characterizing the action or the main hero;
- c) underlining the moral, social, historical and/or philosophical importance of the novel.

The preface was used by the author to reflect upon his own literary discourse, upon its aim and organization. Being in fact a *discourse of discovery*, it can be compared to the scientific discourse. It may have several functions:

- a) the *informative* function, whereby the author comments on the motivations of his enterprise, the character of the plot or personages;
- b) the *literary* function, whereby the author creates a frame of verisimilitude to a story that is too fantastic to be taken as true;
- c) the *theorizing* function, whereby the author explains the narrative techniques he develops or the new literary genres he creates;
- d) the *advertizing* function, whereby the author stirs the curiosity of the reader.

The functions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century subtitles will be discussed later, in connection with Henry Fielding's theoretical preoccupations.

◆ The *text* of the novel is a temporal art form: it is experienced as a process over hours of reading. The duty of the literary critic is to replace

its temporal essence by a spacial apprehension. The architectonic dimension of the novel is its *plot*. To say that the plot of a novel is the story of the respective novel is in fact a misleading interpretation.

The *story* consists of the sequence of events ordered according to their temporal succession; the story is the mere chronological string of events addressed to man's curiosity, to the reader's "and then, what next?" It serves the artist as a pre-text for the plot-construction.

The *plot* of the novel, as defined by the Russian formalists in the 1920s, represents the story liberated from temporal contiguity. The events are redistributed in a different order, usually the one convenient to the narrator who can begin with the end of the story and then proceed with the beginning.

According to E. M. Forster, the *plot* is not concerned just with curiosity, but with intelligence, too. It is built on the reader's inferential capacity to draw conclusions out of premises, to recognize causes for effects, to remember and to forecast. The plot has a *content* and the content is the change on a cause-effect axis. The plot also has a shape, since the change assumes a certain orientation, which is the artistic form of the plot.

There is a great difference between plot *content* and plot *form*. Ronald S. Crane, the author of a famous essay, *The Plot of Tom Jones* defines the plot as a peculiar temporal synthesis among a) *action*, b) *character* and c) *thought*. According to Crane, you cannot disengage and oppose character and plot, as Forster did. A plot is meaningless without an agent. A character is not relevant unless something occurs to him. A plot should take the character in action. Thought is also important. The plot is a matter of combining these three elements. The synthesis is achieved in terms of time, time is ever present.

Gerald Prince discusses time in relation with the rhythm of narration. He distinguishes five categories of *narrative speed*:

1)– if a particular event that took place in time is not mentioned in the narrative, we have an *ellipsis*;

2)– if some part of the narrative corresponds to no progress in narrated time, we speak of pause or *digression*;

3)– if there is an equivalence between the narrative and the represented event, we speak of a *scene*: this is the usual method of relating the events exactly as they took place;

4)– the many cases situated between ellipsis and scene fall under the heading *summary*;

5)– those situated between scene and pause fall under the heading *stretch*.

Back to Crane's synthesis, each of the three components can prevail in turn:

1) In a plot in which *action* prevails, a sudden fundamental reversal may occur. The character may be humbled into a lower position or may be raised to a higher position in society: a change in the fate of the protagonist characterizes the action.

2) The character may prevail with his moral dimension, his nature and being, his moral growth or degradation. In this case, both action and thought are made to converge to the general effect in the novel.

3) The characters live in the realm of ideas (thought), they are ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of ideas. The major change occurs in attitude, belief, opinion; in this case, the novel deals with a clash of opinions or sudden revelations of truth.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century novel is more concerned with types of characters. Symmetry and polarity are fundamental elements in the plot.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century novel there is no satisfactory plot structure. It does not end traditionally, in death or marriage. It simply ends openly. Still, mention must be done of the revival of the picaresque manner, based on movement, action, something that becomes relevant.

The character as a whole has also disappeared in the modern novel. The 20<sup>th</sup> century novel is concerned with consciousness rather than personality. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the character was a matter of personality, a solid entity with a full name, feelings and intellectual powers. The 20<sup>th</sup> century character is reduced to no name, initial name or impossible name.

◆ The *character* is not a mere functional device, it tends to grow beyond the boundary of the structure as an autonomous entity. The character

- is made up of words meant for private reading;
- comes to life in our mind and not on the page;
- becomes detachable from the novel.

A character may become our confessor or our alter-ego, our outer projection. The character made of words has to transcend his or her verbal state and become a reality inside our mind. Objective factors operating during a reading are the reader's *a*) state of mind, *b*) state of health, *c*) being attentive or not. The objective factors are completed with our subjective emotions. The reader's response is not simply the reader's own response, because it is the author who tends to model his response.

The character in a novel is concerned with the human forces acting in a human context. People act in relation with one another, there is a social web of relationships. Interpersonal relationships allow us to assess each speaker, and testify to what extent his/her vision of reality is distorted.

Apart from the human social context of a character, there is an inner dimension, i. e. the character's inner life. In real life we cannot know, we can only infer, deduce what people think; in a novel, the inner world of ideas is revealed to us in a way not possible in everyday life.

By gaining access to a character's inner life, we get access to psychic processes not subjected to physical laws. The psychic time brings in the concept of consciousness which treats time in a particular way, i. e.

- there is no past, present and future;
- the present envelopes everything and life is nothing but a shifting present, a prison of the immediate present tense.

The past becomes recorded memory, a memory actualized in the present.

The future appears as an exploration, a projection made by using our own experience and present data.

The question of time in a novel is quite intricate, implying

a) the time an author needed to complete his work, i. e. the auctorial time;

b) the time required by a book to be read, i. e. the reading time;

c) the plot in a book takes place within a certain temporal framework, i. e. the time of the plot. The plot may develop throughout several generations, a year or a month (Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* expands the plot to several generations; Joyce's *Ulysses* to 24 hours). Time is contracted in Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, where the passing of 20 years is presented in a few lines; it is dilated in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, where two chapters describe a single footstep on a stairway;

d) apart from the time of the plot, the inner time of the character is actualized by the technique of the *flash-back*, by which time is suspended and the past is reinacted.

Not all characters are important. Being a slice of life, the novel should have a center, a structure, an axis, a focus. The focus, in general, is the protagonist. The protagonist is the one who engages our sympathy and interest, who arouses our expectations.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century protagonist is the average man. The 20<sup>th</sup> century protagonist is an exceptional hero approaching the condition of the tragic hero.

The realistic novel is overcrowded with characters. As the novel becomes more and more subjective, self-centered, the crowd of characters tends to be overlooked. They become objects for caricature, laughter, their status as human beings is very low. According to E. M. Forster, characters may be either

a) *flat* (they stand for a certain type, for one feature); or  
b) *round* (they are in a permanent state of becoming, of evolution);  
c) there is also a type of characters performing the function of intermediaries, witnesses, reflectors. They express in an oblique fashion opinions about the other characters (such is the case of witness-characters in Thomas Mann's *Faustus* and Ioan Slavici's *Budulea*).

◆ The literary text of a novel contains two types of discourses:

1) the *auctorial* discourse, very similar in structure and functions to the paratext, as it represents the first person discourse of the author who comments directly addressing to the reader;

2) the *narratorial* discourse, i. e. the impersonal, objective discourse of the narrator that makes the story advance, a discourse written either in the first or the third person singular.

The *auctorial discourse* represents the conscious voice of the author, deliberately interfering with the story in order to comment. The tradition of the auctorial discourse, developed by Fielding in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was continued in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by novelists like Thackeray and Trollope, rejected as too simple and conventional by J. Joyce and V. Woolf and revised by John Barth and other postmodernist writers.

The *narratorial discourse* contains the discourse of the *narrator* and the discourse of the *characters*.

The problem of the narrator takes us to the realm of *narrative technique*, which is the main means of achieving a novel. The novel is a *narrative genre*; a genre that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was derived from a *convention of orality* that implied the presence of a story-teller. *Technique*, on the other hand, is a means of achieving a story as an art form, a mode of presentation.

## THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL (3)

◆ The narrative perspective may be wide or narrow. Perspective has been described as point of view: the point from which the narrator views the story.

In answering the question “Who is the narrator?” we should distinguish two types of novels:

- 1) the novels with a narrator (in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century);
- 2) the novels without a narrator (in the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

In the case of a specified narrator, there are novels in which

- a) the narrator is the author himself (as in Fielding’s *Tom Jones*);
- b) the narrator is a character (as in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*).

The novel without a narrator renders events through a character’s mind, in the form of the interior monologue; it employs the so-called stream of consciousness technique. In this respect, Laurence Sterne precedes the works of 20<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Joyce, V. Woolf or Proust.

- There are two possibilities in the case of author-narrator:

(i) *editorial omniscience*

(ii) *partial omniscience*.

According to Wayne C. Booth, omniscience is a convention granted by the reader to the author, an unsigned contract. The author has acknowledged priorities, he is the creator and we must believe what he says. The author’s omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience are godlike attributes to be observed by the reader.

“To edit” means to prepare a manuscript for print, but in the case of *editorial omniscience* it means to provide all the necessary information and to comment in order to enlighten the reader. It means full control of the story and it gives a clear moral orientation: the novel is, thus, perceived almost as a dogma. The novelist requires you to trust him, he sermonizes, teaches, guides and interprets what he creates for your benefit: he is always right, while the reader is in a humble position.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century audience asked for such a guidance; in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, literature became a new religion and the writers were eager to

step into the priests' shoes. Literature fulfilled an educational need, shaping public opinion.

Nowadays such commentaries are viewed as intrusions. The *intrusive* narrator's comments are rejected by the 20<sup>th</sup> century readership.

*Partial* omniscience, on the other hand, means that the author does not openly comment on the events, thoughts and deeds of characters etc., but expounds his opinions indirectly.

- The character-narrator participates in the story he is recounting. His discourse is a first person narrative, it is subjective, rhetorical and limited. He may be:

- (i) "I" as witness – only partially involved, but freer than the protagonist. He is not totally subjective, he moves about, shifting his perspective permanently;

- (ii) "I" as protagonist – the prisoner of his subjectivity. Such a narrator is in the center of the story, tied to it; he provides a static, limited point of view.

- ◆ A narrator develops an attitude towards what he says. The perspective he chooses allows the reader to have reality filtered through the narrator's vision.

The author who declares himself the creator resorts to the third person narrative.

The character narrator becomes a deputy conveying the story in  
- the first person – as the protagonist;  
- the third person – as a witness.

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth claims that a story told in the third person is better than that in the first person, that *showing* is better than *telling*. Percy Lubbock was the first theorist to distinguish *pictorial*, descriptive narration from *dramatic*, scenic narration: "in one case the reader faces towards the story-teller and listens to him, in the other he turns towards the story and watches it".

*Dramatic* narration or *showing* aims at greater objectivity. It is the dramatic presentation of encountering characters. The outcome of this device is the strict observation of the amount of time necessary to enact the dialogue. There is no way of distance from what is said and done. Book III, chapter 8 of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild the Great* is entirely conceived as a dialogue between Jonathan and his wife, Laetitia.

*Showing* is non-economical: the reader is plunged in a situation in which he has no orientation, he has to work through the text to understand what is going on.

*Telling* implies a narrator's voice, paraphrase and summary, distortion and selection, an alternation of summary and scene.

A novel made up of summary, scene and author's voice results in a neutral omniscient point of view.

Direct presentation, i. e. *showing* is more effective than *telling*, although it implies a waste of time. The general opinion held by the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers is that the story should be presented in the third person, without any subjective colouring. They mostly reject the auctorial commentary.

◆ In Booth's opinion, the problem of the *reliable* vs. *unreliable* narrator is more important than the very identity of the narrator. Trusting a narrator is the ultimate criterion for establishing the effect of a fiction.

Reliability is obtained by developing a sense of judgement for what and how the author says; the tone used by the author betrays him to the reader: he may sound ironical, serious, heretical, etc.

Booth also coins the term *implied author*, defining the projection of the writers' ego. The author is the one who really projects his vision, he is responsible for what his characters say and do. For each work, there is a presence, an entity indistinguishable from the world of the work as such: the implied author who might differ from the author as a person in actual life. He has a tone, an attitude gradually established in the work, gradually modifying the response of the audience, the reader's attitude. For Booth, the author is there in the work whether the work is dramatically shown or traditionally told.

◆ The reader does respond to what he reads. He is more or less exposed to the work of art, affected by it, and he might be a different person after closing a book. He is not the reader of just one book and in the long run he has learnt to adjust himself to books; he has his own preferences and biases but he must go on reading. The reader undergoes a process of adjustment. He must compose an identity in order to meet the world, he must assume a mask through which to contemplate and confront the world.

The *implied reader* must cooperate with the author. The author offers to guide the reader through the labyrinth of the plot by giving him all the necessary details and explanations. In turn, the reader is supposed

- 1) to read with care and attention;
- 2) to use his faculties of judgement and criticism;
- 3) to activate his imagination in order to complete the gaps existing between the different passages of the book. The ideal reader must fill in the *disnarrated* sequences.

According to Umberto Eco (in *Six Walks in the Narrative Woods*), the ideal or implied reader of a literary text is a projection of the text itself; the ideal reader is not a human being in flesh and blood, but a textual strategy which has to be identified by the real readers. The *real*

*reader* is minutely portrayed by Fielding in *Tom Jones*: he is curious (II,9), sagacious (III,1), judicious (III,1), virtuous (III,4), worthy (III,7) and compassionate (VII,15).

The ideal situation would be to have the implied author, the protagonist and the implied reader superimposed. This is what the author aims at. He writes in order to communicate and clarify his vision, trying to convey his message to an audience.

Booth asks himself: to what extent should this message be clear?

The 20<sup>th</sup> century fiction poses the question of ambiguity. In the case of works which shock and bewilder us we

- either recognize value, because they leave us in a state of perplexity and this perplexity is a kind of pleasure that we have learnt to develop;

- or we consider that the author has mismanaged his means and he should be held responsible for his blurring of the focus; that he has not clarified his vision, which is a partial failure.

### THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MIND. THE SATIRE. THE APOLOGUE

◆ The 17<sup>th</sup> century, dominated both by theology and science, allowed reason (i. e. human capacity) to emerge as a real genuine and inspiring force (as in the “metaphysical” poetry).

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is no longer subject either to authority and dogma or to scientific inquiry. Man is perceived as an active factor in the historical development. The human mind is now answering to the questions raised by experience. It believes in historical betterment. God becomes an abstraction, a lay picture of the world is now dominant. The doubts expressed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century mind are shaped into essays.

The political picture of the 18<sup>th</sup> century shows the collapse of absolutist governments and the rise of the bourgeoisie in politics. The industrial revolution and the use of force make people lose their confidence in man’s capacity to rely solely on reason.

After the neo-classic predominance of authors such as Pope, Swift, Defoe and Fielding, the age of sentimentalism follows (illustrated by Sterne, Richardson, the Gothic novelists and the preromantic poets Thomson, Collins, Cowper). Reason alone is no longer enough, feeling becomes highly significant for man’s unity. The 18<sup>th</sup> century is both *rationalistic* and *sentimental*, being characterized by (a) feeling for nature and (b) the reorientation of man’s values towards sentiments and passions. The 18<sup>th</sup> century is also the century of common-sense: it relies on wisdom derived from practical activities.

The *novel* becomes the genre of represented action, a fiction in which characters are presented in unstable, complex relationships. These relationships grow more complex, proliferate, develop; they involve us in the action, make us care for the fate of the characters, make us take interest in the character as such.

Action is modified through transformations: tensions are released and conflicts are resolved and, thus, stable relationships are established among characters.

◆ In this respect, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is *not* a novel. We do not read it for the sake of any character, but for what it is telling us about the world around itself. It portrays no development of character. It develops no unstable relationships towards stable relationships.

Gulliver, the main hero of Swift's masterpiece is in a stable situation, he has no doubts, he does not undergo any transformation as a result of what he experiences. He is never consistent with himself.

A narrative the aim of which is to ridicule is a *satire*. Its targets may be

- an individual's behaviour;
- a group of individuals (or a widespread vice);
- a human institution (a systems of norms, rules etc.)

The satire deals with external objects or facts; it cannot ridicule a state of mind, a feeling, but something obvious, palpable, such as behaviour and acts. Hence, the aim of the satire is to reform.

The satirist has to exaggerate, to distort, to reduce to the absurd his demonstrations for proving in an irrefutable manner what he wants. The satire is *referential*.

The characters are ridiculed with a purpose, not for their own sake.

*Gulliver's Travels* is made up of four books. A balance is established between

- books 1 and 2 (meanness vs. broad-mindedness);
- books 3 and 4 (narrow-mindedness of scientists vs. common sense and wisdom).

Books 1 and 3 as well as books 2 and 4 invite to comparison. Thus, structurally speaking, there is a well-planned balance. Gulliver as a character is a good average man, but he is inconsistent. Consistency operates as a main criterion for a good novel.

In Book 1, he refuses to enslave the population of Blefuscu on account of any people's being entitled to enjoy freedom. In Book 2, the same Gulliver suggests that the king should use the gunpowder for destructive purposes, and such a proposal contradicts his previous actions.

Book 1 aims at satirizing Britain as a great power able to suppress other peoples.

Book 2 presents the whole of civilized Europe, and the progress of civilization.

Book 3 is made up of several incidents, lacking unity of action. The targets of the author's attacks are the debating societies and the Royal Society. The 18<sup>th</sup> century science had no immediate practical aims, consisting of speculation for the sake of general abstract truth. In Swift's opinion, science should yield practical results and cease parasitically drawing on society.

Book 4 is best achieved with its prevailing common sense. The contrast between horses and men is a way of presenting human condition.

Although basically a satire, *Gulliver's Travels* may also be read as a memoir-novel, a novel of adventures or a novel of travels. Swift is the first English writer to use "the myth of the foreigner" (later employed by Goldsmith, too, in his *Chinese Letters*). Postmodern approaches discuss this device referring it to the motif of the stranger and the exploration of otherness. Political allegory, the inverted proportions (viewing the action of Book 1 as if through a pair of inverted field-glasses) and humour are Swift's main tenets in describing the England of his time from a would-be unbiased standpoint. Owing to their diminutive scale, the pomp at the Court of the Emperor, the civil feuds, the war with the neighbours across the channel are made to look ridiculous.

*Gulliver's Travels* is, obviously, a political allegory. The war with Blefuscu is actually England's perpetual war with France. The wearers of the High Heels and Low Heels are the members of the two English political parties, the Tories and the Whigs. The Big-endians and the Small-endians are the religious factions of England, the Catholics and the Protestants.

◆ If the *satire* is referential and distorts in order to convince, the *apologue* is a moral fable, a narrative meant to prove the truth of a statement or a series of statements by fiction. It deals with abstract thinking, with the world of ideas. It argues in order to convince. It has a discursive nature and it resorts to dramatization. This narrative form is best illustrated by *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* by Dr. Samuel Johnson (1759). Johnson was the literary dictator of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Famous as a biographer (*Lives of the Poets, 1779-1781*), essayist, lexicographer and editor of Shakespeare's works, Johnson places his heroes against an exotic Oriental background and his essays on the search for happiness are suitably imbued with Oriental wisdom.

## DANIEL DEFOE

Unlike the satire and the apologue, the novel is concerned with the individuality of characters, with their destinies, their motivations, psyche and attitudes.

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) marks the birth of the *modern novel* as an art form distinct from other literary forms, which shows *the interplay of the individual and society*.

◆ The picaresque novel was defined as an adventurous story of a rogue's life, which through its episodic account of wanderings contains a satiric view of society. It originated in the Spanish and French picaresque novels, whose most famous models were Diego Huntado Mendoza's *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1544), Mateo Aleman's *Guzman de Alfarache* (1599) and A. R. Lesage's *Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715).

The English picaresque strain is represented by the many rogue-histories, chiefly of notorious criminals, a highly popular form of literature to which Defoe himself contributed accounts of Jack Sheppard (1724) and Jonathan Wilde (1725). These go back to Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*; the 17<sup>th</sup> century tales of vagabonds, highwaymen and cheats of both sexes, and Thomas Deloney's *Jack of Newbury*.

◆ Defoe, the author of picaresque novels and novels of adventures, is the writer who was most aware of the individualistic spirit of the middle-class man. His main preoccupation was the economic status of man. His characters are considered to be embodiments of *Homo Economicus*.

The rise of the middle class coincided with the rise of realistic fiction. The ideal pursued by Defoeesque characters is their economic success. Everything else, including morality and conscience, is subordinated to this aim. All Defoe's tales are "success stories", though in a limited field. His heroes and heroines all make good, all reach affluence. They might be even called stories of successful crime. But the success is obtained at the price of a reformed life, accompanied by repentance, the latter feature placing these works in the category of conduct-book.

The puritanical outlook results in autonomous individuality. Defoe's characters resort to diaries, judge their own deeds, understand their own position. They are rationalistic. Life is considered in terms of polarities: virtue vs. vice, good vs. evil. Defoe's characters try to redeem themselves, to transcend their shortcomings by understanding their own behaviour; they wish to reform themselves. They believe in man's capacity to outgrow difficulties. Their economic and social egotism makes them consider poverty to be man's inability to cope with the challenges of the environment.

Poverty is a sin: it is better to steal than beg; man has to resort to any means in his struggle for survival, and it is not innate wickedness, but sheer necessity that drives people to malefaction.

Mobility, dynamism, pragmatism, immediate solutions govern the actions of Defoe's characters. Their choices are momentary, with immediate consequences.

In Defoe's age, the middle class perceived life as unstable, episodic, coincidental (features characteristic of Defoe's plots as well).

◆ The novelist's style was deeply influenced by his *journalistic experience*. Things are put together as they occurred, without the narrator's bothering about their coherence. The immediacy of experience, the hotness of the account is what matters. The naive writer writes as he sees and notices, without any processing of the data. In choosing his forms to write in, Defoe was catering for the small shopkeepers and artisans, the publicans, the footmen and servant wenches, the soldiers and sailors, those who could read just what was easy to read and seemed to be about themselves, or events they might be caught up in. That is why Defoe would claim that he was simply reporting fact, otherwise his stories would remain widely unread, and therefore little sold.

Defoe's characters are always at odds with society, fight for their survival and have no scruples, no principles. Although unusual people – shipwrecked sailors, pirates, prostitutes – Defoe's characters embody the features of the typical bourgeois Englishmen of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Defoe's outcasts, outlaws are handicapped people who single-mindedly manage to build up their lives. They are practical, self-reliant and optimistic even in the most uncommon situations. They almost achieve titanic dimensions.

◆ The narrative perspective of Defoe's novels is narrowed down to that of the protagonist. The voice that speaks offers the perspective of a life that has mastered its vicissitudes. The tone of the first person narrator suggests the optimism of the Puritans, according to which man is his own redeemer, being endowed with a great capacity of endurance and a great adaptability. He is the product of his own work and intelligence, of his own prudence.

The first person narrative of Defoe's novels is alert, captivating the reader's attention through an accurate power of observation and gift of description. Defoe's technique, called *circumstantial realism* is, in Ian Watt's opinion, based on the exact description of temporal and spatial coordinates that make sound true the most incredible events. As Bonamy Dobrée points out, "when Moll Flanders robs the child in Bartholomew Close, we are told what streets she went through as she slipped off; in

the same way, when young Colonel Jacque picks a pocket, we know by what twisted route he made his getaway, scouring down ‘Bartholomew Lane, so into Tokenhouse Yard, into the alleys which pass through from thence to London Wall, so through Moorgate and sat down on the grass in the second of the quarters of Moorfields’ ”.

Based on a picaresque string of events, Defoe’s novels add a deeper insight into the psychology of the main heroes, initiating, according to Ian Watt, “that aspect of the novel’s treatment of experience which rivals the confessional autobiography and outdoes other literary forms in bringing us close to the inward moral being of the individual; and it achieves this closeness to the inner life of the protagonist by using as formal basis the autobiographical *memoir* which was the most immediate and widespread literary expression of the introspective tendency of Puritanism in general”.

◆ *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* is a popular voyage-adventure tale at once eagerly devoured. Its immediate origin was the account of the discovery of Selkirk in Woodes Rogers’s voyage, followed up by Steele in No. 26 of “The Englishman”.

Defoe’s protagonist is able to do without society due to the training and skills that he had learnt in society. Survival is his immediate purpose. In defending himself against intruders, he preserves his sanity of mind, his capacity to remain whole. The message of the book is reassuring and inspiring: man can ultimately become his own sustaining force; all he has to do is keep his mind in a proper working condition.

The Puritan sustains his morality by reading the Bible. The dialogue with God is both a means of salvation and psychic therapeutics. By the attained meditative state, man can transcend his animal state and create for himself a secondary, better world of abstract thoughts and feelings.

◆ *Moll Flanders* narrates a female-picaro’s autobiography. It is the story of a seventy year old woman who had to fight poverty, to move from husband to husband, from place to place, who managed to preserve her sanity, to control circumstances and provide for some of her children.

Having lived he himself five months in Newgate, Defoe knew all about Moll Flanders and her kind. Moll represents the *active* type of picaro (the one mastering his own destiny, as opposed to the *passive*, suffering hero, victim of his own inability to fight the knaveries of his fellows). Moll always has the initiative, she is careful about her possible profits and losses.

And yet, she cannot be blamed for her deeds and options. She is the individualist created by mercantile morality. As Bonamy Dobrée again points out, Defoe “makes this scandalous criminal so entrancing

largely because he endows her with supreme honesty for the moment. She lied in life, but she never lies to herself, nor to us". Moll's only way out is her survival as an individual, in accordance with the social training preaching egotism above other values.

According to some critics, Moll is not a picaro proper. A picaro does not care for respectability, he or she is an outcast offered no chance to ever being socially reintegrated. Unlike most picaros, Moll

- is not subversive, she has a moral sense;
- tries to get accepted by society;
- has her own self-esteem.

The gap between what she does and what she ought to do causes her suffering, a sense of guilt. Forgetting becomes beneficial for her conscience. Her memory wipes things out so as to ensure her survival.

She lives in an evanescent present; the incidents depicted by her are vivid and lifelike. She unconsciously reveals her psyche to the reader.

The novel lacks form, it is made up of a string of events: it starts and goes on to the end.

The protagonist is not seen in stable relationships with other characters. Moll's last sentence informs us that she and her husband resolve to spend the remainder of their years in sincere penitence for the wicked life they had lived – and yet, having in mind Defoe's comment in his Preface, the reader has to be alert. According to Ian Watt, "Moll Flanders is undoubtedly an ironic object; but it is not a work of irony".

Answering the gender anxieties of his age, Defoe conceives *Moll Flanders* as a study into the social and economic conditions for sexual union as well as into the question of why and how women should maintain their dignity.

♦ Moll, Jacques, Singleton are built upon one model; they mirror man's intractable impulse, irresistible itch to go on that no preaching can tame, the tireless demon driving him to hazards and disaster. Still, they are rescued from the utmost consequences of their surrender to impulse. Providence again and again is given credit as prime agent of salvation. (And much in Defoe's life seems to support the idea that ill-controlled impulse was his own destructive principle as well).

### SAMUEL RICHARDSON

The 18<sup>th</sup> century public was greatly desirous to write and receive letters. Many guide books appeared with practical instructions and recommendations for people how to write letters in all possible situations. The epistolary novels of Samuel Richardson derived in fact from such a

volume of model letters entitled *Familiar Letters or Letters Written to and for Particular Friends* (1741).

Richardson, formerly a printer, was aware of literary forms and tradition, of the demand existing in his time. He was endowed with the fluid world of states of mind and feelings. He was a convinced feminist and he campaigned for women's right

- to decide on personal matters;
- to preserve their integrity;
- to adopt a dignified attitude.

Richardson is considered to be the father of the epistolary novel made up of a sequence of letters. The scope of such a novel is limited, concentrated on a single action.

Richardson's *Pamela* is the story of the maid who successfully resisted the attempts of seduction and rape by a country gentry. Her virtue is rewarded in marriage, marriage being the highest ideal a woman could dream of at the time. Fielding soon satirized the idea of rewarded virtue; virtue, with Fielding, is nothing but hypocrisy in disguise.

With Richardson, the 18<sup>th</sup> century novel reaches reconciliation between desire or personal interest AND the set of social norms.

Inevitably, the epistolary form demands a first person narration. The writing character comments, apologizes, addresses himself to the reader, notices what is relevant to him, creates suspense and tension. The auctorial comment is seriously reduced; the moralizing tone is disguised in the voice of one of the letter-writing characters.

The epistolary form allowed Richardson to attain a closer view of the psychology of his characters, to attain the immediacy of his characters' self-discovery, of their reactions and responses under the pressure of surrounding realities. Their feelings are born in the process of letter-writing.

The attention for detail creates an atmosphere. The detail is no longer of a physical nature, a matter of measurement, observation, size and shape (as in Defoe's novels), but a matter of psychological nature, of habit and behaviour. Richardson writes a psychological novel in the descendance of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cryseyde* and Shakespeare's plays. With Richardson, psychological analysis becomes the main tradition in English literature.

The most intimate feelings and thoughts of the writing character were disclosed in a technique not very different from the dramatic monologue or from the modern stream of consciousness. It coordinated two levels:

1) the first level represents the *present* moment of writing the letters, a secondary narrative line that facilitates the transition to the story in itself;

2) the second level, actually the main narrative line, goes back to a *past* moment, recording the events as they took place.

In opposition to the French epistolary novel conceived as a kind of memories written down much later, Richardson reduced the distance between the two levels to the minimum. He brought the narrating character in the immediate past of the events, to keep fresh the excitement of the described situation. The simultaneity of expression and narration creates a vibrant uncertainty about the future outcome of events. Richardson exploited the great possibilities offered by his technique of “writing to the moment”, as he called it, to sustain the tension of the story. The reader cannot imagine *Pamela* writing desperate and sentimental letters after successfully getting married to Squire B. Once out of the immediate context of events, the character can reformulate certain opinions.

The introspective view also permits a minute analysis of emotions and stresses the importance of intense feelings.

◆ *Pamela* is made up of a sequence of letters presenting only Pamela’s point of view; we are deprived of the opposite points of view: there is no counterbalance of her letters. A diary and the author’s moralizing voice (in the guise of her parents’ letters) add up to the construction of *Pamela*.

*Pamela* does not end in marriage, but it continues with the period of adjustment and social acceptance. Marriage is not a climax, but a beginning. The idea of the age was that life is based on friendship, and marriage should be viewed as the ideal form of friendship, as a benevolent interest, as mutual collaboration with a fellow.

◆ *Clarissa* is made up of two sets of correspondence, therefore it presents four major points of view. A gradation of conflict is thus achieved. The problem of the rape, i. e. the climactic point, is reduced to a short note, to a passing remark. Clarissa dies because death is preferable to dishonour.

◆ Richardson can never escape a moralizing, didactic tone. Translated by Abbé Prevost, praised by Diderot and Rousseau, parodied by Fielding, dramatized by Lessing and imitated by Goethe, Richardson was very much praised for inaugurating the *sentimental* novel in a pre-romantic period. Although the creator of the most influential model of the 18<sup>th</sup> century European literature, Richardson is less appreciated today. His artificial, declamatory and bombastic style no longer satisfies the taste of the modern reader.

#### ◆ CONCLUSIONS:

Both Richardson and Defoe express a certain mentality of the middle class, and yet they lay two different major stresses: the former on wealth and the latter on virtue.

Defoe's novels present the middle class striving for economic security. Richardson's books show the middle-class looking for a system of moral values.

Richardson established the middle class morality as better than the aristocratic spirit. With Richardson, family life became the cornerstone of society. For women, marriage became their ultimate goal, and half a century later Jane Austen will still share this view. For men, the main objective remained acquiring wealth through hard work; hence, family life was regarded as a necessary prerequisite for ensuring the continuity in inheritance and fortune.

### HENRY FIELDING

Richardson and Defoe represented forces of the new. Each represented in his own way an impact on their contemporaries' imagination: (a) Defoe – by presenting a world of action; (b) Richardson – by presenting a world of feeling.

Fielding presents quite a different world in terms of background, outlook and experience. He represents the conservative, aristocratic view which did not question the prevailing values of society.

Fielding was not interested in psychology and motivation; he felt attracted by the world of appearances, by the masks displayed in public life, by the social game with its strict and definite set of norms and rules.

As an Augustan neo-classicist, he believed in order, rational justification and account for man's actions. He shared the assumption that man is good at heart, that he is kind, benevolent, endowed with reason. Man's good nature consists in the balance, in the combination of desire (for freedom, passion, indulgence) and reason, understanding, tolerance, honesty, which make social life possible.

According to Fielding, man is a civilized, not an instinctual being; he harmonizes his concerns with his fellow-beings, integrating himself into society.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century view had been that man was no better than wolves, according to Thomas Hobbes's "homo homini lupus". The 18<sup>th</sup> century asserted its belief in man.

Fielding's protagonists are people who commit crimes and errors, violate norms but gradually manage to attain self-awareness, to reach a state when they see their past as a chain of errors and their future as a reintegration into society. They undergo a complete change.

Two more types of characters populate Fielding's novels:

- the ideally good ones, who have already experienced this change;
- the characters who cannot bring about the enlightened action of

reason, who do not get into harmony with the world; they provide the contrast to the good characters.

Fielding's vision is essentially comic, handling with detachment the discrepancies between what one looks and what one wants to look. Fielding embarked upon a moral crusade against the morality of principle, he realized the shallowness of this kind of behaviour, of the assumed rather than genuine virtue. He required a life that was less dogmatic but oriented towards the actual performance of good deeds. The good deed performed for its own sake was a reward in itself.

Fielding's neo-classic background is detectable in his concern for man in his positive aspects and in the lesser attention paid to the darker, irrational side of man. He presents the sunny side of humanity.

Fielding is the first narrator concerned with the architecture of his novels. He creates a complex structure, made up of a multiplicity of functional elements, he creates a world in which relationships are established among people. The main elements of this architecture are

- 1)– the obvious sets of contrasts and polarities;
- 2)– the obvious symmetries suggesting balance and order.

Fielding's aim is to "represent human nature at first hand to the keen appetite of our reader"; he shows us the whole of life as he saw it, in its extremes of poverty and luxury – from Molly Seagrim to Lady Bellaston; its extremes of folly and wisdom – from Partridge to Allworthy; its extremes of meanness and generosity – from Blifil to Tom Jones.

Fielding's fictional world is peopled by specimens rather than characters; the author is not concerned with detailed realism, but with the panoramic view, surveying an abundance of material from a great distance.

Each book of Fielding's novels is framed in a theoretical discussion. Fielding the dramatist, with his vast dramatic experience can be perceived in the chapters of his novels, edited as if they were scenes in a drama. The actions and speech of his characters also show a dramatic nature. Each book has the function of an act, of a larger segment in the plot.

Fielding has been an old time favourite topic of debate among theorists of the novel: his attitude towards his own works, his self-consciousness as an artist grants him a special status. Fielding's prefatory chapters discuss various theoretical problems: they teach the reader how to read, having the function of stage directions. Reading is considered to be a synthesis between entertainment and instruction.

Fielding makes the distinction between the *mere* English reader and the *classical* one. With the latter, he meant what we today mean with the *informed* reader: the reader who besides a linguistic competence

necessary to read a novel also possesses a literary competence enabling him to understand the plot and characters.

Fielding discusses in his novels the following functions of the subtitles:

1) to *organize* the narrative discourse in macro-sentential units that can be read as a whole;

2) to *inform* the reader about the *content* of the chapters and about the *entertainment* he is to expect from it;

The subtitles inform about:

- the *topic* of discussion;
- the *characters* that are to be introduced;
- the particular style employed by the author;
- the aim of the writer;

1) to ensure the aesthetic integrity of the book;

2) to comment upon

- the length of the chapter;
- its instructive value;
- its literary importance;

1) to *advertise* by teasing the reader's imagination with "surprising" or "interesting" incidents;

2) to establish the *chronological span* of the work.

Theoretical commonplaces such as *implied reader* or *intrusive narrator* (Wayne C. Booth) have been most often illustrated with examples taken from Fielding's novels. The latter refers to Fielding's technique of constantly commenting on the characters and on the plot, evaluating the interest they may present to the reader, the moral message and artistic qualities of a book.

The self-conscious Fielding is aware that a narrative cannot display a powerful plot and characterization simultaneously. A powerful plot denies a character the freedom of growth.

Fielding's place is at mid-distance between Swift the satirist and Sterne the experimental novelist. Fielding writes a novel and at the same time an anti-novel, creating a distance between us and the novel.

*Tom Jones* best illustrates the 18<sup>th</sup> century pattern of the fairy-tale novel. It presents "the history" of the protagonist from birth (as a "foundling") to a crucial moment of his life, the rite of passage represented by marriage. The triumph of the good over the evil, of the honest over the hypocritical and the happy ending met the requirements of the 18<sup>th</sup> century readership. *Tom Jones* also displays the features of a picaresque novel, a novel of adventures and even a *Bildungsroman*, taking the reader to the highways and inns of England and presenting several stages in the development of the main hero's personality.

*Joseph Andrews*, originally conceived as a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*, soon became a completely different story, with a plot and characters of its own, in which the burlesque and satirical elements were replaced by a string of original, epic and comic episodes. Many critics consider *Joseph Andrews* to be the first Quixotic novel in English literature. The Quixotic novel has been defined as a variant of the satirical novel, based on a picaresque structure, but with obvious critical intentions. Fielding's Parson Adams, Goldsmith's vicar of Wakefield, Sterne's uncle Toby and Smollett's Sir Launcelot Greaves, blinded by a philosophy improper for true life, will discover after many frustrations that life cannot be mastered and understood by help of reason. Parson Adams, an utterly unrealistic character, has to fight with the inadequacy of his idealistic views of life. His forgetfulness and absent-mindedness are an inexhaustible source of comic. Mrs. Slipslop, the ridiculous servant in Lady Booby's household, anticipates a long series of characters characterized by means of the language they use: Tabitha Bramble in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* and Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan's *The Rivals*. Fielding's attacks against the odious customs of his age, the life of the snobbish aristocratic élite, the hypocritical public image of clergymen, lawyers, playwrights and actors build up an impressive satire.

*Jonathan Wild the Great*, presenting the exploits of a famous criminal of the age, was intended as a warning: vice rewards its advocates poorly.

*Amelia*, Fielding's last novel and "favourite child", takes the narrative backward and forward and the author achieves deeper insight in the psychology of the main heroes. Amelia's character is drawn with a depth of understanding far in advance of his time.

Written briefly before his death, Fielding's *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1755) contained a lot of interesting reflections on landscapes and people.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

Fielding assumes an omniscient perspective, allowing himself access to outcomes and consequences which are not available to the protagonists. In the end, he finds himself unable to provide a commentary that should make up the final judgement. His tone becomes shifty, chameleonic, and the reader is confused by this relativistic approach, which is quite modern.

Fielding's language is more abstract than that of his predecessors, betraying (1) his training in the classics, (2) his aristocratic origin, (3) his intellectual background.

## LAURENCE STERNE

Sterne owes a lot both to Richardson and Fielding. Both in Richardson and in Fielding man is determined by outer circumstances, joins in a social game, participates in the institutions of society – man's lot is fundamentally connected to the social sphere.

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* announces, however, a major change in sensibility.

In *Tristram Shandy* man is baffled, bewildered by what happens to him, he is at the mercy of what occurs in his life. Sterne shares Fielding's comic vision, the belief in man's essentially good moral nature. Sterne's prose clearly points back to Renaissance models such as

- Montaigne – with his essays, digressive style and scepticism;
- Rabelais – with his zest for life, the freedom with which he tackles the bodily functions, his grotesque style;
- Cervantes – with his chivalrous ideals and rhetoric.

Sterne challenges these great models of the past and fuses their experiments into a new whole.

Sterne's background is that of an educated man with an M. A. at Cambridge, with direct access to classical sources; although a priest, he disliked theology and perceived the hypocrisy of his craft.

He was influenced by John Locke's theory of the mental processes (*Essay concerning the Human Understanding*), according to which man is born with a mind as blank as a *tabula rasa*, on which sensations are imprinted; sensations associate to form ideas; ideas act upon one another; they become associated in a haphazard manner; the result is unexpected, an oddity which cannot be grasped.

Temperament or disposition accounts for the fact that each man has a different vision of reality.

The middle class accepted Locke's democratic, tolerant theory; the merchant in real life found himself exposed to the unexpected, his life was governed by speculations. Locke's theory brought about a shift of concern from the category of wit to the category of humour and laughter. (Wit was the quality of the mind to achieve complex, intuitive, immediate connections, to shortcircuit analysis and directly reach essence, and it was regarded as an aristocratic quality).

*Tristram Shandy* opens with the winding of the clock superimposed on marital intercourse – the working of the mind in various situations is thus suggested. The mind is given to flights of fancy, forgetting about the business at hand, working out unexpected associations caused by various hints and images.

*Tristram Shandy* is basically an *anti-novel* with a fractured literary structure and style by which it questions the effects of literary form and the relationship between content and expression. The elements of the plot are reduced to the minimum. Many false beginnings, digressions, blanks and asterisks in the text stress the inability of words to communicate, the inadequacy of language and reason, the failure of fiction to discover truths – these are just a few of the specific features of an anti-novel.

In Sterne's anti-novel, the unity of tone is provided by the voice of the narrator. This voice postulates an audience and at various moments addresses various sections of the public or ourselves.

The prevailing atmosphere is that of a sentimentalism different from that of the later centuries. With Sterne, the excess of feeling with no counterpart is unreasonable, resulting in insincerity or immaturity. Sterne tries to achieve a balance between mind and heart. Therefore, feeling is the result of sensibility, while sentimentalism is defined as the capacity of being impressed. It is an honest, free expression of feeling, requiring *laughter* as a response.

Sterne's work aims at sympathy, identification, concern for common aspects of life, for any living creature. Sterne's sympathetic laughter stands proof for his tolerance in point of mores (i. e. individual behaviours at odds with both morals and manners). The mores tend to replace some preconceived ideas. *Tristram Shandy* does neither castigate nor praise in this respect. The author's attitude is ambiguous: things are presented as they are and the response is left entirely to us.

The novelist assumes the objectivity and detachment of a chronicler interested in events, episodes. He brings them to the foreground to show human mores as they are, not as they should be or ought to be. Sterne is amoral, a feature which came to be accepted by the 20<sup>th</sup> century artists, but was bitterly rejected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (by Thackeray among others).

Sterne's reader is invited to cooperate, to rely on his own experience. He is not a *passive* reader.

The novel displays a great density of style; the dash plays an important role! Sterne invents several graphic devices in order to express the idea that consciousness, personality cannot be captured as an entity, but in its fluidity, in its whimsical becoming.

Sterne's characters have a history, a trade, a hobby-horse, an individuality. His characters are no longer either types or predictable entities. They stand for human complexity, they are not embodiments of a ruling passion, but rounded personalities, of an unstable and evolving roundness. They are shown by the way in which the human brain works

– it starts on several journeys at once, the mind has the tendency to encompass reality as a whole, to create an alternative world. The stream of consciousness technique is thus anticipated.

Time becomes a subjective dimension, rejecting measurement. It is, actually, the structuring element of the novel.

Unlike Fielding's or Defoe's novels, which end either with the marriage or the death of the main hero, *Tristram Shandy*, ends abruptly, in the middle of a sentence. It does not start with the hero's birth, either, but with his begetting. The plot of the novel, however, starts long before Tristram's birth and even before his begetting. Wayne C. Booth suggests that the starting point of the novel's temporal scheme (and plot) might be the year of Uncle Toby's wounding during the siege of Namur (1695, i. e. twenty-three years before Tristram's birth). The ending point of the temporal scheme might be either "this twelfth day of August 1766", when Tristram describes himself as sitting before the desk in a purple jerkin and yellow pair of slippers or Tristram's breeching in Book VI.

Sterne's novel no longer follows the memoir style previously employed by Defoe, with the chronological progression of the narrated events. The novel opens with events occurring in 1717 and it ends with an episode of 1714. Meanwhile, various other events are presented such as the death of Yorick in 1749, Corporal Trim's wounding at Laden in 1693, the siege of Namur in 1695, Uncle Toby's retirement to the countryside in 1701, after four years spent in bed in London, and his falling in love with Widow Wadman in 1713.

The novel is both progressive and digressive. It is progressive because it adheres to a time scheme. The reader is permanently bewildered: after his curiosity has been aroused, digressions follow for whole pages. Sterne indulges in scholarly, military and medical digressions with a great range of allusions.

The German structuralist literary critic Günther Müller distinguishes the vertical progression of a fiction, represented by the elements of action from the helical progression, represented by atmosphere (mood) and digression. Sterne himself is aware of such a helical progression: "and though the flight of this erratic mind is zigzag, like a dragonfly's, one cannot deny that this dragonfly has some method in its flight..." says Virginia Woolf, one of Sterne's greatest admirers.

Sterne often resorts to the use of digression within digression, embedding several digressions within a first one. Quoting again from Virginia Woolf, "Sterne is the analyst of his own sensations, not of the others. What fascinates him is his own mind with its whims and peculiarities. We lose the sense of direction. We go backwards instead

of going forward. A simple remark engenders a digression, we circle round and round and finally return to uncle Toby, who in the meanwhile sat by the fire with his pipe in his hand”.

As D. W. Jefferson has pointed out, Sterne is nowhere greater than in his power to convey a sense of Uncle Toby’s absorption in his own private world, of its remoteness and of the incompleteness of the spell. He lives in a re-created world of his own, in which past events always overlap the present by means of associations. Associations of ideas set Uncle Toby in the “remembrance of things past”. A single word such as “bridge” makes him recollect several past events. Le Fever and Namur become leit-motifs, key-words, obsessions governing his stream of consciousness.

As for progression as the counterpart of digression, the plot of *Tristram Shandy* can be reduced to two narrative lines or stories. The first story is about Tristram’s conception, birth, naming, circumcision and breeching. The second one tells Uncle Toby’s courtship of Widow Wadman. These two stories might have well made up the material of a traditional novel, too.

Sterne’s self-consciousness as an artist is obvious in the discussion of the rhythm or speed of narration: “one day is enough for two volumes and two volumes will be enough for one year” distinguishing between the time of writing, time of narrated events and time of reading.

Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* enjoyed a success similar to that of *Tristram Shandy*. The sentimental impressionism displayed by Sterne in this delightful book mingles interludes of seriousness and humour.

Sterne, the first author to write about the “life and opinions” instead of the “life and adventures” of a character is, in genius, the equal of Joyce and Proust.

## TOBIAS SMOLLETT

In the country of Defoe, the picaresque novel, i. e. the realistic novel of travels and adventure was not absolutely new; nor was the device of stringing the episodes of the story together along the thread of a single character.

Smollett was the novelist who showed how much could still be done with this form, who introduced new life and new types and presented them with unequalled brilliance and energy.

*The Adventures of Roderick Random* was modelled on the plan of Lesage’s *Gil Blas*. Smollett was not a moralist; he was even without a view of life and conduct. He creates shameless young scoundrels, proving his taste for farce, horseplay and violence. Morality and good taste have nothing to do with Smollett’s scoundrels, the elegant and witty bullies

of the most refined cruelty, who are very good at annoying and insulting the people they happen to encounter. *Roderick Random* introduces a new type of character, the British sailor in flesh and blood, with his jargons and slang. Before Smollett, Defoe and other English novelists have written about an “imaginary sea”; Smollett, a former surgeon in the West Indies, is the father of the English sea novels.

Smollett’s next novel, *Peregrine Pickle*, like Fielding’s *Tom Jones* is told in the third person. The distance that appears between the narrator and the agent allows a more objective interpretation of the events. According to M. Bakhtin, the functions of the picaresque, similar to those of the medieval *fool* or *clown*, are determined by his position as an outsider: he can laugh at the vicious conventionality of human relations, he can enter any time a carnival situation which allows him to view life as a comedy and people as poor players.

*The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* reveals Smollett the humourist, perhaps somewhat influenced by Sterne. The title is misleading: the novel actually presents the travels of the Bramble family, joined only towards the end by Humphrey Clinker. Smollett proves that the epistolary novel is not necessarily concerned with sentimental characters and plot. He achieves an interesting combination of epistolary forms and the most significant realistic forms of the eighteenth century novel (the travel book and the picaresque). The interweaving of the three forms with a discarding of their original basic functions constitutes the originality of Smollett’s novel. According to W. Iser, “Smollett takes over from Richardson the complex letter form with several correspondents, but leaves out the self-examination leading to moral analysis which had been the central theme of the epistolary novel in the first half of the eighteenth century. He also takes over the travel book form of giving a panoramic view of a number of localities, but he no longer interprets this as a compendium of topographical information. Finally, he joins on the picaresque novel, but removes the satirical intention of the picaresque’s adventure”.

Smollett’s characters give the account of their travels in England and Scotland, in letters to their friends. The structure of Richardson’s *Pamela* and *Clarissa* is based on an exchange of letters and the device of telling the story in letters leads to wearisome repetitions and involutions. *Humphrey Clinker*, on the other hand, is conceived as a one-side correspondence of five people. Smollett avoids much repetition and the plot evolves steadily forward, to reach its inevitable ending. The multiple narrators offer different views on the same events which allow the reader to grasp them in their entire complexity. This method

anticipates the *web of opinions* technique developed by George Eliot, Henry James and other 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century psychological writers.

Smollett also contributed to the development of the English Quixotic novel. He transcended his model by creative interpretation. The application of the Don Quixote formula in his successful novel *Sir Launcelot Greaves* meant, in fact, the development of a new form of realism in the narrative art. It consisted in the conversion of the picaresque novel into a more useful literary genre that pointed out the follies of ordinary life and reduced the heroism of the picaresque characters. Sir Launcelot Greaves has to undergo the painful confrontation between illusion and reality although he believes in much higher tasks.

Like Fielding and Sterne, Smollett is also the author of a travel narrative. Written in epistolary form, his *Travels through France and Italy* contained many pages compiled from common guide-books and antiquarian treatises.

Like Fielding, Smollett exerted a major influence on the 19<sup>th</sup> century English novel. The greatest novelists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were indebted to Fielding and Smollett alike:

1) Fielding, a master of the philosophical study of character, founded the *novel of character*: His greatest disciple was Thackeray with his power of understanding human nature, with his satirical tendencies;

2) Smollett, a master of the picaresque novel, of naval scenes and characters, exerted a strong influence on Dickens. Both Smollett and Dickens were endowed with a keen observation of superficial oddities of speech and manner; in both, these oddities often become more interesting than the main plot; in both, beneath those oddities, there is often a lack of real character. Winifred Jenkins and Tabitha Bramble in *Humphrey Clinker*; lieutenant Bowling in *Roderick Random* and Admiral Hawser Trunnion in *Peregrine Pickle* best illustrate characterizations through language. Dickens's fun (e. g. in *The Pickwick Papers*) is purer and richer than Smollett's.

## THE GOTHIC NOVEL

The Gothic novel or Gothic romance marks the transition to the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel. It reflects the crisis of sensibility that affected the pre-romantic writers. As in poetry, the search for the mysterious, the feeling of wonder combined with terror, the melodramatic and sentimental attitudes were cultivated with great success. The main aim of the writers was to create suspense and tension.

The Gothic romance became the most fashionable type of narrative between 1760 and 1820. It replaced the declining realism and rationalism

of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Andrew Sanders regards the Gothic novel as a reaction against reason, political stability and flourishing trade. It appeared as an aggressive act and it was justly parodied by Jane Austen.

The word “Gothic” has two major meanings:

1) it defines the architectural style which developed in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, spreading from France to Italy, Germany, England, etc.; that specific style is characterized by the vertical, standing for man’s attempt to transcend his condition in a dialogue with divinity;

2) a horror story. The Gothic story relies on architecture – on hidden, dark, mysterious architectural elements of a Gothic type inducing fear, challenging the subconsciousness.

Gothic elements can be traced back to the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, in the tragedies of Kyd, Shakespeare, Tourneur, Middleton, Marston and, especially, Webster. Other sources available to the 18<sup>th</sup> century writers were the German folklore rich in tales of superstitions, and old myths such as Faustus or the Wandering Jew.

In the Gothic novels reason collapses, it is replaced by violence, horror, mysteries, supernatural phenomena, black magic, ghosts. The setting of the plot is usually a piece of Gothic architecture; haunted dwellings, ruined abbeys, decayed castles, ruins, dungeons, labyrinths, secret passages make up a terrifying setting. The narrated events occur in the Middle Ages, in dark, unstable periods. The Gothic romance differs from the romantic historical novel which emerged in Walter Scott’s works. The former uses historical background just as a source of cruelty and horror. The narrative piles up incredible events in a cumulative technique. Horrors abound: ghosts appear unexpectedly, objects attain extraordinary sizes, paintings move, and suits of armour come to life; the frequent repetition of the same motives made the Gothic novels appear as a variation of an unique pattern.

The Gothic romance is invaded by the supernatural; according to Tzvetan Todorov, the Gothic novel deals with two types of supernatural phenomena:

1) phenomena that can be explained one way or another – they belong to the category of the *strange* and appear in the novels of writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Clara Reeve;

2) phenomena that cannot be explained in a reasonable way and are regarded as such – they belong to the category of the *miraculous* and occur in the novels of writers such as Horace Walpole and Charles Maturin.

In-between these two aesthetic categories comes the *fantastic*; it is a category of continuous evanescence placed between the strange (which is pointing to the past) and the miraculous (which is pointing to

the future). The pure strange, the strange fantastic, the miraculous fantastic and the pure miraculous make up the diagram of the fantastic, in which the median line is represented by the pure fantastic.

Accidents, coincidences, dreams, drugs, illusions, tricks, madness may account for strange events. The mystery is usually revealed in the final chapter and everything is accounted for. Paradoxically, reason is ultimately present, but reason alone is not enough. The irrational side of the mind, the transcending of immediate reality, the past experiences of childhood, the world of dreams are equally important. The Gothic romance has an oniric quality – a dominant feature in the works of the German Romantics, Poe, Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud. It was later rediscovered by André Breton and the surrealists.

As for the narrative technique, the plot is the fundamental element of a Gothic story. The reader's imagination is permanently challenged and his sense of security is, thus, shattered.

The major authors and works that make up the Gothic canon are as follows:

- Horace Walpole – *The Castle of Otranto*, with its subtitle, *A Gothic Story*;

- Clara Reeve – *The Old English Baron*;

- Ann Radcliffe – *The Mysteries of Udolpho*;

- Matthew Gregory Lewis – *The Monk*;

- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – *Frankenstein*, a mixture of sci-fi avant la lettre and horror-tale;

- Charles Maturin – *Melmoth the Wanderer*, considered by Andrew Sanders to be the archetype of North-European Romanticism, later echoed by Byron's *Childe Harold* and *Cain*, Goethe's *Faustus* and Dostoieffski's Raskolnikov (in *Crime and Punishment*).

All these novels were remarkable for their romantic poeticity and feeling of nature, freshness of imagination and colourful style. Today, however, their intrigue seems lifeless, the atmosphere false, and the characters awkward.

Still, the Gothic romance provided a starting point in American fiction: Poe and Hawthorne in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as Faulkner in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did perpetuate the macabre sensationalism and psychological horror of the 18<sup>th</sup> century novels. Both commercial writers such as Stephen King or Dean Koontz and academics such as Umberto Eco (in *The Name of the Rose*) still keep exploring the realm of the Gothic romance nowadays.

## WILLIAM BLAKE – THE SYMBOLIC COSMOGONY

The mystery of time, of space and of conscience pervades Blake's whole life. All the prophetic writings are actually passages into mystery. The space of mystery is thus opened towards a new cosmic perspective by which Blake wishes to restore the sense of creation, to restore man into the light of the spirit, the one lost long ago.

For this, in Blake's perspective, knowledge regarding the state of affairs in the immediate present is necessary, knowledge that is first of all inward, then outward. Because the visible universe has a spiritual basis, just as any event on the earth has its cause in the Spirit (*Milton*, I, 27), as Rudolf Steiner affirms: "what we do in the physical world is nothing but the outward manifestation of spiritual activities."

We will now analyse Blake's cosmological system as it is defined in *The Four Zoas* mainly, the most esoteric poem from the long cycle of epic poetry widely known today as *The Prophetic Books*. There is only one manuscript of this poem which Blake seems never to have intended to engrave. In 1803 Blake wrote to Butts: "But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years' slumber on the banks of the Ocean, unless he has seen them in the Spirit, or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts; for I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme, Similar to Homer's *Iliad* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, (...) I have written this Poem from immediate Dictation ..."(Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1979).

According to Blake, existence precedes creation, which is mainly a fall from eternity. Existence is identified in Blake with the supreme principle, the Perfect Unity, which "Cannot Exist but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden, /The Universal Man, to Whom be Glory Evermore. Amen." (*William Blake, Cărțile Profetice, Cei Patru Zoa*, Institutul European, Iași, 1998). Only the "Heav'nly Father" has the knowledge of life, of the "living beings" (the four Zoas). But a significant part of the deity seems to fall when Albion, the Universal Man, is sunk into a chaotic

sleep, which actually means that the spiritual eyes turned from the “Eternal Vision”, Jesus Christ, inwards, i.e. towards the inside and the outside simultaneously: Los-the Sun-time says that all live from looking at the Divine Image, i.e. Jesus Christ.

The basis of Blake’s cosmogonical theories is the conception about the four Zoas, the “Starry Eternals”, “the living beings”; this idea might originate from Ezekiel’s vision or that experienced by St. John in his Revelation. These “Four Mighty Ones are in every Man”(FZ, I, 6); the first Zoa is Tharmas, “the Parent pow’er”, who is in the West; the second one is Urizen, “Prince of Light”, who is in the South and shall want to become God, thus his world or sphere becoming a ruin. The third Zoa is Luvah, “the Prince of Love”, and he is in the East; he will steal Urizen’s “Horses of Light”, as if reiterating Michael’s fight with Lucifer, as a result of which Michael took the torch of Light that Lucifer was holding, the first Light, the most troubling revelation of God’s Face, hence the name “Angel of the Presence”. The last Zoa is Urthona, “the keeper of heav’n’s gates”(FZ, IV, 42), he is also the most enigmatic of them all, and he is in the North. After the Fall Urthona becomes Los, i.e. time, as Blake himself explains in *Milton*, and he still remains “the Watchman of Eternity”. Each Zoa has an emanation or feminine counterpart as a result of the progressive division from within Creation: *Tharmas-Enion, Urizen-Ahania, Luvah-Vala, Los-Enitharmon*. Tharmas is God of the Waters, the one who rules over the Waters, as God in Genesis, who divides the waters from the waters. He has, as a supreme deity, the nirvanic awareness of vacuity (he says “& I am like an atom, / A Nothing, left in darkness; yet I am an identity: / I wish & feel & weep & groan. Ah, terrible! terrible!” , FZ, I, 58-60 ). This paradox, nothing-identity, reveals factually the idea of the inborn freedom that any being has by divine commandment. Creation by the fragmentation of the One into Many is similar to the shattering, in the Brahmanic conception, of the Giant Purusha, the Primordial Man, the masculine creative Spirit, who by self-division creates the world.

It seems Blake carefully chose the names for his various mythological beings; *Tharmas*, for instance, read through a mirror is *Samrath*, a Sanskrit name, the nominative form of *samraj*, “king over kings”, i.e. exactly the supreme principle. The process of reading through a mirror has been suggested by criticism at least for the name LOS-SOL, one of the most important of Blake’s characters, who is at the same time *the sun* and the Chronus figure-time (see S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, London, Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1973). Otherwise, Blake even engraved such a verse in *Jerusalem* that can be read only using a mirror (*Jerusalem*, plate 41). *Los* seems to have been the character into whom Blake brought much of his own person, he is the most heroic, the most poetic, the most dramatic

and the most controversial of all. Los's ovens and forges are the inward fire of Time by which all move, his hammer is the heart. *Orc*, who is the child of Los and Enitharmon (*time and space*), is a name probably taken from Roman mythology: Orcus, later identified with Hades; *Orc* is for that matter a revolutionary energy at the root of manifestation and he resembles the image of *Kundalini*, the Great Red Serpent, or the Hebrew *Shekinah*, *Persephone-Proserpina*, all of which are names of the solar Uranian essence that has fallen into the centre of the earth, in Pluto-Hades-the *Graal*-the coccys. *Uri-zen* may mean the "zenith of light", as we have in Hebrew the word *uri* = light; *Ahania* (who is Urizen's emanation) is a name that seems to originate from the Sanskrit *ahan* = day, and she can be related to the revelation of the day- light.

Defining and relevant for his *Weltanschauung* is the famous perspective on the nature of infinity that has been described in *Milton*:

"The nature of infinity is this: That every thing has its  
Own Vortex, and when once a traveller thro' Eternity  
Has pass'd that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind  
His path, into a globe itself infolding like a sun,  
Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty,  
While he keeps onwards in his wondrous journey on the earth,  
Or like a human form, a friend with whom he lived benevolent.  
As the eye of man views both the east & west encompassing  
Its vortex, and the north & south with all their starry host,  
Also the rising sun & setting moon he views surrounding  
His corn-fields and his valleys of five hundred acres square,  
Thus is the earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent  
To the weak traveller confin'd beneath the moony shade.  
Thus is the heaven a vortex pass'd already, and the earth  
A vortex not yet pass'd by the traveller thro' Eternity."

Here the infinite is the creational whole and not only the visible infinite universe; it refers to all the levels of conscience and the corresponding ontological planes through which the voyage of the traveller through eternity goes. The infinite here is equivalent to the Universal Spherical Vortex about which Vasile Lovinescu speaks, and which contains all the possible vortices of conscience (energetic vortices on an evolutionary scale), in other words, integral reality. The beings of the Earth are in the middle of the Earth-Vortex, they live at a constant level of conscience, which also makes human experience possible. This means also that, from a Blakean perspective, but from a Brahmanic one, too, the human inward infinite has a vorticular structure. In Blake, the macro-, micro-universe

relationship is always complete, everything is interdependent, interrelated, interfused, so that the journey through the universe of inward conscience, through the vortices-planes of conscience, is also a journey through the macro-universe, it is actually the key by means of which a conscience can enter other universes-planes of conscience, which explains the romantic poet's notorious formula: "all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within,/In your Imagination, of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow."(*Jerusalem*, 71, 18-19, in *Blake Complete Writings*). That the earth is an "infinite plane" shows exactly the fact that it is the infinity of a single plane of conscience, a three-dimensional space only seemingly infinite, from the perspective of a single level of conscience, but this infinite reveals itself as actually two-dimensional from the perspective of more levels of conscience. We have to consider here the hypersphere that Einstein imagined in his theory about the cylindric universe; the two-dimensionality of a plane of conscience has been conceived of by Blake, as it seems, in the sense that it actually is the hypersurface spanning the expanse of a sphere, as is the case with the undulatory surface of the expanse of a sphere in Einstein's theory. The passage from a vortex into another takes place through the expansion of the centre, the latter being the plenitude of the living essence of conscience, a hypersphere of consciousness belonging to a certain level of conscience.

The external creation is the mirror-the symbol-the trace of man's within. Blake always explores the universe of consciousness and its relativity as opposed to the absoluteness of the world of eternity. In the human body the four Zoas are the four main physical eternal senses which have become the four elements (*Jerusalem*, 36, 31-32): Tharmas-the Tongue, Urizen-the Eyes, Luvah-the Nostrils, Urthona-the Ears (*Jerusalem*, 98, 16-18), they are "the four Rivers of the Water of Life", they are the gates of the soul opening towards manifestation. Thus, as man is created in the image and after the likeness of God, the four Zoas are reflections of the divine aspects: Tharmas is the Voice of the Father who speaks to the Son; Urthona is the Son who hears the Father and fulfils the Father's Will, thus making the Voice of the Father heard in the temporal manifestation (Los). This fact explains why Urthona is in the North and is described as being solid, earth; he is a corner stone, the Word-the Logos, the peak of reality, the Logos of the Father. Blake actually says that Jesus is the image and likeness of Los (*Jerusalem*, 96, 7), and the consequence thereof is that here we have the idea of a *patibilis deus*—a God who suffers with his Creation the whole drama of Creation. Urthona is therefore the Son. Urizen stands in front of the Trinity (Tharmas-Urthona-Luvah). By falling, he loses his divine attribute (holding the uncreated light), thus becoming the

master of the physical world, of the stars, and so he enters the world of time. Luvah is the Ghost of life of all beings; the name resembles phonologically the Hebrew *ruah* (ghost of life). Luvah is represented as being invisible, and he is related to a golden age of mankind.

As a consequence, we can say that, synthetically, the symbolical scheme of cosmogony is as follows: the passage out of perfection means creating spaces by scission and emanation (the hypothesis of emanationism in Plotinus and Philo Judaeus has allowed the possibility of an immanent God to be excluded, an immanent God who would mingle his own substance in creation in a pantheistical/cosmotheistical sense), these phenomena are accompanied by gnosis, a fall from innocence into experience; the passage from the pre-cosmogonical cosmos to the paradoxical cosmogonical chaos, in which order, nevertheless, is instituted, has as a consequence the birth of a reflex of vacuity: the enigmatic lake Udan Adan, which actually is the tendency to decosmicize the cosmos, the tendency to cause the cosmic harmonies to enter a drift towards chaos, it is, in other words, the descensive tendency (in the sense of a *descensus ad infernum*); we have to point out that the name Udan Adan practically contains two Sanskrit words: *udan* = wave, water; *adana* = eating, consuming (and, as we have shown, this lake is the devourer of the creational waters, the waters of the all-creating Logos). Consequently, it seems almost certain that Blake had some elements of sanskritology, although we cannot prove it, mostly taking into consideration the fact that the main Blake criticism does not indicate Sanskrit sources in Blake. But, once again, we must point out that even the famous “Gate of *Luban*” (which is the *sex*) in Blake’s mythology contains a name almost certainly originating from the Sanskrit *lobhana* = temptation, *lobha* = lust, wish to possess, and *lubh* = to wish very much, to tempt, to allure (and these are attributes of the Gate of Luban, which is a phenomenon brought about by and through the Fall).

Finally, we have to observe that it seems almost obvious there is a connection between the name of *Golgonooza*, the City of Art, of Poetry, Los’s City (Los also being pre-eminently the artist), and the name of the place called *Golgotha*, the place where Adam had died and where Jesus Christ was crucified. The Greek *zoon* means “living being”, and its plural is *zoa*; the Greek *golgotha* means the place of the skull; Blake’s *Golgonooza* seems to contain the anagram of *zoon* (*Golgo-nooz-a*), so that it can designate the place of the skulls of the four living beings (the four Zoas), if we also take into consideration that the English poet engraved such an image of the “four fallen starry ones” on plate 54 in *Jerusalem*, who obviously are the four Zoas.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

Traditionally, literary histories used to define Romanticism as a historical period starting in 1790 and ending about 1830 or 1840. This assumption is no longer accepted by academics nowadays. Drummond Bone is just one of the many critics who have raised the question: “is Romanticism the name of a historical entity, or merely a word that became an idea and has now outlived its usefulness?” The Romanian critic Bogdan Ștefănescu has recently answered this question in a brilliant doctoral thesis dedicated to the problem of “the critics’ vacillation between understanding Romanticism as a historically (and geographically) bound phenomenon or as a perennial mode, a trans-historical *forma mentis* (a creative prototype, and archetypal pattern)”.

The interpretation of Romanticism as a fictional mode or a *forma mentis* takes us to the conclusion drawn by René Wellek: “In a sense, Romanticism is the revival of something old, but it is a revival with a difference; these ideas were translated into terms acceptable to men who had undergone the experience of the Enlightenment”. It is in the light of these assertions that we can better understand the meaning of Shakespeare’s ‘romantic’ comedies or the ‘Romanticism’ of literary works belonging to even more remote ages.

As a perennial mode, Romanticism ‘haunts the history of Western culture long after its alleged death in the 1850s’ (to quote Bogdan Ștefănescu), while for Harold Bloom Romanticism never ends reverberating through history to the present day.

It seems that English Romanticism has been the subject of far more extensive and theoretical critical strife, more than any other national Romanticism.

♦ Arthur O. Lovejoy, in “On the Discrimination of Romanticism” (1924) upheld the idea that the movement in Germany alone “has the indisputable right to be called Romanticism, since it invented the term for its own use”; he called the other similar European movements a “plurality of romanticisms”; English Romanticism consisted in fact of several “romanticisms”, often mixing essentially antithetic ideas.

Byron attacked the Lake Poets in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and Canto I of *Don Juan*. Southey denounced the “Satanic School” of poetry (i. e. Byron); Shelley attacked Wordsworth and Coleridge; Keats rejected Wordsworth; even Coleridge ended up by contradicting the theoretical ideas promoted by Wordsworth; the younger generation also had different likes and dislikes: while Byron started his career by imitating Pope, Keats clearly condemned the neo-classical school of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Lovejoy declared that the word ‘romantic’ has come ‘to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing’. Lovejoy was challenging the very ontological status of Romanticism. For him, there seems to be no one feature shared by all Romanticists.

There is no coherent Romantic “programme”, nor a conscious sense of belonging to a “movement” AND YET the poets writing between 1790-1840 share a great number of common features making up a peculiar unity of mode and feeling in a diversity of individual attitudes and biases.

◆ The “Preface” to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, a joint-venture collection of poetry produced by Wordsworth and Coleridge, brings about interesting critical ideas. The primary purpose of the authors was to reform poetry by rejecting the “artificial” literature of the previous century. Poetry should rely on “a selection of language really used by men” and its preferable subject matter should be “the humble and rustic life”. The authors rejected the notion of “poetic diction”; poetry was defined as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. They also rejected the purely selfish, rational and unimaginative way of looking at life displayed by their forerunners. Poetry was not necessarily metre, rhythm and poetic diction, but subjective feelings emerging from one’s experience.

◆ An attempt to define the Romantic attitude might include the following features and themes:

1. the rediscovery and exploration of the historical past (either the glamorous Middle Ages or ancient Greece). Some poets took refuge in a supposedly glorious past; others, like Byron and Shelley tried to extract from it human potentials able to change their world;

2. the attraction exerted by the Orient with its exotic and richly coloured world rather than the wisdom assigned to it by the 18<sup>th</sup> century;

3. the conviction that a less advanced stage of culture, even a savage condition, breeds greater happiness than modern society;

4. the idea of progress, the belief in a more glorious tomorrow, in continuous improvement (suggested by the social revolutions);

5. humanitarianism and democracy are supported by the belief in the equality and inherent worth of every man as well as the hostility to monarchical authority and established institutions;

6. originality definitely replaces the fashion of imitations (see Dryden, Pope), original compositions being considered the only valuable works;

7. confessionalism: verse, notes, diaries, correspondence stand proof for the interest in self-analysis. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, claims: “the most of what I have written concerns myself personally” (Wordsworth and Shelley also share this concern);

8. fundamental antipathy of the artist to his times: the Romantic writer goes his own way against the conventions of his time – he is a protester, a discontented type;

9. love of the wild and the picturesque in external and human nature. The wild inner and outer nature were opposite sides of the same coin, the devastating spectacles of Nature corresponding to the poet’s tormented soul;

10. diversitarianism, i. e. the loss of cultural centrality. The doctrine of diversity had Romantic roots: its 20<sup>th</sup> century counterpart is the concept of multi-culturalism;

11. the striving for the infinite and the preference for cosmic visions;

12. the deep longing for wholeness and a painful search for answers concerning ontological problems;

13. a deep feeling of Nature associated with the exaltation of the simplicity of everyday life;

14. the love of beauty and its relation to truth;

15. the cultivation of solitude etc. etc. etc.

◆ The birth of English Romanticism is considered to be the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Their ideal was to form a Naturalistic and Imaginative School of Poetry. (N.B. NATURE and IMAGINATION are key-words in any approach of Romanticism). This dual purpose was to be illustrated in two ways: Coleridge was to deal with fantastic themes of legend and romances in such a way as to produce upon the reader the impression of detailed reality; Wordsworth was to treat subjects of common homely life so imaginatively as to give them the charm of romance.

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Wordsworth’s poems fall into four groups:

1. chiefly narrative poems, in the early naturalistic method of the *Lyrical Ballads*;

2. the great imaginative Odes, the Sonnets, shorter narrative poems;

3. his long reflective and descriptive poems in blank verse: “The Prelude” (9,000 lines), “The Excursion”;

4. the poems of his later period, marked by classic austerity of style, inspired by Vergil and Milton and dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.

For Wordsworth, poetry is no longer mimesis but the representation of the world filtered through the eyes and the soul of the poet. The universe is no longer perceived as a mechanical but as an organic entity. Wordsworth is neither Christian, deist, nor rationalist. He is best described as a *Pantheist*, one who identifies the natural universe with God, and thus denies that God is *over* everything or possesses a distinct ‘personality’. The immanence of the divine in Nature confers it a sacramental dimension as God is perceived to be present everywhere in the world. Hence, the Romantic communion between man and Nature, and the Romantic poet’s conviction that the book of Nature could serve as man’s best teacher.

Wordsworth’s theory of poetic language derives from his deeper nature-philosophy. Although made up mostly of simple words, Wordsworth’s poetry is rich in emotions, rich in epiphanies (those sudden revelations significant for the human being). In the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, he defined poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”, originating “from emotion recollected in tranquility”. Such a recollection of emotions is *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, in which the poet recreates the splendour of a crowd of daffodils beside a lake.

In the sonnet *It Is a Beauteous Evening Calm and Free*, the poet records the sudden perception of a thunder signaling to the world that the “mighty being” is awake. In *Tintern Abbey*, the poetic narrator is emotionally stirred by his return after five years to the banks of the river Wye. Both a nature poem and a poem on man’s mind, *Tintern Abbey* records the movement of the poet’s mind in time. The poet considers the three important stages in the development of his mind, from childhood, when nature is approached through senses (Nature being presented in terms of growth, of organic life, all “colours” and “greenness”) to adolescence, when the approach is passionate (Nature being perceived as a “presence”, a “motion and a spirit”) and to maturity (when the poet transcends the human, the transient, the evil, and has the privilege of experiencing Nature’s eternal principles of kindness and joy, when Nature becomes a moral guide, impressing with beauty and feeding with lofty thoughts).

In *Nutting*, Wordsworth recollects a boyhood episode, when, after picking hazelnuts, he suddenly realized he had plundered the place and sinned against Nature. Wordsworth’s fundamental feeling is the joy stirred by Nature and the deep sadness caused by the human condition, of “what man has made of man”. “The child is father of the man” has been a favourite line of several generations of psychoanalysts but in *Ode: Intimations of*

*Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* children are regarded as repositories of virtue and even wisdom. The poet touches the Romantic obsessive theme of Nature's eternity and man's ephemerality; he expresses the particular feelings or emotional experiences, the vividness and splendour associated with natural objects during childhood, and the loss of capacity to see all these things when you grow up. The child is the "mighty prophet" who retains a feeling of Nature's wholeness, while adulthood suggests a "palsied age", a "prison-house", a "thought of grief".

*The Prelude, or the Growth of a Poet's Mind*, a vast poem written in blank verse, is perhaps the most convincing illustration of the idea that with Wordsworth a journey in space is the cause for a deeply felt journey through life. *The Prelude* is made up of fourteen books in which the author traced the psychology of his mind and heart, marking the "spots" of time and the dearest spaces which registered his poetic growth. Wordsworth the pupil, Wordsworth the student at Cambridge, Wordsworth the adult living in London, Wordsworth the tourist in the Alps are recollected via various autobiographical incidents and yet, it is the poet's philosophy, his vision concerning the relationship between man and the infinite that makes up the bulk of *The Prelude*: the incidents are mere illustrations of his philosophy. *The Prelude* might be best defined as a psychological study of childhood's perceptions and a poetic quest for creative powers.

Wordsworth enriched the language of poetry by bringing into use many words regarded as too humble for such an honour. He showed the beauty of common things and humble lives and opened men's eyes to a new and unsuspected world of beauty lying round them. The distinctive feature of his innovation remains simplicity. He used less symbols than the other Romantic poets. His language is his own, his natural descriptions are fresh and immediate; he is a poet of the particular scene, not the general abstract image. Wordsworth wanted poetry to stay on the ground and extract thrills from the commonplace. He is one of the greatest formative and inspiring influences of modern English poetry. And yet he is unequal in his works. Shelley accused him of being a deserter from the Cause of Humanity; Browning later renewed this charge; some of his early poems were regarded as silly etc.

### SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Coleridge, the confirmed opium eater, is regarded nowadays not only as the poet of illusion and mysticism or the poet of the supernatural, but also as one of the greatest English literary critics of all times, due to works such as *Lectures on Shakespeare* and *Biographia Literaria*. In

Chapter XIII of the latter work he explains his viewpoint regarding imagination (the creative force of mind) vs. fancy (which depends mostly on memory).

However, Coleridge's essential contribution to the Romantic movement lay in a return to the magical and mysterious. Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge wanted poetry to fly into the regions of the marvellous and choose themes that, though fantastic, should be acceptable through "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith". Coleridge's three great poems – *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan* – are coloured with the mysterious and the supernatural.

Coleridge is considered the first Romantic who transformed the reader into a traveller journeying in an unknown space. His poems haunt the reader because of their rich connotations which make the decoding more complex and more varied. Each poem offers a crux, a text constructed on several layers of meaning.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is summarized by Anthony Burgess as follows: "The Ancient Mariner kills an albatross and is forthwith tormented with the most frightening visions and visitations, all of which are presented in the style and metre of the old ballads, but with far greater imagination and astonishing imagery". A more complex reading of the poem might decode it as a voyage leading to self-knowledge and self-discovery. The curse and the haunted ship suggest that redemption can only be attained through deep suffering. (The same motif will be later employed by the German composer Richard Wagner in *The Flying Dutchman*). A more detailed analysis of the same poem might reveal the fact that it is a complex metaphor of the poet's fate. The poem abounds in metaphors which all seem to focus towards one great image: that of the inner pain of choosing or of having been chosen by the creative powers. It is a kind of *misological* metaphor, as Kant called it, of hatred against intellect. Thus, the poem turns out to be a cry against the self-pain-inducing loneliness considered as a primordial sin which must be punished.

*Christabel*, with its flexible metre anticipating Gerard Manley Hopkins, but also reminding us of pre-Chaucerian rhythms, is a Gothic ballad full of the mystery of evil. Geraldine, the beautiful daughter of Roland, has her body inhabited by an evil spirit. Christabel meets her in the forest and although Geraldine discloses her evil qualities in subtle ways, Christabel cannot bring herself to tell the truth. Geraldine's eyes betray the presence of the devil within her: it is a nightmare situation and a nightmare poem, touched with the glamour of old castles and medieval remoteness. The poem might be interpreted as a journey leading

to knowledge (see Christabel's route: the castle yard – the stairs – the room – the bed) and as the metamorphosis of the self into the 'other'.

*Kubla Khan*, like *Christabel*, unfinished, is a dream-poem written in trance. It goes to the fabulous Orient for its theme (the creative, strange power of imagination) and presents the vision of an exotic, unearthly world which is, actually, the lost paradise. *Kubla Khan* is a fantastic invocation of a 'sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice': a microcosm where both body and spirit may coexist in happiness.

Coleridge's Gothic elements strongly influenced the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe (*The Raven*, *Annabel Lee*).

Leon Levițchi upheld the idea of Eminescu's indebtedness to Coleridge (according to him, Eminescu must have read Coleridge during his stay in Berlin); this opinion was rejected by Ștefan Avădanei in *Eminescu și poezia engleză*.

Coleridge remains the author of vast unfinished projects in poetry, philosophy and criticism. Thomas Carlyle characterized Coleridge as "a hundred horse-power steam-engine stuck in the mud and with the boiler burst". Charles Lamb considered Coleridge "a damaged archangel". He inaugurated the habit of writing under the influence of opium (later pursued by Rimbaud, Huxley, etc.) and had he lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he might have become a cultural hero of the underground artistic movement illustrated by Andy Warhol, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, John Lennon, Kurt Cobain, etc.

## GEORGE GORDON BYRON

If William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were in revolt against the poetical conventions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Byron and his followers, called by Southey the Satanic School, went much further. They were in revolt against English society, against English religion and against the English monarchical system of government.

Byron was regarded as the Weltschmerz poet. He gained his reputation after extended travels to Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, when he published in quick succession a number of dazzling but hastily written verse romances with their plot located in the Levant. The poems have plenty of variety of scenery; their weakness lies in their lack of variety in characters. Two rather theatrical personages are, under different names, repeated over and over again: a hero and a heroine. The typical Byronic hero is a man "of one virtue but a thousand crimes"; he has a melancholy look, a pale brow, an irresistible charm for ladies, and generally has no friend, but a dog. In each tale there is a Byronic heroine, too – a woman – sensual, devoted, loving, faithful unto death.

Unlike Shelley, who sincerely believed in the perfectibility of the mankind, Byron was the only English Romantic poet who presented his contemporary world as “falling apart”, as disintegrating into small pieces which could not cohere into a whole. That is why his poems do not deal with mankind’s future, but rather seem to be concerned with himself. If this contention were true, Childe Harold, Cain, the Corsair, the Giaour, Manfred, Mazeppa and Don Juan would all be facets of one and the same personality: Byron’s personality.

His meeting Shelley in Switzerland and reading Goethe’s *Faustus* led to the creation of a Faustian dramatic poem, *Manfred*, while the Italian sojourn and Pulci’s influence account for *Don Juan*, the long comic narrative poem mocking at everything the English held sacred; it is still considered the greatest English satire in verse.

Byron’s hero is daring, proud and selfish. His fierce passions and actions destroy both the human being he loves and himself. Manfred is doomed to die of too much loneliness and corrosive inner anxiety. However, he prefers death to nothingness. Manfred, like Cain, is endowed with a profound thirst for knowledge and a certain philosophical and psychological depth. Manfred sees heaven and hell as purely internal states. Unlike the Giaour or the Corsair, who find relief in passion or fight, Manfred realizes that there is no room for him and his higher aspirations. Tired and vanquished he does not try to struggle against social injustice but lets himself be tortured by human nothingness. And yet, Manfred’s isolation is not a melancholy, static frame of mind: it is filled with the tragic tension rooted in his awareness of the clash between his infinite spiritual powers and their mortal frame. Manfred rejects any compromises, particularly the acceptance of his mortality, and this makes him so isolated in the gallery of Byron’s heroes.

Don Juan is an exception among Byron’s heroes. Don Juan wanders in space through years and centuries, judging everything with an ironical detachment. He has been not just once compared to the wise Fool in *King Lear*. His power of generalizing originates in his experience, in his life lived among his fellows. He opposes the ruin and disorder of England to the beauty and glory of Greece. In Don Juan’s speeches, which make up all the cantos of the poem, the truth is always concealed behind an ironical veil; all contemporary evils are cynically distorted under this ironical guise. *Don Juan* is perhaps “not strictly a Romantic poem at all: there is too much laughter in it, too much of the sharp edge of social criticism”, says Anthony Burgess.

Irony is a key-word in reading Byron: if man’s stern struggle to achieve immortality is marked by metaphors or symbols, it seems that

the other side of the coin is mocked at through irony and all its accessories: "Fools are my theme, let satire be my song", proclaims the young Byron in his early days in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

Falsehood, cowardice, smallness are bitterly attacked; women and marriage, governments and politicians, poets and their works, wars, great military men, religion, God himself, and all his angels are mercilessly mocked.

Byron's irony is different from that of his neoclassical predecessors Dryden and Pope. Byron takes an 18<sup>th</sup> century artistic device and revolutionizes it: his witty spirit permanently vacillates between the denotative and the connotative level of words, in a "continuous wrestling with words". The bathos or anticlimax is one of Byron's favourite figures of speech: highly philosophical reflections are immediately followed by personal reflections, the idyllic atmosphere of a scene is often brought to an abrupt end by some unexpected intrusion, one topic is suddenly dropped and replaced by another.

In Byron's self-centered poetry, Nature is no longer a distinct topic as in Wordsworth's poems. It appears closely knit with love and Time. And yet, Nature's beauty appears in highly emotional, genuine descriptions, in images such as "loud roar of torrents", "black pines", "lofty fountains" and "transparent lakes", "rosy ocean, vast and bright" and "glittering sea".

If with the other Romantics the interest fell more on ideas such as the creative process, imagination, the poet and his creations etc., with Byron the richest study was on love. Whole passages in *Hebrew Melodies* and whole cantos in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* or *Don Juan* are concerned with this feeling in its multifarious aspects: love for a woman, love for friends, love for liberty (freedom and independence), love of nature etc. Byron did not try to create a deformed image of erotic love. The gamut of emotions, fears and stirrings was subtly presented. Byron seems to have studied two intense moments of erotic experience: the void left in one's soul following a passionate experience and the painful realization of the deeper solitude in two.

The Haidée episode in *Don Juan* is the most touching presentation of two youthful beings falling in love with each other. The gradual stages leading to the moment "where heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move" are depicted with candour and this "first love" prolonged in Nature, with "the silent ocean, and the starlight bay,/ The twilight glow" attending on the lovers, is the only ecstatic union in Byron's whole creation.

Byron's heroines in *Oriental Tales* (Gulnare, Leila, Zuleika) belong to the same pattern as Haidée. They are kind-hearted, pretty, loving, dutiful to their beloved man. They are the women who can "restore" and "soothe" the men's tortured souls.

Byron is not a great Nature poet, but a great satirist; he was not a deep thinker; his anti-social attitude made himself become a comic figure; AND YET – his influence on the continent was second to none. Byronism became the fashionable pose: Alfred de Musset, Heinrich Heine, Goethe, Lenau, Lermontov acknowledged his influence.

### PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Shelley, like Byron, spent his short life in revolt; he was a rebel and also a would-be reformer [he refused to take sugar in his tea on the ground that “sugar was produced by slave labour”].

At twenty-one he wrote *Queen Mab*, a long philosophical poem in which he professes himself an atheist, a vegetarian, an opponent of existing marriage laws, a republican, an advocate of universal love. Queen Mab (originally mentioned by Mercutio in a famous cue of *Romeo and Juliet*), the Fairy Queen, leads the soul of the poet through the world. She reveals to him the past and the present with all their wicked forms of government, religion and social tyranny. But at the same time she forecasts a future full of hope and happiness. The influence of Rousseau and Godwin is obvious here as well as in his longer narrative poems which also take up the theme of revolt (*The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Hellas*).

In *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley advocates women’s rights and the emancipation of women, while in *Hellas* he hymns the Greek rising against the Turkish rule. Shelley held that Monarchy, Christianity and Marriage should be abolished.

Shelley’s second wife was the daughter of William Godwin, Rousseau’s apostle in England, and she sympathized with his radical ideas. But Shelley also presents his positive philosophy of the indestructibility of beauty (*The Sensitive Plant*) and of the power of love (*Epipsychidion*). *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude* again presents the poet’s self-portrait, a youth seeking and seeking in vain an ideal embodiment of earthly love. His meeting Byron led to the composition of *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. During his final years (he died at the age of 30) spent in Italy, he got acquainted with the works of Tasso, Ariosto and Petrarch. In Italy Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound*, a drama inspired by Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*. It is not a drama properly, being rather a series of splendid chants in praise of democracy than a picture of action and passion. Prometheus represents Humanity freed at last by the Revolution from the rule of tyrants. Shelley’s best drama, still actable nowadays, is *The Cenci*, a realistic tragedy based on an Italian crime committed in Rome in 1599. The plot tells how the beautiful and noble-

minded Beatrice Cenci is driven by the monstrous cruelty and diabolical wickedness of her father, Old Count Cenci, to conspire with her stepmother and brothers for the murder of their common tyrant. Shelley altered the real story to suit his own prejudices against the Papal Church.

*Adonais*, a memorable elegy in memory of Keats, reveals a mature mysticism, a serene philosophy of life which denies death and affirms the immortality of the human soul. In this poem, Shelley's over-luxurious imagery, generally his greatest fault, is kept in check by the subject.

However, it is as the lyrical poet of Nature that Shelley makes the greatest appeal. He has the same sensitivity as Wordsworth, and perhaps a far greater melodic power. Like Wordsworth, Shelley had no humour. He held comedy in poetry to be a crime. To Wordsworth Nature was the voice of God, but Shelley desired to be made one with Nature. In *Ode to the West Wind* the poet cries "Be thou me, impetuous one!" In his *Odes* Shelley endeavours to look beyond the visible, as he feels attracted by the various processes hidden within the frame of the One. In *Ode to the West Wind*, the natural effects caused by the wind underlie a cyclical process of death and rebirth: what is lasting and durable wells up again in spring. The wind becomes a symbol, the carrier of knowledge ("the seeds and the leaves") from one generation to another.

"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?", the final line brings a note of fear, of anxiety into the serene space of the poem.

The same idea of perpetual metamorphosis is evident in *The Cloud*, too. The temporal transformations and progress are measured not by the clock but by the natural phenomena of days and years. The cloud's various transformations, with the cloud speaking, are presented in a materialistic way: "I bring fresh showers.../I sift the snow.../I rest...". But the cloud also has a symbolic value, it stands for Shelley's conception about eternity vs. transience, about cosmic immortality vs. human evanescence.

In *Ode to Heaven*, the "Chorus of Spirits" provides a three-fold definition of Heaven: the embodiment of eternity and constancy, "the mind's first chamber" and the evanescence of a dew drop.

Throughout Shelley's work we find a technical mastery of both traditional forms such as the Spenserian stanza (in *Adonais*), blank verse (in *Alastor*), couplets, Dante's *terza rima* and innovative prosodical patterns; his eloquence and music stand unmatched among the English poets of the time. Shelley is best in his briefer and simpler lyrics. Key-words in the approach of his works are the democratic dreams inspired

by “the sacred name of Rousseau” and the Revolution; faith in man; humanitarianism; his longing for ideal beauty.

Matthew Arnold characterized Shelley the man and his work as a “beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain”.

### JOHN KEATS

John Keats (who died at the age of 26) was the most talented English Romantic poet. His work seems, at least at first sight, richer and more colourful than that of his predecessors’. In one of his letters he confessed: “Imagination is my Monastery and I am its Monk”. For Keats, Beauty is necessarily Truth and Truth is Beauty.

Beauty’s truth lies in love, love is true only when imagination is at work and than it is equated with a blissful mood which is the attribute of ‘poesy’. To enjoy such a blissful mood means *to know*.

When one contemplates Keats’s life one is struck not only by its sad brevity but by the extraordinary and triumphant fullness of its achievement.

Keats’s heroes were patriot champions of popular freedom: King Alfred, William Tell, Robert Burns, Robin Hood, or the Polish patriot Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The beginning of Book III of *Endymion* was considered a “jacobinical apostrophe” by the Tory government.

*Endymion* is, however, more than that. It is also the tale of a shepherd on Mount Latmos, living, under Zeus’ spell, an everlasting youth. The first pangs of love make Endymion wonder about life and true happiness; the poem records the stages of a descent from

- a) the external life to the inner world of Endymion’s soul;
- b) from Endymion’s self to his deeper self.

The hero embarks upon a *journey* and *pursuit* metaphorically rendered by the image of *net* and *labyrinth*. *Night* registers all the changes by means of which the young man is spiritualized. The poem abounds in architectural and visual imagery, in animal and vegetal imagery, which underlie the hero’s quest aiming at self-knowledge and harmonious integration into Nature. Endymion becomes the poet’s alter-ego in his search for Beauty in life.

*Hyperion*, an unfinished romance in three books is, through the images it uses, complementary to *Endymion*. If Endymion has become immortal through spiritualized love, absolute knowledge makes a god of the poet:

‘Knowledge enormous makes a god of me’.

*Lamia*, a poetic romance in two parts, may stand as the symbol of imagination contrasted to reason. In demonology a ‘lamia’ was a monster in a woman’s shape. Lamia, the serpent, persuades Apollo to transform her back into a woman. Next, she lures the young Lycius and dares him to happiness through love. Lycius abandons cold rationalism in order to reach ‘blissful mood’, but his unnamed bride turns out to be just an illusion, a cold symbol who finally has to die.

In *The Eve of St. Agnes* erotic love associated with storm results in unexpected effects.

Many critics consider Keats’s odes to be the best poetic pieces of his brief career. In *Ode on a Grecian Urn* Keats again asserts his creed:

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all  
Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know’.

Permanence – transience, immortality-mortality, urn-scenes are the antitheses the poem is built on.

The nightingale in *Ode to a Nightingale* undergoes a dramatic change in its gradual transformation from a bird alive in the sky to a symbol of imaginative art. Poetry is equated in stanzas IV and V with the poet’s imaginary participation in the nightingale’s song. And yet, for man the only way to achieve a similar ecstatic mood and to render it eternal is to die. Death here is not extinction but the eager wish to make a transient state of happiness become eternal.

In *Ode to Psyche* the poet creates a delightful “sanctuary” (the world of imagination) in honour of Psyche the goddess (the human soul in love), who will be forever worshipped by her priest (the poet). *To Autumn* is only on the surface a descriptive poem; the stillness (“stationing”, to quote Keats) and the rich variety of details conceal the signs of an on-going process, as if there were no winter to follow. Keats was not only an explicit supporter of humanitarian principles; he was also a great admirer of Milton, Shakespeare and Chapman. Spenserian influences are also detectable in his romance tale-poems, best illustrated by *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

◆ GENERAL CONCLUSION: After this brief survey of the works of the greatest English Romantic poets the definition of Romanticism seems to be as elusive as it appeared in the general introduction to this topic. However, the student in English literature may opt for Wellek’s

definition of Romanticism: a loose conceptual congeries (i.e. mass) organized around three dominant terms: Imagination, Nature, Symbol (or Myth). The Creative Imagination of the poet supplied the Romantic reader with material out of which he could elaborate or explore his own inner subjective world. Nature was a mirror in which the Imagination saw itself reflected. Since the Imagination was private and asocial if not antisocial, the Nature it found itself looking at was necessarily wild nature. And since the Imagination cannot formulate logical propositions, its message to the Romantic reader had to be oblique. The images of wild nature and their relationship to the poet carried with them obscure symbolic significances of universal interest. The symbolical language was a device for asking questions and not one for recording answers. The most frequent word in Blake's *The Tiger* is the interrogative *what*, while both Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* and Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* end on a question.

F. W. Bateson defines Romanticism in social terms, as "a new class, the middle-class intelligentsia, in the process of discovering its identity. The medium of discovery was linguistic".

Finally, Herbert M. Schueller, in "Romanticism Reconsidered" (1962) provides us with a synthetic and conclusive definition of Romanticism as "the tendency to break the confines, the rules, the limits, to go beyond that which has been crystalized".

## JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen (1775-1817) started her literary career by parodying the Gothic romance in *Northanger Abbey*. Although a contemporary of the great English romantic poets, she was not a romantic herself. Her work is considered to crown the patterns established by the 18<sup>th</sup> century novel, achieving a perfect synthesis between the comic and the sentimental.

The Gothic novel had brought the supernatural into the natural, the sublime quality of fear (theorized by Edmund Burke) aroused by the vertical in depth.

Jane Austen presents a self-sufficient world, limited and narrow spheres of life, a cosy environment of sofas, armchairs and rest at leisure, a world in which nothing is menacing. It is a world peopled by men and women of wealth, substance and inheritance, with no economic pressure; they grow into snobs and refined talkers.

Jane Austen's characters live in a mellow ripe world in which the human relationships are domesticated, tamed, reduced to pleasantries: it is a world in which the word does not stand for the thought. They play a social game in which the words cover and hide actual thoughts and feelings.

Jane Austen was a subtle ironist; it is precisely her irony that generates the coherence of her novels, controlling the tensions caused by the conflicting interests of her characters; her characters always keep appearances with those they do despise.

The goal of her female characters is to secure a place in society – to become respectable and preserve this status. In her opinion, the man should consider his wife as an equal partner.

Jane Austen does not identify herself with her heroines, she does not enter under their skin. In keeping a certain distance between the

omniscient, intrusive narrator and the thoughts of her heroines, she anticipates the objective detachment of Gustave Flaubert and Henry James. She is not willing to account for their deeds, but rather expose them to the scrutiny of the reader and of the other characters, for the sake of showing them in the process of inner growth.

Wayne C. Booth has dedicated an entire chapter of his *Rhetoric of Fiction* to the way in which Jane Austen permanently controls the distance between the narrator and main character in *Emma*. The heroine of the novel is a proud, vainglorious young aristocrat; her flaws and mischievous deeds are made obvious to the reader and yet the authoress always saves her from the reader's contempt and she never becomes a completely negative character, although her character *seems* by far less attractive than those of Jane Fairfax or Mr. Knightley. Emma's change of attitude and final reconciliation with herself and with Mr. Knightley trigger off the inevitable happy ending sustained by a comic vision.

Jane Austen did not sound too deeply into the psychology of her characters, but rather into their morals. She displays a large range of attitudes towards her characters, of moral judgements: she approves of Jane Fairfax's conduct and simply despises Wickham's behaviour (in *Pride and Prejudice*), but she never resorts to auctorial commentary and, thus, avoids Richardson's didactic, moralizing tone.

Maturity is the chief value of her characters; prudence and tolerance both towards oneself and the others become essential. Their freedom is severely limited, it is acquired by the understanding of the various necessities imposed on them. These necessities are not derived from the historical events of the authoress's age. Jane Austen was not aware of the political turmoil of her age, of the echoes of the French Revolution, of the effects of the industrial revolution, the policy of enclosures, mass poverty etc.

Although a contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Jane Austen was not interested in nature, either. Nature appears rarely and briefly, mainly as inventories of legacies and domains, in the form of a garden, pond or forest.

The small world of her fiction displays a minute careful realism of a dramatic nature. She is the first novelist to attain an economic novel in terms of literary means and devices. By suppressing the superfluous moralizing comment and by achieving a perfect balance between telling and showing, Jane Austen avoided redundancy: every detail in her novels

is functional, relevant. Her comic vision still preserved the symmetry and polarity of both character and action established by Fielding.

Her language has nothing of the richness and nuances displayed by the characters in the works of Smollett and Dickens, who are realists of a different kind. Jane Austen's language is stereotypical, affected, carefully chosen. Her style is mannered, the speeches in her novels are polite; she uses a pure language made up of accepted and acceptable words, a language of reasoning and verbal duelling.

Like Marlowe and Keats, Jane Austen died young. She did not have time to evolve as an artist. However, her works had a major impact on the writings of great writers such as Virginia Woolf, Henry James and E. M. Forster.

Virginia Woolf wrote that had Jane Austen lived longer and had she had the opportunity to learn more about life, she would have given up comedy and concocted a more elaborate, profound and suggestive method of communicating not only men's words, but also their unuttered thoughts. She might have, thus, become the forerunner of Henry James or Proust. Or even... Virginia Woolf's, as David Daiches has ironically added.

Like Jane Austen, Henry James aimed at a life lived according to aesthetic principles, open to the beautiful, concerned with civilization. E. M. Forster also succeeded in achieving almost a monograph, the study of a social group in a limited sphere, in *A Passage to India*.

## SURVEY SUPPORT TEXTS

• WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *The Taming of the Shrew*, ACT V, SCENE 2

LUCENTIO'S *house* - Enter BAPTISTA, VINCENTIO, GREMIO, *the* PEDANT, LUCENTIO, BIANCA, PETRUCHIO, KATHERINA, HORTENSIO, *and* WIDOW. The SERVINGMEN *with* TRANIO, BIONDELLO, and GRUMIO, *bringing in a banquet*

LUCENTIO At last, though long, our jarring notes agree;  
And time it is when raging war is done  
To smile at scapes and perils overblown.  
My fair Bianca, bid my father welcome,  
While I with self-same kindness welcome thine.  
Brother Petruchio, sister Katherina,  
And thou, Hortensio, with thy loving widow,  
Feast with the best, and welcome to my house.  
My banquet is to close our stomachs up  
After our great good cheer. Pray you, sit down;  
For now we sit to chat as well as eat.

[*They sit*]

PETRUCHIO Nothing but sit and sit, and eat and eat!

BAPTISTA Padua affords this kindness, son Petruchio.

PETRUCHIO Padua affords nothing but what is kind.

HORTENSIO For both our sakes I would that word were true.

PETRUCHIO Now, for my life, Hortensio fears his widow.

WIDOW Then never trust me if I be afraid.

PETRUCHIO YOU are very sensible, and yet you miss my sense:  
I mean Hortensio is afraid of you.

WIDOW He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.

PETRUCHIO Roundly replied.

KATHERINA Mistress, how mean you that?

WIDOW Thus I conceive by him.

PETRUCHIO Conceives by me!  
How likes Hortensio that?  
HORTENSIO My widow says thus she conceives her tale.  
PETRUCHIO Very well mended. Kiss him for that, good widow.  
KATHERINA 'He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.'  
I pray you tell me what you meant by that.  
WIDOW Your husband, being troubled with a shrew,  
Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe;  
And now you know my meaning.  
KATHERINA A very mean meaning.  
WIDOW Right, I mean you.  
KATHERINA And I am mean, indeed, respecting you.  
PETRUCHIO To her, Kate!  
HORTENSIO To her, widow!  
PETRUCHIO A hundred marks, my Kate does put her down.  
HORTENSIO That's my office.  
PETRUCHIO Spoke like an officer- ha' to thee, lad.  
[Drinks to HORTENSIO]  
BAPTISTA How likes Gremio these quick-witted folks?  
GREMIO Believe me, sir, they butt together well.  
BIANCA Head and butt! An hasty-witted body  
Would say your head and butt were head and horn.  
VINCENTIO Ay, mistress bride, hath that awakened you?  
BIANCA Ay, but not frightened me; therefore I'll sleep again.  
PETRUCHIO Nay, that you shall not; since you have begun,  
Have at you for a bitter jest or two.  
BIANCA Am I your bird? I mean to shift my bush,  
And then pursue me as you draw your bow.  
You are welcome all.  
*Exeunt* BIANCA, KATHERINA, and WIDOW  
PETRUCHIO She hath prevented me. Here, Signior Tranio,  
This bird you aim'd at, though you hit her not;  
Therefore a health to all that shot and miss'd.  
TRANIO O, sir, Lucentio slipp'd me like his greyhound,  
Which runs himself, and catches for his master.  
PETRUCHIO A good swift simile, but something currish.  
TRANIO 'Tis well, sir, that you hunted for yourself;  
'Tis thought your deer does hold you at a bay.  
BAPTISTA O, O, Petruchio! Tranio hits you now.  
LUCENTIO I thank thee for that gird, good Tranio.  
HORTENSIO Confess, confess; hath he not hit you here?

PETRUCHIO 'A has a little gall'd me, I confess;  
 And, as the jest did glance away from me,  
 'Tis ten to one it maim'd you two outright.  
 BAPTISTA Now, in good sadness, son Petruccio,  
 I think thou hast the veriest shrew of all.  
 PETRUCHIO Well, I say no; and therefore, for assurance,  
 Let's each one send unto his wife,  
 And he whose wife is most obedient,  
 To come at first when he doth send for her,  
 Shall win the wager which we will propose.  
 HORTENSIO Content. What's the wager?  
 LUCENTIO Twenty crowns.  
 PETRUCHIO Twenty crowns?  
 I'll venture so much of my hawk or hound,  
 But twenty times so much upon my wife.  
 LUCENTIO A hundred then.  
 HORTENSIO Content.  
 PETRUCHIO A match! 'tis done.  
 HORTENSIO Who shall begin?  
 LUCENTIO That will I.  
 Go, Biondello, bid your mistress come to me.  
 BIONDELLO I go.  
*Exit*  
 BAPTISTA Son, I'll be your half Bianca comes.  
 LUCENTIO I'll have no halves; I'll bear it all myself.  
*Re-enter BIONDELLO*  
 How now! what news?  
 BIONDELLO Sir, my mistress sends you word  
 That she is busy and she cannot come.  
 PETRUCHIO How! She's busy, and she cannot come!  
 Is that an answer?  
 GREMIO Ay, and a kind one too.  
 Pray God, sir, your wife send you not a worse.  
 PETRUCHIO I hope better.  
 HORTENSIO Sirrah Biondello, go and entreat my wife  
 To come to me forthwith.  
*Exit BIONDELLO*  
 PETRUCHIO O, ho! entreat her!  
 Nay, then she must needs come.  
 HORTENSIO I am afraid, sir,  
 Do what you can, yours will not be entreated.



WIDOW Lord, let me never have a cause to sigh  
 Till I be brought to such a silly pass!  
 BIANCA Fie! what a foolish duty call you this?  
 LUCENTIO I would your duty were as foolish too;  
 The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,  
 Hath cost me a hundred crowns since supper-time!  
 BIANCA The more fool you for laying on my duty.  
 PETRUCHIO Katherine, I charge thee, tell these headstrong women  
 What duty they do owe their lords and husbands.  
 WIDOW Come, come, you're mocking; we will have no telling.  
 PETRUCHIO Come on, I say; and first begin with her.  
 WIDOW She shall not.  
 PETRUCHIO I say she shall. And first begin with her.  
 KATHERINA Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow,  
 And dart not scornful glances from those eyes  
 To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.  
 It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,  
 Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,  
 And in no sense is meet or amiable.  
 A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled  
 Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;  
 And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty  
 Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.  
 Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,  
 Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,  
 And for thy maintenance commits his body  
 To painful labour both by sea and land,  
 To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,  
 Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;  
 And craves no other tribute at thy hands  
 But love, fair looks, and true obedience  
 Too little payment for so great a debt.  
 Such duty as the subject owes the prince,  
 Even such a woman oweth to her husband;  
 And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,  
 And not obedient to his honest will,  
 What is she but a foul contending rebel  
 And graceless traitor to her loving lord?  
 I am asham'd that women are so simple  
 To offer war where they should kneel for peace;  
 Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,

When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.  
 Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,  
 Unapt to toll and trouble in the world,  
 But that our soft conditions and our hearts  
 Should well agree with our external parts?  
 Come, come, you froward and unable worins!  
 My mind hath been as big as one of yours,  
 My heart as great, my reason haply more,  
 To bandy word for word and frown for frown;  
 But now I see our lances are but straws,  
 Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,  
 That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.  
 Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,  
 And place your hands below your husband's foot;  
 In token of which duty, if he please,  
 My hand is ready, may it do him ease.  
 PETRUCHIO Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate.  
 LUCENTIO Well, go thy ways, old lad, for thou shalt ha't.  
 VINCENTIO 'Tis a good hearing when children are toward.  
 LUCENTIO But a harsh hearing when women are froward.  
 PETRUCHIO Come, Kate, we'll to bed.  
 We three are married, but you two are sped.  
 [*To LUCENTIO*]  
 'Twas I won the wager, though you hit the white;  
 And being a winner, God give you good night!  
*Exeunt PETRUCHIO and KATHERINA*  
 HORTENSIO Now go thy ways; thou hast tam'd a curst shrow.  
 LUCENTIO 'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tam'd so.

• WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,  
 ACT V, SCENE 1

*Athens. The palace of THESEUS*  
*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, LORDS, and*  
 ATTENDANTS  
 HIPPOLYTA 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.  
 THESEUS More strange than true. I never may believe  
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,  
 Are of imagination all compact.  
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold;  
 That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,  
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.  
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name.  
 Such tricks hath strong imagination  
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
 How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear?  
 HIPPOLYTA But all the story of the night told over,  
 And all their minds transfigur'd so together,  
 More witnesseth than fancy's images,  
 And grows to something of great constancy,  
 But howsoever strange and admirable.  
*Enter* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA  
 THESEUS Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.  
 Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love  
 Accompany your hearts!  
 LYSANDER More than to us  
 Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!  
 THESEUS Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,  
 To wear away this long age of three hours  
 Between our after-supper and bed-time?  
 Where is our usual manager of mirth?  
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play  
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?  
 Call Philostrate.  
 PHILOSTRATE Here, mighty Theseus.  
 THESEUS Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?  
 What masque? what music? How shall we beguile  
 The lazy time, if not with some delight?  
 PHILOSTRATE There is a brief how many sports are ripe;  
 Make choice of which your Highness will see first.  
*[Giving a paper]*

THESEUS 'The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung  
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.'  
We'll none of that: that have I told my love,  
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.  
'The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,  
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.'  
That is an old device, and it was play'd  
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.  
'The thrice three Muses mourning for the death  
Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary.'  
That is some satire, keen and critical,  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.  
'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth.'  
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!  
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *As You Like It*, ACT II, SCENE 5.

*Another part of the forest Enter AMIENS, JAQUES, and OTHERS*  
SONG

AMIENS Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither.  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.

JAQUES More, more, I prithee, more.

AMIENS It will make you melancholy, Monsieur Jaques.

JAQUES I thank it. More, I prithee, more. I can suck melancholy  
out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs. More, I prithee, more.

AMIENS My voice is ragged; I know I cannot please you.

JAQUES I do not desire you to please me; I do desire you to sing.  
Come, more; another stanza. Call you 'em stanzas?

AMIENS What you will, Monsieur Jaques.

JAQUES Nay, I care not for their names; they owe me nothing.  
Will you sing?

AMIENS More at your request than to please myself.

JAQUES Well then, if ever I thank any man, I'll thank you; but that they call compliment is like th' encounter of two dog-apes; and when a man thanks me heartily, methinks have given him a penny, and he renders me the beggarly thanks. Come, sing; and you that will not, hold your tongues.

AMIENS Well, I'll end the song. Sirs, cover the while; the Duke will drink under this tree. He hath been all this day to look you.

JAQUES And I have been all this day to avoid him. He is to disputable for my company. I think of as many matters as he; but I give heaven thanks, and make no boast of them. Come, warble, come.

SONG

*[All together here]*

Who doth ambition shun,  
And loves to live i' th' sun,  
Seeking the food he eats,  
And pleas'd with what he gets,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither.  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.

JAQUES I'll give you a verse to this note that I made yesterday in despite of my invention.

AMIENS And I'll sing it.

JAQUES Thus it goes:  
If it do come to pass  
That any man turn ass,  
Leaving his wealth and ease  
A stubborn will to please,  
Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame;  
Here shall he see  
Gross fools as he,  
An if he will come to me.

AMIENS What's that 'ducdame'?

JAQUES 'Tis a Greek invocation, to call fools into a circle. I'll go sleep, if I can; if I cannot, I'll rail against all the first-born of Egypt.

AMIENS And I'll go seek the Duke; his banquet is prepar'd.

*Exeunt severally.*

• DANIEL DEFOE: *Robinson Crusoe*

In the interval of this operation, I took up the Bible, and began to read, but my head was too much disturbed with the tobacco to bear reading, at least that time; only having opened the book casually, the first words that occurred to me were these, "Call on Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify Me." The words were very apt to my case, and made some impression upon my thoughts at the time of reading them, though not so much as they did afterwards; for as for being delivered, the word had no sound, as I may say, to me, the thing was so remote, so impossible in my apprehension of things, that I began to say, as the children of Israel did when they were promised flesh to eat, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" so I began to say, Can God Himself deliver me from this place? And as it was not for many years that any hope appeared, this prevailed very often upon my thoughts. But, however, the words made a great impression upon me, and I mused upon them very often.

It grew now late, and the tobacco had, as I said, dozed my head so much, that I inclined to sleep; so I left my lamp burning in the cave, lest I should want anything in the night, and went to bed. But before I lay down, I did what I never had done in all my life: I kneeled down and prayed to God to fulfill the promise to me, that if I called upon Him in the day of trouble, He would deliver me. After my broken and imperfect prayer was over, I drank the rum in which I had steeped the tobacco; which was so strong and rank of the tobacco that indeed I could scarcely get it down. Immediately upon this I went to bed. I found presently it flew up in my head violently; but I fell into a sound sleep, and waked no more till, by the sun, it must necessarily be near three o'clock in the afternoon the next day. Nay, to his hour I am partly of the opinion that I slept all the next day and night, and till almost three that day after; for otherwise I know not how I should lose a day out of my reckoning in the days of the week, as it appeared some years after had done. For if I had lost it by crossing and recrossing the line, I should have lost more than one day. But certainly I lost a day in my account, and never knew which way.

Be that, however, one way or the other, when I awaked I found myself exceedingly refreshed, and my spirits lively and cheerful. I got up, I was stronger than I was the day before, and my stomach better, for I was hungry; and, in short, I had no fit the next day, but continued much altered for the better. This was the 29th.

The 30th was my well day, of course, and I went abroad with my gun, but did not care to travel too far. I killed a sea-fowl or two, something

like a brand-goose, and brought them home, but was not very forward to eat them; so I ate some more of the turtle's eggs, which were very good. This evening I renewed the medicine, which I had supposed did me good the day before, viz., the tobacco steeped in rum; only I did not take so much as before, nor did I chew any of the leaf, or hold my head over the smoke. However, I was not so well the next day, which was the first of July, as I hoped I should have been; for I had a little spice of the cold fit, but it was not much.

July 2. - I renewed the medicine all the three ways; and dosed myself with it as at first, and doubled the quantity which I drank.

July 3. - I missed the fit for good and all, though I did not recover my full strength for some weeks after. While I was thus gathering strength, my thoughts ran exceedingly upon this Scripture, "I will deliver thee;" and the impossibility of my deliverance lay much upon my mind, in bar of my ever expecting it. But as I was discouraging myself with such thoughts, it occurred to my mind that I pored so much upon my deliverance from the main affliction, that I disregarded the deliverance I had received; and I was, as it were, made to ask myself such questions as these, viz., Have I not been delivered, and wonderfully too, from sickness? from the most distressed condition that could be, and that was so frightful to me? and what notice I had taken of it? Had I done my part? God had delivered me, but I had not glorified Him; that is to say, I had not owned and been thankful for that as a deliverance; and how could I expect greater deliverance? This touched my heart very much; and immediately I kneeled down, and gave God thanks aloud for my recovery from my sickness.

July 4. - In the morning I took the Bible; and beginning at the new Testament, I began seriously to read it, and imposed upon myself to read awhile every morning and every night, not tying myself to the number of chapters, but as long as my thoughts should engage me.

It was not long after I set seriously to this work, but I found my heart more deeply and sincerely affected with the wickedness of my past life. The impression of my dream revived, and the words, "All these things have not brought thee to repentance," ran seriously in my thought. I was earnestly begging of God to give me repentance, when it happened providentially, the very day, that, reading the I came to these words, "He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance, and to give remission." I threw down the book; and with my heart as well as my hands lifted up to heaven, in a kind of ecstasy of joy, I cried out aloud, "Jesus, Thou son of David! Jesus, Thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me repentance!" This was the first time that I could say, in the true

sense of the words, that I prayed in all my life; for now I prayed with a sense of my condition, and with a true Scripture view of hope founded on the encouragement of the Word of God; and from this time, I may say, I began to have hope that God would hear me.

Now I began to construe the words mentioned above, “Call on Me, and I will deliver you,” in a different sense from what I had ever done before; for then I had no notion of anything being called deliverance but my being delivered from the captivity I was in; for though I was indeed at large in the place, yet the island was certainly a prison to me, and that in the worst sense in the world. But now I learned to take it in another sense; now I looked back upon my past life with such horror, and my sins appeared so dreadful, that my soul sought nothing of God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort. As for my solitary life, it was nothing; I did not so much as pray to be delivered from it, or think of it; it was all of no consideration, in comparison to this. And I add this part here, to hint to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true sense of things, they will find deliverance from a sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction.

But leaving this part, I return to my journal.

My condition began now to be, though not less miserable as to my way of living, yet much easier to my mind; and my thoughts being directed, by a constant reading the Scripture, and praying to God, to things of a higher nature, I had a great deal of comfort within, which, till now, I knew nothing of. Also, as my health and strength returned, I bestirred myself to furnish myself with everything that I wanted, and make my way of living as regular as I could.[...]

But now I began to exercise myself with new thoughts. I daily read the Word of God, and applied all the comforts of it to my present state. One morning, being very sad, I opened the Bible upon these words, “I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Immediately it occurred that these words were to me; why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsake of God and man? “Well, then,” said I, “if God does not forsake me, of what ill consequence can it be, or what matters it, though the world should all forsake me, seeing on the other hand, if I had all the world, and should lose the favor and blessing of God, there would be no comparison in the loss?” From this moment I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken solitary condition, that it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state in the world, and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place.

I know not what it was, but something shocked my mind at that thought, and I durst not speak the words. "How canst thou be such a hypocrite," said I, even audibly, "to pretend to be thankful for a condition which, however thou mayest endeavor to be contented with, thou wouldest rather pray heartily to be delivered from?" So I stopped there; but though I could not say I thanked God for being there, yet I sincerely gave thanks to God for opening my eyes, by whatever afflicting providences, to see the former condition of my life, and to mourn for my wickedness, and repent. I never opened the Bible, or shut it, but my very soul within me blessed God for directing my friend in England, without any order of mine, to pack it up among my goods, and for assisting me afterwards to save it out of the wreck of the ship.

Thus, and in this disposition of mind, I began my third year; and though I have not given the reader the trouble of so particular account of my works this year as the first, yet in general it may be observed, that I was very seldom idle, but having regularly divided my time, according to the several daily employments that were before me, such as, first my duty to God, and the reading the Scriptures, which I constantly set apart some time for, thrice every day; secondly, the going abroad with my gun for food, which generally took me up three hours in every morning, when it did not rain; thirdly, the ordering, curing, preserving, and cooking what I had killed or caught for my supply; these took up great part of the day; also it is to be considered that the middle of the day, when the sun was in the zenith, the violence of the heat was too great to stir out; so that about four hours in the evening was all the time I could be supposed to work in, with this exception, that sometimes I changed my hours of hunting and working, and went to work in the morning, and abroad with my gun in the afternoon.

To this short time allowed for labor, desire may be added the exceeding laboriousness of my work; the many hours which, for want of tools, want of help, and want of skill, everything I did took up out of my time. For example, I was full two and forty days making me a board for a long shelf, which I wanted in my cave; whereas two sawyers, with their tools and a saw-pit, would have cut six of them out of the same tree in half a day. [...]

I then reflected that God, who was not only righteous, but omnipotent, as He had thought fit thus to punish and afflict me, so He was able to deliver me; that if He did not think fit to do it, It was my unquestioned duty to resign myself absolutely and entirely to His will; and, on the other hand, it was my duty also to hope in Him, pray to Him, and quietly to attend the dictates and directions of His daily providence.

These thoughts took me up many hours, days, nay, I may say, weeks and months; and one particular effect of my cogitations of this occasion

I cannot omit, viz., one morning early, lying in my bed, and filled with thought about my danger from the appearance of savages, I found it discomposed me very much; upon which those words of the Scripture came into my thoughts, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify Me." Upon this, rising cheerfully out of my bed, my heart was not only comforted, but I was guided and encouraged to pray earnestly to God for deliverance. When I had done praying, I took up my Bible, and opening it to read, the first words that presented to me were, "Wait on the Lord, and be of good cheer, and He shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." It is impossible to express the comfort this gave me. In answer, I thankfully laid down the book, and was no more sad, at least, not on that occasion.

In the middle of these cogitations, apprehensions, and reflections, it came into my thought one day, that all this might be a mere chimera of my own; and that this foot might be the print of my own foot, when I came on shore from my boat.

This cheered me up a little too, and I began to persuade myself it was all a delusion, that it was nothing else but my own foot; and why might not I come that way from the boat, as well as I was going that way to the boat? Again, I considered also, that I could by no means tell, for certain, where I had trod, and where I had not; and that if, at last, this was only the print of my own foot, I had played the part of these fools who strive to make stories of spectre and apparitions, and then are frightened at them more than anybody.

Now I began to take courage, and to peep abroad again, for I had not stirred out of my castle for three days and nights, so that I began to starve for provision; for I had little or nothing within doors but some barley-cakes and water. Then I knew that my goats wanted to be milked too, which usually was my evening diversion; and the poor creatures were in great pain and inconvenience for want of it; and, indeed, it almost spoiled some of them, and almost dried up their milk.

Heartening myself, therefore, with the belief that this was nothing but the print of one of my own feet, and so I might be truly said to start at my own shadow, I began to go abroad again, and went to my country-house to milk my flock. But to see with what fear I went forward, how often I looked behind me, how I was ready, every now and then, to lay down my basket, and run for my life, it would have made any one have thought I was haunted with an evil conscience, or that I had been lately most terribly frightened; and so, indeed, I had.[...]

However, I wore out a year and three months more before I ever saw any more of the savages, and then I found them again, as I shall

soon observe. It is true they might have been there once or twice, but either they made no stay, or at least I did not hear them; but in the month of May, as near as I could calculate, and in my four and twentieth year, I had a very strange encounter with them; of which in its place.

The perturbation of my mind, during this fifteen or sixteen months' interval, was very great. I slept unquiet, dreamed always frightful dreams, and often started out of my sleep in the night. In the day great troubles overwhelmed my mind, and in the night I deamed often of killing the savages, and of the reasons why I might justify the doing of it. But, to waive all this for a while, it was the middle of May, on the sixteenth day, I think, as well as my poor wooden calendar would reckon, for I marked all upon the post still; I say, it was the sixteenth of May that it blew a very great storm of wind all day, with a great deal of lightning and thunder, and a very foul night it was after it. I know not what was the particular occasion of it, but as I was reading in the Bible, and taken up with very serious thoughts about my present condition, I was surprised with a noise of a gun, as I thought, fired at sea.

This was, to be sure, a surprise of a quite different nature from any I had met with before; for the notions this put into my thoughts were quite of another kind. I started up in the greatest haste imaginable and, in a trice, clapped my ladder to the middle place of the rock, and pulled it after me; and mounting it the second time, got to the top of the hill the very moment that a flash of fire bid me listen for a second gun, which accordingly, in about half a minute, I heard; and, by the sound, knew that it was from the part of the sea where I was driven down the current in my boat.[...]

JOHN DONNE: *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
And whisper to their souls, to go,  
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,  
    "The breath goes now," and some say, "No:"  
So let us melt, and make no noise,  
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;  
'Twere profanation of our joys  
    To tell the laity our love.  
Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;  
Men reckon what it did, and meant;  
But trepidation of the spheres,  
    Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
    (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
    Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin'd,  
    That ourselves know not what it is,  
Inter-assured of the mind,  
    Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
    Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
    Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so  
    As stiff twin compasses are two;  
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show  
    To move, but doth, if the' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,  
    Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
    And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must  
    Like th' other foot, obliquely run;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
    And makes me end, where I begun.

JOHN DONNE: *Sonnet 6*

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

JOHN DONNE: *Sonnet 10*

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town to'another due,  
Labor to'admit you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly'I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;  
Divorce me,'untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you'enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

JOHN DONNE: *The Canonization*

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,  
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,  
My five grey hairs, or ruin'd fortune flout,  
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,  
Take you a course, get you a place,  
Observe his Honour, or his Grace,  
Or the King's real, or his stamped face  
Contemplate, what you will, approve,  
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?  
What merchant's ships have my sighs drown'd?  
Who says my tears have overflow'd his ground?  
When did my colds a forward spring remove?  
When did the heats which my veins fill  
Add one more to the plaguy bill?  
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still  
Litigious men, which quarrels move,

Though she and I do love.  
Call us what you will, we are made such by love;  
Call her one, me another fly,  
We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,  
And we in us find the eagle and the dove.  
The phoenix riddle hath more wit  
By us; we two being one, are it.  
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit,  
We die and rise the same, and prove  
Mysterious by this love.

We can die by it, if not live by love,  
And if unfit for tombs and hearse  
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;  
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,  
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;  
As well a well-wrought urn becomes  
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,  
And by these hymns all shall approve  
Us canoniz'd for love;

And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love  
Made one another's hermitage;  
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;  
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove  
Into the glasses of your eyes  
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,  
That they did all to you epitomize)  
Countries, towns, courts: beg from above  
A pattern of your love!"

JOHN DONNE: *The Good Morrow*

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I  
Did, till we lov'd? Were we not wean'd till then,  
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?  
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers' den?  
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.  
If ever any beauty I did see,  
Which I desir'd, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,  
Which watch not one another out of fear;  
For love, all love of other sights controls,  
And makes one little room, an everywhere.  
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,  
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,  
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,  
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;  
Where can we find two better hemispheres,  
Without sharp north, without declining west?  
Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally;  
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I  
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

JOHN DONNE: *The Ecstasy*

Where, like a pillow on a bed,  
A pregnant bank swelled up, to rest  
The violet's reclining head,  
Sat we two, one another's best;  
Our hands were firmly cemented  
With a fast balm, which thence did spring,  
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread  
Our eyes, upon one double string;  
So to' intergraft our hands, as yet  
Was all our means to make us one,  
And pictures in our eyes to get  
Was all our propagation.  
As 'twixt two equal armies,  
Fate Suspends uncertain victory,  
Our souls, (which to advance their state,  
Were gone out), hung 'twixt her, and me.  
And whilst our souls negotiate there,  
We like sepulchral statues lay;  
All day, the same our postures were,  
And we said nothing, all the day.  
If any, so by love refined,  
That he soul's language understood,  
And by good love were grown all mind,

Within convenient distance stood,  
He (though he knew not which soul spake,  
Because both meant, not spake the same)  
Might thence a new concoction take,  
And part far purer than he came.  
This ecstasy doth unperplex  
(We said) and tell us what we love,  
We see by this, it was not sex,  
We see, we saw not what did move:  
But as all several souls contain  
Mixture of things, they knew not what,  
Love, these mixed souls doth mix again,  
And makes both one, each this and that.  
A single violet transplant,  
The strength, the colour, and the size,  
(All which before was poor, and scant,)  
Redoubles still, and multiplies.  
When love, with one another so  
Interinanimates two souls,  
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,  
Defects of loneliness controls.  
We then, who are this new soul, know,  
Of what we are composed, and made,  
For, th' atomies of which we grow,  
Are souls, whom no change can invade.  
But O alas, so long, so far  
Our bodies why do we forbear?  
They are ours, though they are not we, we are  
The intelligences, they the sphere.  
We owe them thanks, because they thus,  
Did us, to us, at first convey,  
Yielded their forces, sense, to us.  
Nor are dross to us, but allay.  
On man heaven's influence works not so,  
But that it first imprints the air,  
So soul into the soul may flow,

Though it to body first repair.  
As our blood labours to beget  
Spirits, as like souls as it can,  
Because such fingers need to knit  
That subtle knot, which makes us man:  
So must pure lovers' souls descend  
T' affections, and to faculties,  
Which sense may reach and apprehend,  
Else a great prince in prison lies.  
To our bodies turn we then, that so  
Weak men on love revealed may look;  
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,  
But yet the body is his book.  
And if some lover, such as we,  
Have heard this dialogue of one,  
Let him still mark us, he shall see  
Small change, when we're to bodies gone.

JOHN DONNE: *Meditation 17*

PERCHANCE he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me,

who am brought so near the door by this sickness. There was a contention as far as a suit (in which both piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled), which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined, that they should ring first that rose earliest. If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his, whose indeed it is. The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that this occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. Neither can we call this a begging of misery, or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves, but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbours. Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did, for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction. If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current money, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it, except we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it. Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels, as gold in a mine, and be of no use to him; but this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out and applies that gold to me: if by this consideration of another's danger I take mine own into contemplation, and so secure myself, by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

• HENRY FIELDING: *Tom Jones*,  
BOOK V  
*CONTAINING A PORTION OF TIME SOMEWHAT LONGER THAN  
HALF A YEAR*  
Chapter 1

**OF THE SERIOUS IN WRITING,  
AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE IT IS INTRODUCED**

Peradventure there may be no parts in this prodigious work which will give the reader less pleasure in the perusing, than those which have given the author the greatest pains in composing. Among these probably may be reckoned those initial essays which we have prefixed to the historical matter contained in every book; and which we have determined to be essentially necessary to this kind of writing, of which we have set ourselves at the head.

For this our determination we do not hold ourselves strictly bound to assign any reason; it, being abundantly sufficient that we have laid it down as a rule necessary to be observed in all prosai-comi-epic writing. Who ever demanded the reasons of that nice unity of time or place which is now established to be so essential to dramatic poetry? What critic hath been ever asked, why a play may not contain two days as well as one? Or why the audience (provided they travel, like electors, without any expense) may not be wafted fifty miles as well as five? Hath any commentator well accounted for the limitation which an antient critic hath set to the drama, which he will have contain neither more nor less than five acts? Or hath any one living attempted to explain what the modern judges of our theatres mean by that word *low*; by which they have happily succeeded in banishing all humour from the stage, and have made the theatre as dull as a drawing-room! Upon all these occasions the world seems to have embraced a maxim of our law, viz., *cuicumque in arte sua perito credendum est*<sup>1</sup>: for it seems perhaps difficult to conceive that any one should have had enough of impudence to lay down dogmatical rules in any art or science without the least foundation. In such cases, therefore, we are apt to conclude there are sound and good reasons at the bottom, though we are unfortunately not able to see so far. Now, in reality, the world have paid too great a compliment to critics,

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<sup>1</sup> Every man is to be trusted in his own art.

and have imagined them men of much greater profundity than they really are. From this complacency, the critics have been emboldened to assume a dictatorial power, and have so far succeeded, that they are now become the masters, and have the assurance to give laws to those authors from whose predecessors they originally received them.

The critic, rightly considered, is no more than the clerk, whose office it is to transcribe the rules and laws laid down by those great judges whose vast strength of genius hath placed them in the light of legislators, in the several sciences over which they presided. This office was all which the critics of old aspired to; nor did they ever dare to advance a sentence, without supporting it by the authority of the judge from whence it was borrowed.

But in process of time, and in ages of ignorance, the clerk began to invade the power and assume the dignity of his master. The laws of writing were no longer founded on the practice of the author, but on the dictates of the critic. The clerk became the legislator, and those very peremptorily gave laws whose business it was, at first, only to transcribe them.

Hence arose an obvious, and perhaps an unavoidable error; for these critics being men of shallow capacities, very easily mistook mere form for substance. They acted as a judge would, who should adhere to the lifeless letter of law, and reject the spirit. Little circumstances, which were perhaps accidental in a great author, were by these critics considered to constitute his chief merit, and transmitted as essentials to be observed by his successors. To these encroachments, time and ignorance, the two great supporters of imposture, gave authority; and thus many rules for good writing have been established, which have not the least foundation in truth or nature; and which commonly serve for no other purpose than to curb and restrain genius, in the same manner as it would have restrained the dancing-master, had the many excellent treatises on that art laid it down as an essential rule that every man must dance in chains.

To avoid, therefore, all imputation of laying down a rule for posterity, founded only on the authority of *ipse dixit*<sup>2</sup>- for which, to say the truth, we have not the profoundest veneration- we shall here waive

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<sup>2</sup> An assertion without proof

the privilege above contended for, and proceed to lay before the reader the reasons which have induced us to intersperse these several digressive essays in the course of this work. And here we shall of necessity be led to open a new vein of knowledge, which if it hath been discovered, hath not, to our remembrance, been wrought on by any antient or modern writer. This vein is no other than that of contrast, which runs through all the works of the creation, and may probably have a large share in constituting in us the idea of all beauty, as well natural as artificial: for what demonstrates the beauty and excellence of anything but its reverse? Thus the beauty of day, and that of summer, is set off by the horrors of night and winter. And, I believe, if it was possible for a man to have seen only the two former, he would have a very imperfect idea of their beauty.

But to avoid too serious an air; can it be doubted, but that the finest woman in the world would lose all benefit of her charms in the eye of a man who had never seen one of another cast? The ladies themselves seem so sensible of this, that they are all industrious to procure foils: nay, they will become foils to themselves; for I have observed (at Bath particularly) that they endeavour to appear as ugly as possible in the morning, in order to set off that beauty which they intend to show you in the evening.

Most artists have this secret in practice, though some, perhaps, have not much studied the theory. The jeweller knows that the finest brilliant requires a foil; and the painter, by the contrast of his figures, often acquires great applause.

A great genius among us will illustrate this matter fully. I cannot, indeed, range him under any general head of common artists, as he hath a title to be placed among those *Inventas qui vitam excoluere per artes*. Who by invented arts have life improved. - I mean here the inventor of that most exquisite entertainment, called the English Pantomime.

This entertainment consisted of two parts, which the inventor distinguished by the names of the serious and the comic. The serious exhibited a certain number of heathen gods and heroes, who were certainly the worst and dullest company into which an audience was ever introduced; and (which was a secret known to few) were actually intended so to be, in order to contrast the comic part of the entertainment, and to display the tricks of harlequin to the better advantage.

This was, perhaps, no very civil use of such personages: but the contrivance was, nevertheless, ingenious enough, and had its effect. And this will now plainly appear, if, instead of serious and comic, we supply the words duller and dullest; for the comic was certainly duller than anything before shown on the stage, and could be set off only by that superlative degree of dulness which composed the serious. So intolerably serious, indeed, were these gods and heroes, that harlequin (though the English gentleman of that name is not at all related to the French family, for he is of a much more serious disposition) was always welcome on the stage, as he relieved the audience from worse company.

Judicious writers have always practised this art of contrast with great success.

I have been surprized that Horace should cavil at this art in Homer; but indeed he contradicts himself in the very next line: *Indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus; Verum opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum.*

I grieve if e'er great Homer chance to sleep, Yet slumbers on long works have right to creep. - For we are not here to understand, as perhaps some have, that an author actually falls asleep while he is writing. It is true, that readers are too apt to be so overtaken; but if the work was as long as any of Oldmixon, the author himself is too well entertained to be subject to the least drowsiness. He is, as Mr. Pope observes, Sleepless himself to give his readers sleep. To say the truth, these soporific parts are so many scenes of serious artfully interwoven, in order to contrast and set off the rest; and this is the true meaning of a late facetious writer, who told the public that whenever he was dull they might be assured there was a design in it.

In this light, then, or rather in this darkness, I would have the reader to consider these initial essays.

HENRY FIELDING: *Tom Jones*, BOOK VIII  
*CONTAINING ABOUT TWO DAYS*  
Chapter 1

**A WONDERFUL LONG CHAPTER CONCERNING  
THE MARVELLOUS; BEING MUCH THE LONGEST  
OF ALL OUR INTRODUCTORY CHAPTERS**

As we are now entering upon a book in which the course of our history will oblige us to relate some matters of a more strange and surprizing kind than any which have hitherto occurred, it may not be amiss, in the prolegomenous or introductory chapter, to say something of that species of writing which is called the marvellous. To this we shall, as well for the sake of ourselves as of others, endeavour to set some certain bounds, and indeed nothing can be more necessary, as critics<sup>1</sup> of different complexions are here apt to run into very different extremes; for while some are, with M. Dacier, ready to allow, that the same thing which is impossible may be yet probable<sup>2</sup>, others have so little historic or poetic faith, that they believe nothing to be either possible or probable, the like to which hath not occurred to their own observation.

First, then, I think it may very reasonably be required of every writer, that he keeps within the bounds of possibility; and still remembers that what it is not possible for man to perform, it is scarce possible for man to believe he did perform.

His conviction perhaps gave birth to many stories of the antient heathen deities (for most of them are of poetical original). The poet, being desirous to indulge a wanton and extravagant imagination, took refuge in that power, of the extent of which his readers were no judges, or rather which they imagined to be infinite, and consequently they could not be shocked at any prodigies related of it. This hath been strongly urged in defence of Homer's miracles; and it is perhaps a defence; not, as Mr. Pope would have it, because Ulysses told a set of foolish lies to the Phaeacians, who were a very dull nation; but because the poet himself wrote to heathens, to whom poetical fables were articles of faith. For my own part, I must confess, so compassionate is my temper, I wish Polypheme had confined himself to his milk diet, and preserved his eye;

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<sup>1</sup> By this word here, and in most other parts of our work, we mean every reader in the world.

<sup>2</sup> It is happy for M. Dacier that he was not an Irishman.

nor could Ulysses be much more concerned than myself, when his companions were turned into swine by Circe, who showed, I think, afterwards, too much regard for man's flesh to be supposed capable of converting it into bacon. I wish, likewise, with all my heart, that Homer could have known the rule prescribed by Horace, to introduce supernatural agents as seldom as possible. We should not then have seen his gods coming on trivial errands, and often behaving themselves so as not only to forfeit all title to respect, but to become the objects of scorn and derision. A conduct which must have shocked the credulity of a pious and sagacious heathen; and which could never have been defended, unless by agreeing with a supposition to which I have been sometimes almost inclined, that this most glorious poet, as he certainly was, had an intent to burlesque the superstitious faith of his own age and country.

But I have rested too long on a doctrine which can be of no use to a Christian writer; for as he cannot introduce into his works any of that heavenly host which make a part of his creed, so it is horrid puerility to search the heathen theology for any of those deities who have been long since dethroned from their immortality.

Lord Shaftesbury observes, that nothing is more cold than the invocation of a muse by a modern; he might have added, that nothing can be more absurd. A modern may with much more elegance invoke a ballad, as some have thought Homer did, or a mug of ale, with the author of Hudibras; which latter may perhaps have inspired much more poetry, as well as prose, than all the liquors of Hippocrene or Helicon.

The only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns, are ghosts; but of these I would advise an author to be extremely sparing.

These are indeed, like arsenic, and other dangerous drugs in physic, to be used with the utmost caution; nor would I advise the introduction of them at all in those works, or by those authors, to which, or to whom, a horselaugh in the reader would be any great prejudice or mortification.

As for elves and fairies, and other such mummary, I purposely omit the mention of them, as I should be very unwilling to confine within any bounds those surprizing imaginations, for whose vast capacity the limits of human nature are too narrow; whose works are to be considered as a new creation; and who have consequently just right to do what they will with their own.

Man therefore is the highest subject (unless on very extraordinary occasions indeed) which presents itself to the pen of our historian, or of our poet; and, in relating his actions, great care is to be taken that we do not exceed the capacity of the agent we describe.

Nor is possibility alone sufficient to justify us; we must keep likewise within the rules of probability. It is, I think, the opinion of Aristotle; or if not, it is the opinion of some wise man, whose authority will be as weighty when it is as old, "That it is no excuse for a poet who relates what is incredible, that the thing related is really matter of fact." This may perhaps be allowed true with regard to poetry, but it may be thought impracticable to extend it to the historian; for he is obliged to record matters as he finds them, though they may be of so extraordinary a nature as will require no small degree of historical faith to swallow them.

Such was the successful armament of Xerxes described by Herodotus, or the successful expedition of Alexander related by Arrian. Such of later years was the victory of Agincourt obtained by Harry the Fifth, or that of Narva won by Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. All which instances, the more we reflect on them, appear still the more astonishing.

Such facts, however, as they occur in the thread of the story, nay, indeed, as they constitute the essential parts of it, the historian is not only justifiable in recording as they really happened, but indeed would be unpardonable should he omit or alter them. But there are other facts not of such consequence nor so necessary, which, though ever so well attested, may nevertheless be sacrificed to oblivion in complacence to the scepticism of a reader. Such is that memorable story of the ghost of George Villiers, which might with more propriety have been made a present of to Dr. Drelincourt, to have kept the ghost of Mrs. Veale company, at the head of his Discourse upon Death, than have been introduced into so solemn a work as the History of the Rebellion.

To say the truth, if the historian will confine himself to what really happened, and utterly reject any circumstance, which, though never so well attested, he must be well assured is false, he will sometimes fall into the marvellous, but never into the incredible. He will often raise the wonder and surprize of his reader, but never that incredulous hatred mentioned by Horace. It is by falling into fiction, therefore, that we generally offend against this rule, of deserting probability, which the historian seldom, if ever, quits, till he forsakes his character and commences a writer of romance. In this, however, those historians who relate public transactions, have the advantage of us who confine ourselves to scenes of private life.

The credit of the former is by common notoriety supported for a long time; and public records, with the concurrent testimony of many authors, bear evidence to their truth in future ages. Thus a Trajan and an Antoninus, a Nero and a Caligula, have all met with the belief of posterity; and no one doubts but that men so very good, and so very bad, were once the masters of mankind.

But we who deal in private character, who search into the most retired recesses, and draw forth examples of virtue and vice from holes and corners of the world, are in a more dangerous situation. As we have no public notoriety, no concurrent testimony, no records to support and corroborate what we deliver, it becomes us to keep within the limits not only of possibility, but of probability too; and this more especially in painting what is greatly good and amiable. Knavery and folly, though never so exorbitant, will more easily meet with assent; for ill nature adds great support and strength to faith.

Thus we may, perhaps, with little danger, relate the history of Fisher; who having long owed his bread to the generosity of Mr. Derby, and having one morning received a considerable bounty from his hands, yet, in order to possess himself of what remained in his friend's scrutore, concealed himself in a public office of the Temple, through which there was a passage into Mr. Derby's chambers. Here he overheard Mr. Derby for many hours solacing himself at an entertainment which he that evening gave his friends, and to which Fisher had been invited. During all this time, no tender, no grateful reflections arose to restrain his purpose; but when the poor gentleman had let his company out through the office, Fisher came suddenly from his lurking-place, and walking softly behind his friend into his chamber, discharged a pistol-ball into his head. This may be believed when the bones of Fisher are as rotten as his heart. Nay, perhaps, it will be credited, that the villain went two days afterwards with some young ladies to the play of Hamlet; and with an unaltered countenance heard one of the ladies, who little suspected how near she was to the person, cry out, "Good God! if the man that murdered Mr.

Derby was now present!" manifesting in this a more seared and callous conscience than even Nero himself; of whom we are told by Suetonius, "that the consciousness of his guilt, after the death of his mother, became immediately intolerable, and so continued; nor could all the congratulations of the soldiers, of the senate, and the people, allay the horrors of his conscience." But now, on the other hand, should I tell my reader, that I had known a man whose penetrating genius had enabled him to raise a large fortune in a way where no beginning was chaulked out to him; that he had done this with the most perfect preservation of his integrity, and not only without the least injustice or injury to any one individual person, but with the highest advantage to

trade, and a vast increase of the public revenue; that he had expended one part of the income of this fortune in discovering a taste superior to most, by works where the highest dignity was united with the purest simplicity, and another part in displaying a degree of goodness superior to all men, by acts of charity to objects whose only recommendations were their merits, or their wants; that he was most industrious in searching after merit in distress, most eager to relieve it, and then as careful (perhaps too careful) to conceal what he had done; that his house, his furniture, his gardens, his table, his private hospitality, and his public beneficence, all denoted the mind from which they flowed, and were all intrinsically rich and noble, without tinsel, or external ostentation; that he filled every relation in life with the most adequate virtue; that he was most piously religious to his Creator, most zealously loyal to his sovereign; a most tender husband to his wife, a kind relation, a munificent patron, a warm and firm friend, a knowing and a chearful companion, indulgent to his servants, hospitable to his neighbours, charitable to the poor, and benevolent to all mankind. Should I add to these the epithets of wise, brave, elegant, and indeed every other amiable epithet in our language, I might surely say, -*Quis credet? nemo Hercule! nemo; Vel duo, vel nemo;* - and yet I know a man who is all I have here described.

But a single instance (and I really know not such another) is not sufficient to justify us, while we are writing to thousands who never heard of the person, nor of anything like him. Such *raae aves* should be remitted to the epitaph writer, or to some poet who may condescend to hitch him in a distich, or to slide him into a rhyme with an air of carelessness and neglect, without giving any offence to the reader.

In the last place, the actions should be such as may not only be within the compass of human agency, and which human agents may probably be supposed to do; but they should be likely for the very actors and characters themselves to have performed; for what may be only wonderful and surprizing in one man, may become improbable, or indeed impossible, when related of another.

This last requisite is what the dramatic critics call conversation of character; and it requires a very extraordinary degree of judgment, and a most exact knowledge of human nature.

It is admirably remarked by a most excellent writer, that zeal can no more hurry a man to act in direct opposition to itself, than a rapid

stream can carry a boat against its own current. I will venture to say, that for a man to act in direct contradiction to the dictates of his nature, is, if not impossible, as improbable and as miraculous as anything which can well be conceived. Should the best parts of the story of M. Antoninus be ascribed to Nero, or should the worst incidents of Nero's life be imputed to Antoninus, what would be more shocking to belief than either instance? whereas both these being related of their proper agent, constitute the truly marvellous.

Our modern authors of comedy have fallen almost universally into the error here hinted at; their heroes generally are notorious rogues, and their heroines abandoned jades, during the first four acts; but in the fifth, the former become very worthy gentlemen, and the latter women of virtue and discretion: nor is the writer often so kind as to give himself least trouble to reconcile or account for this monstrous change and incongruity. There is, indeed, no other reason to be assigned for it, than because the play is drawing to a conclusion; as if it was no less natural in a rogue to repent in the last act of a play, than in the last of his life; which we perceive to be generally the case at Tyburn, a place which might indeed close the scene of some comedies with much propriety, as the heroes in these are most commonly eminent for those very talents which not only bring men to the gallows, but enable them to make an heroic figure when they are there.

Within these few restrictions, I think, every writer may be permitted to deal as much in the wonderful as he pleases; nay, if he thus keeps within the rules of credibility, the more he can surprize the reader the more he will engage his attention, and the more he will charm him. As a genius of the highest rank observes in his fifth chapter of the *Bathos*, "The great art of all poetry is to mix truth with fiction, in order to join the credible with the surprizing." For though every good author will confine himself within the bounds of probability, it is by no means necessary that his characters, or his incidents, should be trite, common, or vulgar; such as happen in every street, or in every house, or which may be met with in the home articles of a newspaper. Nor must he be inhibited from showing many persons and things, which may possibly have never fallen within the knowledge of great part of his readers. If the writer strictly observes the rules above mentioned, he hath discharged his part; and is then intitled to some faith from his reader, who is indeed guilty of critical infidelity if he disbelieves him.

**CONTAINING FIVE PAGES OF PAPER**

As truth distinguishes our writings from those idle romances which are filled with monsters, the productions, not of nature, but of distempered brains; and which have been therefore recommended by an eminent critic to the sole use of the pastry-cook; so, on the other hand, we would avoid any resemblance to that kind of history which a celebrated poet seems to think is no less calculated for the emolument of the brewer, as the reading it should be always attended with a tankard of good ale- While- history with her comrade ale, Soothes the sad series of her serious tale. For as this is the liquor of modern historians, nay, perhaps their muse, if we may believe the opinion of Butler, who attributes inspiration to ale, it ought likewise to be the potation of their readers, since every book ought to be read with the same spirit and in the same manner as it is writ. Thus the famous author of *Hurlothrumbo* told a learned bishop, that the reason his lordship could not taste the excellence of his piece was, that he did not read it with a fiddle in his hand; which instrument he himself had always had in his own, when he composed it.

That our work, therefore, might be in no danger of being likened to the labours of these historians, we have taken every occasion of interspersing through the whole sundry similes, descriptions, and other kind of poetical embellishments.

These are, indeed, designed to supply the place of the said ale, and to refresh the mind, whenever those slumbers, which in a long work are apt to invade the reader as well as the writer, shall begin to creep upon him. Without interruptions of this kind, the best narrative of plain matter of fact must overpower every reader; for nothing but the everlasting watchfulness, which Homer has ascribed only to Jove himself, can be proof against a newspaper of many volumes.

We shall leave to the reader to determine with what judgment we have chosen the several occasions for inserting those ornamental parts of our work. Surely it will be allowed that none could be more proper than the present, where we are about to introduce a considerable character

on the scene; no less, indeed, than the heroine of this heroic, historical, prosaic poem. Here, therefore, we have thought proper to prepare the mind of the reader for her reception, by filling it with every pleasing image which we can draw from the face of nature. And for this method we plead many precedents. First, this is an art well known to, and much practised by, our tragick poets, who seldom fail to prepare their audience for the reception of their principal characters.

Thus the heroe is always introduced with a flourish of drums and trumpets, in order to rouse a martial spirit in the audience, and to accommodate their ears to bombast and fustian, which Mr. Locke's blind man would not have grossly erred in likening to the sound of a trumpet. Again, when lovers are coming forth, soft music often conducts them on the stage, either to soothe the audience with the softness of the tender passion, or to lull and prepare them for that gentle slumber in which they will most probably be composed by the ensuing scene.

And not only the poets, but the masters of these poets, the managers of playhouses, seem to be in this secret; for, besides the aforesaid kettle-drums, &c., which denote the heroe's approach, he is generally ushered on the stage by a large troop of half a dozen scene-shifters; and how necessary these are imagined to his appearance, may be concluded from the following theatrical story: King Pyrrhus was at dinner at an ale-house bordering on the theatre, when he was summoned to go on the stage. The heroe, being unwilling to quit his shoulder of mutton, and as unwilling to draw on himself the indignation of Mr. Wilks (his brother-manager) for making the audience wait, had bribed these his harbingers to be out of the way. While Mr. Wilks, therefore, was thundering out, "Where are the carpenters to walk on before King Pyrrhus?" that monarch very quietly eat his mutton, and the audience, however impatient, were obliged to entertain themselves with music in his absence.

To be plain, I much question whether the politician, who hath generally a good nose, hath not scented out somewhat of the utility of this practice. I am convinced that awful magistrate my lord-mayor contracts a good deal of that reverence which attends him through the year, by the several pageants which precede his pomp. Nay, I must confess, that even I myself, who am not remarkably liable to be captivated with show, have yielded not a little to the impressions of much preceding

state. When I have seen a man strutting in a procession, after others whose business was only to walk before him, I have conceived a higher notion of his dignity than I have felt on seeing him in a common situation. But there is one instance, which comes exactly up to my purpose. This is the custom of sending on a basket-woman, who is to precede the pomp at a coronation, and to strew the stage with flowers, before the great personages begin their procession. The antients would certainly have invoked the goddess Flora for this purpose, and it would have been no difficulty for their priests, or politicians to have persuaded the people of the real presence of the deity, though a plain mortal had personated her and performed her office. But we have no such design of imposing on our reader; and therefore those who object to the heathen theology, may, if they please, change our goddess into the above-mentioned basket-woman. Our intention, in short, is to introduce our heroine with the utmost solemnity in our power, with an elevation of stile, and all other circumstances proper to raise the veneration of our reader. Indeed we would, for certain causes, advise those of our male readers who have any hearts, to read no farther, were we not well assured, that how amiable soever the picture of our heroine will appear, as it is really a copy from nature, many of our fair country-women will be found worthy to satisfy any passion, and to answer any idea of female perfection which our pencil will be able to raise.

And now, without any further preface, we proceed to our next chapter.

HENRY FIELDING: *Tom Jones*, BOOK II  
*CONTAINING SCENES OF MATRIMONIAL FELICITY IN DIFFERENT  
DEGREES OF LIFE; AND VARIOUS OTHER TRANSACTIONS DUR-  
ING THE FIRST TWO YEARS AFTER THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN  
CAPTAIN BLIFIL AND MISS BRIDGET ALLWORTHY*

Chapter 1

**SHOWING WHAT KIND OF A HISTORY THIS IS; WHAT IT IS  
LIKE, AND WHAT IT IS NOT LIKE**

Though we have properly enough entitled this our work, a history, and not a life; nor an apology for a life, as is more in fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the method of those writers, who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable aeras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage.

Such histories as these do, in reality, very much resemble a newspaper, which consists of just the same number of words, whether there be any news in it or not.

They may likewise be compared to a stage coach, which performs constantly the same course, empty as well as full. The writer, indeed, seems to think himself obliged to keep even pace with time, whose amanuensis he is; and, like his master, travels as slowly through centuries of monkish dulness, when the world seems to have been asleep, as through that bright and busy age so nobly distinguished by the excellent Latin poet –

Ad confligendum venientibus undique poenis,  
Omnia cum belli trepido concussa tumultu  
Horrida contremuere sub altis aetheris auris;  
In dubioque fuit sub utrorum regna cadendum  
Omnibus humanis esset, terraque marique. –

Of which we wish we could give our readers a more adequate translation than that by Mr. Creech –

When dreadful Carthage frightened Rome with arms,  
And all the world was shook with fierce alarms;

Whilst undecided yet, which part should fall,  
Which nation rise the glorious lord of all. –

Now it is our purpose, in the ensuing pages, to pursue a contrary method.

When any extraordinary scene presents itself (as we trust will often be the case), we shall spare no pains nor paper to open it at large to our reader; but if whole years should pass without producing anything worthy his notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history; but shall hasten on to matters of consequence, and leave such periods of time totally unobserved.

These are indeed to be considered as blanks in the grand lottery of time. We therefore, who are the registers of that lottery, shall imitate those sagacious persons who deal in that which is drawn at Guildhall, and who never trouble the public with the many blanks they dispose of; but when a great prize happens to be drawn, the newspapers are presently filled with it, and the world is sure to be informed at whose office it was sold: indeed, commonly two or three different offices lay claim to the honour of having disposed of it; by which, I suppose, the adventurers are given to understand that certain brokers are in the secrets of Fortune, and indeed of her cabinet council.

My reader then is not to be surprized, if, in the course of this work, he shall find some chapters very short, and others altogether as long; some that contain only the time of a single day, and others that comprise years; in a word, if my history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly. For all which I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever: for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein. And these laws, my readers, whom I consider as my subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey; with which that they may readily and cheerfully comply, I do hereby assure them that I shall principally regard their ease and advantage in all such institutions: for I do not, like a *jure divino* tyrant, imagine that they are my slaves, or my commodity. I am, indeed, set over them for their own good only, and was created for their use, and not they for mine. Nor do I doubt, while I make their interest the great rule of my writings, they will unanimously concur in supporting my dignity, and in rendering me all the honour I shall deserve or desire.

HENRY FIELDING: *Tom Jones*, BOOK 1  
*CONTAINING AS MUCH OF THE BIRTH OF THE FOUNDLING AS IS  
NECESSARY OR PROPER TO ACQUAINT THE READER WITH IN THE  
BEGINNING OF THIS HISTORY*

Chapter 1

**THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK,  
OR BILL OF FARE TO THE FEAST**

An author ought to consider himself, not as a gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary treat, but rather as one who keeps a public ordinary, at which all persons are welcome for their money. In the former case, it is well known that the entertainer provides what fare he pleases; and though this should be very indifferent, and utterly disagreeable to the taste of his company, they must not find any fault; nay, on the contrary, good breeding forces them outwardly to approve and to commend whatever is set before them. Now the contrary of this happens to the master of an ordinary. Men who pay for what they eat will insist on gratifying their palates, however nice and whimsical these may prove; and if everything is not agreeable to their taste, will challenge a right to censure, to abuse, and to d—n their dinner without controul.

To prevent, therefore, giving offence to their customers by any such disappointment, it hath been usual with the honest and well-meaning host to provide a bill of fare which all persons may peruse at their first entrance into the house; and having thence acquainted themselves with the entertainment which they may expect, may either stay and regale with what is provided for them, or may depart to some other ordinary better accommodated to their taste.

As we do not disdain to borrow wit or wisdom from any man who is capable of lending us either, we have condescended to take a hint from these honest victuallers, and shall prefix not only a general bill of fare to our whole entertainment, but shall likewise give the reader particular bills to every course which is to be served up in this and the ensuing volumes.

The provision, then, which we have here made is no other than Human Nature. Nor do I fear that my sensible reader, though most luxurious in his taste, will start, cavil, or be offended, because I have named but one article. The tortise- as the alderman of Bristol, well learned in eating, knows by much experience- besides the delicious calipash and calipee, contains many different kinds of food; nor can the learned reader be ignorant, that in human nature, though here collected under one general

name, is such prodigious variety, that a cook will have sooner gone through all the several species of animal and vegetable food in the world, than an author will be able to exhaust so extensive a subject.

An objection may perhaps be apprehended from the more delicate, that this dish is too common and vulgar; for what else is the subject of all the romances, novels, plays, and poems, with which the stalls abound? Many exquisite viands might be rejected by the epicure, if it was a sufficient cause for his contemning of them as common and vulgar, that something was to be found in the most paltry alleys under the same name. In reality, true nature is as difficult to be met with in authors, as the Bayonne ham, or Bologna sausage, is to be found in the shops.

But the whole, to continue the same metaphor, consists in the cookery of the author; for, as Mr. Pope tells us- True wit is nature to advantage drest; What oft was thought, but ne'er so well exprest. The same animal which hath the honour to have some part of his flesh eaten at the table of a duke, may perhaps be degraded in another part, and some of his limbs gibbeted, as it were, in the vilest stall in town. Where, then, lies the difference between the food of the nobleman and the porter, if both are at dinner on the same ox or calf, but in the seasoning, the dressing, the garnishing, and the setting forth? Hence the one provokes and incites the most languid appetite, and the other turns and palls that which is the sharpest and keenest.

In like manner, the excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing it up. How pleased, therefore, will the reader be to find that we have, in the following work, adhered closely to one of the highest principles of the best cook which the present age, or perhaps that of Heliogabalus, hath produced. This great man, as is well known to all lovers of polite eating, begins at first by setting plain things before his hungry guests, rising afterwards by degrees as their stomachs may be supposed to decrease, to the very quintessence of sauce and spices. In like manner, we shall represent human nature at first to the keen appetite of our reader, in that more plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country, and shall hereafter hash and ragoo it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford. By these means, we doubt not but our reader may be rendered desirous to read on for ever, as the great person just above-mentioned is supposed to have made some persons eat.

Having premised thus much, we will now detain those who like our bill of fare no longer from their diet, and shall proceed directly to serve up the first course of our history for their entertainment.

• THOMAS GRAY: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness, and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share,

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault  
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault  
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,  
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;  
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad: nor circumscrib'd alone  
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;  
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,  
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;  
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect  
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,  
The place of fame and elegy supply:  
And many a holy text around she strews,  
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,  
Let the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,  
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say, '  
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,  
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn;

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high.  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

‘Hand by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;  
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,  
Or crazed with car, or cross’d in hopeless love.

‘One morn I miss’d him on the custom’d hill,  
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

‘The next with dirges due in sad array  
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,  
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay  
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.’

*The Epitaph*

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown;  
Fair Science frown’d not on his humble birth,  
And Melancholy mark’d him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;  
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:  
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,  
He gain’d from Heaven, ‘twas all he wish’d, a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.

• WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*, ACT III, SCENE 1

HAMLET: To be, or not to be -- that is the question:  
Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them.  
To die - to sleep  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die -- to sleep.  
To sleep -- perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurs  
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would these fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns- puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.- Soft you now!  
The fair Ophelia!- Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins rememb' red.

• WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Macbeth*, ACT II, SCENE I.

*Inverness. Court of Macbeth's castle. Enter Banquo and Fleance, bearing a torch before him.*

BANQUO How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

BANQUO And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE I take't 'tis later, sir.

BANQUO Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven,  
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

*Enter Macbeth and a Servant with a torch.*

Give me my sword.

Who's there? MACBETH A friend.

BANQUO What, sir, not yet at rest? The King's abed.

He hath been in unusual pleasure and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices.  
This diamond he greets your wife withal,  
By the name of most kind hostess, and shut up  
In measureless content.

MACBETH Being unprepared,  
Our will became the servant to defect,  
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO All's well.

I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:  
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH I think not of them;  
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon that business,  
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO At your kind'st leisure.

MACBETH If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,  
It shall make honor for you.

BANQUO So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsel'd.

MACBETH Good repose the while.

BANQUO Thanks, sir, the like to you.

*Exeunt BANQUO and Fleance.*

MACBETH Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

*Exit SERVANT.*

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable

As this which now I draw.

Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going,

And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,

Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,

Which was not so before. There's no such thing:

It is the bloody business which informs

Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse

The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates

Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd Murder,

Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,

Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,

With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design

Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear

Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,

And take the present horror from the time,

Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives;

Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

*A bell rings.*

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.

Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell

That summons thee to heaven, or to hell.

*Exit.*

SCENE 2.

*The same. Enter LADY MACBETH.*

LADY MACBETH That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;

What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark! Peace!  
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
Which gives the stern'st good night. He is about it:  
The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugg'd their possets  
That death and nature do contend about them,  
Whether they live or die.

MACBETH [*Within.*] Who's there? what, ho!

LADY MACBETH Alack, I am afraid they have awaked  
And 'tis not done. The attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't.

*Enter Macbeth.*

My husband!

MACBETH I have done the deed.

Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

MACBETH When?

LADY MACBETH Now.

MACBETH As I descended?

LADY MACBETH Ay.

MACBETH Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?

LADY MACBETH Donalbain.

MACBETH This is a sorry sight.

[*Looks on his hands.*]

LADY MACBETH A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried, "Murther!"  
That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them,  
But they did say their prayers and address'd them  
Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH There are two lodged together.

MACBETH One cried, "God bless us!" and "Amen" the other,  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.

Listening their fear, I could not say "Amen,"  
When they did say, "God bless us!"

LADY MACBETH Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?  
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"  
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep" the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast

LADY MACBETH What do you mean?

MACBETH Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house;  
"Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more."

LADY MACBETH Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane,  
You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things. Go, get some water  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?  
They must lie there. Go carry them, and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH I'll go no more.

I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.

*Exit. Knocking within.*

MACBETH Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? Ha, they pluck out mine eyes!  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

*Re-enter* LADY MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH My hands are of your color, but I shame  
To wear a heart so white. [*Knocking within.*] I hear knocking  
At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber.

A little water clears us of this deed.

How easy is it then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. [*Knocking within.*] Hark, more knocking.

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us

And show us to be watchers. Be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

*Knocking within.*

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

*Exeunt.*

### SCENE 3.

*The same. Enter a* PORTER. *Knocking within.*

PORTER Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of Hell  
Gate, he should have old turning the key.

[*Knocking within.*]

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Belzebub? Here's  
a farmer that hanged himself on th' expectation of plenty. Come in time!  
Have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat fort.

[*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock! Who's there, in th' other devil's  
name? Faith, here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales  
against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet  
could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator.

[*Knocking within.*]

Knock, knock, knock!

Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing  
out of a French hose. Come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose.

[*Knocking within.*]

Knock, knock! Never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too  
cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have let in  
some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.

[*Knocking within.*]

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

*Opens the gate.*

*Enter* MACDUFF *and* LENNOX.

MACDUFF Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late?

PORTER Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock; and  
drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things.

MACDUFF What three things does drink especially provoke?

PORTER Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir,  
it provokes and unprovokes: it provokes the desire, but it takes away the  
performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator  
with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes  
him off; it persuades him and disheartens him; makes him stand to and  
not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and giving him  
the lie, leaves him.

MACDUFF I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

PORTER That it did, sir, i' the very throat on me; but requited  
him for his lie, and, I think, being too strong for him, though he  
took up my legs sometime, yet I made shift to cast him.

MACDUFF Is thy master stirring?

*Enter* MACBETH.

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

LENNOX Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF Is the King stirring, worthy Thane?

MACBETH Not yet.

MACDUFF He did command me to call timely on him;  
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

MACBETH I'll bring you to him.

MACDUFF I know this is a joyful trouble to you,  
But yet 'tis one.

MACBETH The labor we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

MACDUFF I'll make so bold to call, For 'tis my limited service.

*Exit.*

LENNOX Goes the King hence today?

MACBETH He does; he did appoint so.

LENNOX The night has been unruly. Where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,  
And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confused events  
New hatch'd to the woeful time. The obscure bird  
Clamor'd the livelong night. Some say the earth

Was feverous and did shake.

MACBETH 'Twas a rough fight.

LENNOX My young remembrance cannot parallel  
A fellow to it.

*Re-enter* MACDUFF.

MACDUFF O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee.

MACBETH

LENNOX. What's the matter?

MACDUFF Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.  
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope  
The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence  
The life o' the building.

MACBETH What is't you say? the life?

LENNOX Mean you his Majesty?

MACDUFF Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight  
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak;  
See, and then speak yourselves.

*Exeunt* MACBETH *and* LENNOX.

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum bell. Murder and treason!  
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm, awake!  
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,  
And look on death itself! Up, up, and see  
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!  
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites  
To countenance this horror! Ring the bell.

*Bell rings.*

*Enter* LADY MACBETH.

LADY MACBETH What's the business,  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak!

MACDUFF O gentle lady,

'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:

The repetition in a woman's ear  
Would murder as it fell.

*Enter* BANQUO.

O Banquo, Banquo!

Our royal master's murder'd.

LADY MACBETH Woe, alas!

What, in our house?



MACDUFF Look to the lady.

MALCOLM [*Aside to DONALBAIN.*] Why do we hold our tongues, That most may claim this argument for ours?

DONALBAIN [*Aside to MALCOLM.*] What should be spoken here, where our fate,

Hid in an auger hole, may rush and seize us?

Let's away, Our tears are not yet brew'd.

MALCOLM [*Aside to DONALBAIN.*] Nor our strong sorrow Upon the foot of motion.

BANQUO Look to the lady.

LADY MACBETH *is carried out.*

And when we have our naked frailties hid,

That suffer in exposure, let us meet

And question this most bloody piece of work

To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us.

In the great hand of God I stand, and thence

Against the undivulged pretense I fight

Of treasonous malice.

MACDUFF And so do I.

ALL So all.

MACBETH Let's briefly put on manly readiness

And meet i' the hall together.

ALL Well contented.

*Exeunt all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.*

MALCOLM What will you do? Let's not consort with them.

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office

Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

DONALBAIN To Ireland, I; our separated fortune

Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are

There's daggers in men's smiles; the near in blood,

The nearer bloody.

MALCOLM This murtherous shaft that's shot

Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way

Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse;

And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,

But shift away. There's warrant in that theft

Which steals itself when there's no mercy left.

*Exeunt.*



LORENZO Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

STEPHANO.

A friend.

LORENZO A friend! What friend? Your name, I pray you, friend?

STEPHANO. Stephano is my name, and I bring word

My mistress will before the break of day

Be here at Belmont; she doth stray about

By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays

For happy wedlock hours.

LORENZO Who comes with her?

STEPHANO. None but a holy hermit and her maid.

I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

LORENZO He is not, nor we have not heard from him.

But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,

And ceremoniously let us prepare

Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

*Enter* LAUNCELOT

LAUNCELOT Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!

LORENZO Who calls?

LAUNCELOT Sola! Did you see Master Lorenzo?

Master Lorenzo! Sola, sola!

LORENZO Leave holloaing, man. Here!

LAUNCELOT Sola! Where, where?

LORENZO Here!

LAUNCELOT Tell him there's a post come from my master with  
his horn full of good news; my master will be here ere morning.

*Exit*

LORENZO Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their coming.

And yet no matter - why should we go in?

My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,

Within the house, your mistress is at hand;

And bring your music forth into the air.

*Exit* STEPHANO

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.

*Enter* MUSICIANS

Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn;  
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear.

And draw her home with music. [*Music*]

JESSICA I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

LORENZO The reason is your spirits are attentive;  
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,  
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,  
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,  
Which is the hot condition of their blood  
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,  
Or any air of music touch their ears,  
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,  
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze  
By the sweet power of music. Therefore the poet  
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;  
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,  
But music for the time doth change his nature.  
The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull:as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus.  
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Richard II*, ACT IV, SCENE 1.

[...]

*Re-enter YORK, with KING RICHARD, and OFFICERS bearing the regalia*

KING RICHARD Alack, why am I sent for to a king,  
Before I have shook off the regal thoughts  
Wherewith I reign'd? I hardly yet have learn'd  
To insinuate, flatter, bow, and bend my knee.  
Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me  
To this submission. Yet I well remember  
The favours of these men. Were they not mine?  
Did they not sometime cry 'All hail!' to me?  
So Judas did to Christ; but he, in twelve,  
Found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none.

God save the King! Will no man say amen?  
Am I both priest and clerk? Well then, amen.

God save the King! although I be not he;  
And yet, amen, if heaven do think him me.

To do what service am I sent for hither?  
YORK To do that office of thine own good will  
Which tired majesty did make thee offer  
The resignation of thy state and crown  
To Henry Bolingbroke.

KING RICHARD Give me the crown. Here, cousin, seize the crown.  
Here, cousin,

On this side my hand, and on that side thine.

Now is this golden crown like a deep well  
That owes two buckets, filling one another;

The emptier ever dancing in the air,  
The other down, unseen, and full of water.

That bucket down and full of tears am I,  
Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.

BOLINGBROKE I thought you had been willing to resign.

KING RICHARD My crown I am; but still my griefs are mine.  
You may my glories and my state depose,

But not my griefs; still am I king of those.

BOLINGBROKE Part of your cares you give me with your crown.

KING RICHARD Your cares set up do not pluck my cares down.

My care is loss of care, by old care done;  
Your care is gain of care, by new care won.

The cares I give I have, though given away;  
 They tend the crown, yet still with me they stay.  
 BOLINGBROKE Are you contented to resign the crown?  
 KING RICHARD Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be;  
 Therefore no no, for I resign to thee.  
 Now mark me how I will undo myself:  
 I give this heavy weight from off my head,  
 And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,  
 The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;  
 With mine own tears I wash away my balm,  
 With mine own hands I give away my crown,  
 With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,  
 With mine own breath release all duteous oaths;  
 All pomp and majesty I do forswear;  
 My manors, rents, revenues, I forgo;  
 My acts, decrees, and statutes, I deny.  
 God pardon all oaths that are broke to me!  
 God keep all vows unbroke are made to thee!  
 Make me, that nothing have, with nothing griev'd,  
 And thou with all pleas'd, that hast an achiev'd.  
 Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit,  
 And soon lie Richard in an earthly pit.  
 God save King Henry, unking'd Richard says,  
 And send him many years of sunshine days!  
 What more remains?  
 NORTHUMBERLAND No more; but that you read  
 These accusations, and these grievous crimes  
 Committed by your person and your followers  
 Against the state and profit of this land;  
 That, by confessing them, the souls of men  
 May deem that you are worthily depos'd.  
 KING RICHARD Must I do so? And must I ravel out  
 My weav'd-up follies? Gentle Northumberland,  
 If thy offences were upon record,  
 Would it not shame thee in so fair a troop  
 To read a lecture of them? If thou wouldst,  
 There shouldst thou find one heinous article,

Containing the deposing of a king  
 And cracking the strong warrant of an oath,  
 Mark'd with a blot, damn'd in the book of heaven.  
 Nay, all of you that stand and look upon me  
 Whilst that my wretchedness doth bait myself,  
 Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,  
 Showing an outward pity-yet you Pilates  
 Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,  
 And water cannot wash away your sin.  
 NORTHUMBERLAND My lord, dispatch; read o'er these articles.  
 KING RICHARD Mine eyes are full of tears; I cannot see.  
 And yet salt water blinds them not so much  
 But they can see a sort of traitors here.  
 Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,  
 I find myself a traitor with the rest;  
 For I have given here my soul's consent  
 T'undeck the pompous body of a king;  
 Made glory base, and sovereignty a slave,  
 Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant.  
 NORTHUMBERLAND My lord –  
 KING RICHARD No lord of thine, thou haught insulting man,  
 Nor no man's lord; I have no name, no tide  
 No, not that name was given me at the font  
 But 'tis usurp'd. Alack the heavy day,  
 That I have worn so many winters out,  
 And know not now what name to call myself!  
 O that I were a mockery king of snow,  
 Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke  
 To melt myself away in water drops!  
 Good king, great king, and yet not greatly good,  
 And if my word be sterling yet in England,  
 Let it command a mirror hither straight,  
 That it may show me what a face I have  
 Since it is bankrupt of his majesty.  
 BOLINGBROKE Go some of you and fetch a looking-glass.  
*Exit an ATTENDANT*  
 NORTHUMBERLAND Read o'er this paper while the glass doth come.

KING RICHARD Fiend, thou torments me ere I come to hell.  
 BOLINGBROKE Urge it no more, my Lord Northumberland.  
 NORTHUMBERLAND The Commons will not, then, be satisfied.  
 KING RICHARD They shall be satisfied. I'll read enough,  
 When I do see the very book indeed  
 Where all my sins are writ, and that's myself.  
*Re-enter ATTENDANT with glass*  
 Give me that glass, and therein will I read.  
 No deeper wrinkles yet? Hath sorrow struck  
 So many blows upon this face of mine  
 And made no deeper wounds? O flatt'ring glass,  
 Like to my followers in prosperity,  
 Thou dost beguile me! Was this face the face  
 That every day under his household roof  
 Did keep ten thousand men? Was this the face  
 That like the sun did make beholders wink?  
 Is this the face which fac'd so many follies  
 That was at last out-fac'd by Bolingbroke?  
 A brittle glory shineth in this face;  
 As brittle as the glory is the face;  
*[Dashes the glass against the ground]*  
 For there it is, crack'd in a hundred shivers.  
 Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport  
 How soon my sorrow hath destroy'd my face.  
 BOLINGBROKE The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd  
 The shadow of your face.  
 KING RICHARD Say that again.  
 The shadow of my sorrow? Ha! let's see.  
 'Tis very true: my grief lies all within;  
 And these external manner of laments  
 Are merely shadows to the unseen grief  
 That swells with silence in the tortur'd soul.  
 There lies the substance; and I thank thee, king,  
 For thy great bounty, that not only giv'st  
 Me cause to wail, but teachest me the way  
 How to lament the cause. I'll beg one boon,  
 And then be gone and trouble you no more.

Shall I obtain it?

BOLINGBROKE Name it, fair cousin.

KING RICHARD Fair cousin! I am greater than a king;

For when I was a king, my flatterers

Were then but subjects; being now a subject,

I have a king here to my flatterer.

Being so great, I have no need to beg.

BOLINGBROKE Yet ask.

KING RICHARD                   And shall I have?

BOLINGBROKE You shall.

KING RICHARD                   Then give me leave to go.

BOLINGBROKE Whither?

KING RICHARD Whither you will, so I were from your sights.

BOLINGBROKE Go, some of you convey him to the Tower.

KING RICHARD O, good! Convey! Conveyers are you all,

That rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall.

*Exeunt* KING RICHARD, *some* LORDS *and a* GUARD

BOLINGBROKE On Wednesday next we solemnly set down

Our coronation. Lords, prepare yourselves.

*Exeunt all but the* ABBOT OF WESTMINSTER, *the* BISHOP  
OF CARLISLE, *and* AUMERLE

ABBOT A woeful pageant have we here beheld.

CARLISLE The woe's to come; the children yet unborn

Shall feel this day as sharp to them as thorn.

AUMERLE You holy clergymen, is there no plot

To rid the realm of this pernicious blot?

ABBOT My lord, Before I freely speak my mind herein,

You shall not only take the sacrament

To bury mine intents, but also to effect

Whatever I shall happen to devise.

I see your brows are full of discontent,

Your hearts of sorrow, and your eyes of tears.

Come home with me to supper; I will lay

A plot shall show us all a merry day.

• LAURENCE STERNE, *Tristram Shandy*, BOOK I, CHAPTERS 1-5

*Chapter 1.* I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;—that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind;—and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost;—Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly, —I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see me.—Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it;—you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son, &c. &c.—and a great deal to that purpose:—Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into, so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a half-penny matter,—away they go clattering like hey-go mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it. Pray my Dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?—Good G..! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time,—Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question? Pray, what was your father saying?—Nothing.

*Chapter 2.* —Then, positively, there is nothing in the question that I can see, either good or bad.—Then, let me tell you, Sir, it was a very unseasonable question at least,—because it scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand in hand with the Homunculus, and conducted him safe to the place destined for his reception. The Homunculus, Sir, in however low and ludicrous a light he may appear, in this age of levity, to the eye of folly or prejudice;—to the eye of reason in scientific research, he stands confessed—a Being guarded and circumscribed with rights.—The minutest philosophers, who by the bye, have the most enlarged understandings, (their souls being inversely as their enquiries) shew us incontestably, that the Homunculus

is created by the same hand,—engendered in the same course of nature,—endow'd with the same loco-motive powers and faculties with us:—That he consists as we do, of skin, hair, fat, flesh, veins, arteries, ligaments, nerves, cartilages, bones, marrow, brains, glands, genitals, humours, and articulations;—is a Being of as much activity,—and in all senses of the word, as much and as truly our fellow-creature as my Lord Chancellor of England.—He may be benefitted,—he may be injured,—he may obtain redress; in a word, he has all the claims and rights of humanity, which Tully, Puffendorf, or the best ethick writers allow to arise out of that state and relation. Now, dear Sir, what if any accident had befallen him in his way alone!—or that through terror of it, natural to so young a traveller, my little Gentleman had got to his journey's end miserably spent;—his muscular strength and virility worn down to a thread;—his own animal spirits ruffled beyond description,—and that in this sad disorder'd state of nerves, he had lain down a prey to sudden starts, or a series of melancholy dreams and fancies, for nine long, long months together.—I tremble to think what a foundation had been laid for a thousand weaknesses both of body and mind, which no skill of the physician or the philosopher could ever afterwards have set thoroughly to rights.

*Chapter 3.* To my uncle Mr Toby Shandy do I stand indebted for the preceding anecdote, to whom my father, who was an excellent natural philosopher, and much given to close reasoning upon the smallest matters, had oft, and heavily complained of the injury; but once more particularly, as my uncle Toby well remember'd, upon his observing a most unaccountable obliquity, (as he call'd it) in my manner of setting up my top, and justifying the principles upon which I had done it,—the old gentleman shook his head, and in a tone more expressive by half of sorrow than reproach,—he said his heart all along foreboded, and he saw it verified in this, and from a thousand other observations he had made upon me, That I should neither think nor act like any other man's child:—But alas! continued he, shaking his head a second time, and wiping away a tear which was trickling down his cheeks, My Tristram's misfortunes began nine months before ever he came into the world. — My mother, who was sitting by, look'd up, but she knew no more than her backside what my father meant,—but my uncle, Mr. Toby Shandy, who had been often informed of the affair,—understood him very well.

*Chapter 4.* I know there are readers in the world, as well as many other good people in it, who are no readers at all,—who find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last, of every

thing which concerns you. It is in pure compliance with this humour of theirs, and from a backwardness in my nature to disappoint any one soul living, that I have been so very particular already. As my life and opinions are likely to make some noise in the world, and, if I conjecture right, will take in all ranks, professions, and denominations of men whatever,—be no less read than the Pilgrim's Progress itself—and in the end, prove the very thing which Montaigne dreaded his Essays should turn out, that is, a book for a parlour-window;—I find it necessary to consult every one a little in his turn; and therefore must beg pardon for going on a little farther in the same way: For which cause, right glad I am, that I have begun the history of myself in the way I have done; and that I am able to go on, tracing every thing in it, as Horace says, *ab Ovo*. Horace, I know, does not recommend this fashion altogether: But that gentleman is speaking only of an epic poem or a tragedy;—(I forget which,) besides, if it was not so, I should beg Mr Horace's pardon;—for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived. To such however as do not choose to go so far back into these things, I can give no better advice than that they skip over the remaining part of this chapter; for I declare before-hand, 'tis wrote only for the curious and inquisitive. — Shut the door.— I was begot in the night betwixt the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighteen. I am positive I was.—But how I came to be so very particular in my account of a thing which happened before I was born, is owing to another small anecdote known only in our own family, but now made publick for the better clearing up this point. My father, you must know, who was originally a Turkey merchant, but had left off business for some years, in order to retire to, and die upon, his paternal estate in the county of . . . , was, I believe, one of the most regular men in every thing he did, whether 'twas matter of business, or matter of amusement, that ever lived. As a small specimen of this extreme exactness of his, to which he was in truth a slave, he had made it a rule for many years of his life,—on the first Sunday-night of every month throughout the whole year,—as certain as ever the Sunday-night came,—to wind up a large house-clock, which we had standing on the back-stairs head, with his own hands:—And being somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age at the time I have been speaking of,—he had likewise gradually brought some other little family concerns to the same period, in order, as he would often say to my uncle Toby, to get them all out of the way at one time, and be no more plagued and pestered with them the rest of the month. It was attended but with one misfortune, which, in a great measure, fell upon myself, and the effects of which I fear I shall carry with me to my grave; namely, that from

an unhappy association of ideas, which have no connection in nature, it so fell out at length, that my poor mother could never hear the said clock wound up,—but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popped into her head—& vice versa:—Which strange combination of ideas, the sagacious Locke, who certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever. But this by the bye. Now it appears by a memorandum in my father's pocket-book, which now lies upon the table, 'That on Lady-day, which was on the 25th of the same month in which I date my geniture,—my father set upon his journey to London, with my eldest brother Bobby, to fix him at Westminster school;' and, as it appears from the same authority, 'That he did not get down to his wife and family till the second week in May following,'—it brings the thing almost to a certainty. However, what follows in the beginning of the next chapter, puts it beyond all possibility of a doubt.—But pray, Sir, What was your father doing all December, January, and February?—Why, Madam,—he was all that time afflicted with a Sciatica.

*Chapter 5.* On the fifth day of November, 1718, which to the aera fixed on, was as near nine kalendar months as any husband could in reason have expected,—was I Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, brought forth into this scurvy and disastrous world of ours.—I wish I had been born in the Moon, or in any of the planets, (except Jupiter or Saturn, because I never could bear cold weather) for it could not well have fared worse with me in any of them (though I will not answer for Venus) than it has in this vile, dirty planet of ours,—which, o' my conscience, with reverence be it spoken, I take to be made up of the shreds and clippings of the rest;—not but the planet is well enough, provided a man could be born in it to a great title or to a great estate; or could any how contrive to be called up to public charges, and employments of dignity or power;—but that is not my case;—and therefore every man will speak of the fair as his own market has gone in it;—for which cause I affirm it over again to be one of the vilest worlds that ever was made;—for I can truly say, that from the first hour I drew my breath in it, to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all, for an asthma I got in scating against the wind in Flanders;—I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune; and though I will not wrong her by saying, She has ever made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil;—yet with all the good temper in the world I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small Hero sustained.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Troilus and Cressida*, ACT III,  
SCENE 2.

[...].

TROILUS I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.

Th' imaginary relish is so sweet

That it enchants my sense; what will it be

When that the wat'ry palate tastes indeed

Love's thrice-repured nectar? Death, I fear me;

Swooning destruction; or some joy too fine,

Too subtle-potent, tun'd too sharp in sweetness,

For the capacity of my ruder powers.

I fear it much; and I do fear besides

That I shall lose distinction in my joys;

As doth a battle, when they charge on heaps

The enemy flying.

*Re-enter* PANDARUS

PANDARUS She's making her ready, she'll come straight; you must be witty now. She does so blush, and fetches her wind so short, as if she were fray'd with a sprite. I'll fetch her. It is the prettiest villain; she fetches her breath as short as a new-ta'en sparrow.

*Exit*

TROILUS Even such a passion doth embrace my bosom.

My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse,

And all my powers do their bestowing lose,

Like vassalage at unawares encount'ring

The eye of majesty.

*Re-enter* PANDARUS *with* CRESSIDA

PANDARUS Come, come, what need you blush? Shame's a baby.- Here she is now; swear the oaths now to her that you have sworn to me. What, are you gone again? You must be watch'd ere you be made tame, must you? Come your ways, come your ways; an you draw backward, we'll put you i' th' fills.-Why do you not speak to her?-Come, draw this curtain and let's see your picture.

Alas the day, how loath you are to offend daylight! An 'twere dark, you'd close sooner. So, so; rub on, and kiss the mistress How now, a kiss in fee-farm! Build there, carpenter; the air is sweet. Nay, you shall fight your hearts out ere I part you. The falcon as the tercel, for all the ducks i' th' river. Go to, go to.

TROILUS You have bereft me of all words, lady.

PANDARUS Words pay no debts, give her deeds; but she'll bereave

you o' th' deeds too, if she call your activity in question.

What, billing again? Here's 'In witness whereof the parties interchangeably.' Come in, come in; I'll go get a fire.

*Exit*

CRESSIDA Will you walk in, my lord?

TROILUS O Cressid, how often have I wish'd me thus!

CRESSIDA Wish'd, my lord! The gods grant-O my lord!

TROILUS What should they grant? What makes this pretty abruption? What too curious dreg espies my sweet lady in the fountain of our love?

CRESSIDA More dregs than water, if my fears have eyes.

TROILUS Fears make devils of cherubims; they never see truly.

CRESSIDA Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds safer footing than blind reason stumbling without fear. To fear the worst oft cures the worse.

TROILUS O, let my lady apprehend no fear! In all Cupid's pageant there is presented no monster.

CRESSIDA Nor nothing monstrous neither?

TROILUS Nothing, but our undertakings when we vow to weep seas, live in fire, cat rocks, tame tigers; thinking it harder for our mistress to devise imposition enough than for us to undergo any difficulty imposed. This is the monstrosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite, and the execution confin'd; that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit.

CRESSIDA They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten, and discharging less than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?

TROILUS Are there such? Such are not we. Praise us as we are tasted, allow us as we prove; our head shall go bare till merit crown it. No perfection in reversion shall have a praise in present. We will not name desert before his birth; and, being born, his addition shall be humble. Few words to fair faith:

Troilus shall be such to Cressid as what envy can say worst shall be a mock for his truth; and what truth can speak truest not truer than Troilus.

CRESSIDA Will you walk in, my lord?

*Re-enter* PANDARUS

PANDARUS What, blushing still? Have you not done talking yet?

CRESSIDA Well, uncle, what folly I commit, I dedicate to you.

PANDARUS I thank you for that; if my lord get a boy of you, you'll give him me. Be true to my lord; if he flinch, chide me for it.

TROILUS You know now your hostages: your uncle's word and my firm faith.

PANDARUS Nay, I'll give my word for her too: our kindred, though they be long ere they are wooed, they are constant being won; they are burs, I can tell you; they'll stick where they are thrown.

CRESSIDA Boldness comes to me now and brings me heart.

Prince Troilus, I have lov'd you night and day

For many weary months.

TROILUS Why was my Cressid then so hard to win?

CRESSIDA Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord,

With the first glance that ever-pardon me.

If I confess much, you will play the tyrant.

I love you now; but till now not so much

But I might master it. In faith, I lie;

My thoughts were like unbridled children, grown

Too headstrong for their mother. See, we fools!

Why have I blabb'd? Who shall be true to us,

When we are so unsecret to ourselves?

But, though I lov'd you well, I woo'd you not;

And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a man,

Or that we women had men's privilege

Of speaking first. Sweet, bid me hold my tongue,

For in this rapture I shall surely speak

The thing I shall repent. See, see, your silence,

Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws

My very soul of counsel. Stop my mouth.

TROILUS And shall, albeit sweet music issues thence.

PANDARUS Pretty, i' faith.

CRESSIDA My lord, I do beseech you, pardon me;

'Twas not my purpose thus to beg a kiss.

I am asham'd. O heavens! what have I done?

For this time will I take my leave, my lord.

TROILUS Your leave, sweet Cressid!

PANDARUS Leave! An you take leave till to-morrow morning.

CRESSIDA Pray you, content you.

TROILUS What offends you, lady?

CRESSIDA Sir, mine own company.

TROILUS You cannot shun yourself.

CRESSIDA Let me go and try.

I have a kind of self resides with you;  
But an unkind self, that itself will leave  
To be another's fool. I would be gone.

Where is my wit? I know not what I speak.

TROILUS Well know they what they speak that speak so wisely.

CRESSIDA Perchance, my lord, I show more craft than love;  
And fell so roundly to a large confession  
To angle for your thoughts; but you are wise  
Or else you love not; for to be wise and love  
Exceeds man's might; that dwells with gods above.

TROILUS O that I thought it could be in a woman

As, if it can, I will presume in you  
To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;  
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind  
That doth renew swifter than blood decays!  
Or that persuasion could but thus convince me  
That my integrity and truth to you  
Might be affronted with the match and weight  
Of such a winnowed purity in love.

How were I then uplifted! but, alas,

I am as true as truth's simplicity,  
And simpler than the infancy of truth.

CRESSIDA In that I'll war with you.

TROILUS O virtuous fight,

When right with right wars who shall be most right!

True swains in love shall in the world to come  
Approve their truth by Troilus, when their rhymes,  
Full of protest, of oath, and big compare,  
Want similes, truth tir'd with iteration  
As true as steel, as plantage to the moon,  
As sun to day, as turtle to her mate,  
As iron to adamant, as earth to th' centre  
Yet, after all comparisons of truth,  
As truth's authentic author to be cited, '

As true as Troilus' shall crown up the verse  
And sanctify the numbers.

CRESSIDA                      Prophet may you be!  
If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,  
When time is old and hath forgot itself,  
When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy,  
And blind oblivion swallow'd cities up,  
And mighty states characterless are grated  
To dusty nothing-yet let memory  
From false to false, among false maids in love,  
Upbraid my falsehood when th' have said 'As false  
As air, as water, wind, or sandy earth,  
As fox to lamb, or wolf to heifer's calf,  
Pard to the hind, or stepdame to her son'  
Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,  
'As false as Cressid.'

PANDARUS Go to, a bargain made; seal it, seal it; I'll be the witness.  
Here I hold your hand; here my cousin's. If ever you prove false one to  
another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful  
goers- between be call'd to the world's end after my name-call them all  
Pandars; let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and  
all brokers between Pandars. Say 'Amen.' TROILUS Amen.

CRESSIDA Amen.

PANDARUS Amen. Whereupon I will show you a chamber and a  
bed; which bed, because it shall not speak of your pretty encounters,  
press it to death. Away!

And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here, Bed, chamber,  
pander, to provide this gear!

*Exeunt*

### SCENE 3

[...]

ACHILLES Go call Thersites hither, sweet Patroclus.  
I'll send the fool to Ajax, and desire him  
T' invite the Trojan lords, after the combat,  
To see us here unarm'd. I have a woman's longing,

An appetite that I am sick withal,  
To see great Hector in his weeds of peace;  
To talk with him, and to behold his visage,  
Even to my full of view.

*Enter* THERSITES

A labour sav'd!

THERSITES A wonder!

ACHILLES What?

THERSITES Ajax goes up and down the field asking for himself.

ACHILLES How so?

THERSITES He must fight singly to-morrow with Hector, and is so prophetically proud of an heroical cudgelling that he raves in saying nothing.

ACHILLES How can that be?

THERSITES Why, 'a stalks up and down like a peacock-a stride and a stand; ruminaies like an hostess that hath no arithmetic but her brain to set down her reckoning, bites his lip with a politic regard, as who should say 'There were wit in this head, an 'twould out'; and so there is; but it lies as coldly in him as fire in a flint, which will not show without knocking. The man's undone for ever; for if Hector break not his neck i' th' combat, he'll break't himself in vainglory. He knows not me. I said 'Good morrow, Ajax'; and he replies 'Thanks, Agamemnon.' What think you of this man that takes me for the general? He's grown a very land fish, languageless, a monster. A plague of opinion! A man may wear it on both sides, like leather jerkin.

ACHILLES Thou must be my ambassador to him, Thersites.

THERSITES Who, I? Why, he'll answer nobody; he professes not answering. Speaking is for beggars: he wears his tongue in's arms. I will put on his presence. Let Patroclus make his demands to me, you shall see the pageant of Ajax.

ACHILLES To him, Patroclus. Tell him I humbly desire the valiant Ajax to invite the most valorous Hector to come unarm'd to my tent; and to procure safe conduct for his person of the magnanimous and most illustrious six-or-seven-times-honour'd Captain General of the Grecian army, et cetera, Agamemnon. Do this.

PATROCLUS Jove bless great Ajax!

THERSITES Hum!

PATROCLUS I come from the worthy Achilles-

THERSITES Ha!

PATROCLUS Who most humbly desires you to invite Hector to his tent

THERSITES Hum!

PATROCLUS And to procure safe conduct from Agamemnon.

THERSITES Agamemnon!

PATROCLUS Ay, my lord.

THERSITES Ha!

PATROCLUS What you say to't?

THERSITES God buy you, with all my heart.

PATROCLUS Your answer, sir.

THERSITES If to-morrow be a fair day, by eleven of the clock it will go one way or other. Howsoever, he shall pay for me ere he has me.

PATROCLUS Your answer, sir.

THERSITES Fare ye well, with all my heart.

ACHILLES Why, but he is not in this tune, is he?

THERSITES No, but he's out a tune thus. What music will be in him when Hector has knock'd out his brains I know not; but, I am sure, none; unless the fiddler Apollo get his sinews to make catlings on.

ACHILLES Come, thou shalt bear a letter to him straight.

THERSITES Let me carry another to his horse; for that's the more capable creature.

ACHILLES My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirr'd; And I myself see not the bottom of it.

*Exeunt* ACHILLES and PATROCLUS

THERSITES Would the fountain of your mind were clear again, that I might water an ass at it. I had rather be a tick in a sheep than such a valiant ignorance.

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