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THE ITALIAN INFLUENCE IN ENGLISH POETRY

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The Italian Influence in English Poetry

From Chaucer to Southwell

by A. Lytton Sells

*

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IN MEMORY OF

GEORGES RIVES

Plena fuit (nobis) omni concordia vita,
Et stetit ad finem longa tenaxque fides.

*

A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority.

DR. JOHNSON

A house more magnificently placed . .
I do not believe our England in those days
could show; and it deserved its site,
being amply classical in design . . . . Right
English though it was, it bore (as my
father used to say of our best English
poetry) the stamp of great Italian descent .

SIR A. QUILLER-COUCH

Preface

IT has been observed that English literature is in large part derivative. This means that, unlike Greek literature which seems to have been native to the soil, and in some measure French, English has drawn most of its literary forms and often even its themes from overseas. The English have been an importing nation in more than one sense; where they have excelled has been in the rehandling of imports. A man's character—if one may put it in another way—comes out only in his dealings with others and by contrast with them. The images are not exact but they may be near enough to convey the notion that a study of sources enables one to fix a writer's originality in sharper focus than if he is examined in isolation. True originality relates less to the matter of literature than to the expression; we are interested in what a writer talks about, provided he is a good writer—and this is because we are most of all impressed by what the French so well call 'la qualité de son âme.'

'How much more striking, in general, does any Englishman seem in his verse than in his prose!' Matthew Arnold once remarked; adding, decisively: '. . . the power of English literature is in its poets.' It is proposed to confine the present study to poetry, and to exclude drama in verse, which would demand a volume to itself. Of the main sources of English poetry, the Italian comes only a short way after the French and the Greco-Latin. It has been especially potent in ages of Romantic expansion; in the ages of Chaucer, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I; and in the age of Wordsworth. But to assess its significance, to determine how much we really owe to Italy requires a survey of the whole field such as no one has hitherto attempted. There have been scores of partial studies of authors, fewer of periods; what is now needed is a work of collation in a form accessible to the student and the cultured reader and not so detailed (or so heavily documented) as to prevent his embracing the whole subjectat a glance.

The present work took its origin in a course of lectures under the title: *Correnti italiane nella Poesia inglese,* delivered by the author in the University of Padua in 1946-1947 and elaborated more recently. But the impetus behind it has come perhaps as much from a knowledge of Italy extending over many years prior to the War, as from a study of books. In wandering among the mountains and cities of the earthly paradise one is aware at every turn of the presence of some English poet, or of an Italian writer or artist who has inspired him. By the shores of Como, it is Wordsworth; at Sirmione, Tennyson; in Venice, Sidney and Byron and Browning; in Padua, Chaucer and Sidney; at Vallombrosa, Milton; in Florence, Landor; in Rome, Southwell and Byron and Keats (a mixed company). If the shade of England's greatest poet broods over the cities of Venetia, if the gay or tragic tales of which the scene is Verona or Padua or Venice 'find their sole voice in that victorious brow,' the unquiet ghost of Shelley haunts the shores of the Ligurian Sea, from Pisa to San Terenzo. In treading the soil our poets have trod, one may hope to *feel,* and not simply *understand* 'their lyric flow.'

Only less vital perhaps than the inspiration of Italy's great writers has been the stimulus afforded by the country and the people themselves: by the Italian character and way of life and by the unfailing enchantment of Italian scenery, by (to use the words of Shelley) 'the bright blue sky . . . and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication.' He who has not gazed up at the southern ramparts of the Alps, or watched sunset merge into twilight by the shores of some Lombard lake, or lingered in the enchanted solitude of Paestum, has missed something of the fulness of life. And much of the best descriptive poetry in English would be wanting if Byron and Shelley had not fixed for all time in Italy their sensations of the visible world.

The influence of Italian painting on English poetry is harder to determine. Here is a domain in which the critic is often tempted to take conjecture for certainty and in which a prudent caution should be observed. Some attempt has been made to explore the field and to indicate here and there the verses that have been written with an Italian painting in mind.

The task of *understanding,* and even more of interpreting, the Italian influence is far from easy, and the writer might have hesitated

to express his conclusions but for some indications that may be found in the correspondence of Thomas Gray. It will be remembered that in later life Gray thought of writing a history of English poetry, which was to include a study of prosody and also of the three modern poetical literatures which had preceded English: namely the Saxon and Scandinavian, the Celtic and the Provençal. But he felt the undertaking was too vast, and hearing that Thomas Warton was engaged on a similar project, sent Warton an outline of his own plan. This is preserved in a letter of 15th April 1770, from which the salient points may be cited:

> P: 1 On the School of Provence, w^{ch} rose about the year 1100, & was soon followed by the French and Italians . . . Of their imitators the *French*, & of the first *Italian* School . . . about the year 1300 brought to perfection by Dante, Petrarch, Boccace, & others.

This ignores the earlier poetry of northern France, but the omission is not, for Gray's purpose, as serious as it looks. Gray assigns the *primacy* in the great currents of modern poetry to Provence, and research has gone far towards confirming the accuracy of his judgment. English poetry, for Gray, begins with Chaucer.

> P: 2 On *Chaucer* who first introduced the manner of the Provençaux improved by the Italians into our country.

This is true; but it would have been necessary also to study the influence of Anglo-Norman poetry on Chaucer's prosody, and also to show that his first masters were not the poets of Langue d'Oc, but of Langue d'Oil. The school of Chaucer is better described as a Franco-Italian than merely an Italian school.

> P: 3 Second Italian School (or Ariosto, Tasso, &c:) an improvement on the first . . . The lyric poetry of this & the former age introduced from Italy by Ld Surrey, Sr T. Wyat . . .
> *Spencer*, his character. Subject of his poem allegoric & romantic, of Provençal invention: but his manner of (treating) it borrow'd from the Second Italian School . . . this school ends in Milton.
> A *third Italian* School, full of conceit, begun in Q. Elizabeths reign, continued under James, & Charles the first by *Donne*, Crashaw, Cleveland; carried to its height by Cowley . . .
> P: 4 *School of France*, introduced after the Restoration . . . w^{ch} has continued down to our own times.[1]

[1] *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, Oxford, 1935, Vol. III, pp. 1123-25.

One might cavil at certain details, but the only major fault was Gray's failure to grasp and emphasise the pervasive influence exercised from the outset and in practically every period by French literature; and this was curious in a man whose notion of heaven, was a place where one would pass one's time reading novels by Marivaux and the younger Crébillon. For the rest, it will be noticed that Gray excludes dramatic poetry, partly no doubt for practical reasons, and that he classifies all other poetry under 'Italian' or 'French' headings.

Bearing this analysis in mind, one may venture to distinguish the following periods in the history of English poetry:

(i) The Renaissance, from Chaucer, an isolated spokesman of the early Renaissance, to Milton, an isolated survivor of the later Renaissance. During this period English writers take from Italy their ideas of 'great poetry'; certain genres such as the romantic epic, sonnet, madrigal, verse-pastoral; certain metrical forms, blank-verse and rhymed octave. As regards matter, they take lessons in courtesy and good-breeding, in politics and philosophy. They do not seem to have been conscious of the splendour of Italian scenery, or even much inpressed by the climate.

(ii) The early Seventeenth Century: this may be labelled 'late Renaissance' or 'Baroque', according to one's taste. During this period the influence of Italy in social arts and amusements reaches its heights in the court-life of the first two Stuarts; while Italian neo-Platonism is finally assimilated and naturalised by Henry More. The influence of the Counter-Reformation on Anglican thought and feeling is an important feature of the age; and one can see how this came about by tracing the influence of Southwell, who was educated in Rome and took his ideas of poetry from the Jesuit critics, and of Donne who had lived in Italy and owed much to the modes of thought affected by the Italians—on George Herbert, Crashaw and others.

(iii) The third period of English poetry is, as Gray remarked, a 'French' period, it extends from the Restoration to the age of Johnson, and is predominantly didactic, analytic and satirical. Italian influence dwindles and in the early eighteenth-century almost vanishes. But for many years before this great and robust literature declined, new ways of feeling and new aspirations were coming into being. Dante and Ariosto were being rediscovered; Sir Joshua Reynolds was celebrating Michelangelo as an interpreter of the sublime; and the

taste for mountain scenery, savage or grandiose, was being nurtured, if not actually created, by the paintings of Salvator Rosa.

There thus came into being a new poetry, reflective and descriptive, which was very different from that of the Elizabethan and Stuart epochs. Its greatest exponent was Wordsworth, who had studied Italian and visited the Lombard Lakes; and there is little doubt that the 'various language' in which Nature spoke to him communicated messages that can be traced to Salvator Rosa, if not to Michelangelo (some of whose sonnets, incidentally, he translated). The things that Englishmen now admired in Italy were not for the most part the people and their manners, of which the uninformed disapproved, but the climate, the scenery and the galaxy of great artists and sculptors. Now to the scenery the Elizabethans had been largely indifferent, while with the artists thay had been only partially familiar. This therefore represented a revolutionary change of attitude. The political misfortunes of Italy inspired sympathy, and Byron became one of the first foreign protagonists of the Risorgimento.

Thus, in the 'third Italian period' (as one may call it), Italian artists and, if we are to believe the late J. G. Robertson, critical writers, too, helped to create the Romantic aesthetics.

(iv) A fourth 'Italian school' may be discerned among the Victorian poets, although this age as a whole is too complex for neat classifications. There was a critical and rationalising movement, of which Arnold was the spokesman. There was a hellenising movement, which had been encouraged by Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and was well represented by Landor; and it may be recalled that the Hellenic revival had been greatly assisted by the unearthing of Pompeii and Herculaneum and by the rediscovery of Paestum. And there was a political movement in favour of the liberation of Italy, of which one catches many echoes in the poems of Landor, Mrs. Browning and Swinburne. These and other ingredients went to make up the varied feast that Italy provided for the mid-Victorians.

But it is probably in critical theory that the Italian contribution has been most constant. Italy had furnished, successively, the notion of baroque art and of neo-classic. In the eighteenth century the conception of the sublime had crystallised round the figures of Dante and Michelangelo. It was now to the Primitives that English painters and poets went back for inspiration.

In the present volume an attempt is made to map out the Renaissance field. Milton, although a man of the Renaissance, has not been studied here; but Southwell, although the founder of baroque poetry in England, has. Whatever one's theories about schools, one is almost obliged in tracing the course of poetry to follow the principle of 'literary generations'. Shakespeare, Drayton and Southwell all belonged to the same generation, and all are included, though Southwell died in 1594. Greville belonged to an older generation and is studied here, although none of his works were officially published until 1633. The passing of Elizabeth I did not mark the end of a literary epoch, at least as regards drama; but non-dramatic poetry was rapidly changing, and the year 1603 affords a convenient stopping-point. The vogue of the sonnet was over, except in Scotland; so was the vogue of the narrative love-poem. But metaphysical poetry was yet to come. It is true that *Saint Peters Complaynt* and the *Maeoniae* (1595) had decidedly heralded it; and that much of Donne's verse had been written between 1593 and 1600. But none of Donne's poems were published until 1633 and the Metaphysicals really belong to the age of Charles I. These facts seem to justify the inclusion in the present volume of Southwell (born 1561), and the placing of Donne (born 1573) at the opening of a new era. This era, the 'second Italian period', it is hoped to study in a subsequent volume.

The following pages, which do not pretend to be exhaustive, are an essay in literary criticism rather than literary history. The tracing of themes and tendencies has, where possible, been subordinated to the study of books and authors. Some attention has been devoted to the lives of the poets in Italy; but the main purpose has been to examine anew, to admire—and to incite others to admire—the great poems which Italy has inspired.

A word as to the references to Petrarch's *canzoniere*. Editions differ in their method of numbering the poems, the traditional method being to number the *sonetti*, the *canzoni*, and the *sestine* separately; and to number the poems 'in morte di Madonna Laura' separately from the poems 'in vita.' On the other hand, the most useful modern edition is probably *Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca*, edited with a commentary by Giosuè Carducci and Severino Ferrari (Florence, Sansoni, ed. 1937). In this edition the poems are numbered consecutively from i to ccclxvi. I have occasionally referred to well-

known sonnets by the traditional system, but in all instances have given the number of the poem in the Carducci-Ferrari edition.

The author wishes to thank those who have assisted him, whether in furnishing illustrations or in courteously permitting their reproduction: the Director of the British Museum, for the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I; the Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., for Raphael's "St. George and the Dragon"; the Lord Chamberlain, for Zuccaro's "The Calumny of Apelles", reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen; Professor Arturo Cronia, in connection wtih the paintings by Giulio Romano; Lord Willoughby de Broke, for the portrait of Sir Fulke Greville; and the Trustees of the National Gallery, London, for El Greco's "St Peter". He is also greatly indebted to Messrs. Alinari Brothers and to Messrs. John R. Freeman for the various photographs they have supplied.

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A. L. S.

Indiana University
28 May 1954

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CHAPTER I

Geoffrey Chaucer

I

IT is not enough to say that Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340–1400) was the first of our great poets, was, in a sense, our Homer. He was at once less, and far more; less, because none of his works is as great as the *Iliad*; more, because he did for the English people what probably the author of the *Iliad* did not do for the Hellenes—he may be said virtually to have invented English poetry; both its prosody and the spirit that informs it.

We do not think of disparaging Taine, that great historian and critic, when we say that Chaucer does not at all lend himself to the deterministic interpretation of literature. He was the product of his race—he could hardly escape being that. In his humour, his kindliness, his freedom from rancour, perhaps too in a something fresh and childlike that we find in his vision of nature, we today recognise the best of the English tradition; but it is noticeable that we also recognise in him the very beginning of it, as though he invented these traits which are for us a part of his essential Englishness. But what of the *milieu* and the *moment*? The latter at least was by no means propitious. Both abroad and at home things were going very badly indeed. The success achieved by the Treaty of Bretigny (1360) was as barren as it was short-lived. Before long the French, guided by the astute Charles V and led by the brilliant Du Guesclin, had driven us from all our possessions in Southern France, except the territories of Bordeaux and Bayonne. Our fleets were destroyed and our foreign trade crippled. At home the outlook was even darker. The country was ravaged by pestilence. Edward III in his old age had sunk into a life of dishonour and disgrace. The heir to the throne was a young boy of weak character. And England, obscurely and unconsciously, was heading towards an era of political instability and civil war. Were literature indeed an expression of society, or a product of the particular momentum

carrying a people forward at a particular time, the works of Chaucer would surely reflect pessimism and disquiet, or be traversed by such conflicting and anarchic tendencies as we find in the recent poetry of Europe. But they reflect nothing of the kind. They are of a sovereign limpidity, serenity, self-possession. Their glowing rays make up a dawn which quickly kindles to a glorious sunrise. For great literature does not express the feelings and aspirations of a multitude of ordinary men and women; it expresses the visions of a man of genius.

Yes, it may be urged; but this man of genius had his own inner life, his spiritual, literary life, and this was enough to sustain him. To which one would reply that, outside his own soul, he appears to have had very little to sustain him. From his boyhood onward he was engaged in the public life of his time, as a soldier, an official of the Royal household, a diplomatic agent and an administrator. There were few other poets or writers in London with whom he could confer or from whom he could win enthusiasm and encouragement; there was nothing even remotely analogous to what the Pléïade was for Ronsard, or to what Byron, Peacock, and to some extent Keats and Leigh Hunt, were for Shelley.

True, there was Gower, who outlived him and revered him; one of a clan which since that time we seem always to have had—sound, honest, reliable; not very original, but able to understand and no doubt admire the eccentricities of genius. Yet one wonders whether Gower was the man to communicate the divine spark or even to catch much of it from another. He was scarcely an adventurous soul. In short, apart from Gower and a few minor writers, like Henry Scogan and Thomas Usk, Chaucer was, so far as any English compeers were concerned, alone. It is an amazing fact, that he had no forbears and no literary traditions. Anglo-Saxon literature was fading away; after gallant and in some ways noble efforts to revive the alliterative poetry, the old fire was dying out. And Anglo-Norman literature was equally without a future. If England was to have a literature at all, it would have to be something entirely new, based on a new prosody and expressive of a sensibility which had never yet found expression.

Now Chaucer's character and the opportunities which he seized and utilized predisposed him to such a task. His surname, which was French (Chaucier)[1] suggests that his ancestors had been shoemakers in the City, but not necessarily of French origin. They may

well have adopted the name of 'Chaucier' as being more refined than any Saxon vocable and more in keeping with the language and customs of commerce. His immediate forbears, however, were well-to-do vintners, and his wife Philippa was the daughter of a noble. Her sister subsequently married John of Gaunt and she herself was attached to the Queen's household. This marriage must have greatly assisted Chaucer and may explain, though only in part, why he was entrusted with so many diplomatic missions on the Continent. But he did not owe everything to it. At the Court of Edward III he had received the education of a page, an education mainly French in spirit. During an expedition into northern France—an expedition recalled in his famous portrait of the Squire—he was captured, and held prisoner for a time. After being ransomed, he is said to have studied law at the Inner Temple, and it is evident, moreover, that both by his training and capacity he was marked out for promotion. It would probably be true to say that he was a born diplomatist, if it were not even truer to recall that he was a born poet.

But the born poet takes advantage of every opportunity. A man's first education always leaves a strong and lasting impression, although subsequent experiences may modify and even, in some respects, overlay it. So it was with Chaucer. His education was that of all scholars of western Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. He knew something of Virgil and Ovid, he had a very fair knowledge of ancient mythology, he read such books as Albertano da Brescia's *Liber Consolationis*, while Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, to which he is always referring, was his bedside book. His literary taste was of French formation. He read as a young man the *Roman de la Rose*, above all the poems of Guillaume de Machault, for whom he conceived a great and lasting admiration. Somewhat later, perhaps, he became familiar with Eustache Deschamps, from whom he was to draw inspiration in *The Canterbury Tales*. It was therefore natural that his first works like the *Boke of the Duchesse* (1369) and his version of the *Romaunt of the Rose* should be of entirely French inspiration, and that this inspiration should persist and reappear in his later works.

It was formerly held that in the spring of 1368 Chaucer accompanied Prince Lionel to Italy for the prince's marriage with Violante, daughter of Bernabò Visconti, Duke of Milan; and it has been pointed out that as Petrarch was in Milan and attended the

marriage, the young Chaucer may perhaps have been introduced to him. Now this marriage took place on May 28th; and a document which has come to light shows that on July 17th, Chaucer received a passport, and a sum for travelling expenses, to go abroad—a fact which suggests that he may not, after all, have attended Prince Lionel's marriage. It is, however, possible that he had already attended it and then, immediately on his return home, been sent abroad on another mission; or alternatively, that the passport issued on July 17th was to enable him to follow the Prince to Milan for some negotiations analogous to those which he is known to have carried out in 1378. The date of July 17th neither proves nor disproves the theory that he may have been in Milan in May, 1368 and have then begun to acquire a knowledge of the Italian language. What is certain is that he went on a diplomatic mission to Genoa and Florence on December 1st, 1372. The Genoese had opened negotiations for a commercial treaty, and for the special use of a port in England, and Chaucer was sent to discuss the matter; apparently an agreement was not reached, but the consequences of Chaucer's journey for the future of English poetry seem to have been so considerable that one may say an aesthetic treaty was signed for all time. Chaucer's journey did not stop at Genoa. He proceeded to Florence to negotiate a loan on behalf of the King of England. He apparently travelled by way of Pisa, and one may guess that at Pisa they showed him the Tower of Hunger. If that be so, it would fully explain why he afterwards narrated, from the *Inferno*, the story of 'Erl Hugelyn of Pyze.' The completion of his work in Florence probably terminated his mission; but he may have had a margin of time and money, for he next, in the spring of 1373, is said to have crossed the Apennines and come to Padua. This inference is founded on the *Prologe of the Clerkes Tale of Oxenford,* where the clerk, who has been presumed to be speaking for Chaucer, says:

> I wol yow telle a tale which that I
> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> As preved by his wordes and his werk . . .
> Fraunceys Petrark, the lauriat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
> Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie
> As Lynyan dide of philosophie
> Or lawe . . .

This was the tale of Griselda, and it had been told by Boccaccio. But Petrarch, who had been greatly struck with it, is known to have translated it into Latin in 1373; though whether he finished this translation in September or as early as June 8th, as some copies say, is not known. It is, however, certain that Petrarch was living at Arquà at this time. Now even if Chaucer had not personally met him in Milan in the course of a visit which is perhaps hypothetical, but if in 1373 while he was in Florence, he heard that Petrarch was near Padua, it would be natural to go and see him.[2] It has been suggested that they conversed in French or Latin. I think we may be certain they used the language of diplomacy. Petrarch had lived for years at Avignon and Vaucluse. And if one looks at Chaucer's text, one will find some interesting evidence to this effect which has not, to my knowledge, been noted. Chaucer makes no attempt to call Padua or Petrarch by their real, Italian names. Padova becomes Padowe (French 'Padoue'); Francesco Petrarca becomes Fraunceys Petrark, which is simply a phonetic transcription of 'Françoys Pétrarque'; Italia becomes Ytaille. We may take it that they conversed in French; and that Petrarch communicated to Chaucer his Latin version of the tale of Griselda. And when he started back for London it is likely that he also took with him a copy of the *Divina Commedia* and perhaps of the *Teseida* as well. He would pay a good deal for them, as books, being all copied by hand, cost much more in those days. But what books there were to buy! Books by some of the greatest writers of the medieval world—books which are at the origins of modern literature!

In the years that followed, Chaucer was busily occupied as a civil-servant in London, and he appears to have gone to France 'on the King's secret affairs' at least once and possibly on two or three occasions. We know for certain that in May, 1378, he was sent to Milan, in the train of Sir Edward de Berkeley, in the hope of obtaining some help from the Duke (who, as we have seen, was already allied with the English Royal Family) in the war against France. Sir John Hawkwood, the English condottiere, who married Donnina Visconti, and whose splendid monument may be seen in the Duomo at Florence, was also apparently engaged in these negotiations; and Chaucer retained a lasting interest in Bernabò Visconti, whose death in 1385 he recounts in *The Monkes Tale*. He was abroad on this mission from 28th May to 19th Septem-

ber, and his total expenses amounted to over £80—a considerable sum. We may presume that he spent most of the summer in Lombardy and that he at this time greatly extended his knowledge of Italian literature and probably acquired more of the books which he subsequently used in composing the *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*; such as for example Boccaccio's *Filocolo* as well as his *Filostrato* and *Teseida*; not to speak of Giovanni Sercambi's *Novelle*, which are a series of stories told on a pilgrimage and which therefore contained a clear indication to Chaucer, if he knew of them, of what he might do in English.

II

Critics have been accustomed to speak of the French period in Chaucer's work, and the Italian period; but this neat division does not describe what actually happened. Chaucer's literary career does not correspond at all points with the events of his life. The first revelation of Italy to a man of the north sometimes has an immediate and overwhelming effect. Thus it was with Shelley and Byron. But we have no evidence to support the theory that this was so with Chaucer. The Italian current seems rather to have penetrated slowly into the stream of his literary production; then more quickly and with altogether brilliant effect; and finally it became merged with the French and the native current into something homogeneous. Émile Legouis has exactly noted the general tone and quality of Chaucer's work, not perhaps of his very best work, which is in *Troilus and Criseyde*, but of the kind of verse which he tended to write from beginning to end, in the *Boke of the Duchesse*, in the *Hous of Fame* and above all in *The Canterbury Tales*:

> . . . premier grand artiste de lettres de son pays, il tente d'exprimer et vraiment exprime en son langage la beauté poétique qu'il sent dans les meilleurs vers de France et qui est justement celle dont son instinct est avide. Et il se trouve que c'est l'inverse même de l'idéal des scops. À passer d'eux à lui, on éprouve jusqu'au saisissement cette sensation de jour revenu, de clarté qui naît, dont il a été dit qu'elle était celle du lecteur sortant de la poésie anglo-saxonne pour entrer dans la vieille poésie française. La lumière répandue sur l'oeuvre de Chaucer, fine et blanche . . . est juste du même ton que celle de l'Ile-de-France. Un Français qui pénètre dans son oeuvre ne change ni de ciel ni de climat.[3]

Prior to 1370 and even later, Chaucer was first and foremost a translator or adapter of French and Latin works. He translated, among other books, the treatise of Boethius, and adapted the *Roman de la Rose,* which was no small achievement. Eustache Deschamps in his *Ballade à Geoffroy Chaucier* described him admiringly as 'le grand translateur, noble Geoffroy Chaucier.' His aesthetic ideal was entirely French. 'He was, to all intents and purposes,' writes Professor Kittredge, 'a French love-poet writing (so it happened) in the English language.'[4]

Now after his mission to Genoa and Florence, he began to look further afield. He extended his knowledge of such Latin poets as Ovid and Virgil and of the Latin prosateurs, both ancient and medieval; and he probably 'discovered' others like Lucan and Statius. In these years, too, he was evidently browsing in the Italian poets, and particularly Dante. But his appreciation of Italian literature came slowly. At first it was the modern Italian works written in Latin that were most accessible to him. Thus he probably composed at this time the *Clerkes Tale of Oxenford* from the Latin version by Petrarch, and also adapted a number of stories from Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum illustrium* and *De Claris Mulieribus,* stories which he afterwards, so to speak, got off his hands in the *Monkes Tale:* while the story of Hugelyn of Pyze, adapted from Canto XXXIII of the *Inferno,* must also belong to this period. The *Compleynt to his Lady,* of which the date appears uncertain, is a poem written in *terza rima* and this can only have been due to the influence of Dante. Curiously enough, in *The Hous of Fame,* which he seems to have composed between 1378 and 1379 after his last visit to Italy, he abandons the Italian metre and returns to the octosyllabic couplet, but, although the form is French, the matter is partly of Italian and of Latin inspiration. There is in Book II an Eagle of gold which transports the poet to the House of Fame and converses with him on the way; and this Eagle was certainly suggested by the one which transports Dante to the sphere of fire in Book IX of the *Purgatorio.* The tone, however, is different. Chaucer feels no aptitude for the high visions of Dante. He understands that Dante's is a greater poetry, but he can cultivate only his own kind. And so, almost at once, the vein of humour appears; for if pity and humanity are two of Chaucer's great gifts, a keen sense of fun is another. Listen to his description of the Eagle

catching him up from the earth:

> And with hys grymme pawes stronge,
> Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,
> Me, fleynge, in a swap he hente,
> And with hys sours ayeyn up wente,
> Me caryinge in his clawes starke,
> As lyghtly as I were a larke . . .

Greatly alarmed at first, the poet soon recovers himself:

> 'O God,' thoghte I, 'that madest kynde,
> Shal I noon other weyes dye?
> Wher Joves wol me stellifye,
> Or what thing may this sygnifye?'

But he soon finds himself at home with the Eagle, who hastens to reassure him:

> 'Thow demest of thyself amys;
> For Joves is not thereaboute,—
> I dar well putte the out of doute—
> To make of the as yet a sterre . . .

And we now become aware that this is not a laconic, Dantesque Eagle, but an English Eagle whose sojourn in France has taught him eloquence and even loquacity. Hardly is the poet (whom the Eagle addresses as 'Geffrey') allowed to utter half a line before the mighty 'foul' resumes his discourse. Once he interrupts himself to ask kindly how his passenger is getting on:

> 'How farest thow?' quod he to me.
> 'Wel,' quod I. 'Now see,' quod he,
> 'By thy trouthe, yond adoun,
> Where that thou knowest any toun,
> Or hous, or any other thyng . . .

We are flying across France. The poet obediently looks downward:

> And y adoun gan loken thoo,
> And beheld feldes and playnes,
> And now hillies, and now mountaynes,
> Now valeyes, and now forestes,
> And now unnethes grete bestes;
> Now ryveres, now citees,
> Now tounes, and now grete trees,
> Now shippes seyllynge in the see.

Another long discourse from the Eagle, and the poet is invited to look upward:

> 'Now,' quod he thoo, 'cast up thyn ye;
> Se yonder, lo, the Galaxye,
> The which men clepe the Milky Wey,
> For hit ys whit (and somme, parfey,
> Kallen hit Watlynge strete).
> That ones was ybrent with the hete,
> Whan the sonnes sone, the rede
> That highte Pheton, wolde lede
> Algate hys fader cart, and gye . . .'

But the spectacle of the Heavens, which only a Dante could discourse upon with impunity, is too much for our English poet. He calls Boethius to his aid; he knows not whether he is here 'in body or in gost.' But the Eagle again intervenes:

> 'Lat be,' quod he, 'thy fantasye!
> Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?'
> 'Nay, certeynly,' quod y, 'ryght nought.'
> 'And why?' 'For y am now to old![5]

It would be difficult to admit, with more of modesty and good humour, the limits of his art. We shall see that he makes a similar admission after retelling, in the *Monkes Tale,* the story of Ugolino della Gherardesca. Not for him the spectral terrors of the *Inferno* nor the celestial radiance of the *Paradiso.* He is the poet of Mother Earth; of the country road with the lark singing overhead, and a soft breeze bending the flowers and grasses under the warm sunshine, of the road along which moves a company of pilgrims, beguiling the way with touching story and merry jest. But he is more than this, and his modesty is excessive; for though he never perhaps claimed it, he was to prove himself capable of writing *great poetry,* in a sustained manner; poetry of such humanity, delicacy and pathos as our literature was not to know the like of, before the age of Shakespeare.

It is not therefore fanciful to regard the second Book of the *Hous of Fame* as Chaucer's approach to great poetry. Dante's Eagle has taken him up by Thames-side and set him down in the Vale of Arno.

*

III

We do not know when Chaucer first thought of drawing an English poem out of Boccaccio's *Teseida*. To suggest—as has been suggested—that he in the first instance translated it, and afterwards told the story anew in his own words while utilising seven or eight hundred lines of the translation, is to put forward an unverifiable, and yet plausible, hypothesis.[6] The *Teseida* is a work of Boccaccio's youth, an epic poem in twelve books and nearly ten-thousand lines. Now to write a good epic poem of which the main interest centres in the love of two friends for the same girl was to attempt the almost impossible. An epic poem should have as its subject a great theme and be sustained by a variety of incidents and *péripéties*. The artifices required to maintain the interest and avoid the monotony which lurks at the end—or beginning—of every canto, require no uncommon ingenuity. Boccaccio's poem was inevitably a *roman courtois*. Even so, Chaucer saw that if he were to tell Boccaccio's tale anew, he would have to cut it down considerably. In the event, though by what stages we do not know, he produced a poem of two thousand two hundred and fifty lines in rhymed couplets. It is a new poem, the part that is adapted from Boccaccio being very much abridged. Thus, Boccaccio's Book I goes into Chaucer's first few lines, and Book II into the next one hundred and sixty, while the poet humorously explains that he has

> . . . a large field to ere
> And wayke been the oxen in my plough,
> The remenant of the Tale is long ynough.

In fact, as Furnivall has pointed out in his preface to the Six-Text Edition, only two hundred and seventy lines are really translated from Boccaccio, while from three hundred and seventy to five hundred lines are more or less imitated. For the rest, Chaucer follows the general scheme of the Italian poem, but he draws sometimes from the *Thebaid* of Statius, which had been Boccaccio's source, and from the *Roman de Thèbes*; and he makes important alterations and adds passages of his own.

The *Teseida* is a romance full of the freshness of youth (for Boccaccio was a young man when he wrote it) and of the freshness of a literature which is still at its beginnings. It is on a Spring morning that Arcita and Palemone first see the fair Emilia in Teseo's garden,[7]

and so perfectly has the climate of the poem been fixed that, though the seasons bring changing weather, the month of May returns for that fierce encounter in the 'boschetto,' which Teseo and the ladies so happily interrupt. Ah, happy wood!

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu . . .

And the poem is as fresh today as when it enchanted Chaucer.

In the first two books of the *Teseida*, in what no doubt seemed to the English poet a long preamble, Boccaccio describes Theseus' expedition against Thebes and then tells how he brought back captive the two young 'barons' whom he decided not to execute, nor release for ransom, but to condemn 'ad etterna prigione.' This 'worthy duc,' however, did not confine them in a real prison, but placed them under ward in an apartment of the palace itself, where they are attended by servants as befits their rank:

> e questi due furon riservati
> per farli alquanto più ad agio stare,
> perchè di sangue reale eran nati;
> e felli dentro al palagio abitare
> e così in una camera tenere,
> facendo lor servire a lor piacere.[8]

Their room overlooks the palace-garden; but for this they at first care nothing; they are in despair, and think only of death as a hoped-for deliverer. Year follows year, without bringing any change in their lot. But one spring, when the trees are bursting into leaf, their attention is drawn to something that is passing just outside their window. Here in the palace-garden the young Emilia, sister-in-law of Teseo, comes early every morning to gather roses and wind them round her hair,

> sempre cantando be' versi d'amore
> con angelica voce e lieto core.[9]

Chaucer, as usual in his handling of this poem, abbreviates the description:

> She walketh up and doun and as hir liste
> She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
> To make a subtil gerland for hir hede;
> And as an aungel hevenyshly she soong.

But at this point he departs from his model. A room in the palace may have seemed to Boccaccio a suitable place of confinement; but in Chaucer's view Theseus would have acted like some stern English lord; he would have thrown his captives into a strong tower. And so Chaucer invents one:

> The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroonge,
> Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
> (Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun
> Of which I tolde yow and tellen shal)
> Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
> Ther as this Emilye hadde hir pleyinge.

Now it so happened, he goes on to say, that Palamon, who that morning was pacing up and down in a high chamber of the tower, bewailing his lot and wishing he had not been born, glanced down through the thickly-barred window, and

> . . . cast his eye upon Emilya,
> And therwithal he bleynte and cride, 'A!'
> As though he stongen were unto the herte.

In response to Arcite's question, he points her out to him. For himself, he knows not whether she be woman or goddess. Arcite, looking at Emily in his turn, is equally smitten with love, and confesses it, to the great displeasure of Palamon. Jealousy now begins to part those who had hitherto lived as brothers, and a bitter quarrel ensues; but of this Emily is unconscious, and indeed she is unaware that the two young prisoners have seen her.

Now this great scene is of Boccaccio's invention; but when we look at Chaucer's version, we find marked differences in what he says about the prisoners' response. In Book III of the *Teseida,* it is Arcite who first hears and sees Emilia:

> Al suon di quella voce grazioso
> Arcita si levò, ch'era in prigione
> allato allato al giardino amoroso,
> sanza niente dire a Palemone
> e una finestretta disioso
> aprì per meglio udir quella canzone;
> e per vedere ancor chi la cantasse,
> tra' ferri il capo fuori alquanto trasse.

Though the sun is shining in his eyes, he can see what Emilia is doing:

> e rimirando lei fisa nel viso,
> disse fra sé: 'Quest'è di paradiso!'

Palemone, summoned now to come and look,

> disse: 'Per certo questa è Citerea.'[10]

Emilia, seeing the young men, blushes, gets up with her flowers and goes in; but the prisoners, meanwhile, have been smitten by love, 'ladro sottil di ciascun gentil core.' They feel no jealousy of each other as yet, but soon are giving way to tears and sighs. 'L'antica Tebe e loro alto legnaggio' have departed from their memory; so have the harm they have received, and even their present misfortune:

> Emilia solamente vi teneano.

Now all this is possible, but not entirely probable; and it has been argued that Chaucer was well inspired in giving *Palamon* the first sight of Emily, because this confers on him a better moral claim to the woman who in the end becomes his wife; in making the two cousins jealous of each other, because this is more true to human nature; and in leaving Emily unconscious of what is happening, because this creates a more delicate and perhaps, dramatically, a more interesting situation.

In Book III of the *Teseida* Boccaccio goes on to tell us that neither Palemone nor Arcita now wishes to leave Athens. Unfortunately, however, a well-meaning interferer arrives in the person of Peritoo (Perithoüs), an old comrade of Teseo, who hears from his friend about the young barons who are his prisoners. He asks to see them, recognises a former companion in Arcita, and begs Teseo to release him. Teseo agrees, and the veiled hints which Arcita tries to convey to these two great lords are lost on them. In vain he attempts to make Peritoo see that he would rather remain. As a proper delicacy prevents his revealing the secret of his love, Peritoo takes his assurance, that he—Arcita—holds his life as good as lost, as mourning for the destruction of Thebes; and so, much against his will, he has to go. Chaucer, however, shortens the episode of Perithoüs, although not failing to dwell on the sorrows of Palamon, alone now in prison:

Upon that oother syde Palamon
Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,
Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youling and clamour.
The pure fettes on his shines grete
Weren of his bittre salte teres wete.

Chaucer then greatly abbreviates Book IV of the *Teseida* in which Arcita makes his way back to Boeotia, but, finding the country deserted, goes to Corinth, then to Messene and finally, disguised and under the name of Penteo, reappears in Athens, where he becomes a servant in the palace, a page of the chamber to Emily, and finally a squire of Theseus himself. The interest now shifts to Palemone, who has remained in prison. Chaucer observed this change of interest, and, evidently because he felt more interest in Palemone than in Arcita, he insisted, rather more than Boccaccio, on his plight:

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven year hath seten Palamoun
Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo? . . .
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
His martirdom? for sothe it am not I . . .

We return to the *Teseida*. Penteo, that is Arcita, has gone out one morning full of sorrow that, so near to Emilia, he yet cannot declare his love. In a secluded wood he throws himself on the grass and is lamenting his fate when Panfilo, a servant of Palemone, happens to pass that way and overhear him. He immediately returns to the palace and tells his master that Arcita is in the region; moreover he provides means for his master's escape. A physician named Alimeto, who is in the plot, is summoned. Palemone is to put on the physician's clothes and the physician Panfilo's; and they are to stroll out of the prison while Panfilo engages the attention of the guards. So Panfilo goes into the guard-room complaining that he has to attend a sick master, calls for wine and soon has the guards drunk. The others then change their clothes, and

Palemon, fatto medico, assai lieto
fuor di prigione uscì con Alimeto.[11]

Chaucer passes rapidly over this amusing description, without

mention of the doctor and the change of clothes, and concentrates his attention on the preparations for the encounter. He first tells us of the thoughts and movements of Arcite and then describes how the young men meet in a grove near the city, draw swords and fall upon each other. The description of the fight is more violent and picturesque than in Boccaccio. Critics have thought that it was inspired by Froissart's description of similar duels, which may well be so. In any event, it represents the usual procedure of the times. In all these encounters, the combatants are fierce, but courteous and, though there is no umpire, observe the rules of chivalry. Now while the two cousins are engaged like wild boars—

Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood—

Theseus and his court, who are out hunting, come upon them. Theseus bids them desist, and having heard Palamon's confession, declares they both deserve to be hanged. At this the ladies cry out for mercy: the contention has been caused by love. Theseus is touched—

Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte—

a line which Chaucer uses in two other places and which was certainly inspired by one of the Italian poets, and perhaps even by Dante's

Amor ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende.

In Boccaccio, Theseus is a grand, knightly person. Chaucer's Theseus is good-hearted and observant of the rules of chivalry; for the rest, he is a bluff English baron, full of quaint and racy remarks and homely illustrations: one of the humorous characters whom Chaucer loved to introduce into his romantic poems. Listen to his exclamations in front of the young men as they stand before him, bleeding, crestfallen, and perhaps feeling slightly ridiculous, while the ladies look on in sympathy and he himself is probably holding his sides with laughter. 'But this,' he cries, taking a glance at Emily, 'clothed al in grene':

But this is yet the beste game of alle,
That she, for whom they han this Iolitee,
Can hem ther-for as moche thank as me;
She woot namore of al this hote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!

But al moot been assayed, hoot and cold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or old;
I woot it by myself ful yore agoon:
For in my time a servant was I oon.

And so on, for he is as garrulous as one imagines Chaucer to have been. He finally declares he will ordain a tournament in which the rivals shall fight, and that he will give Emily as wife to the victor.

The most famous passages in Part III of the *Knightes Tale* are the descriptions of the oratories of Venus and Mars, or rather of the paintings which adorn their walls. In describing the Temple of Venus, Chaucer roughly follows Boccaccio (Book VII); he follows him somewhat more closely in the *Parlement of Foules*; the verses had evidently struck him. His description of the paintings in the oratory of Mars, and notably the picture of that other great temple of Mars in Thrace, is on a much higher level. For this Chaucer took some of the traits from Boccaccio and others from the *Thebaid* of Statius, but he apparently added features of his own and united them all in verses of extraordinary power and rhythm. It is almost, perhaps quite, in the grand manner, and one of the most admired passages in our early literature. I can still recall how, when I was a mere schoolboy, this passage haunted my imagination:

First on the wal was peynted a foreste,
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne beste,
With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to biholde;
In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough;
And downward from a hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars omnipotente, (Boccaccio)
Wroght al of burned steel, of which thentree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see . . .
The northren light in at the dores shoon, (Statius)
For window on the wal ne was ther noon . . .
Ther saugh I first the derke imagining
Of felonye, and al the compassing;
The cruel ire, as reed as any glede;
The pykepurs, and eek the pale drede;
The smyler with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brenning with the blake smoke . . .[12]

Emily's sacrifice to Diana, which is also based on Book VII of the

Teseida, is almost equally impressive. In describing the royal procession, the lists and the great tournament in Part IV, Chaucer was as much, if not more, in his element. In the *Teseida,* the use of the spear is not allowed; in the *Knightes Tale* as in Froissart and almost certainly in the great combats of thirty, forty or sixty on each side which used then to take place, the combatants used spears, swords and maces. Arcite meets his end, however, not in combat with Palamon or any of the other knights, but owing to a 'fury' sent by Pluto at the request of Saturn, whom Chaucer regards as the father of Venus, the protectress of Palamon. This causes his horse to start to one side and throw him violently to the ground—an intervention of the Gods which bears a strong resemblance to the similar episode in Euripides' *Hippolytus,* just as Emily's prayer to Diana reminds one of Hippolytus' prayer to Artemis at the beginning of the same play.

When he knows he is on the point of death, he calls Emily and Palamon to his side, and tells his lady that he knows none

> So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
> That serveth you, and wol doon al his lyf.
> And if that were ye shul ben a wyf,
> Foryet not Palamon, the gentil man—

in a passage which shows Chaucer here, as in the *Troilus,* a master of the resources of pathos. In Book XI of the *Teseida* which Chaucer was following, Boccaccio tells how the soul of Arcita now journeys through the spheres. Chaucer says

> His spirit changed hous and wente ther,
> As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen where.

But this does not show, as some may suppose, that he was laughing at Boccaccio's high visions, still less that he was a sceptic; because this very passage, descriptive of the flight of the soul, was to inspire what he says of Troilus after his death in *Troilus and Criseyde.*

Theseus now meditates as to where most honourably they may lay the 'goode Arcite'; and he at length decrees that Arcita shall be buried in the wood where he and Palamon had first fought together:

> That in that selve grove, swoote and greene . . .
> He wolde make a fyr in which the office
> Funeral he myghte al accomplice.

For the rites then performed, before the burning of the body, Chaucer has recourse both to the *Teseida* and the *Thebaid,* and he describes the episode in great detail, with an eye to all that was splendid in medieval ceremony as to all that is tragic in human woe.

But he feels that the time has come to 'wende' to the point; and so he says that 'by lengthe of certeyn yeres' a parliament was held in Athens and Duke Theseus then called for Palamon and Emily, and recommended them to marry, in an appropriately long and sententious discourse:

> Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me
> To maken vertu of necessitee.

The deprecatory speeches which are assigned to the lovers in the *Teseida,* and which are of course fully in keeping with the high sentiments of honour and delicacy which prevailed in medieval society, are omitted by Chaucer. In the *Knightes Tales* they listen in silence to Theseus and do what he tells them. The *Teseida,* however, sets the tone for the conclusion. Boccaccio depicts the hero

> . . . in gioia e in diporto
> con la sua donna nobile e cortese.

Chaucer writes:

> For now is Palamon in alle wele,
> Lyvynge in blisse, in richesse, and in hele;
> And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
> And he hir serveth also gentilly,
> That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
> Of jalousye, or any oother tene . . .

It will be seen clearly enough how Chaucer proceeds when writing a poem of Italian inspiration. He treats the subject as his own. He retains the great episodes, and the descriptions which appeal to him; intervening passages and minor incidents are very much simplified, abbreviated or omitted; with the portions that remain he holds himself at liberty to do what he likes, and this is especially true of the characters. Thus he may alter the circumstances and modify the character in a very material manner, as when he narrates the young men's first sight of Emily; he may put an entirely new spirit into a subsidiary character, so as to make of the latter a foil to his hero and heroine. If his hero and heroine are serious,

romantic young people, then an older person, who is humorous and even loquacious—as Chaucer makes Theseus in *The Knightes Tale* and as, later he is to make Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde*—will by contrast throw them into better relief. Chaucer has, in fact, retained from his French education a love of character-study, of humorous development, in short, of psychological variety and equilibrium. Where Boccaccio likes to make a study, in depth, of the simple passion of love, Chaucer puts into his work a wider humanity, and a more subtle and varied study of motives. A poem like *The Knightes Tale* is thus a new poem: new, not only because of the difference in plan, in proportion, and in form and style; but equally, if not more, because of the difference in spirit and interpretation.

We do not know at what date *The Knightes Tale* acquired its definitive form. The tale as we now have it may have been composed before *Troilus and Criseyde,* that is before 1382, or between 1382 and 1386. However that may be, it seems certain that Chaucer was engaged on his adaptation of the *Filostrato* between 1378 and 1382. His head was full of the new Italian poetry and he had devised a stanza of seven decasyllabic lines, rhyming a b a b b c c, which was perhaps imitated from Boccaccio's *ottava rima.* This stanza he was using in *Troilus and Criseyde;* and when he was called upon to celebrate in verse the marriage of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, the same stanza was adopted. Now the royal marriage had taken place on 14th January 1382, and it seems likely that Chaucer composed his *epithalamium* to be read on 14th February, for that is the day on which the Parliament of Birds is assembled.

The Parlement of Foules, as he calls it, opens with a dream. The poet has been reading Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* to a late hour. In his sleep, the great Roman stands before him. He leads him through a park, where are all manner of birds and beasts, until they reach the temple of Venus, the description of which is inspired by Book VII of the *Teseida.* Near by stands Nature, the vicar of God:

> And in a launde upon an hill of floures
> Was set this noble goddesse Nature.

It is St. Valentine's Day, when the birds choose their mates and all are assembled for the purpose. Nature is holding, on her wrist, an eagle who will be the choice of the noblest. The eagle and the falcons

speak the language of chivalry; 'the goos, the cokkow, and the doke' the language of the common people. It is a picture of medieval society, an allegory in the French manner, and was probably read as a *divertissement* to the Court.

IV

Chaucer now seems to have gone ahead with the composition of *Troilus and Criseyde,* which appeared in 1384 or 1385. There is a close connxeion between the writing of this poem and of *The Knightes Tale,* because already in *The Knightes Tale* Arcite, on his secret return to Athens, takes the name of Philostrate,[13] while in Book V of the *Troilus* the opening passage and the description of Troilus's meditations as he looks down from Heaven on the scene of his woes are taken from the *Teseida*; and the second of these is so perfectly adapted to Chaucer's scheme that it is impossible to think of *Troilus and Criseyde* without it.

It is significant that Chaucer's greatest poem is connected with the Trojan cycle. There is no body of poetry in the world so famous:

> Who hath not heard the mighty voice
> Of Homer and the tale of Troy?
> And who that hears doth not rejoice?
> A tale of tears begetteth joy.[13(b)]

Yet there is little except the setting, and the character of Hector, that is Homeric in the story of Troilus and Criseyde. It had been told by Benoît de Sainte-More in the *Roman de Troie* and by Guido delle Colonne in the *Historia Trojana.* Boccaccio had found it in the *Roman de Troie,* where the story begins with the separation of the lovers, and not, as in the later versions, with their earlier history. For Boccaccio, it had seemed so like his own experiences—for he too had been 'struck down' by love of Fiammetta—that he decided to draw from the large and complex French romance a poem of medium length and simple design, concentrated and rapid; a poem in which there should be only three main characters, Troilo, Griseyda and Pandaro, her cousin; and which should be primarily a tale of passion. Chaucer's attitude to the story was different. For him there was probably no personal interest; but on the other hand the theme offered a wonderful opportunity for literary development. Instead of simplifying, he this time amplified. His French training had

interested him above all in character-study. His own nature inclined him to charity. And he saw in Criseyde a character whose conduct and motives might be explained in more detail and with more mercy than Boccaccio had accorded to them. Pandaro offered other possibilities. In the *Filostrato* he is a young man, a cousin of the heroine, and is attracted by the idea of conniving at, and encouraging, a 'grande passion.' Chaucer turns him into the heroine's uncle, a middle-aged, humorous fellow, even more humorous than 'Duk Theseus'; and this development of Pandarus accounts in large part for the much greater length of Chaucer's poem.

In the first three books he follows the *Filostrato* in describing his hero and heroine before they come to know each other, in telling how they fall in love, and finally how they are brought together; here he turns to the *Filocolo* of Boccaccio for inspiration. But when he comes to the episode of the truce and the surrender of Criseyde to the Greeks, he fills out the narrative with the aid of Benoît de Sainte-More and Guido delle Colonne; he draws also from Ovid and Statius; in the course of the poem as a whole he borrows, according to his wont, three fairly considerable passages from Boethius; while there are from time to time reminiscences of Dante and even adaptations of Petrarch and of one or two minor Italian poets. It is clear that the theme fascinated him above all others; that he was determined to enrich his English poem with as many details, ideas, sentiments and aspirations as he could appropriately find or invent; and moreover to tell it in his own way and as well as he could tell it. The idea in his mind made him tremble as Criseyde trembled at the thought of Troilus's love; but when he had finished, he must have realised that, in spite of an apparent mosaic of scenes and ideas taken from all manner of earlier poems, the work was really his own—something new and something English.

The three main characters, and even Diomede, were by now entirely men and women of the fourteenth century. For Criseyde there was no real basis in Homer, except for the name, any more than there had been in the Briseida of Benoît; and the same holds true of Troilus. The whole conception of love and life was medieval. And if Troilus is a gallant soldier and worthy companion of Hector, this is because the perfect knight should be as brave in war as he should be loyal and tender in love.

Chaucer shows himself at the outset a master of every kind of

description, narrative and dialogue. The embarrassment and shame of Criseyde after her father's desertion to the Greeks, and the kind chivalrous manner in which Hector comforts her, are as well described as they could be. Without direct knowledge of the *Iliad,* Chaucer seems to have known the character which Homer attributes to Hector, although he translates almost literally from Boccaccio the stanza describing Hector's reception of Criseyde:

> Era pietoso Ettor di sua natura;
> per che, vedendo di costei il pianto,
> ch'era più bella ch'altre creatura,
> con pio parlar la confortò alquanto,
> dicendo:—Lascia con la ria ventura
> tuo padre andar che m'ha offeso tanto,
> e tu sicura, lieta e sanza noia,
> con noi mentre t'aggrada ti sta' 'n Troia.[14]

But he goes further than Boccaccio, both here and in Books II and IV, in dwelling on his kindliness, his firm attachment to principle even when everyone is against him, and on a political foresight surpassing that of all the others. Here was indeed 'the prop of Troy.' Apart from all this there is an early stanza which reads as though Boccaccio, and even Chaucer himself, were recalling the famous description of Helen at the Scaian Gate and transferring to Criseyde what the senators in the *Iliad* say of Helen:[15]

> And, "tis no marvel,' one to other said,
> 'The valiant Trojans and the well-greaved Greeks
> For beauty such as this should long endure
> The toils of war; for goddess-like she seems;
> And yet, despite her beauty, let her go . . .'[16]

Boccaccio says:

> Avea Calcas lasciato in tanto male,
> Sanza niente farlene sapere,
> una sua figlia vedova, la quale
> si bella e si angelica a vedere
> era, che non parea cosa mortale:
> Griseida nomata . . .[17]

Chaucer writes:

> Criseyde was this lady name al right.
> As to my doom, in al Troies cite

Nas non so fair, for passynge every wight
So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
That lik a thing immortal semed she,
As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
That down were sent in scornynge of nature.

Chaucer then describes her

In widewes habit large of samyt broun,

which is probably a reminiscence of the 'bruna vesta' which Maria d'Aquino was wearing when Boccaccio first encountered her.[18] A little further on in the *Filostrato,* Boccaccio says that Criseide surpassed all other women as the rose surpasses the violet. Chaucer replaces this with a delicate and indirect compliment to Anne of Bohemia,[19] the wife of Richard II:

. . . but natheles,
Right as oure first lettre is now an A,
In beaute first so stood she, makeles.

He then describes Troilus wandering through the temple, fancy-free and scornful of all 'love's servants,' until by chance his eye rests on Criseyde. Here Chaucer abbreviates Boccaccio, and then begins to paint a fuller picture of his heroine and to describe the thoughts and feelings of Troilus 'whan that he in chambre was allone,' with a truth, a subtlety, and a detail of understanding which Stendhal himself could hardly have surpassed. Troilus's song which follows, for all its metaphysical subtleties and ingenious antitheses, is a lyrical outburst which at once raises the narrative above the level of a novel in verse. It is translated from Petrarch's sonnet, (*Rime* cxxxii) 'S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?' Chaucer attributes it to 'myn auctour called Lollius,' and 'Lollius' has been taken by some critics as the name by which he refers to Boccaccio. Moreover, the question has been asked whether Chaucer, who never names Boccaccio and yet translates and borrows from him far more than from any other writer, really knew of his existence. It is however, incredible that, having been at least twice in Italy, and being so well informed on all kinds of subjects, he should have been ignorant of Boccaccio's name. He must have heard of him at least as early as 1373. Professor F. N. Robinson[20] suggests that Chaucer really thought there was an ancient historian named Lollius—to

whom, as I should presume, he imagined all subsequent writers on Troy were indebted. But he cannot possibly have thought that Lollius composed Petrarch's sonnets, or Boccaccio's verse-romance. If 'Lollius' is not a playful *sobriquet* for the man from whom he drew so much that he was diffident of naming him, then it is a convenient name for any Italian author from whom he happened to be drawing.

Chaucer has been reproached, although gently, for having in Books II and III given excessive licence to Pandarus, that incurable talker, and for having in this way delayed the progress of the story. He has been excused again on the ground that some light relief is needed in a story in which the sentiments remain on so exalted a level. Chaucer may have had this in mind, but, whatever our view of it, such interludes were to become a part of our tradition. And perhaps in a romance as detailed and deliberate as this, it was as well to delay the formal meeting of the lovers, as it is delayed, to the beginning of Book III. The beautiful lines in which Troilus offers his love and service—

> 'As to my lady right and chief resort,
> With al my wit and al my diligence;
> And I to ban, right as yow list, comfort,
> Under yowre yerde, egal to myn offence,
> As deth, if that I breke youre defence;
> And that ye diegne me so muche honoure,
> Me to comanden aught in any houre;
>
> 'And I to ben youre verray, humble, trewe,
> Secret, and in my paynes pacient . . .
> Lo, this mene I, myn owen swete herte'—

are inspired by the stanzas (102, 103) in Book II of the *Filostrato,* beginning:

> Dunque, se mai per pura fede alcuno,
> Se mai per grande amor, se per disio
> di ben servire ognora in ciascheduno
> caso, qual si volesse o buono o rio,
> meritò gracia, fa' ch'io ne sia uno,
> cara mia donna; fa' ch'io sia quell'io,
> che a te ricorro, si come a colei
> che se' cagion di tutti i sospiri miei.[21]

But a little later, when Chaucer tells how they are really brought

together, and then how Troilus conceives an unfounded jealousy of Horaste, he was almost certainly thinking of the meeting of Florio and Biancofiore in Boccaccio's *Filocolo,* and of Florio's jealousy,[22] which in the *Filocolo* precedes this meeting, instead of following it as in Chaucer. But Criseyde's lament on the fragility of worldly bliss, which follows it (Book III, verses 812 et seq.) is inspired, as we might expect, by Boethius:

'O brotel wele of mannes joie unstable!'

This, however, is only an episode; before long the lovers are united; and the third Book closes with Troilus's hymn to Love, which corresponds to a song in Boccaccio, though the ideas are again drawn from Boethius.

And now, in Book IV, comes that sudden 'change of fortune' which is to turn a romance into what Chaucer calls a 'tragedie.'

It all arises out of one of those affrays so numerous in the *Iliad.* Hector had led out the Trojans to battle and in the mêlée Antenor had been captured. The question of an exchange of prisoners arises, and the old priest Calcas, who had thrown in his lot with the Greeks, seizes the chance of asking for his daughter Criseyde. Envoys are sent to Troy, Priam assembles his 'Parlement,' the question is debated; and though Hector opposes the surrender of Criseyde, urging truly enough that she is 'no prisoner,' the multitude cry for her to be surrendered, and he is overruled. The 'parlement' therefore decides and the 'president' announces that Criseyde is to be surrendered. What can she do? With the weight of public opinion and the request of her own father against her, she has small moral choice and no physical choice at all. She seeks to console Troilus with the hope that she may contrive to return to him, either by stealth or because there is talk of peace and the war may soon end; but once Diomede leads her away and she finds herself among the Greeks, she realises that these hopes had been only a delusion:

For-which ful ofte a day 'Allas!' she seyde,
'That I was born! Well may myn herte longe
After my deth, for now live I too longe!
Allas, and I ne may it not amende,
For now is wors than evere yet I wen'de!
'My fader n'il for no thing do me grace
To gon ayein, for aught I can him quemen;

And, if so be that I my terme pace,
My Troilus shal in his herte deme
That I am fals; and so it may wel seme:
Thus shal I have unthank on every side.
That I was born, so weylawey the tide!'

Down to the end of Book III, Chaucer had mainly followed the *Filostrato* and the *Filocolo*, drawing on occasion from Boethius and even Petrarch for the songs and reflective passages. But now the centre of interest has changed. The English poet is not principally concerned with the story of a young man's frustrated passion and wild despair, which had been the main theme of Boccaccio; he is curious regarding Criseyde, he wishes to explain and, if possible, excuse her conduct. So he develops this part of the poem into a study of character. He turns to Benoît, to Guido delle Colonne; but above all he invents and he, so to speak, makes Criseyde's character his own. It is this part of the poem which has led to its being called 'the first novel, in the modern sense, that ever was written in the world, and one of the best.'[23] It is 'modern' in the sense that Stendhal or Henry James are modern; but it is equally and more medieval—more medieval even than Boccaccio, as C. S. Lewis has shown[24]—and this is higher praise.

Chaucer wishes, as I said, to excuse Criseyde's conduct; but because he has no intention of departing from the main plot, as he found it in Benoît and Boccaccio, he shows how, after a time, she yields to the skilful court which Diomede pays her, and how the betrayal of Troilus is complete. And all this is narrated so naturally, with so much of understanding and compassion, that her disloyalty seems to be the outcome not of her own nature, but of an alliance against her of forceful men and cruel circumstance. Her father is a traitor; she has no mother, no friend, no confidant. She had had a protector, but he is dead. Hector tries to save her, but is overruled. And she—a woman—is alone among these wily and terrible Greeks, with, as a prospect of future security, only the city to return to, a city perhaps doomed, and filled with people who have already handed her over. She contemplates escaping from the Greek camp by night and returning to Troilus, but shrinks before the physical terror of it. When Diomede urges his suit and says he will speak next day with her father, she replies helplessly and pathetically:

'I say not therefore that I wol you love,
N'y say not nay; but in conclusioun,
I mene wel, by God that sit above!'

She goes back to her father's tent, where at least she has warmth and security.

Retornyng in here soule ay up and down
The wordes of this sodeyn Diomede,
His grete estat, and peril of the town,
And that she was allone and hadde nede
Of frendes help . . .[25]

But trewely, the storie telleth us,
Ther made nevere woman moore wo
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.
She seyde, 'Allas! for now is clene ago
My name of trouthe in love, for evermo!
For I have falsed oon the gentileste
That evere was, and oon the worthieste.'[26]

Her disloyalty is not that of a base character or even, when one closely considers it, a really weak character; but of one not shallow, not unkind, not forgetful, but for whom circumstance was too terrifying and too strong. What man or woman could say that, in like circumstance, he or she would not have acted like Criseyde? A certain number, no doubt; probably not a great number. It had been Criseyde's misfortune to inspire a great passion in a loyal soul, and to be unable, when put to the hardest test, to rise to the greatness of that soul.

Chaucer would not, and probably could not, follow Boccaccio in his diatribes against the frailty of woman—

Che è a porre in donna alcuno amore?
che come al vento si volge la foglia,
così 'n un dì ben mille volte il core
di lor si volge . . .[27]—

excellently and feelingly as they were worded. When in Book VIII of the *Filostrato* Boccaccio returned to the theme:

Giovane donna è mobile, e vogliosa
e negli amanti molti, e sua bellezza
estima più ch'allo specchio, e pomposa
ha vanagloria di sua giovinezza,[28]

one imagines Chaucer confessing to himself that it is, alas, often so; and yet this was not the case with his Criseyde; and he makes us feel with him that she deserves not the hard epithet 'villana' which Boccaccio bestows on her, but pity and mercy.

For this, the concluding part of the *Troilus,* Chaucer borrowed from all manner of sources in addition to the *Filostrato*; from Benoît, Guido, Statius, Dante, and especially from the *Teseida.* The result should, one might think, have been something disparate and uneven; but because everything has been associated by Chaucer's imagination into a harmonious composition, the fifth Book is the most beautiful thing he wrote. The stanzas which close the narrative (verses 1807-1827) and which are in part translated from Boccaccio's description of Arcita's thoughts after death, have been appreciated by J. W. Mackail in perhaps the best pages on Chaucer which have ever been written. Chaucer was fully aware of the greatness of his theme; he was conscious too, not in pride but in trembling, of what his achievement might mean; he was conscious of an immense, yet glorious responsibility.

> —Go litel bok! Go, litel myn tragedye!
> Ther God thy maker yit, or-that he dye,
> So sende might to make in some comedie!
> But, litel bok, no making thow n'envye,
> But subgit be to alle poesye!
> And kis the steppes wher-as thow seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace!
>
> And, for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writing of our tonge,
> So prey to God that non miswrite thee,
> Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge!
> And, red wher-so thou be or elles songe,
> That thou be understonde God biseche!—
> But yet to purpos of my rather speche.

And so he tells, very rapidly, how Troilus met his death at the hands of 'the fierse Achille' and how, after this,

> His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
> Up to the holwnesse of the eighte spere,

and how, from there, he saw everything in a new light, as the Angels see it. It is curious to observe how Chaucer translates these

stanzas from the *Teseida* and the following one from the *Filostrato*, and then adds his own reflections, in such a way that the whole reads as a single poem, with a unity of tone and feeling which only high inspiration could achieve:

> Swich fyn hath tho this Troilus for Love!
> Swich fyn hath al his grete worthinesse!
> Swich fyn hath his estat real above!
> Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse!
> Swich fyn, this false worldes brotelnesse!—
> And thus began his loving of Criseyde
> As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.

The lines, as Mackail observed, are translated from the *Filostrato*,[29] but where Boccaccio had written 'Griseida villana,' Chaucer omits the hard word, and with it the bitterness and even the pain seem to depart; so that the soul may contemplate in all serenity the Eternal God, and the verses which come from the *Paradiso*:

> Quell'uno e due e tre che sempre vive,
> e regna sempre in tre e due ed uno,
> non circonscritto, e tutto circonscrive—[30]

have their place, too, in a poem in which the thought of Boccaccio and the thought of Dante meet in the all-reconciling mind of Chaucer:

> Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne onlive,
> That regnest ay in three and two and oon,
> Uncircumscript, and al mayst circumscrive,
> Us from visible and invisible foon
> Defende!

Emile Legouis, while conceding that Chaucer's achievement was remarkable and indeed unique at that time, did not think that his *Troilus and Criseyde* was artistically equal to *Il Filostrato*. Mario Praz on the other hand recognises the original features which Chaucer put into his work and sees in it a 'modernity of conception which we do not meet with in Boccaccio's poem.' Few but specialists read it today and *The Canterbury Tales* far excel it in popularity. But *The Canterbury Tales* are a collection of poems, not a single work; whereas *Troilus and Criseyde* is a long poem in five books, a complete poem with a single design. J. W. Mackail considered it 'one of the few large perfect things in our literature',[31] and no doubt he was right.

The Legende of Good Women was probably composed in 1385 and early in 1386. Lydgate afterwards said that Chaucer had written it at the request of the Queen, but it is more likely that after telling the story of a woman who failed in love, he felt he owed some handsome reparation to the sex;[32] or—which is even more probable—that he was inspired by the example of Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* to attempt his own portrayal of a gallery of virtuous women, to be selected from among those celebrated by Boccaccio and Guido delle Colonne, and also by Ovid and Virgil. There were to be nineteen or twenty of them; and the final and most glorious picture of all was to be that of Alcestis. Sad to relate, he barely completed the half of his design. Whether the poem palled on him after he had written 2723 lines; or whether the scheme of *The Canterbury Tales* was already in his mind and he was eager to begin work on them, the fact remains that the *Legende* was left incomplete and the story of Alcestis not even begun. Perhaps, as he would to some extent have invited comparison with Euripides, it was just as well.

Yet no poem of Chaucer's is more informative as to the character of his genius and his natural bent. The truth is that, growing older, he was returning to that taste for courtly allegory which he had learned from the French, from the poets whom he was once again taking as his masters. The Prologue is full of passages culled from Froissart, Eustache Deschamps and Guillaume de Machault; and though the scene is a meadow near London on a May morning when hundreds of daisies are open and shining in the sun, this 'dayesie' becomes in the poet's dream the symbol of the lady he would honour—the lady who comes towards him now conducted by the god of Love and followed by nineteen other ladies:

> And from afer come walkyng in the mede
> The god of Love, and in his hand a quene,
> And she was clad in real habit grene;
> A fret of gold she hadde next her heer,
> And upon that a white crowne she beer,
> With flourons smale, and I shal nat lye
> For all the worlde ryght as a daysye
> Y-corouned is with white leves lyte,
> So were the flourons of hire coroune white . . .

But, as Professor Morley pointed out years ago, Chaucer went

beyond the French poets in this image of good Alcestis. 'Ditties in praise of the Marguerite, or daisy,' he wrote, 'were popular with the French fashionable poets; but none of them, like Chaucer, among all their allegorical dreamings, ever dreamed of celebrating in that flower an emblem of womanly truth and purity, wearing its crown as a gentle, innocent, devoted wife.'

There is even a bibliographical element in the *Legende of Good Women,* as it contains a list of the works which Chaucer had written up to that date. Yet it is comparatively free from those long enumerations in which he had previously indulged. And it does not greatly matter that the poem was not finished. It testifies, clearly enough, to his increasing mastery in the art of verse-narrative. Its successive stories contain, in the words of J. W. Mackail, 'some of his finest work . . . he keeps clear of his besetting weakness of digression . . . the handling is broader, the touch more rapid. He has fully mastered the narrative art of which he was yet to make such splendid use.'[33]

We are, in fact, on the eve of the day when Chaucer is to set out, with his fellow pilgrims,

> The holy blisful martir for to seke,
> That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

V

By reason of their greater relative independence of Italian models, *The Canterbury Tales* must occupy us less than some of Chaucer's earlier work. Not that they represent such a change in his mode of writing, or are so different from the poems that preceded them, as some have thought. For Emile Legouis, Chaucer had been, up to about 1386, above all an interpreter of foreign poetry to his compatriots; and it might appear almost miraculous that now, at the age of forty-five or forty-six, he should suddenly become a great national poet and one of the most original England has ever produced. There is truth in this view, and one would be disposed to adhere wholly to it if *The Canterbury Tales* themselves had all been conceived and written from this time onwards. But there is reason to suppose that many of them already existed among the poet's papers, some perhaps in a first draft, others completed and polished; and that Chaucer, while composing the *Legende of Good*

Women, was wondering how he would ever publish a collection so disparate both as to length and tone. How did it come about that in 1386 or 1387 he conceived the idea of depicting a band of pilgrims gathered at Southwark for the purpose of visiting the tomb of St. Thomas, and agreeing that, to pass the time, each should tell two stories on the way out and two on the return?

Was the plan suggested by the example of the *Decamerone*?[34] The problem has been scrutinised by the best writers and their response is one of doubt. We have no evidence to show that Chaucer knew the *Decamerone* or had even heard of it; though it would be rather odd if he had not. His own story-tellers, however, are very different from the young ladies and gentlemen who foregather in the house outside Florence at the time of the plague. Mr. H. B. Hinckley has pointed out that another Italian story-writer, Giovanni Sercambi, had published a collection of *novelle* which purport to be told by the members of a band of pilgrims; and this may have suggested the idea to Chaucer.[35] If we had proof that Chaucer was acquainted with this book, or even that he had heard about it, there would be little doubt in the matter; and in any event the hypothesis is an interesting one. Mario Praz suggests that Dante may have had something to do with the scheme. In his journey through the Inferno and through Purgatory Dante meets every type of character and converses with people of various classes; he is thus able to offer a very representative picture of medieval society; and a similar ambition may have suggested itself to Chaucer, who succeeded in realising it in his famous Prologue. For Chaucer a pilgrimage to the other world was unthinkable;[36] but a pilgrimage to Canterbury was a matter of perhaps weekly, almost daily, occurrence: it was in the habits of the age that

> from every shires ende
> Of Englonde to Canterbury they wende.

Here then were the models for his narrators ready to his hand. The theory is attractive; and one fully admits that Chaucer achieved one of the same results as Dante, namely that he was able to depict almost every social type and thus give us, as Dante gives us, a virtually complete picture of the society of his time. But he probably did this by very simple means. On the one hand, he had among his papers a number of narrative poems which he did not quite know

what to do with. These included 'Al the love of Palamon and Arcyte of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowen lyte',[37] the Tale of Griselda, which had probably been composed as early as 1373; the collection of short tragic narratives which the Monk narrates and which are also anterior to 1380; and many of the others which now figure in *The Canterbury Tales*. *The Nightes Tale,* which is by far the best, appears not to have inspired much interest among Chaucer's friends; and the stories as a whole were so different in tone and character that it probably seemed difficult to publish them together as a group. They were so many odd narratives in search of narrators. But if one could invent a narrator for each, or attribute any two or three to one narrator, they might be incorporated in a single work. For this a company was required, such, for example, as a group united at a supper-party or for some other social purpose.

On the other hand, we know that from the Spring of 1385 onwards Chaucer had been living at Greenwich, on the south bank of the Thames, and that pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, from all over England except the southern counties, passed through Greenwich. Chaucer may himself have taken part more than once in one of these pilgrimages, and it is likely enough that at times some member of the company had beguiled the tedium of the iourney with story or anecdote. Here then were the framework and setting needed for his scheme. It came as naturally as the scheme of the *Decamerone* had come to Boccaccio and was as well adapted to its purpose. One can hardly say with Henry Morley that 'Chaucer's plan was better than that of the *Decameron*'; but it was more ambitious and it certainly 'looked to a much better result.'[38] The fact that Boccaccio's narrators 'were all of the same class, young and rich,' was not, however, a defect; on the contrary, it gave a tonal unity to the *Decamerone* which is completely lacking in Chaucer's work.

What, for example, is there in common between the *Squieres Tale,* which combines Arabian fiction with the romance of chivalry, the *Prioresses Tale* which belongs to the Lives of the Saints, the *Nonnes Preestes Tale,* which is a fable in the light ironic manner of the French, and the *Wife of Baths Tale,* which is a *fabliau* or rather, to use Chaucer's term, a piece of harlotry? It is true that there are groups of stories any one of which might, had it been completed, have furnished the matter of a volume. But the best of these contains

only two stories, the Knight's and the Squire's. The *fabliaux* might have been presented as a group, containing the tales told by the Miller, the Reeve, the Friar, the Sompnour, the Merchant and the Shipman. But Chaucer's aim seems to have been different. He contrives that the Wife of Bath shall choose a theme—the question of the relative superiority of the sexes—and express her view that wives should domineer over their husbands. To this the Clerk replies with the tale of patient Griselda. The Merchant then intervenes to tell the company what a dreadful wife he has, and to embark on a coarse and ironical eulogy of the married state. And finally, when the Squire has raised the tone of the discussion with his tale of 'Cambuscan bold,' the Franklin tells a story of mutual courtesy and consideration between husband and wife, which is designed to correct the opposite extravagances of the Wife of Bath and the Clerk of Oxford. This part of the *Canterbury Tales,* comprising groups E and F, seems to have been really planned and composed; but one cannot say as much of the rest.

Italian influence appears in the most unexpected places. It is of course clearly perceptible in the 'Marriage Group.' *The Wife of Bath's Tale* may owe something to the *Corbaccio* and the *Ameto* of Boccaccio and is certainly indebted to Dante's *Convivio*. This is not to say that where a tale of Chaucer's is almost identical in substance with an Italian poem or novel, it has necessarily been drawn from it. *The Frankeleyn's Tale,* regarding which scholars have been so divided, is a case in point. 'In Armorik, that called is Britayne,' the knight Arveragus and his wife Dorigen are living in perfect love and mutual confidence. But after a time Arveragus feels constrained to sail away to

> dwelle a yeer or tweyne
> In Engeland, that cleped was eek Briteyne,
> To seke in armes worshipe and honour,

leaving Dorigen alone in their home on the cliffs of 'Penmark.' Here the solitude, and disquiet for her husband's safety, begin to weigh on her and as she stares down hour after hour at the savage fangs of rock that rise from the billows round this cape of Finistere, the horror of the scene and a sense of the constant peril of mariners on this storm-lashed coast gradually assume the character of an obsession. Now one day a handsome young squire named Aurelius

sees her, falls in love with her, and lays siege to her heart with all those arguments of passion and despair which came so readily to the mind of a medieval lover. She replies that she will never be untrue to her husband; but, seeing that he complains so piteously, adds playfully that she will be his love if he can remove, round the coast of Brittany, stone by stone, all the rocks which are so great a menace to seafarers. Now Aurelius, after praying to Apollo to raise the sea's level by at least five fathoms, betakes him to a magician at Orleans; and this man so contrives by his magic that for a week or two

> It seemed that alle the rokkes were aweye.

Aurelius now goes to claim his reward of Dorigen, who is plunged into dismay. She thinks of all the virtuous women of ancient times, of Alcestis and 'Goode Penalopee' and Laodamia and Lucretia, and feels that death would be worse than dishonour. But at this moment her husband unexpectedly returns and, having heard her story, decides that she must keep her promise, and repair to the garden where it had been agreed she should meet Aurelius.

Noblesse oblige. The squire perceives that he cannot commit so churlish an action

> Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse,

and sends her back to Arveragus. But he realises at the same time that he owes a thousand pounds in weight of gold to the magician who had assisted him, and that to pay it he will be ruined. Nevertheless he proceeds to Orleans to pay it; but when the 'philosopher' hears his story, the generosity of Arveragus and how Aurelius himself has foregone his reward, he shows himself no less generous, and releases him of the debt.

It is one of the fairy-tales which had perhaps originated in Persia or some other eastern land and thence become part of the folk-literature of western Europe. Boccaccio tells a similar story in the *Filocolo,* with which Chaucer was almost certainly acquainted,[39] and also in the *Decamerone*; and scholars like Pio Rajna and J. M. Manly, and also to some extent Lucien Foulet and Karl Young, support the view that these were Chaucer's sources. But H. M. Cummings, whose study of Boccaccio's influence on Chaucer is the most detailed we possess, and W. H. Schofield, argue persuasively

in favour of its derivation from a now lost Breton lay, and this not simply because the Franklin himself refers to such a source. The atmosphere of his tale is entirely Celtic. A promise rashly made, and a loyal offer of fulfilment, is a theme in Irish and Welsh literature, and in certain versions of the story of Tristan and Iseut, as Professor Schofield has pointed out. Moreover the local colour is strikingly Breton. The names of Arveragus and Dorigen are of Celtic origin, and Aurelius was a Roman name prevalent among the Britons; while the cliffs and rocks of Penmar'ch have about them something so convincing and circumstantial that it is hard to imagine Chaucer as placing his story in a setting so different from that of the *Filocolo,* and yet so appropriate to that of a Breton lay, unless indeed this setting were part of a poem which he actually had before his eyes. True, the tale offers here and there parallels with the *Filocolo,* and more strikingly and convincingly with the *Teseida,* of which Chaucer was of course very fond. He may have been aware that the *Filocolo* contained a similar story; but one cannot be sure that this was his source, and in fact one must doubt it.

On the other hand the Invocation to the Virgin in *The Prologe of the Seconde Nonnes Tale:*

> And thow that flour of virgines art alle
> Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write—

is not only clearly inspired by St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in Canto XXXIII of the *Paradiso,* but parts of it are textually translated from the first twenty-one verses of Dante, beginning:

> 'Vergine madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
> umile ed alta più che creatura,
> termine fisso d'eterno consiglio,
> Tu se' colei che l'umana natura
> nobilitasti sì, che il suo Fattore
> non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.'

The *Seconde Nonnes Tale* was probably, like the *Clerkes Tale,* written soon after 1373 when Chaucer, fresh from his sojourn in Italy, had his mind filled with the poetry of Dante and Petrarch. The metre he used, as in the *Prioresses Tale* and in *Troilus and Criseyde,* was the *rhyme-royal,* a metre which he probably considered the most practical equivalent of the *ottava rima,* and therefore especially suitable for stories of Italian inspiration. And yet, one may

suggest, it was not the metre most characteristic of him; and these tales, excellent as some of them are, are not those for which he is best loved, or best known.

For there is the general Prologue—the great Prologue—a masterpiece of portraiture, a work unique in English literature and in its way not easily matched in any other. The very variety which disturbs the tonal unity of the collection imparts at the same time a richness and a breadth of humanity which everyone admires in the Prologue. *The Canterbury Tales* in general, the Prologue in particular, constitute the most personal and most English of Chaucer's works. In them the French, the Italian and the native currents join and sometimes blend. The Prologue shows what the native genius—or rather, perhaps, the genius of an exceptional man—could achieve when it had been trained in the School of France. *The Knightes Tales* shows what it could achieve when it had learned, in the School of Italy, the secret of great poetry. That much of the *Squieres Tale* should be derived from the travels of Marco Polo is no matter for surprise. It is not of the first importance to decide how far the *Clerkes Tale* may be founded on a personal conversation with Petrarch in Padua—or at Arquà—or on Petrarch's Latin version of Boccaccio's story or on a subsequent French version with which Chaucer may also have been familiar. The poem is well written and contains memorable things; but the story of a capricious lord who marries a peasant girl without rhyme or reason, subjects her to the most monstrous and humiliating moral ordeals and finds in her a patience equalled only by his own exorbitant conduct, is too *invraisemblable* to be taken seriously. It is, as Mackail says, 'either preposterous or shocking; in either case not fit material for high art.'[40] As a separate story the *Clerkes Tale* is an error; though it fits well enough into the scheme of the so-called 'Marriage Group.' But what is more important than any of these observations of detail, though not strictly relevant to our purpose, is the quality of the metre which dominates *The Canterbury Tales* and is used in all the best of them: the rhymed decasyllabic couplet.

This he had taken over from the French decasyllabic line; but the study of Italian prosody had probably enabled him to impart to it a freer movement. The accentual principle—the arrangement of the stresses in the line—was imposed by the nature of the English and Italian languages, in which the stresses remain fixed on particular

syllables, and are not, as in spoken French, moveable. But to understand that the tonic accent must remain where it belongs, that it cannot be shifted to suit the metre but that, on the contrary, the words must be so arranged that the accents fit the rhythm—a perception which did not come naturally to English poets—required the insight of genius. The system of *rimes plates* was French; and this, once adopted, gave rise to the 'heroic couplet,' which Chaucer used in *The Knightes Tale,* as well as in the Prologue and elsewhere. Taken all in all, this metre had the quality of an invention; and, not excepting the naturalisation of blank-verse in the sixteenth century, it was the greatest contribution to English prosody that has ever been made.

Lastly, the beautiful stanza, now known as *rhyme-royal,* which he used in the *Troilus* may have been suggested by the *ottava rima.* Owing to the *rimes plates* at the end of each stanza, it is slightly less rapid than the latter and therefore perhaps less well adapted to narrative poetry; although better adapted to that end than the Spenserian stanza. However that may be, it is an exquisite measure and must count also as one of Chaucer's immense *réussites.*

What can be said of the Italian influence on Chaucer's work as a whole? Petrarch was the only great Italian writer whom he probably met, and Petrarch influenced him the least. The paraphrase of a sonnet which is incorporated in Book I of *Troilus and Criseyde* (verses 400-420) is the most striking example of his influence. Petrarch was above all a man of high spirituality and exquisite sensibility; a pure poet; supreme in his genre, and a very great humanist. For three hundred years or more he was to appeal to the best in the European consciousness. Yet he moved on too spiritual a plane to be fully accessible to Chaucer.

Chaucer had evidently read a good deal, if not all, of the *Divina Commedia* and he understood its supremacy. He was struck by the metre and especially by the style. Scattered through his work, often in an unexpected connection, are traces of his reading in Dante. The most striking are perhaps the prayer of St. Bernard in the *Second Nonnes Prologe,* and the story of 'Erl Hugelyn of Pyze' in the *Monkes Tale.* In Chaucer's mind this fearsome episode loses the spectral and terrifying character it had had in Dante, and becomes simply touching and pitiful. Dante is sometimes grotesque; but usually, like Homer, he is noble; he is more concise than Homer and

his silence is more awe-inspiring than his discourse. Chaucer is garrulous: the words flow from him. The most admired passage in *Inferno XXIII*—one which Matthew Arnold cited as an example of the grand style—is where Ugolino says:

> I wept not, but to stone I turned within.
> *They* wept.

'Piangevan elli.' Homer might have approached this, but it was beyond Chaucer's reach. When Chaucer first read Dante, he was perhaps too old to be deeply influenced; his character was formed; in any event his genius was of a humbler kind. 'Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?', the eagle asks him in the *Hous of Fame*:

> 'Nay, certainly,' quod I, 'right nought'
> 'And why?'—'For I am now to old.'

He understands that Dante is supreme, and that the tale of Ugolino is beyond his own powers worthily to tell. So he concludes:

> Of this tragedie it oghte ynough suffise;
> Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,
> Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille
> That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
> Fro point to point—nat o word wol he faille—[41]

which is surely one of the most splendid tributes ever paid by one poet to another.

Boccaccio, on the other hand, was fully accessible to Chaucer, who drew from him, as has been seen, from the outset. All his longer poems of Italian *provenance*, the *Clerkes Tale of Oxenford*, the *Knightes Tale, Troilus and Criseyde*, not to speak of parts of many other poems, derive from Boccaccio. The significance of this will be apparent. One can only be influenced, as a rule, by those with whom one is in sympathy; to undergo a deep influence, a man must be strongly predisposed. The pure Italian influence was to prove more communicable in different ways to Shakespeare and Milton and Byron than it had been to Chaucer. But Boccaccio was not a pure Italian; his mother was French and he had been born in Paris. It is not surprising that Chaucer conceived an immediate affection for his writings: for his compilations, his poems, his favourite metrical form, and that he drew from him in all the best and greatest of his own work.

REFERENCES

[1] Were Chaucer living today, his name would probably be Sir Geoffrey Hosier.
[2] Some doubt has been cast on this meeting, on the ground that the Clerk's statement proves nothing regarding Chaucer's movements; but the probability is in favour of the supposition that they met. It would be, on the face of it, very strange if Chaucer did not on this occasion seek an opportunity of meeting the greatest scholar-poet of western Europe.
[3] E. Legouis et L. Cazamian, *Histoire de la Littérature anglaise*. Paris, 1924, p. 131.
[4] G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1939, p. 26.
[5] Verses 484-487.
[6] Ten Brink and Skeat postulated the existence of an early *Palemon*, in seven-verse stanzas, which they supposed Chaucer to have written between 1372 and 1376.
[7] '. . . in a morwe of May,' says Chaucer.
[8] *Teseida: delle Nozze d'Emilia*, ed. Roncaglia. Bari, 1941, Libro secondo, stanza 99.
[9] Libro terzo, stanzas 8, 10.
[10] *Ibid.*, stanzas 11, 12, 14.
[11] Libro quinto, stanza 25.
[12] An improvement on Statius.
[13] Verses 1428 and elsewhere.
[13] (*b*) Epigram 303 in the Planudean Appendix to the Greek Anthology. Trans. A. C. Benson, *The Reed of Pan*. London, 1922, p. 84.
[14] *Filostrato*, Parte prima, stanza 13.
[15] It is, of course, virtually certain that they can have had no *direct* knowledge of this.
[16] *Iliad, III.* Lord Derby's translation.
[17] *Filostrato*, Parte prima, stanza 11.
[18] Noted by Professor N. E. Griffin in his Introduction to the prose translation of the *Filostrato*, by N. E. Griffin and F. B. Myrick, Philadelphia, 1929.
[19] This is Professor G. L. Lowes' ingenious conjecture.
[20] *The Poetical Works of Chaucer*. Cambridge edition, Boston, 1933, p. 923.
[21] *Filostrato*, Parte seconda, stanza 102. See H. H. Cummings, *The Indebtedness o Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio*. Menasha, Wisconsin, 1916, pp. 62-63.
[22] This was the view of Professor K. Young in *The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Crisedye* (Chaucer Society, 1908). See *Filocolo*, Parte seconda, stanzas 165-183; and Parte prima, stanzas 247-49.
[23] G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, p. 109.
[24] *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford, 1936, pp. 176-78.
[25] Book V, vv. 1023-27.
[26] *Ibid.*, vv. 1051-57.
[27] Parte prima, stanza 22.
[28] Parte ottava, stanza 30.
[29] Cotal fine ebbe il mal concetto amore
di Troiolo in Griseida, e cotale
fine ebbe il miserabile dolore
di lui al qual non fù mai altro eguale;
Cotal fine ebbe il lucido splendore
che lui servava al solio reale;
Cotal fine ebbe la speranza vana
di Troiolo in Griseida villana (VIII, 28).
[30] Canto XIV, vv. 28-30.
[31] 'The *Filostrato* is lucidly told, gracefully constructed, charmingly written; but the poem that Chaucer has made out of it is a consummate masterpiece.' (*The Springs of Helicon*. London, 1909, pp. 26-27).

[32] See the Prologue, II, 266 et seq . . .
'Ne a trewe lover oghte me not blame,
Thogh that I spake a fals lovere som shame.
They oghte nather with me for to holde,
For that I of Creseyde wroot or tolde,
Or of the Rose . . .
Algate God woot, it was myn entente
To forthren trouthe in love, and it cheryce . . .'

[33] *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

[34] Henry Morley believed that this was where Chaucer found the first hint for his work (*English Writers: an attempt towards a History of English Literature.* London, 1890, Vol. V, p. 279).

[35] *Notes on Chaucer.* Northampton, Mass., 1907.

[36] *Storia della Letteratura inglese.* Florence, 1944, p. 25.

[37] The final version may have been composed as early as 1382 or as late as 1387.

[38] *English Writers.* Vol. V, 279.

[39] See above, pp. 39, 44.

[40] *The Springs of Helicon,* p. 53.

[41] *Monkes Tale,* verses 2457-61.

CHAPTER II

The Flowering of Scottish Poetry

IN England Chaucer had no immediate successors worthy of the name. The poets, such as they were, Occleve and Lydgate in the early part of the fifteenth century, Skelton at the end, knew about him but were incapable of continuing his work or even of echoing it. For upwards of an hundred and thirty years poetry virtually disappeared, and this was not apparently due to political and economic conditions. Chaucer had lived in an age of political depression and material distress, and yet had produced some of the greatest poetry that England has seen. After his death, on the other hand, the country once more became powerful and even illustrious; and the Wars of the Roses did not actually break out until 1454. The reasons for the literary decline, or rather regression—for such it was—that followed, are probably to be found in the fact that, even in his own age, Chaucer has been an isolated genius rather than a representative man; that the old poetic tradition, which was of Anglo-Saxon origin, was dying out; and that such men as had any poetic gifts were unable to orient themselves. Finally, though literary relations with France persisted, Italian poetry became once more a *terra incognita*. Poetry was written in England, to be sure, but by foreign princes and behind prison bars. For the rest, the Muse took refuge beyond the Tweed. And nothing could be more unexpected than the way in which the poetic forms, with the prosody, which Chaucer had virtually invented, were taken up and developed by the Scots; and in which the themes he had derived from Italy received a new and poignant expression from the experiences of a king in exile, or inspired grim, if compassionate, meditations in one of the masters attached to the Benedictine Abbey of Dunfermline.

Of these 'Scottish Chaucerians,' as they have been called, King James I is the more interesting and distinguished. Born in 1394,

he became heir to the throne in 1402 through the death of his elder brother. His father, Robert III, fearing for the child's personal safety in that wild and lawless age, decided to have him brought up in France. Accordingly, in 1405, the young prince set sail; but his vessel was intercepted by the English and he was taken to London and imprisoned in the Tower; Henry IV coolly observing that, had the Scots been an agreeable people, they would have sent the boy to be educated by him, as he too knew French perfectly well.[1]

James, who was about eleven at this time, spent the next eighteen years in various fortresses; but being a very valuable person he was well treated, trained in horsemanship, arms and war, and taken once at least on an expedition into France. A medieval prince was expected to be more than a soldier, sportsman and politician. Skill in music and some knowledge of poetry were necessary accomplishments; and the future James I appears—if one may judge from the way in which he later spent his evenings *en famille* in Scotland—to have learned to play the flute, the cittern and the organ, and also to paint miniatures. But he was a prisoner; and there must have been many hours and even days of tedium when reading was his principal resource. He probably learned French very well; but his favourite authors appear to have been Boethius, Gower, and Chaucer. He probably knew the *Roman de la Rose* best through Chaucer's version of it, and there was, besides, in Chaucer's poems—in such enchanting works as *The Knightes Tale,* the *Parlement of Foules,* and *Troilus and Criseyde,* two of which were written in those seven-line stanzas which Chaucer had invented—enough to initiate one into all the ideals of chivalry and the conventions of medieval poetry.

Meanwhile, however, it seemed as though, like Palamon and Arcita in the *Teseida*—or in *The Knightes Tale*—he had been condemned 'ad etterna prigione.' In the course of time, other useful hostages were caught and caged by the English: Owen Glendower's son, Gruffyd, and Charles d'Orléans, the French prince; and still Prince James was held. But life sometimes plays the trick of imitating art; and so it was in his case.

One night, he tells us in a poem of which the action begins before the great episode of the garden in spring—one night, being unable to sleep, he had taken up the *Consolationes* of Boethius; but the night was long, his eyes began to smart and he was obliged to lay

down the book. At long last he heard the bell ringing for mattins.[2] The bell seemed to say that he should sit down and 'write his torment and his joy'; though of joy there seemed little enough. He therefore took paper and, adopting the metre which Chaucer had used in those courtly and romantic poems, and which we now call 'rhyme royal' because Prince James wrote in it, he told the story of his childhood, of his capture by the English and the sorrows of his long exile. Day and night he had bewailed his evil fortune. Now under the tower in which he was then lodged—and which may have been Windsor Castle, or Kenilworth, or the Tower of London, we do not know, but which reminded him of

> The grete tour that was so thikke and stroong,

in *The Knightes Tale*—was a garden, hedged round with clipped hawthorn and containing shady alleys where the dwellers in the castle might take their pleasure. Early one morning in May, in the same season as that described by Boccaccio and Chaucer, the prisoner looked out of his window

> To se the warld and folk that went forby.[3]

On a green bough below, the 'lytill suete nyghtingale' was singing hymns consecrated to love so loudly and clearly that the castle-walls resounded to his melody. Nor was he a vain harbinger:

> And there-with kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
> Quhare as I sawe, walking under the toure,
> Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne,
> The fairest or the freshest yonge floure
> That ever I sawe, me thoght, before that houre,
> For quhich sodayn abate, anon astert
> The blude of all my body to my hert.[4]

There are here at least four verbal reminiscences of *The Knightes Tale*; and yet the verses are equal to Chaucer's, not just because of the verbal felicity and metrical skill of the poet, but because also of the *authenticity* of his feeling. And the feeling in the next stanza (No. 41) is perhaps even more authentic, for here, one sees, the prince has taken at once, without reflection, one of those vows which bound the knight to the service of his lady for all time:

And though I stude abaisit tho a lyte,
No wonder was; for—quhy my wittis all
Were so overcom with plesance and delyte,
Onely throu latting of my eyen fall,
That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall,
For ever, of free wyll; for of manace
There was no takyn in her suetë face.

Like Palamon, he draws back; but very soon leans out again to gaze, to ask himself whether this is indeed 'a worldly creature, Or hevinly thing in likenesse of nature.'

Or are ye god Cupidis owin princesse,
And cummyn are to louse me out of band?
Or are ye verray nature the goddesse,
That have depaynted with your hevinly hand
This garden full of flowris, as they stand? . . .

It is improbable that Prince James was acquainted with the *Teseida* or the *Filostrato,* though he may have heard of them; but in these stanzas he is certainly recalling Chaucer's rehandling of the former, as he seems to be echoing, in the following stanza (No. 46) the first meeting of the lovers in *Troilus and Criseyde*:[5]

Off hir array the form gif I sael write,
Toward hir goldin haire and rich atyre
In fret-wise couchit was with perllis quhite
And gretë balas lemyng as the fyre,
With many ane emerant and faire saphire;
And on hir hede a chaplet fresch of hewe,
Off plumis partit rede, and quhite, and blewe.

But the episode as a whole, most of the details, and above all the feeling, are his alone. For this was no poet's dream (although, in the poem, it is followed by a notable dream in which he meets and converses with Venus, Minerva and Fortune), but a real maiden, no other than Jane Beaufort, daughter of a house allied to the reigning house of Lancaster. And just as, in Boccaccio and Chaucer, Palamon is released and marries Emilia, so, in real life, the prince James was released and married to the lady Jane Beaufort, whom, in 1425, he took back with him as queen to Scotland.

The poem (which was probably written before his release from prison) closes with blessings on Fortune, whose wheel has come

round so opportunely, on the nightingale, on the gilly-flower (which a dove had brought him in his dream), on the castle-walls, and even on the 'sanctis marcialls,' that is, the saints who preside over the month of March, the month in which as a boy he had set out from Scotland. *The Kingis Quair,* as he calls it, is admirably composed, the story exquisitely conceived, developed and rounded off. Many a man has had a good tale to tell, but few have known so well how to tell it. In it, he traces the pattern of his destiny and shows how Love, Wisdom, and Fortune, working together, may bring the true lover from woe to happiness. The rhyme-royal which he had adopted as his medium, he handles almost as dexterously and often as happily as Chaucer, never slavishly imitating him and sometimes rising to heights which would have done honour to his 'dear master.'

Other echoes of Boccaccio, coming also by way of Chaucer, were to be heard in the second half of the century and from a more unlikely quarter: the fireside of a Dunfermline schoolmaster. Robert Henryson's poem was written as a sequel to *Troilus and Criseyde* and it was printed as such in William Thynne's edition of Chaucer in 1532. Like the *Kingis Quair, The Testament of Cresseid* is in rhyme-royal; but the story is pitched on a lower key and the tone is realistic and *bourgeois.*

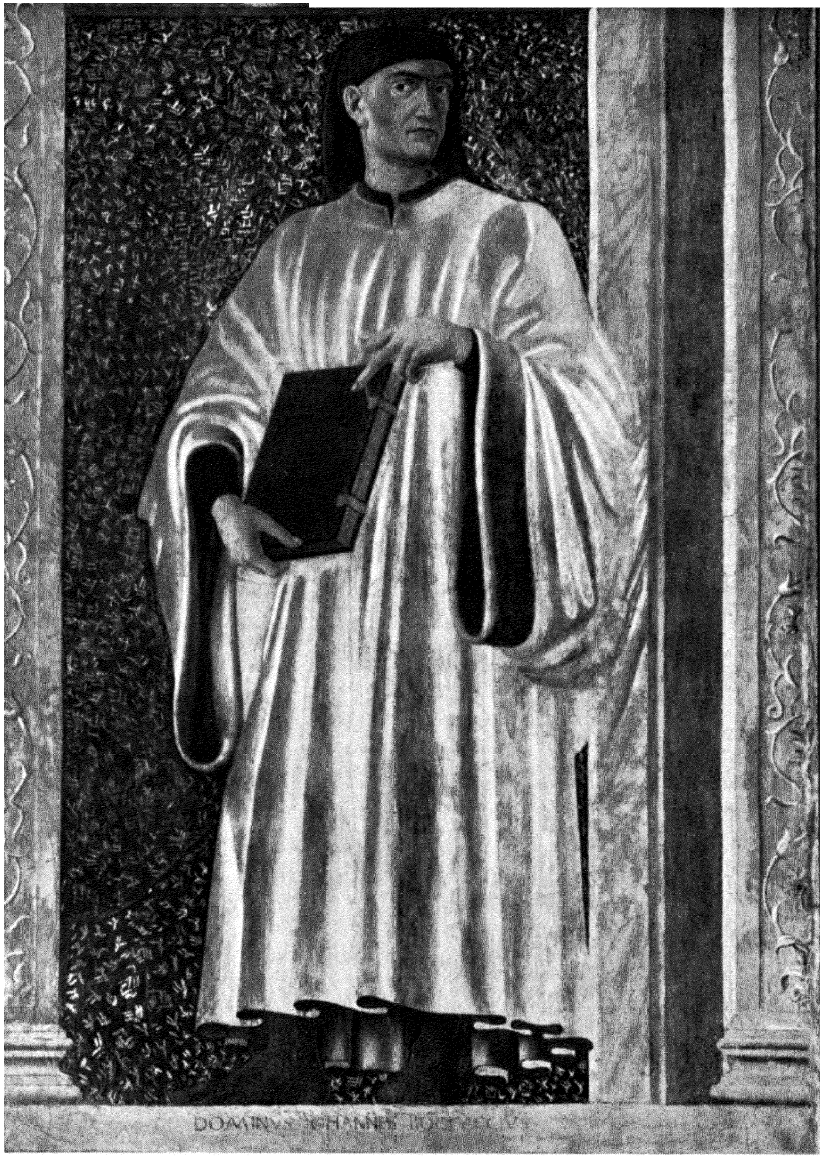
It is mid Lent, and a spell of bitter cold—'wedder richt fervent'—has driven the poet to his fireside:

> I mend the fyre and beikit me abat,
> Than tuik ane drink my spreitis to comfort,
> And armit me weill fra the cauld thairout:
> To cut the winter nicht and mak it schort—

very true and reasonable, of course; but no gentleman would have prated of such homely matters. At last we come to business:

> I tuik ane Quair, and left all uther sport,
> Writtin be worthie Chaucer glorious,
> Of fair Cresseid, and worthie Troylus.[6]

He recalls how Chaucer had finished the story, 'in goodly terms'; but it seems to him that in real life 'Creisseid' would have met with a different and grimmer fate, and so he begins to describe what he himself thinks would have happened to her. Why not? 'Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?' So he tells how, after a time,



(*Photo Alinari*)

2. Portrait of Giovanni Boccaccio by *Andrea del Castagno*
in the Cenacolo of Sant'Apollonia, Florence

(*See p.* 57)

Diomede grew tired of her and repudiated her; how then, being destitute, she took refuge with her father Calchas; then how she has a dream (convention required a poem of this kind to contain a dream, but one cannot say Henryson manages it very well) and on awakening, finds she is a leper, and is obliged to go and live 'with cop and clapper' in the Spittal House. Now one day it happens that Troilus, who has not (as Chaucer supposed) died after all, passes that way on his return from a successful expedition. Cresseid and the other lepers hold up their hands to beg, and Troilus, reminded of something in her face but not recognising his former love, throws her a generous alms:

> Than upon him scho kest up baith hir Ene,
> And with ane blenk it came into his thocht,
> That he sometime hir face befoir had sene.
> Bot scho was in sic plye he knew hir nocht;
> Yit than hir luik into his mynd it brocht
> The sweit visage and amorous blenking
> Of fair Cresseid sumtyme his awin darling.[7]

Later, knowing that she is soon to die, she makes her testament, bequeathing her body to the worms and toads, her possessions to the other lepers, her spirit to Diana—'to walk with hir in waist Woddis and Wellis'—but

> This Royal Ring, set with this Rubie reid,

which Troilus had once given her, she asks one of her companions to take, after her death, to Troilus himself:

> Quhen he had hard hir greit infirmitie,
> Her legacie and Lamentatioun,
> And how scho endit in sic povertie,
> He swelt for wo, and fell doun in ane swoun,
> For greit sorrow his hart to brist was boun:
> Siching full sadlie, said: 'I can no moir,
> Scho was untrew, and wo is me thair foir.'[8]

And the poet concludes, not very tactfully, by telling his lady readers that this 'ballet schort' has been made for their 'worschip and Instructioun.' However that may be, the story is quite well told and some of the scenes are powerfully imagined and leave an impression on the memory. Whether the *Testament of Cresseid* is as notable

a work as some critics have imagined is debatable. The versification is rather rough, if not at times defective. But, like the *Kingis Quair,* it bears witness to the strong human appeal of the stories which Boccaccio had related with such *éclat.*

It also bears the mark of its age. The serenity of the medieval world has now passed away. In the scenes in the leper-house and in the passage where Cresseid makes her testament, one feels the proximity of Villon—without the touch of his genius. All over western Europe, this *hantise de la mort,* this anguished awareness of the corruptibility of the flesh, was finding expression—in poetry, in painting, in sculpture. Italy, land of sun and joy—a land brighter than ever now, with the fuller revelation of Greek art that was coming to it—had grown remote, though only for a time. Not that communications had ever been entirely cut off, even between Italy and Scotland. Once indeed, during the brief and stormy reign of James I, there came, as an envoy from the Council of Bâle, no less a person than Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini. He was not yet a Pope, or even yet in orders; but a learned and courtly scholar, a man of the Renaissance and a man of the world, also, too much accustomed to the luxuries of Tuscany to be able to take kindly to the dour and melancholy North. Two horrible tempests were encountered in the course of the voyage, and Æneas, believing his life in danger, took a vow that, if he should come safely to land, he would make a pilgrimage barefooted to the nearest shrine. He made a safe landing, at North Berwick, only to find that there lay before him a ten miles' walk and that the country was frostbound. His sufferings can be imagined, and it is not surprising that he saw everything thereafter in Scotland with a jaundiced eye. The king received him kindly, paid his expenses and gave him two horses and a handsome largesse; but he afterwards described the king who, whatever his faults, was a courtly and cultured monarch, as heavy and fat—'multa pinguedine gravis.' 'On the whole,' he concluded his narrative, 'Scotland and the borderland in no way resemble Italy. It is a wilderness which knows no sun at all in winter.'[9]

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CHAPTER III

'Two Courtly Makers'

THE fifteenth century in Europe was not notable for its poetic production. Italian poetry, like a great tree, seemed to be exhausted by the magnificent flowering of the Trecento; but towards the end of the period it blossomed again with Boiardo and Sannazaro and put forth new buds of splendid promise when Ariosto was born. France produced only one poet of the first rank; and England produced none. In England the Chaucerians fell so far below the level of their master that instead of carrying poetry forward, they rather allowed it to slip back. It was as though the discoveries and achievements of Chaucer had to be made all over again. This was not really or entirely so, as was later proved. Nevertheless English poetry lost touch with Italian; and it was necessary for Wyatt to go to Italy and to resume, with his younger contemporary Surrey, a direct knowledge of Petrarch and of the living Italian poets, for the current to flow once more.

Yet, in truth, the later fifteenth century had been a time of quiet preparation. The study of Greek and a knowledge of Greek texts had been spreading steadily into western Europe through the port of Venice, and above all through such universities as Padua and Florence which were the great centres of western Hellenism; and towards the end of the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth century, young Englishmen were flocking in larger and larger numbers to Florence and Padua to learn Greek. Thus Italy not only furnished us with examples of her own medieval poetry, but brought us to a knowledge of the greatest poetry of all. It was, as Gray said: the progress of poetry was from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England. But the full effects were not felt at once. Sidney, man of the Renaissance as he was, still lived and felt in the atmosphere of medieval Chivalry; so, on the artistic plane, did Spenser. Spenser was able to take from Greece and Rome that part of their art which

filtered through the medium of French and Italian poetry. And it was not until Milton's time that a true, because a direct, Hellenism enters into the English tradition, and that one finds great English poems (we are not speaking of dramatic, but only of epic poetry) comparable with the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.

Even so, the work of Wyatt and Surrey had been essential, and they are rightly reckoned as the first who, after the long period succeeding the death of Chaucer, had begun to reform our 'numbers.' 'In the latter part of the same King's raigne' (the reign of Henry VIII), wrote a critic[1] in the age of Elizabeth,

> sprang up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyat the elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schools of Dante, Arioste, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie, from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformers of our English metre and stile.

I

Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) was one of the early outstanding examples in England of the Renaissance gentleman: man of action and man of feeling, knight, scholar and poet. With fidelity to the Tudors he united a skill in diplomacy so marked that he was selected for the most delicate foreign missions: in this respect his career offers a certain parallel with Chaucer's.

After studying for four or five years at Cambridge, Wyatt devoted himself to the life of the court and the royal service. He was remarked for his knowledge of languages and skill in music, and in 1526 was sent with Sir Thomas Cheney to the court of François I. We do not know whether he there heard much about Marot or met Mellin de Saint-Gelais, but it would be strange if he did not. He subsequently translated one of the sonnets in which Saint-Gelais was introducing the themes of Petrarchan poetry, with the sonnet-form itself, into France, and this may have inspired him with the idea of going to the sources. He became familiar with the French 'rondeaux' and very probably with the work of Marot, whose translation of the penitential psalms seems to have impressed him. His first literary

initiation abroad was then, like Chaucer's, French. Like Chaucer, he next visited Italy. In 1527 he was on a mission in Venice; but he proceeded on his own account to Bologna, over the Apennines to Florence, and then back to Ferrara, where the court—one of the most cultured and brilliant that have ever existed—was in close touch with that of France. At a time when the cultivation of poetry and music was a recognised part of a courtier's accomplishments, he naturally came into touch with the leading poets of the day, both learned and popular. He seems to have been attracted by the 'strambotti'—little 8-line poems—of Serafino dell' Aquila; by the poems in *terza rima* of Luigi Alamanni, who was to exercise so great an influence on the Pléiade; and with the work of Aretino. He very probably became familiar here with the sonnets and 'canzoni' of Petrarch, who was the recognised fountain-head of love-poetry. As to Alamanni, we know that, although he had been living in exile in Provence, he returned to Florence for two or three years in 1527. If Wyatt met him there, which is possible, this might account for the strong influence that poet exercised on him later.

From the Italians Wyatt took the idea, which the French were also taking, that the best way of emulating the Ancients was to do in one's own language the kind of thing they had done in theirs, and so to render one's mother-tongue 'illustrious.' So far from this being a mark of subservience, it was an assertion of equality and might even become an attempt to surpass. 'If,' as Dr. Tillyard has so well put it, 'if it was patriotic to write well in the English tongue, it was doubly patriotic to write in an Italian or French form, to show that an English poet could compete with the foreigner on his own ground.'[2] Thus began, for Wyatt, a series of essays and experiments in adaptation which were not always very happy but which laid a foundation for the work of Surrey and for the more finished achievements of the Elizabethans.

Perhaps if Wyatt had had more time to devote to poetry, he might have arrived at more satisfying results. But it is fair to remember that he was primarily a public servant—a soldier and a diplomatist. It was on a journey to Falmouth in 1542, where he was to meet a Spanish mission, that he caught fever and died.

Wyatt was acquainted with the work of Chaucer, but he was handicapped from the outset by his failure to understand Chaucer's prosody and by the fact, connected with that failure, that his ear

was still in some measure attuned to the Anglo-Saxon rhythms which were alien to the spirit of our prosody. He was, it is true, feeling back towards Chaucer and forward to what was to become the regular iambic line—which, of course, Chaucer had invented. And in reading his poems it is this verse that one listens for, and sometimes finds, only to have one's hopes dashed by the next verse which, even if it is not barbaric, does not scan at all. It is not certain whether in his earlier pieces he understood or foresaw how essential, within certain limits, the arrangement of the tonic accents in English verse was to be; or whether he displaced them in an arbitrary fashion so as to fit the words to a rhythm that was not that of the English iambic at all. This is what makes his work so curious and unsatisfying. And yet it was heroic, because he was trying with inferior powers to do for the smaller genres what Chaucer had so magnificently accomplished for the greater ones; and if he had not laid his body, so to speak, across the English Channel so that his successors might pass over, one does not see how our Renaissance poetry could have developed at all.

But his experiments were far more than metrical. He was the first Englishman of the Renaissance to introduce not only the Italian genres and verse-forms, but the current of Italian love-poetry, which was refined and sophisticated, abounding also in conceits and antitheses; and he 'petrarchised,' if not with 'fureur' like Du Bellay and Ronsard at a certain moment in their careers, at least with a good deal of pertinacity.

Serafino dell'Aquila was probably the first Italian to impress him as a suitable model, and he translated three or four of his 'strambotti' with considerable success. 'Alas! madame, for stealing of a kiss' is the best. These gallant or ingenious poems in *ottava rima* appeared to offer little scope for originality; and yet, in the course of time, he saw that the form lent itself to the kind of epigram of which Marot was making himself a master; and the poems he later wrote in prison ('Sighs are my food, drink are my tears'; and 'Lux, my fair falcon, and your fellows all') are in effect original 'strambotti'.

Aretino and Alamanni influenced him in a very curious manner. The Florentine Luigi Alamanni was at this time probably the most ingenious and enterprising of the scholar-poets who were trying to naturalise in Italian verse the smaller genres that had been cultivated by the Ancients: satires, eclogues, occasional poems (which he

called 'Selve,' after the 'Silvae' of Statius), epigrams and even odes. In his satires he followed Juvenal rather than Horace. He was one of the first writers of blank verse. But it was his poems in *terza rima* that impressed Wyatt. When, following Aretino, Wyatt paraphrased some of the penitential psalms, he wrote, not like Aretino in prose, but in *terźa rima*; and when he wrote satires, suggested apparently by Alamanni, he also used this form. It was probably because he was here so much indebted to the Italian example that he felt it necessary to assert his Englishness; and so, at the end of the first satire in which he humorously describes his occupations at Alington Castle where the King had sent him to remain under his father's eye, he tells his friend Poyntz, in quite competent *terza rima*, that he is not tasting wine in France, indulging his gluttony in Flanders, bowing to the conventions in Spain, or living in Rome 'a prey for money, poison and treason,' but, like a trueborn Englishman—

> But here I am in Kent and Christendom
> Among the muses where I read and rhyme . . . .

It is in this satire and in that of the town-mouse and the country-mouse that he perhaps shows to best advantage.

Yet the achievement for which he has remained famous was his introduction of the sonnet into English poetry. It is very interesting to study his efforts to handle this form while he is trying, at the same time, to translate Petrarch. He soon found it was easier to naturalise Petrarch's themes than to imitate his verse. Wyatt's first experiments in the latter evidently did not satisfy him. Thus Petrarch's sonnet (*Rime*, No. clxxxix), beginning:

> Passa la nave mia colma d'obblio

is rendered:

> My galley, charged with forgetfulness
> Thorrough sharpe seas, in winter nights doeth pas
> Twene rock and rock; and eke myn ennemy, alas!
> That is my Lorde, sterith with cruelness . . .

He is even less successful in the following verses:

> Ever myn happe is slack and slo in commyng,
> Desir encresing myn hope uncertain . . .

a verse which suggests that while he felt, rightly enough, that there should generally be five feet—or at any rate five stresses—in the line,

he thought that the accent in 'uncertain' might be shifted arbitrarily from the second syllable to the last. One judges, however, that he knew this was not satisfactory, because, instead of confining his Petrarchan exercises to the sonnet, he tried—and with far more success—to adapt Petrarch into octosyllabic quatrains followed by a refrain in the French manner, as in

> To cause accord, or to aggre
> Two contraries in oon degre
> And in oon poynct, as semeth me,
> To all man's wit it cannot be;
> It is impossible;

or into decasyllabic six-verse stanzas followed by a refrain; or into the metre of the following which, with all its imperfections, is one of his greatest *réussites*:

> To wish and want and not obtain,
> To seek and sue ease of my pain,
> Since all that ever I do is vain,
> What may it avail me?

But it is fair to add that he succeeded at least once in composing a regular sonnet—the one on the mobility of 'woman's mind':

> Divers do use, as I have heard and know,
> When that to change their ladies do begin,
> To moan and wail and never for to lynn;
> Hoping thereby to 'pease their painful woe . . .
>
> But let it pass and think it is of kind
> That often change doth please a woman's mind.

It may be said of Wyatt that students who have never read a line of his poems are aware that he introduced the sonnet into England. By thus purchasing 'a text-book glory at the price of advertising the class of poems that does his poetical powers least credit,'[3] he has no doubt injured his reputation among the critics. And yet when one attentively examines his sonnets one comes more and more to respect his achievement. Although among the thirty-eight sonnets of his which have survived some thirteen are based on Petrarch, Sir Sidney Lee, who pointed to their sources,[4] has nevertheless probably exaggerated his dependence—as, in general, he is considered to have exaggerated the indebtedness of the Elizabethan

sonnet-writers to the French and Italians. Wyatt adapted rather than imitated. Instead of composing two quatrains followed by a sestet (or two tercets), he wrote two regular quatrains rhyming a b b a on the Italian model (but sometimes a b a b); then another quatrain rhyming c d c d, and finally a rhymed couplet; and, in one instance, three quatrains with the same two rhymes, followed by a couplet. But in general he took liberties with the rhyming, and in these ways he was, even more than Surrey who perfected the form, the real inventor of the 'Shakespearean' sonnet.[5]

II

Wyatt's poems were not printed during his lifetime. They appeared, with those of a few others, in a volume entitled *Songes and Sonettes written by the ryght honorable Lorde Henry Howard late Earle of Surrey and other,* which was published by a certain Tottel in 1557 and is known as 'Tottel's Miscellany.' The prestige Petrarch now enjoyed and the significance which was attached to the introducing of him to English readers were indicated in two sonnets by an unknown hand, the one headed:

A praise of Petrarke and of Laura his ladie

and the other:

That Petrark cannot be surpassed but notwithstanding that Laura is far surpassed.

The words:

> With Petrarch to compare there may no wight
> Nor yet attain unto so high a style—

show that his style was considered inimitable, although Wyatt and afterwards Surrey had striven, not unworthily, to attain to it.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was born in 1517 or 1518. Both his parents—his father was Duke of Norfolk and his mother was a Percy—had royal blood in their veins. He was educated by a certain John Clerk, who seems to have given him a good grounding in Latin, French, Italian and Spanish,[6] so that by the age of twelve he was able to make quite creditable translations. In 1529 he became the friend and companion of the Duke of Richmond, a son of Henry VIII, and in 1532 they were taken by the king to the meeting with

François I on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. It was decided that they should remain in France for a time as companions to François's three sons; and with them they spent some months at Chantilly and Fontainebleau and in the south. As François I was employing Primaticcio and other Italian artists for the adornment of his palace of Fontainebleau, it is likely that Howard, although only about fifteen at the time, became personally conscious of the artistic prestige which Italy was then enjoying.

His life, in the years that followed, involved him in a succession of duties at the court, military expeditions and all manner of vicissitudes, and he acquired an independence of judgment above his years. The king's atrocious treatment of his successive wives seems to have revolted him, and one may believe that when composing his sonnet on Sardanapolus he was thinking of Henry VIII. Yet he became steward of Cambridge University in 1541 and, later, cupbearer to the king. Periods of imprisonment were followed by military command at Boulogne, a command in which he displayed great energy and ability. But the king's failing health, the question of the Regency and the ambitions of the Duke of Norfolk, which were warmly supported by his son, involved them both in suspicion and later in a charge of high treason. The king's death supervened in time to save the father, but not in time to save Surrey.

Surrey was not perhaps a better poet than his friend Wyatt, but his verse is so much more finished that one has, in reading him, the impression of a greater poet. He understood that the tonic accent may not be shifted to suit the metre, or the metre altered to fit the accentuation of the words. How great a difference this made may be seen from his rendering of Petrarch's Sonnet (*Rime*, no. cxl), which opens as follows:

> Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna,
> E'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
> Talor armato ne la fronte vène,
> Ivi si loca et ivi pon sua insegna . . .

Wyatt had rendered these verses as follows:

> The longe love, that in my thought doth harbor
> And in my hert doeth kepe his residence,
> Intoo my face preaseth with bold pretence,
> And therein campeth, spreding his baner.

Surrey, with a far surer instinct for the English iambic, avoided the error of shifting the tonic accent:

> Love that doth raine and live within my thought,
> And buylt his seat within my captyve brest,
> Clad in the armes wherein with me he fought,
> Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.

He translated or adapted a number of Petrarch's sonnets, of which the *Sonetto in morte* 42—which was greatly to attract the Elizabethans,[7]—affords an interesting basis for study. One cannot agree with the critic who finds here 'artificiality, not to say . . . pedantry.'[8] All the freshness of Spring is in it, as well as that touch of the master's hand which thrills us, we know not why:

> Zefiro torna, e'l bel tempo rimena,
> E i fiori e l'erbe, sua dolce famiglia,
> E garrir Progne e pianger Filomena,
> E primavera candida e vermiglia.

Surrey who introduces into his version fishes, deer, the adder and the busy bee, in place of Petrarch's 'ogni animal,' and spreads over the whole of his poem the colours of an English spring,

> The soote season, that bird and blome furth bringes,

showed himself the kind of disciple whom Petrarch would have approved.

Although he occasionally drew from other authors, Petrarch was clearly his favourite and the principal inspiration of his love-poetry. He brought the spirit of the Tuscan master into English literature as no one else had done, and the little garland of flowers which Petrarch taught him to weave offers an image of those more splendid offerings which 'Astrophel' was to make to 'Stella' and Spenser to his beloved. He could, moreover, be entirely original when he wished and none of his sonnets is better than the one he addressed to the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, a little girl whose grace had touched him and whom he honoured by recalling the tradition that her family were lords of Kildare in Ireland, were descended from the Geraldi of Florence:

> From Tuscan cam my ladies worthi race;
> Faire Florence was sometime her auncient seate;
> The westerne ile, whose pleasaunt showre doth face
> Wylde Chambares cliffes, did give her lyvely heate.

His tone, more elegiac than Wyatt's, is akin to that of Du Bellay. True, he can be strong and direct when he wishes, as in the satire on London which, following Wyatt's example, is in *terza rima*. But the elegiac note is the more characteristic, and it arose perhaps less from his temperament than from his life and from some premonition of his doom.

Surrey did more than improve, or rather re-establish, the structure of the iambic verse; he altered the rhyme-pattern of the sonnet, moving boldly where Wyatt had hesitated, and creating an arrangement which we now regard as thoroughly English. The rhyme-scheme he adopted: a b a b c d c d e f e f gg, while not fundamentally different from Wyatt's, suggested that an English sonnet should contain three quatrains of equal metrical value, and implied that the train of imagery or thought, initiated in the first lines, should be continued to the twelfth, leaving the couplet to summarize or round off the idea. Surrey built his original sonnets in this manner, and Spenser and Shakespeare, though not all the other Elizabethans, tended to proceed on the same principle. This did not mark an absolute break with the principle of the Italian sonnet; but it represented a new departure, excluding the idea, which had been suggested by Petrarch and has been brilliantly illustrated in our own times by Heredia, of narrating a story or presenting a picture in the two quatrains, and explaining its significance or applying it to the poet's heart in the tercets: that is, of making the quatrains objective and the tercets lyrical. It was therefore an innovation which thrust the Shakespearean form of the sonnet, as it was afterwards called, in a particular direction, a direction which the English sonnet has never entirely forsaken, even in the hands of those poets who have returned to the Italian rhyme-scheme.

But Surrey was not only a distinguished writer of sonnets, he was also our first writer of blank verse.

Blank verse, like the sonnet, was of Italian origin; it was the invention of scholar-poets whose eyes were fixed on Virgil and Homer, and on the Greek tragedians. Giangiorgio Trissino was apparently the first to use the eleven-syllable unrhymed lines, known as *versi sciolti*, in his tragedy of *Sofonisba* (1515), a play which is thus a landmark in literary history. These *versi sciolti* were then adopted by Alamanni in his eclogues and eagerly seized upon by the translators

of the *Æneid*, of whom Annibal Caro, Niccolo Liburnio and Ippolito de' Medici were the principal. If Homer and Virgil had written beautiful poems without the assistance of rhyme, it behoved their emulators to do the same, or at least to try to. Hence Liburnio used Trissino's blank verse in his translation of Book IV of the *Æneid* in 1534; while Ippolito de' Medici followed suit in the same metre with Book II in 1539. These were the immediate Italian models available to Surrey when, towards 1540, he attempted an English version of the same books, II and IV. On his table, we may suppose, lay the Latin text, and the complete version in rhymed couplets of Gawain Douglas. He was now ready for the great experiment which, little as he can have forseen it, was to fix for good the verse-form of English tragedy and epic, and of some of the best narrative and reflective poetry.

If their eleven-syllable verse appeared to the Italians the nearest corresponding line to the Latin hexameter, it seemed to Surrey that the English decasyllabic verse, which he himself had used so often, was the best English equivalent. One could not pack as much into it as into an hexameter, but on the other hand, it was dignified and rapid, like the hexameter. Chaucer had used it effectively, with rhymes, in *The Knightes Tale*, and for that matter Douglas had used it. It was evident, however, that Douglas had been too prolix, and in this matter the Italians might aid one towards greater precision. He therefore used the ten-syllable verse without rhymes; but to obviate any feeling that rhyme was missing, he contrived to place pauses within the verse and often allowed the sense to run over from one line to the next. In his rendering of Book II he took hints from Gawain Douglas and from Ippolito de' Medici; in Book IV he seems to have relied to some extent on Liburnio, but he also kept Douglas's version in mind. His rendering of the passage in which Dido, after her desertion by Æneas, evokes the temple and garden of the Hesperides, affords an example of the way in which he made a trifling error through following (as it seems to the present writer) both the Scottish and Italian versions of these difficult lines. Virgil had written (*Liber Quartus*, verses 483-486):

> Hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos,
> Hesperidum templi custos epulasque draconi,
> quae dabat et sacros servabat in arbore ramos,
> spargens umida mella soporiferumque papaver.

The difficulty arises from a construction—the coupling of two verbs, which, in modern English, French or Italian, we should place in separate clauses—a construction which however, is logical and characteristic of Virgil.[9] We should therefore understand that the guardian of the temple who had been shown to Dido was a priestess of Massilian race, 'Quae dabatque epulasque draconi et sacros servabat in arbore ramos,' that is, who both gave food to the dragon and preserved the sacred boughs on the tree.

Of Surrey's versions, the one published by Tottel takes six lines to translate the four in Virgil. The other, which is preserved in the Hargrave MS., renders them in five lines, as follows :

> Borne of Massile, I here, shuld be a nonne,
> Of the Hesperian sisters temple old
> The garder, that gives the dragon foode
> That on the tre preserves the holie fruite
> Which honie moist and sleping popey cast.

Douglas had done the same passage in five lines (in an idiom very remote from southern English), and he had represented the dragon as keeping 'the goldyn apilis in the tre.' Liburnio had also managed to convey it in five lines, keeping closer to the text; but he too had made the same error in speaking of the priestess

> guardiana
> Del tempio de l'Hesperidi, qual dava
> Pasto *al dragone conservante i rami*
> *Sacri ne l'arbor,* humido spargendo
> Mel, e papaver che sogno produce.

Surrey, it will be seen, follows both Douglas and Liburnio in this error; but also he implies that the honey and the poppy-sedative (if one may so describe it) fell from the trees, whereas they were in fact dispensed by the priestess, the one to keep the dragon in good humour, the other to induce him to sleep.

It is interesting to compare Surrey's version with later—and more careful—versions of this passage. Dryden adopts the heroic couplet, like Douglas; and though disposed, like Douglas, to paraphrase and expand, he is much more accurate:

> There a Massylian priestess I have found,
> Honoured for age, for magic arts renowned;

3. The Calumny of Apelles
by *Federigo Zuccaro*
Hampton Court Palace

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(See p. 89)

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[8] F. M. Padelford, *Early Sixteenth-Century Lyrics.* Boston, 1907, p. lv.
[9] *The Æneid,* edited by J. W. Mackail. Oxford, 1930, p. 153 (Commentary).
[10] *The Æneid of Vergil.* Translated by James Rhoades. London, 1907, p. 102.

CHAPTER IV

Travellers and Exiles

I

THE reader who comes fresh to a study of the English Renaissance may quickly arrive at the conclusion that between the death of Surrey in 1547 and the publication of the *Shepherdes Calender* in 1579, there was no English poetry worth the name; and this conclusion would not be entirely erroneous. The so-called 'Epigrams' and 'Sonnets' which were translated from Marot and Du Bellay and published in 1569 in *The Theatre for Worldlings* marked no progress in the art of the sonnet nor indeed any taste for it; they were significant simply in showing that French literature was more accessible to Englishmen than Italian, as it always has been, even in ages when, as in the Elizabethan, the Italian enjoyed greater prestige.

What was happening during the apparent lacuna of thirty years which has been alluded to, was that the true English Renaissance was being prepared, the future poets were being born and educated; and the atmosphere they breathed, now very Gallic and Italianate, and the schooling they received, largely determined the character which the Renaissance poetry of England was to present.

They were educated as humanists, and in this matter, as we have seen, Italy was the great initiator and the Italian universities were the natural intermediaries.

During the first half of the fifteenth century, Italy had become the focal point of a second Renaissance, a newer and fuller revelation of ancient Greek literature than that with which Petrarch had been acquainted. This was furthered by the arrival from Byzantium of Greek scholars like Chalcondylas and Argyropoulos, who settled in Florence, in Bologna, in Padua, in Vicenza and elsewhere; and it was now that Englishmen in greater numbers began to cross the Alps in quest of the new learning. Of these Thomas Linacre, who subsequently taught Greek at Oxford, and Cuthbert Tunstall, the mathematician, who became Bishop of Durham, were only two of

the better known who went as students to Padua. During the sixteenth century, Padua was destined to outshine Bologna and become the most famous of Italian universities. This was due in some measure to the proximity of Venice. For long Venice, owing to her maritime connections with Byzantium, had been the principal centre for the collection, the copying and the diffusion of Greek manuscripts. Then Janus Lascaris and Aldo Manuzio, those scholar-printers of the Renaissance, made Venice their headquarters. Manuzio alone between 1494 and 1515 issued the first printed editions of no less than twenty-seven Greek authors. It was natural that Padua, which was the university of the Venetian Republic, should become the centre of Hellenic studies and draw Hellenists from far and wide.[1]

Not that the Englishmen who went there were limited to converse with Greek scholars and medical men. They might also meet there some of the foremost poets of Italy. Bembo and Ariosto had been students in Padua about the same time as Tunstall; Gaspara Stampa, the poetess, was born there (1523); while G. B. Guarini, author of the famous *Pastor fido,* came as a student to Padua where, like Torquato Tasso a few years later (1564), he was a member of the literary *Accademia degli Eterei.* Meanwhile, from the end of the fifteenth century onwards, English students had been flocking in increasing numbers both to Bologna and Padua, and by 1535 or 1540 they were sufficiently numerous in the latter university to require the supervision of a senior among their compatriots. This was John Cheke (1514-1557) who was in some ways the great luminary of the age. He appears to have come to Padua as a young man and to have acquired there that knowledge of Greek for which he was in England to be so renowned. The date of his appointment as supervisor to the English students at Padua I have not yet been able to trace. But all know that on his return to his own University of Cambridge he was appointed to one of the five new Regius Professorships, and to this day he is famous as the man who 'taught Cambridge, and King Edward, Greek.'[2] On the death of his old pupil, Edward VI, he followed the Council of State in supporting the claim to the throne of Lady Jane Grey, and during the brief period of her reign he acted as Secretary of State. In consequence of the triumph of Mary's party, his property was confiscated and he himself imprisoned in the Tower. This was in July, 1553. It was not until September, 1554 that he was released; and it was natural that his thoughts

should turn to the land where he had passed part of his student days, and perhaps made his début as a teacher, the city where he had no doubt enjoyed great happiness. He returned therefore to Padua, and one need feel no surprise that a man of such brilliance was permitted, if not invited, to become a Professor of Greek in the University, and later in the University of Strasbourg.[3]

Sir John Cheke was not the only political exile at this time. Professor Giovanni Fabris in his valuable little book *Gli Scolari illustri della Università di Padova,*[4] recalls the fate of Lord Edward Courtenay, who had rebelled against Queen Mary with less excuse and who arrived in Venetia in the September of 1556. The French Ambassador in Venice described him as 'le plus beau et le plus agréable gentilhomme de l'Angleterre.' He wished ardently to learn Italian, and one fancies he might have become, if not another Surrey or Wyatt, at least a distinguished patron of poets, but for his untimely death.

Such then were the kinds of men who, after their return to England, whether as teachers and professors, or as patrons of literature, were largely to determine the colour and complexion of Elizabethan poetry. It was necessarily some time before their work bore much fruit. A small but increasing number of writers, not all of them nobles, appear to have been learning Italian; but a much larger number knew French, which has always been our language of preference and which was often the medium between the Italian novel and English drama as well as between Italian poetry and English; while most, though not all, of our poets had a good knowledge of Latin, a knowledge which rendered accessible to them the remarkable neo-Latin poetry of Poliziano, Angeriano, Mantuan (who was very popular), Marullo, Pontano and others.

II

It was mainly in quest of learning and in pursuit of medical studies that the students had been going to Italy; but there was another kind of traveller, curious to see for himself the land of fabulous cities and elegant cavaliers which lay beyond the Alps; curious also to observe the ways of a people who were, individually, socially, and politically so much more sophisticated than ourselves. Sir Richard Guylforde and Sir Richard Torkington who crossed

northern Italy on their way to Palestine were not observers of this type; but soon after 1540 two men of superior intelligence and culture visited the country and recorded their impressions in works still full of interest.

William Thomas, who had been educated at Oxford, lived in Italy between 1544 and 1548, in which year we know he was at Padua.[5] He made a survey of Italian history with a view to showing his countrymen how 'in the Italian nation which seemeth to flourish in civility most of all others at this date,' the various republics and principalities had been enriched by concord and impoverished by war. A penetrating observer, he not only drew lessons from the Italy of the past, but provided a sort of guide to the country, furnishing information and relating experiences that were of interest to the traveller. Thus he notices the wealth and luxury, even of craftsmen, in Milan; the politeness of the Neapolitans, the conversational brilliance of the Florentines. The great merchants of Italy, he notes, are mostly gentlemen; and he pictures Italian gentlemen as exceedingly well educated, not given to slander, honourable in their dealings, quiet in their dress. The terms of familiarity on which children are allowed to live with their elders surprise him. Finally, he observes that there is as much difference between a Florentine and a Venetian, as between a Londoner and a Yorkshireman. Thomas's so-called *Historie of Italie*, which was published in 1549 and reprinted several times, was the best book of its kind written in the sixteenth century. In 1549, after his return to England, Thomas was appointed Clerk to the Council under Edward VI, to whom he appears to have submitted projects of government and documents on foreign affairs. In 1550 he published an Italian Grammar, 'with a Dictionarie for the better understanding of *Boccace, Petrarca and Dante*'—a work which he had apparently completed in Padua in 1548, and the first of its kind produced in this country.[7] Under Queen Mary Tudor, he took part in Wyatt's rebellion and was executed in 1554. Few men, except Florio, seem to have done as much to spread a knowledge of Italy and of the Italian language in sixteenth century England.

Thomas Hoby was a younger and less experienced, though no less interesting, observer. After coming down from Cambridge he was sent by his father to Italy in 1547; he stayed two years; and if he did not produce a standard book of social or political philosophy,

he at least fulfilled his father's intention, which was to complete his education and make him a man of the world. He studied the language at Padua; he conscientiously described the great cities, contemplated the monuments of antiquity, called on notable persons and kept a diary of his travels.[8] Neither he nor Thomas was apparently aware of the marvels of Italian painting, though both were struck by the statuary.[9] But what seems most to have impressed Hoby was the refinement of Italian manners, and the breeding and culture of Italian ladies. In Siena, a city notable for its hospitality, the women 'wrote excellently well, both in prose and verse,' he tells us. He noticed numbers of his compatriots in all the Italian cities and observed that their 'resort thither is principally under pretence of study.'[10] His sojourn in Italy had fitted him, as no amount of reading could have done, to be the perfect translator and interpreter of Castiglione.

It was perceived after a time that there was an art of travelling in Italy, and that the young men who were sent there needed direction and advice. Hence such manuals as the *Direction for Travailers* which many a noble must have carried on the Grand Tour. Jerome Turler in his *Traveiler* (1575) began by giving instruction on travel in Italy, dwelt on the charms of archaeological research and offered a more particular description of Naples and the character of its people—a description to which we shall allude later. When L. Lewkenor, who was to publish in 1600 a handbook to the Italian Universities, translated Contarini's description of Venice (1599), he prefaced it with advice on travel. But most of the guidebooks, like Sir Robert Dallington's *A Method for Travel,* did not appear until the end of the century or the time of James I.

A college for English Catholics had been founded in Rome in 1579 and a large number of men were trained here for the mission of converting England back to Catholicism. Southwell, Parsons and Campion all passed through this college, and Anthony Munday, the future translator and song-writer, described it as early as 1581 in *The English Roman Life.*[11] Meanwhile, however, it had become the fashion for nobles, and for those gentlemen and poets who could afford it, to make Italy an important, and usually the most important, stage in the Grand Tour. Sidney, as we shall see, lived in Venice and Padua from 1573 to 1575 and Edward de Vere spent the winter of 1575-6 in northern Italy. Daniel and Sir Edward Dymoke were in

the country between 1590 and 1592; and it was probably about this time that the young Donne was sent there to be educated as a Catholic. From 1591 to 1593 Sir Henry Wotton visited a large number of cities and pushed as far south as Naples. Robert Tofte, the poet, made a prolonged stay in the peninsula; and Francis Davison, a son of Elizabeth's former Secretary of State, travelled and studied there between 1595 and 1597. Lastly, the celebrated Fynes Morison, who had early conceived a passion for foreign travel, made a thorough tour of the continent, staying in Italy from October, 1593 until the beginning of 1595, during which time he saw the cities of Lombardy and Venetia as well as Rome and Naples.[12] But his *Itinerary* was not published until 1617.

There is no doubt, however, that men like William Thomas and Jerome Turler, who published important works on Italy; others like Hoby, Sidney and Oxford who had travelled in Italy and must have talked a good deal of what they had seen, were now, between about 1550 and 1585, building up what was less a fashion than a cultural attitude: a frame of mind founded not only on admiration for the literary and artistic wealth of Italy but on a consciousness of what England needed at this time—of what perhaps she has always unconsciously needed.

It is, of course, easy to exaggerate the importance of travel, and even of personal friendships, in the modifying of a national literature; though there are instances in which friendship, and more often love, have given to a poet's genius a bent which books could not have given: one thinks of Sidney and Languet, of Milton and Diodati, of Arnold and 'Marguerite.' But it is necessary for a considerable number of writers to spend some time in a foreign environment if this is to produce a very sensible effect on a literature. It is probable that the Italian experiences of the Hobys, Sidneys, Wottons, and Davisons did not, *of themselves*, exercise an influence on English literature equal to the experience of the Royalist exiles in Paris during the time of the Commonwealth. The latter formed a numerous and associated group, which included philosophers and dramatists; they found in France a literature not perhaps at that moment superior, but more advanced, more coherent and more conscious of itself than that which they had left behind; and this imparted to the development of English drama a stamp that was decisive.

Even so—to return to the Renaissance—the 'Sensations d'Italie' experienced by cultured travellers counted more, as I shall try to show, in the development of English poetry than appears on the surface. But there were personal factors of another kind, which counted for a good deal, namely, the presence in England of a few distinguished Italians and of a small but important Italian colony in London.

III

If the English went to Italy for instruction, self-improvement and pleasure, Italians came to England most often at the bidding of duty or necessity. In the preceding century Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, who did so much to enrich the libraries of Oxford, had entertained Italian scholars and employed some of them to make translations of the ancient classics. The tradition initiated by this princely patron of learning had been interrupted by the Civil Wars, but was renewed under Henry VII and more lavishly under Henry VIII, who thought perhaps to emulate in this matter the example of his royal 'brother' of France. Henry VII conferred the Order of the Garter on Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, who in 1506-7 sent Count Baldassare Castiglione to London to receive it and to offer, in acknowledgment, that picture of St. George and the Dragon which had been painted by the young Raphael.[13] Henry VIII employed a number of Italians in court offices, including the Battista Castiglione who was a gentleman of his Privy Chamber and who taught Italian to the young Princess Elizabeth. There were also occasional visitors, like Dr. Girolamo Cardano of Padua who was entertained by Sir John Cheke in 1550. He attended the sick, cast horoscopes (unreliably), made an important discovery in algebra, composed a treatise on consolation which was translated and published in 1573 and again in 1683, and lastly, left a rather valuable account of his visit to England.[14] None of the great masters of Italian painting appears to have visited these shores, but there was a talented disciple of Raphael named Federigo Zuccaro, who arrived in 1574 and spent four years in the country. As there was at that time little or no demand for the historical painting in which he specialised, he seems to have devoted himself to portraits. To him are attributed several paintings of the Queen, portraits of Leicester, Sidney and

Walsingham, the picture of Ralegh which is in the National Portrait Gallery[15], and a picture, probably emblematic, entitled 'The Calumny of Apelles' which is now at Hampton Court.

Such men were exceptional: the majority of Italian sojourners in England were merchants, bankers or refugees. The story of the colony has only been partially reconstructed, but the valuable chapters in Lewis Einstein's *The Italian Renaissance in England*,[16] the additional information gathered by Professor Mary A. Scott in the historical portion of her work on the translations, the vivid account of the refugees and schoolmasters in Miss Frances Yates' book on Florio[17] and the amusing documents brought to light by Professor G. S. Gargano,[18] give us many glimpses of the colony at different moments in its history.

Italy had for long been foremost among the nations in banking, and I imagine that many a young man before starting for the continent received his first impressions of Italy in an office in Lombard Street. Some of the bankers were also merchants, and these men, who mostly represented Genoese and Venetian business-houses, lived on the opposite side of the river, on Bankside. Their actual numbers towards 1545 cannot have been great; but they were being increased at this time by an influx of Protestant refugees.

The Reformation had broken out in parts of Italy as widely separated as Naples, Siena and Piedmont; and at first the authorities (who, to be sure, in Florence had vigorously suppressed a movement that might have turned it into a Protestant city) took little notice of the new doctrines. Ferrara was indeed for a time, thanks to Renée de France, a city of refuge for Protestants. But the Italian reformers were of a peculiarly radical turn of mind. One or two of them like Ochino, after contemplating the habits of the Hebrew patriarchs, played with the notion of polygamy, a notion which the Swiss and English reformers regarded somewhat coldly. Others like the Siennese attacked the doctrine of the Trinity and began to remove from their view of Christianity the mysteries which are central to it. Fausto Sozzini, son of the celebrated Lelio, was a Unitarian three centuries before the time. Small wonder if the Roman Church took alarm, and if the Italian reformers, or at least those of them who escaped prison, fled some to the Engadine or to Zürich, some to Geneva, and several even to England.

Of the places of refuge, Geneva was the most convenient for the

Piedmontese, and the land of the Grisons was nearest for the others. The Grey Leagues had formed at this time an independent republic, strong in their mountain fastness; they had seized the Valtellina and they held Chiavenna, the 'key' of Italy. The Reformation had been established in the Grisons in a relatively amicable way. There was an important church at Chiavenna, and the Val Bregaglia had been converted by Pietro-Paolo Vergerio[19], formerly Bishop of Capodistria, one of the most cultured of the Italian Protestants.

Of those who came to England, Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564) of Siena was perhaps the most versatile and enterprising. He was appointed a prebendary of Canterbury and no less than four of his books of sermons, most of them controversial, and also an anti-Roman treatise, were translated and published between 1547 and 1550. After the accession of Queen Mary he became pastor in Zürich, but was later expelled from Switzerland on account of his dialogue on polygamy. Very different in character and more distinguished as a scholar was Pietro-Martire Vermigli. This Florentine noble had been a man of outstanding piety both before and after he became a Protestant. Cranmer had invited him over from Strasbourg, where he held a professorship, in 1547 and appointed him professor of ecclesiastical law at Oxford. Here his pupils numbered a future Archbishop and other dignitaries of the church. A man of vast learning, he wrote theological treatises and commentaries on certain books of the Bible. He was moderate in temper and far-sighted, wishing on the one hand to see the various Protestant communions united, and retaining, on the other, a filial feeling for the Church in which he had been born. When Queen Mary restored Catholicism, Bishop Gardiner assisted Vermigli to return to Strasbourg.[20] At least five of his works, including a book of prayers, were translated from the Latin and published in London between 1550 and 1583.[21] Though he did not contribute to English literature, he rendered the greatest service to the country by his teaching and his example, and may be reckoned as one of the founders of the Anglican Church.

A minor figure among the reformers, but destined to contribute more to Renaissance literature, was a certain Michelagnolo Florio, who, if we are to believe Aubrey, came from Siena like Ochino and the Sozzini family. He had been a Franciscan friar, then had turned Protestant, had been imprisoned in Rome and, after escaping

at some moment in the year 1550, had at last, after much tribulation, reached our shores. Befriended by Sir William Cecil, he was appointed pastor of the small Italian congregation which met in the Church of St. Thomas of Acon in the city. He did not, however, get on well with his flock; and moreover a grave moral lapse caused Cecil to remove him indignantly from the pastorate. So now Florio, having repaired the fault by marriage, turned his energies from the care of souls to the teaching of Italian.

In this he was more successful. The Duke of Suffolk, who was then in power, offered him shelter, and he taught his language to the Duke's daughter, Lady Jane Grey, to Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, for whom he composed a small grammar, and probably to other members of the aristocracy. In 1553, on the death of Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed queen, but the promising career which seemed to be opening before her father's protégé was brought to an abrupt end by the triumph of 'questa impia e crudelissima sfacciata Jezabel Regina' (Queen Mary) who, he averred somewhat extravagantly, had given the kingdom 'in preda ad Antichristo'. In May 1554 he fled 'with his little family' to Strasbourg and thence, at the invitation of the 'Signori Grigioni', to Chiavenna.[22]

Marriage and misfortune had improved his character, and he must have made a good impression on the Church at Chiavenna to be appointed pastor of Soglio, a village that stands on a high shelf of the Val Bregaglia, as you climb to the upper Engadine. Here he seems to have passed the remainder of his life; administering the little Alpine parish, writing a biography of Lady Jane Grey (full of theology)[23], and, in 1563, dedicating 'alla serenissima e potentissima Lisabetta' (who was now reigning in the stead of that 'crudelissima' Jezebel) a translation of Agricola's *De Re Metallica*. In the foreword to this treatise, he explains that he does not choose to adopt the style of Cardinal Bembo or model his language as some might expect on Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio; but to write simply, in the Tuscan of his own day. And Miss Yates thinks that the slighting remarks on Bembo may point to his having met at Chiavenna the famous and influential Lodovico Castelvetro, whose criticisms of the great scholar-poet were attracting attention.[25]

It will have been noticed that the early phase of the English Renaissance was strongly coloured by the Reformation, although its professors were rarely extremists. The Italian refugees, on the

other hand, tended to be aggressive and radical. But the nature of the duties which devolved on them as teachers, translators or controversialists compelled them to consider questions of grammar, of language, even of style; and it was in these interests, which in the next generation came to the front, that they exerted the greatest influence.

Michelagnolo's family included a son, John, who had been born in London about 1553 and whose mother may have been English. Of John Florio's childhood and early youth we know little, except that he grew up among 'the sterile mountains of Rhaetia' and that in 1563 he was sent to study at the Academy of Tübingen. During the twelve years or so that followed, his biography remains a blank. One may conjecture that he returned once at least to Soglio, where his father had died in 1566; that he afterwards spent a few years in France, building up that knowledge of the language which was later to prove so notable; and that he arrived in London towards 1572,[26] with a view to seeking his fortune as a teacher of Italian and French.

The Earl of Leicester appears to have befriended him and he began by giving lessons to the children of middle-class families, of whom Stephen Gosson was one. But he had an eye on the nobility, and particularly on Leicester's kinsman Sidney and the latter's friends, Dyer and Greville. Dyer, who knew some Italian, did not at once respond to his advances; but it appears almost certain, from a letter Florio wrote in 1621 to Sir Lionel Cranfield, that Greville had been one of his pupils, and if this was so it is important, as showing that he had had some direct influence on a poet who was later to owe something to Petrarch and a good deal to Machiavelli. Meanwhile, in 1576, he published a manual of Italian conversation and grammar, entitled *Florio His first Fruites: which yeelde familiar speech, merie Proverbes, wittie Sentences, and golden sayings.*[27] This followed the general lines of the French primers of Du Ploich and Claude de Sainliens: it began by presenting a sequence of dialogues, with the Italian and English in parallel columns. The dialogues, forty-four in number, are such as might take place between a well-informed Englishman and a foreigner newly arrived in London. They buy a book in 'Paules'; purchase clothes in 'Cheape'; talk about the wars; and praise the Queen's learning and virtue. Florio's spokesman, who is apparently English but who adopts the tone of the superior Italian resident in this semi-barbarous land, refers to the general

ignorance of foreign languages here, recommends parents to have their children 'taught to reade, write, and speake divers languages', disparages the English tongue (well enough in England, but 'passe Dover, it is woorth nothing'), deprecates extravagance in dress and preaches 'Sobrietie and Temperance'. In the central dialogues (Nos. 19 to 25), he introduces moral precepts from Lodovico Guicciardini's *Hore di Ricreatione,* illustrating the same with extracts from Petrarch and 'fine sayings' from Ariosto. In the later dialogues he offers 'golden sayings' from Guevara's *Libro Aureo.* Guevara's book, as we shall see, had been translated by Berners, while the expanded version, *El Reloj de Principes,* was translated by Sir Thomas North. Now Florio's mode of popularising Guevara, which has been analysed by Miss Yates, is of unusual interest. For the first column he draws from Francesco Portonaris da Trino's Italian version of Guevara, and for the English column makes his own translation, not from the Spanish, but from Portonaris.[28] Moreover these English versions are curiously ornate, full of alliterations, parallels and antitheses. Florio may, even before the publication of his *First Fruites,* have come in touch with Lyly as well as Gosson; but the presence of Euphuism associated with Guevara, in an Italian work that appeared just before Lyly's *Euphues,* is evidence that some of the impulse behind this popular style was of Italian as well as Spanish inspiration.

Florio followed the authors of the French manuals in placing the grammar after the dialogues; but the latter are on a higher level than theirs: they seem to be designed less for schoolboys than for young nobles and men of the world; and the list of distinguished persons who were afterwards his 'schollers' shows that he not only succeeded in this aim but that his work left a mark on the patrons of poetry as well as on poets themselves.

There were, it is true, things in the *First Fruites* that would not endear Florio to Englishmen, if the latter were of the right Falstaffian sort. He was obviously one of these superior Italians who were favoured by the Court and as obviously something of a puritan. The warnings against gluttony and drunkenness were not to everyone's taste. But parents were glad enough for their sons to acquire a supply of moral 'sentences' and 'golden sayings' as well as to learn the language which every gentleman was expected to know something of; and there would be no harm in an occasional sermon on sobriety, especially when it was reinforced with a spate of antitheses

and comparisons, and capped by a magnificent proverb. Some such reasoning may have been in the mind of Richard Barnes, Bishop of Durham, when he engaged Florio to act as servant to his son Emmanuel, who was then at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, and to teach him Italian. This was presumably about 1578.

At Oxford Florio may have met another son of the Bishop of Durham, Barnabe Barnes, who was later to write eccentric sonnets and notable religious poems. He must have come in touch with Hakluyt, as the latter engaged him to translate Jacques Cartier's 'Two Navigations and Discoveries to the North-Weast partes called New Fraunce'; not from the original French but from the Italian version published by G. B. Ramusio in 1554.[30] It was at the University, as so often, that he met the young men who were to be his dearest friends. One of these was Matthew Gwinne, a Welsh musician and afterwards surgeon. Gwinne wrote dedicatory sonnets for Florio's *Worlde of Wordes* and helped him in the translation of Montaigne by tracking down the quotations, translating the verses into English verse, and rendering such assistance that Florio spoke of him as his La Boétie. The other friend he made at Oxford was Samuel Daniel, who entered Magdalen Hall in 1579 and whose sister Florio married two or three years later.[31] As Daniel was at this time a very young man and of humble origin, it is unlikely he knew any Italian before coming to Oxford, and we may assume that it was Florio who taught him. The future author of *Delia* and *Musophilus* was to become and remain an ardent admirer of things Italian, and in his life and work we have testimony of Florio's direct influence on English Poetry.

Florio meanwhile had not given up hope of winning the favour of Sir Edward Dyer, a man greatly esteemed. His first assault on Dyer's generosity was not conspicuously successful and Florio (who had inherited one or two of his father's less engaging traits) alluded bitterly to it in a diatribe on 'false Dyers' in his *First Fruites*. A 'bourgeois' would have been incensed, but the 'grand seigneur' was more probably amused. Just prior to this, in January 1576, the Queen had granted him 'a license to pardon and dispense with tanning of leather contrary to the statute of 5 Eliz: and to license any man to be a tanner';[32] and the business outlook was good. True, a dyer was not exactly a tanner; so that when in the same year people read in Florio's language-manual: 'the other day I bought me a cloake of

blacke cloth, and the colour is alredy stayned, certes Dyers are very false now adayes', and so on, the allusion may not have sounded too obvious, and Dyer gave Florio some monetary assistance. This would explain why in 1582 the latter copied out and dedicated to Sir Edward a collection of Italian proverbs. It was accompanied by a Latin epigram from the pen of Samuel Daniel, who showed that he too could pun on people's names, though more agreeably:

> Italicos poterit flores cum nectere Florus,
> Nomine Florus, erit re quoqu: Florilegus,
> Floribus ex istis (mirum) nasutus odores
> Non capit, at naso qui caret, ille capit.[33]

More than once during his Oxford days Florio must have gone up to London and, in view of what followed, it seems likely he was in touch with Dyer and Greville, probably also with Sidney and others. But the Spring of 1583 brought an opportunity of attending the entertainment which the University offered to the Polish Palatine Laski and of hearing the disputations that were part of it. These were particularly animated owing to the presence of a visitor from Nola in Campania, a man whose temper was as uncertain and volcanic as the mountain near whose foot he had been born.

IV

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was at this moment in the midst of his philosophical peregrinations.[34] He had not found Padua much more congenial than Naples, and Geneva was only a slight improvement on Padua. In Toulouse he evidently felt let down; but he thought he had at last found a resting-place in Paris, where he published a comedy, *Il Candelaio,* and dedicated one or two works to Henri III. But his notions were disquieting and in 1583 the king decided to get Bruno off his hands by sending him over to London with a letter of introduction to the French ambassador. His coming to our shores was preceded by a brief warning (28th March 1583) from the English ambassador in Paris to Mr. Secretary Walsingham: 'Dr. Jordano Bruno Nolano, a professor in philosophy, intendeth to pass into England whose religion I cannot commend.'

The truth is, Bruno's mind was seething with new notions and thrilling 'conceits', and he thought of himself as a liberator of the

human spirit. He had learned from Copernicus that the earth is not the centre of the universe but a planet revolving round the sun; he went on to argue that there are many other suns escorted by attendant planets, and that these are inhabited. This was enough to upset naïve folk; but it was his metaphysics that disturbed the authorities. He held that neither matter nor spirit ever ceases to be; they only suffer change. Godhead, which is infinite mind, is immanent in the universe; and in the rise to Godhead which we may achieve, all contraries will be resolved and harmonised.

On arriving in London Bruno seems to have called at the French embassy where the Marquis de Mauvissière accepted him as one of his gentlemen. He next proceeded to Oxford, but whether on his own initiative or at the invitation of Leicester, who was Chancellor, or at someone else's suggestion, we do not know; he arrived, however, in time for the disputations and he took part in them. But of the dons with whom he debated he formed no favourable opinion. Their arguments he easily confuted, but their smug self-satisfaction and wilful obscurantism exasperated him to a degree, and he in particular fell foul of a Dr. John Underhill, whom he afterwards described, no doubt inaccurately, as a pig.[35] If Florio and Gwinne were present at these disputations, as is most likely, we may imagine that they quickly hurried the Nolan back to the shelter of the French embassy.

It occupied a twin-gabled, half-timbered house in Butcher Row, which let southward towards the river across the present site of the Law Courts. Here since 1575 Michel de Castelnau, Marquis de Mauvissière, had been representing his country. It was not an easy task to maintain good relations between a Protestant state and a land still torn by religious strife, but neither was it too difficult for a man of his character and abilities. He was a moderate Catholic, humane in outlook, and seems to have been *persona grata* in England and even *gratissima* among certain people, including Ralegh. One of his duties was to handle the correspondence of Queen Mary Stuart, who was in prison but was allowed to write to him. It appears that he was needing a secretary who knew English and could handle foreign correspondence, and to this post he appointed John Florio; the latter was also to act as tutor to one of the ambassador's little daughters, Catherine-Marie, a child who inherited her mother's charm and was moreover a paragon of learning.[36]

Florio now found himself with an office in Butcher Row, and Bruno with at least a bedroom. As the ambassador's gentlemen, they presumably attended him at official functions and there seem to have been parties too, at the embassy and in other houses, where they met Sidney and his friends and probably Ralegh and some of his circle, and where Bruno was able to expound his views to men who were more open-minded than the Oxford Aristotelians. One at least of these parties was held in Greville's house on Ash-Wednesday 1584, Greville being (according to Bruno) 'eager to learn the reasons for the movement of the earth' and 'anxious to understand the conceits of Copernicus'. Florio and Gwinne went to fetch Bruno and after some tribulation the three men arrived in Whitehall, where Greville was awaiting them with another knight (probably Sidney); Lord Buckhurst; a certain 'Smitho' (perhaps Sir Thomas Smith); and two doctors whom we know only by the names of Torquato and Nundinio. In argument with the English doctors Bruno reasoned on principles absolutely different from theirs; before long the debate became personal, and when Bruno clearly showed Torquato to have made a mistake in interpreting Copernicus, the English doctors departed in dudgeon. Bruno had probably been impatient; his adversaries on the other hand were defending an untenable system and by means which Bruno himself was contributing to put out of date. 'Smitho' appears to have sympathised with him. Greville apologised for the departure of his other guests; and no great harm would have been done if Bruno had not written a highly-coloured description of *La Cena de le Ceneri,* perhaps incorporating in it the account of another party which had been held at the embassy; complaining of the barbarity of the London populace, but also carping at English table-manners and comparing the mentality of certain English doctors with the mentality of a ploughman. This book he had the temerity to publish and to dedicate to Mauvissière. There was a general outcry, and Greville, who had no doubt, like 'Smitho' and probably the ambassador, sympathised with Bruno's exposition of Copernicus, felt aggrieved, if not outraged, by the impropriety.

Bruno tried to explain himself and repair the damage in a Latin work, *De la causa, principio, et uno,* which he dedicated to his host. In this symposium he himself figures as Teofilo, while Armesso (an Englishman) is perhaps Gwinne, and Elitropio probably Florio.[37]

In this same year (1584) he composed another Latin treatise, *De l'infinito, universo et mondi,* expounding the new cosmology; and dedicated to Sidney an Italian book of moral philosophy, entitled *Lo Spaccio de la Bestia trionfante,* in which he represents under the guise of symbolic beasts the forty-eight vices which are to be expelled from man, and describes the soul as a spiritual substance that animates the whole body and cannot perish since, after the death of the body, it passes into other forms. We do not know whether Sidney welcomed this or accepted it with a grace polite enough to embolden Bruno to write for him another book, *De gli eroici furori*—little calculated this time to please a disciple of Petrarch.[38]

Man should not set his heart on terrestrial beauty. What spectacle can be more ignoble than that of a poet displaying the wounds that have been inflicted on him by the caprice of a wanton, and even describing the charms that have brought him such woe? Much rather should he direct his thoughts to the quest of divine wisdom—an object truly deserving of heroic frenzies. 'Soul is in mind,' and 'mind either is God or is in God'; in moving towards infinite mind, the soul moves towards that of which itself is a parcel; and in this quest all contraries are reconciled.[39] Bruno was not a deep thinker. He did not see that the problem of evil in human nature is much too difficult to be resolved in this off-hand manner. His book on heroic frenzies is high-minded enough in its positive aspects, but it has a negative character which was particularly vexatious to contemporary readers. It contains a large number of dialogues, with occasional sonnets and other symbolic verses, the whole being developed with a verbal frenzy almost Rabelaisian. If he did not expound his pantheism more clearly, it was perhaps because he feared ecclesiastical censure; but he risked annoying Sidney and other cultured Englishmen when he ridiculed 'that Tuscan poet who showed himself undergoing such agonies ("tanto spasimare") on the banks of the Sorgue for the sake of her of Vaucluse', as though he could not devote his mind to better things, but must studiously cultivate melancholy in order to celebrate his talent for that kind of verse 'and at the same time explain the affections of a love that was vulgar, animal, bestial and obstinate.'[40] To write in this vein was of course to run counter to the aristocratic ideals of England and also, perhaps wilfully, to misunderstand the nature of Petrarch's love.

From the aspersions he cast on women in general he was careful

to except English women; he indeed wrote a sonnet to the 'vaghe ninfe e belle' of 'l'Inghilterra', declaring that it was unbefitting to call them women, but rather goddesses of celestial substance; and among them he distinguished the 'unique Diana'[41] whom he had celebrated elsewhere as 'la diva Elisabetta'; but these caveats and palinodes were little likely to impress anyone who had waded through so many pages of fanciful metaphysics. Apart from the treatise on memory-training which has been lost, Bruno seems to have written six books while he was in London; but his publisher, John Charlewood, bethought him of stating on the title-page of the Latin works that they were published 'in Venetia' and of the Italian works: 'Stampato in Parigi', or 'Parigi appresso Antonio Buio'—a wise and (in the case of 'Buio') a facetious precaution.

A few Englishmen, including Greville, probably appreciated Bruno's exposition of Copernican astronomy and understood, without subscribing to, his pantheism; but there was no body of opinion to which his theories appealed, except possibly the mysterious 'school of night' associated with Marlowe and Ralegh. His notion that there are other inhabited worlds seems to have impressed Francis Godwin, whose facetious *Man in the Moone* was perhaps echoed by Drayton and later drew from the pen of Bishop John Wilkins a work which was to inspire Cyrano de Bergerac. But Bruno had little influence on the poets, save possibly in favouring the vogue of 'emblems' in some of the sonnet-books of the next decade. The fact that both Sidney in *Astrophel and Stella* and Greville in *Caelica* pass in the end from love of earthly beauty to love of divine truth was probably not due to Bruno's adjurations: this upward passage was implicit in Italian neo-Platonism. During the fifteen years that followed his sojourn in our country, Englishmen wrote in greater quantities than ever before, or perhaps since, exactly the kind of poetry he had decried. In brief, England did more for Bruno by affording him shelter and leisure than he for England; and perhaps his most graceful act was to express his sense of obligation to Sidney and Greville before he returned to France.

One man alone on these shores may be said to have kept his memory green, and that was Florio; whether because he had assisted Bruno and shared his disgust at the barbarous incivility of the lower classes in London,[42] or because there was something childlike and engaging in his character (for Bruno was the least calculating of men). In the

Second Frutes which he published in 1591 Florio introduced him under the name of N. (Nolano), showing him in conversation with Nundinio and Torquato with whom he is now on better terms.[43] And in dedicating his *Montaigne* to the Countess of Rutland in 1603, he coupled his own name with Bruno's in reminding her of the book which 'my fellow *Nolano*' had dedicated to her father, Sir Philip Sidney.[44]

In the latter part of 1585 Mauvissière had been replaced in the London embassy by the Baron de Châteauneuf; but before leaving for France he had written a warm testimonial in Florio's favour, and the new ambassador maintained Florio in the 'ordinary service'. He now apparently took a house in Shoe Lane and brought his family to London; while retaining his old office in the embassy. There is reason to suppose that he also came into closer touch with Secretary Walsingham, whom he may have assisted in reading Machiavelli's *Principe* and his important *Discorsi,* neither of which had yet been translated and which were full of interesting advice. Perhaps also—but it is only an unpleasant conjecture—he kept an eye on Queen Mary's correspondence. The next few years seem to have been employed in translating foreign news-letters, giving Italian lessons to the gentry and preparing a new book of Anglo-Italian dialogues, with an immensely enlarged collection of Italian proverbs. These were to appear in 1591 under the titles respectively of *Florios Second Frutes* and the *Giardino di Ricreatione.*

It was about this time—we do not know the exact year—that Florio entered the service of the Earl of Southampton, perhaps on the recommendation of the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, who had once assisted Florio's father and who may have had other motives for his choice than those of literary culture. However that may be, it seems certain that Florio now encountered Shakespeare.

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[9] Einstein, *op. cit.,* p. 149.
[10] *Ibid.,* pp. 146, 119.
[11] *Ibid.,* pp. 379-81.
[12] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.,* pp. 90-91.
[13] This was purchased by Catherine the Great in 1772. In 1931 it passed over to America, where the later Andrew Mellon acquired it for the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.
[14] See M. A. Scott, *op. cit.,* pp. lxii, lxiii, 458.
[15] *Ibid.,* pp. lxviii-ix.
[16] Part II, Chapters V and VI.
[17] *John Florio.* Cambridge, 1934.
[18] *Scapigliatura italiana a Londra sotto Elisabetta e Giacomo I.*
[19] F. A. Yates, *John Florio.* Cambridge, 1934, p. 15.
[20] M. A. Scott, pp. 248-9.
[21] *Ibid.,* pp. 248-262.
[22] Yates, pp. 1-15.
[23] *Historia de la vita e de la morte de l'Illustriss. Signora Giovanna Graia.* Published ostensibly in Venice in 1607.
[24] For the life of Michelagnolo Florio I have drawn freely from ch. 1 of Miss Yates's *John Florio.*
[25] Yates, *op. cit.,* p. 24.
[26] He may have arrived as early as 1568 or as late as 1575.
[27] See F. A. Yates, *op. cit.,* pp. 28 et seq.
[28] *Ibid.,* p. 39.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 144.
[30] Florio's version appeared in 1580. It was due to an error of Ramusio's, happily perpetuated by Florio, that the name of Saint-Laurent which Cartier had given only to the *Bay,* was extended to the *gulf* and the *river* (see Yates, pp. 55-9).
[31] Yates, p. 54.
[32] Cited by R. M. Sargent in *At the Court of Queen Elizabeth: The life and lyrics of Sir Edward Dyer.* London and New York, 1935, p. 35.
[33] Cited by Yates, p. 54.
[34] For Bruno in England, see Yates, ch. V; and more particularly D. W. Singer, *Giordano Bruno: his Life and Thought.* New York, 1950.
[35] D. W. Singer, *op. cit.,* p. 31.
[36] Yates, pp. 61-3.
[37] Yates, pp. 102-3.
[38] The content of these works has been studied in detail by D. W. Singer.
[39] D. W. Singer, *op. cit.,* p. 127.
[40] 'E per mia fede, se io voglio adattarmi a defendere per nobile l'ingegno di quel tosco poeta, che si mostrò tanto spasimare alle rive di Sorga per una di Valclusa; e non voglio dire che sia stato un pazzo da catene, donarommi a credere, e

forzarommi di persuader ad altri, chi lui per non aver ingegno atto a cose megliori, volse studiosamente nodrir quella melancolia, per celebrar non meno il proprio ingegno su quella matassa, con esplicar gli affetti d'un ostinato amor volgare, animale e bestiale' (G. Bruno, *Opere italiane*, ed. G. Gentile, Bari, 1927, II, 316).

[41] *Opere italiane*, ed. Gentile, II, 330.

[42] Cp. also Yates, pp. 94-5.

[43] Miss Yates analyses this matter with great acumen on pp. 112-15 of her book.

[44] Yates, p. 106.

CHAPTER V

The Approach to Parnassus

IN tracing John Florio's career to this point, one has anticipated the development of the Renaissance. In 1591 it was in flower. So many and so bright were the blossoms it was putting out that we can scarcely take account of them simultaneously; scarcely even realise that they were flowering together. But we must return now to the early years of Elizabeth's reign, and ask ourselves what knowledge at that time Englishmen had of Italy, of Italian thought and poetry; what models, in brief, then offered themselves for the new national poetry they were bent on creating.

I

The literary horizon had changed vastly since the time of Chaucer. Of the great Trecentisti, Dante was still known to a number of scholars and antiquaries, and the poets mentioned him from time to time;[1] but there is little evidence to show that he was studied with much care. At the Council of Constance in 1414 the Bishops of Bath and Salisbury had persuaded Giovanni da Serravalle, Bishop of Fermo, to translate the *Divina Commedia* into Latin and to write a commentary on it;[2] and a copy of the ensuing work was procured for Oxford by Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. Copies may also have found their way to Scotland. In a long poem entitled *The Dreme* (1528) Sir David Lyndsay describes an imaginary journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. In Hell he sees popes, cardinals, kings and others who are being punished for having neglected their duties; and the similarity between these passages and others in the *Inferno* is such that one is tempted to believe that this zealous Protestant was both striving to emulate Dante[3] and to discredit the Roman Church. In England, John Leland, who was a college friend of Wyatt's, mentions Dante a number of times in his Latin epigrams;

he regards Dante and Petrarch as the chief glories of Italian poetry and in the epigram in memory of Wyatt in 1542 he considers Wyatt as not inferior to them.[4] In like manner Gabriel Harvey, in 1593, declared Du Bartas to be 'in nothing inferiour unto Dante'. Some years before, on the death of Gascoigne, in 1577, he had quaintly suggested that Gascoigne would encounter 'Madame Beatrice' in Heaven.[5] Travellers in Italy were not apparently haunted by memories of Dante (as travellers have been since the Romantic era); but Fynes Morison visited his tomb at Ravenna and translated the inscription on it. More interesting are references by the poets. Sidney alludes to him three times in the *Apologie for Poetrie* and his mention of Beatrice suggests he may have had some acquaintance with the *Divine Comedy*. But it is doubtful whether Spenser or Shakespeare had any knowledge of Dante, and a comparison that has been suggested between the *Vita Nuova* and Shakespeare's sonnets seems quite inconclusive.[6] Sir John Harington, however, had certainly read parts of the *Inferno*. In the commentary he attached to his translation of the *Orlando furioso* he refers to passages in Dante and he even translated three of the opening lines into *terza rima*. The following epigram appeared among his posthumous works in 1615:

A good answer of the Poet Dant to an Atheist.

The pleasant learn'd *Italian Poet Dant,*
Hearing an Atheist at the Scriptures jest,
Askt him in jest, which was the greatest beast?
He simply said: he thought an Elephant.
Then *Elephant* (quote *Dant*) it were commodious
That thou woudst hold thy peace, or get thee hence,
Breeding our Conscience scandall and offence
With thy prophaned speech, most vile and odious.
Oh Italy, thou breedst but few such *Dants,*
I would our England bred no Elephants.[7]

For sixteenth-century Englishmen it would appear then that Dante figured mainly as a great Christian writer. He was also invoked as a critic of the Papacy. In *A Defence of the Apologie of the Churche of Englande* (1567), John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, quoted both Dante and Petrarch as stigmatising Rome, though his references to their works are not very accurate.[8] John Foxe seems to have regarded the *De Monarchia,* of which he published an edition at Bâle in 1559,

in a rather similar light.[9] And in 1610 Alexander Cooke exploited Dante in *Pope Joane, a Dialogue between a Protestant and a Papist.* From being 'the grete poete of Ytaille', Dante was now not far from having become a scourge of 'the whore of Babylon'! But it is perfectly plain that scarcely anyone in England read him.

Petrarch was in very different case. His fame indeed seems to have gone on increasing until in the 1590's it reached a meridian—a fame unequalled at that time by any other poet's, unless it were Virgil's or Ovid's. For many years after the time of Chaucer he had been thought of, quite rightly, as a humanist and admired for his treatises in Latin. Duke Humphrey gave a copy of his works to Balliol College and we know that, as early as 1426, a copy of his poems had reached Cambridge and was in the Library at Peterhouse. But it was probably the Italian visitors to the court of Henry VIII or the example of such contemporary disciples of Petrarch's as Luigi Alamanni that drew Wyatt's attention to the *Canzoniere* and thus started a tradition which was to modify the moral outlook of cultured Englishmen and to colour the whole texture of English poetry.

The *Canzoniere* was first printed in Venice in 1470 and thirty-four further editions were published during the remaining years of the century. In the following century alone, one hundred and sixty-seven editions have been recorded. Many of these circulated in France, where Petrarch inspired Maurice Scève and his friends, and, later, the poets of the Pléiade, and thus created a second current flowing into England. His influence in England to the time of James I has been described in outline or touched on by various critics;[10] but it was sometimes, and often in the best English poetry, an impalpable and yet deep and pervasive influence, so that to treat it adequately would require tact and sensibility as well as great learning. I shall venture to speak of it from time to time. It will suffice at the moment to mention the writer who, after Wyatt and Surrey—the great sponsors of Petrarchan poetry in England—did much to popularise him at court.

This was Henry Parker, Baron Morley (1476-1556). He dedicated to Henry VIII—with no ironical intention, one may be sure—a translation of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*; and published in the time of Queen Mary, probably in 1554, a version of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, under the title of *The tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke.* The

Trionfi had been the very last of Petrarch's works, composed only a short time before his death. They contained the *Trionfi d' Amore, della Castità, della Morte, della Fame, del Tempo and della Divinità,* and represented the extreme point in the praise of Madonna Laura. Morley was a good deal older than Wyatt and Surrey, although he outlived them. His language, compared with theirs, seems archaic and at times colloquial, and his versification is rough and defective. He is not seen to advantage in the 'Tryumphe of Love', of which an extract appears in Paget Toynbee's book.[11] Perhaps the concluding lines of the 'Tryumphe of Dyvinitie' give a fairer impression of his manner:

> There is a little river Gebenna men it call
> When first in love I chaunced for to fall
> There love dyd make me so longe a cruel awarre
> That yet I dread to thynke upon that starre
> Happy is that stone that covereth that swet face
> Wherin there resteth so much beautie and grace
> If that then I were happy in thys lyfe it to se
> Here on thys vyle earth so perfect in degree
> After that this swete gratiouse Lady hath taken
> That fame fayre dispoyle yt semyth now forsaken
> What shal it be I praye you to tel me this
> Then to beholde hyr eternall blisse.[12]

He was a sincere admirer of Petrarch and in that rough and cruel age must have represented a force disinterested in its spirituality. The *Canzoniere* was not translated, probably because it was long, and also because most of the poet's admirers possessed a copy from which they selected pieces for adaptation, when they did not imitate Petrarch's French or Italian imitators—which they did, extensively. But the *Septem Psalmi Paenitentiales* were paraphrased by George Chapman in a volume published in 1612;[13] and three of the *Trionfi* were again translated by Anna Hume, a Scottish poetess, in 1644.[14] In the later seventeenth century Petrarch's fame declined in England, but it rose again in the later eighteenth century; and indeed in every age of deep poetic feeling men have found in him a contemporary and a brother.

The action of Boccaccio was still potent, not now on account of the *Teseida* or the *Filostrato,* which were based on ancient poems, but of the works that related to the Italy of his own time. Thus the

Filocolo appeared in an English version in 1567, and the *Fiammetta*, which had been very popular in France, in 1587. A number of Boccaccio's *novelle* were translated and published, as we shall see, in the miscellanies. It appears that a complete translation of the *Decamerone* was authorised by Archbishop Whitgift in 1587 and licensed to the printer Wolfe. His license was for some reason revoked; but it was renewed 'by my Lord of Canterburyes command' in 1620, and the work was then published by Isaac Jaggard in two volumes in-folio, and reprinted in 1624.[15]

Such then was the fame of the older Italian writers; all three were honoured and two were well known. If we glance now at the state of Italian Literature in the late fifteenth and in the sixteenth century, we shall be better able to understand what currents were flowing most strongly and why English poets entered into certain of these more readily than into others.

Narrative poetry had reached its apogee in the work of Boiardo, whose *Orlando innamorato* (1499) would have remained the most popular work of its kind, had it not been in some ways surpassed by the *Orlando furioso* (1532) of Ariosto. Boiardo and Ariosto thus constituted a new genre, the Romantic epic, which was the late Renaissance equivalent of the Homeric epos: the genre best adapted to the Italian genius and the taste of contemporary Europe. It was an achievement so great that no summary description of it seems adequate. The dexterity with which Ariosto conducts several narratives concurrently, leaving one or other of his characters in a dire predicament at the end of one canto, to return to rescue them at a later point after interesting us equally in the adventures of the others; the genius with which he spreads an air of verisimilitude over adventures which belong only to fairyland; his unfailing energy and good-humour; the splendid unrolling of the rhymed octaves—these are only perhaps the more obvious of his merits. He celebrated the ideals of chivalry—the 'gran bontà dei cavalieri antichi'—albeit with a smile at the way in which the public liked them to be celebrated. No imaginative work produced in Europe since the seventeenth century, or perhaps the sixteenth, has captured the imagination of successive generations as the *Orlando furioso* did for a hundred years or so. Spenser, towards the end of the century, could think of nothing better than to try and do in English what Ariosto had done in Italian. By this time, however, Spenser had another

model, in the *Gerusalemme liberata* of Torquato Tasso, of which the first seven books had appeared in 1580. As a model, it was less fortunate. Tasso had attempted to mingle real events and historical personages with fairies and miracles; the poetry was perhaps more enchanting, the episodes more 'melting'; but verisimilitude was thrown to the winds. Nevertheless the poem delighted Spenser and has always retained, and deserved, a certain measure of admiration.

Burlesque narrative poetry, written also in *ottava rima,* had been constituted by Luigi Pulci, whose *Morgante maggiore*—a sort of artistic Gargantua in verse—is as delightful for its form as for a good-humoured satire of chivalry which in some ways foreshadows Cervantes. These poets, who were essentially *bourgeois,* did not appeal to the Elizabethans. To Sidney, a noble, the ideals and practices of chivalry were sacred. Spenser, although by birth a member of the middle-class, gave himself the task of evoking and celebrating the same ideals. Shakespeare's sympathies, like those of nearly all the other poets, were likewise aristocratic. Any notion of burlesquing the military aristocracy of the Middle Ages would have seemed to them low, if not contemptible. It was not until the early nineteenth century that Byron finally naturalised in English verse the vein of Pulci; and then he turned it to uses other than the satire of chivalry.

The pastoral genre was a modern development of the bucolic poetry of the Sicilian Greeks and of Virgil; enriched and diversified by the songs of the Troubadours. It was first exemplified in a great and influential work by the Neapolitan Sannazaro, whose *Arcadia* appeared in 1504. This work consists of twelve prose passages, alternating with twelve eclogues. The scene is laid in an innocent Arcadia, but the spectator, Sincero, is a melancholy exile, and there is no attempt to oppose the happiness of the fields and woods to the misery and corruption of the city. The happiness of these shepherds and shepherdesses is not without alloy;[16] an idyll is succeeded by an elegy; and all this communicates to his work a charm as unforgettable as that which arises from Poussin's famous picture. In the years that followed the appearance of the *Arcadia,* the genre was to become almost as much a Spanish one as an Italian. Sannazaro himself was of Spanish origin and the author of the *Diana enamorada* was a Spaniard. But there were special reasons why these dreams of a golden age should have first been dreamed and sung in Italy. The

political divisions of the peninsula and the decline of the Republican aristocracies had laid Italy open to invasion and tempted the intervention of the foreigner; the Germans, allied with the Spaniards, supported the formation of autocracies; they took Rome in 1527 and Florence in 1530; and although Tuscany acquired independence under a Medici dynasty, Lombardy was brought under Austro-Spanish control, while the papal states became more and more obscurantist. The atmosphere of Rome ceased in fact to be as favourable to poetry as it had been in the days of Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna. The effect of the Counter-Reformation and of the formation of the Society of Jesus, which was of Spanish origin, was to diminish the moral stature of the poet and finally to destroy great poetry—in Italy, though not in France. In the sixteenth century, it was at the court of Urbino for a few happy years (1506-16), and especially at the Court of Ferrara that the poets tended to congregate.

The pastoral genre, meanwhile, had been cultivated by Luigi Alamanni in his *Opere toscane,* and it is significant that he, like so many others before and after, was a political exile. The present was bad, the future would probably be worse. A sound instinct warned the poets that the Golden Age was in the past, and they turned, though not always with that understanding of what made the most touching idyll which Sannazaro had had, to the dream of a pastoral Arcadia where it was always Spring; where on some grassy slope the milk-white lambs danced to the piping of Tityrus and Corydon.

O pastori felici,
Che d'un picciol poder lieti e contenti
Avete i cieli amici
E lungi dalle genti
Non temete di mar ira, o di venti . . .

All' apparir del giorno
Sorgete lieti a salutar l'aurora,
E'l bel prato d'intorno
Spogliate ad ora ad ora
Del vario fior che 'l suo bel grembo onora. . . .

In this ode to the pastoral life Bernardo Tasso showed even less care for reality than Sannazaro: he went frankly back to Virgil or beyond; while some years later his son Torquato followed in a

similar vein. But the *Aminta*, a pastoral drama which was produced at Ferrara in 1573, is a work of great subtlety, in which, if the background is conventional, the characters are profoundly true to life. With extraordinary art, the poet sets in contrast the two pairs of lovers, Tirsi and Dafne on the one hand, Aminta and Silvia on the other. He shows that Tirsi and Dafne, the elder couple, for all their experience and insouciance, are really no more fortunate, and are indeed unhappier, than Aminta and Silvia, for all their despair:

Il mondo invecchia
E invecchiando intristisce,

as Dafne truly and sadly reflects. We live by illusions, and as the French say, 'sans illusion, tout périt.' This mingling of idealism, scepticism and melancholy goes some way towards explaining the hold which the *Aminta* exercised over the sophisticated public of the age. But Tasso's lightness of touch, his wonderful knowledge of the human heart and his mastery of *métier*, render the charm of the *Aminta* almost impossible to define.

Guarini who was present at the first performance of the *Aminta* was so much impressed by it that he set to work on a play in the same vein. This was to be *Il pastor fido*, a pastoral tragi-comedy. It was nine years in the making, and was not published until 1589 and only produced in 1598. Its success was enormous and its vogue came near to eclipsing that of the *Aminta*; but this it hardly deserved; and now that the literary artifice of which it is full has ceased to dazzle us, little remains but the neatly finished lyrics:

O bella età dell'oro,
Quand' era cibo il latte
Del pargoletto mondo, e culla il bosco;
E i cari parti loro
Godean le gregge intatte,
Nè temea il mondo ferro nè tosco![17]

Pastoral poetry was then, after the Romantic epic, the principal achievement of the Italian Muse, and here were the dreams that haunted the fancy of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets—of Milton also in his picture of the earthly paradise. The pastoral, however, whether as romance in mingled prose and verse, or as lyric, or as lyrical drama, was a kind apart. The purely lyrical poetry of sixteenth-century Italy was tending to decline. The poets were

numerous, gifted and ingenious; they knew all about technique; but the freshness and spontaneity which had shone in the work of Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici were now fading. For a time indeed strong and sincere notes could be heard in the verses of Michelangelo and especially of the poetesses Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara and Gaspara Stampa; but, as the century advanced, poetry became more and more an affair of artifice and convention. This is true of most of the collections of sonnets, madrigals and other lyrics which succeeded each other, from the *Rime* of Tebaldeo (1499 and afterwards) and Serafino (1502 and afterwards) to the *Rime* of Guarini and Marino at the end of the century.[18] Alone among all these popular rhymers, of whom one at least—the Cavaliere Marino—is outstanding for the influence he exercised, Gabriele Chiabrera (1552-1638) of Savona, on the Genoese Riviera, produced work of enduring merit. But it was apparently as unknown in England as the sonnets of Michelangelo, which indeed were not published until the early seventeenth century. His Muse would, in any event, have been rather too severe, too Hellenic, for the taste of the Jacobean poets, even in his sonnets and still more in his epitaphs which he wrote in blank verse, probably under the influence of the Greek Anthology; he did not really become known in England until the later eighteenth century and, for practical purposes, it was Wordsworth who 'discovered' and translated some of the more striking of his poems.

The popular poets, however, and even some who today seem of inferior merit, exercised an immense fascination over the minds of the French and later of the English. They rang the changes on all the *motifs* of Petrarchan poetry, and some (as in the case of Berni) of anti-Petrarchan. They revived a number of themes which Horace and Ovid had sung: the theme of *Carpe diem;* the theme of Time which brings all great and lovely things to ruin—except the poet's verse which, defying time, will 'eternise' beauty. And they wrote finished exercises on the other popular *motifs* of the age, such as the misdeameanours of Cupid; Sleep; Night and Day; and so on. There is scarcely a theme to be found among the sonnets of Ronsard and his friends, or of the Elizabethans including Shakespeare, or of the Scottish Petrarchans of the age of James I, which they had not treated and of which, in many instances, they did not actually furnish the models. Only, it must be admitted that—always excepting the

greater Italian poets—they were often surpassed by their disciples. Du Bellay and Ronsard, Sidney and Shakespeare, take up the themes which the minor Italian poets had treated; but they renew and, so to speak, annex them by the authenticity of their experience and the intensity of their feeling.

Many, of the Italians, however, were distinguished Latinists, as well as vernacular poets. To write Latin verse was considered nobler than to write Italian and, *a fortiori,* than to write French or English, and for over two centuries the cult of Latin poetry easily held its own with the cult of the vernacular. Petrarch had set the example for this. Thus many of the genres such as drama, the pastoral eclogue and various kinds of lyric, are so to speak doubled in the two idioms. The first eclogues on the classical model were in Latin, as one can see from the work of Petrarch and, later, of Battista Spagnuoli, better known as Mantuanus (1448-1516). Sannazaro was striking out a new line when he composed his own pastoral in Italian. But his success in the *Arcadia* did not cause those who followed his example in French, like Marot, or in English, like Spenser, to forget 'Mantuanus'—'le Mantouan' as the French called him. On the contrary, Spenser studied him when composing *The Shepheardes Calender;* and it is interesting to notice that when, in his epistle to Henry Reynolds, Michael Drayton recalled his first aspirations and his first lessons in the art of poetry, he associated them with this writer:

> To my milde Tutor merrily I came,
> (For I was then a proper goodly page,
> Much like a Pigmy, scares ten years of age)
> Clasping my slender armes about his thigh.
> O my deare master! cannot you (quoth I)
> Make me a Poet, doe it if you can,
> And you shall see, Ile quickly bee a man....

The tutor replies that, if Michael will 'ply his learning,' he will read some poets to him:

> Too't hard went I, when shortly he began,
> And first read to me honest *Mantuan,*
> Then *Virgils Eclogues,* being entred thus,
> Me thought I straight had mounted *Pegasus*....

What was true of pastoral verse in Italy, was equally true of lyrical

and descriptive verse, and even more of didactic. Marco Vida in his remarkable *Christiad*, in his *De Arte Poetica* (one of the standard texts of the neo-classic creed) and especially in his poem on the silkworm and in his wonderful *Scacchiae Ludus*, achieved more than all but the greatest of the vernacular poets. Bembo and Marullo were as moving in Latin as in Italian; while it was through the Latin versions of various Greek poems which were made by Navagero, Angeriano, Alciati and their compeers, that the epigrams of the Planudean Anthology became chiefly accessible to Du Bellay and his French successors.

II

Englishmen were certainly more at home in this neo-Latin literature and in French literature than in Italian. But the latter was novel, varied, attractive and fashionable. It comprised not only various kinds of poetry, but the most romantic and sensational short stories then available in Europe, not to speak of historical works and books on war, politics, love and good-breeding. Hence a great demand for translations; and no age has seen so many and famous translations as the ages of Elizabeth and James I. Not only were many of the classics of Greece and Rome then put into English, from North's Plutarch to Chapman's Homer, and including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1565 and 1567) and his *Heroycall Epistles* (1567)—for Ovid remained the most popular and best known of all the ancient poets—but the Italian *novellieri* were freely rendered in English, though they sometimes, like Plutarch and Thucydides, reached us by way of French versions. Many of the tales of Boccaccio, Bandello and Straparola figured, along with stories from the Roman and the Greek, in Painter's *Pallace of Pleasure* (1566 and 1567), an omnibus volume on which the dramatists were to draw; while the *Certaine Tragicall Discourses*, which Geffraie Fenton published in 1567, were a rendering of Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques*, which latter had been translated from Bandello. A further volume of stories, largely of Italian origin, from the pen of George Pettie, came out in 1576 under the title of a *Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure*. Unlike Fenton and many of the others, Pettie knew Italian and was not obliged to rely on French translations. It might be added, in passing, that he was already writing in a style which we should now call

'Euphuistic' and which there is reason to suppose owed much to Italian influence.[19] A little later, in 1581, he published a version of Stefano Guazzo's *Civile Conversazione* (1574), a work which dealt with the art of conversation and described a company of young people engaged in discussing the love-problems that had for so long been a fashionable pastime in Italy. 'I have,' he tells us in a foreword, 'supplied various things out of the Italian original which were left out by the French translator.' So eager were the court and the nobility to catch every 'report of fashions in proud Italy' that it appears likely that the *History of Gualfrido and Bernardo,* which John Drout had published in 1570 as a translation from the Italian, was really an original work.[20]

Though we hear few echoes of Niccolò Machiavelli among the non-dramatic poets, except Spenser and Greville, the Elizabethan stage resounded with allusions to him, and he became a byword for all that was cunning or villainous, whether in the tyrant or the politician. Secretary to the Council of Florence, Machiavelli had set out his theories towards 1513 in the *Principe,* which was officially published in 1532; had developed them in the *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (1531), and had sought to justify them by historical examples in the *Istorie fiorentine* (1537). In the *Arte della Guerra* he showed, among other things, that the art of war must be studied through history. Though the *Discorsi* are probably his most illuminating work, it was the *Principe* which enjoyed, and perhaps still enjoys, the greatest celebrity. In this book he had analysed the forms of personal government with which he was acquainted; had recommended the abandonment of mercenary, in favour of national, armies; and explained the rules whereby a prince (by which he means any autocratic ruler, and not necessarily an hereditary monarch), who wishes to maintain himself in power, should be governed. Himself free of passion, he should know how to take advantage of the passions and frailties of others; how never to be half-hearted in his policy; how to meet evil with evil; and, when necessary, how to sin against morality in order to promote the welfare of the state. Particular interest attaches to chapters XVII and XVIII. In answering the question: 'Se egli è meglio essere amato che temuto, o temuto che amato?', he concludes that it is better to be loved than hated, but better to be feared than loved.[21] When he comes to consider in what ways a prince should observe good faith in his dealings, he argues

that he should take lessons from the beasts. The lion cannot defend himself against a snare or trap; the fox cannot defend himself against a wolf. The prince should therefore be a fox to recognise and avoid snares, and a lion to terrify the wolves. A prudent ruler cannot and should not observe faith when such conduct turns against him and when the reasons which led him to make a promise have passed away. If all men were good, this precept would not be good, but since they are bad (says Machiavelli) and would not keep faith with you, you need not keep faith with them.[22]

Machiavelli's thought is complex and his intentions are sometimes obscure; few great writers have been more misunderstood or misinterpreted, and it is doubtful whether, even today, any half-dozen competent critics would agree about him. It is easy to be shocked by him, it is perhaps easier to admire him; but one may safely observe that while the premise on which his politics rest, namely that human nature is corrupt, may be sound, nevertheless the general adoption by governments of his maxims would not raise the level of national or international politics.[23]

It would be tempting to trace the fortune of Machiavelli's doctrines and to distinguish between the Machiavellism of the Florentine Secretary and Machiavellism as it appeared to his critics in Italy, France and England. Of these, Guicciardini was perhaps the most penetrating and Gentillet the most influential. If the *Principe* was not translated into English until 1620, it was perfectly well known to our statesmen and it did much to inspire the policy of the Tudors from the time of Thomas Cromwell onwards. The *Discorsi* were also known to them. Someone made and translated extracts from this work and at least three copies in manuscript have survived. One, which is among the Cecil Papers, belonged to the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, and another, which is in Elizabeth's 'Commonplace Book' among the Hatfield House Papers, belonged to the Queen.[24] Whether she cared much for Machiavelli is doubtful, though she probably regarded him as useful. She had great notions of honour, and it seems likely that she would have wished to save Mary Stuart; but her advisers with the backing of Parliament, the dread of a Catholic succession and the maxims laid down in Chapter XVIII of the *Principe,* to support them, over-ruled her. In the revulsion of feeling that followed Mary's execution, Elizabeth dismissed her

Secretary of State; though Burleigh, that 'old fox,' was not a man one easily got rid of.

The majority of people, both in France and in England, were shocked by the cynicism of the *Principe*. It became known in Scotland, too, where the Sempill Ballads contain references to 'this false Machivilian,' to 'men of Machevillus Scuillis,' and so forth, from 1568 onwards.[25] English prejudice against Machiavelli must have been largely spontaneous, but it was greatly nourished also by the *Contre-Machiavel* of the French Huguenot, Innocent Gentillet. This work, composed in French, was translated into Latin and published in 1576; it was Englished by Simon Patericke in the following year, but this version appeared only in 1602. It was in vain that Alberico Gentili tried to explain and justify Machiavelli: his name became synonymous with that of the villainous politician and his notions, as presented by Gentillet, animated with a new horror the figure of the tyrant as it appeared in the plays of Seneca. It was then, Mario Praz has shown, in the framework of Senecan drama with which all the playwrights were familiar, that Machiavelli invaded the Elizabethan stage. Now Seneca had been adapted to the Italian stage in the plays of Giraldi Cinthio, and it was through this influential writer that he first became known to our dramatists.[26] This has given rise to misapprehension and notably to an exaggerating of Machiavelli's influence on the part of those who have not realised how pervasive was the influence of the Roman dramatist: figures that may seem to have been inspired by Machiavelli are often merely derived from Seneca.[27] But the Florentine got the blame. The word 'Machiavellian' became associated with devilry, poisoning and atheism;[28] and 'policie,' 'politicke' and 'politician' all acquired sinister connotations.[29] The name of Niccolò suggested old Nick, and 'Machiavel' was readily turned into 'Match-Evill' or 'Match a Villain.'[30] Shakespeare's Richard III says: 'I can . . . set the murderous Machiavel to school,' and the plays of Marlowe and Webster are full of Machiavellism as they conceived it. In the next century, from being an object of horror, the Machiavellian became a butt for ridicule, as in *Volpone*.[31] But it is interesting to notice that as late as 1624, in Middleton's play, *A Game at Chesse*, in which the English Jesuit Floyd, Ignatius Loyola and the Spanish ambassador Gondomar are depicted, the Black Knight (Gondomar) is represented as a very formidable Machiavellian politician.[32]

It is not certain that English opinion in general and the dramatists in particular were greatly mistaken in their estimate of Machiavelli.[33] English thought was still Christian and we were still a very medieval-minded people. Machiavelli, on the other hand, had substituted for the medieval outlook the ideals of ancient paganism.[34] Either this world is a place of trial and testing for the world to come; or it is a place for the seizing and enjoyment of power: one has to choose.

It was natural that there should be a division of opinion among Englishmen regarding the merits of 'great Italy,' as Shakespeare called her. She produced all sorts of men and especially the extreme sorts: saints and sinners: the godly Dante and the licentious Aretino; the cynical Machiavelli and the noble-minded Castiglione. If some —the stay-at-homes and the 'bourgeois'—considered the Italians over-sophisticated, immoral and corrupt, the nobility and, for the most part, the poets regarded them with envy and admiration.[35] They read Italian novels and went to Italy whenever they had the chance. Roger Ascham was greatly scandalized by the mischief which he believed arose from these habits. 'Ten *Morte Arthures,*' he declared, 'do not the tenth part so much harme as one of these bookes, made in Italie, and translated in England.' Very judiciously, on the other hand, he approved of Sir Thomas Hoby's version of Castiglione's famous work, which had appeared in 1561 under the title of *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio, divided into four bookes,* and which was to become the breviary of the Elizabethan gentleman and a kind of model to which the poets could look up. This version was to be republished in 1577, 1588 and 1602.

Il Libro del Cortegiano del Conte B. C. had first appeared in Venice in 1528, and its merits were not long in being universally recognised. It was translated into Latin, French, Spanish, English and German. No work of the Italian sixteenth century, not even Ariosto's poem, was received with such enthusiasm. Not only did Hoby translate it into English, but Bartholomew Clerke produced a Latin version which was published in 1571 and must have been widely read, since it was reprinted in London in 1577, 1585, 1593, 1603 and 1612; while a revised edition appeared at Cambridge in 1713.[36] In all, one hundred and forty-three editions have been recorded in various languages down to the present time. Its popularity in the age of Elizabeth was all pervasive; it seems likely that in *Much Ado about Nothing* the characters of Benedick and Beatrice were founded on

those of Gaspare Pallavicino and Emilia Pia who carry on a 'merry war' of words in one of the dialogues of the *Cortegiano*.[37] Much of what the Elizabethans knew of Bembo and his exposition of neo-Platonism came to them indirectly from the closing pages of this unique masterpiece. Nor were the merits that dazzled them peculiar to the age. *Il Cortegiano*, declared Dr. Johnson in 1773, is 'the best book that ever was written upon good breeding . . . and you should read it.'[38] Roger Ascham had thought the same. 'Advisedlie read, and diligentlie folowed, but one year at home in England,' this book, he had said, 'would do a yong gentleman more good, I wisse, than three yeares travell abrode spent in Italie.' The schoolmaster's approval was probably grounded in the hope that the book might *prevent* fathers from sending their sons to Italy, a habit which he strongly and vainly deplored.

Ascham's prejudice, it will be noticed, was not against the Italians themselves, but against the influence of their country on Englishmen who went to live there. How far any real anti-Italian prejudice, where it existed, was well founded, is difficult to ascertain. Jerome Turler in his book of the *Traveiler* (1575) gives a very fair and well-balanced view of the country. He notes the faults and vices of 'the most delicious realme of Naples,' but these he attributes mainly to the Calabrians and Sicilians who harboured there. From his description of Italy, one has the impression that the virtues of the people outweigh their defects,[39] and that his feeling for Italy was similar to that of any Englishman of the Romantic era or of today.

It would be interesting—in parenthesis—to know what the Italians thought of ourselves. The available evidence suggests that their opinion was not very flattering; and as there was an Italian colony in London, they had some means of forming an opinion. John Florio, as we have seen, deprecated the habits of 'surfeiting' and 'drunkennesse' which were probably not uncommon. Bruno's strictures on University men may be taken *cum grano salis;* even modern scholars can be irritable when their favourite prejudices are disturbed. But he was struck, in London, with the boorish manners of the populace and intimidated by their tendency to subject foreigners to open violence. The resident Italian merchants had no doubt learned to protect themselves; but their opinions would be worth ascertaining. One of them, whose correspondence is quoted

by Professor Gargano, was shocked by the low morals of the London apprentices and students. The scholars of Westminister, according to him, took pleasure in making cuckolds of the honest burghers of the district, who could never snore away the night 'troppo sicuramente.'[40] The thing is so prettily put that one suspects it has not lost in the telling. What is more to our purpose is to observe first that cultured Italians were welcomed in England and that a few of them, as we shall see later, found the country sufficiently tolerable to settle in it and to become honoured subjects of the crown; and that cultured Englishmen were welcomed in Italy and sometimes spent two or three years there; and, second, that while Italians were mostly not at all curious about England, Englishmen were so curious about Italy that at no time, before or since, has there been such a demand for the translation of Italian books.

These, as we have seen, were principally prose works; but many of them, like the prose-writings of Boccaccio, Bembo, Castiglione and Machiavelli, influenced the English poets; just as the many Italian *novelle* provided plots for English drama. It may seem surprising to notice that the Italian narrative poems of the late fifteenth century and of the Cinquecento did not appear in translation until the end of the century. Thus Sir John Harington's *Orlando furioso* was published in 1591;[41] the earlier *Orlando innamorato* of Boiardo, Englished by Robert Tofte, in 1598;[42] Carew's *Jerusalem delivered* in 1594; and Fairfax's more famous version, under the title of *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recoverie of Jerusalem,* in 1600.[43] But it seems clear that Sannazaro was familiar to Sidney, and Boiardo, Arioste and Tasso to Spenser, before any of them appeared in English. Spenser, as we shall see, also had knowledge of *Trissino's L'Italia liberata dai Goti,* which was not apparently Englished.

The translators were not, for the most part, professional scholars, and in many cases they were the veriest amateurs; but there were notable exceptions and these included some of the best known names.[44] All or nearly all approached their task in a spirit of romantic adventure, and their freedom not merely from pedantry, but from the burden of much learning, served their purpose. They thought, perhaps rightly, that a translation should sound like a book composed in English. They therefore naturalised the foreign authors, and sometimes they improved on them. Their work was justified by the prodigious stimulus which it afforded to the poets; though it must

be added that this stimulus was felt more in drama than in narrative and lyrical verse.

III

The dawn of Elizabethan poetry was long and hesitant, and the first poets were, characteristically, moved to emulate the example of the French. Now while Du Bellay, following the precepts of Alamanni, had strongly recommended his compatriots to write in the genres created by the Greeks and Romans, it was observed that both he and Ronsard had distinguished themselves in their sonnet-sequences. If the example of the Italians counted, in French eyes, for more than their precepts, the example of the Italians and the French combined was, *a fortiori*, stronger with the English poets; and it was to the sonnet that, in the 1580's, they began more particularly to direct their attention. George Gascoigne had already written a few sonnets and attempted to define the genre; but the honour of publishing the first large collection of English sonnets, or rather, of 'little songs' (the meaning which the word then generally bore) belongs to Thomas Watson, whose famous *Hekatompathia, or Passionate Centurie of Love*, appeared in 1582.

Of the hundred poems in this *recueil*, most contain eighteen verses, but there are a number of sonnets of the type written by Surrey. Of these, twelve are translated or adapted from Serafino, eight from Petrarch, four from Ronsard, four from Ercole Strozza; while a few others are from French and Italian Latinists, like Poliziano and Battista Spagnuoli—or rather Mantuan, as he was always called. The book is preceded by a dedication to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and by verses from a friend of the author, hailing him as the English successor of Petrarch:

> The stars which did at Petrarch's birthday reign
> Were fixed again at thy nativity,
> Destining thee the Tuscan's poesy,
> Who scaled the skies in lofty quatorzain.
> The Muses gave to thee thy fatal vain,
> The very same that Petrarch had, whereby
> Madonna Laura's fame is grown so high.
> And that whereby his glory he did gain. . . .[45]

Without genius or much of originality, Watson writes with a

certain elegant distinction. He has a sense of style, as one sees in the eighteen-line poem in which, imitating Serafino dell' Aquila, who was himself following Ovid, he speaks of the destructive power of Time:

> In time the Bull is brought to weare the yoake;
> In time all haggred Haukes will stoope the Lures;
> In time small wedge will cleave the sturdiest Oake;
> In time the Marble weares with weakest shewres.
> More fierce is my sweet love, more hard withall
> Than Beast or Birde, the Tree, or Stony wall. . . .[46]

Here, and in the remainder of the poem, there is Euphuism. Miss Violet Jeffery, in her study of *John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance,*[47] cites three passages from the Euphues novels in which the same theme and some of the same images recur. These books had appeared two or three years before Watson's, and it seems clear that both writers were drawing from Italian sources—a point to which we shall return. But what is particularly striking in the *Passionate Centurie* is the manner in which, as Miss Janet Scott has shown,[48] Watson treats or, so to speak, announces some of the principal themes that his great successors were to exploit. An enumeration, often very detailed, by the poet of his mistress's charms (an Italian convention which had been taken up also by Ronsard); a description of the lover's emotions, his hopes, fears, dreams and sufferings (a Petrarchan motif); the poet's notion, apparently originating with the supposed Anacreon, that he would like to be transformed into anything, a mirror, a table, even an insect, which his mistress might touch or which might touch her; and finally the theme of fugitive Time, which was so dear to the neo-Latinists and the French—these were the main topics of his verse. Without one's being sure that Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare and the others read Watson at all attentively, one must be struck by the fact that they treat the same themes and that one or other of his 'sonnets' challenges comparison with a sonnet now of *Astrophel and Stella,* now of the *Amoretti,* now of Shakespeare, or of Daniel's *Delia,* Lodge's *Phillis* or Fletcher's *Licia.* Thus, if he did not influence any of these sonnet-sequences, he seems to have laid down the principal lines which most of them were to follow.

Beyond this, he did not proceed far. He was very much of a humanist and, no more than many others, had he accepted the view that the modern poet should write only in the vernacular. When in

1585 he translated Tasso's *Aminta,* it was not into English verse but into Latin hexameters; and, when he wrote a pastoral poem of his own, it was also in Latin, the *Amyntae Gaudia.* Thus, among the 'shepherds' of the English Arcadia he figures as *Amyntas,* and so he appears in *Colin Clout's come home.*

He contributed also to the vogue of the song, which was perhaps the best and most characteristic expression of lyricism in that age. His *Italian Madrigalls Englished* is a collection of Italian songs which had been set to music by such contemporary composers as Palestrina and Luca Marenzio. This contains a version of Petrarch's beautiful 'Zefiro torna, e'l bel tempo rimena.' Finally in 1593, after his death, there appeared from his pen a collection of real sonnets, or 'quatorzains' as they were then called, sixty in all, entitled *The Tears of Fancie, or Love Disdained.* These are less closely derivative than the verses of the *Passionate Centurie;* but they still contain many echoes of Ronsard, of the Anacreontea and especially of Petrarch, whose odes and *canzoni* as well as his sonnets furnish the matter for many of these quatorzains.[49]

The *Passionate Centurie,* which remains his best known work, is the first of the Elizabethan *recueils* definitely to raise the problem of Euphuism in English poetry. That the subsequent development of this 'malady of the language' owed more to Lyly and perhaps George Pettie than to Watson, seems certain; but they were prosateurs; and though Watson wrote a little later than Lyly, his Euphism does not derive from Lyly's novels.

The origins of Euphuism have in fact been debated, though less warmly than the nature and extension of the Baroque. Some critics, pointing to Berners's translation of Guevara—and perhaps thinking, by anticipation, of Gongora—have attributed it to Spanish influence. Others, however, have observed that Berners had displayed Euphuistic tendencies in his earlier version of Froissart. Nor has it been difficult to push the enquiry back into the Middle Ages and draw attention to the stylistic devices of the medieval Latinists. There, in all probability, appeared the first rivulets of a stream which later was to swell into a torrent, or rather into a number of parallel torrents of which the waters often over-flowed into neighbouring stream-beds.

Petrarch wrote sonnets in which parallelism and antithesis, though kept within moderate bounds, gave a foretaste of what was

to come. A similar tendency is perceptible in Boccaccio; but it was mainly among Petrarch's Italian imitators that these habits developed and blossomed out, while in France the 'Grands Rhétoriqueurs' more or less kept pace with them.

Miss Jeffery quotes decisive examples of the fascination which the Italian 'euphuists' had for Watson. When he writes:

> Love is a sowr delight; a sugred greefe;
> A luring death, an everdying life—

it is more than probable that he had an Italian poem in mind. When he writes:

> From out my Mystres eyes, two lightsome starres,
> He desinates estate of double kinde,
> My teares, my smyling cheere, my peace, my warres,
> My sighes, my songes: my feare, my hoping minde,
> My fyre, my frost, my joy, my sorrowes gall,
> My curse, my prayse, my death, but life withall. . . .

he is simply translating G. Parabosco's verses that begin:

> Occhi tuoi enzi stelle alme e fatali. . . .[50]

It is doubtful whether in their use of assonnance and alliteration the Elizabethans owed much, if anything, to a knowledge of Anglo-Saxon poetry. The French and Italians, on the other hand, with whom they were very familiar, had been practising these habits for some time. Marot, in his *Complaincte de Madame Loyse de Savoie,* had used, and even abused them with the greatest virtuosity; and Spenser was to imitate them from him. So, too, Serafino dell' Aquila, in the 'Strambotti' which he published in 1504, showed himself a virtuoso in the combined use of assonnance and alliteration. It would be hard indeed to go further than he goes in the following poem:

> La fida fede ch' al tuo caro core
> io porto in parte, donna, merti io morto,
> per cruda che non crede amaro amore,
> chi t'ami e tema di sua sarte o sorte;
> tu gridi, si t'agrado a dar dolore,
> e di legare e sciorre e farti forte,
> e dare e dir di me c'ha vinto el vanto,
> secondo scando il verso e conto e canto.[51]

Watson did not usually go as far; but he was fascinated by Serafino's antitheses, and by those he found in Petrarch; and his avowed imitation of Serafino's 'strambotto' beginning:

> Se Salamandra in fiamma vive, e in fuoco,
> Non mi stupisce quel che fa natura—

affords further evidence of the Euphuistic traits which he looked for, and borrowed from Italian poetry.

There is little doubt that Euphuism was a tendency of medieval origin; that it developed concurrently in Italy, Spain, France and England, taking different forms in each literature; and that in England it owed a good deal to the influence of both French and Italian writers, but especially the latter. In France, indeed, the tendency was checked for a time by the prestige of Greek and Latin models, a prestige which outweighed that of Italian poetry; and by the good taste of Ronsard and his friends. It began to revive, however, even in France in the court of Henri III; and later, when Marino visited Paris, he was received with ecstasy. Ultimately, however, the cult of 'Nature' and 'Reason' were to triumph, and a standard of taste to be established and illustrated by masterpieces which won the suffrage of the whole of Europe; but by then, the English had turned away from Italian models and were taking lessons once more from the French.

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A minor poet who may deserve mention, though he was more of a plagiarist than Watson, was John Soowthern. Of his *Pandora,* dedicated in 1584 to the Earl of Oxford, only one copy today survives. Puttenham, while granting him a certain facility, accused him with reason of translating a number of Ronsard's adaptations of Pindar, 'Anacreon' and other Greek poets ; he had not apparently observed that Soowthern also translated Remi Belleau and Desportes, and that the name of his mistress, Diana, was taken from Desportes' *recueil* which bears that title.[52] But Desportes was the most Italianate of all the major French poets. Thus the Italian current came to Soowthern through French poetry and this was to be the case in some degree with most of the other sonnet-writers, including at the outset Spenser and in some measure Shakespeare.

At this time, as will be seen, the sonnet did not take root in England as it had done in Italy and France. Only Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare composed sonnet-sequences that can be called notable; the work of the other poets being in the main conventional or derivative. They were often the veriest plagiarists and were denounced as such, on occasion, by the critics of the time.

There were, however, a number of young men, especially among those who had been at Oxford or Cambridge, who, towards 1576, were preparing to create the new poetry; for the notion had arisen that England, like France and Italy, needed a national poetry and that it behoved them, as patriots, to create it. The poets were now as numerous as, thirty years before, they had been rare. Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford; Christopher Marlowe; Philip Sidney and his friends, Fulke Greville, Edward Dyer and Ludovyk Bryskett; Spenser; and Drayton were the principal names. Lodge, Daniel, Barnes, Giles Fletcher, Constable and Barnfield stood in a lower rank. They were not all sonnet-writers, though most of them were to publish sonnet-sequences between 1591 and 1597. Like the French, whose example they wished to emulate, they aimed at producing various kinds of poetry: eclogues, elegies, narrative poems, odes or songs. One of them at least, it was hoped, would write a great romantic epic. In the event, it was in the narrative poem, of which Shakespeare's *Lucrece* was a good example, and especially in the song, that they were to prove the most successful.

REFERENCES

[1] See Paget J. Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature*. London, 1909, 2 vols, I, 26-137; and W. P. Friederich, *Dante's Fame abroad*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1950, 191-210.

[2] Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. XVIII.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

[6] There were both Latin and French translations of the *Divine Comedy*, but not of the *Vita Nuova*. See Friederich, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

[7] Toynbee, pp. 82-4.

[8] *Ibid.*, 51-2.

[9] *Ibid.*, 57-9.

[10] E.g. Peter Borghesi, *Petrarch and his influence on English literature*, Bologna, 1906; Maud F. Jerrold, *Francesco Petrarca: Poet and Humanist*, London, 1909.

[11] *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.

[12] *The Tryumphes of Petrarch, translated by Henry Parker, Lord Morley*, 1554. Reprinted by Stafford Henry, Earl of Iddesleigh. London, 1887, p. 99.

[13] Mary A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian*, p. 179.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

[15] See M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 91 et seq. The history of English versions of the *Decamerone* is very curious. Franco Sacchetti the poet, one of Boccaccio's friends, writing in 1399, said that it was translated both in France and England (M. A. Scott, p. 92). It is conceivable that one of these early unprinted versions may some day come to light.

[16] See, for a study of the Pastoral in Italy, Spain and France, Mia I. Gerhardt, *La Pastorale: essai d'analyse littéraire*. Assen, 1950.

[17] Chorus in Act IV, sc. 9.

[18] See Janet G. Scott, *Les Sonnets élisabéthains: les sources et l'apport personnel*. Paris, 1929, p. 299.

[19] Miss V. M. Jeffery discusses this problem in *John Lyly and the Italian Renaissance*. Paris, 1928, pp. 118-23.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[21] 'Deve nondimanco il principe farsi temere in modo che se non acquista l'amore, ei fugga l'odio, perchè può molto bene stare insieme esser temuto, e non odiato' (*Il Principe*, ed. L. A. Burd. Oxford, 1891. cap. XVII, p. 293).

[22] 'Essendo adunque un principe necessitato sapere bene usare la bestia, debbe di quella pigliare la volpe ed il lione; perche il lione non si difende dai lacci, la volpe non si difende da' lupi. Bisogna adunque essere volpe a conoscere i lacci, e lione a sbigottire i lupi' (cap. XVIII, *ed. cit.*, pp. 302-3).

[23] Machiavelli lived in an age of crisis, in which the notion of political morality had perhaps ceased to exist; and he seems to have written with an eye on such times. His own outlook seems to have been amoral. He believed that statecraft and war should be studied in the pages of history, and that both might become sciences. His personal preference was probably for the aristocratic forms of government; but as the republics were collapsing around him and as the future seemed to be with rulers who, to maintain order, would need to be authoritarian, his maxims are directed mainly for their guidance. The head of an ancient ruling house has generally little to fear from his subjects; he enjoys prestige and often affection; but a 'new prince,' if he wishes to be absolute, will have to be ruthless; and Machiavelli shows how. He declares (in the *Discorsi*, I, 26) that the methods these men sometimes employ, such as the transfer of populations, are 'utterly barbarous and incompatible with Christian society,' and that a man should abbor them and 'choose rather to be a private citizen than reign as a king at the price of such

devastation.' But he probably felt, like Hobbes in the next century, that 'homo homini lupus (est),' and that anything is better than anarchy; so he was willing to show how such a ruler can reign, and indeed how any ruler, including a legitimate king, may reign. The resulting maxims are based, as we have said, on M.'s low view of human nature. The prince should understand that men are wicked ('ungrateful,' 'deceitful,' 'avid of gain'—'tristi' that is, 'bad,' as he repeats) and that they will display their natural corruption whenever a good opportunity presents itself. This opinion was probably, like Taine's, based on a study of history rather than on theology; and this would go to explain his cold-blooded cynicism. A belief that we all share in the frailties of man's fallen nature undoubtedly tends to soften the ferocity of our reaction to them in others; and Machiavelli's politics are only tolerable when reinterpreted and modified in the light of Christian doctrine, as Greville appears to have seen. One has the impression that Machiavelli rather enjoyed showing how very intelligent and logical and thorough-going he was; but at heart he was a patriot, who suffered from a sense of Italy's misfortunes and of her tragic impotence. He would probably have welcomed the rise of a prince who would drive out the barbarians and establish order in the peninsula; and the men of the Risorgimento were not ill-inspired in their appeal to him.—Among the many modern studies devoted to Machiavelli, one may single out Lord Acton's essay, in the Introduction to Burd's edition of the *Principe;* and also Herbert Butterfield, *The Statecraft of Machiavelli,* London, 1940; and J. H. Whitfield, *Machiavelli,* Oxford, 1947.

[24] See J. W. Horrocks, *Machiavelli in Tudor Political Opinion and Discussion* (Thesis for the D. Litt. of London University, 1908), p. 95.

[25] See Mario Praz, 'Machiavelli and the Elizabethans' in *Proceedings o the British Academy.* London, 1928, pp. 52-3.

[26] *Ibid.,* pp. 63-66.

[27] *Ibid.,* p. 71.

[28] *Ibid.,* pp. 80-82.

[29] *Ibid.,* pp. 58-63.

[30] *Ibid.,* p. 82.

[31] *Ibid.,* pp. 74.

[32] *Ibid.,* pp. 92-3.

[33] See H. Butterfield, *The Stratecraft ofMachiavelli,* London, 1940.

[34] M. Praz, *art. cit.,* p. 84.

[35] Both attitudes may be detected in Lyly.

[36] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.,* p. 446.

[37] M. A. Scott, 'The Book of the Courtyer: A Possible Source of Benedick and Beatrice,' *P.M.L.A.* (XVI), Dec. 1901.

[38] J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson. Journal of a Tour to The Hebrides.* Ed. Birkbeck Hill, Vol. V, p. 276.

[39] See V. M. Jeffrey, *op. cit.,* pp. 70-72.

[40] Letter from Alessandro Manelli, cited by G. S. Gargano in *Scapigliatura italiana a Londra Sotto Elisabetta e Giacomo* I. Florence, 1923, p. 36.

[41] M. A. Scott, pp. 135-6.

[42] *Ibid.,* pp. 152-3 and see pp. 145-8.

[43] *Ibid.,* pp. 157-8.

[44] For the Elizabethan translations, see M. A. Scott; Charles Whibley, 'The Translators,' in the *Cambridge History of English Literature,* Vol. IV, ch. I. Cambridge, 1949, pp. 1-25; and F. O. Matthiessen, *Translation, an Elizabethan Art.* Harvard Univ. Press, 1931.

[45] Sidney Lee, *Elizabethan Sonnets,* Vol. I (*An English Garner,* Vol. II). London, 1904, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

[46] Sonnet 47. The theme had probably originated in the Greek Anthology (*Palatine Anthology,* IX, 627); Ovid had treated it in his *Tristia* (IV, vi, 1-16); Angeriano had composed a Latin poem:

Tempore tecta ruunt Praetoria, tempore vires,
Tempore quaesitae debilitantus opes. . . .

perhaps based on the Greek epigram; and this was to be imitated in turn by Giles Fletcher in his *Licia*. Shakespeare may have been thinking of one of these versions when he composed the sonnet beginning: 'When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced.'

[47] Paris, 1928, pp. 120–21.

[48] *Les Sonnets élisabéthains*, pp. 7–9. 'Le recueil de Watson est un épitomé de tous les recueils elisabéthains.' (p. 7).

[49] Sidney Lee, *op. cit.*, I, xli–xlii.

[50] V. M. Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–25.

[51] Cited by V. M. Jeffrey, p. 126.

[52] J. G. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–12.

CHAPTER VI

Sidney; or, the Triumph of Petrarch

I

OF these men, gentlemen, scholars and poets, Philip Sidney offers the perfect example.

He was the elder son of Sir Henry Sidney and Lady Mary Dudley, and thus was allied on his mother's side to the Earl of Leicester. His parents were both people of exceptional character. His father, one of the most capable, certainly the most upright, of Elizabeth's administrators, was successively assistant to the Deputy for Ireland, Lord President of the Marches of Wales, and Lord Deputy for Ireland, while the son was still a child and a schoolboy; but these high offices were chiefly of benefit to the country and financial embarrassment to himself. The son seems to have been the most variously and splendidly endowed Englishman who has ever lived. In the early part of the present century Rupert Brooke gives one some idea of what Philip Sidney must have been like. Even as a boy at Shrewsbury School, his friend Fulke Greville saw in him 'such staiedness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity, as carried grace and reverence above greater years . . . . His very play tended to enrich his mind.' At the age of twelve he could write to his father in Latin or in French. He and Greville parted for a time when Greville went to Cambridge, and Sidney, at the age of thirteen, to Christ Church, Oxford.

It was not here, as far as one can judge, that he acquired much knowledge of the modern languages or of Italian poetry. Ancient history, philosophy and geometry were the principal subjects of study; but he could meet, and possibly did meet, some of the men who were to become famous as writers or explorers, as Hakluyt, Hooker, Lyly, Bodley, Campion and Walter Ralegh were all students in Oxford at the same time. It was during these four years also that Cecil (the future Burleigh) and Sir Henry Sidney planned a marriage between Philip and Anne Cecil who was about his age—

a plan which Cecil abandoned when he believed that Philip's family was losing favour and also that his daughter might be married to a wealthier man—which she afterwards was—to her misfortune.

Sidney's classical learning was extraordinary, though he had probably only acquired a small portion of it at Oxford. His *Apologie for Poetrie,* which was composed some nine years later, shows him to have been almost as familiar with the masterpieces of Greece and Rome and with the literary and historical anecdotes of the ancient world, as the members of the Pléïade, except no doubt Daurat, Ronsard and De Baïf. His initiation into Italian literature came later; for Oxford was regarded as furnishing only the intermediate stages of an education which should be completed by a period of travel and residence abroad. Accordingly, in May 1572, the Queen issued a passport 'to her trusty and well-beloved Philip Sidney, Esq., to go out of England into parts beyond the seas, with three servants and four horses, etc., to remain the space of two years . . . for his attaining the knowledge of foreign languages.'

Sidney's companions were Coningsby, Griffin Maddox, a Welshman, and Ludovick Bryskett, an amusing and sprightly young poet who had lived for some time in Italy and could hardly have been better selected to initiate a companion, if not into its wonders, at least into its delights. The four of them went first in the train of Lord Lincoln to Paris, where Philip made such an impression on Charles IX that the latter created him 'Baron de Sidenay.' The English mission had come to treat the delicate question of a marriage between the Duc d'Alençon and Queen Elizabeth; but another marriage, that of Marguerite de Valois and Henri de Navarre was being celebrated in August, and the great company of Huguenots assembled for the occasion offered an opportunity of crippling the party which the extreme Catholics seized on the night of St. Bartholomew. From Paris, after the massacre, Sidney proceeded to Frankfort, where he met the French jurist, Hubert Languet; and though Languet was now fifty-six and Sidney only nineteen, they at once conceived a great esteem for each other and became firm friends. Languet had been a Catholic, but about 1549 he had embraced the Protestant faith, and this and his exceptional endowments and outstanding probity, were so many titles to Sidney's admiration.

He was at this time a kind of ambassador at large for the Huguenot party; he had connections in the principal courts and was well able

to introduce Sidney to all the important people. Politics interested him above all: he was working to create an alliance among the Protestant princes so as to check the power of Spain, and he desired to obtain the support of England who, alone perhaps, by intervening in Holland, could play a decisive role. It was natural that, with these diplomatic ends in view, he should wish Sidney to give more time to the study of German, and that he should not encourage him to visit Italy; although he himself had once been Professor of Civil Law at Padua. Sidney remembered the night of terror and bloodshed which he had witnessed; he sympathised with the idea of a Protestant alliance; but he was very anxious to visit Italy and push as far as Rome.

Languet meanwhile was going to Vienna, and Sidney agreed that after visiting Strasbourg and Bâle he would join him there. In Vienna, Languet introduced him to the court of the Emperor Maximilian. But Sidney was restless. Ludovick Bryskett, who himself wanted to return to Italy, almost certainly encouraged his desire to see the earthly paradise; and so, in November 1573, the English party set out for Venice. Bryskett has left a description of their travels, which, in the following year, extended as far as Florence and Genoa.

> Through many a hill and dale,
> Through pleasant woods, and many an unknowne way,
> Along the bankes of many silver streames,
> Thou with him yodest; and with him didst scale
> The craggie rocks of th' Alpes and Appenine!
> Still with the Muses sporting, while those beames
> Of vertu kindled in his noble brest,
> Which after did so gloriously forth shine.[1]

Sidney's impressions of Venice were not much more favourable than those of Du Bellay, some years earlier. The days of military greatness were over; a tendency to oppression and servility was showing itself. Yet a kind of Indian Summer shone over the city, which was still being adorned by the masterpieces of Tintoretto (was anything more exquisite ever painted, for delicacy and refinement, than the marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne or the mystical marriage of St. Catherine?), while Paolo Veronese was 'eternizing' on the walls and ceilings of the palaces the gorgeously attired nobles and ladies of the Republic. Sidney met both of them, and sat for his portrait to Veronese: a portrait he afterwards sent to Languet. It was, wrote Languet, 'so beautiful . . , that I possess nothing that I

value more. . . . The painter has represented you sad and thoughtful. I should have been better pleased if your face had worn a more cheerful look.' The portrait has been lost. But it is probable that Veronese was well inspired, and that, reading the character of his subject, he let fall unconsciously over the young man's features the shadow of a tragic destiny.

At some time in the New Year of 1574 Sidney went on to Padua, where, much more seriously than Shakespeare's Tranio, he settled down to 'a course of study and ingenious learning.' This, if not positively recommended by Languet, was much more to Languet's taste. The University, moreover, offered every facility. The 'Cortile antico,' which is now the glory of the 'Palazzo centrale,' had been built some twenty years before; the wooden anatomical theatre, which is unique of its kind, was also there; while the tower of Ezzelino's old fortress served for astronomical observations. Sidney plunged forthwith into the study of mathematics and astronomy. Languet in his letters reproached him with working too hard, and urged him to concentrate on moral philosophy and European politics; but the young Englishman was as much the poet as the politician, and, for all Languet's anxieties regarding his Protestant orthodoxy, found no more difficulty than subsequent Englishmen in reconciling his loyalty to the national Church with a love of ancient and modern poetry and an admiration for Italian art and music. He studied Greek, he perfected his knowledge of French and began to acquire an extensive knowledge of Italian. He was already a poet. An American scholar has recently shown that Sonnet xxxix of *Astrophel and Stella* had been composed as early as 1573. And we may be fairly sure that Bryskett encouraged and helped him. He must have steeped himself at this time in Petrarch, Sannazaro and Tasso and read many of the Italian lyrists and neo-Latinists of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento; while the *Cortegiano* of Castiglione furnished him with the breviary of conduct to which he now tried to live up. His capacity for learning was only one mark of his vitality; though this vitality was already shadowed by moods of melancholy and premature thoughtfulness. He seems, however, to have learned more of literature in a few months than most capable scholars learn in as many years: it was apparently during the nine or ten months he spent in Padua that he acquired the extraordinary knowledge of Italian poetry which appears throughout his work.

It was in deference to Languet that Sidney abandoned an opportunity of visiting Rome, in deference to his father, to whom he wrote, that he finally gave up any idea of doing so; though not without reproaching Languet for his disappointment. A visit to Florence and a trip to Genoa may in some measure have consoled him; and it is possible that, in accordance with Languet's suggestions, he went to Venice to seek an interview with the Duc d'Anjou. The latter, after a sojourn in Poland of which country he had been elected king, was on his way back to France, where he was to succeed his brother as Henri III; and Languet had done all in his power to find influential men in Venice who would introduce the Baron de Sidenay. Whether or not the young baron really met that ill-fated prince, we know that he rejoined Languet and spent the winter in Vienna. Here he met Edward Wotton, and devoted himself to horsemanship in the school of the famous Pugliano, an Italian of a kind very different from Castiglione and Tasso. Sidney was as much impressed by his virtuosity as he was amused by the extravagant praise he bestowed on horses and horsemen:

> When the right virtuous *Edward Wotton* and I were at the Emperors Court together, we gave our selves to learn horsemanship of *John Pietro Pugliano*. . . . And he, according to the fertileness of the Italian art, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaden, than when (either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration) he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said, Soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of Soldiers. . . . Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a Prince as to be a good horseman. Skill of Government was but a Pedanteria in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast a horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage and such more, that, if I had not been a piece of a Logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse.[2]

It is probable that during all his time in Italy, Sidney had not met an Italian of this type, though it is a well marked one: the type which often combines great technical virtuosity with a naïve enthusiasm

or pet obsession to which no Frenchman or Englishman—even if he entertained it—would openly confess.

Sidney returned home in May 1575; but he was soon afterwards engaged on a delicate diplomatic mission in Germany, and it was not for some time that he was able really to devote himself to the study of poetry, and especially of prosody. On this topic he listened to the theories, and probably received the admonitions of Gabriel Harvey. He made the acquaintance of Spenser, who had been with Harvey at Cambridge; and together with Fulke Greville and Dyer they formed a literary club known as the Areopagus. Two years later, on account of a bold and imprudent letter he had addressed to the Queen, he was exiled from the Court; and in the quiet retirement of his sister's, the Countess of Pembroke's, home at Wilton, he wrote the *Arcadia,* a pastoral romance in prose interspersed with verse.

This kind of pastoral, as already mentioned, had been created by Sannazaro, and for more than a century after the appearance of his masterpiece attempts were made to repeat his success. Of these Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana enamorada* and, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Honoré D'Urfé's *Astrée* are the only ones which have stood the test of time. But Sidney's romance was in its own day—and in some measure down to the later seventeenth century—extremely popular and very influential.

He composed it, apparently between 1578 and 1580, for his sister's amusement, and called it *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia.* It consisted of five books in prose, with a principal plot ingeniously worked out, at inordinate length, and mingled with episodic narratives. There are five 'pastoral intermezzos,' with sonnets and songs, some of them set to Italian airs of the time. So far as Sidney had a model, it seems to have been the *Diana enamorada*; but his work is a kind of fantasia which gave him an opportunity of expressing all his favourite sentiments and ideals in the subtle, high-flown, artificial language which was coming more and more into fashion. Here and there, indeed, his book shows the influence of great masters like Boccaccio and Sannazaro; but it is also full of those *concetti* and metaphors in doubtful taste which marred the style even of the *Gerusalemme liberata.*

This kind of writing, as we have seen, was not new. It had infected all the principal literatures, but it had blossomed in Italy with

particular luxuriance and the Italian example seems to have had much to do with its development in England. Sidney cultivated it in his prose, probably because he felt that a romance needed the ornaments of the 'alto estilo,' as it was called in Spain, to compensate for the absence of metre and rhythm.

In this sense he went much further than Tasso, whom, to be sure, he was not imitating at this time. Tasso had ventured to make Olindo compare the flames that were burning at the stake with the flames of Love (*G. L.*, Canto II, stanza 34):

> 'Altre fiamme, altri nodi amor promise,'

he says to Sophronia.

> 'Oh miracol d'amor! che le faville
> Tragge del pianto, e i cor' ne l'acqua accende'

is another example. Such lapses of taste, rather than fanciful episodes like those of the maternal tiger or the talking bird (which after all, as they belong to the realm of fairyland, the conception of the romantic epic seems to render legitimate) prevent the *Jerusalem delivered* from taking its place in the very first rank of great poems. But these are nothing to what Sidney was capable of. It is true that one of his main desires is to work out refinements of sentiment ever more refined and also to enrich the ornamentation of his story. But he seeks out the pretty, the exquisite—all that which, in the literary domain, corresponds to the elaborate costume of the Elizabethan gentleman—and indulges in such verbal flights, comparable to the odd movements of a tumbler-pigeon, as 'Zelmane, exceedingly sorry for Pamela, but exceedingly exceeding that exceedingness in fear for Philoclea.'

The *Arcadia* is less of a novel than Lyly's *Euphues, the Anatomie of Wit,* which had been published in 1579; or *Euphues and his England* which appeared in 1580. Lyly had his eye on contemporary life and society pastimes much more than Sidney. But all these books, and especially Sidney's, illustrate the fact that the art of prose had not yet been created in England and that an imaginative writer who sought expression in prose had no adequate framework or discipline to guide him. Sidney's books and Lyly's were widely read however and were certainly responsible for a good deal in Shakespeare's verse, beginning with *Love's Labour's Lost,* as well as, later, in the

Metaphysical poets. It is a matter for regret that in these critical years our writers were taking from Italy some of the less desirable, as well as some of the nobler lessons she had to teach.

The notable fact about Sidney, however, is that while his prose is liable to such extravagances, his taste in poetry hardly allows him to go beyond the refinements of Petrarch. This comes out in the poems interspersed in the *Arcadia*. One of them, although it would not now be regarded as a 'regular' sonnet, ranks among the best he ever wrote and since it cannot have been written later than 1580 and may date from an earlier time, disposes of the legend that he was only inspired to great poetry by a love for Penelope Devereux, which is alleged to have been obsessing him in 1581. This is the sonnet in question:

> My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
> By just exchange, one for another given.
> I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss:
> There never was a better bargain driven.
>
> His heart in me, keeps me and him in one,
> My heart in him, his thought and senses guides.
> He loves my heart, for once it was his own:
> I cherish his, because in me it bides.
>
> His heart his wound received from my sight:
> My heart was wounded, with his wounded heart,
> For as from me, on him his hurt did light,
> So still methought in me his hurt did smart:
>
> Both equal hurt, in this change sought out bliss:
> My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

The idea was Petrarchan and neo-Platonic; the symmetry of the form, corresponding with that of the thought, was also in the tradition of Italian love-poetry; but the verse which opens and concludes the sonnet was good enough of itself to make the fortune of a poem.

Again, when he wishes, through the mouth of Philisides, to pay tribute to the great Frenchman who had been his Mentor on the Continent, his style is comparatively speaking severe:

> The song I sang old Languet had me taught,
> Languet the shepherd best swift Ister knew.

For clerkly reed, and hating what is naught,
For faithful heart, clean hands and mouth as true,
With his sweet skill my skilless youth he drew
To have a feeling taste of Him that sits
Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.

It is interesting to observe that, while yet so young, Sidney recognised in Languet that firmness of judgment, rectitude in moral outlook and wonderful gift for friendship which have probably always been a mark of the French genius.[3] The very subject of the pastoral song about Languet must have dictated the purity of the style. And it was perhaps for analogous reasons that the *prose* of *An Apologie for Poetrie,* which Sidney probably wrote at Wilton while he was still engaged on the *Arcadia,* is so far superior to that of the romance. His evocation of Pugliano shows what he was able to do in narrative or portraiture when not led away by that taste for fine frenzies and 'brave translunary things,' as Drayton called them, which were in the fashion of the age. Similarly, when he comes to review the progress of English poetry and explain why poetry is not honoured in England as it is elsewhere, his style is as sober as his judgment is sound.[4] The remarks he makes on the sonnet in this treatise, and especially his ironical comment on sonnets which treat of love,[5] hardly foreshadow the series of songs and love-sonnets which go by the name of *Astrophel and Stella*: which he had certainly begun to compose at this time and which he probably completed two or three years later.

II

Astrophel and Stella is one of the most difficult of all the Elizabethan sonnet-sequences to interpret. There is love-poetry here, ardent and intimate on occasion. One feels that someone must have inspired some of it; and the question of 'Stella's' identity is not foreign to our enquiry, because if she were, throughout the sonnets, a real person, any inspiration drawn from continental models would be less significant than if she were a poetical Muse.

It has been commonly supposed that 'Stella' was the Penelope Devereux whom her father, the Earl of Essex, had intended as Sidney's bride, but whom, after the death of Essex, her mother and step-father forced into a reluctant marriage with Lord Rich.

Evidence in favour of this identification may be adduced from sonnet xxiv: 'Rich fooles there be, whose base and filthy hart. . . .' This, it is true, might be no more than a modern exercise on the theme of Marot's 'A un riche ignorant.' Not so, however, sonnet xxxvii which can point only to Penelope. But this sonnet did not appear in the collection published in 1591: it was first printed in the Folio of 1598; and there are various and serious difficulties in the way of any general identification of 'Stella' with Lady Rich. It seems probable that Sidney was in love with Penelope at some time during the interval between her father's death and her marriage to Rich; that is in 1580 and 1581. But in that case the affair must have been quickly brought to a close by Penelope herself. She was not in love with Sidney, but with Charles Blount, to whom she had plighted her troth as a child and whom, after her divorce from Rich, she subsequently married. Had Sidney paid court to her *after* her marriage to Rich in 1582, there would almost certainly have been a scandal, and it is hard to understand why, in that case, Walsingham should have been so anxious to marry his daughter, Frances, to Sidney, and have done so much to establish the young couple as we know he did, in 1583. We can hardly, on the other hand, suppose that 'Stella' was Frances Walsingham, who appears to have been a rather subdued young girl—little more than a child. To adduce or even summarise the evidence on which the above statements are made is outside the scope of this work. The whole question is shrouded in mystery and will probably remain so. It seems fair to conclude, however, that, while Penelope inspired some of the sonnets and may even have become in Sidney's mind what Beatrice was for Dante, 'Stella' was really a poetical Muse. Spenser's 'Astrophel' which he actually dedicated to Lady Sidney after Sir Philip's death, would lead us to suppose that Spenser thought so; for, if he had known that 'Stella' had been Penelope Devereux, he would scarcely have referred to such a love-affair in an elegy addressed to Sidney's widow.[6]

We can take it, then, that all those who were informed on the matter—and it is hard to think that Sidney's wife and father-in-law were not—regarded 'Stella' as the divine pattern of whom the earthly beauties he had known were but imperfect copies. These might include the unknown girl whom he had met before the affair with Penelope; they would also include Frances Walsingham, who may

be the 'Stella' who, at the tournament, 'lookt on and from her heavenly face/Sent forth her beames, which made so fair a race.' She is, in any event, identified with virtue:

> Alas if thou, the height of Vertues throane,
> Canst but vouchsafe the influence of a thought,

writes Sidney in sonnet xl; while in lx he says:

> When my good Angell guides me to the place
> Where's al my good; I doe in *Stella* see,
> That Heavenly joye throwes onely downe on me
> Thundred disdains, and Lightning of disgrace . . .

She is, in brief, the ideal mistress who leads him by successive stages to a contemplation of that divine beauty which alone henceforth will merit his undivided affection.

*

One can readily see how the impulses furnished by Italy and France fit into the pattern which has been suggested. Sidney was a poet of strong personality who rarely allowed any literary model to dominate him; on the contrary, those which came to hand he used when and as he needed them. And although it does not appear that *Astrophel and Stella* is the transcription of a love-affair, yet this sonnet-sequence does recount the pilgrimage of a soul; and one is fairly sure that, at the outset, the poet did not foresee where the pilgrimage was going to lead him.

Loving in trueth, and fayne [his] love in verse to show, Astrophel is seeking means to find 'words' and 'inventions' that will convey his pain. He studies 'inventions fine' and turns 'otheres leaves' to no purpose, until

> Byting my tongue and penne, beating my selfe for spite
> Foole, said My muse to me, looke in thy heart and write.[7]

So great is the prestige of Platonic love, enthroned beyond all rivalry by the *canzoniere* in which Petrarch had narrated the adventures of the lover's soul, that Sidney cannot, without a backward glance, separate himself from this tradition:

> It is most true, what wee call *Cupids* dart
> An image is, which for our selves we carve. . . .

It is most true, that eyes are bound to serve
The inward part: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be King. . . .
True that true beautie vertue is indeede,
Whereof this beautie can but be a shade:
Which Elements with mortal mixture breede,
True that on earth we are but Pilgrimes made. . . .[8]

The very pattern of this sonnet, with the repetition of 'It is most true,' is imitated from Petrarch and his Italian followers. And yet after all, Sidney reflects, to tell of Petrarch's woes is to take a 'wrong way.' Poets should be themselves, not depend on their forerunners:

You that doe dictionary method bring
Into your rymes, running in rattling rowes
You that old Petrarchs long deceased woes
With new borne sighs, and wit disguised sing;
You take wrong wayes, those far-fet helps be such,
As doe bewray a want of inward tutch,
And sure at length stolne goods doe come to light.
But if both for your love and skil you name,
You seeke to nurse at fullest brest of Fame,
Stella behold and then begin to write.[9]

The tone of the last verse strongly supports the view that 'Stella' is an ideal mistress and not a real person; and such a name would be in the tradition both of the Petrarchan poets and of the anti-Petrarchans. The Italian followers of Petrarch, as Miss Janet Scott has pointed out, described their ladies as 'guiding stars'; while Pontano, whose vein nevertheless was very different from theirs, was held by Du Bellay to have conferred lustre on the name of Stella. Now Sidney was familiar directly or indirectly with Pontano, because Sonnet xvii in which Nature, pitying Cupid's loss of his bow and shafts,

Of *Stellas* browes, made him two better bowes,

is adapted either from Pontano's Latin poem 'De Stella':

Exhausit pharetram Veneris puer: at Venus ignes
Extinsit, Venus hinc, inde et inermis Amor. . . .[10]

or possibly from Amadis Jamyn's translation, which had appeared in 1575;[11] although one must add that the sestet of Sidney's poem,

in which Cupid is rearmed not with shafts from Stella's eyes, as in Pontano, but with the bows formed by her eyebrows, is of Sidney's own invention. And, apart from a very few sonnets, in which as here he is mainly indebted to an Italian or French model, he makes good his claim—on the whole. His sonnets, unlike so many of those of his contemporaries, are not just 'stolen goods;' but neither have they all been dictated by his heart alone or inspired alone by the vision of Stella; and in fact if he does not exactly study others' 'inventions' and turn 'others' leaves,' he has already begun to remember them.

The theme of Eros with his incorrigible pranks recurs from beginning to end of *Astrophel and Stella*. 'Dan Cupid' had, thanks to Ovid, been popular in the allegorical poetry of the Middle Ages and his prestige had increased with the publication in 1494 of the Planudean Anthology, which contained amorous epigrams by Paulus Silentiarius and others; and, later, with the *Anacreontea* in 1554. Such Italian Latinists as Poliziano, Angeriano, Navagero, Pontano and Marullo had already been ringing variations on the theme, which had been quickly taken up and exploited by the Lyonnese poets and, later, by Ronsard and De Baïf.[12] It lent itself to all manner of ingenious applications.[13]

Closely related to the theme of Cupid was that of the 'Baiser.' Serafino had written in this vein; but it was developed mainly by Ronsard and by certain Italian poets including Tasso who were contemporaries of Sidney.

The debate between Love and Reason, or between Love and Virtue, had in the Middle Ages been conducted in the Courts of Love by the Troubadours; from them it had passed into the hands of Petrarch. It had reappeared in the *Roman de la Rose*; it had delighted Maurice Scève and the learned ladies of Lyons; it had been solemnly discussed in the dialogues of Sperone Speroni. No poetic theme, save that of Platonic love, was more popular or more international, and one is not surprised to find it furnishing the matter for a number of Astrophel's sonnets (iv, x, xviii, lii).

Less purely intellectual but perhaps more readily suggestive of poetry were the invocations to Sleep and the addresses to the Moon which figure again and again in the verses of the neo-Latinists and of the vernacular poets. The former of these themes was old enough, to be sure, Meleager himself having begged the cicada in the tree

above his head to vouchsafe him by his song the boon of sleep that so he might for a time 'forget the pains of love.' It was probably from Pontano and Marullo that Sidney derived the idea which inspired one of the best of his sonnets:

> Come Sleepe, o Sleepe, the certaine knot of peace,
> The bathing place of wits, the balme of woe,
> The poore man's wealth, the prysoners release.
> The indifferent Judge betweene the hie and lowe,
> With shielde of proofe, shielde me from out the presse
> Of these fierce dartes, Dispayre at me doth throw;
> O make in me those civill warres to cease:
> I will good trybute pay if thou doe soe.
> Take thou of me smooth pillowes, sweetest bed,
> A chamber deafe of noyse, and blinde of light,
> A rosie garland, and a wearie head.
> And if these things (as being thine in right)
> Move not thy heavie grace, thou shalt in mee,
> (Livelier than els) rare *Stellas* image see.[14]

To the Moon, an almost equally popular theme in Italian poetry, Sidney addressed only one sonnet:

> With how sad steps o Moone thou clim'st the skyes,
> How silently, and with how meane a face,
> What may it be, that even in heavenly place,
> That busie Archer his sharpe Arrowes tryes?[15]

But it is one of his best. It was to be recalled by Wordsworth in the sonnet which, significantly, accompanies the three original sonnets he wrote to Sleep.

Allied with the themes of Sleep and of the Moon is the theme of Night and Day. This had appeared in the Italian *Rime di Diversi* of 1547, and had also been treated by R. Fiorentino in the *Fiori* as follows:

> Deh non ritorni a rimenarne il giorno
> L'alba, e mai sempre adombri oscura notte,
> Queste selve, e quest' antri, e sia la notte
> Il Sole a gli occhi miei l'Aurora il giorno. . . .

and so on—a poem which Sidney must have had in mind[16] (and not the verses which Michelangelo put in the mouth of his statue of Night and which were not published until later and hardly noticed

by English poets until Wordsworth translated them) when he wrote:

> Now that of absence the most yrksome night
> With darkest shade doth overcome the daie:
> Since *Stellas* eyes that wont give mee my daie,
> Leaving my *Hemisphere* o'ercast with night,
> Each daie seemes long, and longs for long staied night . . .[17]

To praise '*Stellas* eyes' the poet might perhaps—in view of what he had said in sonnets i and xv—be expected to turn away from literary models, but it is not certain that he would do so: between a poet's theory and a poet's practice the gap is often wide. We do not know whether the eyes of Penelope or any other lady of Sidney's acquaintance were black, but we can be sure that those of the Signora Lavinia de la Rovere were, because Tasso tells us this in praising them:[18]

> *Spettacolo a le genti offrir Natura*
> *Volle* in angusto spazio il paradiso,
> E nel seren di pargoletto viso
> *Formò due soli ardenti oltra misura*:
> Ma vide che quel lume e quell' arsura
> Senso d'umane tempre averian conquiso;
> Onde perché ci sia chi miri e fiso
> Vagheggi di sua man l'alta fattura,
> *Di dolce negro avvolse il lume loro,*
> E temprò il foco, e il bello e il dolce ai rai
> Accrebbe; e come il fece, essa l'intende,
> *Oh novo de' duo soli almo lavoro!*
> Tanto più bel del sol, quanto egli rende
> Cieco chi' l mira e tu cerviero il fai.[19]

Sidney's sonnet is not a translation of this, but the quatrains are clearly founded on it. Stella's eyes are the work of 'nature'; they are 'in colour black' and at the same time 'Sun-like':

> When nature made her chiefe worke, *Stellas* eyes,
> In collour blacke, why wrapt she beames so bright?
> Would she in beamy blacke like Painter wise,
> Frame daintiest lustre mixte with shaddowes light?
> Or did she els that sober hewe devise,
> In object best, to strength and knitt our sight:
> Least if no vaile these brave beames did disguise,
> They Sun-like would more dazell than delight?

Or would she her miraculous power shewe,
That whereas blacke seemes Beauties contrarie,
Shee even in blacke doth make all Beauties flowe:
But so and thus, she minding Love should bee
Plaste ever there, gave him this mourning weede:
To honour all their deathes, who for her bleede?[20]

It will be seen that, much as this owes to Tasso, the two last verses of the Italian sonnet, with their strange conceit—that whereas the sun blinds him that looks on it, Lavinia's eyes, fairer than the sun, give him the eyes of a lynx—were rejected by Sidney in favour of the gallant and ingenious yet more subdued, imagery which occupies his last six verses (a quatrain and couplet, instead of a sestet). There could be few better examples of the way in which he stood to the Italians when he borrowed from them. He is a disciple, though hardly subservient. On Petrarch he cannot improve, from Tasso he selects.

He had tried in sonnet xv, when reproaching those who sang 'old *Petrarchs* long deceased woes,' to stand apart from the 'renowner of Laura'; to draw his inspiration only from 'Stella.' But his frequent use of antithesis, the images he has recourse to in drawing the physical portrait of 'Stella', and other expressions in his vocabulary of love, derive from Petrarch. The imagery of sonnet ix is based on canzone xxv (*Rime,* cccxxv); sonnet xc appears to be full of Petrarchan reminiscences, and the concluding lines were almost certainly suggested by the end of *sonetto c in Vita* (*Rime,* cli), and not inferior to it; while the opening quatrain of sonnet lxxi is adapted, though not copied, from *sonetto ccx in Vita* (*Rime,* ccxlviii),[20] as one may see at a glance.

Petrarch had written:

Chi vuol veder quantunque può natura
e'l ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei. . . .
Vedrà, s'arriva a tempo, ogni vertute,
ogni bellezza, ogni real costume
giunti in un corpo con mirabil tempre. . . .

and Sidney:

Who will in fayrest booke of nature knowe,
How Vertu may best lodgde in Beautie bee,
Let him but learne of love to read in thee
Stella, those faire lines which true beautie showe.

(*Photo : Alinari*)

4. Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione by *Raffaello Sanzio*
in the National Museum of the Louvre, Paris

(*See p.* 117)

But the triumph of Petrarch is to be found not so much in the style, imagery or vocabulary of so many of these sonnets, as in the goal to which they lead. Astrophel, in the course of his pilgrimage, had sung nearly every kind of love, including the physical:

> . . . As fast thy vertue bends that love to good:
> But ah, Desire still cries, give me some food.[21]

He had tried to be himself, and had succeeded; but in being himself he came at last to the point which Petrarch had reached. He had at the outset understood, but only with his head, that

> True that on earth we are but Pilgrimes made
> And should in soule, up to our Country move. . . .

Astrophel and Stella was left unfinished; but among the 'Sonets' which were published in the Folio of 1598, the one which concludes the series must have been intended as the conclusion of *Astrophel and Stella*.[22] It is, in any event, Sidney's poetical testament:

> Leave me o Love, which reachest but to dust,
> And thou my mind aspire to higher things:
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
> What ever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
>
> Draw in thy beames, and humble all thy might
> To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedoms be:
> Which breakes the clowdes and opens forth the light
> That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
>
> O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
> In this small course which birth draws out to death,
> And thinke how evill becommeth him to slide,
> Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heavn'ly breath.
>
> Then farewell world, thy uttermost I see,
> Eternall love maintaine thy life in me.[23]

Astrophel and Stella, with the songs and lyrics that follow it,[24] offers probably the nearest approach we have in English to the work of Petrarch; it would be more appropriate to apply the name of 'the English Petrarch' to Sidney than to any other of the Elizabethans. His poems remain as an enduring monument not of a frustrated passion, but of the adventure of a soul which had been drawn

> To have a feeling taste of Him that sits
> Beyond the heaven, far more beyond our wits.

They are not perhaps the greatest of the Elizabethan *canzonieri,* but they are the loftiest and they do the most honour to the Muse.

Sidney, like his contemporaries, applies the term 'sonet' to any short lyric poem and not simply to his 'quatorzains.' He calls his translations of Horace and Catullus, and his *Wonders of England,* 'sonets.' Most of the pieces in *Astrophel and Stella* are sonnets in the narrower sense. Sidney tried the alexandrine verse in three or four of them before finally accepting the decasyllabic line. For the rhyme-pattern he had only Wyatt, Surrey and Watson to guide him—apart of course from the Italians and the French. Sometimes he uses the scheme a b b a a b b a c d c d ee, which seems like a compromise between the Italian and the Shakespearean pattern; but his preference is for the scheme a b a b a b a b c d c d ee. Here there is still a distinction between the octet and the sestet. By introducing new rhymes into the second quatrain, Shakespeare was to transform the sonnet into three quatrains followed by a couplet, a form entirely English.

III

During the years in which he was composing *Astrophel and Stella* Sidney's imagination had been greatly occupied with Frobisher's and Humphrey Gilbert's projects for founding colonies in North America. Then, in September 1583, came his marriage with Frances Walsingham. It was about this time that he met the philosopher Giordano Bruno, first perhaps in London and later at Oxford where he disputed for some time. With his new interest in navigation and exploration, Sidney was likely to be impressed by Bruno's defence and development of the Copernican system. The Italian's belief that man would slowly evolve into a higher kind of being in whom carnal lusts would be replaced by the passion for truth, prudence and wisdom—an early manifestation of the theory of progress—may also have appealed to him; though he would respond more readily to Bruno's assurance 'that Nature has endowed me with an inward sense by which I reason from the beauty before my eyes to the light and eminence of more excellent spiritual beauty, which is light, majesty and divinity;'[25] precisely because this was an old belief that he already held.

Bruno found much to criticise in England. The climate was

dreadful, while the standard of manners appeared low. True, he was allowed to philosophise to his heart's content and no one appeared to object to theories which, in Italy, were to provoke a tempest; but then few people probably paid much attention to them. This was particularly trying at Oxford. Bruno had described himself as a 'dormitantium animarum excubitor' and no doubt his learning and eloquence were extremely rousing; but—*mirabile dictu*—his Oxford audiences appear to have dozed a good deal during lectures. He felt it very keenly. Oxford was 'una costellazione di pedantesca ostinatissima ignoranza e presunzione mista con una rustica inciviltà, che farebbe prevaricar la pazienza di Giobbe.'[26] From strictures so severe he of course excepted Sidney, who appeared to him to have a nobility of mind that was rare either in Italy or any other country; and touched also, no doubt, by the genuine interest which Sidney took in his discourses, he dedicated to him the two philosophical works that he published at this time: the *Spaccio de la Bestia trionfante* (London, 1584) and *De gli eroici furori* (London, 1588).[27] The latter is of particular interest as a psychological study, suggested in all probability by the spectacle of the Wars of Religion and the course of the Counter-Reformation. The analysis of 'enthusiasm' foreshadows Voltaire's diatribes against that passion; but whereas Voltaire identifies enthusiasm with the religious ardour that develops into intolerance and so gives rise to persecution, Giordano Bruno distinguishes between the enthusiasm of fanaticism and the enthusiasm for truth which animates the prophet, the philosopher and the poet. The passion can therefore be canalised and directed. *De gli eroici furori* isone of the best of all pleas for what Matthew Arnold afterwards called culture.

Sidney, who was a moderate in matters sectarian, must have sympathised with these views. He may possibly have sympathised with the opinion that Bruno was expounding with more impetuosity than prudence, that God is manifest in the whole of creation; but it is doubtful whether he would have followed Bruno far in the direction of pantheism. There was something of the iconoclast in the Italian; Sidney's mind, on the other hand, was turning more and more to the cult of the inner life, and the real direction of his thought is seen in the fact that he was now translating Philippe du Plessis-Mornay's book, *De la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*. The nature of the physical universe plainly interested him less than the life of the soul.

Meanwhile, however, he was employed in such positive duties as the defence of the south coast against a possible Spanish attack and the building up of a stronger navy. In 1585 Elizabeth at last brought herself to the idea of military intervention in the Netherlands, on behalf of the United Provinces. An expeditionary force was sent out under Leicester, and Sidney received a command in it. In the following year, in an engagement outside Zutphen, a musket-ball hit him above the knee, shattered the bone and lodged there. He was carried to Arnhem where the surgeons tried to extract the bullet—in vain.

When the news of his death reached London, the country was grief-stricken. The body, which had been brought over, was followed to its resting place in old St. Paul's by seven hundred chief mourners, including Leicester and Essex as well as Drake, Greville, Dyer and Sidney's other contemporaries. It was one of those rare occasions when a whole people seems to have realised the greatness of its loss.

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[1] *A Pastoral Æglogue upon the death of Sir Philip Sidney,* by L. B. Printed in the *Works of Edmund Spenser* (Globe Edition, London, 1902, p. 567), together with the Elegies of Spenser and Roydon and two epitaphs from an unknown hand.
[2] *An Apologie for Poetry* (1595). Ed. J. Churton Collins, Oxford, 1907, p. 1.
[3] The same observation comes out in a way that is more striking because it is incidental in *An Apologie for Poetrie,* when he is reviewing the great poets, patrons, philosophers and thinkers of other lands and speaks of 'so grave Counsellors, as, besides many, but before all, that *Hospitall* [Michel de l'Hospital] of Fraunce, then whom (I thinke) that Realme never brought forth a more accomplished judgement, more firmly builded upon vertue.' (Ed. cited, p. 48).
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 51.
[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 56-7.
[6] See W. L. Renwick in '*Daphnaida and other Poems*' *by Edmund Spenser.* 1929, II, 191.
[7] 'Astrophel and Stella,' Sonnet i. *The Complete Poetical Works of Sir Philip Sidney,* ed. A. Feuillerat. Cambridge, 1922, II, 243.
[8] *Ibid.,* No. v, pp. 244-5.
[9] *Ibid.,* No. xv, pp. 248-9.
[10] J. G. Scott, 'The Names of the Heroines of Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences,' in *Review of English Studies,* II (1926), 159.
[11] J. G. Scott, *Les Sonnets élisabéthains,* 33.
[12] *Ibid.,* 29-30.
[13] *Astrophel and Stella,* v, viii, xi, xii, cii.
[14] No. xxxix. *Cf.* Nos. xxxii and xxxviii.
[15] No. xxxi.
[16] See J. G. Scott, *op. cit.,* pp. 40-41.
[17] No. lxxxix. The repetition of 'daie' and 'night,' as in the Italian, instead of a rhyming word, seems to leave Sidney's indebtedness to Fiorentino beyond doubt.
[18] Miss J. G. Scott suggests this parallel (*op. cit.,* pp. 41-42), though she is not quite certain whether Tasso's sonnet really influenced Sidney.
[19] 'Loda gli occhi de la Signora Lavinia de la Rovere.' Published in the *Rime* of 1581.
[20] For all these rapprochements, see J. G. Scott, *op. cit.,* pp. 38-40.
[21] No. lxxi.
[22] C. H. Warren, *Sir Philip Sidney: a study in conflict.* London, 1936, pp. 132-34.
[23] Ed. Feuillerat, Vol. II, p. 322.
[24] Some of which were translated from Montemayor's *Diana enamorada.*
[25] Cited by Warren, *op. cit.,* p. 164.
[26] Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare and the Italian Renaissance.* London, 1915, p. 14.
[27] M. W. Wallace, *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney.* Cambridge, 1915, p. 301.

CHAPTER VII

Spenser

I

THE English Renaissance was not only the latest of all the national Renaissances; it was very late. At the time when France had already been endowed with a body of fine and diversified modern poetry, England, as Sidney pointed out in his *Apologie for Poetrie,* had seen since Chaucer the appearance of little more than Surrey's lyrics and the tragedy of *Gorboduc.* But a study of the years of patient and half-conscious preparation which preceded the flowering of 1579 suggests that, if Englishmen had not at that time, or soon after, been able to read versions of Virgil and Ovid and Plutarch, of Castiglione and Guevara and Montemayor, and especially perhaps of the Italian *novellieri,* in their own language, then the flowering of English poetry which followed would have presented very different features and would certainly not have appeared in the same plenitude. Many of these poets, it is true, were scholars who could read French with ease and could manage (though with less ease) to make their way through a Latin or Italian text; but this was not the case with all of them; and, moreover, they were writing for a public which, cultured as it was, could not have been expected to have much knowledge of Greek and Roman history, of Italian love-stories and romances and Italian social ideals, until it had been assisted by the translators. Literature is, after all, a matter of collaboration between author and public: the early works of Lyly, Sidney and Spenser would not have been read and admired as warmly as they were, if the public had not been in some measure familiar with the background of their writings.

In 1579 the spiritual preparation had gone a long way; but in the field of 'English' literature (the Elizabethans did not think in terms of 'original' writing, which is a comparatively modern craze, and illusory at that), it seemed that everything had to be done. Hence the formation by Sidney and Dyer of the 'Areopagus,' a kind of club which met in or near London and with which Spenser and

Fulke Greville were associated, marks one of the great moments in our literary annals. The fact that Spenser, a commoner and not well-to-do, was invited to join them, is evidence of the respect inspired by his manners, learning and genius. It was the ambition of this group—an ambition which recalls that of Ronsard and his friends[1]—to present England with a new poetry, worthy of the island Empire. The occasion for launching this poetry was the publication of the *Shepheardes Calender*. It was dedicated to Sidney, the paragon of the age; and its author, Spenser, was hailed as 'our new poet.'

Like the Chaucer he so much admired, he came of a middle-class family and had been born in London. He was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School and from there, in 1569, went up to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. The seven years he spent there (B.A., 1573; M.A., 1576) marked him deeply and permanently. He readily adopted the tone of his college and university. The tone at Pembroke was not what we should call '*extreme* Evangelical'; but the Master, like his two immediate predecessors, was a man of Calvinistic sympathies, and—though he afterwards was made a bishop—his leniency toward the dissenters was not pleasing to Elizabeth. Spenser took his side, and this comes out, quaintly enough, in the *Shepheardes Calender* when he is drawing from Mantuan, of all people. Cambridge, at this time, had become the home of the new Platonism. It is possible that Spenser wrestled with one of two of the dialogues in the original, which he must have found difficult; and certain that, now or later, he interpreted them in the light of Marsilio Ficino's commentaries, in Latin, which were regarded as authoritative. It is equally certain that he read the *Cortegiano* in Sir Thomas Hoby's translation, which had appeared in 1565. This contained the most attractive and poetical exposition of Platonism which then existed, and Spenser a few years later followed it closely in two of his *Hymnes*. In politics he was probably less interested at this time; but he must have heard a good deal about the *Principe*, that *vade mecum* of Tudor policy, and after leaving Cambridge he may have browsed in Gentillet's *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un royaume . . . contre N. Machiavel le Florentin*, which had appeared precisely in 1576. The picture of 'foxcraft' in *Mother Hubberds Tale* seems to derive from this unfavourable and rather one-sided view of the Machiavellian politics, as the popular prejudice against Machiavelli, which still survives, clearly dates from the

English version of Gentillet, by Simon Patericke, in 1602. Spenser, in the course of time, was to acquire a better understanding of Machiavelli. He learned from him, among other things, that the Prince should resemble a lion as well as a fox and that he should be governed by reason and not by sentiment. These and other Machiavellian principles were to animate the picture he gives of Prince Artegall in Book V of the *Faërie Queene*.[2]

A writer's knowledge of other writers is, of course, no proof that he has read them. Much of it may be acquired in conversation and this is particularly true of the highly stimulating conversation of Cambridge and Oxford. Of the Italian writers on politics and philosophy whom Spenser may have read while still at Cambridge, we can only conjecture. But his education was for the most part literary, and in this field we can conjecture with some confidence. By the time he left the University he possessed a remarkable store of classical learning; he had a first-hand knowledge of Virgil and Ovid and of course, Mantuan, who was already a 'classic' and a text-book in the schools. He knew about Theocritus and understood that he was the fountainhead of pastoral poetry. Among the modern vernacular poets, Marot and Du Bellay, Ariosto, Trissino and Tasso were probably his favourites; Marot's *Églogues* and Tasso's *Aminta* seem, at this time, to have embodied his idea of poetry. Marot was the most accessible to him and, as with Chaucer, the French influence predominated at the outset; gradually, he drew more inspiration from the Italians.

After leaving Cambridge, he stayed for a time with kinsfolk in Lancashire where he met, and perhaps became 'enamoured' of, 'the countrie lasse called Rosalinde' who figures in the *Shepheardes Calender*. We next find him in London, in the service of the Earl of Leicester. It was here that he met Sidney, who was Leicester's kinsman, and Sidney's Oxford friends, Dyer and Ralegh. They were nobles or country-gentlemen. Spenser quickly embraced their outlook and prejudices and even went beyond them in his attachment to medieval ideals: there is no partisan of aristocracy so ardent or so convinced as the middle-class poet may become.

It was about this time that he wrote the two *Hymnes in honour of Love and Beautie*, which, with *Mother Hubberds Tale*, he did not publish until later; and planned the *Shepheardes Calender* and the *Faërie Queene*. The *Shepheardes Calender* was to be his first great venture.

Spenser probably admired—or thought he admired—Theocritus and Virgil more than any of the modern poets, and certainly the wealth of classical lore and reference contained in the glosses to the *Shepheardes Calender* would do credit to a classical dictionary. But his classicism was of the extreme Elizabethan kind, a classicism of learning rather than taste. Spenser's taste was neither Greek nor Latin; for all his archaising tendencies (he was as fond of allegory as the fourteenth-century poets), it was thoroughly florid and Elizabethan.

Yet the *Shepheardes Calender* which was his *coup d'essai* was also a *coup de maître* and was recognised as such. He tries to follow in the footsteps of Theocritus, whom he is continually evoking; but there is too much of study, too little of nature, in his adaptations: no one, except perhaps Burns, has been able to match the directness of Theocritus. And Spenser, who turned nearly every poem he composed to the service of allegory, was incapable of writing in the Greek manner. He was, in any event, well inspired in taking as his models not only the Sicilian bucolic poets, but Virgil, Mantuan and Marot. The two last, in particular, lent themselves well to his purpose.

In Mantuan's eighth eclogue, which is in Latin hexameters, two shepherds, Candidus and Alphus, debate the relative merits as pasture grounds of the mountain and the plain. Candidus vaunts the former because of the holy convents which are found there; he speaks also of the mountain-cave where the shepherd Endymion slept, and then refers to the garden of Eden and the Fall. Spenser, in his *Eclogue VII* for July, takes over this syncretism of mythology and Christian tradition, but pushes the allegory much further. Morrell, who corresponds with Mantuan's Candidus, represents the high Anglican; Thomalin, the moderate Protestant. The mountains figure the pride and luxury of haughty prelates; the plains, the modest piety of true Christians. This dialogue is conducted in a lyrical metre; and there is no acknowledgment to Mantuan as, in the case of other eclogues, there is to Theocritus and Virgil and (though not always) to Marot.

A similar motive is to be found in Eclogue IX, for September. In Mantuan's poem, 'Religio,' Candidus is now a shepherd from northern Italy who, having brought his flock to pasture near Rome, is annoyed to find that the fields are barren and that his sheep are being attacked by dogs; the local shepherds, Faustulus tells him, are

responsible. This is a satire on the Roman clergy, and Spenser was quick to seize on it. In his poem, Diggon Davie, who makes similar complaints to Hobbinol (Gabriel Harvey), is alluding to 'the loose living of popish prelates.'[3]

The *Çalender* contains an eclogue for every month in the year, and there is great variety in the metres and rhyme-schemes which are used. The lyrical measure adopted in the song to Elizabeth in Eclogue IV is the most generally admired; it may have been suggested by some of the songs of Remi Belleau, or of Ronsard, devoted to country life. The array of flowers which he evokes at the end gives a distinct foretaste of Shakespeare; as, indeed, so much in Spenser gives a foretaste of so much that was to follow. Even more remarkable than this, in a poet so young, are the easy flow of language and the easy mastery of the form. Few adaptations are more successful, or read more freshly, than the translation (unacknowledged) of Marot's memories of childhood in Eclogue XII: the six-line stanza used here is a particularly happy choice. But for the student of the Italian influence, no stanza is more illuminating than the variation on the *ottava rima* in Eclogue VI.

Boccaccio had used the rhymed octave in the *Teseida* and the *Filostrato*; Boiardo had used it, and Ariosto, and Tasso. It was the recognised measure in Italy for epic and romantic narrative. Chaucer, perhaps for adequate reasons, had replaced it with the rhyme-royal. The rhyme-royal is a little easier to handle, but one may question whether it is as well adapted as the octave to narrative poetry: the couplet at the end of a seven-line stanza creates a pause slightly more marked than that at the end of an eight-line. English narrative poets, following Chaucer's example in the *Knightes Tale,* have generally preferred the heroic couplet—or, of course, blank verse. But Byron boldly used the *ottava rima* in *Don Juan,* which is a great poem, unique in its kind; and Shelley used it in *The Witch of Atlas,* with results equally brilliant.

It may seem strange that Spenser should have generally avoided it. Here, however, in Eclogue VI, he used a rhymed octave, but the rhyme-scheme (a b a b b c b c) is different

> The God of shepheards, Tityrus, is dead
> Who taught me homely, as I can, to make;
> He, whilst he lived, was the Sovereign head
> Of Shepheards all that ben with love ytake:

Wel couth he wayle his Woes, and lightly slake
The flames which love within his heart had bredd,
And tell us mery tales to keepe us wake,
The while our sheepe about us safely fedde.

This is not the Italian octave, but it is a good one, swift enough for narrative poetry, and one does not see why it should not have been generally adopted. One does know why Spenser did not use it in the *Faërie Queen,* though one regrets that his peculiar genius led him to add another line—an alexandrine into the bargain—and so produce the Spenserian stanza.

It was about this time, possibly a little earlier, that Spenser composed the two *Hymnes in honour of Love and Beautie* which, with the *Hymnes in honour of Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beautie,* he afterwards dedicated to the Countesses of Warwick and Cumberland. These hymns are to be studied in the light of the new Platonism as it had been expounded by Marsilio Ficino in the Academy of Florence. Ficino had regarded the Platonic dialogues very much as early Protestants regarded the text of the Old Testament. They were verbally inspired; and if here and there one came upon apparent contradictions, the latter could be reconciled or explained, sometimes with the help of the pseudo-Dionysius, from whom Joannes Scotus Erigena had already drawn in an earlier synthesis of Christian and Platonic thought. Ficino's commentaries had an immense fortune outside Italy. They were studied in Paris, and particularly in circles sympathetic to the Reformation. In England, Cambridge became the home of the new Platonism,[4] which was to be further renewed and enriched in the seventeenth century by Henry More and his adherents; so much so that Plato has been called, without too much of paradox, one of the first Fathers of the Anglican Church. Meanwhile, however, the Platonism of Ficino had been further developed and popularised in Italy itself. A little after his time another Florentine named Girolamo Benivieni incorporated Ficino's ideas in his *Canzone d'Amore,* and Pico della Mirandola in turn wrote a commentary on this, which appeared in the edition of Benivieni's works published in Venice in 1522. But it was reserved for Castiglione to bring the new Platonism out of the field of metaphysics and scholarship, to show how its doctrines might apply to our experience of love and our attitude to woman, and generally to explain them in language clear to the layman. This

he did in the oration attributed to Cardinal Bembo in Book IV of the *Cortegiano*.[5]

A first reading of Spenser's *Hymnes* might suggest that he drew his knowledge of Plato directly from Ficino; but a closer scrutiny of the text has shown that he relied mainly on Castiglione's exposition, which he read in Hoby's translation; although he seems also to have referred to Ficino's commentary, perhaps to Benivieni's poem and even to the text of Plato himself. When speaking of the birth of Love, Spenser writes:

> Or who alive can perfectly declare
> The wondrous cradle of thine infancie,
> When thy great mother Venus first thee bare,
> Begot of Plentie and of Penurie,
> Though elder than thine owne nativitie,
> And yet a chyld, renewing still thy feares,
> And yet the eldest of the heavenly Peares?

he is reproducing the account which is attributed to Socrates in the *Symposium*. But a few of the extracts from Hoby's translation, which are cited by Dr. Lee in his demonstration of Spenser's indebtedness,[6] may serve best to give some notions of a book which every man of culture read or looked into; and also to reveal the fact that Spenser followed Castiglione, not translating him but very faithfully reproducing his ideas and frequently using the words which Hoby had employed in his version.

Love, by which is meant spiritual, not carnal love, comes to us through the eyes. This belief, which derives from a passage in the *Phaedrus*, had for long been familiar to the poets. Petrarch had expressed it exquisitely in the lines:

> Per divina bellezza indarno mira
> Chi gli occhi de costei già mai non vide,
> Come soavemente ella gli gira.
> Non sa come Amor sana e come ancida,
> Chi non sa come dolce ella suspira,
> E come dolce parla e dolce ride.

The matter is explained as follows in Hoby's translation of the *Book of the Courtier*:

> Therefore it may full well be said, that the eyes are a guide in love, especiallye if they have a good grace and sweetnesse in them . . . and

> so comely and percinge in behouldinge, as some, in which a man thinketh verilie that the ways that give an issue to the spirites are so deepe, that by them he maye see as farr as the hart. The eyes therefore lye lurkinge like souldiers in warre . . . and if the fourme of all the bodye be welfavoured and of good proportion, it draweth unto it and allureth whoso beehouldeth it a farr off, until he come nigh: and as soone as he is at hande, the eyes shoote, and . . . bewitch, and especiallie when by a right line they sende their glisteringe beames into the eies of the wight beloved at the time whan they do the like. . . .

This passage is skilfully adapted by Spenser[7] in verses 232-245 of the *Hymne in honour of Beautie.*

They are mistaken, says Bembo in the *Courtier,* who suppose true beauty to reside in symmetry and colour, although these qualities are an earthly sign of it. True beauty,

> whan it findeth out a face well proportioned, and framed with a certain livelie agreement of severall colours . . . and with an orderly distaunce and limites of lines, thereinto it distilleth itself and appeereth most wel-favoured, and decketh out and lyghtneth the subject where it shyneth with a marvelous grace . . . so that it draweth unto it mens eyes with pleasure, and percing through them imprinteth him selfe in the soule. . . .

A little further on in the *Courtier* we read:

> . . . it may be said that Good and beawtifull be after a sort one selfe thinge, especiallie in the bodies of men: of the beawtie wherof the nighest cause (I suppose) is the beawtie of the soule: the which as a partner of the right and heavenlie beawtie, maketh sightlie and beawtifull what ever she toucheth. . . . Therefore Beawtie is the true monument and spoile of the victorye of the soule, whan she with heavenlie influence beareth rule over materiall and grosse nature.[8]

Finally, in a remarkable passage, Castiglione represents Bembo as justifying beauty even in a woman no longer chaste; because, if she has sinned, it has been through man's uncontrolled appetite, whereas her beauty in itself would incline her rather to virtue:

> Neyther yet ought beawtifull women to beare the blame of that hatred, mortalitie, and destruction, which the unbridled appetites of men are the cause of. I will not now denye, but it is possible to find in the world beawtifull women unchast, yet not because beawtie inclineth them to unchast livinge, for it rather plucketh them from

it, and leadeth them into the way of vertuous condicions, throughe the affinitie that beawtie hath with Goodnesse. . . .

These and several other passages[9] were followed more or less closely by Spenser. Thus in the *Hymne to Beautie* he wrote:

> Therefore where-ever that thou doest behold
> A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,
> Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
> A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed . . .
>
> And oft it falles (aye me, the more to rew!)
> That goodly beautie, albe heavenly borne,
> Is foule abused, and that celestial hew,
> Which doth the world with her delight adorne,
> Made but the bait of sinne, and sinners scorne . . .
>
> Yet nathemore is that faire beauties blame,
> But theirs that do abuse it unto ill . . .

and again:

> Natheless the soul is faire and beauteous still . . .
> For things immortall no corruption take.

Spenser's knowledge of Platonism while he was still a young man was by no means superficial, nor did he owe it solely to the *Book of the Courtier*. It was, as far as can be judged, based on a scholarly study of the best sources then available, including Ficino's *Commentarium in Convivium*. Thus his picture of the birth of Love, already referred to, was taken either from Ficino or from the text of the *Symposium*, and it is likely that, even when following Castiglione and sometimes using his metaphors, he still had Ficino in mind. It is curious that when on his return from Ireland in 1595 he decided to print these two Hymns, he should have thought them not spiritual enough, or at least have held it necessary to make some kind of apology. The reason he alleges, in his letter of dedication to the Countesses of Cumberland and Warwick, is that the poems had been too pleasing to youthful readers, who had rather taken from them 'poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight.' Being however unable to call in the (presumably manuscript) copies of the hymns, 'I resolved at least to amend, and by way of retraction to reforme them, making instead of those two hymns of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiall.'

There is mystery here. Whether Spenser actually corrected or 'amended' the text of the first two hymns, we do not know. The love he had sung had been *spiritual*, not carnal love; but it had still been love of woman, and that is, earthly. Perhaps the poet had been chided for singing of any love other than the love of God. In any case, a complete exposition of the Platonic doctrine touching love and beauty might be held to involve a description of the ascent of the soul to that heavenly love which is its final resting place; and therefore to require the two further hymns which Spenser now composed.

The vision of earthly beauty which inspires in the beholder a spiritual love of the woman from whom this beauty shines, is only the first stage in the ascent of the soul. The Platonists appear to have distinguished six stages,[10] each marking an advance towards the universal and the divine: thus, for example, in the third stage the lover has risen to a general contemplation of feminine beauty; in the fourth he sees, through the eyes of the soul, an *image* of the heavenly beauty; in the fifth, he actually beholds it; in the last stage he enters into union with it. It is uncertain whether Spenser distinguished all these stages; but he seems to have had in mind the fourth stage when he wrote in the *Hymne in honour of Love*:

> Such is the powre of that sweet passion,
> That it all sordid basenesse doth expel,
> And the refyned mind doth newly fashion
> Unto a fairer forme, which now doth dwell
> In his high thought, that would it selfe excell;
> Which he behoulding still with constant sight,
> Admires the mirrour of so heavenly light.

And the two last stages of the ascent are clearly marked in the splendid concluding stanza of the *Hymne of heavenly Beautie*:

> And looke at last up to that Soveraine Light,
> From whose pure beams al perfect Beauty springs,
> That kindleth love in every godly spright,
> Even the love of God, which loathing brings
> Of this vile world and these gay seeming things;
> With whose sweete pleasures being so possest,
> Thy straying thoughts henceforth for ever rest.

II

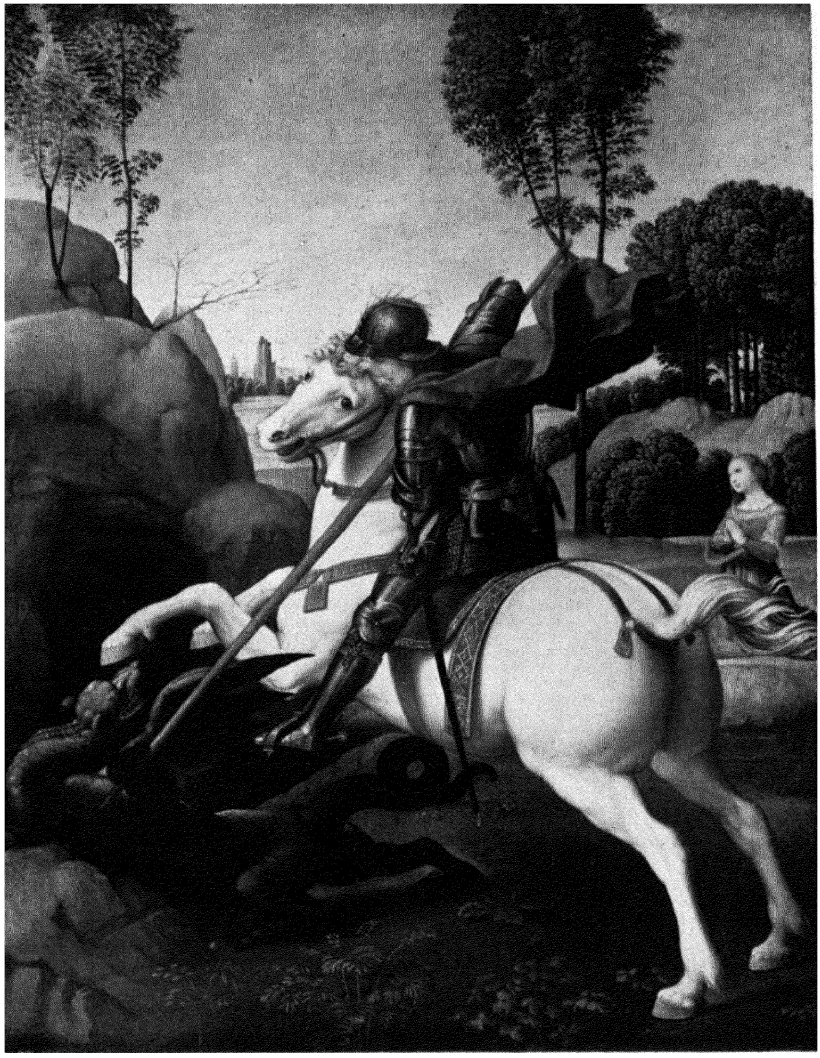
All this was in harmony with the strain of Petrarchan poetry with which Spenser, like Sidney, was wholly in sympathy. He had probably first become acquainted with Petrarch through the intermediary of Du Bellay, during his Cambridge days. He had translated Du Bellay's *Antiquitez de Rome,* and a few of his other sonnets, and drawn from the *Deffense et Illustration* some at least of the theories contained in the *Teares of the Muses*; he had also translated the seven sonnets entitled 'Petrarch's Visions.' The form in all but the last of these is that of the ordinary Elizabethan sonnet, and the work has no special distinction. But the last 'vision,' of which the rhyme-scheme is the one he was to follow in the *Amoretti,* with a carry-over of one rhyme from each quatrain to the next, is written in simple and direct language and shows how well he could translate Petrarch, even at this early date.

The other minor poems 'of the worlds vanitie' contained in the recueil of 'Complaints' offer no special example of Italian influence, except that in the pictorial stanzas of 'Muiopotmos' one may see a parallel with the kind of Italian poetry and painting which appears to have arisen in the time of Poliziano and draws inspiration mainly from Ovid. The rest are occasional verse, allegorical or satirical, in which the poet gives vent to his pessimism. The level of morals is declining, corruption is rife in the Church, even the Muses are neglected; and though they have indeed a few poets in their service, these poets lack subjects worthy of their song. Time was, says Calliope in *The Teares of the Muses,* when

> Bacchus and Hercules I raised to heaven,
> And Charlemaine, amongst the starris seaven.
>
> But now I will my golden clarion rend . . .
> For noble peeres, whom I was wont to raise,
> Now onely seeke for pleasure, nought for praise.

Spenser had almost, not quite, reached the point at which Burke, two centuries later, could write:

> The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself,



(Reproduced by courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Mellon Collection)

5. St. George and the Dragon by *Raffaello Sanzio*

This picture, which had perhaps been painted with a view to presentation to Henry VII, was brought to England by Castiglione in 1506–7, as a gift from the Duke of Urbino.

(See pp. 88, 189*)*

> the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroick enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost its evil by losing all its grossness.[11]

The news of Sir Philip Sidney's death at Arnhem in 1586 must have confirmed Spenser in his pessimism. He probably knew that the funeral expenses of one who had been a national hero and whose family had impoverished itself in the service of the state, were defrayed not by the government but by the dead man's father-in-law. 'The age of economists and calculators' if it had not come, was certainly on the way. Spenser appears to have supervised, or at least taken part in, the composition of a group of elegies which now appears in his collected works, and of which his own is by no means the best. In fact his great learning and reverence for poetic tradition did not serve him well on this occasion, because instead of writing a simple tribute to the dead in the manner of the Greek sepulchral epigrams, he followed Bion's elegy on the death of Adonis in composing a pastoral poem in which 'a gentle shepheard borne in Arcady' is gored to death by a wild boar. 'The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda,' by the Countess of Pembroke, is better, because more direct. Best of all is 'An Elegie, or Friends Passion for his Astrophel,' by Matthew Royden. Of all the tributes paid to one who had been so greatly loved, none is more moving or sincere than that which is contained in the lines:

> A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
> A full assurance given by lookes,
> Continuall comfort in a face,
> The lineaments of Gospell bookes;
> I trowe that countenance cannot be
> Whose thoughts are legible in the eie.
> Was never eie did see that face,
> Was never eare did heare that tong,
> Was never minde did minde his grace,
> That ever thought the travel long. . . .

This winter of 1586–1587 must have seemed dark indeed to Spenser. It was now some years since he had been living in Ireland. He was

not happy or at ease. And every new occasion of censure or regret confirmed him in the wisdom of working on the great poem which he had begun some years earlier, which should transport him from the coarse and decadent world in which he had to live, into the 'delightful land of faerie' and enable him to celebrate with a feeling even more intense than Ariosto's, the

> . . . goodly usage of these antique times
> In which the sword was servant unto right.

III

The desire to endow England with a great national epic has from time to time haunted our poets. It animated Spenser, and it was the principal motive of his career. His contemporaries seem to have encouraged him, and when the first books of his *Faërie Queene* were published, they probably thought he had succeeded. A similar ambition had inspired the other great nations. Giangiorgio Trissino had devoted twenty years to the composition of *L'Italia liberata dai Goti*, which had appeared in 1547-48; and more recently Ronsard had produced the *Franciade*. Ronsard's tastes were classical, and his model was the *Æneid*. Trissino also had classical tastes; but the theme of his epic was the liberation of Italy by the armies of Belisarius, and moreover he had introduced the elements of magic and allegory which were part of the tradition of romance. It was to this tradition that Spenser adhered. If he was to write a poem of epic dimensions, it would necessarily be romantic and allegorical. For the hero of a British epic he could find no greater figure than Arthur; but he was not disposed to attempt a poetic version of Mallory, probably because he had been impressed by Ariosto, was tempted to imitate him and thought that the device of several plots carried forward conjointly, as in the *Orlando furioso*, would lend itself better to the design of allegorizing the moral virtues, which was what he had most at heart.

'Life is a pilgrimage,' a great statesman has observed, 'and this world a place of trial.' This is, after all, only the Christian view of life, which is so much at variance with the humanist, or materialist, views. It is implicit in the *Faërie Queene*. But to the man who accepts life on these terms, life offers compensations and even pleasures on the way: the romance of adventure, the mystery of the unknown,

the poetry of the woods and fields, the service of the lady of his choice. The figure of the knight who rides out on some high quest, encounters temptations that put his virtues to the proof, yields or partly yields to them at times and yet is never wholly overcome, is thus a symbol of modern man, truer and more informative in a general way than the heroes of realistic novels who, at best, give only a partial or accidental glimpse of reality. Spenser understood this and he could not conceive of a long poem which should not be written in this spirit.

The *Gerusalemme liberata* had not been published at the time when Spenser was first planning the *Faërie Queene*: the first seven books appeared in 1580; but we know that from the outset Spenser had hoped to emulate Ariosto. 'Nowe, my *Dreames* and *Dying Pelicane* being fully published . . . ' he wrote to Harvey on 2 April, 1580, 'I will in hande forthwith with my *Faery Queene*. . . . ' and Harvey replied:

> To be plaine, I am voyde of al judgement, if your *Nine Comoedies* . . . come not neerer Ariostoes comoedies . . . than that *Elvish Queene* doth to his *Orlando Furioso*, which, notwithstanding, you will needes seem to emulate, and hope to overgo, as you flatly professed your self in one of your last letters.

But Spenser lacked the gifts needed for success in epic poetry or even in the kind of verse romance in which Ariosto excelled. He was—in spite of all objections that have been brought against the view—a wonderful painter of word-pictures; but he was without that valuable asset, the gift of self-imposed limitation. It would be hazardous but probably true to say that he could not conduct a long narrative poem in such a way as to maintain the reader's interest. What seems clear is that he was mainly interested, not in narrative but in allegory. He explains in his letter of dedication to Sir Walter Ralegh, which was dated 23 January, 1589 and therefore written at a time when he had leisure to meditate on the nature of Tasso's achievement, that he had chosen 'the historye of King Arthur' and 'followed all the antique Poets historicall.' He then passes in review Homer, Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso, to all of whom he ascribes allegorical intentions. It will be noticed that he does not mention either Boiardo or Trissino, although he was to draw diversely from both of them in composing the rich tapestry of his poem.

Of those whom he does mention, the one who especially haunted his mind was Ariosto. This poet, had he been in Spenser's place, would probably have drawn from the Arthurian cycle two or three capital stories that he would have narrated with gusto and that would at once have become classics. Spenser, on the other hand, launches into allegory. He wishes to portray in Prince Arthur 'the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues'; but, in point of fact, in Arthur he sets forth 'magnificence in particular . . . and of the XII other vertues,' he adds, 'I make XII other knightes the patrones, for the more variety of the history.'

But there is another reason for Spenser's comparative failure as a narrative poet, which is that he was even more careless of verisimilitude than Tasso. The introduction of fairies and enchanters, in a word, of the 'marvellous,' was in the tradition of the romantic epic, and the poet was no more at liberty to exclude these things than a modern novelist is to ignore the claims of local colour and a certain amount of documentation. As long as the fairy element was associated with legendary heroes like the knights of the Round Table or semi-historical personages like the paladins of Charlemagne, verisimilitude did not suffer. Once the convention is accepted, the reader has no more difficulty in believing the adventures of Lancelot or the doings of Vivien and Merlin, than in following the nightmare improbabilities of *Le Cousin Pons* or the delightful and perfectly incredible doings described in *Ursule Mirouët*; in fact he has less. But let fairies mingle in the adventures of characters known to history, and it is a different tale. This was Trissino's error, and in a larger degree Tasso's. The mingling of actual battles in Palestine and real persons like Godfrey of Bouillon with Herminias, Clorindas and especially Armidas, puts a strain on our aesthetic credulity, if one may so call it, which it is not able to bear: it destroys the unity of tone which a verse romance should present. Spenser in a way went further, as W. J. Courthope so truly pointed out, by proclaiming from the outset that his imaginary heroes were to be regarded only as symbols of moral virtues. 'How, for example, can we believe that the historical prince Arthur ever came to the allegorical house of Pride, or really fought with the abstract personage, Disdain?'[12]

Ariosto had never introduced that kind of thing, and from the

point of view of well-drawn character and vivid narrative Spenser was well-inspired when taking ideas from him. The *Orlando furioso* was a splendid romance, full of movement, high endeavour, faithful loves and noble deeds. True, it included several stories running side by side; but the whole narrative was conducted with extraordinary *verve* and incomparable dexterity. Scott, when attempting something similar in the second half of *Ivanhoe*, thought naturally of Ariosto's achievement.[13] The latter was never at a loss for an episode and knew just when to relieve the tension by a light or cheerful touch and just how to mingle the tragic, the tender and the gay. Above all, he had created wonderful heroines: a lively and amusing heroine, Angelica; and a warlike one, Bradamante. Spenser could not 'outgo' him as a story-teller; but he had a genius for word-painting and knew how to touch the heart by his portrayals of female innocence and distress. The characters of Una and Britomartis are as incomparable in their way as those of Angelica and Bradamante, though the first is not developed or maintained as it should have been. Both have been made an object of raillery. No doubt a knight accoutred for battle, accompanied by a meek-looking princess leading a white lamb, and followed at some distance by a dwarf

> That lasie seemd, in being ever last
> Or wearied with bearing of her bag
> Of needments at his back—

may seem a conspicuously unpractical arrangement, and one which allegory does little to palliate in our minds. But how vividly we see them, and how we like to recall them! Wordsworth concluded his second sonnet, on the pleasures of books, with the words:

> Two shall be named preeminently dear,—
> The gentle lady married to the Moor,
> And heavenly Una with her snow-white lamb.

Real or imaginary animals had occasionally played a part in medieval romance, as in *Yvain*, and it was probably one of these which gave Spenser the idea of introducing a number of them. He must have been struck by the episode of the kindly tigress who nourished and protected little Clorinda, in the *Gerusalemme liberata*;[14] but this part of Tasso's romance was not included in the 1580 edition and Spenser may have completed the story of Una before he read it. If he was indeed familiar with it before he put the final

touches to Book I, the adventure probably seemed too conspicuous to be imitated; but in that case he might present another large and terrible beast such as a lion, who should protect his heroine in distress. Hence he shows Una, who has been separated from her knight and who one day has lain down to rest in the shade, as surprised by a lion who rushes upon her; but who, his heart melted by the sight of her innocence, remains with her and accompanies her on her journey:

> The lyon would not leave her desolate,
> But with her went along, as a strong gard
> Of her chast person, and a faythfull mate
> Of her sad troubles and misfortunes hard:
> Still, when she slept, he kept both watch and ward,
> And when she wakt, he wayted diligent,
> With humble service to her will prepared. . . .[13]

Una and the Knight have been separated by the wiles of an enchanter named Archimago and a witch, Duessa (Falsehood). The latter, masquerading under the guise of a fair damsel, Fidessa, seduces the Redcross Knight. In Canto vii his downfall is complete and he is imprisoned in the stronghold of giant Pride, whom Duessa addresses by his Italian name of Orgoglio. He is, however, rescued by Prince Arthur, he rejoins Una, and despite a final effort on the part of Archimago and Duessa, they are married. It is possible that the characters of Archimago and Duessa were first suggested by Ariosto's Atlante and Alcina respectively; but for Duessa Spenser had a more immediate model in the witch Ligridonia, in *L'Italia liberata,* of which he follows some of the episodes rather closely in Book II.

There is, however, in the body of Book I, a curious adventure of which the material details come neither from Ariosto nor Trissino, but from their predecessor Matteo Boiardo.[16] In Book I, canto xvii, of the *Orlando innamorato*, Ranaldo and his companions encounter a man who, fully armed, comes galloping towards them urging on his horse and trembling with fear, white-faced—'ed è nel viso bianco.' They ply him with questions:

> Chiaschedun di novelle il dimandava,
> Ma lui non rispondeva alcuna cosa,
> E pur a dietro spesso risguardava.
> Dopo, a la fine in voce paurosa,
> (Perchè la lingua, co 'l cor gli tremava
> Disse. . . .

Now in Book I, canto ix, of the *Faërie Queene* Una and her Knight have a similar experience:

> So as they traveild, lo! they gan espy
> An armed knight towards them gallop fast,
> That seemed from some feared foe to fly,
> Or other griesly thing that him aghast.
> Still as he fledd his eye was backward cast,
> As if his feare still followed him behynd . . .
> Nor drop of blood in all his face appeares. . . .

Una's companion addresses the stranger

> who nought to him replyde;
> But, trembling every joynt, did inly quake,
> And foltring tongue, at last, these words seemd forth to shake.

In Boiardo, the knight is flying from the terrible Orlando; in Spenser, he is flying from Despair, whom the Redcross Knight is able to withstand. Spenser takes over the external details of the fugitive's appearance, but, as elsewhere, turns to the purpose of the allegory what, in the Italian, had been romance or adventure.

In Book II of the *Faërie Queene* he was indebted mainly to Trissino. There were indeed in the latter's romance features which must have attracted him almost as much as those in Ariosto. If Ariosto admired his paladins, he sometimes smiled at them; he gave some place to allegory, but as much or more to romance. Trissino's work, on the other hand, was full of allegory. One may judge of this from the adventures narrated in Books IV and V of the *Italia liberata*, adventures which Spenser took over without much alteration for the story of Sir Guyon, which occupies Book II of his poem.[17]

Trissino tells how a number of Belisarius's knights set out for the gardens of the witch Acratia, to rescue their comrades who have fallen under the spell of this enchantress. They withstand the spells of another witch, Ligridonia; encounter a magic fountain fed by the tears of a woman in a place where a knight had been slain at the command of Acratia (Fleshly Lust); and finally, in Book V, are guided by an old man to the enchanted gardens of the witch herself. These pleasure grounds lie within a wall pierced by an ivory door: here, after gaining admission, the knights find a palace where men and girls are abandoned to feasting and licentious pleasure. They

release their companions, capture the sorceress and conduct her to the castle of Ateta (Virtue), whose companions are Clemency, Chastity, Honour and Magnanimity. The castle is described in some detail.

Spenser simplified this adventure by making use of Ligridonia mainly in Book I and by substituting one knight, Sir Guyon, who is to symbolise Temperance, for the several knights who figure in the Italian poem; for the rest, Acrasia—whose name he retains, no doubt by way of acknowledgement to Trissino—represents the same vice as in the *Italia*. In the *Faërie Queene*, Sir Guyon, accompanied by a palmer, is skirting the edges of a forest when a woman's shrieks lead him to turn aside. Making his way through the thicket he comes to a place where by 'a bubling fountaine' a goodly knight is lying dead, and beside him a young woman with a knife plunged in her breast is dying. The lady tells how her husband, 'the good Sir Mortdant,' had been beguiled by the enchantress Acrasia, who dwelt in 'a wandring island,' enticed to her 'Bowre of Blis' and there corrupted. His wife had followed him, freed him from the enchantment and won him back; but Acrasia, on finding she had to part with him, had pronounced an oracular spell, which later, on drinking of the fountain, he had unwittingly fulfilled—and so perished. After telling her story, the lady herself dies. Sir Guyon and the palmer bury the two unfortunates, and Sir Guyon swears to execute vengeance on the witch.

This episode (Book II, canto i) is rather more elaborate than in Trissino, and the fountain has a different property; though the part played by Acrasia and the allegorical bearing of the episode are similar. Spenser was able to enrich it by drawing at the same time from one of the clearly allegorical adventures in the *Orlando furioso*.[18] When Ruggiero has been seduced by the witch Alcina, he is rescued by the good enchantress Melissa who appeals to him on behalf of the children who will one day be his: an episode which must have suggested to Spenser the touching picture of Mortdant's child.

In Canto ii the castle of Medina, the 'golden Mean,' was apparently inspired by the castle of Logostilla which is on Alcina's island, Logostilla being the virtuous half-sister of the witch. And Spenser also remembers Logostilla when, after other adventures in which he is not uniformly prosperous, Sir Guyon, accompanied now by Prince Arthur, reaches (canto ix)

The House of Temperance, in which
Doth sober Alma dwell. . . .

This castle is beset by a swarm of foes, 'vile caitive wretches, ragged, rude, deformd,' something like the crowd of men with beasts' heads which Ruggiero encounters, when, after returning from Alcina's city, he tries to make his way to the castle of Logostilla. It is not until these have been overcome that the two knights can be admitted. They are received by Alma (the Soul) and conducted over her castle which is a very treasure-house of allegories, even to the kitchens, where

There placed was a caudron wide and tall
Upon a mightie fornace, burning whott,
More whott than Aetn', or flaming Mongiball.*

This House of Temperance recalls both Ariosto's castle of Logostilla and Trissino's castle of Areta, and some of the details of Trissino's description of the central court seem to be recalled in the twenty-second stanza;[19] but the visit to this house takes place before, and not after, the adventure of the enchanted gardens.

Parting from Prince Arthur, but still accompanied by the palmer, Sir Guyon now fares across a perilous sea; not riding on a Hippogriff like Ruggiero, but piloted by a boatman who is Reason. So he comes (canto xii) to the island of Acrasia and finally reaches the Bower of Bliss. The barrier surrounding it is made for ornament rather than defence, and the door, which is of ivory like the one in Trissino's poem, stands always open. In the pleasaunce within, Sir Guyon first sees two wanton girls whose blandishments he is, however, able to withstand; but at this point it had occurred to Spenser that he might make the charms of the Bower of Bliss more convincing by transferring to them some of the most attractive features of the gardens of Armida: the skill with which these were laid out, so that Nature seemed to vie with Art and Art with Nature; the song of the birds; and the invitation to love. Thus five of the stanzas in Canto xii are translated from Canto XVI of the *Gerusalemme liberata*.[20] In stanza 12 of this Canto we read:

Vezzosi augelli in fra le verdi fronde
Temprano a prova lascivette note.
Mormora l'aura, e fa le foglie e l'onde
Garrir, che variamente ella percote.

*Mongibello, i.e. Monte bello, the Sicilian name for Etna.

Quando taccion gli augelli alto risponde;
Quando cantan gli augei, più lieve scote;
Si caso od arte, or accompagna ed ora
Alterna i versi lor la music' ora.

This is adapted as follows:

The joyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th' angelicall soft trembling voyces made
To the' instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmurs of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle, warbling wind low answered to all.

A little further on, the famous song of the rose (*G. L.*, XVI, 14,15), which was later to be rendered in sonnet-form by Daniel:

Deh mira, egli cantò, spuntar la rosa
Dal verde suo modesta e verginella,
Che mezzo aperta ancora, e mezzo ascosa,
Quanto si mostra men, tanto è più bella—

appears in two of Spenser's best stanzas, beginning:

The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay:—

and concluding:

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre . . .
Gather therefore the rose, whilest yet in prime,
For soone comes age, that will her pride deflowre:
Gather the rose of love, whilest yet is time,
Whilest loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime.

And now at last Sir Guyon comes upon the witch, toying with Verdant, the latest of her victims. She is not, of course, an Armida, but a Circe who has changed her earlier lovers into the wild beasts Sir Guyon had seen outside the Bower. He and the palmer now seize and bind the witch, destroy her gardens and pleasure-houses and restore her victims to human shape; just as in Trissino's poem the knights of Belisarius capture Acratia, to hand her over to Areta and release their companions. Sir Guyon, in a similar way, has

planned to surrender Acrasia to the Fairy Queen; but Acrasia has not, like Ariosto's Alcina, been revealed as in reality shrunken and hideous.

There are other episodes in Book II, such as Phedon's pursuit of Pryene and encounter with Furour; the manner in which Sir Guyon strikes off the head of Pyrocles' horse; and the coming of Sir Guyon and Cymocles to a river which they wish to be ferried across, that are apparently reminiscences of similar happenings in Boiardo and, in the case of the last adventure, of Tasso as well.[21] To trace them in detail would be the kind of task the French describe as 'fastidieux.' This second book of the *Faërie Queene* is probably not the best, but for a study of Spenser's habits of composition it is one of the most interesting. It shows how he enriched a story taken from the *Italia liberata* with details that had struck him when reading the *Orlando innamorata*[22] and the *Orlando furioso,* improved the picture by translating some of the best stanzas in Tasso's recent romance, and made the whole adventure subserve the purpose of his allegory of temperance.

Ariosto, however, remained his general model,[23] and it is easy to understand why, with Europe generally, Spenser so greatly admired him. The *Orlando furioso* contained, as the old critics would have said, so many 'perfections.' The poet had somehow contrived to depict in Orlando one who, even in his madness, continues to inspire sympathy and admiration: a mirror of the knightly virtues and a kind of counterpart to Prince Arthur. The popularity of the name of Orlando in the age of Shakespeare is only one instance of his prestige—and, of course, of Boiardo's, though in a lesser degree. Then Ariosto had admired and taught his readers to admire the way in which Bradamante by her constancy and heroism gradually raises the weaker Ruggiero to a level of virtue nearer her own; and he enables us at the same time to take pleasure in the escapades of the whimsical and mischievous Angelica. We are amazed by Ruggiero's discovery of Astolfo, who had been changed into a tree; and even more perhaps by Astolfo's journey to the moon; but are quickly brought back to earth with a *douche* of common sense, and are never quite sure when the poet will turn on us with that 'sorriso italiano' that is one of his greatest charms. Here, in the *Orlando*

furioso, as in the *Canterbury Tales*, we have 'God's plenty,' and Ariosto is in fact more like Chaucer than Spenser is like either of them.

He introduces allegory in the episode of Ruggiero and Astolfo on the isle of Alcina, in the later journeys of Astolfo to Purgatory, to the earthly Paradise and to the moon, and possibly in a few other places;[24] though he was plainly as much interested in adventure and character-study, and his sense of humour and his mental balance are as delightful as Chaucer's.

Ariosto had not long been dead before the critics set to work on his romance with commentary and explanation. The first was Simone Fornari in his *Spositione sopra l'Orlando Furioso di M. Ludovico Ariosto* (Florence, 1549); the second Toscanella, in the *Bellezze del Furioso* (Venice, 1574). Fornari's defence is in large part literary and philological; he notes the episodes which are plainly allegorical, but also conceives the idea of writing for each canto a study of the moral lesson arising from it. Toscanella also dwells on the didactic value of poetry and presents Ariosto as, like Homer and Virgil, a moral teacher. In the last quarter of the century the English critics, of whom Gascoigne, Gosson, Sidney, Lodge and Puttenham were the principal, show a similar interest in the moral bearing of poetry; but it was Harington who, in the preface to his translation of the *Orlando furioso* (1591), not only defended the morality of poetry in general but offered an apologia for Ariosto in particular. In this he draws liberally on Fornari,[25] and one may assume that the latter's book was fairly well known in England and that Spenser was also familiar with it.

It seems certain that most of the critics, including Spenser, read more of allegory into the *Orlando* than Ariosto intended. No doubt the latter conceived Bradamante as a character to be developed on romantic lines, as an ideal but also a thoroughly human heroine,[26] surpassing in interest the lively and flirtatious Angelica.[27] He would not have denied that a lesson of moral and psychological interest arises from her relations with Ruggiero; but it probably never occurred to him that his admirers would interpret her as symbolising at different times the chaste wife, the divine love and the Heavenly Grace![28] It was interpretations like these that appealed to Spenser, and that in large measure inspired his treatment of Britomart.

The character and adventures of Britomart, which occupy Book

III and cover the greater part of Books IV and V, were of course suggested by those of Ariosto's heroine. Like Bradamante, Britomart is the indomitable warrior-maid who overthrows the bravest knights. Her principal adventures, too, are similar. As Bradamante is taken for a man by Fiordispina, Britomart's martial attire leads to the same error on the part of Malecasta. In the *Orlando* Bradamante goes to the rescue of Pinnabello's lady who has been stolen away by the magician Atlante and confined in a castle of steel; in the *Faërie Queene*, Britomart goes to the rescue of Amoret, who has been imprisoned in the house of Busyrane. This stronghold is defended by a great fire, which symbolises the scorching power of lust. But Britomart is untouched by it, and after spending a night in vigil and the resistance of temptation, she is able to release Amoret. Thus, where Ariosto had simply narrated a fairy-story, Spenser had used much the same material to develop the allegory of chastity. Finally, the love-story of Britomart and Artegall follows in general lines the story of Bradamante and Ruggiero. Like Ariosto's heroine, Britomart knows the pains of jealousy when Artegall, who has fallen victim to Radigund, does not appear at the tryst: she watches the road, counts the passing of the days, loses herself in vain surmise (Book V, canto vi), and when Talus, Artegall's squire, brings news of what has happened, gives way to passionate grief (stanza 13). In all this Spenser closely follows Ariosto. But he replaces the Amazon Marfisa, the unrecognised sister of Ruggiero (who, by the way, is never conquered), by an independent Amazon, Radigund, whose beauty has for a time overcome Artegall (Book V, canto v), but who is overthrown and slain in combat by Britomart (Book V, canto vii).[29]

Britomart's character is by far the most interesting and the most subtly delineated of all the characters in the *Faërie Queene*,[30] and so far as the book has a central plot, her adventures provide it. It might have been better, had Spenser concentrated on them and written simply the romance of Britomart and Artegall. There are scenes and moments in her career which are truly memorable: this, for example:

> There she alighted from her light-foot beast,
> And sitting downe upon the rocky shore,
> Badd her old squyre unlace her lofty creast:
> Tho having vewd a while the surges hore

That gainst the craggy clifts did loudly rore,
And in their raging surquedry disdaynd
That the fast earth affronted them so sore,
And their devouring covetize restraynd;
Thereat she sighed deepe, and after thus complaynd.

'Huge sea of sorrow and tempestuous griefe,
Wherein my feeble barke is tossed long,
Far from the hoped haven of reliefe,
Why doe thy cruel billowes beat so strong? . . .

There had been in English literature no romance of chivalry at once as vivid, as impressive and as well written as this. It is no small testimony to the genius of Ariosto to say that his Bradamante inspired not only the first great French tragi-comedy, but the most interesting and successful portions of the *Faërie Queene*.

These central portions of the poem, in particular, possess another kind of interest, which, however, they also share with the *Orlando furioso*. Ariosto, as was well known, had inserted in his romance portraits and eulogies of his great contemporaries; Machiavelli, indeed, in praising the first (1516) edition of the poem, had humorously though justifiably complained that he was omitted.[31] The *Faërie Queene* in like manner, if less openly, appears to contain numerous allusions to famous persons and circumstances—such as Elizabeth's diplomatic relations with the princes who were suitors for her hand—which would certainly be understood by contemporaries but regarding which we can only make conjectures more or less probable. It is a noteworthy fact that Spenser made no attempt to reproduce the character of Angelica. Her coquetry and pranks he probably regarded with disapproval; he did not *want* a humorous character. But he may have been sufficiently impressed to take certain features of her story and apply them, as one critic has supposed,[32] to Florimel, to Snowy Florimel and to Belphoebe. And though he may not (as we suppose) have much cared for her himself, he was probably aware that she was very popular with other readers and that she was even being taken, in the words of Harington,[33] as a symbol of 'honour which brave men hunt after by blood and battels.' And it may have been for some such reason as this that he thought the character of Gloriana, who represents Elizabeth, would replace her very suitably.[34] It seems certain, on the other hand, that some of the passages about Sir Artegall and

Irena in Book V, canto xii, represent an apology for Lord Gray's policy in Ireland, an apology founded on that serious study of Machiavelli's *Principe* which comes out more fully in his *Veue of the Present State of Ireland*.[35]

The episode of Pastorella in Book VI stands apart from the rest of the poem, and, Dr. Mackail singled it out for special praise. Spenser's genius was perhaps better adapted for the purpose of a pastoral idyll than of a stirring romance; though it is not long before he brings brigands into the picture. On the other hand, the episode is much slighter than the story of Britomart. The style is well sustained in Canto ix and through part of Canto x, when suddenly we come to this:

> One day, as they all three together went
> To the greene wood to gather strawberries,
> There chaunst to them a dangerous accident:
> A Tigre forth out of the wood did rise,
> That with fell clawes full of fierce gourmandize,
> And greedy mouth wide gaping like hell-gate,
> Did runne at Pastorell her to surprize. . . .

One suspects this rough tiger is the brother of the gentle tigress who was so kind to little Clorinda in the *Jerusalem delivered*; and the manner of his death is as astonishing as the conduct of Tasso's tigress had been. But one must remember that this is fairyland; or at least it is the Arcadia that Sannazaro, Montemayor and the author of *Aminta* were rendering popular in England. This part is full of literary reminiscences, ancient and medieval, Greek, Latin[36] and French; and the influence of Chaucer is probably as strong as any other, if one may judge from Sir Calidore's first sight of Pastorella, not to speak of the allegorical nature of what follows:

> Tho, having fed his fill, he there besyde
> Saw a faire damzell, which did weare a crowne
> Of sundry flowres with silken ribbands tyde,
> Yclad in home-made greene that her owne hands had dyde.
>
> Upon a little hillocke she was placed
> Higher than all the rest, and round about
> Environ'd with a girland, goodly graced,

Of lovely lasses, and them all without
The lustie shepheard swaynes sate in a rout
The which did pype and sing her prayses dew,
And oft rejoyce, and oft for wonder shout. . . .[37]

This is inspired by the picture of Alcestis in the *Legende of Good Women* and by a passage in the *Parlement of Foules*; perhaps also by a sonnet of Louise Labé.[38] But it seems likely that in his picture of the Graces on Mount Acidale in canto x Spenser had in mind a passage in which Ariosto paid tribute to Alessandra di Francesco Benucci, the beautiful young widow with whom he had fallen in love in the summer of 1513. In canto xlii of the *Orlando*, Rinaldo is shown admiring a wondrous fountain on the banks of the Po. It is adorned with statues of eight of the noblest ladies of the time, each of whom (save one) is supported and praised by two poets. The exceptional one is a tall lady of marvellous loveliness who stands between Lucrezia Borgia and Beatrice d'Este: she is supported by one poet only, and these two alone are unnamed: they are Alessandra and Ariosto. In like manner, Edmund Gardner points out,[39] Spenser does honour to his fiancée. Sir Calidore is watching the three Graces as they dance to the piping of Colin Clout ('who knowes not Colin Clout?'). In the midst of them is another damsel 'as a precious gemme':

But that faire one,
That in the midst was placed paravaunt,
Was she to whom that shepheard pypt alone,
That made him pipe so merrily as never none.

And this is as clearly an allusion to Spenser's betrothed as Ariosto's verses about the tall lady,

Che sotto puro velo, in nera gonna,
Senza oro e gemme, in un vestire schietto,
Tra le più adorne non parea men bella
Che sia tra l'altre la Cyprigna stella—

verses which, however, Spenser does not imitate—are an allusion to Madonna Alessandra.

But Spenser's reading had been so well assimilated that his Arcadia has a character and a tonal unity of its own. And it is perhaps less interesting for any sources which the curious may trace in it, than as offering a foretaste of the *Winter's Tale*.[40] Even so, one

may note that three of the best portions of the *Faërie Queene* owe their inspiration, more or less directly, to Italian models.

IV

There is a side of Spenser's genius we have not touched upon, a talent which has been admired by nearly all the critics since the age of Pope and which—though its serious quality and even its existence have been called in question—will, we think, continue to be admired: his gift for pictorial writing. Sometimes he describes a series of tapestries as in *Muiopotmos* and in the episode of the House of Busyrane (*Faërie Queene*, Book III, canto xi, stanzas 28-49); sometimes he pictures one of the elaborate Masques so popular during the Renaissance;[41] sometimes he presents a person or a group very much as a painter would: such is our impression of Sir Calidore's first vision of Pastorella, and, in the next canto, of Mount Acidale, where the three Graces are dancing:

> The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
> And like a girland did in compasse stemme:
> And in the middest of those same three was placed
> Another damzell, as a precious gemme
> Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced. . . .[42]

and this is striking because, not content with conjuring up a vision of fair damsels, the poet insists on enriching it with a further image.

The literary description of works of art had, of course, nothing new about it. Homer had shown the way, in his description of the shield of Achilles; various examples might be cited from the *Anthology*. The more specific habit of describing a series of *pictures* goes back to Virgil and Statius, and Chaucer had taken it up in *The Knightes Tale*. In another genre, but still highly decorative, Poliziano had celebrated a tourney and a masque which were given in Florence. There is much of decorative poetry, too, in Marot's *Complaincte de Madame Loyse*, a poem with which Spenser was very familiar. But no one probably had cultivated this kind of poetry as abundantly or complacently as Spenser himself. Now we know that in the sixteenth century Ovid, who had also been a 'decorative' artist, supplied the bulk of the material, and that this was in the main mythological. But Spenser's pictures, especially his description of tapestries, are so numerous that critics have been

constantly tempted to think of contemporary tapestries or paintings which, hypothetically, he may have had in mind.

Thus, for the tapestries in the House of Busyrane[43] Frederick Hard is disposed to think that Spenser was less indebted for these descriptions to literary sources than to contemporary tapestries, which he presumably studied with the full appreciation that is characteristic of him;[44] and in this connexion he refers to tapestries which belonged to Leicester and which Spenser may be presumed to have seen when he was in the service of that nobleman: these included a 'Cupid and Venus'; a 'Diana bathing, with her nymphs'; a picture of Diana and Actaeon. Books of engravings of scenes from Ovid were also available at that time. But, even if we were certain of having traced a number of Spenser's pictures to specific tapestries or engravings, the fact would not carry us much further into the nature of his genius. Most of the critics, when reading him, have thought of the work of painters rather than arras-makers; but the *rapprochements* which some of them have made are to artists so diverse that one is sceptical of the critical value that may be attached to such comparisons. One of Spenser's latest critics, Mr. W. B. Watkins, thinks—rightly, as we believe—that Spenser tried to transcend the art of the tapestry-maker.[45] The picture of Mount Acidale makes him think of Mantegna's 'Parnassus';[46] the description of the Graces surrounded by nymphs, of Botticelli's 'Primavera';[47] the portrait of Acrasia, of one of Titian's Venuses.[48]

But it seems hazardous to the present writer to compare Spenser with painters so diverse in both feeling and technique. The opulence and, so to speak the *abundance,* of his art seem to ally, his sensibility rather to that of Titian or Veronese than to the refined delicacy of Botticelli or the sculptural sobriety of Mantegna; for anyone who has studied the great Venetians will easily draw comparisons between their pictures and passages in Spenser. When, for example, one reads in *Muiopotmos*:

> Arachne figur'd how Jove did abuse
> Europa like a bull, and on his backe
> Her through the sea did beare; so lively seene,
> That it true sea and true bull ye would weene. . . .
> Before the bull she pictur'd winged Love,
> With his young brother Sport, light fluttering
> Upon the waves, as each had been a dove. . . .[49]

one would think that Spenser was trying to recall Titian's picture of this episode, if one did not know that he was in fact translating Ovid. Similarly the metamorphosis of Jupiter, figured on a tapestry in the House of Busyrane:

> Soon after that, into a golden showre
> Him selfe he chaung'd, faire Danaë to vew,
> And through the roofe of her strong brasen towre
> Did raine into her lap a hony dew,
> The whiles her foolish garde, that little knew
> Of such deceipt, kept th'yron dore fast bard. . . .[50]

irresistibly evokes, not so much the first 'Danaë' painted by Titian, which dates from 1545 and is now in the Naples Museum, as his 'Danaë' of 1554—now in the Prado—which is more sensual and in which the old guardian-woman is portrayed. Yet it would be difficult to show that Spenser had even heard of these great pictures, unless indeed some nobleman returning from Italy had told him of them. In another sense, however, such passages are more informative as to Spenser's genius than they would be if he were deliberately describing pictures he had seen. The fact that he, like Shakespeare and in a lesser degree Sidney and Marlowe, often gives the impression of striving to emulate the painters, is significant of his age and country. The English genius has never lent itself to the plastic arts in the same measure as that of the Mediterranean peoples—perhaps for climatic reasons; and in an age when even religious carving and sculpture had been discouraged by the Reformation, the plastic sense of the artist tended, *a fortiori,* to take refuge in poetry.

One might therefore expect the poetry of the time to present analogies with the painting—English poetry with Italian painting—not only as to their *subjects* (for in this matter, as we shall show, virtually everyone took his text from Ovid), but also as to the sensibility of the artist; and this expectation will not be disappointed. Take, for example, the picture of 'Fancy, like a lovely boy,' in the Masque of Cupid:

> His garment nether was of silke nor say,
> But paynted plumes in goodly order dight,
> Like as the sunburnt Indians do aray
> Their tauney bodies in their proudest plight:
> As those same plumes so seemd he vaine and light,
> That by his gate might easily appeare;

For still he far'd as dauncing in delight,
And in his hand a windy fan did beare,
That in the ydle ayre he mov'd still here and theare.[51]

Does not one *see* him, with a marble balustrade and a glowing sky beyond, painted on the ceiling of a Venetian or a Paduan palace? One is aware that he is followed by Desire, Doubt, Danger and the rest, and that Spenser is, as usual, greatly concerned with his allegory; but we are also concerned with the impression Spenser's words convey, and in this matter we believe Emile Legouis was right:[52] the impression is that of a Venetian picture. For although Spenser did not succeed in becoming the English Ariosto, he was in a true sense, in words, the English Veronese. There is in the *Faërie Queene* a patrician splendour which makes of this great poem the literary counterpart of the Venetian painting of the time.

V

Spenser devoted something like twenty years to the composition of the *Faërie Queene*. The first three books, published in 1591, were hailed with pride and enthusiasm as England's great poem. Spenser was planning nine more, which would have made a work considerably longer than any of the famous epics it was supposed to rival. We know that he only completed three, which appeared in 1596. Meanwhile, however, he had met Elizabeth Pease, a young widow whom he celebrated, as we have seen, in the Book of Courtesy, and whose heart he set out to win. For the first time in his life he was moved to express himself simply and directly, or at least with the minimum of literary artifice. Now of the kinds of verse then available, the one that lent itself best to such expression was the 'quatorzain.' Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella,* composed some time before but published in 1591, had confirmed, if not created, the vogue. It was thus that Spenser, with an instinct as sound as Shakespeare's, began to compose the eighty-eight sonnets that he entitled *Amoretti.*

It is true that number viii and possibly number i belong to an earlier period; true also that some doubt has been cast on the identity of the heroine. But the circumstances of Spenser's life at this time and the fact that in sonnets viii and xxxvi he plays on the word 'peace' render virtually certain her identification with the poet's future wife.

The *Amoretti* may then be taken as a record of the poet's courtship; and if at the outset we neglect the detail and consider only the general rhythm of emotion and experience, the story they tell is as natural, almost as normal, as that of Petrarch and Sidney had been exceptional. It may be thought that to compose a good sonnet-sequence about the fiancée whom one does in the end marry is considerably harder than to narrate the course of unrequited love; and it certainly is. But Spenser succeeded because for a time his advances were apparently repelled; and because he had at his disposal a wide range of simile and illustration, of literary reminiscence (xxiii), of suggestions taken from our northern countryside (xix); and knew well how to ring the changes on two or three of the great *motifs* of Renaissance love-poetry; above all, of course, because he was a great poet whose excessive fluency was confined here 'within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground.' Spenser's tendency, which was that of his age, to be prolix and florid, the Rabelaisian love of verbal gymnastics, the penchant for decoration and embroidery, in short the lack of classical restraint from which he suffered, found here a salutary corrective.

Spenser did not imitate or even adapt any sonnet of Petrarch, whom he doubtless considered too celebrated to be treated in such a way. But he openly adopted the imagery and even the vocabulary of love that are found in Petrarch, and from time to time beheld in his lady the earthly image of a divine IDEA—a theme of Petrarchan origin, which had gathered new strength from the prestige of the Florentine neo-Platonism and had been developed not only by the Italians, but by such popular French poets as Du Bellay, Pontus de Tyard, Claude de Pontoux and especially Desportes.

The Petrarchan imagery he used was mainly that of war: of siege and attack, of truce, of alternating fear and hope ('temo e spero'), and of the conclusion of peace:[53]

> One day I sought with her hart-thrilling eies
> To make a truce, and termes to entertaine . . .
> So as I then disarmed did remaine,
> A wicked ambush, which lay hidden long
> In the close covert of her guilefull eyen,
> Thence breaking forth, did thick about me throng.

All this (no. xii) is a vivid development of Petrarch's description of himself as 'del tutto disarmato.' Again, as Petrarch had one day

gazed on Laura's eyes, 'secur, senza suspetto,' so Spenser (no. xvi):

> One day as I unwarily did gaze
> On those fayre eyes, my loves immortall light. . . .

Other reminiscences of Petrarch might be cited from xiv, xxv, xxxvi and lxxvi; but the most striking is perhaps the one in lvii:

> Sweet warriour, when shall I have peace with you?
> High time it is this warre now ended were:
> Which I no lenger can endure to sue,
> Ne your incessant battry more to beare—

verses which are full of the Italian poet's imagery, including that of his 'dolce guerriera,' and also perhaps contain a play on the name of Elizabeth Pease. One might sum up the matter by saying that the time for adapting Petrarch was past; one simply paid courteous tribute here and there to 'the renowner of Laura.'

But with Tasso it was a different matter. Tasso was a novelty, and Spenser was so greatly fascinated that he modelled at least nine of the *Amoretti* on sonnets of Tasso, sometimes translating, sometimes modifying or adapting.[54] Numbers xliii and lvi seem to have been written after a reading of Tasso, though they cannot be called imitations. On the other hand, the image of the hunter who for long has pursued a doe in vain, and to whom after a time the doe returns of her own accord—the theme of Tasso's

> Questa fera gentil, ch' in si crucciosa
> Fronte fuggia pur dianzi i vostri passi
> Fra spini e sterpi, e dirupati sassi,
> Strada ad og'nor prendendo erta, e dubbiosa;
> Or, cangiato voler, d'onesta posa
> Vaga, discende ai sentier piani e bassi,
> E, quasi ogni durezza indietro lassi,
> Incentro vi si fa lieta e vezzosa. . . .[55]

appeared so novel and charming that Spenser adapted and told it, in no. lxvii, as though it were an experience of his own:

> Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace,
> Seeing the game from him escapt away,
> Sits downe to rest him in some shady place,
> With panting hounds beguiled of their pray. . . .

In lxxiii he simply translates Tasso's

> Donna, poichè fortuna empia mi nega
> Seguirvi, e cinge al pie dure catene;
> Almen per le vostre orme il cor ne viene,
> Cui laccio, oltre i bei crini, altro non lega.
> E fa quasi augellin, che l'ali spiega
> Dietro ad uom, che dolce esca in man ritiene. . . .[56]

He seems to follow Tasso quite closely in lxxxi, yet he describes the charms of his mistress in such a way that the sonnet reads like a personal portrait. But lxxii affords the most interesting example of Tasso's influence. From the latter's beautiful sonnet beginning:

> L'alma vaga di luce e di bellezza,
> Ardite spiega al Ciel l'ale amorose;
> Ma si le fa l'umanità gravose,
> Che le dechina a quel, ch' in terra apprezza. . . .
> E fa quasi augellin. . . .[57]

he takes the image of the soul as a bird which in seeking the heavens finds its wings rendered heavy by the mortal condition; and then so to speak rewrites the poem with an accent that is his own and indeed in the grand manner:

> Oft when my spirit doth spred her bolder winges,
> In mind to mount up to the purest sky,
> It down is weighd with thoght of earthly things,
> And clogd with burden of mortality. . . .

There are times when he is tempted to sensual enjoyment; but he never writes an anti-Petrarchan sonnet in the manner of Berni, and indeed the neo-Platonic conception of Love recurs at intervals through the sequence and is well expressed in sonnets xlv and lxxviii; best of all perhaps in lxxix when he writes:

> Men call you fayre, and you doe credit it,
> For that your selfe ye dayly such doe see:
> But the trew fayre, that is the gentle wit
> And vertuous mind, is much more praysed of me.
> For all the rest, how ever fayre it be,
> Shall turn to nought and loose that glorious hew:
> But only that is permanent, and free
> From frayle corruption, that doth flesh ensew.
> That is true beautie: that doth argue you
> To be divine, and home of heavenly seed. . . .

And it is on the note of beauty in which the poet contemplates 'the idea playne'—the divine IDEA—that the *Amoretti* end (number lxxxvii) or, at least, would end if the very last sonnet were not devoted to the theme of absence.

The Platonic idea of poetry as a sacred 'enthusiasm' that descends from Heaven had been strongly entertained by the poets of the Pléiade,[58] and Spenser may well have derived it from Ronsard.[59] He is thinking of this doctrine when he writes (lxxxiv):

> Her worth is written with a golden quill:
> That me with *heavenly fury* doth inspire—

and such verses remind us of the great lines in the *Sonnets pour Hélène*, for it is by virtue of this gift that the poet will eternize (the word is French, 'éterniser') those whom he celebrates. The idea was of course very old. Pindar had claimed this power when honouring the victors at Olympia or Delphi or the Isthmus; the Italians had referred to it; but it was probably owing to the example of Ronsard that Spenser reasserted the claim with confidence, and in more than one instance. One day, he says (lxxv), he wrote his love's name in the sand; but the waves erased it.

> Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay
> A mortall thing so to immortalize! . . .
> Not so (quod I) let baser things devize
> To dy by dust, but you shall live by fame:
> My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
> And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.

There are times when Spenser seems to look forward towards the poetry that is to follow and, so to speak, breathe into his successors some of the greatest accents that English poetry has known; and this even when borrowing from Tasso—whose style he perhaps transcends. One may regret, on the other hand, that the rhyme-scheme of the *Amoretti* has not been adopted by subsequent sonneteers. It had been used by the Scottish poets in the 1580's and had probably been invented by James VI. The opening line of each quatrain rhymes with the concluding line of the last, and thus the three quatrains are most artistically interlaced. Full advantage is taken of the final couplet, which is employed really to conclude or to sum up, and not simply to complete the requisite fourteen verses. And this is seen nowhere better than in the opening quatorzain:

Happy, ye leaves! when as those lilly hands
Which hold my life. . . .

which, whatever its faults of diction, is masterfully constructed and was afterwards to be recalled by Milton, and by Keats in the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.'

The *Epithalamion,* which completes and crowns the record of Spenser's courtship, is a rare triumph of art. At the time of his wedding-day (11 June 1594) which this splendid ode describes, Spenser was at the height of his powers. The framework of the sonnet had curbed his fluency to good effect; the ode on the other hand, susceptible of comprising a large number of stanzas of subtly varied patterns, admitted a certain generosity of plan, a certain copiousness of invention, and even—as Pindar had shown—called for them. Yet Spenser did not abuse the opportunity. As in the *Amoretti* he had shown himself a worthy disciple of the Italians, so in the *Epithalamion* he wrote, for perhaps the one time in his life, in a manner like that of the Greeks, or at least of Pindar and Bacchylides if theirs can be called a truly Greek manner.

Spenser may not have been one of our greatest poets; but he was, after Chaucer, the *chef d'école* for most of the subsequent poets: a sort of informal Professor appointed by the Muses, immensely learned, imaginative and ingenious, endowed too with an intuition of all kinds of possibilities; and he had a number of brilliant pupils—less in his own time than later—who were able, once he had given them the hint, to go further than he and sometimes to outshine him. In the light of all this, it is significant that Chaucer, 'source of English undefiled,' and Spenser, 'the poets' poet,' were both steeped in the poetry of Italy and wrote some of their best work on Italian models.

REFERENCES

[1] The analogy with the Pléiade has of course been noted before. Sidney affords a certain parallel with Du Bellay, while Spenser probably aspired, not without reason, to becoming the English Ronsard. Gabriel Harvey, however, can hardly be matched with Daurat.

[2] See E. A. Greenlaw, 'The Influence of Machiavelli on Spenser,' in *Modern Philology*, VII (1909), 187, 193-4.

[3] W. J. Courthope, 'The Poetry of Spenser,' in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. Cambridge, 1949, III, 224.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 214-16.

[5] R. W. Lee, 'Castiglione's Influence on Spenser's Early Hymns,' in *The Philological Quarterly*, VII (1928), 66.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-77.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

[8] Cf. the *Hymne in honour of Beautie*, vv. 120-140.

[9] Verses 148-161. Cited by Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 71 note.

[11] Quoted by Courthope, *op. cit.*, III, 235.

[12] *Ibid.*, III, 230.

[13] See the end of Chapter XVIII.

[14] Book XII, stanzas 29, 30, 31.

[15] Book I, canto iii, stanza 9.

[16] H. H. Blanchard, 'Spenser and Boiardo,' in *PMLA*, XL (1925), 830-31.

[17] See C. W. Lemmi, 'The Influence of Trissino on the *Faërie Queene*,' in *The Philological Quarterly*, VII (1928), 220-223.

[18] S. J. McMurphy, 'Spenser's Use of Ariosto for Allegory,' in *University of Washington Publications: Language and Literature, II, No. 1*. Seattle, 1924, p. 25.

[19] Lemmi, *art cit.*, p. 222.

[20] Canto xii, stanzas 57 and 59 of Spenser are translated from Tasso, Canto XVI, stanzas 9 and 10; stanzas 71, 74 and 75 of Spenser, from Tasso, stanzas 12, 14 and 15.

[21] Blanchard, *art. cit.*, pp. 834-38.

[22] It has been shown that various features of the story of Britomart and of those associated with it owe something to Boiardo: the name of Castle Joyous, which is the 'Palazzo gioioso' of the *Orlando innamorato*; the 'hideous beast' (III, vii) which threatens Florimell and which was suggested by the 'orc'—a monster whom, by the way, Ariosto had taken over; the discovery by Britomart of Scudamour in distress (III, xi) and their journey to the House of Busyrane; Scudamour's adventure in Book IV, canto x; some of Sir Artegall's adventures (IV, vi and V, viii); and even one or two details relating to Colin Clout and Pastorella in Book VI. A close study of these passages enabled Mr. Blanchard (*art. cit.*, pp. 838-49) to show that Spenser made use here of his memories of the *Orlando innamorato*. It must of course be recalled that a number of characters and episodes were common to Boiardo and Ariosto, whose work was a continuation of his predecessor's and even by some readers regarded as a sequel; and that a few of them were common to Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso. Spenser's mind was soaked in the romances of all three; and his idea of composition was not so much to *select* as to *collect*.

[23] R. E. Neil Dodge, 'Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto,' *PMLA*, XII (1897); and XXXV (1920); A. H. Gilbert, 'Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto, Supplementary,' *PMLA*, XXXIV (1919); S. J. McMurphy, *op. cit.*.

[24] McMurphy, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-20.

[26] Cf. Edmund G. Gardner, *The King of Court Poets . . . Lodovico Ariosto.* London, 1906, p. 274.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 269.
[28] McMurphy, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.
[29] For these parallels, cf. McMurphy, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
[30] 'Britomart est la seule des héroïnes spensériennes qui ait vraiment l'ampleur d'une création romanesque.' E. Legouis, in Legouis et Cazamian, *Histoire de la Littérature anglaise.* Paris, 1939, p. 279.
[31] Letter of 15 December 1517. Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-26.
[32] McMurphy, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 39, 47.
[33] In his note to Canto XIX of the translation of the *Orlando furioso.*
[34] McMurphy, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.
[35] E. A. Greenlaw, *art. cit.*, pp. 193-94.
[36] The Virgilian :

> 'How much' (sayd he) more happie is the state
> In which ye, father, here doe dwell at ease. . . .

is one of the more prominent and inevitable.
[37] Book VI, canto ix, stanzas 7 and 8.
[38] 'Diane de nymphes couronnée.'
[39] Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-16.
[40] J. W. Mackail, *The Springs of Helicon*, pp. 129-30.
[41] Book III, canto xii.
[42] Book VI, canto x, stanza 12.
[43] Book III, canto xi, stanzas 28-49.
[44] 'Spenser's Clothes of Arras and of Tours,' in the *Variorum Spenser*, III, 398-99.
[45] W. B. Watkins, *Shakespeare and Spenser.* Princeton, 1950, p. 224.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 235.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[49] Verses 289-91.
[50] Book III, canto xi, stanza 31.
[51] Book III, canto xii, stanza 8.
[52] '*La Reine des Fées* est essentiellement une galerie de peintures. Spenser est un grand peintre qui n'a jamais manié le pinceau. Le destin l'avait fait naître dans un pays où les arts plastiques ne devaient guère fleurir que deux siècles après lui. S'il était né en Italie, il aurait pu être un autre Titien, un second Véronèse. . . .' Legouis et Cazamian, *op. cit.*, p. 279.
[53] J. G. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-63.
[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-58.
[55] *Rime*, ed. Solerti, II, 429. Cited by Scott, *ibid*, p. 166.
[56] *Ibid.*, II, 319.
[57] *Ibid.*, II, 96.
[58] Legouis et Cazamian, *op. cit.*, p. 251.
[59] Sidney Lee, 'The Elizabethan Sonnet,' in *The Cambridge History of English Literature.* Cambridge, 1949, III, 259.

CHAPTER VIII

Shakespeare

I

THERE was a kind of narrative poem, sometimes ardent and licentious, that flourished between 1592 and 1595 and attracted writers of the highest genius. The vogue was encouraged by some of the younger nobles and courtiers and it has been attributed—without, however, an abundance of proof—to Italian influence. When, however, one examines the poems in question: Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (c. 1592), Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595), Marston's *Pygmalion*; and also Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* and Phineas Fletcher's *Venus and Anchises* (which were inferior essays in the same genre) one is led to ask what really inspired them. Was it the erotic poems of the Italian neo-Latinists, who were as a rule more daring than the vernacular poets? Or the Italian, and particularly the Venetian, painting of the time? Or were they merely suggested by the young nobles who had travelled in Italy and had acquired a taste for this kind of art because it was in the air?

A study of Spenser shows how perilous it is to see the influence of a specific painting in a passage where the poet, in treating the same theme, has been inspired only by a similar way of seeing things. And yet the question of influence in the genesis of a poem or a passage, even when we know that the author had at his elbow the text of Musaeus, Ovid, or Virgil, cannot be for this reason excluded.

We have to recognize that the artistic culture of Europe was then very homogeneous, and that in the field of secular art this quality had been strengthened by the Renaissance. Mythological themes were everywhere popular and the artists, whether painters or poets, nearly all drew inspiration from Ovid. Thus the themes of Mars and Venus, Venus and Adonis, Apollo and Daphne, the loves of Jupiter, stories from the tale of Troy, and even the story of Tarquin and Lucretia, were interpreted again and again by the painters, and the

Italian palaces were full of frescoes or pictures representing these subjects.[1] Men living in the same period, though in countries somewhat remote from each other, must often, one would think, possess a similar sensibility; and we know, in point of fact, that they often did, and do. It is then no matter for surprise if an English poem appears to be the exact counterpart of an Italian picture, and even conveys an identical impression. It was recognised, besides, that the two arts had some common ground, apart from the subjects they treated. Simonides had once, they say, described painting as dumb poetry and poetry as painting that speaks, and the saying was to be discussed for centuries, so much so that it appears to underlie the work of many of the greatest Renaissance artists. It is implicit in the relations between Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici on the one hand, and Botticelli on the other. Titian called his mythological paintings 'poesie,' and one could find a literary source for most of them. It is known that in his 'Bacchus and Ariadne' he followed Ovid and Catullus in the greatest detail. The relations between Latin poems and Italian paintings are clear enough; but what of the relations between Italian paintings and English poems? and, in short, what knowledge may we suppose English poets to have had of Italian painting?

The only Italian masterpiece to reach our shores in the early sixteenth century seems to have been 'St. George and the Dragon', a work of the young Raphael, which, as already mentioned, came as a present to Henry VII from the Duke of Urbino in 1506. Henry VIII began to collect foreign works of art and a number of nobles probably followed his example. But the Tudor sovereigns did not think of attracting to London such artists as Primaticcio, Leonardo or Andrea del Sarto, who had been invited to France. The first great collection of paintings, Italian and other, was made by Charles I and this indeed was superb and probably unique in Europe—until the Commonwealth broke it up.

In the sixteenth century the royal palaces at Hampton Court, Shene and Westminster may have possessed specimens of Italian art, so too may Leicester House and a few others; but it is doubtful whether, apart from one or two portraits, any of the masterpieces now in the National Gallery had reached England by the end of the century. There were great Italian pictures in Paris—François I^{er} had seen to that; and there were some in Madrid. But the majority were

still in Italy, and it would seem that Italian painting was known in England mainly through the intermediary of such poets as Ariosto and Tasso, and through the accounts given by travellers.

Of the more prominent English poets only Wyatt, Oxford, Sidney, Southwell, Daniel and Donne are certainly known to have visited the peninsula. On the other hand students and scholars went in numbers to Padua and Bologna, and a stay in Italy was already regarded as an essential feature of the Grand Tour, and part of a gentleman's education. There was a tendency to treat Venice, where one landed, or Padua, as one's headquarters, and from there to visit the cities of northern Italy or push south as far as Rome or Naples. But of all these cities Venice was by far the best known: it had the closest commercial relations with London, while the exotic splendour of its palaces and its artists dazzled the English. It was apparently usual to make a stay there and have one's portrait painted. Thus in 1574 Veronese made the portrait of Sidney which so greatly impressed Hubert Languet.

After that one returned home, bringing new clothes and often, it was said, strange morals. Shakespeare speaks of

> Reports of fashions in proud Italy
> Whose manners still our tardy apish nation
> Limps after in base imitation;[2]

while, much earlier than this—as early as 1570—Roger Ascham had spoken severely of these habits. The Italians were right, he said, in declaring: 'L'Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato.' But it is not easy to verify the truth of this statement. It may be said (as it usually is) to apply to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose quarrels with Burleigh and Sidney were to create a certain scandal. It was in the autumn of 1575 that he realised 'the ambition of his life' in visiting Milan, Venice, Padua, and perhaps Mantua. He returned in March 1576. But how far was his violence due to the few winter months he passed in northern Italy? Of what other travellers might Ascham's observations be true? Certainly not of Sidney, or of Henry Wotton who in 1591-1593 made a more prolonged stay, passing by way of Venice, Padua, Florence, Siena, Rome and Naples, and returning later as ambassador to Venice. One would like to have fuller information regarding other visitors; but correspondence as copious as Wotton's, and even as Sidney's, is rare. One cannot, however, but

feel that their experiences were fairly typical, and one is inclined to think that the majority of travellers were more impressed with what they saw and heard than with what they read. The fact that Sidney in the *Arcadia* speaks of Titian's *Danaë* suggests that he had seen one of the two pictures the artist had painted of that subject.

Now it was gentlemen of this kind who set the tone for the poets who admired them or sought their protection. Poems were dedicated to them, and even possibly solicited by them. And it seems likely that, fired with enthusiasm for the great paintings they had seen in Venice, Mantua or elsewhere, they spoke of them on their return home and that, to please them, the poets attempted to vie in verse with the masters of modern Italian art.

In the case of Marlowe this may be doubtful; even when he describes the lovers his imagination is very bookish. But Shakespeare often speaks of pictures and describes them in such a way that good judges have held that he was thinking of paintings that really existed. Thus in considering *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece,* Sir Walter Ralegh wrote: 'It would not be rash to say that these two poems were suggested by pictures, and that they should be read and appreciated in the light of this fact';[3] while Abel Lefranc said of *Lucrece*: 'Il est manifeste que le poète ne s'est pas seulement inspiré de Virgile et d'Ovide, mais d'une série de peintures véritables qu'on n'a pas réussi encore à identifier.'[4] This has been doubted. And yet, apropos of Shakespeare, one should be on one's guard against preconceived notions. Let us turn to the text:

> Even as the sun with purple-colour'd face
> Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,
> Rose-cheek'd Adonis hied him to the chase;
> Hunting he lov'd, but love he laugh'd to scorn;
> Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,
> And like a bold-fac'd suitor 'gins to woo him.

Thus begins *Venus and Adonis.* If we now look at Titian's *Venus and Adonis,* we may well tell ourselves that here was the starting-point of the poem. Titian portrays a young hunter with sun-tanned features that speak only of health and the open air. He is holding his dogs in leash and looking down on the goddess with an air that seems to express boredom not unmixed with impatience and even disdain. He is, in short, rebellious, exactly as Shakespeare depicts him; whereas *in all the ancient poets,* Greek and Latin, he is responsive to her love.

One may reasonably infer that this modern interpretation of the myth had come to Shakespeare directly or indirectly from the lips of a traveller who had seen Titian's painting, or one like it; or one might even suppose he had seen it himself, though that would involve a further hypothesis.

He is not, of course, in this instance speaking of a painting; however, in the 'Induction' to *The Taming of the Shrew,* someone says to Sly:

> Do'st see these pictures? We will fetch thee straight
> Adonis painted by a running brook,
> And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
> Which seem to move and wanton with her breath. . . .
> *Lord.*—We'll show thee Io as she was a maid,
> And how she was beguiled and surpris'd
> As lively painted as the deed was done.
> *Third Servant.*—Or Daphne roaming through a thorny wood. . . .
> So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn.

It is possible that Shakespeare is here simply inventing; but it is more natural to suppose that he is describing real pictures such, for example, as Correggio's *Io* which was then at Milan;[6] because the scene is in Italy (at Padua), and he is speaking of pictures in a very circumstantial way. Mr. J. J. Dwyer, the author of a recent study from which we draw in these pages, attempts to show that the poems and dramas attributed to Shakespeare contain many allusions to pictures which had been actually seen in Italy. Without in the least subscribing to the Earl of Oxford paradox (which Mr. Dwyer apparently holds to), one may note certain curious facts.

In the last act of *The Winter's Tale,* when they are preparing to reveal Hermione, ostensibly as a statue, to Leontes, who believes her dead, a gentleman uses these words:

> . . . the princess hearing of her mother's statue . . . a piece many years in doing, and now recently perform'd by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape.[7]

An allusion, albeit doubtful, to Raphael's pupil has also been seen in *Love's Labour's Lost,*[8] which is one of the first of Shakespeare's plays as *The Winter's Tale* is the last. However that may be, it is certain that Shakespeare knew about Giulio Romano.

If we turn now to the *Rape of Lucrece* we find a very curious passage which has no parallel either in Livy (who was the principal source of this poem) or Ovid. Lucrece, who is awaiting Collatine's return and, weary with grief, seeking new means of lamenting, finally thinks of a picture she has:

> At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece
> Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy;
> Before the which is drawn the power of Greece,
> For Helen's rape the city to destroy. . . .
>
> In Ajax and Ulysses, O, what art
> Of physiognomy might one behold!
> The face of either cipher'd either's heart;
> Their face their manners most expressly told;
> In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigour roll'd. . . .
>
> To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,
> To find a face where all distress is stell'd.
> Many she sees where cares have carved some,
> But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd,
> Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,
> Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,
> Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies.
>
> In her the painter had anatomiz'd
> Time's ruin, beauty's wrack, and grim care's reign. . . .

Finally she sees the subtle Sinon whose devices were represented with an art equally subtle, and this makes her think once more of Tarquin and fills her with despair.

In spite of the allusion to 'a piece of skilful painting', one has the impression of several pictures because Lucrece sees episodes both of the siege and of the taking of the city. Now, as Mr. Dwyer points out, towards 1536 Giulio Romano had painted for the Castello at Mantua, where he was employed on work of reconstruction as well as decoration, a series of frescoes of the siege and taking of Troy, among which figure 'Il Ratto di Elena' ('Helen's Rape'), 'Il Sogno di Ecuba' and 'Il Cavallo di Legno con l'astuto Sinone.'[9] We know that Mantua belonged to the Gonzaga family. If it be recalled that in the play which Hamlet arranges to be acted so as to unmask his uncle someone speaks, with apparent irrelevance, of the murder of Priam by Pyrrhus, and the despair of Hecuba, and that after the piece has been

interrupted, the prince excitedly exclaims: 'His name's Gonzago, the story is extant, writ in choice Italian,' it may be imagined from this concourse of little circumstances that Shakespeare had some knowledge of the court of the Gonzagas and the paintings of Giulio Romano, which, in that event, would be the 'série de peintures véritables' of which Abel Lefranc postulated the existence. One may add that the theme of Lucretia had been treated by several of the Italian painters, by Lorenzo Lotti, Tintoretto and others. If, as has been suggested, Shakespeare visited Venice, Padua and Verona with the Earl of Southampton in 1593, they might well have pushed as far as Mantua; in that case everything would be explained. This is an hypothesis to which we shall return later.

It has been observed with regard to the passage in *Lucrece*[10] that in the first book of the *Æneid* the hero sees a picture of the battle-fields of Ilium in a temple of Carthage. However, on examining these verses one sees that it is a question here of the siege, and not the capture of the city; and that Shakespeare did not follow them. For the death of Priam, and especially for Sinon, he may have taken something from Æneas' narrative in Book II, and that is all the more probable as he seems to have derived from verses 693-696 of this book the image: 'And little stars shot from their fixed places.'

The problem remains obscure; but, basing ourselves only on established facts, we may be allowed to suppose that the passage in *Lucrece* which comprises 202 verses (vv. 1366-1568) was founded on Giulio Romano's pictures and that Shakespeare took certain additional details from Virgil.

II

The history of Shakespeare's sonnets raises problems so difficult and yet so fascinating that they have tended to occupy the critics more than a study of the sonnets themselves. As the answers to these problems, except that of the period during which the sonnets were composed, lie outside the immediate scope of our enquiry, we touch on them only in passing and by way of introduction.

It is safe to say that the things we do not know about the history of the sonnets, and particularly of the persons and events to which they allude, greatly exceed in number the things we do know. We *know* that the first contemporary reference to them is in Meres's *Palladis*

Tamia of 1598; that the first two (145 and 146) to be published were in the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599; and that the series as a whole was published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609. There is no more reason to suppose that Shakespeare authorised or even approved of this publication than there is to doubt that he was the author of the one hundred and fifty-four sonnets attributed to him. But we do *not* know when he composed these sonnets; we cannot with certainty identify the 'Fair Youth,' 'the Dark Lady' or the rival poet; we are greatly perplexed as to what or whom he meant by the 'mortal moon' in sonnet cvii or by the 'pyramids of Time' in cxxiii; nor do we know in what order the sonnets should be arranged. The last point is so evident that a radical regrouping, such as has been suggested by Professor Benvenuto Cellini in his brilliant *Vita e Arte nei Sonetti di Shakespeare* is not only legitimate, but called for.

As regards the date of the sonnets, it is probably still held by most scholars that Shakespeare began them in 1593 and that, as a consequence, the stories they tell of the fair youth and the dark lady probably cover the three or four years that followed. But good reasons have been shown for dating the earlier sonnets somewhat earlier than this. A study of the style has led Cellini to believe that sonnets i to xvii (in which the poet urges the fair youth to marry) probably antedate *Venus and Adonis* (1593),[11] and that most of the sonnets belong to the period of the plays which are held to have been written between 1591 and 1595;[12] moreover the existence of actual sonnets embedded so to speak in the text—in letters, lyrics, and even in the dialogue of such early plays as *Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet,* and *All's Well that Ends Well,*[13]—strongly suggests that Shakespeare was composing the sonnets at the time he was writing these plays. Only, unfortunately, we are not exactly sure when he *was* writing them.

Dr. Leslie Hotson, the great literary detective of our times, goes even further than Cellini, arguing that in the group (i-cxxvi) which more or less concerns the fair youth, three of the more mature sonnets, namely cvii, cxxiii and cxxiv, refer to events which had taken place in 1588 or 1589, and that they refer to them as current or very recent events. In cvii, for example, according to Dr. Hotson, the verse, 'The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd' is not an allusion to Queen Elizabeth, who successfully emerged from her

climacteric in 1596 (though this is still the orthodox explanation); but to the eclipse of the Spanish Armada which, a 'mortal,' that is *deadly,* thing, had advanced up the Channel in the formation of a crescent moon in 1588. Similarly, he thinks that cxxiv refers to the assassination of Henri III by Jacques Clément in 1589.[14] It follows, if we accept Dr. Hotson's conclusions, that Shakespeare had essayed his 'pupil pen' about three years prior to 1589; and that in 1589 he had attained a maturity of manner and inspiration which has hitherto been associated with some such moment as say 1596; hence, that the first group of sonnets was probably completed in 1590 and that those addressed to the dark lady followed immediately. The consequences are revolutionary, and the first of them would be to give Shakespeare priority as a sonnet-writer over all the other considerable sonneteers of the time, except Sidney.

A dating of the sonnets so early, attractive as it may seem, remains a matter of hypothesis, and in the absence of more conclusive evidence, it may be wiser to agree with Cellini that they belong for the most part to the period 1591 to 1594, with a very few that were perhaps composed in later years. It is obvious, however, that the problem of the fair youth's identity is inseparable from the problem of the dating of the sonnets addressed to him. We must, in effect, suppose that he was in the first bloom of youth about 1591, or possibly a few years earlier, and that he was handsome, noble, rich, clever, and greatly averse to marriage. Numbers of persons have been suggested to fill the part; but it is just as likely that the object of Shakespeare's devotion was the young Earl of Southampton, as anyone else. We know that between 1589 and 1594 he resisted Lord Burleigh's attempts to make him marry Lady Elizabeth de Vere (the Earl of Oxford's daughter), that he paid £5,000 to free himself from the obligation; and also that in 1593, and probably earlier, he was Shakespeare's patron. The fact that his initials happened to be 'H. W.' (Henry Wriothesley) and not 'W. H.' is in the judgment of certain scholars not relevant to the problem, because nothing compels us to identify the fair youth with the 'Mr. W. H.' to whom Thomas Thorpe dedicated the volume of 1609 as 'To the onlie Begetter of these insuing sonnets.' It is difficult to conceive how a nobleman of the rank of earl, baron, or even knight, could be addressed as 'Mr.', and it is possible that by 'begetter' Thorpe meant simply to designate the person who had procured for him the manuscript or the means

of publishing it. 'Mr. W. H.' may as well have been William Hall as anyone else.

As to the dark lady, we can be sure from the internal evidence of the sonnets that she was not a poetical Muse; further, that she was a married woman, that she was not beautiful, and that the attraction she exercised on the poet filled him with a sense of humiliation, guilt, and even anguish. In default of a likelier hypothesis, we may well suppose that she was Anne Sachfeilde, daughter of William Bird of Bristol and wife of John Davenant of Oxford;[15] perhaps also that she is to be identified with the 'Avisa' who was subsequently the object of Henry Willoughby's passion.[16] Now, as *Willobie his Avisa* appeared in 1594, this latter theory would favour an early dating of the sonnets to the dark lady. In any event there can be no question of a Petrarchan vein in these 'Dark Lady' poems; nor perhaps of any specifically anti-Petrarchan. They are among the most personal and the least 'literary' poems ever written; and therein they, even more than the poems to the fair youth, differ profoundly from most of the Elizabethan sonnets, except certain sonnets of Sidney, Spenser and Greville.

'The exclusive embodiment in verse of mere private introspection was barely known to [Shakespeare's] era,' wrote Sir Sidney Lee in his life of Shakespeare.[17] This may be true of the practice of most of Shakespeare's English contemporaries; but it does not seem to apply to Shakespeare himself. Indeed the considerations that have been mentioned—and they are, in this matter at least, relevant to our topic—suggest that we should not expect to find in most of his sonnets the same close dependence on literary models, particularly Italian and French, that we find in the minor sonneteers of the age.

III

The study of Shakespeare's literary sources in the sonnets is a delicate task and one approaches it with more diffidence since any conclusions arrived at will affect our conception both of the bearing of the sonnets on the poet's life, and of his art in the sonnet as distinguished from his art in narrative poetry and drama.

As soon as the collection of Shakespeare's sonnets is studied comparatively with the many thousand poems of cognate theme and form that the printing presses of England, France and Italy poured forth

> during the last years of the XVIth Century, a vast number of Shakespeare's performances prove to be little more than trials of skill, often of superlative merit, to which he deemed himself challenged by the poetic effort of his own or of past ages at home and abroad.[18]

So writes Sir Sidney Lee, and one hesitates to differ with a critic of such learning and acumen. Yet it seems to the present writer that the inspiration of the sonnets differs not in degree, but in kind, from the inspiration of the narrative poems Shakespeare was (as we believe) composing at the same time. *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* are exercises on literary themes, written under the empire of a literary fashion. They are brilliant and finished works of art—and primarily of art. When in the former poem Shakespeare turns from his literary theme, of which the best that can be said is that his treatment of it is adequate—as soon as he turns from this and writes from his own observation, in the episode of the hunted hare, one is conscious of the superiority of the work, not exactly from the style but from the accent. Here is something authentic. 'Tout le reste', good as it is, is still 'littérature.' The sonnets tell a very different story. They are of unequal merit; the style in some is absolutely final; in others rough or uneven. They have not, as a whole, been polished with a view to publication; but in them Shakespeare speaks from an experience so authentic, so poignant, that any literary reminiscences one may trace, or think one traces, can only have suggested themselves to him *après coup*, and as the readiest means of conveying what he had in mind. 'With this key,' as Wordsworth said, 'Shakespeare unlocked his heart.'

It has been pointed out that most of the themes treated by Shakespeare had also been treated by Italian poets; but as soon as one sonnet is confronted with another, the resemblance ceases to be striking except perhaps in the case of an Italian of whose sonnets he could have had no knowledge whatever.

Certain themes are, of course, central and it is impossible not to be struck with them from the outset:

> From fairest creatures we desire increase,
> That thereby beauty's rose might never die. . . .

We may think to eternise in poetry the beauty of the fair youth who is our friend; but it is only in his children that his beauty will live again:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field . . .
Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days . . .
If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,'
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

This and the other sonnets, especially xii and xvii in which the poet urges his friend to marry, led a learned German named Wolff[19] to point to three or four poems in which Tasso appeared to have sounded a like note. Thus, for example, we are told 'he wrote to Leonora Sanvitale, who is known to us through Goethe, that no artist could seize and perpetuate her image; she alone could do this through the birth of a child.' We are left to suppose that Tasso was actually warning this lady that her beauty would be left without memorial unless she had a child; and that the theme of his poem is thus almost identical with Shakespeare's; albeit, much less delicate. In actual fact, we discover that Tasso was congratulating her on the birth of a daughter.[20] The circumstances were after all very different. Among other comparisons suggested by Wolff is one with a sonnet in which Tasso warns the Duc de Joyeuse against falling in love, Narcissus-like, with himself. One supposes that, like Shakespeare, he is urging his patron to marry. He is doing nothing of the kind; on the contrary, he is directing the duke's gaze towards the object of the Platonists' highest contemplation— the eternal beauty which perishes not:

Non divieni, Signor, novo Narciso,
Anzi ti volgi a le bellezze eterne.

Another theme prominent in Shakespeare's sonnets is the situation of two men loving the same woman, a woman who transfers her affection from one to the other. This, Wolff points out, had occurred in the case of Tosco and Alamanni, and the latter had written on it. This, of course, resembles the position of Shakespeare as regards his friend and the dark lady; but it does not prove that Shakespeare knew anything about Alamanni, still less that the story related in the 'Dark Lady' sonnets had not taken place. We feel sure (and it is one of our few certainties) that it had. And finally the

fact that Italian poets had celebrated 'dark' beauties, although fair ones were more fashionable, does not prove that Shakespeare did not love a dark lady. Nowhere, perhaps, has the quest for sources proved more delusive than in the case of Shakespeare's sonnets.[21]

The ardent friendship of one man for another—a friendship exempt from sexual passion—and the eulogy of one's friend's beauty, were not uncommon in Renaissance Europe. Shakespeare's affection for the fair youth was probably of the same order as Michelangelo's for Tommaso de' Cavallieri. Other Italian poets had celebrated this theme which is so prominent in Shakespeare's sonnets; but there is no certainty that he had read any of them, and one is not sure that he knew very much Italian.[22]

He could hardly, of course, escape from the Petrarchism which had been penetrating English poetry since the time of Surrey, and he had probably read a number of English Petrarchan sonnets and become aware of their tone; even of the themes they treated. When he found himself in situations vaguely analogous to those of Petrarch, it was natural that his response should be rather similar, and there are five or six sonnets, grouped by Signor Cellini under the heading 'I Sonetti della Lontananza,' in which we may see a community of experiences and inspiration between the two poets. It is interesting to compare Shakespeare's sonnets l and li[23] with Petrarch's Sonetto xi in Vita (*Rime,* nº xv). Petrarch, journeying away from his beloved, had written:

Io mi rivolgo indietro, a ciascun passo
Col corpo stanco, ch' a gran pena porto;
E prendo allor del vostr' acre conforto,
Che 'l fa gir oltra, dicendo: Oimè lasso!
Poi, ripensando al dolce ben ch'io lasso,
Al cammin lungo et al mio viver corto,
Fermo le piante sbigottito e smorto,
E gli occhi in terra lagrimando abasso. . . .

The texture of the sonnet, like the emotion, is fairly simple. Shakespeare enriches the theme of the grieving soul and the weary body by showing his horse as sharing in his woe:

How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek, my weary travel's end,
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
'Thus far the miles are measur'd from thy friend!'

The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods dully on to bear that weight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider lov'd not speed, being made from thee.

So he spurs on his beast. The horse responds with a groan, and this reminds him that

My grief lies onward and my joy behind.

There is a similar community of feeling, too, in the sonnets on wakefulness.[24] In clxxviii in Vita (*Rime*, ccxxxiv), Petrarch addresses the room which once had been as a haven, and the bed which had once given comfort, but is now watered with his tears:

O cameretta, che già fusti un porto
A le gravi tempeste mi diurne,
Fonte se' or di lagrime notturne,
Che' l dí celate per vergogna porto!
O letticciuol, che requie eri e conforto
In tanti affanni, di che dogliose urne
Ti bagna Amor con quelle mani eburne
Solo ver 'me crudeli a sí gran torto.

Shakespeare in a like situation undergoes a more rapid succession of torments:

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired.[25]

So that he sees continually the image of the beloved. Likewise the wakefulness which is also the theme of sonnets xxviii and lxi has been compared[26] with Petrarch's Canzone iv in Vita (*Rime*, l):

Ma, lasso, ogni dolor che 'l dí m'adduce,
Cresce qual or s'invia
Per partirsi da noi l'eterna luce.

The reawakening of life in spring, commonplace as it may appear, is a theme associated with Petrarch, and there is almost certainly an echo of his 'Zefiro torna e 'l bel tempo rimena,' which had been imitated by Surrey, in Shakespeare's sonnet xcviii:

> From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim
> Hath put a spirit of youth in everything.
> That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him. . . .

So, too, Shakespeare's comparison of his muse to a ship, in one of the sonnets referring to the rival poet (who was perhaps George Chapman[27]):

> But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,
> The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
> My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
> On your broad main doth wilfully appear. . . .[28]

is an image deriving from Sonetto cxxxvii in Vita (*Rime,* clxxxix): 'Passa la nave mia colma d'obblio. . . .' by way of Wyatt,[29] whom he must have read. But Professor Cellini, who points to these correspondences, does not suggest that Shakespeare imitated Petrarch. Shakespeare did not scruple to draw *motifs* or hints from the common stock of Petrarchan lyricism; but he remained himself. 'Eppure il suo è l'unico forse dei canzonieri inglesi del tempo che non contenga neppure una sola traduzione o un solo rifacimento di sonetti del Petrarca o dei petrarchisti, sia italiani che francesi.'[30] To this one can only add that if he ever drew more than a *motif* from poets who were not Latin or English, it was, as Sir Sidney Lee has argued,[31] from the French: from Jodelle, Jamyn, possibly Ronsard and almost certainly from Vauquelin de la Fresnaye.[32]

He must have been fully aware of all the great themes of Renaissance poetry, and yet, even when one feels sure he has had some particular verses in mind, they have been so much assimilated to his experience that he speaks only in his own name. This is particularly noticeable in the many sonnets on Time, that 'Bloody Tyrant,'[33] including those in which he touches on the boast of poets that their verse shall triumph over Time; for it is as though he were less confident in the power of his verse to eternise the beauty of the beloved, than Spenser or Drayton were in theirs; as though, in fact, he had to remind himself of this boasted power:

> Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long
> To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?[34]

Once indeed he speaks with assurance, in sonnet lv, but his usual

note is more wistful, as in the exquisite cvi:

> When in the chronicle of wasted time
> I see descriptions of the fairest wights. . . .

He does not pretend to have more skill than those who went before him nor does he feel that his verse will be more enduring than his love.[35]

> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
> If this be error and upon me proved,
> I never writ nor no man ever loved.[36]

Only Michelangelo had written on friendship in a vein so lofty, and his sonnets, which were later to attract Wordsworth's attention, were unknown to Shakespeare. They are perhaps more sublime than Shakespeare's, they contain more of piety. Their language is difficult, sometimes a little rough, and the similarity of feeling will be most easily apparent if we recall Wordsworth's rendering of the beautiful

> Ben può talor col mie 'rdente desio
> Salir la speme e non esser fallace . . .[37]

as follows:

> Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
> And I be undeluded, unbetrayed:
> For if of our affections none find grace
> In sight of Heaven, then, wherefore hath God made
> The world which we inhabit? Better plea
> Love cannot have, than that in loving thee
> Glory to that eternal Peace is paid,
> Who such divinity to thee imparts
> As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
> His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
> With beauty, which is varying every hour;
> But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
> Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
> That breathes on earth the air of paradise.[38]

The Italian touches greater heights, both in this sonnet and in the

one beginning:

> Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale
> Allor che ne' bei vostri intera pace
> Trovai. . . .[39]

> No mortal object did these eyes behold
> When first they met the placid light of thine. . . .[40]

but fundamentally these two great men were at one.

A study of Shakespeare bears out the view that in literature it is not the originality of the theme that counts as much as the manner in which the poet has relived it. What is of most value is the quality of soul, of which poetry is the notation. If it is true that

> Le vers se sent toujours des bassesses du coeur,

it is also true that it reveals the heart's nobilities. In the sonnets Shakespeare is always speaking from the heart, and out of a personal experience. This was a rare but not unique experience, because his friendship for the fair youth recalls Michelangelo's for Tommaso de' Cavallieri, and this is the more striking for being independent.

IV

It was not so much in lyrical poetry as in the theatre that Shakespeare was indebted to the Italians, and here his dependence is too obvious to be overlooked. Of the thirty-eight plays which he wrote or sketched out, the scenes of eleven are laid wholly or partly in Italy, while four or five others are inspired by Italian writers. Yet here, too, one meets with difficulty in the study of his sources because where the original of a drama or comedy is clearly an Italian *novella,* Shakespeare seems often to have had access to it through an earlier English play or poem, or through a French or English translation.

At the same time his tragedies and comedies are penetrated with Italian thought in ways that are often unexpected. *Hamlet,* as Drayton Henderson has shown,[41] is a case in point. Shakespeare's Hamlet is a far different person from the crafty and forceful warrior of Saxo and Belleforest; probably too from the hero of the earlier play which is supposed to have been Shakespeare's model. He is in fact a

Renaissance prince and his standard of conduct—a standard which also he expects in others—is that which Castiglione had delineated. It is to this he has lived up, until his mother's second marriage and the suspicion of his uncle's infamy have forced him to dissemble, and even to feign madness. What he was at heart, what he had been up to this point, emerges from Ophelia's cry of distress in Act I, scene iii:

> Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

Here is simply an image of the 'Cortegiano' who was the very 'glass of fashion' for Shakespeare's age. It may be recalled too that the duel of wit in *Much Ado* between Beatrice and Benedick seems to have been suggested by a similar passage in the *Booke of the Courtyer*. If, as seems likely, *Much Ado about Nothing* was written towards 1600 and *Hamlet* towards 1602, one may safely assume that Shakespeare had been browsing in Hoby's version about that time.

Much of Shakespeare's life, however, is shrouded in mystery and the chronology of the plays written prior to 1599 is so uncertain that authorities are greatly at variance regarding them. Hence the difficulty of assembling the evidence needed to examine the question: did Shakespeare ever visit Italy? and even the question: did he ever leave our shores?

It is true that we know more about his life than about the lives of most of the Elizabethan writers; but from February, 1585, when his children Judith and Hamnet were baptised at Stratford-on-Avon, to 1594 or 1595 lie the 'hidden years,'[42] as they have been called, when he was presumably gathering experience and making his *début* as a playwright. When it has been confessed that he makes strange errors in his plays, of which 'the sea-coast of Bohemia'[43] is one of the oddest, it must yet be admitted that his knowledge of soldiering and also of seafaring is so detailed and precise that, if he had had no experience of military service or the sea, he was almost miraculously clever in picking up so much information; and the fact that he often uses it as it were unconsciously suggests that it

had been gathered at first hand. Daring hypotheses, even to that of a voyage round the world in 'The Golden Hind,'[44] have been put forward to account for his knowledge. The most attractive, as it rests on credible evidence, is the one which has been advanced by Sir Duff Cooper. We know that in 1585, at the very beginning of the 'hidden years,' Leicester was raising troops at Kenilworth, less than fifteen miles from Stratford-on-Avon, as he was about to take command of an expeditionary force to the Netherlands. What more natural than that he should recruit two or three players, a jester or someone who could 'play the fool well,' to accompany him? and that Shakespeare, who had been in trouble owing to his poaching on Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, should ask to join, or even be invited? However that may be, Sir Philip Sidney, who was one of Leicester's senior officers, writing to a correspondent in England in March, 1586, said: 'I wrote to you a letter by Will, my Lord of Leicester's jesting player, enclosed in a letter to my wife, and I never had answer thereof. . . . I since find that the knave delivered the letters to my lady of Leicester, but whether she sent them to you or no I know not. . . . '[45] The inference is that it was Will Shakespeare who, being on the point of returning to England, took Sidney's letter with him.[46] We have no proof that the 'jesting player' was Shakespeare, but if he was not the coincidence is an extraordinary one.

Among the problems that remain, the question of a possible sea-voyage and of a visit to Italy are among the most fascinating. He loved, in imagination, to dwell in Venetia more than in any other part of Italy, and seven of his plays, if not more, are situated in or related to this region. A first reading of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Romeo and Juliet* might lead one to suppose that he had been to Verona, while a closer study of *The Merchant of Venice* would lend force to an impression that he knew the whole territory. But as we are not sure when he composed any of these plays, we are at a loss to draw conclusions from them. One cannot pretend that *The Two Gentlemen, The Taming of the Shrew,* or *Romeo and Juliet* reveal a personal knowledge of Italy. Any evidence afforded by *The Taming of the Shrew* is inconclusive. One recalls how the play opens. Lucentio comes on the stage and at once, in magnificent language, like the hero of a Greek play, declaims the name of his father, the city of his birth and the purpose of his journey:

Tranio, since for the great desire I had
To see fair Padua, nursery of arts,
I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy,
The pleasant garden of great Italy . . .
Here let us breathe and haply institute
A course of learning and ingenious studies.

There is warmth of feeling here and the kind of admiration one might expect from an Englishman who had visited the city and seen the famous University. Such impressions, however, might easily have been obtained from some of the many Englishmen who had studied there.

But during the worst of the plague years, between 1592 and 1594, when the London theatres were closed for a long period and when Shakespeare was probably attached to the household of Southampton, it is not impossible that he and his patron, with some of the latter's friends, went by sea to Venice and that from there they visited Padua, Vicenza and Verona. This voyage would account for a knowledge of seafaring quite astonishing in an age when soldiers occupied a far higher place than sailors in the popular estimation. It might account, too, for such phrases as 'dry as the remainder biscuit' in *As You Like It,* and for Shakespeare's awareness that sailors are afraid of the 'lee shore' and like to have plenty of 'sea room.' It would render more natural his preoccupation with shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, which take place, or are referred to, in *The Comedy of Errors, Pericles, The Merchant of Venice* (in which Antonio's 'argosies' are particularly unfortunate), *Twelfth Night* (which starts with a shipwreck), *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale.*[47] Shakespeare's interest in Sicily and Illyria, near both of which one would pass in the course of a voyage to Venice, would also be readily comprehensible. Now this voyage, if—as there is reason to think—Shakespeare ever made it, must have been made in 1593 or early in 1594. It is significant that in *The Merchant of Venice,* which Shakespeare probably began to compose in 1594 while the trial of Dr. Lopez was proceeding in London (and what more natural than to write such a play on the morrow of a return from Venetia?) the Italian local colour is far more precise, more substantial and more convincing than in the (presumably) earlier plays of which the scenes are laid in this region.

Thus, in the trial, when he has to save Antonio from the clutches

of Shylock, Shakespeare turns to a 'young doctor of Padua,' knowing well that the Law School was at Padua; while the other best scenes in the play: the casket scene, the scene between Lorenzo and Jessica ('How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!') and the final recognition-scene between Portia and Bassanio, all are placed at 'Belmont,' that is, Montebello, the hill which overlooks the main road between Vicenza and Verona, and which is still crowned with its old castle walls. Shakespeare knew that the Venetian exchange was at the Rialto; he knew about the 'tranect' from Venice to the mainland; and he knew the exact distance from Padua to Montebello. One might reasonably conclude that he had been there.[48]

If we accept the hypothesis that the first group of the sonnets was begun in 1590 or 1591, it is easy to suppose that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet* were written before 1593, and that during that year Shakespeare could quite well have visited the scenes described in *The Merchant of Venice* and even perhaps have gone as far as Mantua. We should then the more readily understand why the opening of *Venus and Adonis* reminds us of Titian, and why Shakespeare gave so much space in *Lucrece* to describing the pictures of Troy.

The theory is attractive; yet some of the best critics have doubted it. They have argued that he could have obtained much information about Italy, as he certainly obtained some, from Giovanni Florio, who had been placed by Burleigh as a sort of tutor—and perhaps spy—in the household of Southampton. He apparently alluded to Florio in *Love's Labour's Lost* (1591?) and Florio retaliated in *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598). Shakespeare, moreover, could have met and talked with Italian, and notably, Venetian, merchants at the Elephant Inn at Bankside[49] where the theatres stood, and he might conceivably have acquired from them the knowledge he displays.

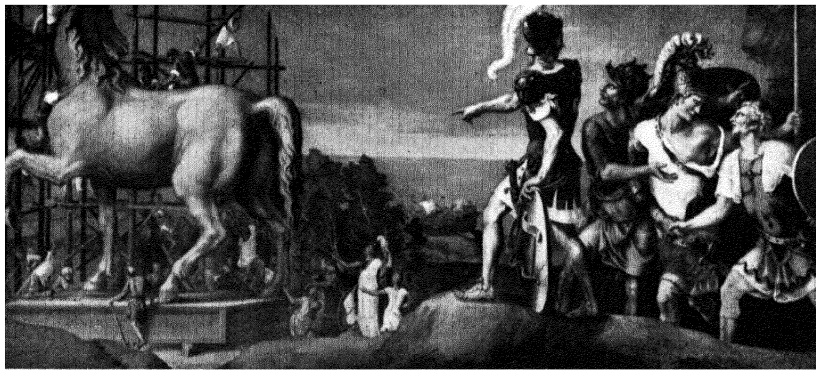
But this is supposing a good deal. The research of various kinds which has been published in the last few years tends to push further back than was hitherto accepted, the date of Shakespeare's début as a poet; and it thereby renders more feasible the supposition that a visit to Italy, not by land but by sea, took place between the composition of the three early plays relating to Italy, and *The Merchant of Venice*—a play which is doubtless at the centre of the argument. It seems incredible that a mind as active as Shakespeare's, an imagination as much occupied as his with the Italian scene, should not have

Mantua, Palazzo Ducale) *(Photo : Alinari)*

6. Il Ratto di Elena by *Giulio Romano*

At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece
Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy:
Before the which is drawn the power of Greece
For Helen's rape the city to destroy . . .

One of the paintings of the tale of Troy which may have a bearing on the description of Lucrece's pictures in Shakespeare's poem. Giulio Romano is the only Italian artist whom Shakespeare names.



Mantua, Palazzo Ducale) *(Photo : Alinari)*

Il Cavallo di Legno con l'astuto Sinone by *Giulio Romano*

The well-skill'd workman this mild Image drew
For perjur'd Sinon, whose enchanting story
The credulous old Priam after slew . . .

(*See p* 193)

seized an opportunity, such as may well have occurred in 1593, of visiting the peninsula. We do not know, any more than we know that he had, a few years earlier, gone to the Netherlands with Leicester's army; but the evidence points in the direction of both these hypotheses.

REFERENCES

[1] J. J. Dwyer, *Italian Art in the Poems and Plays of Shakespeare.* Colchester, 1946, p. 10.
[2] *Richard II,* Act II, scene i.
[3] *Shakespeare,* London, 1907, p. 82.
[4] Abel Lefranc, *A la Découverte de Shakespeare,* p. 198.
[5] Composed between August 1592 and April 1593.
[6] Sir Lionel Cust, the keeper of the King's pictures, thought so. J. J. Dwyer, *op. cit.,* p. 11.
[7] *The Winter's Tale,* Act V, scene ii. Cited by Dwyer, *op. cit.,* p. 3.
[8] In the phrase 'This senior-junior giant dwarf, Dan Cupid,' because the first Folio has the reading: 'This Signior Junio's gyant dwarfe, Dan Cupid,' and these words have been amended by Karl Elze (*Essays on Shakespeare,* London, 1874, cited by Dwyer, *op. cit.,* p. 14) to read 'Signor Julio' and been made to refer to Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici's dwarf, a portrait of whom was added by Giulio Romano to Raphael's *Vision of Constantine,* presumably to please the Cardinal.
[9] Dwyer, *op. cit.,* p. 6.
[10] *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece and the Minor Poems,* ed. Albert Feuillerat. New Haven, 1928, p. 162.
[11] Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita e Arte nei Sonetti di Shakespeare.* Rome, 1943, p. 14.
[12] *Ibid.,* pp. 14, 23.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 152.
[14] J. L. Hotson, *Shakespeare's Sonnets dated, and Other Essays.* London, 1949, pp. 4-21, 27-31.
[15] A. Acheson, *Shakespeare's Sonnet Story,* 1592-1598. London, 1933, pp. 120-56; B. Cellini, *op. cit.,* pp. 45-46.
[16] A. Acheson, *Mistress Davenant, the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets.* London, 1913; but cf. Cellini, *op. cit.,* pp. 39-40.
[17] Sir Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare.* London, ed. 1915, pp. 168-69.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 177.
[19] Wolff, 'Petrarchism and anti-Petrarchism in Shakespeare's Sonnets,' in *Englische Studien,* XLIX, cited by J. G. Scott, *Les Sonnets élisabéthains,* pp. 237 *et seq.*
[20] J. G. Scott, pp. 238-39.
[21] Not that Wolff affirmed that Shakespeare necessarily borrowed anything directly from the Italians; he wished apparently to show that the latter had treated all the essential themes we find in Shakespeare.
[22] But the late Ernesto Grillo, sometime Professor of Italian at Glasgow University, thought he knew a certain amount, and offered persuasive reasons for this belief (*Shakespeare and Italy.* Glasgow, Maclehose, 1949, pp. 125-131). His book should be studied by all who are unaware of Shakespeare's knowledge of Italy and things Italians. And it has just been shown by Leslie Hotson, in a paper read before the Modern Language Association of America at Chicago (29 December 1953), that Shakespeare knew more about foreign languages, including Dutch as well as French and Italian, than most of his commentators have allowed.
[23] Cellini, *op. cit.,* pp. 195-96.
[24] *Ibid.,* p. 197.
[25] No. xxvii.
[26] Cellini, *op. cit.,* p. 197.
[27] *Ibid.,* pp. 30-37.
[28] Sonnet lxxx.
[29] See above, p. 72.
[30] Cellini, *op. cit.,* p. 209.
[31] Sir Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England.* Oxford, 1910, pp. 254-55, 266-76. 'Shakespeare owed more to French than to Italian tuition.'

[32] La terre que ja trois fois s'est desaisie
De sa verdure, et ja de leurs vertus
Se sont trois fois les arbes devêtus,
Depuis qu' à toi s'est mon âme asservie.
(*Les Foresteries*)
With this, cf. Shakespeare, civ:
Three winters cold,
Have from the forest shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd. . . .

[33] No. xvi.

[34] No. c.

[35] Cf. No. cxxiii: 'This I do vow and this shall ever be:
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.'

[36] No. cxvi.

[37] Michelangelo Buonarotti, *Poesie* con prefazione di G. Amendola. Lanciano, 1934, No. cix, p. 126.

[38] *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt. Oxford, 1946, Vol. III, p. 14. Cf. Shakespeare's 'Love is not Love
That alters where it alteration finds.'

[39] No. lxxix. *Ed. cit.*, p. 70.

[40] Wordsworth, *ed. cit.*, III, p. 15.

[41] W. B. Drayton Henderson, note to the Everyman edition of *The Book of the Courtier*. London, 1928, pp. xiii-xvi.

[42] By Ivor Brown in *Shakespeare*, London, 1949.

[43] William Bliss in *The Real Shakespeare*, London, 1949, p. 106, suggests that Illyria and Bohemia were 'almost identical geographical terms' in Shakespeare's mind. The Emperior Rudolph II, whose dominions comprised Illyria, was also King of Bohemia.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[45] Harleian MSS, Vol. CCLXXXVII, f. 1. Quoted by W. J. Thoms in *Three Notelets on Shakespeare*, 1865; and by Duff Cooper.

[46] Duff Cooper, *Sergeant Shakespeare*. New York, 1950, pp. 31-35.

[47] William Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-87, 104-107. Mr. Bliss goes as far as to suggest that Shakespeare perhaps went round the world with Drake, Dec. 1577 to Sept. 1580; and later, to recoup his finances, made a voyage to the Mediterranean (1585-1589) on a ship probably trading to Tripoli; suffered shipwreck on the coast of Illyria but contrived to reach Venice, where he for the first time was introduced to Southampton. The latter, it is suggested, befriended him as a fellow-countryman in trouble; and so their friendship began (Bliss, pp. 102-114). But it seems to the present writer more probable that a voyage to the Mediterranean, if Shakespeare ever made one, took place about 1593 and in company with Southampton.

[48] Ernesto Grillo has shown that the objections raised against this theory, on the ground that Shakespeare's knowledge of Italian geography was defective, are for the most part invalid. One could perfectly well travel from Milan to the sea by water, as there was a canal connecting Milan with the Po: indeed it may have been easier at that time to visit most of the cities of northern Italy by water than by road. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Shakespeare refers to a forest, haunted by robbers, between Milan and Bergamo; and one of his critics has made this a ground for accusing him of ignorance. But this forest existed: it was known as the 'Gran Macchia' and is described by Manzoni in *I promessi Sposi*. (See *Shakespeare and Italy*, pp. 132-147).

[49] See G. S. Gargano, *Scapigliatura italiana a Londra sotto Elisabetta e Giacomo* I. Florence, 1923.

CHAPTER IX

Italians 'anglyfide'

I

THE wonderful manifestation of poetry which took place between 1590 and 1615, but which had begun before and continued after, could scarcely be represented by any mode of expression we possess. Its *simultaneous* character eludes literary art; its moral and intellectual content defies the resources of music; its musical qualities escape the grasp of the painter. One might think of the poets as forming an orchestra, in which one set of instruments would represent drama, another narrative verse, another pastoral, others again the sonnet, the song, and the religious poem; and in which every verse would blend into a symphony. Or one might think of the poetry of that time as a flower-garden. But it would require a Maeterlinck—the Maeterlinck of *Le double Jardin*—to present such an analogy; and only so, perhaps, could the simultaneous wonder of Elizabethan poetry, and Jacobean, be even vaguely apprehended.

A great mystery surrounds Shakespeare's débuts as poet and dramatist. We may tentatively suppose that he was in London in 1591, that about this time he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost* (of which the title seems to allude to a passage in Florio's *First Fruites*) and possibly *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and that his brilliance provoked the angry warning to other playwrights which was uttered by Greene in 1592. We may further suppose that by this time he was enjoying the protection and probably the friendship of Southampton, and that in the latter's household he encountered John Florio. He had probably already met him in London and it seems certain that he caricatured him in *Love's Labour's Lost,* in the personages of Armado and Holofernes.

Florio was now become one of the most prominent of the Italians resident in England; but only one; there was now in fact a considerable colony,[1] most of its members being resident aliens but some having been naturalised. And if the majority made no direct con-

tribution to the development of English poetry, the distinction of a few was a sign of the prestige which Italy enjoyed. Among the doctors was Cesare Adelmare, a graduate of Padua, who had been made censor of the Royal College of Physicians, and whose son, Sir Julius Caesar, was judge of the Admiralty Court. There was Giulio Borgarucci, brother of the Professor of Anatomy at Padua, who in 1572 had received the Cambridge M.D. and been appointed physician for life to the royal household. It was he who invented the curious 'pomo' which one carried about with one (as described in *John Inglesant*) as a safeguard against the plague. And there was the father of Milton's future friend, Charles Diodati. Elizabeth had appointed a number of Italians as musicians to the court, including the Bassani, the Lupos, Alfonso Ferrabosco, and later his son who had been born in England.[2] She also, less willingly no doubt, had recourse to the banking firm which Orazio Pallavicino had founded in the city.

He was a Genoese who had come over in the time of Queen Mary and acted as Collector of Papal taxes. When Elizabeth reestablished the Church on a Protestant basis, he decided to conform. The pence he had collected for Peter went to found a private business, with which, in the course of time, he associated a merchant named Niccolò di Gozzi. He subsequently advanced large sums to the future Henri IV and also to Elizabeth whom he saved from the direst embarrassment. In 1588 he fitted out a vessel at his own expense and himself took part in the naval battle in the Channel. Nor probably was he the only Italian serving with the English fleet; for the Cavaliere Petruccio Ubaldini described the discomfiture of the Armada in a splendidly illustrated manuscript which was afterwards translated and published in English.[3] This Ubaldini was a scion of the Florentine family: a professional soldier, he had come over towards 1550, and being a Protestant had settled in England. He was poor, and appears to have made a living by teaching Italian and illuminating books and manuscripts, an art in which he was greatly skilled. He was something of a poet, too.[4] One would gladly know more of him; one guesses he was the kind of Italian Shakespeare would like, as Florio was the kind he did not. Pallavicino was still another kind. While the Florentine noble remained poor, the Genoese financier went from strength to strength. He was knighted; and his death in 1600 was honoured by a book of elegies,

edited by Theophilus Field and bearing the quaint title: *An Italians dead bodie stucke with English flowers*. The poems it contains are not without savour, for while one wag proposed as epitaph:

> Here lies Horatio Palavazene
> Who robbed the Pope to lend the Queen,[5]

another wrote, more flatteringly:

> An English man Italionate (sic),
> Becomes a divell incarnate:
> But an Italian Anglyfide
> Becomes a Saint Angelifide.[6]

And it is fair to add that he had become a very honourable and patriotic Englishman, who had been on terms of intimacy with Burleigh, Buckhurst and others.[7]

Of the Italian merchants who lived on Bankside, most were probably Venetians, Genoese and Florentines, and a few may have had noble blood; for in Italy the prejudice against a noble's taking to trade was less strong than in England. In former times they had presumably lived together as metics; but as the wealth and power of England were now in the ascendant, they probably tended, like Pallavicino, to become naturalised. They can scarcely have had much influence in poetry, but an indirect influence on the stage—on those very numerous Elizabethan and Jacobean plays of which the scenes and subjects are Italian—they must have had; because the theatres—the Swan, the Rose and the Globe—were in their quarter and some of them certainly encountered the dramatists in the taverns. How much one would give to have the record of an evening's conversation at the Elephant Inn between some Italian with his reminiscences of the Rialto or the Grand Canal, or the 'traghetto,' and a Greene, Kyd, Marston (son of an Italian), Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, Massinger or Ford! They would meet casually, no doubt, but on equal terms; and while the dramatists drew most of their knowledge of Italy from books, nothing is more likely than that they should verify details or seek further information from the natives whom they met. The strongly Italianate features of the English stage between 1580 and 1630 offer a field of enquiry and meditation so vast and so difficult to explore that they still await their historian.

Poetry—non-dramatic—was more nearly connected with courtly

and University circles, and here too we find Italians who had made their home in England. The great jurist, Alberico Gentili (1550-1611), after spending some years at Tübingen, arrived in London in 1580 and settled at Oxford in 1582. In 1585, when the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, was discovered to be plotting against the Crown, the Queen's government appealed to Gentili, who advised against the use of drastic measures and wrote a treatise *De Legationibus, libri tres,* which became one of the bases of international law. In 1587 he was appointed professor of Civil Law at Oxford. Gentili was a noble, and a personal friend of Sidney, Walsingham, Bodley, Sir Henry Wotton and others.[8]

In the *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign and Domestic,* from which much of our knowledge of resident Italians has been derived, there is a letter[9] from a certain 'Allex Fougli' to John Florio, in which the writer speaks of a Signor Castelvetro for whom Florio had done some translating. We do not know whether this was the Giacomo Castelvetro who taught King James Italian;[10] but it seems more likely that it was Jacopo Castelvetro, a nephew of the great theoretician Lodovico, whose edition of Aristotle's *Poetics,* with the famous commentary (1570), was one of the main foundations of the neo-classic creed. Jacopo had come to England in 1584, and being fond of poetry and a man of means, had got into touch with the printer-publisher John Wolfe. This Wolfe had been to Italy to learn the language and study type-setting, and he was now and for years to come publishing Italian texts in London. So great at this time was the demand for the new pastoral poems that Castelvetro had the *Aminta* and the *Pastor fido* printed at his own expense;[11] and there is no doubt that these easily accessible London editions encouraged the vogue of pastoral poetry which flourished in the 1590's, and of pastoral drama in the following decades.

To suppose that Jacopo Castelvetro shared his uncle's views on the dramatic unities and on 'decoro' (a most important principle of the neo-classic creed)[12] would be pure guess-work. If he did—and the thing is possible—we should be entitled to see in him one of the most influential emissaries of literary Italy in the reign of Elizabeth. It would be strange indeed if, arriving as he did in 1584, he was not introduced to the circle of Sidney and his friends—of Sidney who, in his *Apologie for Poetrie,* had defended the new Italian doctrines and ridiculed the dramas which ignored them. It would

be pleasant then to picture this cultured and probably gentle Italian engaging his English hosts in a fascinating discussion of plays in which every personage should act and speak in a manner appropriate to his age, profession and nation ('decorum'), in which the atmosphere of a tragedy should not be ruined by the incursion of a buffoon, and in which the action should be ingeniously contrived to unroll in one spot and within the space of twenty-four hours. Whereupon Sidney, agreeing, would say that the scene should certainly not, as in some plays he could mention, shift bewilderingly from Asia on one side of the stage to Africa on the other; and soon after present three ladies gathering flowers in a garden; suddenly announce a shipwreck (presumably somewhere else); and afterwards show two armies in combat with four men on each side; or else, in despite of another kind of verisimilitude, present in the first act a prince and princess in love; in the second, the princess's having just given birth to a son; who is lost; but who grows up; and who in the last act is on the eve of becoming a father himself—and all in the space of two hours. To hear Sidney reading this sally from his manuscript, as he must once or twice have done—for the *Apologie* was not published until 1595—would delight a partisan of Lodovico Castelvetro, as Jacopo may have been and as Florio, who perhaps attended some such discussions, was certainly to become.

One always, *nolens volens,* comes back to Florio. The man was ubiquitous. Born in London, as we have seen, perhaps of an English mother, 'resolute John' combined the sobriety and cultural pride of the Italian with the pertinacity of the Englishman; and to these qualities he joined the shrewdness and inventiveness which are nurtured by Necessity. He was now coming to know nearly everyone who counted in England, and an even larger number were coming to know about him, a few to like him, some to respect and others probably to distrust him; for people were aware that he was a keen Protestant and suspected him of being a secret agent of the government. In the literary and political world of the 1590's and of the reign of James I he was to play a much larger part than was realised until the Comtesse de Chambrun[13] and Miss Frances Yates brought him so vividly before our eyes. We left him at the moment (1591) when he was publishing his *Second Frutes, to be gathered of twelve trees . . . To which is annexed his Gardine o Recreation, yeelding six thousand Italian Proverbs.*[14]

This was another Anglo-Italian primer, the dialogues being designed to illustrate the proverbs, the use of which is indicated by an asterisk in the text. It is one of the most compendious modern-language manuals of the time and it also gives us intimate pictures of contemporary life and manners. Torquato, Nundinio, Nolano (Bruno), Giovanni (Florio?), Daniel (Samuel Daniel?), Thomas, Pandolpho, Silvestro and others are introduced in a series of conversations on getting up, taking breakfast, playing tennis, dining ('this cramming after the English fashion'), discussing English amusements, disparaging English dramas, playing primero, backgammon and chess, talking of 'letters from forraine countries,' of travel and finally of love. Two of these dialogues are of literary interest. From the one on the theatre we can see how, since 1578, Florio had come to embrace the neo-classic doctrine. In the *First Fruites* he had decried English comedies because there was 'much knaverie used at' them. By 1591, as Miss Yates has shown,[15] he had found literary reasons for his disapproval. In the dialogue between Henry, 'G.', and Thomas, he makes Henry say: 'In Inghilterra non recitano vere comedie'. Thomas objects: 'E pur non fan altro che recitar tutto il giorno.' (Florio is still the puritan—and the pedant). Henry replies: 'Si, ma non sono nè vere comedie nè vere tragedie'; but, as he goes on to explain, 'Rapresentationi d'historie, *senza alcun decoro*.' 'Vere comedie,' etc., are translated by 'right comedies' and 'right tragedies', the terms Sidney had employed; but the use of the word 'decorum' is interesting because Sidney, while recommending the thing, had not employed the term.[16] Jacopo Castelvetro probably had; and I think we may ascribe much of Florio's attitude to his influence. In the twelfth and last dialogue, which is long, Pandolpho assails love and women with a plentiful ammunition of facetious proverbs, while Silvestro defends them, less effectively, by hurling back scraps of mythology and verses from Petrarch. Pandolpho is apparently renewing the line of attack Bruno had opened;[17] and one can see where Florio's sympathies lay, though he was cautious enough not openly to take sides.

The tone in Florio's *Second Frutes* is less carping, less didactic and more fashionable than in his *First Fruites*. English 'surfeting' is still frowned upon, but not the English language. There is talk of Vincenzo Saviolo, the Paduan fencing-master who lives 'at the sign of the red Lyon,' 'in the little streate, where the well is'; and it

is made clear that he is a very splendid, skilful, patient and honourable person; but the old English habit of fighting with sword and buckler is not now treated as 'clownish' and 'dastardly.' Finally, we are no longer told as in 1578 that 'al books are ful of love, with so many authours, that it were labour lost to speake of love'; on the contrary, we have forty pages of it. Florio is adapting himself to the tastes of his clientèle.[18] It is even as though he scents what is coming: the songs and love-poems and especially the books or sonnets by the brightest wits and by others less bright, and as though he is preparing young men for this vogue, not merely by warning them against 'tippling', 'swilling' and surfeting', but by offering specimens of conversation in the Italian manner and by showing how the question of love could be debated wittily and intelligently. The triumph of poetry is not exactly declared, but it is accepted.

Interesting in this matter is the sonnet which follows the epistle 'To the Reader' and is headed 'Phaeton *to his friend* Florio.

> Sweete friend whose name agrees with thy increase,
> How fit a rivall art thou of the Spring?
> For when each branche hath left his flourishing,
> And green-lockt Sommers shadie pleasures cease:
>
> She makes the Winters stormes repose in peace,
> And spends her franchise on each living thing:
> The dazies sprout, the litle birds doo sing,
> Hearbes, gummes, and plants doo vaunt of their release.
>
> So when that all our English witts lay dead,
> (Except the Laurell that is ever greene,)
> Thou with thy Frutes our barrenness o're-spread,
> And set thy flowrie pleasance to be seene.
>
> Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralitie,
> Were nere before brought out of Italy.

This is a mysterious sonnet, whatever way one looks at it. 'So when that all our English witts lay dead' seems to refer to the year 1578, when the *First Fruites* were published, in which case the wits would be Wyatt, Surrey and Gascoigne, the latter having died in 1577. But who was 'the Laurell that is ever greene," unless it was Robert Greene, who had been born in 1560? True, in 1578 he had not yet won any laurels, but the word 'ever' (on which of course there is a pun) could, and more naturally would, refer to the year

1591; and in 1591 Greene was famous for his novels which were edifying, and for his way of life which was not. The author of the sonnet may, in Miss Yates's opinion, have been Daniel; and as Daniel had played on Florio's name in the Latin verses he wrote in 1582 for the book of proverbs which Florio dedicated to Dyer; as he subsequently wrote verses for the Montaigne and for *Queen Anna's Worlde of Wordes,* this is likely.[19] He remained warmly attached to Florio throughout his life.

But Florio had foes as well as friends. No true Englishman, unless personally prejudiced in his favour, could fail to be irritated or amused by his pedantic self-sufficiency. The Warwickshire men in particular seem to have eyed him askance. Greville, who had given him money, could afford to shrug his shoulders; Drayton, who was good-humoured, to smile at his rage for proverbs; and Shakespeare to mock at him in a way that penetrated Florio's armour and stung him to the quick. But they were not all so good-natured, and a counterblast to the *Second Frutes* was not long in coming. This was the *Orthoepia Gallica. Eliots Fruits for the French,* which John Wolfe published in 1593. It is ostensibly another of the modern-language manuals which had been appearing, but it is really directed against the foreigners who were teaching languages in London, and especially against Florio. The author, John Eliot,[20] was a fellow-countryman of Shakespeare, who was two years younger than he. Eliot seems to have made a living by translating French books for Wolfe's press. He was an excellent French scholar, and doubtless a warm admirer of French literature, and especially of Rabelais. He is perhaps to be identified with the 'red-bearded thrid-bare Cavalier' whom Nashe describes 'at an ordinarie' as 'fumbling the dice after supper':[21] clearly not a puritan.

His book seems to have created a minor sensation. There are lively denunciations of Aretino and Machiavelli, but it is particularly into Florio and into the *Second Frutes* that Eliot fastens his teeth. To Florio's sermons on sobriety he opposes a 'Drunken Mens Banket' in which his tipplers cite the august examples of Æschylus and Ennius who (they allege) 'did drinke composing, did compose drinking.' There was no need to name Florio for Eliot's raillery to find its mark. Many, who had glanced through his *Second Frutes,* would recall that 'Augustine' does 'not greatlie fansie the Bear-baiting, by reason of the filthie stinke'; and that, when it is a question

of riding, 'Pompilio' inveighs against the 'filthie and accursed fashion of some Englishmen, to ride with these hard, straight and litle saddles.' One may judge of their delight when the Italian who is riding a horse in Eliot's book looks like 'an Ape on a Beares backe'; and when Eliot describes an 'Italian Harlekin' who 'is crump-shouldered and crooked, and hath a Hawkes-nose. The Persians adored those who had an Aquiline nose, for Cyrus sake, who they say, had his of forme like a shooing-horne.'

If Florio was living in Shoe Lane (where he had acquired a house) in 1593, he cannot have welcomed the appearance of the *Orthoepia Gallica*; but we know that at some date prior to October, 1594 and perhaps as early as 1592 he had entered the service of Southampton. Had he been invited by the earl? had he even been welcomed in a household whose sympathies were perhaps still half-Catholic? In 1589 the young earls of Southampton, Rutland and Bedford had all been wards of the Crown; and it may be that Burleigh recommended Florio to Southampton, ostensibly as the best Italian teacher of the day and really as one whom he could trust to keep his eyes and ears open; it may even be that he imposed Florio on his ward. Between 1591 and 1598 we know virtually nothing of Florio's private life, except that in October, 1594 he was in Hampshire and taking a violent part in one of Southampton's private quarrels.[22] That he was at the outset half a spy is extremely probable; but one fancies in the light of what followed, that he successfully ingratiated himself with this young lord. Now he had been engaged for some years on 'an exquisite Italian and English Dictionary and a Compendious Grammar.' In 1596 this 'most copious and exacte Dictionarye' was licensed, and it appeared in 1598 under the title of *A Worlde of Wordes*, dedicated to Southampton, Rutland and to Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford. It seems that all these persons had been his pupils, and all are complimented on their proficiency in Italian; the Countess, who knew French and Spanish as well, being Florio's 'most-most honoured, because best-best adorned Madame.'[23]

A Worlde of Wordes was one of the central literary achievements of the age. It not only served as a guide to all the standard books of courtesy and poetry, but it contained out-of-the-way words, dialect words and the technical words used in various arts and trades. No previous dictionary approached it for scholarship or thorough-

ness. But if Florio's pupils had learned much from him, he had learned much while compiling his lexicon. It will be remembered how in his *First Fruites* he had disparaged English, a language containing 'but a fewe' words that belong 'to Englishmen.' In the *Second Frutes* he had praised Italian as 'the most eloquent and copious' of all tongues. But in hunting out equivalents for the Italian words in his dictionary he had learned to appreciate the strength, colour and variety of English, and to enjoy its wealth of proverbs. 'And for English-gentlemen,' he writes, 'me thinks it must needs be a pleasure to them, to see so rich a toong (as Italian) out-vide by their mother-speech, as by the manie-folde Englishes of wordes in this is manifest.' This Italian-English lexicon is still a valuable reference-work for the language of Shakespeare, and in its own day it made Florio's reputation as a scholar.

His reputation as a wordy and cantankerous critic was already made and his 'Address to the Reader' well sustains it. He barks loudly at his enemies, 'leering curs, that rather snarle than bite,' and in particular at a certain 'H. S.'—that 'tooth-lesse dog.' Apparently this was Hugh Stanford, secretary to the Earl of Pembroke. And he had his 'complices': Eliot of course, who knew how to bite and whom Florio wisely let alone, but also a certain 'Aristophanes' whose identity is not hard to guess:

> Let Aristophanes and his comedians make plaies, and scowre their mouthes on Socrates; those very mouthes they make to vilifie, shall be the means to amplifie his vertue. . . It may be Socrates would not kicke again, if an asse did kicke at him, yet some that cannot be so wise . . . will for such jadish tricks give the asse his due burthen of bastonados.[24]

Florio had not forgiven the author of *Love's Labour's Lost*; and one imagines that the rage with which John Eliot had filled him, he now vents on Shakespeare, knowing that the latter is too great a man to retaliate. The image of an ape, with a nose like 'a shooing-horn,' riding 'on a Beares backe,' must have haunted Florio whenever he had occasion to ride up Shoe-Lane. 'Tell me, Signor Proverb, you would as lief ride bare-backe as on one of our "hard, straight and litle saddles." Or said you, "beare-backe"?' and so on and so forth. No matter, Florio-Socrates is too wise to deal in bastonados. And he has a 'great faction of good writers' on his side, these

presumably including Daniel and Nashe, and probably Jonson, who shares his views about the theatre.

He need scarcely have raised such an outcry. His literary position was strong, his social and political position seemed to be growing stronger. He had identified himself with the party of Essex and Southampton, and it is known that in 1598 Essex had begun to negotiate with the King of Scotland whom he regarded as the most probable and perhaps the best claimant to the succession.[25] Florio was shrewd enough to guess who the next sovereign would be; but also to know that nothing is certain until it has happened. There is evidence in the *Calendar of State Papers* to show that in August 1600 he was handling diplomatic correspondence with Scotland under the instructions of the Queen's Secretary. Now this was Sir Robert Cecil and he, as Miss Yates points out, was an enemy of Essex; one has therefore the strong suspicion that Florio, who probably still had his office at the French Embassy, was still acting as a secret agent of the Cecils.[26] At the end of 1600 Essex and his partisans decided to write personally to King James; in 1601 Essex attempted to seize power, and Southampton and Rutland made open cause with him. Essex was executed, Southampton imprisoned. Not only the Rutlands and Lady Rich (Essex's sister) must have been under a cloud, but probably the Bedfords and Haringtons too.[27]

Nothing happened to Florio; but he must have achieved miracles of discretion for all his patrons not to withdraw their support. From Southampton he does indeed seem to have drifted away. But there were now protectresses to whom he could turn. Not long before this, perhaps in 1597, Sir Edward Wotton had asked him to translate one of the *Essais* of Montaigne; then the Countess of Bedford had suggested he should translate the whole book; and this he at last accomplished. The *Essayes Or Morall Politike and Militarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne* (1603) were dedicated to six noble ladies of whom the first was fittingly the Countess of Bedford, who, with the Countess of Pembroke, was then the most generous patron of letters. In this classic version, Florio may be said to have enriched the language: it was widely read and justly admired. It seems very probable that in the plays written after 1603 Shakespeare used a certain number of words that he had found in it,[28] and there is a passage in Act II, Scene 1 of *The Tempest* which is clearly taken from the Montaigne.

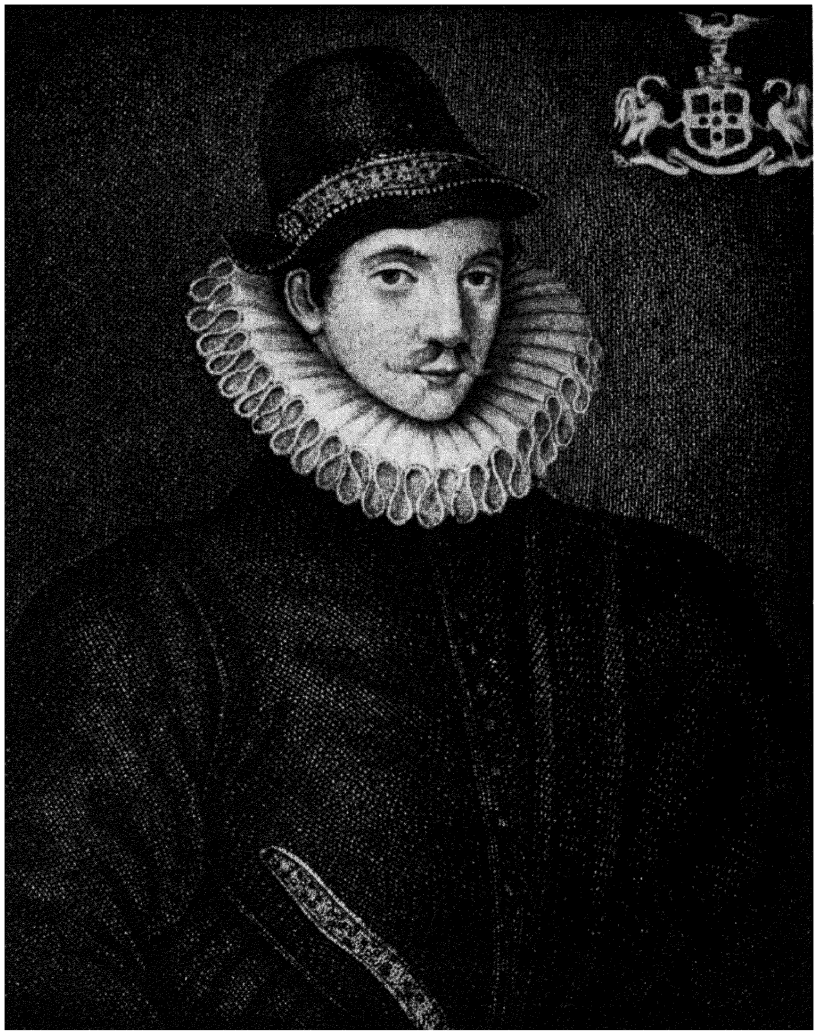
With the accession of James I Southampton had been released; the sun shone once more on the Bedfords and Haringtons; but Sir Robert Cecil kept his place, and Florio was now appointed private secretary and Italian tutor to Anne of Denmark, with the rank of 'groom of the Privy Chamber'[20] This was a confidential post and his influence soon became considerable. He was courted by foreign diplomats. One of these was Ottaviano Lotti, the skilful and amusing Resident of Tuscany, who made many friends in London and who was working for a marriage between Prince Henry, and after the latter's death, Prince Charles, and a Medici princess. James I was a good deal beholden to the Grand Duke who, years before, had warned him through the intermediary of Sir Henry Wotton, of the plots against his life. The Tuscan match did not materialise, but Lotti's dispatches to Florence (which were in cipher and afterwards decoded) give us two or three curious glimpses of Florio. In 1611 Lotti wrote that Florio 'è tutto'l giorno con la Regina a insegnarle la lingua italiana (she spoke it very well: it was probably her greatest attainment), e sente la ragionar d'ogni cosa, *e scrive tutte le sue più segrete lettere*' (our italics); and he adds details of Florio's conversations with the Princess Elizabeth about her marriage.[30] In 1613 he had occasion to solicit Florio's good offices. 'Mi guadagnai Florio con dargli desinare, e presentargli una pippa di tobacco, tutte cose che usano,'[31] a good dinner and a new pipe—'tutte cosa che usano,' in London, if not in Florence.

Life at Court was much gayer than it had been under the ageing Elizabeth. James was delighted to be in London, flattered by urbane cavaliers and courtly prelates. He spent money freely and his consort added her share to the extravagance. Masques, music and dancing were the order of the day, or rather of the night. Samuel Daniel was 'master of the children of the Queen's Revels'; Inigo Jones, who had been in Italy where he had no doubt studied these things, contrived marvels of scenery for the Masques; A. Ferrabosco, Nicholas Lanyer and Gioan Marco with their English colleagues composed the music; while the libretti were written by Daniel, Chapman, Beaumont and especially Ben Jonson. Jonson composed some twenty Masques for the Court and it was thanks mainly to him that the Masque became a literary genre of great beauty.[32] Poetry predominated in those days,[33] but much care also was given to the music. A new style, the 'stilo recitativo', had been devised in

Florence and it may be that Lotti was instrumental in introducing this into England. New kinds of lute, the 'chitarrone' and the 'theorbo' had also been invented in Italy and these, with the lyre and the viola were now brought into service. Thus we learn that Lanyer sang the *Masque of Lethe,* of which Jonson had written the words, 'after the Italian manner, having ordered and made both the scene and the music.'[34] Generally, however, it was Inigo Jones who 'ordered and made' the scenery, and he tended more and more to 'order' the whole production; in later years he quarrelled with Jonson, and contrived to have him excluded.[35] Queen Anne took part in these Masques from the outset, and the Court seemed 'a continual masquerade, where [the Queen's Ladies in Waiting], like so many sea-nymphs or Nereids, appeared often in various dresses, to the ravishment of the beholders, the King himself being not a little delighted with such fluent elegancies as made the night more glorious than the day.'[36]

The story of the Masque, which has been told by Miss Sullivan,[37] Miss Welsford and others, belongs to the history of dramatic verse and opera rather than to the kind of poetry we are studying; but the influences which determined the music and affected the libretti must have strengthened the Italianate atmosphere in which all poetry flourished at that time. In all this, Florio counted for something. He had his finger in many pies. But his influence was more linguistic than artistic. He was right in thinking the dictionary his *magnum opus.* He had continued to work on it, reading more widely than before, and in 1611 he brought out a second edition entitled *Queen Annas New Worlde of Words . . . . collected and newly much augmented.*

There were now over seventy-three thousand words listed. Florio had made a special study of Dante, with the aid of four commentaries; he had read a number of modern Italian dramatists, poets and prosateurs, including Machiavelli; he had studied Italian versions of the Bible and of Du Bartas's *Sepmaine.* But most of the books he had examined were on non-literary topics, scientific or technical.[38] His definitions or equivalents are so full not only of racy or proverbial alternatives, but also of explanations and historical notes that his work has some of the features of a gazetteer. More striking even than the industry and learning which underlay it, was the knowledge of Elizabethan English and the gusto he brought to its enjoyment. His old interest in Italian proverbs had no doubt led him to collect



(*Collection of Lord Willoughby de Broke*)

7. Portrait of Sir Fulke Greville, 1st Lord Brooke

(*See p.* 286)

English proverbs and other picturesque expressions. Among the examples cited by Miss Yates from the dictionary, one notices:

> *Fantásma*, a ghost, a hag, a spirit, a hobgoblin, a robin-good-fellow. Also the night-mare or riding-hag.
>
> *Grán romóre e póca lána*, great noise and little worth, or as we say much a doe about nothing.

In the Montaigne, he had written: 'My consultation doth somewhat roughly hew the matter'.[39] Critics have long speculated as to Shakespeare's probable indebtedness to Florio; but the problems this question raises are complicated by uncertainty regarding the dates of the plays. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had probably appeared by 1596, *Much Ado about Nothing* by 1600. Hamlet perhaps belongs to 1601 or 1602. Florio may occasionally have drawn from Shakespeare.

He spent part of his last years in preparing a third edition of the Dictionary, and also, we learn, 'tenn dialogues in Italian and English'. What happened to the latter is not exactly known, but they probably furnished the nine dialogues which Giovanni Torriano published in 1640. The third edition of the Dictionary, based on Florio's notes, was issued by this Torriano under the title of *Vocabulario Italiano & Inglese* in 1659, Torriano having added material of his own, and also an English-Italian dictionary. This was to remain until the eighteenth century the standard work.

In 1619, with the death of Queen Anne, Florio fell on evil days. He had lost his wife some years before, and his brother-in-law died in this same year, 1619. In December, feeling 'like a wolf driven from the wood by hunger', he appealed to Sir Francis Windebank, the Treasurer, for assistance;[40] and the Treasurer obtained from the king a patent granting Florio a pension of £100 a year for life. But he received nothing, for the good reason that the State was facing bankruptcy. In 1621 all pension-payments were suspended. Florio meanwhile had had to borrow in order to live and was in fear of imprisonment for debt. In a pathetic letter to Lord Cranfield, he recalls: 'Two Queenes, and the most eminent subjects of this Land (whereof fower Earles, three Lords, sitt with with (*sic*) your Ho: Lordship, at the sterne of this State) have heretofore bin my schollers'; and he might have added that he had served the late queen for sixteen years. His plea was just. Cranfield or his secretary noted that there were now £250 in arrears; and he apparently relieved

Florio out of his own pocket. But by 1623 Florio, who was now seventy years of age, was in the direst straits, and he again wrote to Cranfield a most heartrending letter. He had perhaps made a little money by translating extracts from Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnasso* (1612-1615), a quite fascinating work which throws light on the political and literary affairs of western Europe. But the English version did not appear until 1626, and it is uncertain whether any small payment had been made. It is more likely that Cranfield again assisted him privately. But the end was near. In 1625 there was an outbreak of the plague in London. It reached Fulham, where Florio was living, in the autumn, and this was the probable occasion of his death. He left one child, Aurelia, who had married a barber-surgeon named Molins and who had many descendants.

How much did Florio count for in the development of English poetry? His dialogue-books and his Montaigne were read by many of the writers of his age and of the succeeding age; and most students of Italian in the seventeenth century must have used his dictionary. All these books were treasuries of English, and the dictionary served as a kind of Roget's *Thesaurus*. But such reading would be of more assistance to prosateurs and dramatists than to poets. His appeal was not to the lyrist. Three distinguished poets seem to have been fond of him: Nicholas Breton, who in 1603 dedicated to Florio his dialogue, *A Mad World my Masters*; Samuel Daniel, a lifelong friend; and Ben Jonson, with whom he was on excellent terms under James I. But Breton was an older man, whose style was probably formed before he met Florio (and when that was, is unknown); and Daniel, though fond of his brother-in-law, was a person of gentler character and higher ideals. His own style, transparent and already classical, was very different from Florio's. The latter's relations with Jonson appear to have been close and cordial. In a copy of *Volpone* which Jonson presented to Florio, he wrote on the fly-leaf:

> To his loving Father, and worthy Freind
> Mr. John Florio:
> The Ayde of his Muses.
> Ben: Johnson seales this testemony of
> Freindship, and love.

It is likely that Florio had helped him with *Volpone*. There is evidence in Jonson's plays that he had read the Anglo-Italian dialogues; and

it appears that Florio shared Jonson's views on the unities and on 'decorum'; he may even have strengthened Jonson's attachment to them.[41]

His influence on non-dramatic poetry cannot have been as great as on prose and drama. It was impalpable and indirect. Nevertheless he taught Italian to a good many people including probably other poets besides Daniel and Fulke Greville; while others no doubt studied his language-dialogues. We often owe more to our schoolmaster, especially I think to the arrogant pedants among them (a small number, but notable) than we realise at the time; and so it may have been with Florio. Then, too, he made his presence felt in the circles of the Earl of Southampton and the Countess of Bedford and later in a court which, like those circles, was devoted to poetry. He was not an Italian of the personal stature of Alberico Gentili, or, later, of Baretti; but one judges that those who were not greatly enamoured of the man, respected the scholar, his devotion to 'the noble Italian tongue', and his naïve and sincere discovery of the beauties of the English tongue; of which, if he was not an architect, he was a kind of herald and pursuivant. From the varied rôles he played, the prestige of Italian culture, so great under the Tudors, probably gained under the first two Stuarts; and it is not fanciful to attribute to Florio something of the literary climate which prevailed in courtly and noble circles until the Civil War and the emigration of the Royalists prepared the way for a kind of literature that was different from that of the Renaissance.

REFERENCES

[1] From the *Returns of Aliens dwelling in the city and suburbs of London from the Reign of Henry VIII to that of James I* (Aberdeen, 1900), one learns that in 1567 there had been 138 Italians living in the City. By 1590 there may well have been 250 or so; and on Bankside, where the merchants were quartered, there were probably another 200 or so (See D. W. Singer, *Giordano Bruno*. New York, 1950, p. 28 note).

[2] L. Einstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 350–1; Yates, pp. 84, 254.

[3] In 1590. See M. A. Scott, p. 403.

[4] His *Rime* appeared in London in 1596, and a volume of his Italian verses with Latin translations was published posthumously in 1613 (M. A. Scott, pp. 498, 500).

[5] Cited by Einstein, p. 274 note.

[6] Cited by Yates, p. 36 note 2.

[7] See Einstein, pp. 273–277.

[8] See M. A. Scott, pp. 508, 510.

[9] Quoted by Miss Yates, pp. 77–8 note. The date of this letter is unknown, but it may belong to the later 1580's.

[10] Yates, pp. 78–9.

[11] *Il Pastor Fido: a spese di Jacopo Castelvetri. Londra,* 1591. (Einstein, p. 191). For his other publications, see M. A. Scott, pp. 510–11.

[12] See Yates, p. 44.

[13] *Giovanni Florio: un apôtre de la Renaissance en Angleterre.* Paris, 1921.

[14] 'London, Printed for Thomas Woodcock, dwelling at the Black-beare.' The *Giardino di Ricreatione* was also printed in a separate edition and issued by the same publisher.

[15] *Op. cit.*, pp. 44–5.

[16] 'But besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion . . .' And see Yates, p. 43.

[17] Yates, pp. 119–122.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 136–7.

[19] Yates, pp. 130–1.

[20] For John Eliot, see Yates, chapters VII and VIII.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 190–1.

[24] Cited by Yates, Appendix I, p. 339.

[25] Yates, p. 215.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 216–218.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] G. C. Taylor, *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne.* London, 1925; and Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

[29] One of his compatriots, G. F. Biondi, was a 'Gentleman Extraordinary of the Royal Privy Chamber.'

[30] Archivio di Stato, Florence. *Archivio Mediceo,* 4189. Cited by Gargano, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

[31] *Ibid., Archivio Mediceo,* 4190. See Gargano, p. 71.

[32] See M. B. Pickel, *Charles I as patron of Poetry and Drama.* London, 1936, pp. 129–30.

[33] Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque.* Cambridge, 1927.

[34] Yates, p. 254.

[35] M. B. Pickel, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–8.

[36] T. F. Henderson, *James I and VI*, p. 232. Cited by Pickel, p. 129.
[37] *Court Masques of James I.* New York, 1913.
[38] I am indebted for this summary to Miss Yates's analysis, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-7.
[39] See Yates, pp. 244-5, 268.
[40] In a letter in Italian, full of exquisite and touching circumlocutions. Published by Miss Yates, pp. 293-5.
[41] Yates, pp. 277-8. Florio's possible influence on Shakespeare has been discussed by A. H. Upham, the Comtesse de Chambrun, G. C. Taylor and Miss F. Yates (*op. cit.*, pp. 334-6 and passages listed above). In a work on *Italian Scholarship in Renaissance England* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1952) Dr. R. C. Simonini, Jr. devotes some interesting pages to Florio's probable influence on Shakespeare's plays (pp. 86-103) and on Ben Jonson's (pp. 103-109). The same writer, in an essay on 'John Florio, Scholar and Humanist' (*A Tribute to G. C. Taylor*, Chapel Hill, 1952, pp. 67-82), stresses Florio's importance as 'one of the foremost humanists of his time' (p. 81). My justification for having devoted so much space to him rests partly on this ground, partly on the fact that we, perhaps unfortunately, know so much about him and so little about the other Italians in England. Now whether the Elizabethans regarded Florio with the respect that modern scholars appear to feel for him, is more than doubtful. It is easy, thanks to Miss Yates, to list a few of his friends and a number of his protectors, but what other prominent people thought of him is another matter. One cannot rid oneself of the impression that there was something ambiguous about his position and life at the French embassy and, later, in Southampton's household; or of the suspicion that a number of men who were shrewd judges of character eyed him somewhat askance. It is true that he appears to have been very much in the hands of the Cecils; and it was not his fault that he had to keep an eye on the main chance. But did this require him to indulge in the violent polemics which disfigured part of the preface to *A Worlde of Wordes*? and one wonders what obliged him to dedicate the second edition to James I's consort and even to call it 'Queen Anna's Worlde of Wordes.' Had Southampton forfeited his esteem, or merely ceased to be useful? There were a number of Italians resident in England who were more respected than Florio and who must have contributed more than he to the opinion of Italy then current among well-informed men. If, in brief, Italy enjoyed so great a prestige at that time, it was due to them, and to other causes, more than to 'Resolute John.'

CHAPTER X

The Sonnet-books

IN the year 1590 the literary climate must have felt even more Italianate than before. The influence of Leicester, dead but honoured; the work of Florio; the fact that Sidney, Spenser, Lyly and others had shown or were showing how well the lessons of Italy could be incorporated into work of a national character—all were signs of the popularity of Southern culture. While some Englishmen, like John Eliot, resented the notion that they had anything to learn from abroad—unless it were from France—, entrenched themselves in national prejudice or invoked Rabelais to justify their love of good cheer, others perceived that England could only gain from a study of Italian manners, poetry and music. The novelist Thomas Nashe probably expressed a widespread feeling when in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592) he deprecated the excessive eating and drinking, which seem then to have been vices of all the northern peoples:

> God so love me, as I love the quick-witted Italians, and therefore love them the more, because they detest this surley swinish generation.

A year later, he returned to the charge, in *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem*:

> In all other things *English* men are the stoutest of all others, but being schollers, and lyving in theyr owne native soyle, theyr braines are so pestered with full platters, that they have no roome to bestirre them. Fie, fie, shall we, because we have Leade and Tynne Mynes in *England*, have Leade and Tynne Muses? . . . Let not the *Italians* call you dul-headed *Tramontani*.[1]

But the reproach was already being removed, and the years that elapsed between 1590 and 1614, and in a lesser degree until the Civil War, saw the greatest single flowering of poetry which England has ever produced: poetry of every kind, tragedies, comedies,

narrative and didactic poems, pastorals and eclogues, sonnets, songs and madrigals. And French and Italian influences, as well as classical, are perceptible almost everywhere.

The period 1591 to 1598 was the age of the sonnet; although some sonnets had been written or published before 1591. The sonnets of Shakespeare, probably begun as early as 1587, did not appear until 1609; those of Fulke Greville, of which the earliest may date from 1577, was published in 1633; those of Drummond of Hawthornden, in 1616. Sonnets sometimes appeared in prose-romances, like Sidney's *Arcadia* (1588); and many were republished in *Englands Helicon* in 1600. Most of them, however, were issued in separate volumes.

I

It is often insisted—over much, I believe—that the writing of variations on an old theme, and even positive imitations of notable poets, were regarded in Renaissance times as lawful and even laudable. But the more serious poets had doubts of this. What might have been admissible under Henry VIII, when the very forms of poetry were being created, was no longer desirable or necessary under Elizabeth. Besides, if a theme does not belong to any one author, the sequence of thoughts and images, by which he develops it, does; and to copy them is indignity. The greater poets all appear to have seen this, and most of them observed the principle: it is very rare that Shakespeare copies (if ever), or Drayton, or Greville, or Donne. And if the lesser poets filched 'from Petrarch's or from Portes' pen', they either admitted the fact, or hoped no one would observe it. Puttenham's strictures on plagiarists and Harington's sharp remark to Daniel, show that plagiarism was not approved by men of judgment.

The vogue of the sonnet was of short duration, and if we set apart the sonnets of Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare which have been examined, and those of Drayton and Greville which will be studied later, there was usually something exotic and artificial in it. The outburst of sonneteering which began in 1591 was apparently due to the sensation produced by *Astrophel and Stella* and to the prestige of Ronsard and Desportes. 'Few men', declared Lodge, 'are able to second the sweet conceits of Philippe Desportes whose poetical writings are ordinarily in every body's hand.'[2]

Unfortunately, there were few who did not attempt to 'second' them, supplying their want of feeling or imagination by pilfering from the French and Italians. 'The rank and file', writes Sir Sidney Lee,

> almost entirely depended for inspiration on their foreign reading. The full story of the Elizabethan sonnet is, for the most part, a suggestive chapter in the literary records of plagiarism, a testimony to the frequency of communication between literary Englishmen and literary Frenchmen and Italians, an illustration of the community of literary feeling which linked the three nations to one another.[3]

Back in 1576, acording to Florio, 'al books' had been 'full of love, with so many authors, that it were labour lost to speak of love'. The more particular fashion now was to address a sonnet to one's 'mistress' eyebrow'; and, if we are to believe Harington, those who wanted wit to rhyme their own verses had recourse to the professional; the usual charge being two crowns for a quatorzain. Drayton says that once, by writing a sonnet, he enabled a witless lover to win his lady.

It would be interesting to have an anthology of pieces written with so practical an object. In the sixteen or seventeen *canzonieri* that have survived, most of the pieces sound like literary exercises written by bachelors who were fancy free, or at most only served Fashion. It was the fashion to pay homage to Petrarch, for his primacy was well understood. To follow or copy him was not shameful, because, as Gabriel Harvey declared,

> all the noblest Italians, French and Spanish poets have in their several veins Petrarchized; and it is no dishonour for the daintiest or divinest muse to be his scholler, whom the amiablest invention and beautifullest elocution acknowledge their master.[4]

One could, and often did, Petrarchise at second hand; in this there was no great dishonour either, provided one admitted it. Italian was far more widely known that it had been thirty or forty years before, and most men of fashion pretended to some acquaintance with it. Where such acquaintance on the part of a poet was reasonably adequate, he was tempted to browse among the *Rime* of Tebaldeo and Serafino—which were often reprinted; of Paschale, Ruscelli, Firenzuola, Giovanni della Casa: among the various *Rime di Diversi*; and among such greater poets as Bembo, Ariosto and Tasso; while of course the neo-Latinists were not neglected.

Among the minor sonnet-writers a place of honour belongs to Samuel Daniel. In 1595, in the verses of *Colin Clouts come home again*, Spenser saluted him as follows:

> And there is a new shepheard late up sprong,
> The which doth all afore him far surpasse:
> Appearing well in that well tuned song
> Which late he sung unto a scornfull lasse. . . .

And the tribute was not undeserved because in 1591, when Daniel's first sonnets were printed without his leave in the first edition of *Astrophel and Stella*, no one in England except Sidney himself had published any as good.

He was the son of a music master and had been born in Somerset in 1562. From 1579 to 1581 he was at Magdalen Hall (that is, Hertford College), Oxford, where he seems to have learned Italian from John Florio. In 1585 he published a translation of the *Ragionimento di Paolo Giovio sopra i Motti, e Disegne d'Arme e d'Amore communemente chiamano Imprese*, which he dedicated to Sir Edward Dymoke, or Dimmock, who was at that time Queen's Champion.[5] Towards 1589 he accompanied Sir Edward on a tour of France and Italy. They seem to have been at Padua in 1590 and 1591 and there met Guarini, and probably became acquainted with the work of Tasso and Giovanni della Casa. It is possible that the Countess of Pembroke had defrayed his expenses on this journey with a view to employing him in her service; because after his return, he became tutor to her son, Lord William Herbert. She in any event first encouraged him in the pursuit of letters and to her he dedicated his *Delia*. In 1599 he dedicated to Greville the *Musophilus, or a General Defence of Learning*; and in this year he was engaged by the Countess of Cumberland as tutor to her daughter, Anne Clifford, then a little girl of nine. The next few years were spent in the castles at Skipton and Appleby, where there is still a portrait of Daniel. In 1602 he published an important *Defence of Rhyme*; and in 1603 he became, with his brother-in-law Florio, a groom of the Chamber to Anne of Denmark; 'inspector of Kirkham's children of the Queen's Revels'; and, as we have seen, a frequent purveyor of Masques to the Court. He died in 1619.

Daniel was not perhaps a great poet, but he was esteemed by both Spenser and Drayton, and he inspires respect for his character,

for his life-long devotion to poetry and learning, and for the purity and excellence of his diction. He is interesting as an example of that class of commoner who had received an Italian and French education and who, being employed by the nobility as tutors to their children, did much to build up and maintain a standard of culture in England.

During his visit to Italy, if we are to believe a sonnet of 1602, Guarini had told him that 'our costes', that is, our English coasts,

> were with no measures grac'd
> Nor barbarous tongues could any verse bring forth.

If so injudicious a remark was ever made, it must have put Daniel on his mettle to disprove it: which he was to do, very amply.

His *Delia contayning certayne Sonnets; with the Complaint of Rosamund* was published in 1592 and dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke. Whether the name had been inspired by Maurice Scève's *Délie* (which he does not imitate), or was intended to designate his patroness, we do not know; but there is nothing to suggest that 'Delia' is other than a synonym for the cold moon-goddess, an imaginary mistress. Daniel wrote in the conventional vein, telling of his ardent devotion, his sleepless nights, the cruelty of his mistress; and never perhaps has poet sung of the extremities of passion in accents more reasonable or less likely to disturb. Although no Petrarch, he avers he loves as well, and Delia will live on in his verses:

> Then take this picture which I here present thee! . . .
> This may remain thy lasting monument . . .

And again in number xxxviii:

> Thou canst not die, whilst any zeal abound
> In feeling hearts that can conceive these lines:
> Though thou a LAURA, hast no PETRARCH found;
> In base attire, yet clearly, beauty shines.
>
> And I, though born within a colder clime,
> Do feel mine inward heat as great (I know it).
> He never had more faith, although more ryme:
> I love as well, though he could better show it.

A critic,[6] impressed by the Petrarchan spirit of *Delia,* has established numerous parallels between these sonnets and Petrarch's *canzoniere*; but the closer scrutiny to which Sir Sidney Lee[7] and Miss Janet Scott[8]

have subjected them reveals that, while Daniel had some acquaintance with the text of the master, he more frequently had recourse to Desportes' adaptations. Sonnets xv and xvi may have originated in a reading of Petrarch, but Daniel almost certainly used the *Amours de Diane* (I, viii) for the former. There is much of Petrarch's spirit in number ix, but it also has come by way of the *Amours de Diane* (I, xxix). The sonnet (xxxii) which begins so promisingly:

Why doth my mistress credit so her glass. . .?

is adapted from number xviii of the *Amours d'Hippolyte,* while numbers xxxiii and liv are from the *Amours de Cléonice.* Daniel, however, was not content simply to adapt Desportes (and also Du Bellay); he studied the modern Italians with as much attention and it has been shown that he drew from Tansillo in number xx, from Tebaldeo in xxxii, from Cariteo and della Casa in xlix; from Guarini in xxviii and xlii, and especially from Tasso: from his *Rime amorose* in xxxvi and xxxvii, from Canto xvi of the *Gerusalemme liberata*:

Deh mira, egli cantò, spuntar la rosa . . .

which he rendered in xxxiv:

Look, Delia! how we 'steem the half-blown rose . . .

which is not as good a version as Spenser's; and above all from the famous chorus in Act I, scene ii of the *Aminta,* which he rendered beautifully, though without acknowledgment, in a metre closely resembling that of the original:

O happy Golden Age!
Not for that Rivers ran
With Streams of milk, and Honey dropt from Trees;
Not that the earth did gage
Unto the Husband man
Her voluntary fruits, free without Fees . . .

He also translated from G.-B. Marino the 'Description of Beauty' which, like the 'Pastorall' from Tasso cited above, follows his sonnet-sequence; and this was a symptom of the rising star of the Neapolitan poet, from whom Drummond, some fifteen or twenty years later, was to draw much more extensively.

The Italian colour of *Delia* can be seen not merely in the verses

which he lifted direct from Tasso and others (to the great amusement of Harington who twitted him pleasantly about 'honest theft'), but in the general atmosphere of his book which is much like that of Desportes' poems. Daniel's thoughts, feelings and literary habits were those of his age; his merits were his own. He was respected for the decency of his Muse and for the affection he bore the English language. From time to time he hit off a perfect phrase, and once or twice he wrote a sonnet which came near to perfection. One—if it be really Daniel's, as Miss Yates conjectures—was the 'Phaeton to his friend Florio', which appeared at the beginning of the *Second Frutes*[9] in 159·. Another was:

> Care-charmer Sleep! Son of the sable Night!
> Brother to Death! In silent darkness born! . . .[10]

It did not matter that most of the Latinists and vernacular poets of Italy had written on Sleep: the merit of Daniel's sonnet lay in the beauty of the language and the unity of the tone. Unlike the great poets of the age he was no *laudator temporis acti,* and in fact he seems more modern than Spenser and Shakespeare. Florio must have contributed to his knowledge of things Italian, but he does not seem to have influenced his style, which is not typically Elizabethan at all; it is as though he had felt the need of classical restraint and were already trying to exercise it.

A revised and slightly enlarged edition of *Delia* was printed in 1594. But the year 1593 had seen the appearance not only of the delightful *Phoenix Nest,* which contained a few sonnets, but of four of the most notable minor *canzonieri*: Watson's *Teares of Fancie,* which has already been noticed: Barnes's *Parthenophil*; Lodge's *Phillis*; and Giles Fletcher's *Licia.*

Barnabe Barnes (1569?-1609) was a son of the Puritan Bishop of Durham and brother of the Emmanuel Barnes who had been at Magdalen Hall in Oxford with Daniel and Florio. His *Parthenophil and Parthenophe. Sonnets, Madrigals, Elegies and Odes* is one of the most substantial volumes of its class, containing as it does one hundred and five sonnets, twenty-six madrigals, twenty-five elegies and other verses. One of his contemporaries called him 'Petrarch's scholar', but there is little here of the inwardness of Petrarch; and, though he may perhaps have heard of Sannazaro, Serafino or Cariteo, one can trace virtually nothing of direct Italian influence.

At the most, the name of his Muse—Parthenope—may have been suggested by Angeriano's invocation to his native city of Naples. He draws occasionally from Ronsard, Baïf, Belleau and Desportes; but his verses are more varied and original than those of most of his contemporaries. He had lived for a time in one of the Inns of Court—'the third University,' as they were called—and the earlier sonnets are full of legal terminology. All of them are alive and often extravagant:

> Barneus' art, unless I doe him wrong
> Is like a cuppe of sacke, heady and strong,

wrote Campion. 'C'est un forcené', remarks Legouis.

Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) began his career as a poet and romancer before settling down to the life of a physician. He had made his début in 1589 with *Scillaes Metamorphosis*. In 1590 came the *Rosalynde*, a romance in prose intermingled with songs and sonnets, from which Shakespeare was to draw the plot of *As You Like it*. Lodge next, being an adventurous soul, went on a voyage to Brazil and the Straits of Magellan, returning only in 1593. In this year he published *Phillis Honoured with Pastorall Sonnets, Elegies and amorous delights*, and a novel entitled *The Life and Death of William Longbeard*; in 1596 came another romance, *A Margarite of America*. In all these works he drew from French or Italian sources, from Bianciardi for *William Longbeard*, from Dolce and Martelli for *Margarite*; from more notable poets for *Phillis*. It is curious to observe that his long voyage to the southern Hemisphere, where he may indeed have picked up the story of *Margarite*, seems in no way to have affected his conception of literature; indeed the *Phillis* is less original than any of his other works. He drew largely from Ronsard and Desportes; but a fair number of the poems in *Phillis* have been traced[11] to Italian models.

Thus number xxxix, a 24-line 'sonnet' beginning: 'My matchless mistress whose delicious eye', is a diffuse exercise on a theme treated in a 12-line Latin epigram of Navagero's which had been imitated by Dolce, Domenichi and others. Number xxv derives from Petrarch, number xvii from Sannazaro; numbers ii, vi, x, and xviii—all poor or indifferent—are based on the *Rime* of Lodovico Paschale (1548), and numbers xx, xxi, xxii, xxvii and xxviii, on Ariosto. The last group is the most interesting. Good critics have been deceived by 'a seeming artlessness in Lodge's sonnets, a winning

directness' in his style, as until a few years ago everyone was deceived by Ronsard's famous 'Comme on void sur la branche an mois de mai la rose', which sounded indeed like a cry from the heart, though it was really a *rifacimento* from the Latin. Whether there is much of directness or artlessness in the following (*Phillis,* xxi), the reader may be left to judge:

> Ye heralds of my heart, mine ardent groans,
> Oh, tears which gladly would burst out in brooks,
> Oh, spent on fruitless sand my surging moans,
> Oh, thoughts enthralled unto care-boding looks! . . .

This comes straight from Ariosto's

> O, messaggi del cor, sospiri ardenti,
> O lagrime, ch'l giorno io celo a pena;
> O preghi sparsi in non feconda arena;
> O sempre in un voler pensieri intenti . . .[12]

The second verse, as will be seen, Lodge made precious and euphuistic, though he followed the rest of Ariosto's sonnet fairly closely. Number xxiii ('Burst, burst, poor heart! Thou hast no longer hope') is another, but apparently original exercise in the same vein. But xx and xxii, which are adapted from Ariosto, are much better and they explain why Lodge may still be esteemed as a sonnet-writer. Number xxii which begins:

> Fair art thou, Phillis, ay, so fair, sweet maid,
> As nor the sun, nor I have seen more fair—

which then enumerates her charms after the conventional pattern and concludes:

> Yet natheless though wondrous gifts you call these,
> My faith is far more wonderful than all these,

has been singled out[13] for special praise. It is good, though not an improvement on Ariosto's

> Madonna sete bella, e bella tanto
> Ch'io non veggio di voi cosa più bella;
> Miri la fronte, o luna, e l'altra stella,
> Che mi scorgon la via col lume santo . . .

concluding:

> . . . nondimeno
> Non starò, ch'io non dica arditamente,
> Che più mirabil molto è la mia fede.

Number xx, however, which is based on Ariosto's 'Altri loderà il viso', seems to me, despite obvious lapses, to show Lodge equally to advantage:

> Some praise the looks, and others praise the locks
> Of their fair queens, in love with curious words;
> Some laud the breast where love his treasure locks,
> All like the eye that life and love affords.
>
> But none of these frail beauties and unstable
> Shall make my pen riot in pompous style;
> More greater gifts shall my grave muse enable,
> Whereat severer brows shall never smile.
>
> I praise her honey-sweeter eloquence,
> Which from the fountain of true wisdom floweth,
> Her modest mien that matcheth excellence,
> Her matchless faith which from her virtue groweth;
> And could my style her happy virtues equal,
> Time had no power her glories to enthral.

In *A Margarite of America* he avowedly draws two sonnets from Dolce, one from Paschale and one from Vincenzo Martelli. The truth is, Lodge was usually cramped and artificial when writing sonnets, and his habit of borrowing them from others hindered more than it helped. As soon as he turns to the song, he is natural: he excells in the song, as one sees from the many lyrics contained in *Rosalynde* and elsewhere, and in *The Phoenix Nest* to which he was the principal contributor.

More even and facile, on the whole, than the pieces in *Phillis* are the fifty-three sonnets, followed by an ode and a verse dialogue, which were published by Giles Fletcher, the diplomat, in the autumn of 1593: *Licia, or Poems of Love in honour of the admirable and singular virtues of his Lady. To the Imitation of the best Latin Poets, and others.* 'If thou muse, What my Licia is?' he writes, 'Take her to be some Diana, at the least, chaste; or some Minerva: no Venus, fairer far. It may be she is Learning's Image . . . Perhaps I have shadowed '(The Holy) Discipline.' . . . It may be some College. It may be my conceit . . .'

He drew a few pieces from Ronsard, Muret and Théodore de Bèze; but it has been discovered by Miss J. G. Scott that he was principally indebted to an edition of the Latin poems of Angeriano,

Marullo and Jean Second (Secundus) which had appeared under the title *Poetae tres elegantissimi* in Paris in 1582, and to Gruter's *Ideae Pulchritudinis Harmosynae* (Heidelberg, 1587). Thus the first of the introductory epigrams, and also sonnets xvii, xviii, xix, and xxi are from Marullo, while numbers i-xv, xxiv-xxx, and xxxi and xxxii (24 in all) are paraphrases of Angeriano. Fletcher does not pretend to be original, but he rehandles his models in a more personal way than the plagiarisers of the time. Number xvii ('As are the sands, fair Licia, on the shore') is freely rehandled from Marullo, and number xviii is a development on a short dialogue by the same poet. In number xxviii ('In time the strong and stately turrets fall') he writes a paraphrase, almost a variation on the famous poem of Angeriano's inspired by Ovid, which had already been imitated by Watson and which Shakespeare was perhaps thinking of in 'When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced'. Numbers i, ii and xxv ('Seven are the Lights that wander in the skies') are more than usually happy adaptations of Angeriano; while number xlv ('There shone a Comet, and it was full west') which comes from the French Latinist, Jean Bonnefons, is perhaps the best of the series.[14]

Fletcher never posed as a man of letters. He was an LL.D., a former Fellow of King's College, Cambridge (where, as he recalls in his letter to Lady Mollineux, Sir John Harington had made his translation of Ariosto), and he led a busy life in the foreign service, acting as ambassador in various lands and travelling as far afield as Russia. His *Licia* merely represents the pastime of a gentleman.

Of Henry Constable (1562-1613), one forms a higher opinion than of most of the minor sonneteers. His themes are more varied, and he handles them with greater firmness than is usual. He even on occasion (I, ix, 'My lady's presence makes the Roses red') causes one to think of Shakespeare's sonnet on a similar *motif*, without the comparison's being very unfavourable to Constable.

Diana, the praises of his mistres, in certaine sweete Sonnets, by H. C.... (23 sonnets) was published in 1592. In 1594 appeared an enlarged edition: *Diana, or, The Excellent conceitful Sonnets of H. C. augmented with divers Quatorzains of honourable and learned personages.* It transpired that a number of the latter were by Sidney, and we do not know exactly which of the 1594 sonnets were really Constable's. They are grouped in eight 'Decades' of which two are addressed to well-known ladies of the time; but for the rest, 'Diana' is as imaginary

as the other Muses who inspired so much literary fervour. The general feeling of this *recueil* is Petrarchan, and Miss Scott has pointed to a verbal reminiscence of Petrarch's 'Vostro, Donna, il peccato, e mio sia'l danno' in Decade VI, sonnet i, which concludes: 'Mine be the torment, but the guilt be thine'.[15] He also draws from Angelo di Costanza's *Fiori delle Rime, fo* 20, at the end of II, iii, where the verse

Io sento il caldo, e non veggio la luce

has suggested 'I feel my sun's heat, though his light I miss'; and at the beginning of II, x, in which Costanza's verses

S'amate, almo mio sol, ch'io canti o scriva
L'alte bellezze, onde'l ciel volse ornavi

are apparently compressed into

Fair Aun! if you would have me praise your light;[16]

while Costanza's striking sonnet in *Fiori,* fo 5, beginning 'Del foco che dal ciel Prometeo tolse' is the basis of Constable's

Prometheus, for stealing living fire
From heaven's king, was judged eternal death.

But he borrowed rather more from the French than from the Italians, and his best sonnets seem to be original. He did not adopt the rhyme scheme: a b a b c d c d e f e f g g which Fletcher had followed, and which is regarded as the English pattern; he rather preferred the form a b b a a b b a c d c d e e, which Sidney had used, and sometimes in place of the quatrain and couplet which normally closed an English sonnet, he writes tercets in the Italian and French manner, rhyming c d c e d e, and once c d c d c d, following the strict Italian pattern.

Constable was a recusant. He was imprisoned for a time in the Tower, and afterwards went into exile, passing most of his later life in Paris. He was primarily a religious poet, a man who had learned, as he says, 'to live alone with God.'

If it is hard to rank Barnes, Lodge and Constable higher than *Poetae minores,* their successors (with the exception of Drayton, of course) were no more than *Poetae minimi.* William Percy's *Caelia* (1594) is without inspiration. *Willobie his Avisa* (1594) is interesting mainly on account of references to 'H. W.' and 'W. S.', who may be Southampton and Shakespeare. The anonymous author of *Zepheria*

(1594) concluded his book with the device: 'Troppo sperar inganna', and dedicated it 'alli (*sic*) veri figlioli delle Muse'; but of direct Italian influence it is hard to trace any. The poems, which he calls 'canzons', though most of them are sonnets, are distinguished for their extravagant neologisms; but his use of the language of the law-courts, especially in Canzon 20, is not ineffective. In *Cynthia* (1595) Richard Barnfield displays a certain facility; but his work is imitative and without personal feeling. It would be a paradox of the first order that this bookish sonneteer should subsequently have written some of the most charming songs of the age, if he had not, at the time of *Cynthia,* been a very young man and hampered by the sonnet-vogue. The anonymous *Emericdulfe* (1595) and Griffin's *Fidessa* (1596) are without much distinction; but Richard Linche, who appended thirty-eight sonnets to the 'Amorous Poem of Dom Diego and Ginevra' (which he had adapted from Bandello) under the title of *Diella* (1596), has a certain facility and charm. The sonnets of *Chloris* (1596) by William Smith are Petrarchan in tone and the author knew something about the *Aminta,* but he imitated Daniel and Lodge, and was a poor rhymer.

Robert Tofte is an altogether more interesting figure. He travelled in France and rather extensively in Italy, and he seems to have been widely read in modern Italian Literature. Most of his works are translations: *Two Tales* from Ariosto in 1597; the first three books of the *Orlando innamorato,* from Domenichi's version (which is not a very good one), in 1598; *Of Marriage and Wiving* (1599), which is a translation, part in prose part in verse, of the controversy 'betweene the two famous Tassi', Ercole and Torquato (Bergamo, 1594); and *The Blazon of Jealousie* (1615), from an oration delivered by Benedetto Varchi before the *Infiammati* of Padua (1564) and later dedicated to Gaspara Stampa. His *Laura,* which had appeared in 1597, is composed of three parts, each containing forty poems, some of ten, some of twelve verses; and a longer concluding poem. Most of them were 'conceived in Italie', and a number of them are dated from various Italian cities. The first in Part I is marked 'Padua', the second 'London'. These are unique features of his book, which is better than the average sonnet-sequence. Tofte's ideas and feelings may be derivative, but his imagery is varied and pleasing and he is no mere copyist. *Laura* was a preliminary sketch for a long poem entitled *Alba,* which Tofte published in 1598 and dedicated to the same lady,

probably Elizabeth Carill.[17] His devotion seems to have been perfectly Platonic, and both these books bear witness to the strength of the Petrarchan tradition.

Few sonnets, except Shakespeare's, Greville's and Drummond's, were published after 1597; but already in 1595 the genre had begun to fall into disrepute. Even Shakespeare makes Mercutio deride Romeo for writing sonnets.[18] But he probably sympathised with Juliet's lover, and his touch was in any case lighter than George Chapman's. In the ten sonnets contained in *A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy* (1595), Chapman vaunts the pleasures of the mind above those of the body. His mistress is a pure idea, the highest expression of virtue and beauty, or rather the point where virtue and beauty are one. Although paying tribute to neo-Platonism, Chapman seems bent on criticising the Petrarchans because, even if their mistress be an idea, they describe her charms in sensuous language. Moreover, they are popular and Chapman hates the *profanum vulgus*. The exact intention of these sonnets is uncertain. Chapman promised to be clearer in future: *lucidius olim*. There is on the other hand nothing obscure about the nine 'Gulling Sonnets' of Sir John Davies which in 1596 must have greatly amused the City and the Court. He parodies the more extravagant of the sonnets, and notably the habit of repeating at the beginning of each verse the concluding words of the last; he ridicules the conceits of the neo-Petrarchans and also the use of legal terminology (for more than one of the sonneteers had been a lawyer). In number vii he speaks of the 'Middle Temple' of his heart; number viii, which is aimed at *Zepheria,* is full of such language. The 'Gulling Sonnets' are extremely droll and well written, and they point to the fact that, in that age at least, our minor poets were not at home in the sonnet as the minor poets of France and Italy had been.

Their weakness was not that they took so many flowers from the gardens of Serafino, Desportes and others, but that they wove them into garlands that seem already half faded. And yet, as Oliver Elton once pointed out, the sonnet possessed at that time a 'unique transmissive power'.[19] The light that flowed from Petrarch could be rekindled again and again and, to use another of Elton's phrases, a poet of genius could well be Petrarch's 'messenger' and not his ape. This was what Sidney had been, and what, though more remotely, Drayton was to be.

REFERENCES

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[2] *A Margarite of America*, 1596.
[3] *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. 1949, III, 248.
[4] *Pierces Supererogation*, 1593, p. 61.
[5] M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations . . .*, p. 468.
[6] J. Guggenheim in *Quellen Studien zu Samuel Daniels Delia.*
[7] *The Elizabethan Sonnets*, I, liii-lx.
[8] *Op. cit.*, pp. 118-120, 314.
[9] See above, p. 218.
[10] *Delia*, no. xlix.
[11] By Sir Sidney Lee, *The Elizabethan Sonnets* (in *An English Garner*, Vol. II), I, pp. lxiv-lxxv; and Miss Alice Walker, 'Italian Sources of Lyrics of Thomas Lodge,' *M. L. R. XXII* (1927).
[12] Cited by Lee, *op. cit.*, I, lxxiv.
[13] By J. G. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[14] The form and rhyme-scheme in his sonnets are perfectly regular, and in this he stands apart from most of the minor sonneteers.
[15] J. G. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
[16] See *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7.
[17] For Tofte, see M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations* . . . pp. 145-9, 152-3, 157, 170, 180-1, 206; and J. G. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 202. *Laura* has been reprinted by Lee, *Elizabethan Sonnets*, II, 351-424; *Alba* by Grosart in 1880.
[18] *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, sc. iv.

CHAPTER XI

Songs, Madrigals and Occasional Verse

THE happiest and most spontaneous kind of lyric, however, was not the sonnet but the song. Grave poets might attempt epics, ambitious 'wits' compose tragedies, but nearly everyone wrote songs: soldiers and gentlemen of the Inns of Court, lords and gentlewomen without literary pretensions, often composed excellent songs, and it is significant that some of the best are anonymous.

They are to be met with everywhere, and first in the formal song-books where the musical notation often accompanied the words. Such were the *Lyrics, Elegies, Psalms, Sonnets and Songs of Gravity and Piety* of William Byrd (1587-8). In this book the lighter pieces had Italian models. Byrd (1538-1623) was honorary organist to the Chapel Royal, and the composer of the great Masses which, for sweetness and spirituality, make even a Mass by Mozart sound like a piece of wordly virtuosity.[1] Italian music was being introduced at this time—though there was an abundance of native genius—and it is in some of the song-books such as Nicholas Yonge's *Musica Transalpina* (Part I, 1588; Part II, 1597) that the Italian influence is most prominent. Songs often formed the best and most original element in the poetical miscellanies which had been appearing at intervals since the *Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1566 and 1584), and of which the *Phoenix Nest* (1593) and *Englands Helicon* (1600) are outstanding. There were songs in the pastoral poems of Spenser and Drayton. Nicholas Breton included songs in *Brittons Bowre of Delights* (1591), Richard Barnfield in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599) and Francis Davison in *A Poetical Rapsody* (1602). But it was the dramatists above all who excelled in the song.

The note of the song is usually gay and heedless, a note of spring; like the song of the cuckoo, the pale glance of the primrose, the scent of the cowslip—a note that has never been recaptured. They were normally of two kinds: the madrigal and the 'ayre'. The

madrigal was a song composed for several voices, with interweaving melodies; the music being continuous. The 'ayre' might be sung by one or more voices; here the same music was often repeated in stanza after stanza, and the lute was the usual instrument to accompany the voice.[2] There was of course a native, medieval tradition of sóng and ballad; strongest, one fancies, in the Border counties and in those districts that were visited by such Welsh minstrels as the John Hewes whom Drayton listened to as a child. The medieval aristocracy had been well versed in French and Provençal songs, though these probably fell into oblivion during the Civil Wars. Under Henry VIII the courtly poets once again looked abroad for models, and found them in the *canzoni* and *ballate,* but above all in the *madrigali* of Italy.

The former had flourished exceedingly at the court of Lorenzo de' Medici. This cultured prince was himself a skilled poet, who drew inspiration from the peasant-songs of Tuscany and whose *Canzoni a ballo* and sacred poems, too, *laudi* and others, were sung to the accompaniment of lute or viol. Equally skilful in this vein was his friend, the learned poet and professor of Florence, and there are perhaps no Italian songs which have better stood the test of time than the *Ballate* of Poliziano: exquisite as we read them today, entrancing as they must have sounded when a good voice rendered such refrains as 'La non vuol esser più mia', 'I' non mi vo' scusar', 'I' mi trovai, fanciulle' or 'Donne di nuovo . . . .' and many others. Poliziano seems to have been scarcely known in Elizabethan England; but it was very different with the writers of Italian madrigals, who were numerous. The madrigal was a kind of song already old in Italy: Boccaccio and his friend Franco Sacchetti had written some of the best, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino and many others, including Tasso and Guarini, had occasionally contributed to the genre. The most distinguished poet-composer of madrigals at this time was Luca Marenzio and he seems to have been the best known in England. Of the great fame he enjoyed we may judge from what Henry Peacham wrote of him in *The Compleat Gentleman*:

> For delicious Aire and sweete Invention in Madrigals, Luca Marenzio excelleth all other whosoever, having published more Sets than any other Authour else whosoever; and to say truth, hath not an ill Song, though sometimes an oversight (which might be the Printers fault) of two eights or fiftes escapt him; as betweene the Tenor and

> Bass in the last close of, *I must depart all haplesse*: ending according to the nature of the Ditty most artificially, with a Minim rest. His first, second, and third parts of Thysris,* *Veggo dolce mio ben, Che fae hoggi mio Sole Cantava*† or *sweet-singing Amaryllis*, are Songs the Muses themselves might not have been ashamed to have composed. Of stature and complexion, he was a little and black man: he was Organist in the Pope's Chappell at Rome a good while.[3]

It had been natural at the opening of that swift and brilliant summer of Elizabethan lyrism to look to Italy for music as well as verses—the Italians, headed by the great Palestrina, leading in this as in the other arts. Some of them, like Marenzio and, a little later, Averio, supplied both; in such cases, the tendency was to transplant verses and music together. After that, a song, once established so to speak, was often set to another air by an English composer.

Such then were the models which the poets and composers of Elizabeth's time had before them, and which in general provided the patterns they were to follow, with variations of their own. They continued to translate and adapt well on into the reign of James I. But for many years before this, the greater poets had 'perfectly assimilated' their models; the inspiration of men like Marlowe, Shakespeare, Dyer and Ralegh is their own and nothing in the whole range of lyrical poetry now appears so English as the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline songs at their best. In this way the inspiration that came from Italy was wholly absorbed into a national tradition, and our sensibility was modified and enriched in the process.

I

The first book of Italian Madrigals was edited by Nicholas Yonge under the title of *Musica Transalpina* and published by Thomas East, 'the assignè of William Byrd', in 1588. The letter (October 1588) in which Yonge, who appears to have been a teacher of music in the City, dedicated the volume to Lord Talbot, shows how he and probably most Englishmen viewed the question of native and foreign madrigals at this time:

> ... albeit there be some English Songs lately set forth by a great master of music ...: yet because they are not many in number, men

*'Tirsi morir volea.'

†'Che fa hogg' il mio Sole,' and 'Cantava la più vaga.'

(delighted with variety) have wished for more of the same sort. For whose cause chiefly, I endeavoured to get into my hands all such English songs as were praiseworthy; and amongst others, I had the hap to find in the hands of some of my good friends certain Italian Madrigals, translated, most of them five years ago by a gentleman for his private delight (as not long before, certain Neapolitans had been Englished by a very honourable personage . . .)[4]

The 'great master of music' was William Byrd, whose *Lyrics, Elegies, Psalms etc.* had been entered at Stationers Hall in 1587. The madrigals in Yonge's volume had apparently been translated towards 1583 by the unknown gentleman in question; each is accompanied by the name of the composer, Italian or Flemish as a rule, who had set it to music and by the music itself. The greater number are by Ferrabosco, who was living in England, but ten are by Marenzio and five by Palestrina. The songs themselves are for the most part light, and full of conceits, not greatly inspired though neatly translated. But Yonge set special store by the fact that he could include 'the first and second part of La Verginella, made by Maister Byrd, upon two Stanz's of Ariosto, and brought to speake English with the rest'. As the *Musica Transalpina* was the first book in which the word 'madrigal' was used in English and as 'La Verginella'[5] has some claim to be the first English madrigal[6]—as moreover it has a fragile grace and beauty absent from most of the others—it deserves citing, at least in part:

I

The fayre yong virgin is like the rose untainted,
In garden faire while tender stalk doth beare it;
Sole and untoucht, with no resort acquainted,
No shepherd nor his flock doth once come neere it . . .

II

But not soone from greene stock where it growed,
The same is pluckt and from the same removed;
As lost is all from heaven and earth that flowed,
Both favour grace and beauty best beloved:

The virgin faire that hath the flower bestowed,
Which more than life to gard it her behowed,
Loseth her praise, and is no more desired
Of those that late unto her love aspired.[7]

There is also a rendering in madrigal form, the octave forming the first part, the sestet the second, of Petrarch's famous 'Zefiro torna, e'l bel tempo rimena'[8]. It was not well Englished; but the music, by Geronimo Conversi, probably redeemed it.

In 1597 Yonge published a further volume: *Musica Transalpina, Cantus. The Seconde Booke of Madrigalles, to 5 and 6 voices: translated out of sundrie Italian Authors.* The English versions are fairly literal, but undistinguished. Of the composers represented, Ferrabosco, Marenzio, Quintiani and Croce were the principal; Croce, whom we shall meet with later, appearing here for the first time.

In 1590, as we have noticed, Thomas Watson published what he claimed to be *The first sett of Italian Madrigalls Englished, not to the sense of the original dittie, but after the affection of the Noate.* Of these, twenty-three were by Marenzio, and there were two of which the words were probably by Watson and the music by Byrd. These madrigals were of six parts, each having its title page, headed 'Superius,' 'Tenor,' 'Contra-Tenor,' 'Bassus' and 'Sextus.'[9]

The most prolific composer of Madrigals in the years that followed was Thomas Morley (1557-1604), who was a pupil of Byrd's, became organist at St. Paul's and afterwards a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal. He assiduously collected the most recent Italian madrigals, and published in rapid succession *Madrigalles to four Voyces, the first Booke* (1594), *The First Booke of Balletts to five Voyces, and The first Booke of Canzonets to Two Voyces* (1595); *Canzonets. Or Little Short Songs to foure voyces: colected out of the best and approved Italian Authors . . .* (1597), *Madrigals to five voyces . . .* (1598); not to speak of an *Introduction to Practicall Musicke*; a *First Booke of Ayres or Little Short Songs* (1600) and *The Triumphs of Oriana,* which he edited in 1601 and of which we shall speak later.[10] The main interest of the *Canzonets to two Voyces* of 1595 and the *Canzonets* of 1597, is that they revealed to English music-lovers the madrigals of Felice Anerio and the 'ballets' of Giovanni-Giacomo Gastoldi. Anerio (c. 1560—c. 1630) succeeded Palestrina as organist of the Pontifical Chapel in Rome; he composed both sacred and secular madrigals.[11] Gastoldi, who was *maestro di capella* at Mantua, composed *Balletti da suonare, cantare, e ballare* (Venice 1591-5)[12]—from which it is clear that the 'balletto' was not a form exclusively for dancing. Morley appears to have drawn inspiration from Gastoldi for some of the music and also to have translated the words of a

number of the 'little songs,' and to have been a better musician than he was a poet. One of his more successful canzonets, in the 1595 volume, 'When lo! by break of morning,' is adapted from Anerio's:

> Quando la vaga Flori
> Nei matutini albori,
> Premendo i verdi prati,
> Sceglie fiori i più lieti ed odoranti;
> Cantar gl'augelli amorosetti all'hora,
> Ecco la nova Aurora.

In 1601 the Queen was plunged into grief by the affair of Essex's rising and execution. Some person or persons—and one conjectures it was Lord Howard of Effingham or Thomas Morley—conceived the idea of trying to distract her mind by the offering of a book of madrigals in the Italian manner. A model for a work of this kind, in praise of a certain Doris, had fairly recently appeared in Italy, or so it seems, under the title: *Il Trionfo di Dori . . . A sei voci*; it was reprinted in Antwerp in 1601 and 1614. Most of the principal composers, including Palestrina, Marenzio, Anerio and Gastoldi, contributed to it and each of the twenty-nine madrigals it contained ended with the words: 'Viva la bella Dori.' Morley now enlisted the services of twenty-two of his compatriots to produce *Madrigales, The Triumphes of Oriana, to five and six voices,* which was printed by Thomas Este in 1601 and dedicated to Effingham. Most of the twenty-five madrigals included end with the words:

> Then sang the nymphs and shepherds of Diana,
> Long live fair Oriana,

in imitation of *Il Trionfo di Dori.* They are of no great merit as to the words, save here and there as in John Bennet's contribution, but the music is often remarkable, both for the close of John Hilton's song in the 1601 edition and for Thomas Bateson's two songs which appeared in a second edition published after the Queen's death. Interest attaches also to the list of contributors to this touching work, which includes Thomas Weelkes, John Wilbye and John Milton the elder.

Without being a good poet or a very brilliant composer, Morley did immense service to English song and music by his single-hearted devotion, vast editorial activity and popularising of recent Italian work. It is due to him that we have William Byrd's setting of 'O

mistress mine' from *Twelfth Night*, which was published in Morley's *Consort Lessons* in 1599; and his own setting, a very appropriate one, of 'It was a lover and his lass' from *As you Like It*. This appeared in his *First Booke of Ayres or Little Short Songs* in 1600.

A more original composer was Thomas Weelkes, whose *Madrigals* appeared in 1597 and *Ayres or Phantasticke Spirites for three voices* in 1608. Weelkes, who was organist of Chichester Cathedral, was particularly addicted to light and comic songs; but he drew little from Italian sources. John Wilbye on the other hand drew a good deal, and he is regarded by the authority in these matters[13] as the best of the English poet-composers of madrigals in that era. In *The First Set of English Madrigals to three, four, five and six voices* (1598) he gave a rendering of Guarini's 'Dice la mia bellissima Lycori' and a very finished paraphrase in six eleven-syllable verses of Livio Celiano's

> Quand' io miro le rose
> Ch' in voi natura pose;
> E quelle che v'ha l'arte
> Nel vago seno sparte;
> Non so conoscer poi
> Se voi le rose, o sian le rose in voi.

The original setting, by Bianciardi, did not of course fit a version in lines appreciably longer. More important was *The Second Set of Madrigals to three, four, five, and six parts* which Wilbye published in 1609. This contained a brilliant version of Petrarch's 'Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra' (cxxxiv in Vita), in the form of a madrigal in seven verses, with a 'Riposta' in seven. And equally successful was his translation of the Italian:

> Cangiami, O ciel pietoso, in questo sasso. . . .
> E se di carne sasso non vuoi farmi,
> Fa di Madonna il cor di sasso carne,

as

> Change me, O Heaven, into the ruby stone
> That on my love's fair locks doth hang in gold:
> Yet leave me speech, to her to make my moan;
> And give me eyes, her beauty to behold.
> Or, if you will not make my flesh a stone,
> Make her hard heart seem flesh, that now seems none.[14]

It will be evident at this point that the minor Elizabethans succeeded better in the madrigal than the sonnet. The melodies that came into their heads (music being part of every gentleman's education) probably inspired those who were not composers, and certainly those who were. Then, too, they were less cramped by this kind of song. The madrigal had no fixed pattern either as to the length or the number of the verses, although most madrigals ranged from six (sometimes four) verses to sixteen. A sonnet could easily be adapted as a madrigal. As regards theme and tone, there were idyllic, gallant and 'conceited,' humorous, and also sacred madrigals. The taste for religious poetry which was growing simultaneously in Italy, France and England, found expression in the madrigal. The best of the Italian *madrigalisti* were organists or *Maestri di Cappella*; many of the volumes we have noticed contained sacred madrigals, and one at least was devoted entirely to them. This contained versions of a number of 'sonnets' set to music by Croce and Englished by 'R. H.' (perhaps Richard Hill); it was published in 1608, and reprinted in 1611, under the title of *Musica Sacra to Sixe Voyces. Composed in the Italian tongue by Giovanni Croce.* The 'sonnets' were apparently paraphrases of the seven penitential psalms,[15] and the words appear to have been by Francesco (*not* Pietro) Bembo, and only the music by Croce. Of the latter Henry Peacham tells us that he was 'Master not long since of S. Markes Chappell in Venice; second to none, for a full, lofty and sprightly veine, following none save his own humour: who while he lived was one of the most free and brave Companions of the World. His *Penitentiall Psalmes* are excellently composed, and for piety are his best.'[16]

II

The romantic novelists of the age are chiefly admired today on account of the songs interspersed in their prose. There had been prose-romances in the latter Middle Ages, often French in inspiration. But the prose-romance of the time of Elizabeth was modelled on the *novelle* of Boccaccio, Ser Giovanni, Masuccio, Straparola and others, and the habit of inserting lyrics in the narrative was also an Italian habit. Foremost in this vein[17] were Robert Greene, whose life came to so pathetic and untimely an end, and Thomas

Lodge who, after an adventurous youth, settled down to the career of a respectable physician. There could be few greater contrasts than between the lives of the Bohemian Greene whose soul (if we may judge from his books) remained pure amid the deviations of the flesh, and the pious and virtuous author of *Rosalynde*; and yet the tone of their romances is similar. In Greene's *Arbasto* (1584), *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith* (1588), *Menaphon* (1589), and *Philomela* (1592); in Lodge's *Rosalynde or Euphues' Golden Legacy* (1590), *The Life and Death of William Longbeard* (1593) and *A Margarite of America,* are charming lyrics of which several were republished in the poetical miscellanies. Research[18] has traced a number of them to Italian sources, though it would be tedious to examine these in detail. Greene appears to have leaned mainly on the older poets and his favourite models were probably Boccaccio (who also provided most of the tales in *Perimedes*), Ser Giovanni and Franco Sacchetti (1335-1400). The last named was a particularly charming poet of spring and one of his pastoral idylls:

O vaghe montanine pasturelle,
D'onde venite sì leggiadre e belle?
Qual è il paese dove nate sète,
Che sì bel frutto più che gli altri adduce?

was for long known by heart to hundreds of people in Italy and probably did much to set the fashion for the Elizabethan spring-song.

Greene was one of the most gifted lyrists of his generation. 'Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee' and

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;
The quiet mind is richer than a crown. . . .

are but two of his masterpieces. A little song in *Arbasto* (1584), entitled 'Time,' shows how well a theme which had been treated by Serafino and, just before this time, rather formally adapted by Watson (1582),[19] could in his hands become the starting point of something new. There are indeed few better instances, among the minor writers, of Italian inspiration as distinct from imitation:

In time we see the silver drops
The craggy stones make soft;
The slowest snail in time we see
Doth creep and climb aloft.

With feeble puffs the tallest pine
In tract of time doth fall;
The hardest heart in time doth yield
To Venus' luring call.

. . . . . .

Time causeth hope to have his hap:
What care in time not eased?
In time I loathed that now I love
In both content and pleased.[20]

Lodge preferred to draw from recent or contemporary Italian poets. In *William Longbeard* are madrigals based on Guarini; on Livio Celiano whose verses, with some of Tasso's, had been published as recently as 1587 in the *Rime di diversi celebri poeti dell' età nostra* at Bergamo; from Bianciardi and Dolce. His rendering of Bianciardi's madrigal, which has already been cited, is much nearer the original than Wilbye's; though both are good. Finally in that curious romance, *A Margarite of America,* which Lodge averred he had found in a Jesuit library in Brazil and translated, there are four short poems avowedly taken from Dolce, Paschale and Martelli.[21]

III

The flower of Elizabethan lyricism, aside from the wonderful songs that adorn the dramas and romances, is to be found in the poetical miscellanies that were then so popular. Of the earlier collections we will not speak, except to note that in 1590 the earliest of all, which was *Tottel's Miscellany,* was in its ninth edition. But the best were still to come, and these were the *Phoenix Nest* (1593) and *Englands Helicon* (1600). Here were lyrics of various kinds, elegies, little pastorals, songs of which some had already appeared in novels, poetical debates, riddles and other occasional verse. Of the two collections, *The Phoenix Nest* is more of a miscellany, and it offers the charm of surprise, freshness and variety; *Englands Helicon* is more of an anthology, and its fame rests on the illustrious names that adorn it.

The Phoenix Nest, Built up with the most rare and refined workes of Noble Men, woorthy Knights, gallant Gentlemen, Masters of Arts, and brave Schollers. Full of varietie, excellent invention and singular delight . . . Set foorth by R. S. of the Inner Temple, Gentleman was a fairly

small volume of 110 pages. Few of the pieces are signed, many are anonymous, others have only the initials of the author. The contributors included Lord Oxford, Sir Edward Dyer, Sir William Herbert, Sir Walter Ralegh, George Peele, Robert Greene and others, as well as Richard Stapleton who may have been the editor; but a larger number of poems came from the pens of 'T. L. Gent.' (Thomas Lodge) and 'N. B. Gent.' (Nicholas Breton) than from any other.

Lodge was fascinated by the contemporary foreign poets. In this same year (1593), as we have seen, he was plundering Desportes and various Italians for his *Phillis*. To *The Phoenix Nest* he contributed a sonnet full of conceits and antitheses[22] which he had Englished (without acknowledgment) from the one beginning:

Breve riposo haver di lunghi affanni

in the *Rime di diversi excellenti autori bresciani* (Venice, 1553).[23] More successful is one of his songs:

For pittie pretie eies surcease
To give me warre, and graunt me peace,
Triumphant eies, why beare you Armes,
Against a hart that thinks no harmes . . .[24]

which has been shown by Miss Walker[25] to derive from a madrigal of Guarini's, 'Non più guerra, pietate . . . ' in the *Rime di diversi celebri poeti dell' età nostra* (Bergamo, 1587). These two Italian miscellanies seem to have had a wide circulation.

The early pieces in *The Phoenix Nest* are for the most part original; but there are frequently borrowings and echoes, especially of Petrarch, among the anonymous poems printed between pages 82 and 98. Thus, the sonnet

Set me where Phoebus heate the flowers slaieth,

and the longer and better poem beginning:

To make a truce, Sweet Mistres with your eies
How often have I profferd you my hart
Which profers unesteemed you despise
As far to meane, to equall your desart . . .[26]

are both based on Petrarch; and it has been pointed out by Dr. H. E. Rollins[27] that the punning poem on the name of Margaret:

Thinking upon the name, by Love engraved,
Within my hart, to be my lives directer . . .

and in which the key-words are 'Marvell' in line 5, 'Gaine' in line 7, and 'Retire' in line 13, is an exercise in the same genre as Petrarch's sonnet on the name of Laura:

> Quand io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi
> e'l nome che nel cor mi scrisse Amore,
> Laudando s'incomincia udir di fore
> il suon de' primi dolci accenti suoi . . .

where (and in the following lines) the key-words are 'laudando,' 'real,' 'taci,' 'laudare' and 'reverire.'

'The praise of Virginitie,' another anonymous piece, is a rendering of Ariosto's 'La Verginella è simile alla rosa,' less moving and poetical than the one in *Musica Transalpina*. But the most interesting traces of Italian influence in *The Phoenix Nest* are to be found less in direct imitations than in the independent responses of poets to the great themes which had been launched by Petrarch.

The greatness of Petrarch—distinction of character, originality of thought, intensity of feeling, magic of style (style which is the signature of the heart)—had been such that a number of his sonnets and *canzoni* were in the memory of every man of taste and feeling. Echoes of 'Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi/Vo misurando a passi tardi e lenti'; 'Chi vuol veder quantunque può Natura'; 'Gli occhi di ch' io parlai si caldamente'; and of course 'Zefiro torna . . . ' are heard again and again among the French and English poets of the Renaissance. They liked to follow the rhythm of his feelings, to describe their mistress in terms similar to his, to feel in her absence as he had felt in Laura's, to be transported to the 'alto ciel' by thoughts of her, and even to fix the year, day and place where Love had first transfixed their soul. For if Ovid had prated about Eros, Petrarch had discovered Love. Now everyone knew that it was on 6 April 1327, at Avignon, that Petrarch had encountered Laura and received Love's arrow. Looking back on that moment, despite the pain and sorrow he had known, Petrarch had blessed the day, even the season and the spot:

> Benedetto sia'l giorno e'l mese e'l anno
> E la stagione e'l tempo e'l'ora e'l punto
> E'l bel paese e'l loco ov'io fui giunto
> Da due begli occhi che legato m' hanno. . . .[28]

Poliziano was thinking of this when composing the *ballata* of

which the refrain runs:

Benedetto sie'l giorno e'l'ora e'l punto
Che dal tuo dolce amor, dama, fu' punto;

and the words were echoed again and again by Ronsard and his friends. It was inevitable that the anti-Petrarchans should sound the note of 'maledetto'; and one of the most amusing responses to the Petrarchan 'Blessed be the day' poems—scarcely a serious blasphemy—came from an unknown pen in *The Phoenix Nest*:

The time, when first I fell in Love,
Which now I must lament,
The yeere, wherein I lost such time
To compasse my content.

The day, wherein I sawe too late
The follies of a Lover,
The hower, wherein I found such losse,
As care cannot recover.

And last, the minute of mishap,
Which makes me thus to plaine,
The dolefull fruits of Lovers sutes,
Which labor lose in vaine:

Doth make me solemnly protest,
As I with paine doe prove,
There is no time, yeere, day, nor howre,
Nor minute, good to love.[29]

Of a different type from these verses were Nicholas Breton's poems. Little is known of his life. It appears that his father was a merchant in the City and that he himself had been born about 1542. He wrote voluminously in prose and verse; he was a satirist, but also an excellent observer of nature and a mystical poet of distinction. The Countess of Pembroke had helped him in his monetary difficulties, and he was at this time a member of her circle. He had long had a good knowledge of Italian; a diarist writes of him in 1582 as one that 'speaketh the Italian well.' As we have seen, he was a friend of Florio's, at least in later years.

More medieval-minded than most of his contemporaries, he was fond of the allegory and the dream. As a metrist, he is interesting too, affecting as he did the fourteen-syllable verse and the 'Poulter's measure,' which he handled with great skill; and in his own

collection entitled *Brittons Bowre of Delights* he had published poems in the stanza later used by Shakespeare for *Venus and Adonis*. The more conspicuous of his pieces in *The Phoenix Nest* are 'A strange description of a rare Garden plot,' 'An excellent Dreame of Ladies and their Riddles' and 'The Chesse Play.'

There was a precedent for verses on Chess in the *Boke of the Duchesse*, but it is more likely that the notion for Breton's poem came from a guide to Chess, in Spanish and Italian, by Damiano da Odemira, entitled *Questo libro è da imparare giocare a scacchi* and published in Rome in 1512. It had been translated by James Rowbotham as *The pleasaunt and wittie playe of the Cheasts renewed . . .* in 1562. Breton probably had knowledge of this and also perhaps of Vida's better known Latin poem, the *Scacchiae Ludus*. But he was no plagiarist; and, indeed, Breton appears rarely, if ever, to have copied from the Italian. His own poem consists of ten stanzas of six verses each, with two stanzas in 'Lenvoy.' It seems to have been thrown off spontaneously, if not carelessly; the inspiration is still medieval. Each piece symbolises a passion or quality: thus, the King is 'haughtie Care,' the Queen 'quick Conceit,' the Bishop, 'wittie braine'; the 'Rookes are reason':

> The Knight is knowledge how to fight
> Against his Princes enimies,
> He never makes his walke outright,
> But leaps and skips, in wilie wise,
> To take by sleight a traitrous foe,
> Might slilie seeke their overthrowe.[30]

The *Scacchiae Ludus*, to which reference has been made, was a long poem in Latin hexameters which Marco Vida had written about 1530 and which had so much impressed his Holiness that he made the author Bishop of Alba. It had been published at Cremona in 1550, and appeared in an English verse translation 'by W.B.' in the same volume with an abridged version of Damiano's treatise, in 1597, as *Ludus Scacchiae: Chesse-play*.[31] Vida describes the circumstances in which the first game of Chess was played, at a party given for the gods by Oceanus on the occasion of his wedding; how he produced the board and the pieces, explained the moves and the rules, all in accurate detail; how Apollo and Mercury then play together—a long and spirited battle, in which Mercury cheats

once or twice—; how Mercury wins, and how he afterwards gives the set to Scacchis, a nymph of Po whom he had beguiled, to console her for his desertion. To describe in Latin verse a game unknown to the Romans was an achievement which few but the great Italians of the Renaissance would even have contemplated. The whole poem is a *tour-de-force* of astounding brilliance which has never been surpassed, or even equalled; and its fame must have reached England many years before 'W. B.' translated it. The *Scacchiae Ludus* is best known today through the version in rhymed couplets which has been attributed to Goldsmith.

Englands Helicon, which appeared in 1600, is a good deal longer than *The Phoenix Nest,* and also more representative of the age. Not only do many of the poets of *The Phoenix Nest* and other miscellanies reappear; but the great names of Spenser, Marlowe, Drayton and Shakespeare figure in these pages; and there are such new contributors as Barnfield, Bolton, Browne, 'Shepherd Tony' (who has been identified with Anthony Munday[32]), and Bartholomew Yonge. The first edition contained an hundred and fifty poems, to which nine were added in the edition of 1614. The editor, whom Dr. Rollins believes to have been Nicholas Ling,[33] had a preference for pastoral songs and lyrics, and this no doubt explains why he chose twenty-five pieces by Yonge. There are fifteen by Sidney, ten by Lodge, eight by Breton, seven by Greene and 'Tony,' six by Dyer, five by Drayton, three by Peele, two or three by Greville, and one each by Oxford, Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The lyrics of *Englands Helicon* are much less dependent on Italian models than those of earlier miscellanies. The only pieces which seem to be derivative in this respect are 'The Solitarie Sheepheards Song' from *A Margarite of America,* which Lodge himself had declared to be 'in immitation of *Martelli*[34] having the right nature of an *Italian* melancholie'; two Italian songs, and a version of 'Zefiro torna . . .' reprinted from the *Musica Transalpina* of 1588; and 'Shepherd Tony's'

> Beautie sate bathing by a Spring,
> where fayrest shades did hide her.
> The winds blew calme, the birds did sing,
> the coole streames ranne beside her . . .

This had first appeared in *Primaleon of Greece,* a prose-romance

which had been written in Spanish and printed in 1516; translated later into Italian (1559) and French (1572); and finally 'translated out of French and Italian, into English' by Anthony Munday in 1595.[35] Far more numerous than the few songs of Italian origin are the lyrics translated from Montemayor by Sidney and especially by Bartholomew Yonge, a neat and skilful metrist who had published a version of the *Diana enamorada* in 1598. Even so, translations and imitations seem exceptional here; and, good as many of them are, what strikes the reader of *Englands Helicon* is that for some years past the best of the English poets had been ceasing to echo foreign masters and were singing of pastoral loves in their own manner, in accents which, to us at least today, sound English. That Lyly and Marlowe could do this is of course well known, and the inclusion in this volume of Marlowe's 'Come live with me and be my love' and of the almost equally beautiful replies by unknown poets (numbers 138 and 139), make it hard for the work of lesser writers to stand beside them.

A Poetical Rapsody, which was published by the brothers Francis and Walter Davison in 1602, though less brilliant than *Englands Helicon,* is still full of interest. Francis Davison certainly had a better knowledge of Italy than most Englishmen of his time. He was the elder son of the William Davison who had been Secretary of State at the time of Queen Mary Stuart's execution and whom Elizabeth had made her scapegoat in the matter. Although not very well-to-do, Davison sent his son, under the charge of a tutor named Edward Smyth, to travel and study in Italy from the spring of 1595 until the end of 1597. The young man appears to have devoted part of his time to the speaking, reading and writing of Italian, part to studying books on history and politics, and the rest to sending home long 'relations' concerning the provinces he had visited; while the tutor anxiously planned how, in view of the high cost of food and clothing, he could make their money spin out.[36] One feels rather keenly, too, for Francis when he writes to his father: 'My promised relation of Tuscany your last letter hath so dashed as I am resolved not to proceed withal.' Later, however, he becomes more hopeful: 'Touching giving some proof to yourself and others, whether I have made the same use of our travel in Italy that it pleased you to think I did in Germany, I have gathered and observed divers particulars both in Tuscany and some other places, which I forbear to

reduce into an absolute discourse before I hear how my Lord accepted of my other.'[37]

Seven or eight years later life was less strenuous. 'It seems,' wrote a contemporary to Sir Dudley Carleton on 8 July 1602, 'young Davison means to take another course and turn poet, for he hath lately set out certain Sonnets and Epigrams.'[38] We may infer from this that *A Poetical Rapsody* had appeared earlier in the year. It contained a large variety of poems—odes, eclogues, elegies, sonnets, madrigals and 'inscriptions' by Francis Davison, a few by his brother, and a selection of verses by Sidney, Spenser, Mary Sidney, mother of the then Earl of Pembroke (to whom the work was dedicated), Ralegh, Henry Wotton, Donne, Constable and the mysterious 'A. W.'. Two of the best of Davison's own poems are 'In praise of a beggar's life' and the eclogue in which Eubulus stands for William Davison and which is a defence of the former Secretary.

There is some Petrarchan matter among the anonymous poems ascribed to 'A. W.' and in one of Davison's own sonnets; but it does not appear that the latter had been well read in the older Italian poetry or in that of the early Cinquecento. He had probably had small leisure for such things. His Continental education had been severely practical, confined, as far as one can judge, to history, sociology and political science—apart from a knowledge of Italian in which he must have been an expert. From the Harleian MS. in the British Museum, Number 298, it appears that he carried round with him on the Continent some sixty accounts of foreign countries, of which all but one were in Italian, and what is more, that he studied them! As to the joys of poetry, these must have been rare indeed. Even his food was limited. Edward Smyth who marketed for the two of them 'as frugally as I could,' complained that in one city the prices were so high that 'in truth such are not fit to remain as cannot eat oil, roots, salad, cheese and such like cheap dishes, which Mr. Francis can in no wise digest, and any good thing else whatsoever at very great rate.'[39] One feels very deeply for Francis Davison. He seems to have perfectly understood that his father's resources were limited and that he was receiving the best education then procurable. Among the books he purchased for his pleasure were probably a copy of Guarini's poems and almost certainly the *Rime di Luigi Groto, Cieco d' Hadria* of 1592. In *A Poetical Rapsody* three

of his poems are based on Guarini, including one which is 'An Inscription for the Statue of Dido'; while from Groto he drew inspiration for an ode, a sonnet, several madrigals and the 'inscriptions' on Thisbe, Ajax, Romulus and Fabricius Curio.[40] The inscription was a kind of epigram. There was a certain novelty in publishing such pieces in a miscellany, and it was a sign of the times, as the vernacular epigram was coming into favour in England. It should be added, however, that many of Francis Davison's poems, including the more ambitious ones, were original, and that though he was not a great poet he wrote very creditable verse.

REFERENCES

[1] John Dowland, who published three books of *Songs and Ayres* (1597, 1600 and 1603) and *A Pilgrim's Solace* (1612), was primarily a lutanist and composer. Thomas Campion, one of the greatest figures in the history of the song, composed the words of his 'ayres' with a view to the melody he had in mind (*Two Bookes of Ayres*, 1612; *The Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres*, 1617; *Ayres that were sung and played at Brougham Castle*, 1618).

[2] Harold Child, 'The Song-Books and Miscellanies' in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. 1949, IV, 110-12.

[3] Ed. Tudor and Stuart Library, London, 1906, p. 101.

[4] Reprinted by E. Arber in *An English Garner*. London, 1880, Vol. III, pp. 33-50. See also M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations* . . . pp. 128-130.

[5] From the *Orlando furioso*, I, 42-3.

[6] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

[7] Ariosto's verses had been adapted from Catullus: 'Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis' in the *Epithalamium*, lxii, 39-47.

[8] xlii, in Morte; i.e. no. cccx in the whole canzoniere.

[9] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 141-163.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[13] Thomas Oliphant in *La Musa madrigalesca*, p. 174.

[14] Cited by M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-5.

[15] M. A. Scott, p. 171.

[16] *The Compleat Gentleman*. London, ed. 1906, p. 102. Cited by M. A. Scott, p. 171.

[17] Antony Munday inserted songs in his *Two Italian Gentlemen* (1584).

[18] Sir Sidney Lee, *The Elizabethan Sonnets* (1904); Mary A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations* . . . (1916); Alice A. Walker, 'Italian Sources of Lyrics of Thomas Lodge,' *Modern Language Review*, XXII (1927).

[19] See above, p. 121.

[20] Cited by A. H. Bullen, *Poems . . . from Romances and Prose-tracts of the Elizabethan Age*. London, 1890, p. 9.

[21] M. A. Scott, pp. 65-6; Lee, *Elizabethan Sonnets*, Vol. I, p. lxv.

[22] P. 52 of the 1593 edition.

[23] Alice Walker, 'Italian Sources of Lyrics of Thomas Lodge,' *M. L. R.*, XXII (1927), p. 77. The authorship of the Italian sonnet is uncertain.

[24] Pp. 59-60.

[25] *Art. cit.*, p. 78.

[26] Pp. 85-6.

[27] *The Phoenix Nest*. Ed. H. E. Rollins, Harvard University Press, 1931, p. 188-9.

[28] No. lxi; i.e. sonnetto 10, in Vita.

[29] P. 76 of the 1593 edition.

[30] P. 28.

[31] M. A. Scott, *Elizabethan Translations* . . ., pp. 312-313.

[32] By the late A. H. Bullen. See also H. E. Rollins, *Englands Helicon*. Harvard University Press, 1935, Vol. II, pp. 30-33.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

[34] Martelli, *Opere*, fol. 47, Florence 1548.

[35] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4.

[36] L. Einstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3.

[37] See British Museum, Additional MSS., 4121 f. 265 and 4122, ff. 43, 111, 139. Cited by H. Nicolas in his edition of *A Poetical Rapsody*, 1826, and by Einstein, pp. 126-7.

[38] Cited by M. A. Scott, p. 166.

[39] Harleian MS., 296, f. 114.

[40] M. A. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-8.

CHAPTER XII

Drayton

Two men of Warwick, besides Shakespeare, conferred lustre on the age, one by his verses in honour of the English countryside and of the great men and women of the past; the other by his philosophical poems. Both had learned much from Italy, but this they thought out and lived anew. They did not repeat the words of those they had studied or even for the most part imitate them, but wrote new poems in which the things they had learned from Italy had somehow become English or were at least being absorbed into a native tradition.

I

Michael Drayton is sometimes classed among the minor sonneteers, but *Ideas Mirrour* is far better than the other *canzonieri* except Sidney's, Spenser's, Shakespeare's and possibly Greville's. In later life he was regarded as England's poet laureate, and this was just. He had been born in 1563 at the village of Hartshill, near the Leicestershire border. His parents were humble folk, but they had kinsmen with some claim to gentility, and it was probably for this reason and because of the promise he showed as a little boy, that he was taken up by Sir Henry Goodere and reared and educated at Polesworth Hall, which stood near the bridge spanning the Ancor. Thus all his early memories were associated with Warwickshire and he could write:

> Fair Arden, thou my Tempe art alone!
> And thou, sweet Ankor, art my Helicon.[1]

In his 'Epistle to Reynolds' (1627) he tells how from the cradle he had been 'inclin'd to noble poesy,' and how 'scarce ten years of age,' he came to his tutor, and,

Clasping my slender arms about his thigh:
'O my dear master! cannot you,' quoth I,
'Make me a poet? Do it if you can,
And you shall see I'll quickly be a man.'

He then tells us how his tutor read him Virgil's *Eclogues* and the pastoral poems of Mantuanus (which, as we have seen, were to inspire Spenser). 'O moral Mantuan,' he wrote in 1604,

live thy verses long!
Honour attend thee and they reverend song.

Whether he later looked into Petrarch, Sannazaro, Tasso or Guarini is not known. But the traditions of the Petrarchan sonnet and the pastoral eclogue were being naturalised in England during his youth and early maturity; and although I think he himself had much to do with the naturalisation of the eclogue, still, these currents probably came to him mainly through native channels. His own culture seems to have been Latin, Biblical, French, and English; and he became familiar with some of the native songs and ballads through a Welsh harper named John Hewes who frequented Polesworth Hall.[2]

In 1591 he went up to London, where Sir Henry had apparently commended him to the Haringtons; and it was to Lucy Harington that in 1593 he dedicated *Idea, the Shepheards Garland, fashioned in nine Eglogs. Rowlands Sacrifice to the Nine Muses.* These are mostly dialogues in the classical manner, in which Drayton himself figures as Rowland, the name of Ariosto's hero being then specially popular. But there appears no evidence of his recalling any Italian pastorals for this purpose, except perhaps Mantuan's: his models are probably Virgil, Marot and Spenser. For the pictures of birds and beasts in the first 'Eglog' there is warrant in Theocritus, Virgil and Marot; yet they express his own spontaneous love of the country. Equally moving and sincere in their lyric flow are the verses to Phebe—the Moon—in the ninth Eglog, associated as they are with his loyalty to '*Ideas* sacred name.' As it was under her name that the Garland had appeared and as the fifth Eglog was written in her honour, this may point to some love which had possessed his heart about the time of his arrival in London or soon after. ''Tis nine years now since first I lost my wit,' he wrote towards 1602, and there is little doubt that it was over Anne Goodere, his patron's daughter, who

had probably been his playmate as a child. That on finding himself alone in the great city he should have missed her more than he had expected, that he should perhaps have realised that he had given his heart to one whose station was far above his, seems likely. In the seventh Eglog, where the old shepherd Borrill blasphemes the name of Love, Batte replies that he will avenge him and in such sort as to prove

> That all my good consisteth in my love.
> Love was the first that fram'd my speech,
> love was the first that gave me grace—

'grace' being one of the qualities most prized by the neo-Platonists of the Cinquecento—

> . . . love is the loadstarre of my love . . .
> love seated my delights above . . .

In Drayton's life-long devotion to this lady and her family, to her father first, to her husband later, there is something manly as well as touching. Many in that age talked of platonic love, but Drayton was probably one of the few who practised it.

He seems to have begun writing sonnets before 1593, and it was at the suggestion of Anthony Cooke whom he calls 'his ever kind Maecenas' that in 1594 he published his first collection: *Ideas Mirrour. Amours in Quatorzains,* above the epigraph: 'Chi serve e tace assai domanda.' This volume contained two introductory sonnets and forty-nine 'Amours.' In 1599, with *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* he published a second edition, adding new sonnets but altering or omitting some of the old ones: fifty-nine in all, not all 'Amours.' In the edition of 1602 some new sonnets are added, and there are sixty-seven in all. In 1605 he printed three introductory sonnets, sixty-two sonnets addressed to Idea, and five 'sonnets to great and worthy personages.' Finally, for the last edition (1619), there are further omissions, alterations and additions, the additions including the best; and the total is now sixty-three. But in the course of this period one hundred and six sonnets had appeared from his pen, and it was scruple and love of revision that had led him to omit over forty of the earlier ones.[3] A study of his sonnets shows that *Ideas Mirrour* was steadily improved through its successive recensions.

Despite the Italian epigraph, which was appropriate to Drayton's

situation, there is a vaguely French flavour about these 'Quatorzains.' The fashion for writing 'Amours' addressed to a real or poetical mistress was much more French than Italian. The name 'Idea' may well have been suggested by Claude de Pontoux's *recueil, L'Idée* (1579),[4] but in any case it accurately marks the attitude he had taken up; and his 'Idea' was certainly Anne Goodere, as Professor Elton has proved.[5] In the sonnet 'Great Lady, essence of my chiefest good,' which appeared with *Endimion and Phebe* in 1595, he addresses her as 'sweet nymph of Ancor, crown of my desire' and adds:

> Where thou dost live, there let the graces be,
> Which want their grace, if only wanting thee,

using here, as in *The Shepheards Garland,* the neo-Platonic language of the time.

In the dedication of *Ideas Mirrour* he speaks of his verses as 'rude unpolish'd rymes':

> Yet these mine owne, I wrong not other men,
> Nor trafique further than thys happy Clyme,
> Nor filch from *Portes* nor from *Petrarchs* pen,
> A fault too common in thys latter tyme.
> Divine syr Phillip, I avouch thy writ,
> I am no Pickpurse of anothers wit.

This was generally true, if the Petrarchan themes were now considered as part of the common patrimony of Europe, as indeed they seem to have been. Drayton's 'Amours' of 1594 are for the most part conventional as to their matter. He compares his love to the passage of the sun through the twelve houses of the Zodiac (xlvii); describes the perfections of his mistress (iv, xxiii, xxv, xxix); speaks of her unkindness (xxx, xl); tells the story of his woe (i, x, xxxiii, xxix, xl, xlii, xliv, xlv), while insisting that he owes all his inspiration to her, and says that she has taught him 'the Alphabet of love' (xi); explains that he who praises 'Idea' can never write amiss (xxviii); asserts that his passion will outlast the most enduring things, even metals and diamonds (xxi), and sends out his lines as 'Embassadors of love,'

> With my harts trybute to her conquering eyes,
> From whence, if you one tear of pitty move
> For all my woes, that onely shall suffise . . .

None of these sonnets seems to be imitated or adapted, yet most of them could probably be matched in one or other of the sonnet-sequences of the Renaissance. To scrutinise them a little more closely, one does not see how, but for his Italian predecessors, he could very well have written the Eaglet sonnet (iii in 1594; lvi in 1619); the Phœnix sonnet (vi ; xvi in 1619) ; the one on the nine orders of Angels (viii; xviii in 1619); the one on the Graces (iv in the 1602 edition); the sonnet on 'Aye' and 'No' (viii in 1599); or the sonnet on the interchange of personality between lovers (xi in 1599). Thus in Amour iii (1594) he writes:

> My thoughts bred up with Eagle-birds of love,
> And for their vertues I desired to know,
> Upon the nest I set them, forth to prove,
> If they were of the Eagles kinde or no.
>
> But they no sooner saw my Sunne appeare,
> But on her rayes with gazing eyes they stood,
> Which proov'd my birds delighted in the ayre,
> And that they came of this rare kinglie brood.

It was an old (and well-founded) belief that the eagle can gaze into the eye of the sun. There is mention of it in the later Latin poetry, but Serafino wrote a sonnet on the theme, and this had been imitated by J. de Billy in his *Sonnets spirituels* (1577) and by Watson in *Hekatompatheia,* xcix; Molza and Tasso had also treated it. The allusion to the Phœnix in a love-sonnet goes back to Petrarch. The motif of Eyes and Heart in xxxiii can be traced to Petrarch's 'Occhi, piangete'; and Serafino had written a variation on this. The Miracles of Love (xii in 1594) are a notion of Petrarch's and others.[6] The theme of the 'Celestial Numbers' (viii in 1594) is of more interest, because here if anywhere is a sonnet born of reading:

> . . . To this our World, to Learning, and to Heaven;
> Three Nines there are, to every one a Nine.
> Nine Orders first, of Angels be in heaven;
> Nine Muses do, with Learning still frequent;
> These with the gods are ever resident.
> Nine worthy Women, to the World were given.

But 'Idea' adds one to each order:

> My worthy One, to these nine Worthies addeth:
> And my faire Muse, one Muse unto the Nine!

And my good Angel (in my soul divine!),
With one more Order, these nine Orders gladeth!
My Muse, my Worthy, and my Angel then
Makes every One of these three Nines, a Ten.

We do not know where Drayton found this notion, but it might have been in A. Minturno's *Rime Scelte* (1563) which Miss Janet Scott cites[7] in this connection.:

Eran le Gratie tre care sorelle . . .
Ma per favor de le migliori Stelle,
Perchè dieci le muse alme e dilette,
Le Gratie quattro e l'alte Dee sien sette,
Una in terra s'aggiunge a tutte quelle.

Drayton replaces the six goddesses with nine angels, and the three graces with nine worthy women; for the rest, the idea seems identical.

A desire to celebrate the rivers of England may have been spontaneous in Drayton, though Marot had done something of the kind for the French rivers.

Our floods' Queen, Thames, for Ships and swans is crowned . . .
Arden's sweet Ankor, let thy glory be,
That fair IDEA only lives by thee.[8]

But Petrarch had supposed a stream to be honoured by its vicinity to his mistress, and others had repeated the fancy. Drayton's sonnet liii is thus Petrarchan, even if he was not distinctly aware of it:

Clear Ankor, on whose silver-sanded shore,
My soul-shrined Saint, my fair IDEA lies;
O blessed brook! whose milk-white swans adore
Thy crystal stream, refinèd by her eyes.[9]

Both these sonnets appeared in 1594, and indeed this first collection was not much less conventional as to its subjects than Daniel's. But in 1599 Drayton began adding sonnets on themes other than love, and in the editions that followed his collection grew increasingly original. In the verses of 1599, 'To the Reader of these Sonnets,' he declares that he who looks here for passion or 'far-fetched sighs' may lay down the volume. 'My verse,' he says, 'is the true image of my mind':

My Muse is rightly of the English strain,
That cannot long one fashion entertain.

And this claim to originality he makes good in the poems that were added now and later.

The sonnet 'To Proverbe' (lix in 1600) seems to refer to that enthusiasm for collecting Italian proverbs which had led Florio to publish his *Giardino di Ricreatione,* containing as will be recalled some six thousand of them, and also to illustrate the use of a number of them in the dialogues of his *Second Frutes*[10]. Proverbs, he had declared, are 'the pith, the proprieties, the proofes, the purities, the elegancies, as the commonest so the commendablest phrases of a language.' It was a large claim to subscribe to; and if, besides, Drayton did not much care for the exuberant and dogmatic Florio, this would explain the ironical tone of his sonnet:

> As Love and I, later harbour'd in one Inne,
> With Proverbs thus each other intertaine:
> In Love there is no lack, thus I begin,
> Faire words make Fooles, replyeth he againe;
> Who spares to speake, doth spare to speed (quoth I).
> As well (sayth he) too forward, as too slow——

And so on, with proverb answering proverb:

> And having thus awhile each other thwarted,
> Fooles as we met, so Fooles again we parted.[11]

Elsewhere, among these new poems, one at least of the old themes reappears, and the *concetti* of contemporary verse mingle with an imagery already 'metaphysical.' But Drayton's hand is firmer than it was, and his accent is at times almost Shakespearean:

> Whilst thus my pen strives to eternize thee,
> Age rules my lines with wrinkles in my face;
> Where in the Map of all my Misery,
> Is modelled out the World of my disgrace.[12]

In sonnet lxiii of the 1599 edition:

> Truce, gentle Love! a Parley now I crave . . .

the language of war applied to love shows how, in Drayton's hands, the Petrarchan manner is passing into the Metaphysical:

> I send defiance! since if overthrown,
> Thou vanquishing, the conquest is mine own!

There are two or three very odd poems which perhaps have no

literary source. The belief that if a murderer was brought near the body of his victim, the corpse would bleed anew,[13] may be common to western folklore. Serafino had treated it.[14] 'His remedy for Love' (Number xv in 1619) is a sonnet that tempts comment and conjecture to run riot, but it may be no more than a set of fantastic inventions which occurred to Drayton when he was feeling very much of a woman-hater.[15] The handling of these themes appears, in any case, to be Drayton's own; and there are other sonnets which are wholly original, such as the opening poem in the 1619 edition:

> Like an adventurous seafarer am I . . .

and the very splendid poem (xlvii in 1605) which records some triumph he had achieved in the theatre, probably with the play of *Sir John Oldcastle*. But the best of all is no doubt the famous

> Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part,

a sonnet almost miraculous in the note of trembling hope on which it closes:

> When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
> And Innocence is closing up his eyes:
> Now, if thou wouldst! when all have given him over,
> From death to life, thou might'st him yet recover.[16]

II

The originality of the later sonnets, the growing mastery of diction, accents which we might call Shakespearean if they did not belong to Drayton—these things were the reward of many years of apprenticeship and striving. They were the reward, too, of the severity of his life, of the 'piety' to which Fuller later alluded. Not that they were not foreshadowed from the outset. But also there was in Drayton, more than in Shakespeare, a *classical* artist, and this is apparent in the long poem he had dedicated to Lucy Goodere, 'Idea's' sister.

Endimion and Phœbe: Ideas Latmus appeared in 1595.[17] The vogue of the narrative love-poem had been partly anticipated by Lodge in *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, but it had been really launched by Marlowe in *Hero and Leander* about 1592; and though his work

was not published till 1598, Drayton had probably seen a manuscript copy because he follows Marlowe in using the rhymed couplet rather than the stanza which Breton had been popularising and which Shakespeare adopted in *Venus and Adonis* (1593). These poems were essays in the Ovidian manner, and the themes were similar to Ovid's. There was a similar attention to sensuous detail and decorative effect; while, as regards the matter, one could range widely in search of subjects through the *Amores*, the *Ars amatoria*, the *Metamorphoses*, the *Heroides* and even the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae*. In Italy this genre had found its most splendid expression in the paintings of Titian, Giorgione, Correggio and others; it was considered 'Italian' and was fashionable. But Drayton's muse was chaste; and, besides, the heroine of a poem written for his fair 'Idea' or for her sister could only be a chaste heroine. Hence the choice of Phœbe, to give her one only of the appellations of the Moon.[18]

Of the myths associated with Artemis, the story of Actaeon or the story of Hippolytus might have been selected, had they been less violent and tragic. The story of Endymion did not perhaps impose itself on Drayton, but it was in the Italian taste, the Carracci had painted a scene from it, it had idyllic and pastoral features which commended it especially to Drayton; and, lastly, it lent itself to neo-Platonic interpretation. It had already been so interpreted. Benedetto Gareth, the Neapolitan poet who is better known as Cariteo, had in 1506 published a book of sonnets and canzoni entitled *Endimione*. These are platonic poems addressed to 'Luna,' whose face is

> Quel volto, che già vide in paradiso
> Prima ch' intrasse l'alma in questa vita.[19]

The myth was not recounted by Cariteo; but it was later on to be developed by Lyly in his *Endimion*, and also in a very platonic way. The sensual features of the story were ignored, and Endimion was shown as rising from a contemplation of the earthly beauty of Tellus to the heavenly beauty of Cynthia, a beauty in which every perfection was united.[20]

In Drayton the story is of the slightest. 'His are cool, moonlight loves,' wrote Harold Child in one of the best appreciations of *Endimion and Phœbe*. 'The poem recalls irresistibly some Italian painting of the renascence, where nymphs and satyrs occupy a quiet, spacious and purely decorative world.'[21] It is a succession of

lovely scenes, interrupted by an occasional meditation or an excursion into astronomy, or astrology, or philosophy, and ending with an exquisite invocation to 'Idea'. Thus there is the opening picture of Mt Latmus, reminiscent of Spenser and, as it were, looking forward to Milton. The 'paradise' on the summit is described:

> For which fayre *Phœbe* sliding from her sphere

often descends; and this image, which is repeated further on, is perhaps the only material detail Drayton borrows from Ovid.[22] The goddess appears to Endimion in the likeness of a nymph:

> Neere to a Grove she had *Endimion* spide,
> Where he was fishing by a River Side
> Under a Popler, shadowed from the Sun,
> Where merrily to court him she begun;
> Sweet boy (qd. she) take what thy hart can wish,
> When thou doost angle would I were a fish . . .

She pictures to Endimion the dainty and innocent joys that await him if he loves her. There are things here that remind one of *Venus and Adonis* and—sparing the bathos—of Titania's promises to Bottom: but, as regards the latter, we do not know which poet recalled which. Endimion resists. He is the servant of Phœbe, he can serve no lesser nymph:

> Now, he requests that shee would stand aside,
> Because the fish her shadow had espide.

The whole scene, which is the most lifelike in the poem, suggests a painting by Giorgione in his cooler mood. Endimion now grows more impatient, so that after further pleading the goddess leaves him. But her presence has worked her will:

> Deceitfull Love had undermin'd the Fort.

The purpose of this episode, probably invented by Drayton, is to show that earthly beauty is a figure of heavenly. To present herself in a form accessible to mortal senses, the goddess could only appear 'less than, lower than her celestial self.'[23] Endimion does not yet recognise her as Phœbe. But, when love for her enters his heart, he begins to mount the ladder which leads from love of earthly beauty to love of that which is its divine pattern. Drayton could hardly have presented his belief in Platonic love more effectively.[24]

Endimion loves. And now follows the most beautiful passage in the poem, a passage which—though Drayton's critics have overlooked the point—appears to me to derive from Petrarch, perhaps directly, perhaps by way of Ronsard.

Absent from Laura, Petrarch gazed at the bench where she had once sat in thought; he paused at the spot where love had first taken possession of him. The earliest violets recalled her grace, the first roses her cheeks. As he wanders through the countryside, each turn of the path reminds him of some movement, some glance, of the beloved's:

> Quì tutta umile e quì la vidi altera;
> Or aspra or piana, or dispietata or pia . . .
> Quì cantò dolcemente, e quì s'assise;
> Quì si rivolse, e quì rattenne il passo;
> Quì co' begli occhi mi traffisse il core;
> Quì disse una parola e quì sorrise . . .[25]

Here is the mirror in which since Petrarch's time the human heart has again and again recognised its image. The thing cannot be matched or equalled, but only repeated or imitated, as it was by Ronsard—and by Drayton. By Ronsard first:

> Voici le bois que ma sainte Angelette
> Sur le printemps anime de son chant.
> Voici les fleurs que son pied va marchant,
> Lors que pensive elle s'esbat seulette . . .
> Ici chanter, là pleurer je la vis.
> Ici sourire, et là je fu ravy
> De ses discours, par lesquels je desvie;
> Ici s'asseoir, là je la vis danser.[26]

So, too, Drayton:

> Heere my love sat, in this place did she play,
> Heere in this Fountaine hath my Goddesse been,
> And with her presence hath she grac'd this green.

Often by a stream, or on the sward, or in the trunk of a beech-tree or even in a white cloud, Petrarch had seen the face of Laura:

> I' l'ho più volte (or chi fia che me'l creda?)
> Ne l'acqua chiara e sopra l'erba verde
> Veduta viva, e nel troncon d'un faggio
> E'n bianca nube . . .[27]

And later, after her death, when the poet was walking by the Sorgue, he would see her form like a nymph's emerging from the stream and sitting on the bank:

> Ora in forma di ninfa o d'altra diva
> Che del più chiaro fondo di Sorga esca
> E pongasi a seder in su la riva;
> Or l'ho veduta sù per l'erba fresca——[28]

verses which one feels Drayton must have known about, before he wrote of Phœbe who was for him the 'sweet nymph of Ankor,' the English Sorgue. But the whole passage is to be cited. It is not a presentation of desire but a study of what is called 'falling in love.'[29]

> He cannot love, and yet forsooth he will,
> He sees her not, and yet he sees her still,
> Hee goes unto the place shee stood upon,
> And asks the poor soyle whether she was gon;
> Fayne would he follow her, yet makes delay,
> Fayne would he goe, and yet fayne would he stay,
> Hee kist the flowers depressed with her feete,
> And swears from her they borrow'd all their sweet.
> Fayne would he cast aside this troublous thought,
> But still like poyson, more and more it wrought,
> And to himself thus often would he say,
> Heere my Love sat, in this place did shee play,
> Heere in this Fountaine hath my Goddesse been,
> And with her presence hath she grac'd this green.

If Drayton is here Plato's and Petrarch's 'scholar,' as he is, nothing could be more skilful or more limpid than this central passage.

The scenes that follow are less happily inspired; but how was a poet to tell at any length the story of Endimion and Phœbe, when all he really knew was that the moon-goddess had become enamoured of a fair shephered whose flocks grazed on Latmos; that she bestowed a kiss on him as he slept in the shadow of a cave; and that he slept thereafter for the space of thirty years? It was true that, *before* this time, he must often have gazed on his mistress as her silver crescent hung above him in the sky; and so—as the learned thought—this Endimion must really have been an astronomer plotting the moon's path across the heavens. Sylvester, in his translation of Du Bartas's *Sepmaine,* entitled *Bartas his Devine*

Weekes, had referred to Endimion when speaking in 'praise of learned Astronomers,'[39] and this was probably a sufficient hint for Drayton to depict Endimion as sitting on a bank by moonlight and addressing the constellations: Calisto, Andromeda, Perseus, Cassiopeia and the others (verses 339-384); and, later, for Phœbe to convey him into the heavens from whence he sees not only

> The earth in perfect roundness of a ball,

but the other planets performing their revolutions

> Within the compasse of the Zodiacke.[31]

This journey, for which there was precedent in Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*, was very probably suggested by Du Bartas's *Sepmaine*, as indeed the character of Phœbe may owe something to his *Uranie*.[32] The poem concludes with Endimion sleeping for thirty years (as the authorities had stated),

> Remayning ever beautiful and yong,
> And what in vision there to him be fell
> My weary Muse some other time shall tell.

Drayton then invokes Collin (Spenser), Musaeus (Daniel), Goldey (Lodge), and especially the 'Sweet Nymph of *Ankor*, crowne of my desire,' calling down blessings on her home 'Where all the Muses be imparadis'd.'

He had probably been discouraged by the difficulty of the theme, and may not have realised that this youthful essay contained some of the loveliest verses of the age. There is here a purity of line, a transparency of diction and syntax which suggest that somehow, beyond the tapestries of Spenser and Ovid, he had divined the radiance of Greek art. The rhymed couplets at their best have never been surpassed; they are neither too rigid as in Pope, nor too loose and easy-flowing as in Keats.

Drayton never republished this poem.[33] Two copies alone of the 1595 edition seem to have survived, and it remained unknown to all but a very few until it was reprinted by J. P. Collier in 1870. Even then, little attention was excited; and it is only in our own times that the edition prepared by the late Professor Hebel in 1925, and the text contained in his Variorum Drayton,[34] have rendered the poem really accessible.

III

Drayton had a great affection for his native language and his native land. This patriotism took the form of a love for the English countryside and for England's heroic past; and he now turned to the writing of an epic poem. This was the *Mortimeriados* (1596) of which the subject was the war between Edward II and the Barons. It was told in rhyme-royal, perhaps under Chaucer's influence, and proved popular. But Drayton was not satisfied with the metre, and he rewrote and republished it in 1603 under the title of *The Barrons War*. It was now in *ottava rima*, and Drayton explained his final choice of this stanza in an important preface:

> The often harmony softened the verse more than the majesty of the subject would pe mit . . . Therefore (but not without fashioning the whole frame) I chose Ariosto's stanza, of all other the most complete and best proportioned.

He then explained why the quatrain, the quinzain and the 'sestin' are unsuitable for an epic poem, and added

> The stanza of seven is touched on before. This of eight both holds the tune clean through to the base of the column (which is the couplet . . .) and closeth not but with a full satisfaction to the ear for so long detention. Briefly, this sort of stanza hath in it majesty, perfection and solidity . . .

This must be one of the best analyses of the rhymed octave that has ever been made; and it is not to disparage Drayton to say that he does not handle it quite as adroitly or energetically as Ariosto had done. Meanwhile, however, he had been experimenting in another kind of historical poetry, better fitted to his powers, namely the verse-epistles which are supposedly exchanged between famous heroes and heroines. In *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597) he 'professed himself' to be 'a pupil' of Ovid: but he was attempting something different from what Ovid had attempted in the *Heroides*. These epistles were to present great moments in the national history, not by means of narrative but of a series of 'lyrical monologues,' as Elton well describes them,[35] in which Henry II and Rosamund, Richard II and Isabelle, Mary of France and Charles Brandon—to name a few—communicate. Thus we are not reading the complaints of forsaken women, of 'Cupid's saints,' as they were called,

whose lovers do not reply;[36] but letters by men as well as women. The tone is sometimes noble and vigorous, sometimes touching and pathetic; and the rhymed couplet which he had adopted very probably reminded readers of Ovid's elegiacs,[37] as it was doubtless intended to do. There is nothing Italian in this; but the letter from *Henry Howard, Earle of Surrey, to the Lady Geraldine* tells more about Italy than was ever warranted by the short and tragic life of the Duke of Norfolk's son. Drayton believed, with his contemporaries, that Surrey had been in love with Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and he supposed further that Surrey had actually visited Italy, travelling by way of Rotterdam, and had taken part in a tournament in Florence. This was pretext for a letter in praise of Tuscany and England:

> From learned *Florence* (long time rich in fame)
> From whence thy race, thy noble grandsirs came,
> To famous *England*, that kind nurse of mine,
> Thy Surrey sends to heav'nly GERALDINE:
> Yet let not *Tuscan* think I doe it wrong,
> That I from thence write in my Native tongue;
> That in these harsh-tun'd Cadences I sing,
> Sitting so neere the Muses sacred Spring. . . .
> Though to the Tuscans I the smoothnesse grant,
> Our Dialect no Majestie doth want. . . .

'Geraldine,' in her reply, lays no claim to descent from the Geraldi of Florence, but rather boasts the honours she derives from the Earls of Desmond and Kildare, and vaunts her Irish forbears. It appears, none the less, that her family had given some credit to the old tradition. In 1507 the then Earl of Kildare had written in this connection to the Gherardini family in Italy. But the story of Surrey's travels is fictional. Drayton may have confused Surrey with Wyatt, who had certainly been in Italy; or, he may have believed the narrative in Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* (1594)—which is the story of Jack Wilton, the servant of Surrey, and their travels abroad—to be authentic.[38]

In the last two Epistles, which proved very popular, we see Lady Jane Grey and her husband, Gilford Dudley, confined in separate chambers of the Tower, awaiting their execution. Jane laments the ambition of their fathers, which had brought them to this pass, and, writing for a moment like one of 'Cupid's saints,'

she sighs that

> These briny Teares doe make my Incke looke pale.

But soon, unlike Ovid's heroines, she calls religion to her aid:

> Then, my kinde Lord, sweet GILFORD, be not griev'd,
> The soule is Heavenly, and from Heaven reliev'd . . .
> Now let us make exchange of Mindes to either . . .
> For each good motion that the Soule awakes,
> A Heavenly figure sees, from whence it takes
> That sweet Resemblance, which by power of kinde,
> Forms (like it selfe) an Image in the minde,
> And in our Faith the operations bee,
> Of that Divinenesse which through that we see;
> Which never erres, but accidentally,
> By our fraile Fleshes imbecillity . . .
> For as these Towers our bodies doe enclose,
> So our Soules prisons verily are those.

It has been observed that there were two closely allied currents of mystical thought in the sixteenth century: the neo-Platonic and the purely Christian mysticism of medieval origin;[39] and that, as the century advanced, many people tended to turn from the neo-Platonic to the Christian. In his commentary on Benivieni's *Canzone*, Pico della Mirandola, while agreeing that the first three steps of the ascent can be accomplished as Benivieni thought, declared that the *last* three can only be effected by divine grace.[40] And this is the attitude Drayton attributes to Lady Jane Grey. In brief, the passage shows how thoroughly the fusion of Christian and neo-Platonic thought, as interpreted by Ficino, Benivieni, Pico and others, had been absorbed by this time by a mind as English as Drayton's and was indeed becoming part of the Anglican tradition. As regards the historical background of the 'Epistle,' he may have read some of the actual letters which Lady Jane had written to her father and sisters; the tone he ascribes to her is similar to that of her own letters, and these verses are among the most 'heroicall' of the series.

IV

The 'Odes' which Drayton published in 1606 in *Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall* are among his best titles to fame. Some, like 'To his

Rivall,' are simple lyrics; 'To his coy Love' is a song, almost in the Caroline manner. But others, 'To the Virginian Voyage,' 'A Hymne to his Ladies Birthplace' and 'To the Cambro-Britons and their Harpe, a ballade of Agincourt,' are the first successful attempts to naturalise the Horation ode; Ronsard's later 'odes' and 'odelettes,' written after he had given up the imitation of Pinder, may have shown Drayton how the metre and rhymes could be handled. It seems that, as he grew older, Drayton's lyric vein improved and also that he was growing more himself. The long years spent in composing *Polyolbion* might have stifled a genius less vital than his. That this was not so appears from his return to pastoral poetry.

He had revised his early eclogues for the edition of 1606; he again revised and republished them in 1619 under the title of *Pastorals, Contayning Eclogues. With the Man in the Moone,* preceded by a preface on pastoral poetry. They had gained something in revision and perhaps lost something of value: the praise of love, spoken by Batte in Eclogue viii, was rewritten and was less effective than in the 1594 version. In the preface he points out that, though the speakers in this genre are humble folk and their language plain, the matter they treat of is weighty. He knows Virgil for the Messianic Eclogue which came (he believes, perhaps rightly) from 'Sibyl's moniments'; and he argues that, by the song of the Angels at Christ's Nativity, pastoral poetry was consecrated. Of recent poets, he names only Sannazaro and Spenser; not, curiously, Mantuan, although he was to make special mention of the latter in his 'Epistle to Henry Reynolds' (1627).

The love of pastoral remained with him to the end and he perhaps did as much as anyone to renew the genre, and especially its language. This may be seen by reading *Nimphidia, the Quest of Cinthia* and *The Shepheardes Sirena,* which appeared in 1627, and still more *The Muses Elizium,* published in 1630. *The Quest of Cinthia* is for the most part a lyrical monologue, full of country sights and sounds. In *The Shepheardes Sirena* (the name must have come from Montemayor), with the informal dialogue between Sirena and Dorilus and the song of the other shepherds, there is more than a flavour of the *Aminta*; but the tone is entirely English. Sirena is the nymph of Trent; and so the Derbyshire hills and the streams of Dove and Derwent are celebrated; and the song:

Neare to the Silver Trent,
Sirena dwelleth:
Shee to whom Nature lent
All that excelleth—

shows how he was naturalising pastoral in England much as D'Urfé, a little earlier, had been naturalising it in his native Forez. The change is even more perceptible in the ten 'Nymphalls' of *The Muses Elizium.*

This fantasy, which he published at the age of sixty-seven, shows him enjoying a kind of second youth, serenely master of his medium. One feels that the older kind of pastoral, which had drawn its main sustenance from Virgil, Mantuan and Marot—the kind that Spenser had perfected—is passing away. The artifice of the poetic contest, or of the lovers' dialogue, is less often resorted to (though the second Nymphall is an exception); and most of the speakers are nymphs. We no longer have panegyrics of kings and queens, and there is less satire of contemporary life, although what there is, is strong. It is a new kind of eclogue, nearer in tone to the pastoral dramas of Tasso and Guarini, and in which the use of song and chorus gives a hint of their influence; but without that penetrating, reflective and elegiac study of love which makes the *Aminta* so impressive. The land into which Drayton leads us is in fact more remote from reality than Torquato Tasso's, or even Bernardo's, or Sannazaro's:

The winter here a Summer is,
No waste is made by time,
Nor doth the Autumne ever misse
The blossoms of the Prime.

It is the Muses' Elysium, a haunt not unlike Raphael's *Parnassus,* and perhaps the nearest equivalent English poetry offers to that great painting:

There in perpetuall Summers shade
Apolloes Prophets sit
Among the flowres that never fade,
But flourish like their wit . . .
The thrice three Virgins heavenly Cleere
Their trembling Timbrels sound,
Whilst the three comely Graces there
Dance many a dainty Round . . .

> The Poets Paradise this is,
> To which but few can come;
> The Muses onely bower of blisse,
> Their Deare *Elizium*. . . .

It is a refuge from the world of men, which lies beyond the border; and a paradise which one enters only after a life spent in the service of poetry and the rejection of sensual enjoyments. True, there sometimes comes to Elysium a rumour of the actual world, of that land of Felicia (so-called) where 'choice Nymphs' are few indeed and the greater number of dames are 'raging frantique Froes' whose clothes make them look like 'huge Bags blowne up with wind.' Once, in the tenth Nymphall, comes a monster, half-man, half-goat, who had fled from Felicia because the woods that once sheltered his kind, and herds of deer and 'quires of birds,' are now wholly devoured by 'the flaming Furnace.' In these verses Drayton laments the passing of the tall forests of oak and beech which covered most of Warwickshire and which were being rapidly felled for the smelting of iron.[41] This was indeed an iron age, he thought, as he looked back to the days of his youth, which seemed to him better. Perhaps he meant to depict himself in the fugitive satyr;[24] perhaps, under the guise of Elysium he was portraying Knole House, the home of his patron the Earl of Dorset, and contrasting it with London, or 'Felicia.'[43] If there is satire in these verses, it is lightly pointed; although his patron's home was probably for him something like what Urbino had been for Bernardo Tasso and others.

Drayton owes little in these eclogues directly to his predecessors. The rivalry in the second Nymphall between Cleon, the mountain shepherd, and Lalus, the shepherd of the vale, goes back to Mantuan; and there are a few reminiscences of the Greek and Roman classics. But of invention there is a great deal, both in matter and manner. An Elysium peopled mainly with nymphs and fairies was new; while in the fifth Nymphall the symbolism of flowers, the Herbal with the properties of plants that cure diseases, and the garlands which the nymphs weave, enable the poet to celebrate the more famous herbs, garden-flowers and wild-flowers of his country. Lastly, the metres he adopts in the lyrics, and the rich rhymes, are as charming as the kind of existence they describe.

Mertilla.—Why how now *Cloris*, what, thy head
Bound with forsaken Willow?
Is the cold ground become thy bed?
The grasse become thy pillow?
O let not those life-lightning eyes
In this sad vayle be shrowded,
Which into mourning puts the skyes,
To see them over clowded.

Cloris.—O my *Mertilla* doe not praise
These Lampes so dimly burning,
Such sad and sullen lights as these
Were onely made for mourning . . .

And again, in such a descriptive passage as this:

Cleere had the day bin from the dawne,
All chequered was the Skye,
Thin Clouds like Scarfs of Cobweb Lawne
Vayld Heavens most glorious eye.

There is an airiness here, and also a finish, which show the English pastoral genre at, or at least near, its point of perfection. One feels the proximity of Herrick (who knew these poems) and strangely, and perhaps equally, of Burns.

If the work of Drayton has been reviewed at greater length than any precise Italian influences always seem to warrant, this is because he illustrates the sometimes hardly perceptible manner in which the currents of Italian poetry entered the main stream of English. He never plagiarises and rarely imitates. Reflections of the Italian sonneteers are caught here and there in *Ideas Mirrour,* but they grow fewer in the later editions of *Idea. Endimion and Phœbe* differs markedly from *Hero and Leander* and from *Venus and Adonis* in that its hero is not animated by sensual passion, but by the pure love of beauty which marks the first step in the ascent of the soul; Drayton is here a disciple of Ficino, Bembo and the others. There are also, in this long poem, a few lines which are a clear reminiscence of Petrarch, though the thoughts may have reached him indirectly. Finally, in his later years, we see Drayton composing a new kind of pastoral poetry, a kind which Tasso and Guarini had heralded as from a distance, which is more independent than Spenser's of classical models and which one recognises as more and more English.

REFERENCES

[1] No. xiii in *Ideas Mirrour*, 1594; no. liii in *Idea*, 1619.
[2] It is to Hewes that he is probably alluding when he speaks of his 'friends, the Camber-Britons.'
[3] For a study of Drayton's sonnets, with a record of their appearances in the five editions, see Oliver Elton, *Michael Drayton: a critical study*. London, 1905. Appendix A, pp. 206–9.
[4] As Sir Sidney Lee argued.
[5] The Gooderes had lived at Polesworth on the Ancor; but Lucy Harington, who married the Earl of Bedford and became a great patroness of letters, had also lived on the Ancor, at Combe Abbey. 'Idea' however was not the Countess of Bedford. In *Polyolbion* we read that 'An-cor prophesies her (Idea's) Christian name and Godiva half her surname;' and from the 'Hymn to his Lady's Birthplace' we learn that she had been born at Coventry. The association of Coventry with Godiva thus identifies Anne Goodere with 'Idea.' Finally we know that towards 1596 Anne had married Sir Henry Rainsford and gone to live in the Vale of Evesham, by the Stour (a Cotswold stream). Now in the eighth eclogue as rewritten for the 1606 edition, we learn that 'Modest Idea . . ./ That Rowland hath so highly deified' is now 'Driving her flocks upon the fruitful Meen/Which daily looks upon the lovely Stour . . .' (See Elton, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–21).
[6] The picture of the Graces which are seated on Idea's eyelids may have some connection with a poem in the Italian *Fiori*, Fo 72, 2.
[7] *Les Sonnets élisabéthains*, p. 147 and note 1.
[8] No. xxxii.
[9] There is also perhaps here a reminiscence of Marot's *Complaincte de Madame Loyse*.
[10] Miss Yates thinks this sonnet refers more particularly to the dialogue on Love in the *Second Frutes* (*John Florio*, p. 138).
[11] *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. W. Hebel. Oxford, 1932, II, 340.
[12] No. xliii (1599) and cf. no. xlvii of the 1605 edition.
[13] xlvi (1605).
[14] J. G. Scott, p. 318.
[15] Elton, *op. cit.*, p. 61 note 1.
[16] No. lxi (1619).
[17] In this same year Lodge, who was a friend of Drayton's, hailed him as 'Pieria's Michael.'
[18] It was becoming fashionable also about this time to refer to the 'Imperial votaress' as a moon-goddess.
[19] Cited by E. S. Le Comte in his excellent *Endymion in England*. New York, 1944.
[20] Chapman also, in 1594, had offered a spiritual interpretation of the myth.
[21] 'Michael Drayton' in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, IV, 180.
[22] It comes from the line in *Heroides*, xviii: 'Tu dea mortalem caela delapsa petebas,' as Kathleen Tillotson has pointed out (Drayton, *Works*, ed. Hebel, V, 19, 21).
[23] E. S. Le Comte, *op. cit.*, p. 92. Professor Douglas Bush has shown that there is a similar episode in Francesco Ellio's *Endimione*. Here, however, the nymph is not regarded as a rival to Diana; nor is it certain that this poem appeared before 1618 (*Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, 1932, pp. 150–163).
[24] 'He presents in concrete story the "way of love" of traditional Platonism' (J. W. Hebel, Introduction to *Endimion and Phoebe*, ed. cit., 1925).
[25] lxxvi in Vita (*Rime*, cxii).
[26] *Amours de* 1552, No. cxxxi. Ed. Laumonnier, 1939, IV, 127.
[27] Canzone xiii, in Vita (*Rime*, cxxix).
[28] xiii in Morte (*Rime*, cclxxix).
[29] cf. Kathleen Tillotson in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. cit., V, 20.
[30] E. S. Le Comte, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[31] See verses 603-730.

[32] K. Tillotson in Drayton, *Works*, V, 19 note. Whether Drayton read the *Uranie* in Sylvester's version we do not know; it had been translated by King James as early as 1584. The passage on 'the excellency of the soule' in which

> Her sweet Endimion more to beautifie,
> Into his soule the Goddesse did infuse
> The fiery nature of a heavenly Muse (vv. 506-8),

comes from *L'Uranie*; and the disquisition of the 'threes and nines' which so much impressed Lodge seems to have been suggested by *La Sepmaine*.

[33] Although he later on rehandled the theme satirically in *The Man in the Moon*.

[34] Vol. I, Oxford, 1931.

[35] *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

[36] K. Tillotson, Drayton, *Works*, V, 98.

[37] Harold Child in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, IV, 183; Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition*, 164, 187 note.

[38] K. Tillotson in Drayton, *Works*, V, 130-1.

[39] See J. B. Collins, *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age*. Baltimore, 1940, pp. 112-118.

[40] 'Nè in se, o per se potrà l'anima sufficientemente possidere quel lume della bellezza, il quale da se non ha, ma solo per dono e communicatione di altrui . . . etc.' *Commento*, III, 10. Cited by Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 116 note.

[41] K. Tillotson in Drayton, *Works*, V, 223.

[42] *Ibid.*, 220.

[43] *Ibid.*, note 4.

CHAPTER XIII

Greville

THE figure of Greville is very different from that of any of his literary compeers. More complex and mysterious than Sidney or Drayton, more profound than the minor writers, he offers, even in the poems of his too little known *Caelica,* a field very inviting to exploration.

A native of Warwickshire, like Shakespeare and Drayton, he had been born at Beauchamp Court in 1554. He was educated with Sidney at Shrewsbury School, and afterwards at Jesus College, Cambridge. Theology and Philosophy attracted him more than pure poetry and the Calvinism in which he had grown up predisposed him to sympathy with Sidney's French friends, Du Plessis Mornay and Hubert Languet. It will be remembered[1] that it was he who, in 1584, entertained Giordano Bruno at a dinner-party which the latter afterwards described, and perhaps unwittingly caricatured, in *La Cena de le Ceneri.* If Bruno's conduct in this matter annoyed him, as it must have done,[2] the Italian's heterodox opinions probably appealed to him even less than they appealed to Sidney. One sees no reason to suppose, however, that he was unwilling to listen to a man whose learning was so vast. Bruno seems to have acquainted him with the outlines of the Copernican system, and he may perhaps —though this is conjectural—have descanted on the Christian scepticism which Nicholas Cusanus, Bishop of Liége, had brought to bear in his criticism of human learning. Cusanus's *De docto Ignorantia* was one of the most notable works of the fifteenth century, and the attitude Greville later adopted in his *Treatie of Humane Learning* suggests that he may have had some knowledge of it.

Greville's education and accomplishments as a young man were like those of most other nobles. He had learned French, Latin and Greek at Shrewsbury; later, in London, he probably learned Italian from Florio.[3] Tradition represents him as associated with

Sidney and Dyer in a literary circle, but of this we unfortunately know little. What we do know is that he held Sidney in the greatest affection and admiration, and that it was only the royal mandate which prevented his accompanying Sidney and Leicester on the expedition to the Netherlands. The former's death overwhelmed him, and his life in the years that followed took on a sombre hue which never left it. He was so grief-stricken that he was unable to contribute to the many elegies that were composed; but, almost immediately afterwards, he had obtained leave to join the King of Navarre's army in France (1587), perhaps in the hope that he might be killed in battle.[4] He fought at Coutras and in other engagements and was not killed. Somewhat later we find him associated with the Countess of Pembroke's circle and also enjoying the steady favour of the Queen. He did not marry, and of his private life very little is known. In 1598 he was appointed Treasurer to the Navy, in 1614 Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1621 he was raised to the peerage. He was immensely wealthy; and he used his money in assisting needy men of letters, in founding a professorship at Cambridge and in restoring Warwick Castle. He was murdered in 1628 by a man who thought (mistakenly) that he had been omitted from Lord Brooke's will. His poetical works, including the dramas, were published in 1633 and his *Life of Sidney* in 1652.

Greville was more of a statesman and political thinker than a poet. He probably agreed with Castiglione that an ability to write verse was a necessary adornment of the courtier; but he seems to have soon tired of composing perfunctory sonnets. He looked into his own heart, he watched his conduct and feelings and those of the woman, or women, he loved, he meditated on the problem of evil; and his observations, set down with ruthless sincerity, impart to his verses an astringency as marked as that of the darkest of Shakespeare's sonnets. He had no great facility as a poet, and even less felicity of phrase, but for intellectual penetration he was unmatched, except by Shakespeare and perhaps Donne. His mind was more French than English, and he was a spiritual brother of Pascal, whom he seems to me curiously to anticipate.

Greville had imbibed something of the neo-Platonism that was then fashionable and something of the Stoicism which was being reinterpreted and adapted to Christian thought by Guillaume Du Vair. But, not satisfied with the stoic view of evil, or with the

Stoic 'apathy,' he sought the origin of evil rather in the primal fault postulated by Christian philosophy. Man had fallen by an act of self-will, and it was by repeated acts of self-will that men continued to err.

> Angels fell first from God,
> man was the next that fell;
> Both being made by him for Heav'n,
> have for themselves made Hell.[5]

Thus Greville sees a deep cleavage between the state of nature and the state of grace: he sees it in others and has a poignant consciousness of it in himself. Critics have been quick to observe that his conduct probably did not always square with his principles, and he has been regarded as a sort of English Talleyrand and treated as a self-seeker, if not a time-server. It is doubtful how far such charges can be substantiated. As a statesman and administrator, he was compelled to make some distinction between ideal principle and practical policy; but he did not allow this to alter his fundamental beliefs. The famous remark which he made in 1613: 'I know the world and believe in God,' is full of meaning and, as far as one can judge, of sincerity.

I

Greville's earliest poems as well as many that belong to his middle years are to be found in *Caelica*. The hundred and nine pieces contained in this volume are called 'sonnets,' and many are indeed regular sonnets of the Shakespearean pattern. But one or more quatrains have sometimes been added, as the poet felt the need of them; while other pieces are in the six-line stanzas, rhyming a b a b c c; poems in mixed metres; or longer poems in seven-syllable rhymed couplets. Greville has a marked liking for the eleven-syllable line which he mingles with the ten-syllable. In variety of tone and topic *Caelica* resembles the sonnets of Shakespeare more than those of any other poet of his time. Some seventy-five of the poems relate to love;[6] of these, fifty-seven are written for 'Caelica,' 'Myra' and 'Cynthia'; but these names may all conceal the same real mistress[7] and represent her in different moods or in different phases of the love that binds her and the poet. Others, however, are addressed to Cupid and others treat of the philosophy of love. Many of them are very original and far above the intellectual level

of most of the sonneteers. Apart from these, there are a few occasional pieces, a number of poems on political subjects, and eighteen religious poems in the latter part of the collection. But these are not grouped strictly according to their themes, and students believe that the order in which the sonnets are printed roughly corresponds to the order in which they were composed. The earliest were probably written between 1577 and 1580;[8] the latest possibly after 1600.[9]

The feeling of a number of the early love-poems is Petrarchan. Love is 'the delight of all well-thinking minds'; the beloved is

> More than most faire, full of that heavenly fire
> Kindled above to shew the Makers glory . . .
> If in my heart all Saints else be defaced,
> Honour the Shrine, where you alone are placed.[10]

The name of Caelica denotes the skies where all perfections dwell. The stars should rejoice to be compared with her eyes:

> You little starres that live in skyes,
> And glory in *Apollo's* glorie,
> In whose aspects conjoined lyes
> The Heavens will, and Natures storie,
> Joy to be likened to those eyes,
> Which eyes make all eyes glad, or sorie . . .[11]

But Caelica's anger brings anguish to her lover; when absent from her, he strives to be glad, but fails.[12] He swears to be constant. But the terms in which all this is expressed are highly personal and novel, and they verge on the 'metaphysical':

> Faire Dog, which so my heart dost tear asunder
> That my lives-blood, my bowels overfloweth,
> Alas, what wicked rage conceal'st thou under
> These sweet enticing eyes, thy forehead showeth?[13]

For a time he still places love 'above those middle regions, where every passion warres it selfe with legions.' But his *canzoniere* records a spiritual pilgrimage more desolating than Shakespeare's. He fears that lover's vows may still not guard him from change and sorrow; fearing this in himself, he fears it also in the beloved, in whom he discerns an alternation of passion and repentance, but such

> As neither partie satisfying other,
> Repentance still becomes desires mother.[14]

He has reached a moment when love, though still with him, has retired 'downe to (his) darkened minde' in which

> Truth clouds it selfe . . .
> Envie is King, at others good offended,
> Memorie doth worlds of wretchednesse assemble,
> Passion to ruin passion is intended,
> My reason is but power to dissemble . . .

because he sees at once the end of love, or its survival as due only to reason's wilfully creating a state of illusion. And yet he accepts this illusion; or, rather, he will insist to himself on contemplating in his mistress's beauty an image of the divine excellence.

> Rather goe backe unto that heavenly quire
> Of Natures riches, in her beauties placed,
> And there in contemplation feed desire,
> Which till it wonder, is not rightly graced;
> For those sweet glories, which you doe aspire,
> Must, as *Ideas* only be embraced
> Since excellence in other forme enjoyed,
> Is by descending to her Saints destroyed.[15]

This is neo-Platonism, but of a sophisticated and even disillusioned kind: less securely founded than the Christian Platonism of sonnet lxxxv; but by the time he reaches that point he will have passed through experiences that bring greater refinement.

More complex, however, and akin to the perceptions of Dante and his disciples of the 'Dolce stil nuovo,' as Professor Bullough has indicated,[16] is sonnet ix, one of the most self-scrutinising and metaphysical of the whole series:

> O Love, thou mortall sphere of powers divine,
> The paradise of Nature in perfection,
> What makes thee thus thy Kingdome undermine,
> Vailing thy glories under woes reflection? . . .
>
> For sorrow holds mans life to be her owne,
> His thoughts her stage, where tragedies she plaies,
> Her orbe she makes his Reason overthrowne,
> His love foundations for her ruines layes;
> So as while love will torments of her borrow,
> Love shall become the very love of sorrow.

Love therefore speake to *Caelica* for me,
Shew her thy selfe in everything I doe;
Safely thy powers she may in others see,[17]
And in thy power see her glories too. . . .

In the moral climate of these poems there is a breeze blowing from Italy which Greville has breathed and in which he has lived for a time. But this fairly stable weather then begins to change. The climate of *Caelica* is quite unlike that of the *Amoretti* or even of *Astrophel and Stella*. In sonnet xviii:

I offer wrong to my beloved Saint,
I scorne, I change, I falsify my love,

he reproaches Caelica with coquetry and inconstancy, and concludes:

Change and contempt (you know) ill speakers be:
Caelica: and such are all your thoughts of me.

Sonnet xxii is one of the most beautiful love-poems of the age, with its picture of the colours the lovers exchange and of the flower-garland which he found 'on Sunday at the Church-stile.' Number xl marks a state of equilibrium which Petrarch could not have experienced. But this is short-lived. There are verses which suggest that the poet is not as constant as he wished to be. The sonnets become more charged with thought; until at last, in the desolation that arises from his awareness of human frailty ('My age of joy is past, of woe begunne'), he speaks of the vanity of those who seek glory in love, or war, or politics, and turns his thoughts to heaven:

Who seeks true glory must looke to the skye.[18]

And he realises (number lxvii) that

Unconstancy and doublenesse depart,
When man bends his desires to mend his heart.

He explains to Caelica in one of that class of poems which Charles Lamb afterwards described as 'all frozen and made rigid with intellect,' the real reasons for constancy in love:

Since Love no doomes-day hath, where bodies change,
Why should new be delight, not being strange?

He bids her a courteous farewell in a long poem (lxxv) which perhaps contains the record of an actual parting, and is the more

moving for the tears it holds back, and for the light and sustained sweetness of the metre, as though both lovers were resolved to avoid any outcry. And so at last he comes round to a conception of love not far removed from Dante's:

> Love is the Peace, whereto all thoughts doe strive . . .
> Perfections spirit, Goddesse of the minde,
> Passed through hope, desire, griefe and feare,
> A simple goodnesse in the flesh refin'd,
> Which of the joyes to come doth witnesse beare.
> Constant because it sees no cause to varie,
> A Quintessence of Passions overthrowne,
> Rais'd above all that change of objects cary,
> A Nature by no other nature knowne . . .[19]

If there was a poet whom Greville ever recalled, it was Sidney, but then in a mood of emulation and not imitation. For the exercises or variations on a given theme, such as a *motif* from Ovid or Petrarch, he had no taste. In the earlier poems of *Caelica* the presence of Petrarch is felt as that of a man whose attitude one would like to share; but Caelica was not for Greville what Laura had been for the poet of Vaucluse. The last word of his sonnets brings him nearer to Dante, perhaps unconsciously. In the religious poems his thought is his own, or at least it is as personal as the thought can be, of one who through suffering and reflection has found a solution in Christian doctrine. He is conscious of the mystery, as well as the misery, of our fallen nature; and in his awareness of the *separateness* of Nature and Grace, he foreshadows the great Pascal.

II

Greville was one of the few English poets who have at once led an intense inner life, been associated in the conduct of government and kept abreast of the intellectual movement of their time. He was not, like Spenser, a *laudator temporis acti*; but neither did he refrain from subjecting to a chilly scrutiny the novelties which were welcomed by his contemporaries.

In the early years of the seventeenth century Francis Bacon was beginning that great 'Instauratio' of knowledge, which was to be his life's work, by setting out the division of the sciences. He had been struck by the dangers of error and ignorance and, on the other hand,

by the need of a method; and in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) he displayed to his readers the vast field of nature which was to be explored, not primarily by speculative reason, but by observation. His object was practical; for man, who 'is but the servant and interpreter of nature', may by the accumulation of knowledge become her master. With much of this Greville was in sympathy; yet he was conscious that in the pursuit of a design so ambitious, man might tend to forget—what the Middle Ages had well understood—'that the spiritual world is just as much a reality as the material world, and that the former is man's true home'.[20] The statesman in Greville applauded the utility of Bacon's design; but the sceptic doubted the foundations, and the Christian deprecated the pride, of human knowledge as such. Hence he was impelled to answer *The Advancement of Learning* by a *Treatie of Humane Learning*, in which he uttered certain warnings and entered certain *caveats*.

The first part of this poem contains a drastic criticism of 'our defects in Nature', and of the arts and science we have built up by means of them. He passes in review the senses (in which the beasts excel us), and imagination, memory and understanding, much as Pascal some years later was to examine 'les puissances trompeuses'; and shows how uncertain are their verdicts. As therefore all human knowledge is subjective, the arts and sciences are no substitute for divine Wisdom or religious truth, of which alone we can be sure. In this part of his treatise Greville does not apparently draw from Italian sources but rather, as Geoffrey Bullough has shown,[21] from the ancient sceptics, especially from Seneca, and from the modern Dutch philosopher Cornelius Agrippa. Whether he had read the *De docta Ignorantia* we do not know: Giordano Bruno, who greatly admired its author, 'the divine Cusanus,' might have told him of this masterwork; but the line of attack had in any event been well marked out.

The arts and sciences offer none of the reliability of which we can be sure; they may be delusive and even harmful. But it does not follow that science is useless. We see from experience that ignorance is 'Nurse and Mother unto every lust':

> Since who commit injustice, often sinne,
> Because they know not what to each is just.
>
> Man must not therefore rashly Science scorne,
> But choose, and read with care; since Learning is

A bunch of grapes sprung up among the thornes,
Where, but by caution, none the harme can misse.

One sees from this that the cult of disinterested learning will not be very easily defended. Knowledge, in Greville's view, should be studied in Nature rather than in books, and should be directed to practical ends, of which one of the principal is government.

III

Although, in the second half of the *Humane Learning* (stanzas 61-151), Greville treats of learning in general, and in particular of grammar, rhetoric, poetry and music, some of the more important stanzas (83-101) are concerned with government, civil and ecclesiastical, and the principles he advances, which are in part Machiavellian, are similar to those that animate the *Treatie of Warres* and the *Treatie of Monarchy*; while the religious principles (for example in stanzas 89, 149-151) are in accord with those of *Caelica,* of the later *Inquisition upon Fame and Honour,* and of the other works mentioned.

The first draft of the *Monarchy* seems to have been written in the time of Elizabeth, but he worked over it again after 1610 when experience had added to his sense of disillusionment; and he added to it later. It was not published until 1670. There were reasons for this; and, indeed, its boldness seems as astonishing today as it apparently did at that time. Greville sets out his theories much more daringly in this treatise than in the *Humane Learning* of 1605; and these theories, as Dr. Croll has shown in his thesis on Greville[22]—a most important piece of pioneer research—agree in many respects with Machiavelli's. The reason, no doubt, why many readers are revolted by Machiavelli is that they are at once unconscious of the motives which determine their own conduct and they also assume that the principles which should govern our private conduct should also govern the conduct of affairs and international relations. Ideally, they ought to; but premature attempts to make them do so are sometimes seen to produce more harm than good. Machiavelli's cynicism is a standing reproach to hypocrisy on the one hand and to political naïveté on the other. Not that, for this reason, everything in Machiavelli is to be approved. But Greville knew too much about the practical difficulties of government to be shocked by him; and although one cannot say exactly how far a study of the *Principe*

went to form Greville's political views—for he never really imitates, he rather assimilates—and how far they were the product of experience, the evidence goes to show that Machiavelli accounts for a good deal in those views as they are expressed in his philosophical poems.

If, as one may assume, he was disposed to accept many of the Florentine Secretary's maxims, it was because the temper of his mind was averse to political innovation; he suspected that any drastic change in the constitution would bring about what he called a 'declination'. This perhaps explains the first five sections of the *Treatie of Monarchy*. He here advises the tyrant as to the measures he may adopt to maintain himself in power; some measures are appropriate to the weak tyrant, others to the strong. Two things are to be noted here: the word 'tyrant' is used in an unfavourable sense and is not synonymous with 'autocrat' or absolute monarch; secondly, it will be recalled that Machiavelli had offered advice precisely to persons of this description, who were frequently in fact 'new princes', that is to stay, upstart dictators; and also, incidentally, Machiavelli had pointed out that the scion of an ancient dynasty has not as a rule much to hear from his subjects.[23] Greville's attitude in the above matter seems to be exactly that of Machiavelli. He may, when writing this part of the treatise, have been in a Hobbsian mood; or he may have felt that any change would be a change for the worse; but in view of stanzas 297 and 306 to which we shall allude later, it is possible that he was writing ironically, as Dr. Croll thought.[24]

His exact views are, however, difficult to interpret. What seems clear is that, as Professor Bullough points out, Greville divined from theological premises what Machiavelli had observed from his study of history.[25] Greville was an extreme conservative. Thus the theories of divine right which appealed to James I were not only new but almost certainly, in Greville's eyes, suspect. Monarchy is saved from tyranny when it is tempered by aristocracy; the statesman should aim at preserving this balance of power within the state, and, on the same principle, the balance of power in Europe.

Machiavelli had shown how the prince may, and indeed should, safeguard the constitution by respecting the established religion, laws and usages;[26] and Greville naturally follows him in these principles. When, in *A Treatie of Humane Learning*, he advocates a

national church and the discouragement of strange sects:

> So were it to be wish'd, each Kingdome would
> Within her proper Soveraignity,
> Seditions, Schismes, and strange Opinions mould
> By Synods, to a setled unity;
> Such, as though Error privately did harme,
> Yet publike Schismes might not so freely swarme,[27]

he is obviously writing with an eye to his own times; but a comparison of the first five sections of the *Treatie of Monarchy* with the *Principe* shows that when composing it he recalled several passages of this famous work. Thus the theme of Capitolo xxiii, in which the prince is advised to avoid flatterers ('Come si debbano fuggire gli adulatori')[28] is repeated by Greville in stanza 132. Machiavelli's opinion that fortresses and even artillery are less valuable to the prince than a devoted and well-disciplined army (Cap. xx) is echoed in stanzas 135-137. Earlier in his treatise, the Italian had discussed the virtues and vices of princes in a rather ambiguous chapter (xv), from which, however, one extracts this clear, if self-evident, maxim: 'gli (that is, for the prince) è necessario essere tanto prudente, che sappia fuggire l'infamia di quelli vizi che gli torrebbero lo stato'; but he had then gone on (Cap. xvi) to lay down categorically: 'E intra tutte le cose da che un principe si debbe guardare è l'essere disprezzato e odioso'; and had devoted a whole chapter (xix) to developing this maxim—'che il principe pensi . . . . di fuggire quelle cose che lo facciano odioso o vile';[29] and Greville repeats this principle in stanza 153. Pleasant vices may, however, be of more practical use to a prince than austere virtues (stanza 152)—an observation which the life of the Vert galant in Greville's time, and of Charles I just after, would have strikingly illustrated. On the other hand, Greville does not at all agree, in stanzas 164-175, with Machiavelli's scandalous maxim that a prince need not observe good faith 'quando tale osservanzia gli torni contro, e che sono spente le cagioni che la fecero promettere,' and the casuistical reasons that accompany it.[30] On the contrary, he asks:

> For what gains power by loss of reputation? . . .
> Since every blossome that ill-doing bears
> Blasteth the fruit of good successe with fears.

Machiavelli, however, was not merely a cynical adviser of 'new

princes'; the impression that he was being due to the fact that in the *Principe* he passes very rapidly—too rapidly—over the problems of old and hereditary principalities simply because the heads of such states have little difficulty in maintaining themselves;[31] and because most readers confine themselves to the *Principe* instead of also studying the later and better-balanced *Discorsi*.

Greville's fears regarding 'the declination of monarchy' as he calls it, his study of the ways in which an hereditary monarchy, though naturally stable, may nevertheless degenerate if unworthy heirs succeed to the throne, possibly derive from a reading of the *Discorsi*. He observes that, in the above cases, vice succeeds worth and weakness strength (stanza 86). A little further on (93) he writes:

> Under which clouds, while Pow'r would shadow Sloth
> And make the Crown a specious hive for Drones,
> Unactiveness finds scorn, and ruine both,
> Vice and misfortune seldom go alone,
> Power losing itself by distaste of pain,
> Since they that labor will be sure to gain.

This stanza may, as Professor Orsini has shown,[32] be based on the following passage in Book I, section 2, of the *Discorsi*: '. . . . Subito cominciarono li eredi a degenerare dai loro antichi; e lasciando l'opere virtuose, pensavano che i principi non avessero a fare altro che superare gli altri di sontuosità e lascivia e d'ogni altra qualità di licenza'. The basic thought is similar; and, though Greville could have made the observation for himself, Machiavelli's use of the word 'degenerare' and his own use of 'declination' incline one to think that he had read this passage. But when, much further on, in the section on Peace, he treats of colonial expansion and describes the excellent policy of the Romans in extending the citizenship to peoples whom they had subdued, his repetition of a phrase that occurs in Book II, Section 2, of the *Discorsi*—that the Romans were 'prodighi di Roma'—makes it certain that he drew from this work:

> This the chief pillar is of Policy
> That ever by the Romans was invented,
> Envyless to uphold their Monarchy,
> And make the stranger with their yoke contented;
> Prodigal of Rome they to their neighbors were,
> Whereby her own womb did the Empire bear.[33]

Machiavelli was perfectly aware of the political value of an old-established religion. He says indeed that the head of a state should maintain the existing foundations of religion because by doing so, he will find it easier to keep his state religious 'and consequently virtuous and united'.[34] So when, in stanza 206 of the *Monarchy*, Greville argues that established religions assist the civil government, because they are instruments

> Whereby divided Kingdoms may unite
> If not in truth, at least in outward rite,

he is in agreement with the Italian, though his observation, which is more subtle, may have arisen from his own study of affairs. And finally—and this is more impressive because it reflects Greville's suspicion of Stuart tendencies—when he speaks regretfully and affectionately of the days in which elections were 'kept free' and there was 'freedom of speech' and no 'impositions':

> Yet doth the Parliamental subsidy
> Relieve Kings want at home with peoples wealth,
> And shows the World that both States are in health,[35]

he is uttering, albeit in secret, a warning to the new dynasty which is identical with the blunt advice given by Machiavelli[36] in Book III of the *Discorsi*:

> i principi . . . a quell' ora cominciano a perder lo Stato, ch'ei cominciano a rompere le leggi, e quelli modi e quelle consuetudini che sono antiche, e sotto le quali gli uomini lungo tempo sono vissuti.[37]

An important passage which goes beyond what he had said in chapters II and III of the *Principe*.

IV

Both the Florentine Secretary and the Secretary to the Navy enjoyed the signal advantage of a first-hand acquaintance with affairs; but where the political thought of the former derived from a study of history, that of the latter was based on a metaphysical doctrine which he no doubt thought that experience confirmed. In some way of which we have no rational knowledge but which imposes itself as the most reasonable hypothesis, because it is the one that best fits

the facts, man has fallen from a state of original innocence. There has been what Greville calls a 'primal fault'; and this has corrupted our natures; it has affected our senses, our powers of reasoning, the very organs of our knowledge, and it has therefore quite naturally tainted our institutions. The thoughtful man is aware of this in the world around him, and in himself, every day of his life. Of the many passions that animate us and of which the unchecked career is so fertile of evil, Machiavelli thought that the passion for power was fundamental. Greville, who probably agreed with him in this, writes in *A Treatie of Warres* (stanza 47):

> For States are made of Men, and Men of dust,
> The moulds are frail, disease consume them must.

It is a question of preserving them as long as possible. Greville seems to have thought that the passion for power is more dangerous in the subject than in the government. He was as strongly convinced as the Italian (and only less strongly than Hobbes) of the importance of authority in the state, while at the same time he was not very reverent of tradition.[38] His views on the above questions come out in the curious stanzas of *A Treatie of Humane Learning* in which he descants on 'Politicke Philosophie'. We cannot 'perfect' Nature, but we may 'delude' it or 'redresse' it, that is to say, check its excesses by appealing to, or bringing into play, various kinds of self-interest. Now this 'Redresse of nature' 'cannot come from below,/But from that Orbe, where power exalted raignes', namely, from Government. So, let Government strive to reconcile the pursuit of earthly traditions with our primal state of innocence,

> And bring them back unto their infant dayes,
> To keepe her owne Soveraignity on earth;
> Else viper-like, their parents they devoure:
> For all Powers children easily covet power.

By the last line Greville probably means there are usually a number of subjects in a state anxious to seize political power so as also to enjoy the other powers that accompany it. The world in this iron age can hardly be made good; nor can we, in order to mend its ways, always use the highest means. Not only do lower motives in the prince often perform the function of higher, but in dealing with a world essentially corrupt, the prince must take some guidance from considerations of expediency.

In these views Greville was in general agreement with Bacon. The latter was not a man of spiritual outlook; on the contrary, the temper of his mind was rather similar to that of Machiavelli, and he had written in *The Advancement of Learning*: 'We are much beholden to Machiavelli and other writers of that class, who openly and unfeignedly declare and describe what men do and not what they ought to do.'[39] One could not deny this, although one might deprecate the fact that the Florentine had by no means confined himself to description; and might shudder to be informed that 'it has been, is, and always will be true, that evil succeeds good, and good evil, and that one is always the cause of the other.'[40] Even supposing this statement to be susceptible of proof, one might still question the propriety of blazoning the remark abroad. But then again rulers ought to be on their guard in the matter.

Some concessions to expediency—a recognition that it is a corrupt world we have to deal with—the prince will be obliged to make in foreign policy as in domestic. Stanzas 26-29 of *A Treatie of Warres* are of great interest in this connection. Wars are evil, war is 'the perfect type of hell'; but sometimes necessary. Certain virtues flourish in time of war more than in time of peace. Wars should be waged only for just causes, and then according to the rules of war. Good may come out of them. They are likely to continue, so long as the world retains 'the common staines of our humanitie':

> Since States will then leave warre, when men begin
> For Gods sake to abhorre this world of sinne.[41]

In these concluding lines of the treatise on war, Greville returns to the thought expressed in sonnet lxvii of *Caelica*:

> Unconstancy and doublenesse depart
> When man bends his desires to mend his heart.

It is clear, from the whole tone of these passages, that though Greville may be 'nearer than any other Elizabethan Englishman to Machiavelli',[42] his outlook is by no means identical with the Italian's or indeed with Bacon's. He thought we should not dwell exclusively on what is, but think sometimes of what ought to be. If Gentillet had reacted too passionately to the cynicism of Machiavelli, his attitude, though perhaps mistaken, was natural; and Greville, who quite probably looked into Gentillet's book, may have been touched by it. We notice that in setting out, in the *Humane Learning*, the

Warres and the *Monarchy,* a number of Machiavellian views, he softens the harshness of the exposition and he incorporates it into a general philosophy of which Religion is the keystone.

There was in Greville a very lonely man brooding, in the isolation of his study, on the nature of love, the nature of woman, his own nature; and on the destiny of mankind: one of the most notable of the English moralists. But there was also a man of affairs who occupied great executive positions under a competent queen and under her extravagant successor. He was thus better placed than either ruler or ruled to take a dispassionate view of human nature. That he observed that the English people were difficult to govern and that they were at that time growing increasingly difficult, one can hardly doubt. But other peoples were, in this, much like the English. It is unwise to suppose that the world will ever be a comfortable place to live in. It is probably not intended to be comfortable; for surely, as Greville writes in *A Treatie of Warres,*

> For surely, if it had beene Gods intent
> To give Man here eternally possession,
> Earth had been free from all misgovernment,
> Warre, Malice, could not then have had possession,
> Man (as at first) had bin mans nursing brother,
> And not, as since, One Wolfe unto another.[43]

In verses like these Greville appears as a central figure between Machiavelli and Hobbes, but at heart much more closely akin to the Pascal of the *Apologie:*

> What are Mens lives, but labyrinths of error,
> Shops of deceit, and Seas of misery?
> Yet Death yields so small comfort, so much terror;
> Gaine, Honour, Pleasure, such illusions be;
> As though against life, each man whet his wit,
> Yet all Mens hearts, and sense, take part with it.

In thus opening *An Inquisition upon Fame and Honour,*[44] Greville refuses the vision of fame to which Petrarch had pointed and draws for us instead a picture of man in his fallen state, incapable by unaided effort of discerning the truth, deluded by the mirage of greatness or pleasure; shrinking from life yet appalled by the image of death; or, as Pascal put it some fifty years later: 'L'homme n'est qu'on sujet plein d'erreur, naturelle et ineffaçable sans la grâce. Rien ne lui

montre le vérité. Tout l'abuse . . . .'[45] If Greville's attitude to the sciences in the *Treatie of Humane Learning* is almost identical with Pascal's,[46] his view of fame in the *Inquisition upon Fame and Honour* is not very different. The desire for fame is not to be condemned, as it is by the Stoics, because it impels us to action; but to put trust in it as something good in itself is fallacious (stanzas 26-31). There are several stanzas in the early part of this poem in which he exalts humility as man's chief virtue and abases

> This pride of minde, this Magnanimity,
> His greatest vice, his first seducing spirit,

which make one think of various passages in the *Pensées,* most of which Pascal would have placed under the section that was to be headed: *Misère de l'homme sans Dieu.* And even this title is curiously anticipated by Greville when he writes:

> Without his God, Man thus must wander ever,
> See moates in others, in himselfe no beames.

There have been descriptions of man more disparaging than this, such as Hobbes's and Taine's; but Greville is better balanced than these thinkers, and here again nearer to Pascal. It is a mistake, the latter declares in important passages, to abase man over much; we should not tell him that he is a beast (as Taine was later to do when describing man as a 'gorille féroce et lubrique') without also telling him that he is an angel; or better still, that he is not exactly either, but 'un monstre incompréhensible'—incomprehensible, that is, to speculative reason. Although playthings of illusion and error, and strongly impelled to evil, we still have notions of good and aspirations to purity, which are survivals of our primal state; nor should we despair of discerning the truth, by way of humility, of submission to the divine will and by awaiting the gift of grace. 'Soumission est usage de la raison', writes Pascal; and again: 'Pour faire d'un homme un saint, il faut bien que ce soit la grâce, et qui en doute ne sait ce que c'est que saint et qu' homme'.[47] In the *Treatie of Humane Learning* Greville had written:

> Lastly, the truth and good to love, and doe them;
> The error, onely to destroy, and shunne it;
> Our hearts in general will lead us to them,
> When gifts of Grace, and Faith have once begun it.
> For without these, the minde of man growes numbe,
> The body darkenesse, to the soule a tombe.

Thus are true Learnings to the humble heart
A Spirituall worke, raising Gods image, rased
By our transgression; a well-framed art,
At which the world, and error stand amazed . . .[48]

So, while Christian doctrine made it easier for Greville to interpret certain elements of the Machiavellian psychology and politics, it especially enabled him to transcend them; and while he is handicapped by the metre which he does not handle with any notable ease, he is more impressive in these rough and often difficult verses than is Pope in the glittering couplets of his *Essay on Man*.

Greville himself will never be easy to understand; but he is perhaps easier to appreciate now than at any time in the last three hundred years because history has tended to confirm his views and because our own age has seen such sharp checks to human pride and human calculation.

REFERENCES

[1] See above, p. 97.
[2] See e.g. Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[4] See *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville* . . . Edited by Geoffrey Bullough. Edinburgh and London, 1939, Vol. I. Introduction, p. 6.
[5] *Mustapha*, Chorus IV. Ed. Bullough, Vol. II, p. 121. Cf. Introduction, Vol. I, p. 50.
[6] For this analysis and much of the general study of Greville that follows, I am indebted to Professor G. Bullough's admirable introduction to the *Poems and Dramas*. See pp. 34 et seq. and passim.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[9] But see Bullough, p. 40.
[10] No. iii.
[11] No. iv.
[12] No. xviii.
[13] No. ii.
[14] No. xi.
[15] No. x.
[16] Ed. cit., I, 234-5.
[17] Bullough compares this with Dante in the *Vita Nuova:* 'Amor e cor gentil son una cosa.'
[18] No. lxii. It may be that in this transfer of desire from the beauty that perishes to the beauty that endures, Greville remembered the trend of feeling in Bruno's *De gli eroici furori* though where Bruno directed the mind to intellectual exploration and speculation as avenues to divine beauty (see Yates, pp. 107-8 and cf. Singer, *op. cit.*, p. 125), Greville saw the true approach in revealed religion.
[19] No. lxxxv.
[20] Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 6.
[21] *Op. cit.*, I, 55-6.
[22] Morris W. Croll, *The Works of Fulke Greville,* (M. A. Thesis, Univ. of Pennsylvania). Philadelphia, 1903. See also a closer and more decisive analysis in Napoleone Orsini, *Fulke Greville tra il mondo e Dio.* Milan, 1941, pp. 69-87.
[23] *Principe*, Cap. II.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
[25] *Op. cit.*, I, 14.
[26] *Discorsi*, III, 5 and see below.
[27] Stanza 86.
[28] Ed. Burd. Oxford, 1891, pp. 349-352.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 284-5, 289-90, 309 et seq.
[30] Cap. XVIII. Ed. Burd, p. 303. This notorious passage is to be explained, though not excused, by the desperate state of politics in the Italy of Machiavelli's time and by the virtual disappearance of any system of international morals.
[31] Note what he says about Ferrara in Cap. II.
[32] *Fulke Greville tra il mondo e Dio*, pp. 77-78.
[33] See Orsini, p. 84. There are many places in the treatises on Monarchy and War, as well as in the Dramas, that show Greville to have been conversant with the Florentine's writings, with which he sometimes agreed and sometimes disagreed.
[34] Cited by Bullough, *op. cit.*, I, 15.
[35] Stanzas 297, 302.
[36] Bullough, I, 16.
[37] *Discorsi*, III, 5.
[38] See Bullough, I, 59.

[39] For Machiavelli's influence on Francis Bacon, see N. Orsini, *Bacone e Machiavelli.* Genoa, 1936; and *Fulke Greville* . . . Milan, 1941, pp. 25-27, 84-85.
[40] Cited by Bullough, I, 14.
[41] Stanza 68. *Ed. cit.*, I, 230.
[42] Bullough, I, 14. Perhaps one should say, than any other Elizabethan *poet.*
[43] The phrase comes from Plautus.
[44] Date of composition unknown; published in 1633.
[45] Fragment 83 in the Brunschvicg editions. See *Pascal's Apology for Religion*, ed. H. F. Stewart. Cambridge, 1942, p. 24.
[46] Cf. *Pensées,* Fragments 67, 68 (Brunschvicg).
[47] Fragments 269 and 508 (Brunschvicg).
[48] Stanzas 149, 150.

CHAPTER XIV

Southwell

I

A marked change was creeping into the climate of English poetry between about 1591 and 1603: a turning away from a godless life to a godly, from the life of the senses to that of the spirit. Sometimes this was marked by positive conversions, sometimes it was the slow outcome of intellectual growth, or it was accompanied by remorse and the desire for amendment. It can be traced in Greville's later sonnets. In the 1590's poet after poet seems to regret his worldly sonnets and begins to write spiritual. There is a shift of feeling even between *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece.*

Much of the love-poetry of the age had, as we have seen, had a mystical character. It is true there was an element of fashion in all this, though it is no less true that those who had set the fashion—Petrarch, Ficino and Ficino's disciples—had by so doing raised the whole level of thought and feeling among poets. It has been shown, also,[1] that devotees of neo-Platonic mysticism had been tending before the middle of the century to pass over to Christian mysticism. Bembo in *Gli Asolani* is still neo-Platonic; but it is curious to notice that in Book IV of the *Cortegiano,* and still more in the concluding pages, Castiglione introduces a good deal of mysticism which is medieval. The following passage, in Hoby's translation, must have been familiar to many English readers:

> Let us therefore bend all our force and thoughts of soule to this most holy light, that sheweth us the way which leadeth to heaven; and after it, putting off the affections we were clad at our coming downe, let us climbe up the staires, which at the lowermost steppe have the shadow of sensuall beautie, to the high mansion place where the heavenly, amiable and right beautie dwelleth, which lyeth hidden in the innermost secrets of God . . .[2]

He adds that there we shall find a sure remedy for our miseries. This is not pure neo-Platonism; something of the mystical current

deriving from St. Bernard has crept into it. Later in his book Castiglione says that the final union of the soul with pure beauty was experienced by St. Francis 'in whom a fervent spirite of love imprinted the most holy seale of five wounds'; that is, the stigmata; and he makes Giuliano say that there are women in our time worthy to receive the stigmata; and that Mary Magdalene had felt the same 'angellike love'.

Mystical thought in England would probably have followed a similar course; but a work as popular as Hoby's *Courtier* afforded a definite impulse. It is clear, in any event, that by about 1591 English poetry was beginning to undergo an evolution roughly parallel with that of France and Italy, although as in other respects somewhat behind them. The ultimate fragility of Renaissance worldliness was becoming apparent, and the pride of the flesh was giving place to a sense of sin and of need for repentance.

The need for repentance was felt everywhere. It animated much of the poetry of the Italian Counter-Reformation, and the transition is clearly apparent in the work of Tansillo. If the Italians blushed for the conduct of the godless popes, and the French for the conduct of Henri III and his 'mignons', thoughtful men in England were shocked by the ruthless policy of the queen's ministers, and the executions of Mary Stuart and later of Robert Southwell were not without their effect. It was a time for repentance.

A sense of the *taedium vitae,* a feeling that here we have no continuing city; meditations on the sorrows of the Virgin, on the tears of Mary Magdalene, on the repentance of Peter—these supplied the principal themes of the new poetry. The religious verse of Henry Constable, Barnabe Barnes, Henry Lok, John Davies of Hereford, Philip Howard Earl of Arundel, Gervase Markham and Nicholas Breton,[3] is much more extensive than is generally realised. It is important less by virtue of its literary merit than of its sincerity and because it prepared the ground for the great flowering of Anglican poetry in the following century. Except for the work of Robert Southwell—and this exception is all important, as it affected the greatest of the religious poets—it does not seem to have been directly inspired by Italian models. If Henry Constable had any models for the *Spiritual Sonnettes to the Honour of God and Hys Saintes* which he probably composed in Paris towards 1593, these may have been Jacques de Billy's *Sonnets spirituels* (1573, 1578) and Desportes'

Œuvres chrétiennes. Barnes opens his *Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnetts* (1595) on the same note as that on which Southwell had introduced *St. Peters Complaynt*—a work of Italian background:

> No more lewde laies of lighter loves I sing,
> Nor teach my lustfull Muse abus'de to flie
> With sparrowes plumes, and for compassion crie
> To mortal beauties which no succour bring . . .

—a note which George Herbert was to repeat in a sonnet he sent to his mother in his student-days at Trinity.[4] Breton's religious verses cover the greater part of his career, but were interspersed with books of secular poetry. His *Solempne and repentant Prayer, for a former life misspent* dates from 1577; the *Pilgrimage to Paradise* and *The Countesse of Penbrookes Love* from 1592; *A Solemne Passion of the Soules Love* appeared in 1595 and was reprinted twice. Among his other works are included *The Blessed Weeper* (1601) and *The Soules Harmony* (1602). These verses owe little or nothing to fashion. Breton was an extremely pious man who wrote out of personal experience and he seems to have understood the various kinds of mystical contemplation.[5]

Prominent among the religious poems of the age are those inspired by Mary Magdalene. Breton devoted one, if not two, pieces to her; and Gervase Markham (1565-1637) published a poem of two hundred stanzas entitled *Marie Magdalenes Teares for the Losse of Hir Master Jesus* in the same year as Breton published *The Blessed Weeper*. The theme had been current in medieval drama, but had received additional impetus from the prose-work of Southwell.

II

It was in this way, and as if by chance, that the piety native to England was suddenly reinforced by the precepts and examples of Italy. Something essential indeed in the poetic spirit of the Counter-Reformation at its best passed at this time into English literature in the work of a great poet cut off in the flower of his age; and through him into the Anglican poetry of the next century—something without which it would have missed much of its sweetness, its gentle piety and distinctive character.

Robert Southwell[6] came of an old family of Norfolk gentry and was born at Horsham St Faith's in 1561. He was brought up in the

old religion, and, as the two Universities were strictly Protestant, he was at the age of fourteen sent, together with John Cotton, a member of the Derbyshire family, to the English College at Douai. Here, and at Anchin College, he came in touch with the new policy of the Jesuits, which was to bring the study of the ancient classics to the service of Christian education. The theory underlying this policy was at the basis of Southwell's later ambition to use the beauties of poetry in the service of God. After some months of study at Douai, Southwell and Cotton moved to Paris where they were attached to the Jesuit Collège de Clermont. If the college at Douai had been very English in tone, having been founded to train missionaries for the English field,[7] the great Parisian school was on the other hand rather Spanish and Italian. The instruction was given exclusively in Latin, the only subjects studied were the Latin classics, and the spirit of the place was rhetorical. The pupils were taught to imitate Cicero, Virgil and Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistolae ex Ponto*. Southwell thus became in the course of time an adept in composing Latin verse; yet he remained devoted to his native tongue, and he was able to cultivate it through the companionship of two other young Englishmen and of his director, Thomas Darbyshire, who was master of the novices at the Collège de Clermont.

He already had hopes of entering the Society of Jesus, and in 1578 he was admitted to the novice-house in Rome, and so pursued his literary, and later his philosophical studies at the Roman College. In 1580 he took his first vows and entered the famous English College which had just been founded by Cardinal Allen. Here he quickly won promotion; and there is reason to suppose that he was greatly liked in the cosmopolitan society of the Roman College, in which there were students from nearly every country in Europe and even from Asia.[8] The literary climate of this international University—for such in effect it was—accounts for much in his conception of poetry as it was later to appear, and it is interesting to notice how he contrived to maintain himself in an atmosphere so strongly tinged with German and Spanish doctrines. The reason for this lay partly in his character, partly in a preference for theories of Italian origin, theories which harmonised with his native genius.

The Jesuit rhetoricians were at this time elaborating a number of literary doctrines which are associated with the neo-classic

aesthetics: some of the more widespread were in themselves narrow and pedestrian. To know exactly which of these theories came to bear upon Southwell is partly conjectural; but it is possible, as Professor Janelle has shown, in view of Southwell's later writings, to distinguish between those of which the influence was superficial and those which he thoroughly absorbed. Thus it was certainly the liberal and inspired doctrines of Francesco Benci, of Aquapendente, who was professor at the Roman College during the time of Southwell's sojourn in Rome, that left the deepest mark on him. But this only came out later, and at the moment he seems to have followed the more formal and orthodox theories.

It was a principle with the Jesuits that the aim of poetry should be to instruct and improve. For this purpose the German critic Pontanus (Spanmüller) who a few years later was to produce a work on *Poeticae Institutiones,* considered that 'judicium' or judgment is more important than 'ingenium' or genius. The Jesuit poet does not conceive his subject in a flash of inspiration; he elaborates it patiently in his study by taking suitable themes which the Jesuit fathers will designate to him (Pontanus mentions a number of them) and treating them in language taken from the Latin poets. The art of writing is the art of imitating[10]; and by this Pontanus does not apparently mean trying to do in a modern language and a personal way the kind of thing the Greek and Roman poets had done in their languages, but in taking whole phrases from Virgil or Ovid and fitting them into new patterns; just as, at this time, le père Antoine Possevin was doing in a number of prayers he composed.[11] For a period Southwell attempted exercises of this kind. He began in the epic genre with a poem *De Assumptione* in Latin hexameters imitated very creditably from Virgil, and followed this up with a *Filii prodigi porcos pascentis ad patrem epistola,* inspired rather appropriately by the *Tristia* and the letters from the Black Sea. There was much to be said, of course, for this conception of literature. The average poet was assured of a subject of more human interest than he was likely to discover for himself, while the development of the theme gave scope for inventiveness and ingenuity. If in these early essays of Southwell's there was more of 'judicium' than 'ingenium', the fact did him no harm. Later, when he began to write poetry in English, there was to be more 'ingenium' than 'judicium,' because the quality of his style would be inspired by contemporary Italian taste, and not by

that of Virgil or Ovid. But the letter of the prodigal son was better than his earlier Latin poems, and better still were his elegies on the life and death of St Margaret of Scotland and two epigrams, one on the Nativity, and one 'To God, in affliction.' In these and in his poem *Ad Sanctam Catherinam* there is a depth of sincerity which redeems what is conventional in the form and shows him as moving towards the balance of inspiration and style which marks the best of his later English poems.

What, however, is to be specially noted of Southwell's stay in Rome is that he did not live and work in isolation. He learned Italian well enough to read and enjoy the modern poets and to write the language correctly; and so far from being subdued by the more conventional doctrines of the Jesuit theorists which not only prescribed subjects but treated poetry as a kind of mechanical drudge,[12] he chose rather to follow Benci who considered poetry as an art able to give joy of itself and fitted to be the collaborator rather than the menial of Religion. This latter conception was to animate Southwell's English poetry in the years to come, and was later to be shared by Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Milton. Thus it was through the intermediary of Southwell, whose works were widely read and admired in England, that the better literary theories of the Counter-Reformation entered into the fabric of Anglican poetry as well as of Catholic.

In the spring of 1586 Southwell, in the company of another priest, Henry Garnet, was sent to England to assist in the effort then being made to recruit young men for the priesthood and to win the country back to Roman Catholicism. As many of the nobility and the middle-class were still recusants, the enterprise did not appear hopeless, in spite of the stern measures that were taken against those who relapsed. The young priests travelled through Milan and, it is thought,[13] crossed the Alps by way of the St. Gothard and Andermatt. The impressions of mountain scenery which he received on this journey were recalled by Southwell in a long passage unique in the English poetry of the time: interesting also because, although Southwell shares the horror which the Alps inspired in nearly all travellers down to the eighteenth century, he concedes that this horror is 'pleasing' and that the glen is

> a place for mated myndes,
> Where everything with mourners doth conspire.

Arriving in England, Southwell found a place of concealment in Arundel House, in the Strand. Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, a grandson of the poet Surrey, had joined the Roman Church in 1584. He had attempted to leave the country but had been arrested, tried in the Court of Star Chamber, fined £10,000 and held a prisoner. It was in his home, where the Countess was still residing, that Southwell lodged. During the six years that followed, he devoted himself to comforting his fellow Catholics and to seeking out young men of ability who might be educated on the Continent. Although scores of people, including many humble folk, must have connived at his concealment, his mission brought him mainly in contact with the gentry and nobility. This explains why the government was so anxious to seize him and why, after his capture, he was so closely questioned by members of the Privy Council and repeatedly tortured. The lower classes, whatever their sympathies, gave no serious ground for alarm; even middle-class recusants like Lodge were treated with leniency; but the government apparently feared that if a substantial portion of the aristocracy were converted, this might, in the as yet uncertain situation that would arise after the queen's death, win the country back to the old religion. Only Arundel, because he belonged to the very highest nobility, was allowed to die in prison.

Southwell must have spent long hours in retirement and even in seclusion. He translated the Spanish mystic Diego de Estella's *Meditaciones devotisimas del Amor de Dios* for Lady Beauchamp, and dedicated his own prose-work, *Mary Magdalens Funerall Teares* to Dorothy Arundell of Cornwall. This book appears to have gone through eleven editions or reprints by 1636. He wrote other prose-works in this period; but more and more as time went on he devoted himself to poetry, treating in verse themes he had first attempted in prose. A passionate lover of beauty, Southwell did not distinguish between his poetical activity and his missionary duties. However, in the summer of 1592 he was seized by a noted priest-hunter named Topcliffe. Repeated applications of torture failed to draw from him the names of his associates; but the physical misery to which he was reduced by the conditions of his prison was such that, in response to representations from his father, he was transferred to the Tower. In 1594 he was put on trial as a traitor and condemned to death by being hanged, drawn and quartered. His execution at

Tyburn was witnessed by a great company, including a 'Protestant Lord who wishe[d] that whensoever he dyed, his soule might goe with his.' Indeed, the constancy and sweetness of resignation he displayed created an impression of admiring wonderment, and the hangman did his best to shorten the dying man's sufferings. Another fact emerges clearly from the documents of the time: that Southwell had never sought to foster sedition or to detach subjects from their loyalty to the queen.

III

It is one of the seeming paradoxes of the age that Southwell's poetical works were openly published soon after his execution, although they had probably circulated in manuscript before this time. There is a record that Elizabeth, in conversation with a nobleman who had visited Southwell in prison, said that this noble 'had been deceived . . . when he had been told, that the said father [Southwell] had come to raise sedition in the realm; she shewed that she lamented his death, and much more so after she had seen a book that the same father had composed of various pious and devout subjects, in the English tongue.'[14]

This episode must be placed in 1595 or 1596, but whether the book in question was *Mary Magdalens Funerall Teares or,* as seems more likely, *St. Peters Complaynt* or the *Maeoniae,* is uncertain. The two last named were quarto volumes of verse, and both appeared in 1595. Of the twenty poems contained in *Saint Peters Complaynt. With other Poemes,* most are written in six-line stanzas, rhyming a b a b c c, the metre which Shakespeare used in *Venus and Adonis* after Southwell had composed these poems but before they were published. They are not therefore, as was formerly supposed, a kind of reply or reproof to Shakespeare, as 'Content and ritche' and 'A Sinners complainte' are certainly replies to poems by Dyer. *Saint Peters Complaynt* was published in 1595 by John Wolfe;[15] and again in the same year, with certain minor differences, by Gabriel Cawood.[16] It was republished by Cawood in 1597 and 1599. In 1598 or 1600 John Johnston, a professor at St Andrews, republished it in Edinburgh with a few alterations to give it a Protestant tone. Two new editions, in the meantime, were being prepared, augmented with seven poems not hitherto published; and these

appeared in or by the year 1602: they contain 'The Burning Babe,' that famous lyric which inspired the admiration of Ben Jonson. Finally, there was a further London edition in 1615.

Maeoniae, or, Certaine excellent Poems and Spirituall Hymnes contained twenty-two compositions, of which twelve celebrate events in the life of the Virgin and in the life of our Lord, while the others are of various inspiration. The 'Gospel poems,' as the first group are called, are written in the same metre as 'St Peters Complaint,' but they show a tendency to simplicity and more personal feeling. This volume came out in 1595, was reprinted in the same year and in 1596, and again, probably in 1599.

The first collected edition appeared at Douai in 1616 and again in 1620. Another collected edition, including the *Maeoniae*, was published in London in 1620 and again in 1630, 1634 and 1636; and there was also an Edinburgh edition, 1634 and 1636. It will thus be seen that Southwell was one of the most widely read lyric poets of the age and that his vogue continued well into the reign of Charles I. The reasons for this seem clear. The childlike piety of his verses appealed to Anglicans as well as Catholics; the mastery of *métier*, the range and colour of the language, even the wealth of conceits in the earlier pieces, pleased the literary taste of the time. No more extraordinary or moving verses of their kind have ever been written; and nowhere, except in Crashaw, is the sincerity underlying the *concettism* of baroque poetry more plainly evident.

Southwell's inspiration was his own. But almost everything else he owed either to the Bible, or to Italian and Latin models: his theory of poetry; the subjects he treated; and even, in the earlier religious poems, his plentiful use of *concetti*, not to speak of other tricks of style.

In the dedication of *Saint Peters Complaynt* he writes:

> Poets, by abusing their talent, and making the follies and faynings of love the customary subject of their base endevours, have so discredited this facultie, that a poet, a lover, and a lyer, are by many reckoned but three words of one signification. But the vanitie of men cannot counterpoise the authoritie of God, who . . . by his Apostle willing us to exercise our devotion in hymnes and spiritual sonnets, warranteth the art to be good, and the use allowable.

And he goes on to say that, to convince poets of the error of their works, he thinks the best course 'is to weave a new webbe in their own loome.' This he has attempted, in the hope of inviting 'some

skilfuller wits to goe forward in the same, or to begin some finer peece . . . '[17] Now these and other arguments of Southwell's seem to have been inspired by Francesco Benci's *Orationes de laudibus poeticae,* or, to be exact, by what he had heard of these lectures while he was a student in Rome.[18] Benci, who was an advocate of formal beauty, spoke engagingly of the 'elegantes et ingenuae artes' of poetry.[19] He even argued that poetry could only be Christian, and that ancient poetry was really Christian, even though the poets themselves were not aware of the fact. One had only to study the great epic, lyric and tragic poems of the ancient pagans to see how keenly they were conscious of the supernatural and how strongly they encourage us to virtue and piety. Virgil is to be commended above all: 'Quanta sit orationis ubertas, quae pondera sententiarum, quanta dignitas speciesque verborum . . . !'[20] Benci reminded his hearers that in the fourth Eclogue Virgil had foretold the birth of Christ,[21] and he went into raptures over Catullus's Epithalamium of Thetis and Peleus, of which the brilliant ornaments 'ingenerant amorem virtutis, et gloriae cupiditatem in animis.'[22] There was much to be said for this line of criticism, though less for the argument that metre was invented by the Hebrews and that Moses wrote in hexameters.

One can see (if one overlooks the last-named conjectures) how much of Southwell's theory of literature he owed to the Roman professor. To him also, and to Pontanus, he owed many of his themes; for, as Janelle has shown, Pontanus recommended the composition of Latin hymns on the liturgical feasts of the Virgin, and Southwell wrote a cycle of poems on these lines; while Benci had included among his own *Carmina* poems on episodes in the life of Christ; a poem on the Virgin, and on her ascension; and one on Mary Magdalene—subjects which were in general, and sometimes in detail, developed by Southwell. His first essays in English, however, were to be in the literature of remorse or, to be precise, the literature of tears.

In this matter, the theme of Mary Magdalene took precedence of others. It had frequently been treated in the Middle Ages; but in recent years poems on the tears of the Magdalene, on her conversion and on her repentance had been appearing in numbers.[23] Pious Catholics were of course as keenly alive as the northern Protestants, and probably more so, to the worldliness of the fifteenth-

century Renaissance and to the scandals which had disfigured the Papacy. In this situation, penitential themes based on the Gospels were an obvious source of poetry, and the story of Mary Magdalene was probably the favourite. It is true that the woman, a sinner whose repentance in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke VII, 36-50) moved our Lord to a notable declaration, and who was doubtless the Mary Magdalene who was the first to see Him after His resurrection, was sometimes confused with the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and this was natural, because of the similarity of two episodes in which a woman, hitherto apparently a stranger to our Lord, anointed Him with ointment in the house of one named Simon.[24] But without entering into the slightly detailed, though not difficult exegesis which is involved, one may suggest that this innocent confusion enhanced the poetical possibilities of the theme. The passages in John XI, 1-33 (Mary of Bethany) and John XX, 11-18 (Mary of Magdala) are full of poetry.

Southwell, however, did not begin with the Gospel texts. His first essay was a prose-translation of an old Italian meditation, probably dating from the fourteenth century.[25] During the period of his mission in England he rehandled the theme, added developments of his own and rewrote it in a more poetical style, but in a style freer from conceits and euphuisms than his earlier essays. This prose-work was to be imitated in prose by Lodge in 1596; in verse by Breton in 1601; and was later echoed in Crashaw's 'The Weeper.'[26] Meanwhile, however, there had appeared in Italy a poem by Erasmo da Valvasone on *Le Lagrime della Maddalena* which, though seemingly written before 1580, was first published in the same volume as Tansillo's *Lagrime di San Piero* at Genoa in 1587 and again at Venice in 1592. We cannot be certain whether Southwell had knowledge of Valvasone's poem before his return to England or even after, but it is significant that between 1586 and 1592 he treated the themes of both these poems, that of Valvasone in prose and that of Tansillo in verse. It is the latter that concerns us here.

The life and writings of Luigi Tansillo, a fellow-townsman of Giordano Bruno, had given rise to scandal, and his *Lagrime di San Piero* had been written towards 1559 as a sort of palinode. It consisted of forty-two stanzas in rhymed octaves and was published in 1560 in a volume ascribed to the Cardinal de' Pucci. This version was reprinted six times down to 1582; but in 1585 there appeared a

new version containing one hundred and ten stanzas and now attributed to Tansillo who, however, had been dead since 1568.

The 1560 version is a meditation on the theme of Peter's denial of our Lord. There are short passages of narrative, but most of it consists of soliloquies containing many of the similes and conceits popular in the love-poetry of the later sixteenth century. The 1585 version is an attempt to turn all this into an epic poem. Narrative and description now take precedence. Tansillo makes Peter wander round Jerusalem so that the places he visits recall events of the past, which are then described, and in this way the poet is able to range discursively over the Old and New Testaments. He adds little or nothing in the way of serious meditation; but the original soliloquies are inserted in this 1585 version in appropriate places.

Now it is difficult to know whether Southwell possessed the 1560 or the 1585 version, or possibly had access to some text now lost; but without going far into a problem which has been closely analysed by Mario Praz[27] and Pierre Janelle,[28] we may observe that Southwell makes the apostle speak throughout: his poem is, in brief, a soliloquy. Nearly all the passages in the Italian poem which Southwell imitated appear, according to Praz, to have consisted 'of direct speeches by St Peter, whereas the narrative parts were either unknown, or, more likely, utterly disregarded by the English poet.'[29] Whether or no he knew more of Tansillo's work than what is contained in the 1560 version seems unimportant: there is no evidence that he did.

A study of his first essay on this subject with a sideways glance at his treatment of the theme of Mary Magdalene strengthens this view. There is an early fragment among the manuscripts at Stonyhurst College entitled 'Peeter Playnt,' which Grosart took to be a first draft of the later poem; Mario Praz has shown that it is really a fairly literal translation of the first thirteen stanzas of the 1560 *Lagrime*. It is curiously uninspired. What happened afterwards is clear. Southwell took up the subject again, put into it his personal feelings and his confidence in the love of Christ and now wrote a poem which, despite its indebtedness to certain passages in Tansillo, and even to Ovid and Petrarch, deserves to rank as a personal treatment of the theme.

Saint Peters Complaynt[30] is remarkable for its unity of tone and for its observance of the unities of time and place. Whereas Tansillo

in his first version had made Peter revisit the garden of Gethsemane and in the later version had described more extensive wanderings, Southwell concentrates our attention on the moments immediately following the apostle's emergence from the palace of the High Priest. The starting-point is the episode narrated with tragic concision in Luke XX, 54-62. The poet begins by making Peter describe his first outbreak of grief and remorse;[31] he next reflects on his crime, loads himself with reproaches; and then, casting back in his mind, remembers various episodes in his life with Jesus, such as the day when he had tried to walk on the lake (stanza 24). He recalls the happenings in Gethsemane, the agony of our Lord: then how, following Jesus' arrest, he had made his way into the High Priest's palace and, while Jesus was being questioned, had warmed himself at the fire; and finally how he had three times denied that he knew Jesus. But now, little by little, tears and contrition soothe his grief; he implores our Lord for forgiveness and, though no word is spoken, he feels his prayer has been granted. The concluding stanzas contain an expression of childlike trust in the mercy of Jesus and of hope for the gift of grace.

The poem is loftier in feeling than Tansillo's, and there is no doubt Southwell put the best of himself into it. His fundamental sources are of course the Gospels; but the outline of the story and the modes of thought and style in which it is told are for the most part Italian, and without the Italian background the poem would have lacked much of its colour and character. To analyse the various elements that have gone to its making—the mysticism of St. Bernard and his successors, medieval meditations on Gospel themes, some of the imagery of Petrarchan love-poetry, the taste for antithesis, paradox and conceit which was a feature of the modern Italian poetry—would be to supply information without conveying what is essential, the feeling of the poem itself. It seems better to reopen the book and to reread some of the stanzas consecutively.

But first we must ask why he used the six-line stanza rhyming a b a b c c, when Tansillo had written in *ottava rima* and when experience seemed to have shown that the best English equivalent for this was the *rhyme-royal*. Critics have contented themselves with remarking that he wrote in the metre of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*—a poem which they have assumed he knew of—or with merely accepting the fact. But *Venus and Adonis* was probably not

written, certainly not published, until 1593, and at that time Southwell was in prison, crippled by torture and unable to write. It is extremely probable that all his poems antedate his arrest.[32] The many resemblances that have been noted between these poems and Shakespeare's[33] are either accidental or they suggest that Shakespeare read and remembered Southwell. But the stanza of *Saint Peters Complaynt* was not new. Chaucer had used it in some of his 'Envoys,' and more recently Gascoigne. For some reason it had suddenly become very popular, and I should conjecture that Southwell took it from Breton, a poet with whose temper he was not entirely out of sympathy. This stanza appears in fact in twenty-three[34] out of the fifty-seven poems contained in *Brittons Bowre of Delights,* a volume published by Richard Jones in 1591.[35] Now among the poems in question one is rather struck by 'Brittons vision of Cupid's complaint against his fowle father Vulcan for begetting him' and by 'Brittons second dreame of Venus complaint when she lost her son Cupid'; and I think that when Southwell composed *Saint Peters Complaynt* or at least when he wrote the addresses 'to the Reader,' he had been reading *Brittons Bowre of Delights* and that it is to this volume he is alluding.

The point would hardly be worth labouring if it had not been supposed that Southwell was referring to Shakespeare's poem; but not only do the circumstances of his life make this most improbable, the words he uses point in another direction. We know that in France Malherbe had already in 1587 imitated Tansillo in a poem entitled *Les Larmes de S. Pierre,* and that Robert Estienne was also to adapt him under the same title in 1595. If Southwell did not call his poem 'Saint Peters Teares', it was probably because he wished to allude to Breton's 'Cupids complaint' and 'Venus complaint' and was actually using the metre in which they were written. In the light of these subjects and titles, what he says in the second introductory poem of his volume, 'The Author to the Reader,' takes on a new significance:

> This makes my mourning Muse resolve in teares,
> This theames my heavy penne to plaine in prose,
> Christs Thorne is sharpe, no head his garland weares:
> Stil finest wits are stilling Venus Rose.
> In Paynim toyes the sweetest vaines are spent:
> To Christian workes, few have their tallents lent.[36]

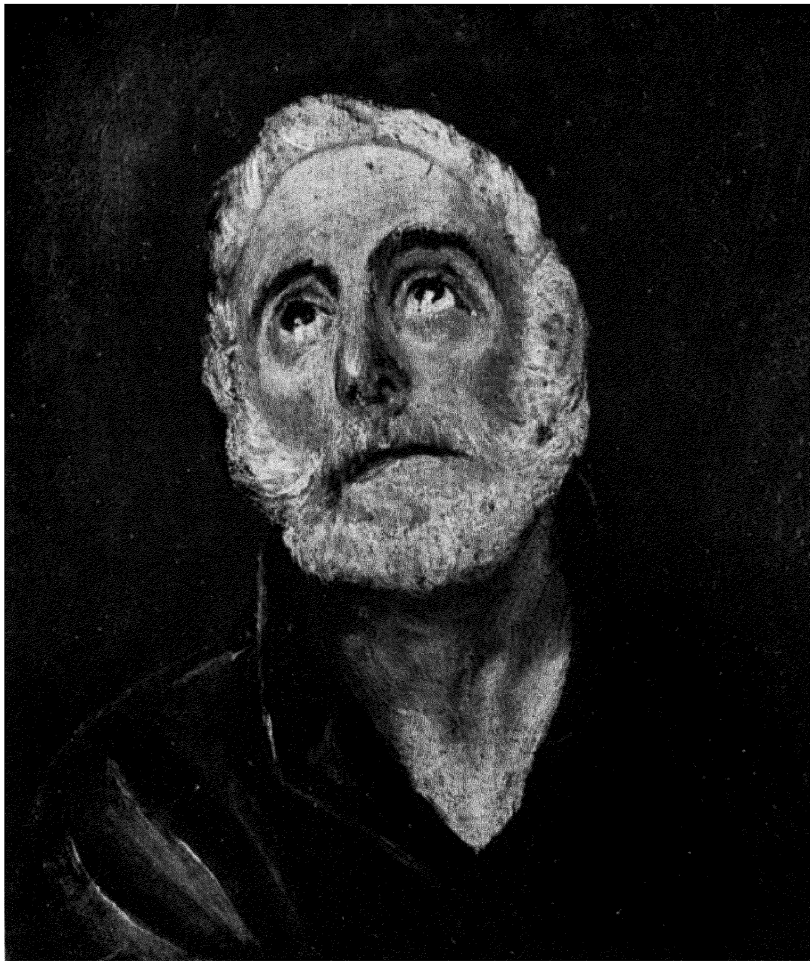
The love-poems and 'paynim toys' of such 'finest wits' as Breton, Lodge, Oxford and others were being read and admired by the very class of people whom Southwell wished to convert: he was simply turning the metrical forms and even some of the imagery they employed from the purposes of secular to the purposes of sacred poetry. Nor was this as difficult as it might look if we suppose that in the present instance he was thinking of Breton's poems; for Breton's Cupid was no wanton but 'a little wagge,' much troubled by doubts as to his paternity:

> Once Vulcans sonne I know I cannot be,
> Mars was the man came neerer to the marke:
> As for the Smith it never could be hee,
> A Bunting never could beget a Larke.
> Ah no, the world is much deceiv'd in mee,
> I hope to finde an other pedegree.[37]

While his mother, speaking more seriously, says of him:

> My Cupid was to me a child of love,
> And no such babe as joyed in childrens bables:
> For mark his life, his mind would soone approve,
> Such feined fancies were but Ovids fables,
> Who was as far from knowing my Cupido,
> As faithfull love is farre from foule Libido.[38]

For the rest, while keeping the 'Christian worke' of Tansillo before his eyes, Southwell did not scruple to employ the 'vaines' of 'paynim' poetry for adornment, and even, amusingly enough, those of Ovid (stanza 31 of *St Peters Complaynt*), and of such choice 'wits' as Panfilo Sassi, whom he perhaps knew of through the adaptations made by Watson,[39] or by Oxford in *Brittons Bowre of Delights*.[40] But the sweetest were doubtless those of the poet of Vaucluse. That Southwell was familiar with his work has been made clear by Pierre Janelle, who shows that the first stanza of 'what joy to live'—one of the lyrics contained in the St. Peter volume—a stanza not very well connected with the rest of the poem, is translated from Petrarch's sonnetto cxxxiv in Vita: 'Pace non trovo e non ho da far guerra,' which was one of the most popular. So also, when we come to read 'Saint Peters Complaynt,' we find that the image in Petrarch of the poet's soul as a boat on a troubled sea, with harsh thoughts for oarsmen, and a sail torn by a gale of sighs and hopes,[41]



(*Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, the National Gallery, London*)

8. A painting presumed to represent St. Peter after his denial of our Lord, by *El Greco*

National Gallery

With mildnesse, Jesu, measure my offence,
Let true remorse thy due revenge abate . . .
Redeeme my lapse with ransome of thy love,
Traverse th' inditement, rigors doome suspend,
Let frailtie favour, sorrowes succour move,
Be thou thyselfe, though changling I offend.
Saint Peter's Complaynt

Between Southwell's poem and El Greco's picture there is affinity of feeling and art.

(*See p.* 325)

and the allegorical trial in which Love is arraigned to appear before the poet and his mistress, and even—most daring of all—the description of Laura's eyes as 'Lumi del ciel' which 'melt the poet's heart as the sun melts the snow'—

> Non fur già mai veduti sì begli occhi
> O ne la nostra etade o ne' prim' anni
> Che mi struggon così come 'l sol neve . . .[42]

—blessed lights that shine into his soul as a ray of sunlight shines through a pane of glass:

> Ma voi, occhi beati . . .
> Poi che vostro vedere in me risplende,
> Come raggio di sol traluce in vetro . . .[43]

these Petrarchan images are used to impart to Southwell's poem a colour and warmth of feeling in which he fully shared but which were often lacking in Tansillo.

In the opening stanzas Peter exhorts himself to weep; here the poet makes good use of the Petrarchan allegory:

> Launch foorth my Soule into a maine of teares,
> Full fraught with griefe the traffick of thy mind:
> Torne sayles will serve, thoughts rent with guilty feares:
> Give care the sterne: use sighes in lieu of wind:
> Remorse, they Pilot: thy misdeede, thy Carde;
> Torment, thy Haven: Shipwracke, thy best reward.[44]

This, as we have noted, recalls Petrarch's:

> . . . et al governo
> Siede 'l signore, anzi'l nimico mio.
> A ciascun remo un penser pronto e rio,
> Che la tempesta e'l fin par ch' abbi a scherno:
> La vela rompe un vento, umido, eterno,
> Di sospir, di speranze e di desio.
> Pioggia di lagrimar, nebbia di sdegni
> Bagna e rallenta le già stanche sarte . . .[45]

Peter now reflects more fully on the horror of his denial, and on the vanity of his previous boasting; he laments that the lake had not overwhelmed him that day when he had tried to walk on the waves. Tansillo had written:

Orme odorate . . . voi seguendo il varco
Mi diede, e fece la, dove altri affonda
Indurir soto il piè la liquida onda[46]—

verses which Southwell greatly improves on in the following lines:

Why did the yeelding sea like marble way
Support a wretch more wavering than the waves?
Whom doubt did plunge, why did the water stay,
Unkind, in kindnesse; murthering, while it saves?[47]

A little further on, in the passage where Peter says he had not yielded to threats or torture but that a maiden's 'easie' question had overthrown him (stanza 28), Southwell paraphrases Tansillo in some spirited and rhetorical lines. We next have the details of what had happened. Peter recalls the events in the garden and how he had afterwards made his way into the court of the High Priest's house, and had warmed himself at the fire which had been lit there:

Sharpe was the weather in that stormie place,
Best suting hearts benum'd with hellish frost.

The poet now follows the narratives in Luke XXII and John XVIII. 'And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light [of the fire] . . . said, This man also was with Him. But he denied, saying, Woman, I know him not,' In response to two further questions he again denies. Then comes the passage: 'And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew' (Luke XXII, 60). This gives rise in the Italian poem to a perspective into the remainder of Peter's earthly life:

De la sua vita tutto il rimanente,
Non fù mai notte, che ei non si destasse,
Udendo il gallo a dir quanto fù iniquo,
Dando lagrime nove al fallo antiquo.[48]

That Tansillo was well inspired in this vision is undeniable. Southwell accepts the idea, but gives it even greater life by making Peter adjure the cock to remind him perpetually of what he had done:

O wakefull bird, proclaimer of the day,
Whose piercing note doth daunt the Lions rage:
Thy crowing did my selfe to me bewray,
My frights, and brutish heates it did amaze.
But ô, in this alone unhappie cocke:
That thou to count my foyles wert made the clocke.

O bird, the just rebuker of my crime,
The faithfull waker of my sleeping feares:
Be now the daylie clocke to strike the time,
When stinted eyes shall pay their taske of teares.
Upbraide mine eares with thine accusing crow:
To make me rew that first it made me know.[49]

Coming now to the passage (Luke XXII, 61): 'And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,'[50] Tansillo, we find, had developed this in an elaborate simile, which may have been taken from Petrarch but probably with the design of giving an epic character to his poem:

Come falda di neve, che agghacciata
Il verno in chiusa valle, ascosa giacque;
A primavera poi dal sol scaldata,
Tutta si sface: si discioglie in acque;
Così la tema, ch'entro al cor gelata
Era di Pietro allhor, che'l vero tacque,
Quando Christo ver lui gli occhi rivolse;
Tutta si sfece, e'n pianto si disciolse.[51]

But Southwell has no epic designs; his mood is one of meditation and devotion, and he writes:

In time, ô Lord, thine eyes with mine did meete,
In them I reade the ruines of my fall:
Their chearing raies that made misfortune sweete,
Into my guiltie thoughts pourd floods of gall . . .

And then, reverting to Petrarch's images, even intensifying them, he continues:

These blazing Comets, lightning flames of love,
Made me their warming influence to know;
My frozen hart theyr sacred force did prove,
Which at their lookes did yeeld like melting snowe,
They did not joyes in former plentie carve
Yet sweet are crums where pined thoughts do starve . . .[52]

This is one of the passages that makes an unconscious pendant to El Greco's 'St Peter' in the National Gallery. The latter touches heights comparable to Shakespeare's *Lear*, and there are people who cannot look at it without terror. But the analogy with Southwell's gentler treatment is instructive. Southwell develops his theme

with the aid of other images of which the best is that of 'the pooles of Hesebon,' taken from *The Song of Songs*, and now, once again drawing from Petrarch and Tansillo:

> O Sunnes! all but your selves in light excelling,
> Whose presence, day, whose absence causeth night,[53]
> Whose neighbour-course brings Sommer colde expelling,
> Whose distant periods freeze away delight;
> Ah, that I lost your bright and fostring beames,
> To plunge my soule in these congealed streames,[54]

This is baroque poetry, but how full of true feeling, how splendid!

In the part that follows he recalls others who had sorrowed greatly, like Hagar and David, and others who had sinned. The passage in which he envies the lot of the Holy Innocents was no doubt suggested by stanzas 21 to 27 of Tansillo's *Lagrime*. Southwell treats it in three stanzas, of which the first is the best:

> Joy infant Saints, whom in the tender flower
> A happy storme did free from feare of sinne,
> Long is their life that die in blisfull hower,
> Joyfull sueh ends as endless joy begin.
> Too long they lyve, that lyve till they be nought,
> Life sav'd by sinne, base purchase deerely bought.[55]

The meditations that follow seem to me of inferior merit. There is a preciosity in the invocations to Mary and Martha, and to James and John, which the warmth of feeling, sincere as it is, fails to make acceptable as I think it makes acceptable the earlier passage about the cock, and also the images describing the look of Jesus. Further on, Southwell makes rather free use of the figures of rhetoric. It was considered appropriate at that time for religious poets to employ some of the terms and even the forms of love-poetry, and of these the dialogue on love in the form of question and answer was particularly attractive: it probably owed something to the *Greek Anthology*. A very popular example is to be found in the sonnet by Panfilo Sassi, sometimes attributed to Serafino, which begins:

> Quando nascesti, Amor?—Quando la terra
> Si reveste di verde e bel colore. . . .[56]

Southwell may have known this in the original, though it is more likely that he read Watson's adaptation of it or Oxford's translation in *Brittons Bowre of Delights*. Whether he was familiar with these or had

read similar dialogues, he was well inspired in applying the *procédé*:

> At sorrowes dore I knockt, they crav'd my name;
> I answered one, unworthy to be knowne;
> What one, say they? one worthiest of blame.
> But who? a wretch, not Gods, nor yet his owne.
> A man? O no, a beast; much worse, what creature?
> A rocke: how cald? the rock of scandale, Peter.[57]

One would not be surprised if either this passage and the concluding stanzas of 'Saint Peters Complaynt,' or the adaptations from Panfilo Sassi, were at the back of George Herbert's mind when he composed his famous:

> Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
> Guiltie of dust and sinne
> But quick-ey'd Love . . .
> Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
> If I lack'd any thing.
>
> A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here.
> Love said, You shall be he.
> I, the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
> I cannot look on thee. . . .[58]

The feeling of Herbert's poem, as well as the mode of question and answer, are closely reminiscent of Southwell. After this passage come some reflections on sleep, a theme popular among the Italian poets, and these are well inspired. Southwell, indeed, as he approaches the end, seems to forget the elegant manner he had so studiously cultivated; and, identifying himself with the apostle, becoming once more as a little child, he begs forgiveness in confident hope it will be granted:

> With mildnesse, Jesu, measure my offence:
> Let true remorse thy due revenge abate. . . .
> Redeeme my lapse with raunsome of thy love,
> Traverse th' inditement, rigors doome suspend:
> Let frailtie favour, sorrowes succour move,[59]
> Be thou thy selfe, though changling I offend.
> Tender my sute, clense this defiled denne,
> Cancell my debts, sweet Jesu, say Amen.

The Latinised syntax of the last stanza is by its bareness and concision superior to the ornate style he usually affects.

It seems to be held by Catholic[60] as well as Protestant critics that 'Saint Peters Complaynt' is a less successful poem than some of the 'Gospel' pieces and other lyrics in this volume and in the *Maeoniae*; and that the trend of his poetic style during the six years of his English apostolate, which was, as far as one can judge, away from preciosity and towards directness and simplicity, was also a movement towards perfection. But his motive in such devotional poems as 'Saint Peters Complaynt,' in others like 'Christ's bloody sweate' and 'The Burning Babe,' was not simply lyrical: it was proselytising. This fact most critics have ignored, but Pierre Janelle has very well brought it out.[62] It is fundamental, because it explains why some of the later poems[63] are full of conceits and paradoxes. He wrote them not merely because he had come to think that this was the right literary style, but because he felt sure it would appeal to English readers—as it unquestionably did.

To say this is not to imply condemnation of the baroque manner in religious poetry. Images, antitheses and conceits which would be extravagant in other contexts often acquire *rightness* as Southwell applies them; whether because of the greatness of his theme, or because his ardent sincerity and at times genius raise the imaginative temperature to a level on which they become possible and even natural. One may suggest, however, that 'Saint Peters Complaynt' would have gained from the curtailment of some of the developments or, in certain instances, from the substitution of narrative, direct or retrospective, for meditations which were very difficult to compose. The faults in 'Saint Peters Complaynt' were not all implicit in the Italian poem. Tansillo had seen the difficulty of composing a long poem on the theme in question and had tried to overcome it by introducing more of narrative; but without conspicuous success. The theme was suitable for a 'meditation' in perhaps forty or fifty stanzas, but was too lacking in action to allow of more.[64]

IV

Following the suggestions of the Jesuit professors Southwell wrote a number of poems relating to the life of the Virgin and the life of our Lord, and also a few which treat of other Gospel themes, and a few religious lyrics. Of these, two on Mary Magdalene and the two poems on 'The Nativitie of Christ' and 'Christ's Childhood' appeared

in *Saint Peters Complaynt*; most of the others in the *Maeoniae*.

Maeoniae, or Certaine excellent Poems and spirituall Hymnes: Omitted in the last Impression of Peters Complaint; being needfull thereunto to be annexed, as being both Divine and Wittie. All composed by R. S. were printed by Valentine Sims for John Busbie in 1595. This volume contained five poems on the life of the Virgin, eight on the life of Christ and two on St Peters remorse, as well as a number of others that we shall speak of later. These were the 'Gospel' lyrics and were apparently intended by the editors to be read in conjunction with 'The Nativitie of Christ' and 'Christ's Childhood.' They seem to be original exercises on New Testament themes, but in the Italian manner; and though they were evidently much admired by Elizabethans, it must be admitted that they are of uneven merit and that in some of them the 'wit,' as it was called—the puns and conceits, to be exact—today seem excessive. Others, however, are moving by virtue of their union of sincerity with a greater plainness of diction.

'The Nativitie of Christ' begins with what may be a reminiscence of the *Paradiso*:

> Beholde the father, is his daughters sonne:
> The bird that built the nest, is hatcht therein:
> The olde of years, an hour hath not out-runne:
> Eternall life, to live doth now beginne . . .

but this is very much in the baroque manner, and the fourth and concluding stanza is even more so. The poems on the life of Jesus in the *Maeoniae* are concerned with 'His Circumcision,' 'The Epiphanie,' 'The Presentation,' 'The flight into Egypt,' 'Christs returne out of Egypt,' 'Christs bloody sweat,' 'Christs sleeping friends' and 'The Virgin Mary to Christ on the Crosse.' Of these, the theme of the Circumcision might be thought the most difficult, but it is the one in which Southwell succeeded best,[65] and that without recourse to the means he usually adopted. 'The Epiphanie' is also free from the conceits he used elsewhere, and 'The Presentation' contains lines of great beauty. But the best of the series is probably the last, and in this he used a different metre:

> What mist hath dimd that glorious face, what
> seas of griefe my sun doth tosse!
> The golden raies of heavenly grace lie now
> eclipsed on the crosse . . .[66]

In two poems of the St Peter volume and perhaps one of the *Maeoniae*, Pierre Janelle[67] discerns a clear expression of the Italian neo-Platonism as in the past hundred years it had been adapted and more completely Christianised. What, however, seems to distinguish Southwell's neo-Platonism from that of a poet like Spenser is the exactitude of the philosophy that underlies it.[68] In 'Looke Home' he writes:

> Retyrèd thoughts enjoy their owne delights,
> As beautie doth in selfe-beholding eye:
> Mans mind a mirrour is of heavenlie sights,
> A briefe wherein all mervailes summed lye:
> Of fayrest formes, and sweetest shapes the store,
> Most gracefull all, yet thought may grace them more.
>
> The mind a creature is, yet can create,
> To natures patterns adding higher skill . . .
>
> Mans soule of endlesse beauties image is,
> Drawne by the worke of endles skill and might . . .[69]

These verses are best explained in the light of the neo-Platonism of Plotinus, who had held that the soul, by withdrawing into itself, discovers an emanation of 'the world of ideas' which is 'the image of the original being'; but also that the soul 'generates' the world of phenomena.[70] But Southwell seems also to have been aware of the Platonic (rather than neo-Platonic) belief that the soul retains memories of an earlier existence in which it had known the glory of God—the doctrine which Wordsworth was to express in his famous ode. This appears in Southwell's lovely poem, 'At Home in Heaven':

> Fair soule, how long shall veyles thy graces shroud?
> How long shall this exile with-hold thy right,
> When will thy sunne disperse this mortall cloud,
> And give thy glories scope to blaze thy light? . . .
>
> O soule do not thy noble thoughtes abase
> To lose thy loves in any mortall wight:
> Content thine eye at home with native grace,
> Sith God him selfe is ravisht with thy sight.
> If on thy beautie God enamoured bee:
> Base is thy love of any lesse than hee.[71]

How Southwell had come by this knowledge is open to conjecture, but it was most probably in Rome where the course in philosophy was a regular part of the curriculum. The natural thing to suppose is that he had studied the commentaries by Ficino and that his knowledge of Plotinus was indirect, though he may have read some Plato in the text. The fact that his expression of neo-Platonism is more precise and scholarly than Spenser's lends force to these suppositions. During his sojourn in Rome, the Jesuit fathers may actually have encouraged these studies; but in the following century they seem rather to have relied on the philosophy of Aristotle as interpreted by the Schoolmen; whereas Platonism developed within the Anglican communion. Here again we see a current of thought in Southwell which, though he was unconscious of it, was flowing in an Anglican direction.

Many of Southwell's best known verses—his 'responses' to Breton and Dyer,[72] and the most admired of his religious poems such as 'New Prince, new Pompe,' 'The Burning Babe' and 'New Heaven, new Warre'—fall outside the scope of this study; but there is a poem quite different from any of the above and which could not have been written but for his sojourn in Italy: a piece unique, I believe, in this sense, that it contains the first detailed description of the Alps in English poetry. It must, if we assume that he crossed the Alps in 1586 by way of the St Gothard, have been inspired by recollections either of the Ticino Valley near Airolo or of the upper Reusstal near Göschenen. It is true that Sannazaro had already seen in a mountain-landscape a fitting background for sighs and tears, and Southwell may have known the sonnet[78] which begins:

> Simile a questi smisurati monti
> E l'aspra vita mia colma di doglie;
> Alti son questi, e alte le mie voglie;
> Di lagrime ambedue, questi di fonti....
> Soffian sempre fra lor rabbiosi venti
> In me gravi suspiri esito fanno....

There was also a passage in Valvasone's *Lagrime della Maddalena* about 'harsh woods' and 'rocky cliffs' (sassose rupi), the haunt of wolves and night-birds. But in Sannazaro's verses the 'huge mountains' and 'furious winds' are evoked as symbols rather than for their own sake, and there is something even more conventional,

Pierre Janelle considers,[74] in Valvasone. However that may be, 'A vale of teares,' as Southwell called his poem, seems in all other respects to be entirely original.

A vale of teares

A vale there is enwrapt with dreadful shades,
Which thicke of mourning pines shrouds from the sunne,
Where hanging clifts yeld short and dumpish glades,
And snowy flouds with broken streames do runne,
Where eie-roume is from rocke to cloudie skie,
From thence to dales which stormy ruines shrowd,
Then to the crushed waters frothie frie,
Which tumbleth from the tops where snow is thow'd:
Where eares of other sound can have no choice,
But various blustring of the stubborne wind,
In trees, in caves, in straits with divers noise,
Which now doth hisse, now howle, now roare by kind . . .
And in the horror of this fearfull quier,
Consists the musicke of this dolefull place,
All pleasant birds their tunes from thence retire,
Where none but heavy notes have any grace.

One thinks, after reading this, of the verses in *The Prelude* where Wordsworth describes his first entry into Italy, the 'torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,' the 'dripping crags' and

in the narrow strait at every turn,
Wind thwarting wind bewildered and forlorn.

Southwell was impressed by the 'horror' of the Alps, as nearly everyone was before the eighteenth century. He could not but judge the mountains from the standpoint of his age which required 'nature' to be perfected by 'art' even when, as in the Gardens of Armida, the art did not show itself. But he stands apart from his age in seeing something in this spectacle that does not displease him:

Yet natures worke it is of arte untoucht,
So strait indeede, so vast unto the eie,
With such disordred order strangely coucht,
And so with pleasing horror low and hie,
That who it viewes must needes remaine agast,
Much at the worke, more at the Makers might,
And muse how Nature such a plot could cast,
Where nothing seemèd wrong, yet nothing right.[75]

This is wholly delightful—and very original. We have in the opening lines a realistic description, remarkable for its detail; then an attempt to impose meaning on the apparently meaningless discord:

> And in the horror of this fearefull *quier*
> Consists the *musicke* of this dolefull place . . .

Lastly the poet's mind tries to stand apart and explain the effect that has been produced on his sensibility. One or two of the French baroque poets, Saint-Amant and Théophile de Viau, took pleasure in evoking the wilder aspects of nature as neither their Renaissance predecessors nor their neo-classic successors thought of doing. But they did not attempt to justify a taste which official opinion deemed irregular. Southwell, on the other hand, makes such an attempt. These horrific Alps are 'natures worke'; but he is 'agast' not so much at the work as 'at the Makers might.' Since they are the creatures of God, they cannot be wholly 'wrong.' Nothing about them seems 'right' according to the accepted canons of taste; yet somehow nothing seems 'wrong'—to a new aesthetic which is taking shape in his mind. This represents a very great advance, if not a revolution, in the understanding of mountain-scenery, as it makes of Southwell a herald of the Pre-romantics. But before the taste for 'sounding cataracts' and 'eagle-baffling mountains' could become general, it would be necessary for the paintings of such masters as Salvator Rosa,[76] and other influences too, to effect a gradual transformation of feeling among travellers and poets.

*

Southwell has not hitherto received, in histories of English poetry, the prominence which is his due. The strength of his inspiration, the vigour of his imagery, a union of piety and wit that Donne was to inherit from him—all entitle him to a very distinguished position among our lyrists. He did not achieve the object of his mission, which was to win England back to Rome, but he achieved things which he had not perhaps foreseen. Although not the earliest, or the most prolific, of the mystical poets of his time, he was the most distinguished, and his merit seems to have been at once recognised by the reading public. Internal evidence suggests that he was read by Shakespeare and Breton, external shows that he was admired by Marston and Ben Jonson; while the numerous editions of his

works point to his being widely read by the aristocracy and those members of the middle-class who, with the aristocracy, were to form the backbone of the Anglican Church.[77] These classes had remained attached to many features of 'the old religion' and preferred a kind of faith and worship which did not divorce beauty from piety.

The poetry of Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne and, before his conversion, Crashaw, was to be the expression of this new Anglicanism, and it seems likely that the reading of Southwell accounted for something of the quiet fervour that underlay it and much of that personal devotion to Jesus which, in the minds of many who followed Archbishop Laud,[78] took the place of a clear grasp of the Augustinian doctrines of faith and grace. The Calvinists and Jansenists were no doubt better equipped in that matter. But the Society of Jesus, for all its worldliness and indulgence to human frailty, had grasped something which was often lacking in its adversaries: a certain charity and a certain sweetness in devotional exercises. It was this, one may suggest, that the poetry of Robert Southwell communicated to Anglican feeling when it was still in formation and on the eve of its first and perhaps loveliest poetic flowering.

No one had been more deeply influenced by Italy than Southwell and no one, in his generation, did more honour to the Italian influence. His poems, both in themselves and in the impulse they seem to have imparted, bear witness to the pervasive character of Italian thought and feeling in the England of that time.

REFERENCES

[1] J. B. Collins, *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age*. Baltimore, 1940, p. 116.
[2] Cited by Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
[3] J. G. Scott, *Les Sonnets élisabéthains*, pp. 217-223; J. B. Collins, pp. 137-169; 176-190.
[4] Quoted by A. G. Hyde in *George Herbert and his Times*. London and New York, 1906, p. 51.
[5] For a detailed study of Breton as a mystical poet, see Collins, pp. 176-190.
[6] See Pierre Janelle, *Robert Southwell the Writer*. London and New York, 1935. In the following pages, I am greatly indebted to this important work.
[7] Janelle, pp. 6-8, 22.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-126.
[10] *Poeticae Institutiones*. Ingoldstadt, 1594, p. iii and ch. X. See Janelle, p. 122.
[11] Janelle, p. 122.
[12] Cf. Janelle's summary of the question on p. 123 of his book.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[14] Diego de Yepez, *Historia particular de la persecucion de Inglaterra*. Madrid, 1599, pp. 646-7. Cited by Janelle, pp. 86-7.
[15] There is a copy in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.
[16] There is a copy in the British Museum.
[17] R. Southwell, *Complete Poems*, ed. A. B. Grosart. Blackburn, 1872, pp. 4-5.
[18] The printed volume, containing also the *Carmina*, appeared at Ingoldstadt in 1592; but Southwell must have attended the original 'orationes' at the Roman College.
[19] *Orationes*, pp. 84-92. Cited by Janelle, p. 124.
[20] *Orationes*, p. 105.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 115-16.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[23] There was even a *Nuova raccolta di Lagrime* published at Bergamo in 1593.
[24] In Mark XIV, 3-9 and Matthew XXVI, 6-13 (perhaps based on Mark), it is stated that this was Simon *the leper*, who lived at Bethany; but the woman's name is not given. In John XI, 1-2, it appears that her name was Mary and that she was the sister of Martha, who also lived at Bethany. This then was the Mary whose seeming extravagance shocked some of the disciples; whose love of contemplation was approved by Jesus; and who in the Middle Ages became a symbol of the meditative as distinct from the active way of life. There is no indication that she was other than a virtuous woman. But we read elsewhere that when Jesus was being entertained by Simon *the Pharisee* (probably at Magdala) a certain woman made her way into the house, washed His feet with her tears and drying them with her hair, anointed them with ointment. The Pharisee pointed out that she was a sinner and our Lord replied that her sins were forgiven (Luke VII, 47). This must have been the Mary Magdalene who was the first to see our Lord after the resurrection (Mark XVI, 9-11: John XX, 11-18).
[25] Janelle, p. 184.
[26] See Janelle, pp. 195, 309-10.
[27] *Modern Language Review*, XIX (1924), p. 274 et seq.
[28] *Op. cit.*, pp. 212-218.
[29] Praz. *art. cit.*, p. 287.
[30] *Saint Peters complaynt. With other Poems. At London. Printed by I. R. for G. C.* 1595. British Museum: C. 39 e. 27. The quotations in the following pages are taken from a photostat copy of the above edition, in the Library of the University of Notre Dame, by courtesy of Father James Macdonald and through the kindness of Mrs. S. E. Brown.

[31] I have been mainly guided in the remainder of this paragraph by Pierre Janelle's analysis.

[32] Janelle, p. 160.

[33] Harold Child in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, IV, 129.

[34] See the edition published by H. E. Rollins. Harvard, 1933, p. xxiii.

[35] This six-line stanza is also used in various poems by Breton, Lodge and others which were published in *The Phoenix Nest* in 1593 but had been circulating in manuscript before that date. In the *Bowre of Delights*, the poem on 'Cupid's complaint' contains 23 stanzas (pp. 38-42 in the 1591 edition), while 'Venus complaint' contains 18 stanzas (pp. 42-46). Breton's mystical poem, *The Countess of Penbrookes Love* (1592) is also in this stanza, but one doubts whether Southwell knew of this work, though he would probably have approved of it. What he *disapproved* of was, I suggest, such 'paynim toyes' as the Cupid and Venus complaints.

[36] One may note in passing that in a sonnet which he sent to his mother from Cambridge, George Herbert, who must have read Southwell, says much the same:

> . . . Doth poetry
> Wear Venus' livery? —Only to serve her turn?
> Why are not sonnets made of Thee, and lays
> Upon Thine altar burnt? Cannot Thy love
> Heighten a spirit to sound out Thy praise
> As well as any she? Cannot thy dove
> Outstrip their Cupid easily in flight? . . .

(Cited by A. G. Hyde, *George Herbert and his Times*. London and New York, 1906, p. 51).

[37] Stanza 18. *Ed. cit.*, p. 41.

[38] 'Brittons second dreame of Venus complaint when she lost her son Cupid,' stanza 14. *Ed. cit.*, p. 45.

[39] In *Hekatompatheia*, 1582: sonnet xxii.

[40] 'Of the birth and bringing up of desire,' signed by 'E. of Ox.' No. 40, p. 47. This is a 14-line poem in rhymed couplets.

[41] *Rime*, clxxxix.

[42] This is in the poem (no. xxx in Vita in the Carducci edition) beginning: 'Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro.'

[43] *Rime*, xcv.

[44] Stanza I. Ed. Cawood, 1595, p. 1.

[45] *Rime*, clxxxix.

[46] *Lagrime*, ed. 1560, f. 49a.

[47] Stanza 24.

[48] *Lagrime*, f. 44b.

[49] Stanzas 44, 45.

[50] This is not in Mark XIV, or Matthew XXVI, or John XVIII.

[51] *Lagrime*, f. 44b.

[52] Stanza 61, p. 16.

[53] = 'Whose presence causeth day, whose absence causeth night'
—a Latin construction frequently used by Southwell.

[54] Stanza 67, p. 17.

[55] Stanza 93.

[56] Quando nascesti, Amor?—Quando la terra
Si reveste di verde e bel colore.
Di che sei generato?—D'un ardore
Che ozio lascivo in se rachiude e serra.
—Che ti produsse a farne tanta guerra?
—Calda speranza e gelido timore.
—Ove prima abitasti?—In gentil core

Che sotto al mio valor presto s'atterra.
—Che fù la tua nutrice?—Giovenezza,
E le serve raccolte a lei dintorno
Legiadria, vanità, pompa e bellezza.
—Di che ti pasce?—D'un guardar adorno.
—Pò contra la morte e la vecchiezza?
—No, ch'io rinasco mille volte el giorno.
(Serafino Aquilano, *Le Rime*, ed. Menghini, 1894, I, 2213; cited by H. E. Rollins in his edition of *Brittons Bowre of Delights*, p. 96).

[57] Stanza 118, p. 30.

[58] 'Love.' See *The English Works of George Herbert*, ed. G. H. Palmer. Boston, 1905, Vol. II, p. 401.

[59] —'Let my frailty move thy favour, my sorrows move thy succour.'

[60] Janelle, pp. 163-5.

[61] Harold Child, in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, IV, 129-130.

[62] Janelle, pp. 1-3.

[63] There is good reason for supposing that *St. Peter's Complaint* dates from 1591.

[64] Shakespeare was to face a similar problem, from the technical point of view, in *Venus and Adonis*, and he only partially solved it by introducing the description of the hare-hunt, and the description of the boar: the former a brilliant artifice, though not of very marked relevance to the main theme.

[65] With weeping eies His Mother rev'd His smart,
If bloode from Him, teares came from her as fast;
The knife that cut His fleshe did perce her hart,
The payne that Jesus felt did Marye tast . . .
(This is Grosart's text: *Complete Poems of R. S.*, p. 131. The text in the Busbie edition seems defective).

[66] Ed. Busbie, 1595, p. 14.

[67] Janelle, pp. 267-271.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

[69] *Saint Peters complaynt. With other Poems. Ed. cit.*, p. 40.

[70] A. Harnack and J. M. Mitchell, art. 'Plotinus,' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. vol. xix. Cited by Janelle, p. 270.

[71] *Saint Peters complaynt. With other Poems*, pp. 61-2.

[72] The responses to Breton's 'Garden Plot' in 'Loves gardyne griefe,' to Dyer's 'My Mind to me a kingdom is' in 'Content and ritche,' and to Dyer's 'Fancy' in 'A Phansie turned to a sinners complaint.'

[73] *Rime*, Part III, sonnet 3, ed. 1531.

[74] *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

[75] *Maeoniae*, ed. Busbie, 1595, pp. 27, 28.

[76] E. W. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York, 1925.

[77] Pierre Janelle, in discussing the transition from Catholicism to Anglicanism, writes: 'Does not the conclusion suggest itself, that the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, as introduced into England by Southwell and his fellow-missioners, spread to the Establishment and imparted to it some of its nature?' (p. 285).

[78] The character of Anglican Christianity under Charles I and in the time of the Commonwealth has been well defined by J. H. Shorthouse in *John Inglesant* (see in particular ch. XVII).

Conclusion

THE nations are usually a mystery to one another and often as a closed book. The image they present has been described as a mirage, and the mirage is at times so distorted as to be a caricature. Eighteenth-century England as seen by the average Frenchman, twentieth-century France as she appears to the average American, represent images very remote from the realities. Since for the average man books, newspapers and, more recently, the cinema are the only guides to knowledge of a foreign nation, the books or pictures which tend to confirm the mirage make an impression, while those that contradict it make none—or very little. Writers themselves often take pleasure in strengthening the illusion, not necessarily because they share it but because they seek in another people or another literature those qualities they feel most in need of at the moment. All art distorts, in a sense, and when it passes from one country to another there is a double distortion. Did the mirage of Italy as it appeared to Shakespeare's contemporaries represent a distortion as marked as those mentioned?

So far as any view that can be called 'prevailing' existed, it was doubtless that of theatre-going Londoners and of the courtiers and University wits who spent part of the year in London. For these the picture of Italy was presented by the 'Italian' plays of Shakespeare, Webster and one or two others, by the *novelle* they read in Painter's and Pettie's volumes and by the novels of Robert Greene. The learned countesses who protected the poets, and the nobles and commoners who had travelled in Italy saw something more complex; but it is not certain that for the cultured subjects of Elizabeth I and James I as a whole the mirage of Italy was very far removed from the truth. The Italy of the novels and the theatre was a land where love was more exciting, plotting more tortuous and crime more horrific than in less favoured latitudes. Yet if the

shadow of the 'Machiavellian' villain sometimes darkened the sun, the stage was mostly occupied by angelic damsels, 'spirited wenches' and cavaliers either very faithful or very fickle. But Italy also made a glamorous setting for the Senecan drama of vengeance and horror, which was, naturally enough, the kind of drama the Italians liked to place in the exotic East. Now this theatrical Italy was not entirely, perhaps not mainly, an illusion. Italian life and scenery have at all times been suggestive of opera. For the average Italian, life is a spectacle and he poses on the stage with an artistry that is the delight and sometimes the envy of travellers. The Italians were probably as well known to Shakespeare and his fellows as any people have been known to any other.

The poets, to be sure, looked for something rather different from the crime-story, the love intrigue or the duel of wit. In the nature of the case they were more selective, and their object was usually to vie with the Italians in the verse-forms and the kinds of verse in which the latter excelled. Their aim was not to depict the Italian scene but to naturalise modes of thought and feeling.

Literary influences, however, are subject to distortions or deflections as strange as those that affect one people's vision of another. They can probably never be forecast. Machiavelli could not have foreseen that his lessons would enable a Protestant power to steer her way to safety in an age still dominated, in large measure, by authoritarian Catholicism. That one of the effects of the Counter-Reformation was to impart to French seventeenth-century literature the cult of clear ideas that we find in Descartes, the love of rational demonstration that animates the heroes and heroines of Corneille and, above all, the intense interest in psychology that appears in the moralists—this would not be difficult to prove. I think, and in a forthcoming volume hope to show, that it also left a deep and beneficial mark on the English 'Metaphysicals.' Catholic poets like Tansillo and Marino, Jesuit professors like Benci, could not foresee that the effect of their work in England would be, not to create a Jesuit literature but to contribute indirectly to a kind of poetry which is one of the glories of the Anglican Church.

To return for a moment to the travellers, the modern reader may be more surprised by what they did not notice or admire than by what they did. They admired the music and the formal gardens, and were beginning to imitate them: Sir John Danvers had a notable

Italian garden laid out at Chelsea; but they do not appear fully to have realised the greatness of Italian painting, except in portraiture. It would be idle to expect them to admire the Alps; and the 'pleasing horror' that Southwell saw in their recesses is utterly unexpected; but Southwell is a precursor. One would have thought that the shining spaces of Lago Maggiore, which many of the travellers must have seen, would have impressed them; but they probably thought the lush meadows watered by 'Silver Thames' were better. Padua is notable, in Shakespeare's eye, not for the Dolomites in the north or for the abrupt cones of the Euganean hills, but because it is in 'the pleasant garden of great Italy'. Finally, if there is one word to describe the Elizabethan response to Italy, it is 'aristocratic': a response primarily intellectual, moral and spiritual.

In the seventeenth century, changes began to take place, at first imperceptibly. They were partly connected with the political misfortunes of the country. But the influence of Italy on the age of the Stuarts and the Commonwealth has never been well examined or defined: the literary relations between the two countries still appear nebulous. We have no general works on this period comparable to Lewis Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England* or Roderick Marshall's *Italy in English Literature*: 1755-1815; few comprehensive monographs like Miss Yates' book on Florio, or, for the eighteenth century, Miss Manwaring's study of the influence of Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain. Yet to the student of religious thought, of poetry, of drama, of painting and architecture, too, the seventeenth century possesses a fascination second to none. To explore it more fully than it has yet been explored, in the light of the Italian influence, will be the object of a subsequent volume.

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