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CLASSICAL INFLUENCES ON ENGLISH POETRY

by J. A. K. THOMSON

GREEKS AND BARBARIANS

THE GREEK TRADITION

IRONY

THE ART OF THE LOGOS

THE CLASSICAL BACKGROUND
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

SHAKESPEARE AND THE CLASSICS

J. A. K. THOMSON

CLASSICAL INFLUENCES ON ENGLISH POETRY

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PREFACE

THIS may be called a sequel to my *Classical Background of English Literature* (Allen and Unwin, 1948). That book was not unfavourably received, but there was a feeling among those for whom it was principally intended that it suffered from the absence of illustrative examples. The broad statements I made might be reasonable, but one wished to see them tested by their application to cases. In this volume I have tried to meet that criticism. But the subject is so large, and the risk of not hitting the mark so great, that I have confined myself to poetry. If my treatment appears to satisfy readers, I shall hope to employ it in a subsequent volume dealing with prose.

Since I am not writing primarily for classical scholars, I have had to impose certain restrictions on myself: these I may now explain. No Greek is quoted, only Latin. But as Latin is a very difficult language, and Latin authors use it in very different ways, I have translated my Latin extracts for the use of those who may feel glad of the assistance. These translations I have put in an Appendix, that they might not disfigure the page, and offend those who can read the original without them.

I have not been very scrupulous or consistent in my quotation of texts whether Latin or English. In a book which is not meant for the critical scholar more is lost than gained by following a rigid plan. It does not seem to me worth while, but much the contrary, to make it harder for the average man to read Latin by writing v as u and -is instead of -es in the accusative plural of many third declension nouns. On the other hand it seems that the Romans did not normally begin verses, as we do, with a capital letter, and I have followed them in this, since no confusion is possible.

As I have had in this volume to traverse the same ground as I covered in *The Classical Background*, it has not been possible to avoid some repetition. I could not feel it right to offer the reader something which was not fully intelligible without reference to another book, and that a book of my own. Although what I have now written is in a sense only a fragment, it will be found complete in itself, so far as I could make it so.

J. A. K. THOMSON

CONTENTS

PREFACE		page 5
I.	*The Epic*	9
II.	*The Epic Tradition in Antiquity*	30
III.	*The Epic Tradition in Modern Times: Milton*	53
IV.	*Didactic Poetry*	75
V.	*Tragedy*	97
VI.	*Comedy*	119
VII.	*Lyric Poetry*	138
VIII.	*Elegiac Poetry*	159
IX.	*The Pastoral*	172
X.	*Satire*	196
XI.	*The Epigram*	239
	Appendix	247

CHAPTER ONE

THE EPIC

A

EUROPEAN literature begins with Homer, and Homer is the epic. That is to say, all subsequent poetry which can be described as epic is so described in proportion as it resembles the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Homer is the origin of it all and the standard by which it is judged.

Yet in some (and these very important) respects Homer is unique. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed in and for a society that no longer exists; consequently the conditions for reproducing such poetry no longer exist. They ceased to exist in ancient Greece itself after the Homeric age, and they never existed at all in Roman times. There was an approximation to them in certain countries—Iceland for example—in the middle ages, but nothing issued from them comparable in artistic competence to the Homeric poems. In modern times, in civilised countries, the conditions have, of course, entirely disappeared. The Roman epic, then, and the modern epic, so far as they model themselves upon Homer, are imitative, are 'artificial'. For that very reason they cannot be understood except after study of their model. And their model Homer cannot be understood except after study of the conditions which made such poetry possible.

This sounds too difficult for the ordinary student, unless he happens to be a Greek scholar. But the elements of the problem can be understood by anybody. The exercise of a little imagination will convince us that in an unlettered community, such as Homer addressed, the poet must give his audience what it wishes to hear; otherwise it will not listen at all, and what is he to do then? He cannot appeal from that audience to the

reading public, for there is no reading public. Thus the simple fact that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have survived at all proves that they pleased their hearers. It does more; it proves that they were composed to please their hearers. What it comes to is this, that in an age when poetry is still oral, that is to say composed for recitation, it is the audience that in the long run chooses both the subject and the style in which it is treated.

We can go beyond this, we can say without fear of contradiction what sort of subject and what sort of style the audience will prefer. It will desire to hear a traditional subject treated in a traditional manner. The English reader will think of the ballads, which in the circumstances of their origin, if in no other respect, come nearer to Homer than anything else in our literature. Even if the theme of the bard is really new, he treats it as if it were old, casting the events back into an undated prehistory and relating them in the traditional diction and metre. One bard naturally will do this better than another, but this they all have to do. Homer did what the other minstrels had done and were doing; only he did it better. The true miracle is not the nature of the Homeric poetry but its quality. Why is that so high? No one can tell; all we can say is that there was genius adequate to produce it. But we must never forget, as even scholars have been too apt to do, that there was an audience worthy of this genius and capable of recognising it. That is almost as great a miracle as the other. It is fatal to think of Homer as a printed book. Homer is living speech. This stamps it with a special character, which is preserved by the art of Virgil and Milton, but is not natural to them as it is to Homer. In this respect he is unique, and what is unique cannot be successfully imitated. Accordingly they were driven to imitate what in him was imitable. It is this imitable element which alone can engage our attention here. That it may not be unnecessarily divided, I propose to consider first the *structure* of the Homeric poems and then their *style*. And I shall begin with the *Iliad*.

The best way of appreciating the art with which the *Iliad* has been constructed is to review the materials which the artist had before him. We must dismiss the picture of a romantic poet finding his theme in his private imagination. Homer's materials were all before him; his problem was to organise them. These materials consisted in a mass of traditional lore about the Trojan War. Only a summary of it can be given here, but so much is necessary if we are to follow the poet's method of dealing with it. Some of the details may have been added in times later than Homer; but the tenor of the traditions was as follows.

Zeus, king of the gods, observing that the earth was overpopulated, determined to remedy this evil by a war. He contrived that a dispute should arise between the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite (in Latin, Juno, Minerva and Venus) as to which of them deserved the prize of beauty, a golden apple. The decision was referred to Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, who awarded the prize to Aphrodite on her promising to give him Helen, the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. To get her, Paris voyages to Sparta, whence he brings her to Troy; and this was the cause of the Trojan War. For Menelaus was the brother of Agamemnon, who was recognised by the other kings or chiefs of Greece as a sort of feudal superior, and Agamemnon called upon them to follow him in an expedition to avenge his brother. A great armament is assembled and, after many delays, reaches the Troad. The landing of the Greeks, at first opposed—it was then that Protesilaus, the husband of Laodamia was killed—is finally successful. The Trojans still refusing to give back Helen, the war begins. For nine years it was fought with varying fortunes. In the tenth a quarrel broke out between Agamemnon and Achilles, the most brilliant warrior on the Greek side, as Hector is on the Trojan. The consequence is that Achilles now refuses to fight any longer for the Greeks, and in his absence the Trojans are victorious. But when Hector slays Patroclus, the dear friend of Achilles, then Achilles returns in fury to the war, kills Hector and dishonours his body. The aged Priam, Hector's father,

ventures into the Greek camp and succeeds in redeeming the body of his son from Achilles. But the death of Hector is not the end of the war. New allies come to the aid of Troy: first, Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons; then, Memnon, son of the Dawn. Both are slain by Achilles. But now it is the fate of Achilles himself to die. He perishes by the hand of Paris, who, with the aid of the god Apollo, wounds him with a deadly arrow. Then follows a great struggle for the possession of the body, which is finally carried into safety by Aias (Ajax), while Odysseus (Ulysses) covers his retreat. The corpse is then solemnly burned. This however leads to a fresh quarrel, Aias and Odysseus contending which is to inherit the divine armour of Achilles. When the decision goes against him, Aias loses his wits and kills himself. Some time after this Odysseus contrives to capture the Trojan Helenus, who is a prophet, and forces him to reveal the secret of how Troy may be taken. This leads to the bringing to Troy of the archer Philoctetes, who had been marooned on an island. Philoctetes kills Paris or (as Homer usually calls him) Alexandros. Odysseus next fetches Pyrrhus (also and more generally called Neoptolemus), the son of Achilles, from the Aegean island of Skyros. In the young man are seen again the courage and ferocity of his father, and the Trojans are now pent up in their city. Odysseus enters it in disguise, meets Helen there, and returns with much intelligence. At nightfall he goes back with Diomedes and carries off the sacred image of Athena, the *Palladium*, from her temple. That gone, the luck of Troy goes with it. The citizens are induced to draw within their walls a great wooden horse, within which are concealed chosen Greek warriors, who come out at nightfall. So Troy is taken at last by means of the Trojan Horse.

That, omitting many details, was the story. It will be observed that it is not in the least like a summary of the *Iliad*. The reason for that is that Homer has deliberately avoided what may be called the chronological method of narration. That is the method of the verse-chronicle, of which there are many examples both in ancient and modern literature, and

very many in mediaeval poetry. The objection to the chronological epic is that a work of high art must be an organic whole, and the unity which belongs to an organic whole is something quite different from that produced by the mere sequence of events. The inevitability of history is not the inevitability of art; and Homer, perhaps instinctively, more probably as the result of long experiment on the part of himself and his predecessors, had come to perceive this. It was not, however, perceived by Lucan, whose *Pharsalia* is merely versified history, and by many other poets, ancient, mediaeval and modern, who conceived themselves to have written epics.

Then Homer might have chosen to incorporate all the relevant matter of Troy in a poem which should be in effect the life-history of a particular hero. So far as the *Iliad* has a hero, it is Achilles. Homer then might have written an *Achilleid*, as some later poets did, in which the career of Achilles from cradle to grave would have been related, his feats before Troy being naturally a principal part of it. This kind of epic was a favourite in antiquity; and it corresponds to the metrical romance, which had so prodigious a vogue in the middle ages, at least to that variety of it, by far the commonest, which embraced the life of some saint or prince or hero. This type of poem did not perish with the middle ages; a modern example is Morris's *Life and Death of Jason*. Aristotle remarks that the authors of such 'epics' have fallen into the error of thinking that a poem must have unity if it is all 'about one man'. Such unity is not organic but accidental. What these authors give us is only versified biography, just as the others give us versified chronicle.

Thirdly, Homer might have treated his subject episodically. A good English example of such a method is Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. In them certain episodes are taken from the mass of the Arthurian legend and worked up into separate, though comparable, poems. Other examples may be found among the ancient bucolic poets, of whom the chief name is

Theocritus. The art both of Theocritus and of Tennyson is refined almost to the point of sophistication, but that to which it is applied is almost the earliest kind of poetry of which we have record. Long before anything like our *Iliad* could have come into existence men, not necessarily professional bards, sang brief lays celebrating what Homer calls 'the glories of heroes'. These naturally revolved about single episodes. No doubt it was always possible to string such episodical lays together, and in this way a long poem could be produced. The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid is fundamentally a production of this kind. The incidents there are strung together with great ingenuity, but they remain detachable incidents. In the greatest works of art this is not possible.

Homer followed none of these methods. He looked for the *artistic* centre of his material, its unifying principle. When that had been found the whole poem was felt to possess a natural, not an artificially contrived or merely casual, unity. A concise analysis of the *Iliad* will show how the method was applied.

After an appeal to the Muse we are taken at once into the heart of the story. Homer does not begin at the beginning of the Trojan matter, but in the middle or, rather, near the end. We discover the priest of Apollo, Chryses, appealing to Agamemnon before the assembled Greeks to restore his daughter, who had become their prisoner of war. The appeal is heard with favour by all except Agamemnon himself, whose property the damsel had become; he dismisses Chryses with threatening words. The old man goes sadly away, and as he goes he prays to Apollo that he may be avenged on the Greeks. The god hears his prayer and afflicts the host with a dreadful plague. Thereupon Achilles calls an assembly of the warriors, in whose presence he bids the prophet Calchas declare the cause of Apollo's anger. Calchas says it is the treatment of Chryses' daughter. At this Agamemnon breaks out into a furious denunciation of the prophet. Achilles protests, and this leads to an open quarrel and a threat by Agamemnon that,

if he must give up the daughter of Chryses, he will take the girl Briseis, the captive of Achilles' spear. When the threat is carried out, Achilles goes down to the sea and calls upon his mother Thetis, who is a sea-goddess. She rises from the waves and comforts him with the promise of an appeal to Zeus that he right the wrongs of her son. Accordingly at dawn she visits Zeus on Olympus, and he gives her the pledge she has desired.

At this point, it will be observed, a new element comes into the story—the will or purpose of Zeus. It is of such importance that at the very outset of the *Iliad* the poet declares that his theme will be the fulfilling of the purpose of Zeus. That is the chain—a living chain, because it is psychological and not mechanical—which binds the various episodes together. They are now, to use a word much in favour, 'integrated'. At the same time Homer avoids the error of showing us the steady operation of an irresistible will—an error which, though unavoidable, destroys much of the interest of *Paradise Lost*. Zeus is far from being omnipotent; he has not even a very strong character. So his purpose, although it prevails in the end, is constantly being thwarted or diverted. Hence the *Iliad* is full of dramatic ebbs and flows of excitement.

The plan of Zeus is by defeat to punish Agamemnon to such an extent that he will humble his pride and make reparation to Achilles. He sends a dream in the night to Agamemnon, which bids him attack the Trojans. Since a dream of that kind could not be disregarded by a Homeric Greek, the king leads out his forces in the morning. These are enumerated and briefly described by the poet in a passage known in antiquity as the catalogue of the ships. It became the model of catalogues in later poets, including Milton, whose roll-call of devils in the first book of *Paradise Lost* is an elaborate catalogue. When the Trojans descry the approach of the Greeks, they also assemble. Before however the fighting begins, it is proposed by Paris that the dispute between Menelaus and himself be

decided by single combat. Certain preliminaries have to be arranged, and this means fetching Priam from Troy. We are now transported in imagination to Troy, while the action on the battle front remains suspended. Here is used for the first time the device of suspension of interest by a temporary change of scene at a moment of great tension. In Troy Helen hears of the approaching combat, and makes her way to the Scaean gate of the city, where Priam and his counsellors are watching how the battle goes. Helen, herself a Greek, describes each of the Greek chieftains as he comes into view. This is the most vivid, concise and dramatic way of communicating the information we need about the various actors in the war. It is one of the most brilliant of narrative inventions.

Priam goes to the field, ratifies the truce and returns to the city. The duel is then fought, and Paris has the worst of it. This ought to settle the dispute and end the war. But two things intervene. Paris is carried off to safety by Aphrodite, and the truce is violated by the Trojans. It is the archer Pandarus—a very different character from what he became later in the hands of Chaucer and Shakespeare—who wounds Menelaus. This he does at the instigation of Athena. Here then we have two instances of something that happens frequently in Homer, the intervention of a god in human affairs. We must remember that Homer's audiences seriously believed that the gods did on occasion appear among men; at least they believed that they had often so appeared to their heroic ancestors. The poet's skill in using this belief is remarkable, as we may have occasion to observe. In particular he uses it to hurry on or to delay the action, never, as in some later poets, for a sensational or decorative effect.

The breach of the truce brings on a general engagement, in which Diomedes especially distinguishes himself. When it looks as if the Greeks might force their way into Troy, Hector enters the city with the purpose of getting the Trojan women to make a special appeal to the goddess who protects it.

(Another instance of the suspension of interest by change of scene, for the battle continues during Hector's absence.) He visits his wife Andromache, who on his saying farewell to her has the presentiment that she will never see him alive again. The use of omens and presentiments to charge the atmosphere with expectancy is not uncommon in Homer, and can be immensely effective, as in the accumulation of prodigies and prophecies that darkens the close of the *Odyssey*. Meanwhile we follow Hector, who returns to the battle and challenges the bravest of the Greeks to fight him. They draw lots for the dangerous distinction, and the choice falls on Aias, who in the ensuing combat acquits himself more than well. This however does nothing to end the war, which goes on with increasing fury. Zeus now sees to it that the Trojans win; they drive the Greeks back to their ships, thinking to annihilate their enemies next day. The Greeks themselves expect no better, and in their extremity they look to Agamemnon. He is now willing to make the amplest amends to Achilles, if only Achilles will fight again. An embassy is sent to make this offer, but it is scornfully repulsed. In his original dispute with Agamemnon Achilles was clearly in the right, at any rate more in the right than his opponent. Now he is as clearly in the wrong. What was indignation at an injustice has become the nursing of a wounded pride. The tragic consequences that ensue flow from a weakness in the hero's character. Homer has discovered, as Aristotle perceived, the secret of all the great tragic dramatists. Achilles being the man he was, his fate could not be different from what it was. Take by way of contrast the case of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*. They have no characters; they are simply Man and Woman, innocent one moment and sinful the next. The Fall, as Milton presents it, is something that need not have happened.

Achilles remaining obdurate, the war goes on. It sways backwards and forwards, but finally sets once more in favour of the Trojans. Agamemnon and other Greek leaders are

wounded; the Trojans press on and nearly succeed in setting fire to the ships. At this point there is another divine intervention. Poseidon, the god of the sea, disguised as a mortal warrior, comes to the rescue, and at last the Trojans break and run. What, it may be asked, has Zeus been doing all this time? Alas, he is asleep, beguiled thereto by the arts of Hera. When he awakes and sees what has happened, he sends his messenger Iris to Poseidon recalling him from the field, while he himself puts fear in the hearts of the Greeks and courage in the hearts of the Trojans. So it is the Greeks who are now routed, and it appears that nothing can save them. Then an incident occurs which has a decisive influence on the course of events. Patroclus (who has withdrawn from the war in sympathy with his friend) cannot bear any longer to look idly upon the death and despair of his comrades. Achilles consents to his plea that he be allowed to fight, but only on condition that he shall not pursue the Trojans to their city. So Patroclus, clad in the borrowed armour of Achilles, enters the fray. His attack proves irresistible, but fatal to himself, for in the exaltation of victory he presses on to the very walls of Troy, where he is met by Hector, who with the aid of Apollo kills him, strips him of Achilles' armour and wears it himself. When Achilles hears of this, his mingled rage and grief is terrible, and he vows an atrocious revenge upon Hector. It is easier for a modern reader to sympathise with Hector than with Achilles, but an ancient audience would have understood Achilles better. He has great virtues: perfect courage, perfect truthfulness, a naturally frank and generous temper; and he is the most devoted of friends. It was this devotion that made the strongest impression on the ancient Greeks, who set a higher value on friendship than we. Achilles knew from his mother that, if he stayed in the land of Troy, it was his fate to perish there. He flings all away—youth, life, love, happiness—in order to please, according to the notions of his time, the injured spirit of his friend. It is necessary to keep this in mind if we

are to see how much the plot of the *Iliad* depends on the character of Achilles.

He is now reconciled to Agamemnon, but has to wait for new armour, made for him with incomparable skill by the god Hephaestus. He then takes the field, utterly routs the Trojans, pursues Hector thrice round the walls of Troy, slays him, drags the dead body at his chariot wheels, and casts it to the dogs in the Greek camp. That might seem the end, and perhaps in the earliest form of the story it was the end. But Greek art never liked to leave the moral sense revolted. There was something noble in Achilles after all, and Homer felt it to be an artistic necessity that this should be brought out. So in a last great scene Hector's aged father comes to the tent of the man that had killed his son and begs for the body; and the fierce young warrior yields it, crying to the ghost of Patroclus not to be angry with him for doing so.

The object of this summary has been to reveal something of the skill with which the *Iliad* has been wrought out of a chronicle of events into a living unity. Some flaws have been detected or fancied, the chief perhaps being this, that certain not inconsiderable parts hang too loosely upon the plot and might be spared. Does the plot really require, it may be asked, the long fifth book, full of the exploits of Diomedes, which have little or no effect upon the course of events? Does one need the tenth book, about Dolon the spy? Does one need all that description of the funeral games in the twenty-third book, or the account of the making of Achilles' shield in the eighteenth? The best answer is to think what would happen to the *Iliad*, if these passages were taken out. The tenth book we might indeed spare, and there is reason for believing that it was not an original, or at least a permanent, part of the poem. But the other passages cannot be spared. An epic is not like a drama. It has to make up for the absence of actors and scenery by enlarging its scope and deepening its background, so that the characters may be fairly seen in the world to which they

belong. Hector and Achilles belong to the heroic world of ancient Greece, and unless Homer had depicted that world for us, we should not understand them. Hence everything that helps to build up that picture for us is relevant. For example, nothing could give us a more vivid impression of what the heroic age really was than the description of the games or the adornment of Achilles' shield with these brilliant vignettes of everyday life. Artistically, they are entirely relevant.

We are now in a position to answer the question how Homer deals with his material. He selects a particular theme—the Wrath of Achilles—and weaves it into the broad fabric of the war, through which he traces its pattern. No doubt the poet leaves out a great deal. Unless he had done that, the unity of his work would have disappeared in the mass of irrelevant details. Nevertheless the whole Trojan story is present to his mind. But it was also present—this is what it is so easy and yet so fatal to overlook—to the mind of his auditors. It is this which enables him to use, for the first time in literature, that effect of tragic irony which was so powerful an instrument in the hands of the great Athenian dramatists. Andromache knows, and the audience know, that she will never see Hector again. Achilles knows, and the audience know, that he will die 'far from his native land'. Hector, like the audience, is certain that Troy is doomed. All this lends a peculiar depth and sadness to their words.

Very much more could be said; but this may do to convince the modern reader that the *Iliad* is a work of majestic constructive art, and to suggest why this is so.

The structure of the *Odyssey* shows an advance even on the *Iliad* in technical accomplishment. The *Odyssey* has been called the best story in the world; but this is to say both too much and too little. It is its poetical beauty, not its merits as a story, that makes it a great poem. As for its construction, that is indeed a piece of consummate art. Homer has avoided

the mistake of giving us a biography of Odysseus. He does not even give us a complete account of all that his hero did and suffered between the fall of Troy and the slaying of the suitors. As in the *Iliad* he began with the tenth year of the war, so in the *Odyssey* he begins in the tenth year of Odysseus' wanderings, and he does not, until the poem is about a sixth part over, permit us to meet its hero in person. The first four books are taken up in exciting our interest about him. It is an example of the art of imaginative preparation. Odysseus has been cast away upon a lonely island, and his loneliness is impressed upon the reader to heighten the effect of what follows. Everyone remembers how this device is used in *Robinson Crusoe*. It is only after a picture of Crusoe's loneliness has been elaborated through chapter after chapter of convincing details, until the imagination is oppressed by a sense of total isolation, that the incident of the footprint in the sand is introduced. Then it is absolutely terrifying. The method of Homer is rather different; he sets everybody looking for Odysseus. But it excites our imagination in the same way.

Odysseus is set free from his island by the action of the gods, and divine interventions are as common in the *Odyssey* as in the *Iliad*. In particular the anger of Poseidon at the blinding of his son Polyphemus has the same unifying force in the first half of the *Odyssey* that the purpose of Zeus has throughout the *Iliad*. It is the anger of Poseidon that causes Odysseus to be wrecked upon the coast of Phaeaecia. Here he finds favour with the king, Alcinous, who, after a period in which the curiosity of the Phaeaecians is worked up to the highest pitch, invites him to tell his story to the company. Thereupon he gives that account of his wanderings which is the most famous part of the *Odyssey*. We are not called upon to praise it here, but rather to note it as an instance of what may be called retrospective narrative, a device which has been used, though never with quite the same art, by the epic poets of later ages. It has many advantages, of which not the least is

that it concentrates the plot, which would otherwise be dissipated by relating events in their chronological sequence. For Odysseus can, and does, leave out whatever is comparatively uninteresting.

B

Having seen from the example of Homer how the heroic epic is constructed, we have now to consider the epic style. It has already been observed that this style, in Homer, is unique, and therefore inimitable. In particular what cannot be recovered is its impersonality. In other respects it can be imitated. What are these? Matthew Arnold has defined them as simplicity and directness, rapidity, 'nobleness'. One might say in general that what distinguishes the Homeric style is a peculiar vividness and energy of imagination. These qualities may be reproduced in translation, although it would be too much to expect all of them to be combined in a single version.

I take a well-known passage from the *Iliad*, giving it first in Tennyson's words, because he renders the meaning of the original with great fidelity, and will therefore serve as a check in that respect upon the others.

> So Hector spake; the Trojans roar'd applause;
> Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke,
> And each beside his chariot bound his own;
> And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
> In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine
> And bread from out the houses brought, and heap'd
> Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain
> Roll'd the rich vapour far into the heaven.
> And these all night upon the bridge of war
> Sat glorying; many a fire before them blazed:
> As when in heaven the stars about the moon
> Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,

And every height comes out, and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his heart:
So many a fire between the ships and stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
A thousand on the plain, and close by each
Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
And eating hoary grain and pulse the steeds,
Fixt by their cars, waited the golden dawn.

(VIII. 542–561.)

This translation has simplicity (a *studied* simplicity), directness, dignity; what it fails to reproduce is the movement of Homer, his rapidity. The hexameters of Homer move lightly, each following the other like racing waves; the blank verse of Tennyson is full of eddy, relapse and recoil. In that way fine metrical effects are obtained, but they are not the effects of Homer.

I give now Chapman's translation.

This speech all Trojans did applaud, who from their traces los'd
Their sweating horse, which sev'rally with headstalls they repos'd,
And fast'ned by their chariots; when others brought from town
Fat sheep and oxen, instantly, bread, wine, and hewéd down
Huge store of wood. The winds transferr'd into the friendly sky
Their supper's savour; to the which they sat delightfully,
And spent all night in open fields; fires round about them shin'd.
As when about the silver moon, when air is free from wind,
And stars shine clear, to whose sweet beams, high prospects, and the brows
Of all steep hills and pinnacles, thrust up themselves for shows,
And ev'n the lonely valleys joy to glitter in their sight,
When the unmeasur'd firmament bursts to disclose her light,
And all the signs in heav'n are seen, that glad the shepherd's heart;
So many fires disclos'd their beams, made by the Trojan part,
Before the face of Ilion, and her bright turrets show'd.

A thousand courts of guard kept fire, and ev'ry guard allow'd
Fifty stout men, by whom their horse ate oats and hard white corn,
And all did wishfully expect the silver thronéd morn.

This version has something of the rapidity, the *impetus*, of Homer; it keeps some of his plainness and some of his nobility. But there is here, as in nearly all that Chapman writes, a stumbling clumsiness and a thickness of speech, than which nothing could be less Homeric. We may say then that Chapman fails in style. The criticism would have surprised him, for he is constantly seeking to improve upon the style of Homer. This leads him often to twist the plain sense of the Greek into conceits, and he has all the Elizabethan, but unhomeric, love of hyperbole. In the passage quoted he is reasonably free from these vices of style, but even there he says that the hills in the moonlight 'thrust up themselves for shows', as if Homer were capable of attributing to the hills this form of exhibitionism. Nevertheless Chapman has fire, energy, the onward rush; and occasionally he has a fine line or a happy phrase.

Let us listen now to Pope.

The troops exulting sat in order round,
And beaming fires illumin'd all the ground.
As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night!
O'er heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole,
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head;
Then shine the vales, the rocks in prospect rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies:
The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.

So many flames before proud Ilium blaze,
And lighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays:
The long reflections of the distant fires
Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.
A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,
And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.
Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,
Whose umber'd arms, by fits, thick flashes send.
Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,
And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

This version (of which only the latter part has been given) is rather a paraphrase or expansion of the original than a translation, and so far it is to be condemned. But it can never be denied that it has style. Pope was a very great master of the art of poetry as it was understood in the eighteenth century, and on this passage he has lavished all his skill. But the Popian style, rhetorical and antithetic, gives quite a false impression of Homer's.

It has been said, by Coleridge among others, that one of the marks of true poetry is that it is untranslatable. He did not mean by this that poetry ought never to be translated, for Coleridge translated a great deal himself, but that the problem of the translator is to make one kind of poetry into another, which shall yet not misrepresent the original. Chapman and Pope and Tennyson all succeed to a greater or less degree in doing this, and if one translator could unite the merits of all three and get rid of their defects, the English reader could form a not inadequate conception of what Homer is like in Greek. But even so a man who knows the original would miss a great deal of what seems most essential in Homer—his imaginative intensity and the unmatched splendour of his language. Pope in the interesting Preface to his translation notes this imaginative intensity, though he gives it another name; but it is apt to be dimmed in his somewhat conventional diction. The English reader may get the best idea of it from the Authorized Version.

nd it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, ere appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them th asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And lisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of rael, *and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more.* That really more like Homer in its imaginative quality than any f the three poetical versions. But then it is in prose, and so e do not get the other quality, the *splendor verborum.*

Besides these broad characteristics the Homeric style has rtain special features which call for mention, because one ds them imitated in later epic poetry. It may be enough to ention two: the Homeric epithet, and the Homeric simile. he epithets in Homer are of two kinds, traditional and orna- ental. The fixed epithet is, of course, a well-known pheno- enon of traditional poetry; we find it in Early English verse d in the ballads with their 'wan' water and their 'red' gold. is certainly a notable feature of the Homeric poems, and as ch it has been imitated not only by other ancient poets but y Milton and Tennyson, in whose *Morte d' Arthur*, for instance, is always the 'bold' Sir Bedivere. In modern English, how- er, it has perhaps too much the air of a deliberate archaism, hich one scarcely feels in Homer. With respect to the orna- ental or decorative epithets, they too are apt to be recurrent him, but for a different reason, because the poet is satisfied ith them. They are often of a composite order, like 'rosy- gered', used of the Dawn, and they are invariably beautiful. f course, they have been abundantly imitated, but the first, often happens in poetry, are still the finest.

The similes call for a somewhat fuller discussion. They have o peculiarities. First, the poet often seems not so much to mpare things as to identify them in his imagination. condly, he is apt to sheer away from the point of likeness, til it all but vanishes. On this matter it is well for us to member that terms like 'simile' and 'metaphor' are the inage of later grammarians and rhetoricians. Homer knew

nothing of these distinctions, which in fact are blurred in all early poetry. Thus in the Hebrew prophets, as anyone may see by reading the Bible, metaphor and simile and imaginative identification merge in one. It is much the same in Homer, except that he is far more of a conscious artist, and always knows at least how to present the clearest of pictures.

A few examples will illustrate what has been said. We may begin with the simile in the passage just translated. To compare the plain covered at night with the watch-fires of the Trojans to the starry sky is exceedingly natural. But the moon spoils the comparison. For when the moon is in the sky, particularly if it is pretty much at the full, as it evidently is in Homer's imagination, the stars appear to diminish in number and radiance. Wordsworth, criticising this very passage in Pope's translation of it, is extremely severe upon him for his ignorance of what happens in nature. But if Wordsworth had gone to the Greek, he would have found that the original fault (although no doubt Pope exaggerates it) was committed by Homer. The fact is that the poet's mind passes at once from the thought of many stars to the thought of the night which they illuminate, and the thought of an illuminated night makes him see the moon in all her glory. The original point of similarity, which was the number and brightness of the stars, is lost.

Or consider this passage, very faithfully translated by Tennyson.

> Then rose Achilles dear to Zeus; and round
> The warrior's puissant shoulders Pallas flung
> Her fringed ægis, and around his head
> The glorious goddess wreath'd a golden cloud,
> And from it lighted an all-shining flame.
> As when a smoke from a city goes to heaven
> Far off from out an island girt by foes,
> All day the men contend in grievous war
> From their own city, but with set of sun

Their fires flame thickly, and aloft the glare
Flies streaming, if perchance the neighbours round
May see, and sail to help them in the war;
So from his head the splendour went to heaven.

(*Il.* XVIII, 203 f.)

It might be objected that this is no simile at all, since it is ɔthing but the comparison of a flame to a flame. Yet that ight be defended, if it could be shown that there is some- ing special in the comparison. The special point here may : that both flames threaten war; but it cannot be pressed, for is his enemies that are threatened by the flame on the crest ' Achilles, whereas the island beacons are an appeal for ccour. Homer's imagination, enthralled by the picture of e besieged city, develops that, gets absorbed by it, and has be recalled as if by an effort to the flame on the helmet, hich suggested the comparison.

We read in the fourth book of the *Iliad* (273 f.) that ɜamemnon 'as he passed along the press of men came to the ʼo Ajaxes. These were putting on their armour, and with em came a cloud of footmen. As when a herdsman descries ɔm a height a cloud coming over the sea before the roaring ɛst, and to him, a long way off, it looks as it comes over the ı blacker than pitch, and it is laden with tempest; and he udders at the sight and drives his flock into a cave. Such ɛre the dense columns of vigorous young men that moved .th the Ajaxes into battle—dark columns bristling with shield d spear. And king Agamemnon was glad when he saw ɛm'. The simile, vividly observed from Aegean weather, in itself apt enough; the advancing mass of warriors may ry well be likened to a storm moving across the sea. But ıen one looks into the details one observes that, while ɜamemnon is glad to see the warriors, the herdsman is not ıd when he sees the cloud. The truth is that the simile is lly completed when the column has been likened to a cloud,

and the lines about the shepherd, though no one wishes them away, are irrelevant.

Other examples might be adduced, but they cannot be necessary in so plain a matter. It is not, of course, suggested that all, or even most, of the similes in Homer are not entirely normal. But the kind we have been studying is characteristic, and for that reason calls for special attention.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EPIC TRADITION IN ANTIQUITY

It was necessary to examine the structure and style of the Homeric poems, if we are to understand the history and nature of epic poetry at all. But the influence of Homer on English literature has been in the main indirect. The direct influence is Latin, transmitted chiefly through Virgil, Lucan and Statius.

A

The *Aeneid* of Virgil is much more closely articulated than the *Iliad* or even the *Odyssey*, but its structure is altogether on their lines and it pays for its closer articulation by seeming more obviously contrived. For all that Virgil handles his complex material with admirable skill, and he has not, any more than Milton, received all the credit due to him as a considerable, if not supreme, master of succinct and energetic narrative. But perhaps he overcrowds his canvas, for within the limits of the *Aeneid* he tries as it were to compress an *Iliad*, an *Odyssey* and an *Argonautica*. He begins like Homer towards the end of his story, and we are shown Aeneas and his men battling with a storm off the coast of Carthage. It is the *Odyssey* that Virgil has here in mind, that is to say the fifth book of the *Odyssey*. The storm has been raised by Juno, who pursues Aeneas with her hostility all through the poem, a unifying strand running through its texture, just as the will of Zeus holds together the *Iliad*, and the wrath of Poseidon the *Odyssey*. But something more powerful than Juno, namely Destiny (*fatum*), has ordained that Aeneas shall fulfil his mission, which is to found a Trojan city in Italy that shall be the mother of Rome. This conception of Aeneas as the servant of Destiny is very im-

portant for the poem and helps to bind the successive episodes together, although Virgil skilfully avoids giving the impression that he is engaged on a 'poem with a purpose'. One feels that the purpose is there, but one does not feel it in any oppressive way, as one is apt to do in *The Faerie Queene* or even in *Paradise Lost*. It might be thought that the modern reader could take but a languid interest in what happens to Aeneas, but one needs to be rather unimaginative not to feel some interest in the enormous fortunes of the Roman Empire.

To resume: the first book of the *Aeneid* is in its essential features closely modelled on the sixth of the *Odyssey*. Aeneas lands shipwrecked on an unknown coast like Odysseus, and thereafter meets Dido, as Odysseus meets Nausicaa. The fact that Aeneas is not companionless does not alter the situation, although it is complicated by minor imitations drawn from other parts of Homer. The main parallel is still with the sixth and part of the seventh book of the *Odyssey*. In the second and third books of the *Aeneid* Aeneas relates to Dido and her court the story of his adventures. This, of course, is in direct following of Odysseus' narrative to Alcinous and his Phaeaecians. In the fourth book, however, Virgil leaves Homer altogether and takes for his model Apollonius, a Greek poet of the third century before Christ, in whose *Argonautica* we read of the fatal passion of Medea for Jason in his quest of the Golden Fleece. At the same time there are constant imitations, echoes, suggestions, even more or less direct translations of Homer and Apollonius as well as other poets, both Greek and Latin, in these and the other books of the *Aeneid*. It does not affect the essential originality of Virgil, whose style transforms and makes his own whatever he touches.

The fifth book, of which by far the greatest part is taken up by the funeral games in honour of Anchises, is modelled upon the twenty-third of the *Iliad*, which describes the funeral games for Patroclus. The sixth reverts to the *Odyssey* in so far as it may have been suggested by the journey of Odysseus to

consult the ghost of the prophet Tiresias, who in a manner corresponds to the Sibyl. But here the debt is for no more than a suggestion, and the sixth book of the *Aeneid* is perhaps the most original, as it is the most impressive, thing that Virgil has done. The seventh brings Aeneas to the Tiber and Italy, and from this point onwards it is the *Iliad* that is Virgil's principal, though not his only, model. Omens and divine interventions are prominent in this book and form an imposing introduction to the war that follows. When it breaks out, we get, in imitation of Homer, a catalogue of the leaders upon the Italian side, of whom the chief is Turnus, whose death in single combat with Aeneas is the end of the poem. The parallel to this is the killing of Hector by Achilles, though the character of Turnus has a greater affinity with that of Achilles himself. Before Turnus meets his fate, Camilla has fought and died. Camilla is a sort of Amazon, and in describing her appearance, her mode of fighting and her death, Virgil is following a part of the Trojan story which is not in Homer, but was known to Virgil from an ancient epic called the *Aethiopis*. In like manner in the second book of the *Aeneid* Virgil follows two lost epics, the *Sack of Ilios* and the *Little Iliad*. But in the main the structure of his poem is based on Homer. Here Virgil does not attain, for he does not seek, originality.

It is different with the style of the *Aeneid*. Virgil takes over the Homeric style, retaining its general character and even its special features; yet he transforms it into a style that is quite his own. What made this possible? One can only say: into the impersonal style of the old epic he infuses his own personality. The dictum of Buffon, *le style c'est l'homme même*, does not apply to Homer; to Virgil it is perfectly applicable. If we consider the two styles, we shall find that of Homer to be direct and eminently clear, the syntax simple and almost elementary, words used in their normal sense. The style of Virgil is indirect, the syntax involved, words are constantly used to suggest one meaning behind another. The metre is the

same, yet the difference in the effect produced on the ear by the Virgilian hexameter from that produced by the Homeric is so great that it would be incredible, if it were not felt. Virgil's art, being an expression of his personality, defies analysis, and none shall be attempted here. What it concerns us to note is that later epic poets have generally sought to enrich and elaborate their styles in the Virgilian manner. Where they have succeeded it is on their own lines, not on his. In particular his subtle variations of meaning have generally escaped their notice or their emulation. No doubt the language of all great poets is charged with double or multiple associations. But what Virgil does is to vary the old associations a little so as to produce a slight shock of delighted surprise. Take for instance the famous line:

sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

Every word is, taken by itself, perfectly simple and perfectly common, and yet the total effect is not. We know what 'tears', and 'things', and 'mind' or 'heart' is, and we know that *sunt* means 'are'. But we do not know what *sunt lacrimae rerum*, taken together, means; we do not want to know, we feel that it is right. Milton has some effects of this kind:

> That faire field
> Of *Enna*, where *Proserpin* gathring flours,
> Herself a fairer Floure by gloome *Dis*
> Was gatherd.

Here, however, the word 'gatherd' is led up to by 'gathring', used in its normal sense. And for the most part Milton follows a different method of producing these Virgilian subtleties. On the other hand Tennyson takes Virgil's way. For example Virgil says of Dido:

> neque umquam
> solvitur in somnos oculisve aut pectore noctem
> accipit,

'She never lapses into sleep or in her eyes or bosom receives the night.' To 'receive the night', meaning the peaceful influences of the night, is no more ordinary Latin than ordinary English. But it has imaginative value, and so we find Tennyson saying of a heroine of his that she could not 'draw the quiet night into her blood'. Let this example serve for many.

To such exceptional refinement of speech Virgil adds a comparable beauty of sound. He felt, more perhaps than any other ancient poet, that style and versification go together. It is probable that no modern ear, however highly trained in the quantitative scansion of Latin verse, can receive the same intensity of pleasure from Virgil's music as would be felt by some of his contemporaries. But if one takes the trouble, which is not very serious after all, of learning the rules of Latin scansion and pronunciation, it is at least possible to take the keenest delight in reading Virgil. For the sake of those who may find it helpful, I will put down here a short passage with the quantities marked,— denoting a long quantity, that is a sound on which the voice dwells twice as long as on a short quantity, which is marked ⏑. It is also necessary to know that Latin poets practise elision, which occurs when a word *ends* in a vowel (or in a vowel followed by m) and the next word *begins* with a vowel (or with h followed by a vowel). It is the last vowel of the preceding word that is elided, this being usually indicated by enclosing it in brackets. Lines so marked present an ugly appearance on the page, but this deformation may be excused for once. For if anyone, unaccustomed to Latin scansion but with a natural ear for verbal music, will repeat even this short passage to himself until he can speak it without stumbling, he will surely be struck by its extraordinary beauty. The experiment is at least worth trying. For the plain truth is that it is quite impossible to do justice to the ancient poets until one can read them without effort in all their varied metres.

qualis populea maerens Philomela sub umbra
amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator
observans nid (o) implumis detraxit: at illa
flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
integrat et maestis late loca questibus implet.

(*Georgics* IV. 511–515.)

That is Virgil's impression of the nightingale's song. Because it is given only for the sound, it need not be translated. Indeed it cannot be translated, for it *is* sound.

A general estimate of Virgil's influence upon English poetry is hardly possible and, if it were, would not be illuminating. It is detailed illustration that we want, and that can only be pursued through the pages of this volume. What has been said of Virgil so far is merely by way of introduction. At that we must, for the moment, leave it.

B

Virgil had many imitators among the Latin poets who succeeded him; they may be said to have failed in proportion as they imitated. His style is so peculiarly his own that it could flow naturally from no other pen; art becomes artifice, imitation a kind of parody. The technical perfection of the Virgilian hexameter led to such an impasse as followed Pope and Tennyson, when the one perfected the couplet and the other the versification inherited from the great poets of the romantic movement. No more could be done in that direction. Poetry had to strike out a new path or go on marking time. This is what happened to the heroic epic in Latin after the publication of the *Aeneid*. Then, after more than half a century, appeared the *De Bello Civili* of Lucan. A new kind of epic was born.

Lucan is not much read now even by scholars, and when they do read him they sometimes wonder if he is a poet at all. It is the more important that we should account, if we can, for his influence. For of that there can be no doubt. He was popular from the first, and he continued to be popular all through later antiquity and the middle ages. He did not lose his popularity, perhaps he increased it, at the renaissance; the eighteenth century strongly admired him, nor did this admiration wholly cease even in the revolution of taste which came in with the nineteenth, for Shelley preferred Lucan to Virgil. His actual influence upon English poetic style is to this day gravely underestimated.

Lucan's subject is the civil war between Caesar and the Roman senate, whose armies were commanded by Pompey. That accounts for the title *De Bello Civili*; an alternative title, suggested by Lucan himself, is *Pharsalia*, the decisive battle of the war having been fought near Pharsalus in Thessaly. Neither title was given to the poem by Lucan himself, who left it unfinished when he was put to death by Nero at the age of twenty-five. Even unfinished, it is a long poem, not very much shorter than the *Aeneid*; a massive achievement for so young a man. It is based in the main on the *Bellum Civile* of Julius Caesar, which we still possess in a somewhat mutilated form; but Lucan had access to other authorities now lost to us. He has a certain regard for historical accuracy and does not feel entitled, as some epic poets have done, to rearrange the order of events in the interests of his plot. The achievement of Lucan is to make an epic out of authentic history. In a sense this was a reversion to the practice of some of the earliest Latin poets—of Naevius, who wrote a *Punicum Bellum* about the Roman wars with Carthage, and Ennius, whose *Annales* treated the history of his own times. These works, except for some quotations, are lost, and this precludes us from passing judgment upon them. But it appears that the poem of Naevius was largely mythological, while Ennius modelled himself on

Homer. Compared with them, Lucan was completely modern. He throws overboard the whole paraphernalia of the traditional epic—divine interventions, invocations of the Muse, councils of gods, and all the rest of it. The civil war *was* an epic. There was no need to bring the gods into it at all or to colour the facts. In other words an epic, according to Lucan, is history seen by a man of genius.

Such a conception leaves no room for a 'plot' of the traditional Homeric-Virgilian type. The *Pharsalia* has not got that organic unity which is possessed by the Homeric poems and the *Aeneid*. Episode follows episode in their historical sequence. Yet another kind of unity the *Pharsalia* does possess, if only by accident; its subject may fairly be said to have, in Aristotle's phrase, 'a beginning, a middle and an end'. It progresses to a climax—the battle at Pharsalus—and moves steadily towards a conclusion in the final victory of Caesar. Another consequence of the new conception is that the poem is without a hero. Caesar plays somewhat the part that is played in *Paradise Lost* by Satan, to whom he bears a resemblance that may not be wholly accidental. But Caesar is no more the hero of the *Pharsalia* than Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Pompey has the best claim to the title, but, as he plays a losing part and disappears before the end of the poem, he could hardly, according to ancient notions, be regarded as its hero. Lucan has probably most sympathy with Cato, but Cato acts in a subordinate role. To a certain extent the poem is held together by Caesar's will to win, which is a permanent element in it and may be considered the prime cause of all that happens. But all this cannot save the *Pharsalia* from the charge of having no central design.

In many respects it is a bad, even a very bad, poem. It carries hyperbole beyond the limits not only of good taste but sometimes of rationality. It exhibits or ministers to a sadistic love of monstrous and cruel forms of death and wounding; there are odious descriptions of necromancy and witch-

craft; there is a complete absence of any feeling for beauty in nature or the arts; there is an insensitiveness of ear and a coarseness of taste in the very sound and colour of the verse. These points might be illustrated at length, but no one could take any pleasure in the illustrations, and the whole matter will be reconsidered when we come to Seneca, who was the uncle of Lucan and clearly had much influence upon him. The shocking defects of the *Pharsalia* must not be minimised, and, as the reader is never safe from them for many lines together, they levy a heavy tax on Lucan's claim to be regarded as a great poet or (according to modern ideas or prejudices) a poet at all.

The problem of Lucan is one that cannot be solved, as it cannot be understood, without some knowledge of ancient rhetoric. That art, like so many others, was a Greek invention. A considerable treatise on the subject was composed by no less an authority than Aristotle; but a study of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* will not give us the clue to Lucan. Aristotle was a reasonable person, and the audience he assumed for his imaginary rhetorician was composed of reasonable persons. But clearly, if rhetoric be, as he defines it, the art of persuasion, a great deal, or rather everything, will depend upon the character of the people whom it is sought to persuade. An effective speaker will not address the British Academy in the words which he would use at a political rally in the Albert Hall. Aristotle hardly considers this. For him rhetoric is the art of stating a case, and he assumes that there will be a case to state. That is why he thinks that the most important virtue of a prose style is clearness, by which he means clearness in the arrangement of your ideas as well as of your words. But suppose your case is a weak or bad one? Then clearness will only expose its defects, and your audience will not be persuaded. The way was open to a different conception of the nature and function of rhetoric.

It is hard for us to realise the importance of public speaking in the ancient world. It was the high and almost the only road

to success. There were no daily newspapers, no telegraph, no wireless; there was practically no way of influencing the public except by oratory. Therefore it was most assiduously cultivated. And audiences became proportionately critical. The speaker had no chance unless he was an expert. The natural consequence was that skill in rhetoric became the first, and among the Romans at least almost the last, object of higher education. The common method of instruction was to give the pupil a theme on which to compose a speech. The theme might be drawn from some actual or imaginary law-suit, from the old mythology, or from Greek or Roman history. 'What did Ajax say when pleading that the arms of Achilles should be awarded to him?' 'How did Hannibal address his troops before crossing the Alps?' Such were the subjects. The only problem for the pupil was how effective he could make the imaginary oration. Historical accuracy or even common sense hardly mattered. All that counted was the impact made on the listener.

The literature of a people so educated could not fail to become drenched in rhetoric. It was not only prose that was affected; we see the thing invading poetry as well. It is not absent from the *Aeneid* itself, where the speeches exhibit every device of the orator's art, and even the narrative is heightened by rhetorical touches. This is often by English critics too severely judged and not always according to knowledge. In rhetoric itself there is nothing ignoble; all depends on the use we make of it and the occasion of its use. The set speeches in Homer—and he has a great many—are masterpieces of oratory, and Virgil was only following Homer when he made the set speeches in the *Aeneid* also masterpieces of oratory. There is, of course, this difference, and it is a serious one, that the oratory in Homer is such as one might expect from a warrior of the heroic age, when eloquence was admired almost as much as valour, whereas the rhetoric of Virgil may strike us as too conscious or elaborate, too literary. But the people who read

or listened to the *Aeneid* did not feel any such incongruity. For one thing, the 'language of passion' among the Latin races naturally takes a rhetorical form; for another, the epic style, as we have seen, presupposes an audience. Consequently it is in its very nature and origin oratorical; this being quite as true of *Paradise Lost* as of the *Aeneid*.

But, while the rhetoric of Virgil is kept in its proper place, the style of Lucan is all rhetoric. Here is a specimen of it—a favourable specimen. It is a comparison or contrast between Pompey and Caesar.

> quis iustius induit arma
> scire nefas: magno se iudice quisque tuetur;
> victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni.
> nec coiere pares, alter vergentibus annis
> in senium longoque togae tranquillior usu
> dedidicit iam pace ducem, famaeque petitor
> multa dare in vulgus, totus popularibus auris
> impelli plausuque sui gaudere theatri,
> nec reparare novas vires, multumque priori
> credere fortunae. Stat magni nominis umbra,
> qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro
> exuvias veteris populi sacrataque gestans
> dona ducum nec iam validis radicibus haerens
> pondere fixa suo est, nudosque per aera ramos
> effundens trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram,
> et quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
> tot circum silvae firmo se robore tollant,
> sola tamen colitur. Sed non in Caesare tantum
> nomen erat nec fama ducis, sed nescia virtus
> stare loco, solusque pudor non vincere bello.
> acer et indomitus, quo spes quoque ira vocasset,
> successus urguere suos, instare favori
> numinis, inpellens quidquid sibi summa petenti
> obstaret gaudensque viam fecisse ruina.[1]

(I. 126–150.)

Here rhetoric is in its place, and the comparison of Pompey to an ancient and sacred oak comes as near what we feel to be poetry as Lucan ever reaches. Undoubtedly the passage as a whole is a little over-emphatic, the very metre has a rub-a-dub rhythm utterly different from the lovely lapse of Virgil's hexameters. But how effective the passage is! What a magnificent epigram is that of *victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni!* What a fine phrase is *stat magni nominis umbra!* And there are a great many such epigrams and phrases in Lucan. True, they are by no means all equally good. Some are empty of any real content, epigrams in form but not in matter. The constant strain after brilliant and powerful expression proves at last too much for the most alert intelligence and the most responsive feeling. Yet it is something to have provided so much to think and feel about. The reader is carried along, alternately absorbed and repelled. Since our business is to account for Lucan's influence, I will add one instance of his intellectual, and one of his emotional, power, both famous and strongly operative on the work of later men.

In the course of his African campaign Cato, who is represented by Lucan as the ideal Stoic sage, comes to the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in the Siwah oasis. His lieutenant Labienus urges him to consult the oracle, and Cato answers:

> quid quaeri, Labiene, iubes? an liber in armis
> occubuisse velim potius quam regna videre?
> an sit vita nihil sed longa an differat aetas?
> an noceat vis nulla bono fortunaque perdat
> opposita virtute minas, laudandaque velle
> sit satis et numquam successu crescat honestum?
> scimus, et hoc nobis non altius inseret Hammon.
> haeremus cuncti superis, temploque tacente
> nil facimus non sponte dei; nec vocibus ullis
> numen eget, dixitque semel nascentibus auctor
> quidquid scire licet. Sterilesne elegit harenas
> ut caneret paucis, mersitque hoc pulvere verum,

estque dei sedes nisi terra et pontus et aer
et caelum et virtus? Superos quid quaerimus ultra?
Iuppiter est quodcumque vides, quodcumque moveris.[2]
(IX. 566–80.)

These are commonplaces of Stoic morality, but the expression of them is not commonplace. One derives from the passage something of the pleasure one feels in reading Dryden's verse, where vigour of intelligence and expressiveness of phrase make up for a certain coarseness of poetic fibre. Stoicism appealed to Lucan for the 'paradoxes'—it is the term of the Stoics themselves—in which it abounds; but his zeal for it appears to be something more than a youthful devotion. There is an interesting comment in Sir Thomas Browne, which indicates how a man of scholarship and virtue could feel about Lucan in the seventeenth century. 'I am much taken with two verses of Lucan, since I have been able not only, as we do at School, to construe, but understand:

Victurosque Dei celant, ut vivere durent,
Felix esse mori.

We're all deluded, vainly searching ways
To make us happy by the length of days;
For cunningly to make's protract this breath,
The Gods conceal the happiness of Death.

There be many excellent strains in that Poet, wherewith his Stoical Genius hath liberally supplied him.' (*Rel. Med.* I. xliv.)

Here is my second illustration, which will be very short. There is a story, wonderfully well invented if not true, that Eloise, when about to take her vows as a nun, cried out, with her thoughts on Abelard,

O maxime coniunx,
O thalamis indigne meis, hoc iuris habebat
in tantum fortuna caput? Cur inpia nupsi,
si miserum factura fui? nunc accipe poenas,
sed quas sponte luam.[3]

These lines come from the eighth book of the *Pharsalia* (94–98), and the passage will show as well as any the emotional power of Lucan. It shows also the impression he could produce on the best minds of the middle ages.

I should say that Lucan enjoyed an advantage in his subject. Most ancient epics dealt with legendary or mythological matters, and people were beginning to tire of Greek mythology, although the poets continued to drag it in. Even Lucan does this, but sparingly. Since the old stories were now excessively familiar, recourse was had to allusion of the kind that makes people refer to Shakespeare as the Swan of Avon. This habit destroyed the charm of the myths, which consisted in their simplicity. So it was a relief to the public when Lucan gave them not another epic about the Trojan War or the Golden Fleece, but an emotional, highly-coloured version of the most decisive and controversial events in Roman history. Even to-day, although some may regret the prejudice against the imperial system, and even question a little the sincerity of the prejudice, one feels the interest of the subject as Lucan handles it.

The good qualities of Lucan we have seen, and yet it is probable enough that their influence would have been much smaller, if they had not been accompanied by his defects—his love of paradox, his wild and even fantastic exaggerations, his passion for the kind of conceits and bogus natural history which colours the pages of Lyly. The faults of Lucan were at least as attractive to his successors as his merits. The remark applies not less to his English than to his Latin successors. It is indeed rather too complicated and dubious a business to trace his influence on our mediaeval literature. It was certain that he was much read in the middle ages by men—like Dante, who associates him with Virgil and Homer, Ovid and 'Horace the satirist' in the *nobile castello* of the *Inferno*—of sufficient education to read his difficult Latin. Poets of smaller culture were mediaevally content to be instructed by their superiors

in scholarship, and in this way Lucan's influence spread beyond that inner circle. But when we come to the renaissance, when good Latin scholars were common, the direct influence of Lucan is very notable. It is much underestimated by the ordinary run of literary historians, who attribute to Seneca a good deal that probably ought rather to be put to the account of Lucan. The good and bad points of the two are so much alike—although the *Pharsalia* is a much more living and admirable achievement than the Tragedies—that one cannot hope now to give each his due. But it is certainly wrong to credit Seneca with everything, even in drama, that has a Senecan look. Take for instance the Pyrrhus speech in *Hamlet*. It is not quite dramatic speech, it is what the Greeks called a *rhêsis*—a quasi-epic narrative in a play. It is in fact 'Aeneas's tale to Dido' retold from the second book of the *Aeneid*. The matter of it comes from Virgil. But the style? It is pure Lucan.

> The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
> Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
> When he lay couchéd in the ominous horse,
> Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
> With heraldry more dismal: head to foot
> Now is he total gules, horridly tricked
> With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
> Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
> That lend a tyrannous and damnéd light
> To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,
> And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
> With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
> Old grandsire Priam seeks . . .

I do not suppose Shakespeare had read Lucan in the original, but Marlowe had translated the first book of the *Pharsalia* into blank verse, and this I do suppose Shakespeare had read. Later the whole poem was to be translated by Thomas May, and later still by Shakespeare's first editor, Nicholas Rowe. It is clear that Lucan was popular then, and it is a thing worth

serious consideration how far he contributed to the more lofty and 'swelling' forms of Elizabethan poetic style.

He continued to be read and admired in the eighteenth century, but his positive influence on English poetry was now checked and overpowered by a greater and more beneficent influence, that of *Paradise Lost*. It is not the least of Milton's services to English literature that he restored the Homeric-Virgilian epic. He did not lack admiration of Lucan and Ovid; in Ovid he took particular delight. But he perceived that the *Pharsalia* and the *Metamorphoses* belonged to lower types of epic poetry than the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*, and he had long made up his mind that for his part he would write none but the highest and most difficult. *Paradise Lost* is evidence of critical as well as poetical genius.

C

The next poet of the heroic epic whose influence must be recognised is Statius. Most of this influence has come from the *Thebais*, which no one except an occasional scholar now thinks of reading. It therefore calls for some description. The *Thebais* (or *Thebaid*) is an epic as long as the *Aeneid*, and like the *Aeneid* it is divided into twelve books. Its subject is taken from the legendary history of Thebes, particularly the quarrel between the sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices, and the attack made on the city by the warriors who are generally referred to as the Seven against Thebes. The matter was very old and famous, and was the theme of an epic early and fine enough to be attributed to Homer himself. How much Statius owed to this older poem we cannot say, for it is lost; but it is probably fair to assume that he used it as the basis of its own. The *Thebais* of Statius is the old *Thebais* rewritten in terms of Latin rhetoric. It will be observed that Statius did not follow the example of Lucan in choosing an historical subject. It was followed, however, by Silius Italicus, a contemporary who wrote a very long epic about Hannibal and the Punic

War. Although it was written long after the death of Lucan, its author was actually the elder of the two. In spite of his subject he is a devotee of Virgil. His devotion leads him into some absurdities, as when he causes the gods to intervene in the affairs of Hannibal as they do in the affairs of Aeneas. He did not realise that you must not do that in a historical poem. Oddly enough it is for its history that the *Bellum Punicum* of Silius is now read. And this has probably always been true, and accounts for the preservation of a poem which has not a great deal of poetry to recommend it. At least we may be sure that, so far as it was read in the middle ages, it was read for its history. The renaissance, with its awakened interest in classical style, paid more attention to Silius as a writer. His work is by no means altogether bad and has not been altogether devoid of influence. We can say no more about it than that.

Statius preferred a legendary subject, and this at least enables him to employ all the traditional epic machinery, including divine intervention, with no more incongruity than Virgil. But of the art with which Virgil conducts his story he has no true conception. There is no genuine unity in the *Thebais*; it is essentially a versified chronicle. Even as a chronicle it is not well told, which is a pity, because the story is a fine one. The reader is lost in a wilderness of verbose and noisy description in which nothing is clearly described. Statius, it is obvious, rested his fame upon his style, encouraged thereto by the applause of his contemporaries. And it is his style that now keeps us from reading him.

It had not, however, this effect in the middle ages, during which Statius was enormously popular. One indication of that is the extraordinary number of manuscripts of the *Thebais* that have come down to us from that time; another is the number of translations—there is even one in Gaelic. His matter is being constantly used and referred to in mediaeval literature. The original story is simple enough. When the sin of Oedipus was brought to light, he could no longer be king of

Thebes. His natural successors were his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices; but their treatment of their father was such in his judgment as to warrant his uttering a curse against them, in which they were devoted to mutual slaughter. The brothers quarrelled about the succession to the throne, and Polynices, getting the worse in the quarrel, went into exile, breathing vengeance upon Eteocles. The exile wandered to Argos, the king of which, Adrastus, espoused his cause and married him to his daughter. Then an expedition was prepared against Thebes under the leadership of Adrastus. It was joined by five other mighty men of valour: Hippomedon the king's brother, the ferocious Tydeus, the beautiful Parthenopaeus, the impious Capaneus and the prophet Amphiaraus. After some adventures they arrive before the walls of Thebes, which refuses to admit Polynices. An assault is then prepared on the city, which conveniently possesses exactly seven gates, one of which is assigned to each of the seven champions. The attack is unsuccessful; Capaneus is destroyed by a thunderbolt cast by Zeus, and Amphiaraus is swallowed up by a rift that opens in the ground. At last the issue comes to depend on a duel between the brothers, who fight and mortally wound one another. The city remains untaken, and the invaders flee, Adrastus alone of the Seven escaping with his life.

But this plain tale, which could easily be made the subject of great tragedy, as had been proved by the Athenian dramatists, becomes in Statius merely portentous. The characters are all larger than life and speak like the characters in the 'heroic' plays of Dryden, who knows his Statius. Anything horrifying or unnatural in the original story is seized upon and elaborated in revolting detail. Dreadful prophecies, direful omens, bloody sacrifices, black magic are irresistibly fascinating to Statius. Mediaeval men had strong stomachs, and they liked this kind of thing. After all they did believe in the existence of the Devil, and it was logical to believe that the Devil was everywhere at work. We are more squeamish, except in matters of sex, on

which Statius does not touch. When he is not gratifying his or his public's taste for the horrible, he has occasional good lines and even passages. It is only fair to give an example of these, and I do it the more readily because it is the inspiration (through Boccaccio) of that part of the Knight's Tale in Chaucer where the temple of Mars is described. Here is the Latin.

Hic steriles delubra notat Mavortia silvas
(horrescitque tuens), ubi mille Furoribus illi
cingitur averso domus immansueta sub Haemo.
ferrea compago laterum, ferro arta teruntur
limina, ferratis incumbunt tecta columnis.
laeditur adversum Phoebi iubar, ipsaque sedem
lux timet, et durus contristat sidera fulgor.
digna loco statio: primis salit Impetus amens
e foribus caecumque Nefas Iraeque rubentes
exsanguesque Metus, occultisque ensibus astant
Insidiae geminumque tenens Discordia ferrum.
innumeris strepit aula minis, tristissima Virtus
stat medio, laetusque Furor vultuque cruento
Mors armata sedet; bellorum solus in aris
sanguis et incensis qui raptus ab urbibus ignis.
terrarum exuviae circum et fastigia templi
captae insignibant gentes, caelataque ferro
fragmina portarum bellatricesque carinae,
et vacui currus protritaque curribus ora,
paene etiam gemitus: adeo vis omnis et omne
vulnus: ubique ipsum, sed non usquam ore remisso
cernere erat . . .
quaerere templorum regem vix coeperat ales
Maenalius, tremit ecce solum et mugire refractis
corniger Hebrus aquis: tunc quod pecus utile bello
vallem infestabat, trepidas spumare par herbas,
signa adventantis, clausaeque adamante perenni
dissiluere fores. Hyrcano in sanguine pulcher
ipse subit curru, diraque aspergine latos
mutat agros, spolia a tergo flentesque catervae.[4]

(IX. 40–76.)

There is no doubt a good deal of bombast and the false-sublime about this description; but one is entitled perhaps to beat the big drum when the god of war appears; and there are some touches of genuine imagination about the passage. It is most instructive to see how it was dealt with first by Boccaccio, then by Chaucer, lastly by Dryden. Boccaccio alone seems to have consulted the original; Chaucer paraphrases Boccaccio, and Dryden Chaucer. This is an extract from the Knight's Tale.

> And downward from an hille, under a bente,
> There stood the temple of Mars armypotente,
> Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
> Was long and streit, and gastly for to see . . .
> The dores were al of adamant eterne,
> Yclenched overthwart and endelong
> With iren tough, and for to make it strong,
> Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
> Was tonne greet, of iren bright and shene.
> Ther saugh I first the derk imagining
> Of felonye, and al the compassing;
> Of cruel ire, rede as any glede;
> The pykepurs, and eke the pale drede;
> The smyler with the knyf under the cloke . . .

Observe how the personifications, which in Statius are mere abstract entities, become real persons to the mediaeval mind. Contrast *occultis ensibus astant Insidiae*, 'The Ambushes are there with hidden swords', with 'The smyler with the knyf under the cloke'. How much more vivid and poetical is the English!

The Knight's Tale is a mediaeval love-romance grafted upon an episode which occurs at the end of the *Thebais*, although Boccaccio, as in the description of the temple of Mars, drew upon other parts of the Latin poem as well. The episode is this. The widows of the champions slain before Thebes meet Theseus, king of Athens, as he rides home from his conquest of the Amazons and supplicate him to compel the

new Theban king, Creon, to surrender the corpses to the funeral pyre, which Creon had refused to do. The rest of the story (which is not in Statius) may be read in Chaucer. It will be remembered that Theseus appears with his Amazon bride Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although it must not be inferred from this that Shakespeare took any interest in Statius. It does, however, prove that the story was well known. The eighteenth century with its taste for Latin style continued to cherish Statius, though with decreasing admiration. The first book of the *Thebais* was translated by Pope while still a boy. If Statius now survives at all it is as the poet of the *Silvae*, a collection of occasional verses, sometimes pretty, never much more.

D

A note may be added on Claudian, whose influence, though nothing like that of Virgil or Lucan or Statius, has been at certain periods very far from negligible. Claudian must have 'flourished' about the year A.D. 400. The date is significant because by that time classical Latin had ceased to be spoken, although, of course, it could still be understood. Since Claudian always wrote in classical Latin, it was inevitable that much of his work should have the air of an academic exercise. But his mastery of his medium is astonishing, and it is no wonder if many critics have been seduced by it into accepting such brilliant verse for genuine poetry. Here is a typical passage from one of his most celebrated essays in the heroic epic, 'The Rape of Proserpine' (*De Raptu Proserpinae*).

> Hortatur Cytherea, legant. 'Nunc ite, sorores,
> dum matutinis praesudat solibus aer,
> dum meus umectat flaventes Lucifer agros
> roranti praevectus equo.' sic fata doloris
> carpit signa sui. varios tum cetera saltus
> invasere cohors: credas examina fundi

Hyblaeum raptura thymum, cum cerea reges
castra movent fagique cava demissus ab alno
mellifer electis exercitus obstrepit herbis.
pratorum spoliatur honos: haec lilia fuscis
intexit violis; hanc mollis amaracus ornat;
haec graditur stellata rosis, haec alba ligustris.
te quoque, flebilibus maerens Hyacinthe figuris,
Narcissumque metunt, nunc inclita germina veris,
praestantes olim pueros: tu natus Amyclis,
hunc Helicon genuit; disci te perculit error,
hunc fontis decepit amor; te fronte retusa
Delius, hunc fracta Cephisus harundine luget.[5]

(119–136.)

Nothing could be prettier in sentiment, nothing more accomplished in versification. It is such a good imitation of classical poetry that one is inclined to give in and say, 'Yes, this is the real thing'. It is a feeling one often gets in reading nineteenth-century poetry, especially certain followers of Tennyson and Keats.

It is easy to understand how attractive Claudian would be to the men of the renaissance, many of whom themselves composed Latin verses of an artificial elegance. To them he appeared as a master, as indeed in his own way he is. He has always found his admirers. Coleridge preferred him to Virgil. It is true this opinion is found only in the *Table Talk*, and what a man says at table has not the same authority as what he deliberately prints in a book. It is also true that Coleridge was so unclassical in the temper of his mind that what he says on classical poetry is (to speak plainly) hardly worth the paper it was written on. To prefer Claudian to Virgil is just bad criticism and bad taste. But this has nothing to do with Claudian's influence. His most popular piece was that known as 'The Old Man of Verona', a charming thing; that, however, is not epic, but a little pastoral in elegiac couplets. His most powerful writing is found in certain passages of invective

which occur in his more ambitious epics. But even these passages are not entirely satisfactory. Invective is not satire, which ought to be or to contain a criticism of life. One does not feel any such background to Claudian's denunciations. He is merely very angry with certain people because they have offended himself.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EPIC TRADITION IN MODERN TIMES: MILTON

WITH Homer, Virgil and the rest in our minds let us now look at *Paradise Lost*; and let us begin, as we did in the case of Homer and Virgil, with the structure of the poem. Here we enjoy the advantage of having the *arguments*, that is to say summaries of the matters treated, composed for each book by the poet himself. We cannot do better than use as much of these as serves our purpose, which is no more than to expose the frame-work of *Paradise Lost*.

'This first Book proposes first in brief the whole Subject.' That is what is done at the beginning of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. At the beginning of the two Homeric poems there is an invocation of the Muse, and here Milton follows Homer. *Of Man's First Disobedience . . . Sing, Heav'nly Muse.* Virgil begins otherwise, *Arma virumque cano*, 'I sing of arms and the man'. But in a later part of the *Aeneid* he invokes the Muse Erato. 'Then touches *the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent or rather* Satan *in the Serpent* . . . Which action past over, the Poem hasts into the midst of things.' Milton is translating *in medias res* and following the recommendation of Horace to follow Homer in this respect. The recommendation was further enforced by renaissance critics from the elder Scaliger to Ben Jonson; all of them known to Milton. 'The Poem,' he continues, 'hasts into the midst of things, presenting *Satan with his Angels now fallen into Hell. . . .* Satan *awakens all his Legions. . . . They rise, thir Numbers, array of Battel, the chief Leaders nam'd.*' That is to say we now have a catalogue. No epic poem, it had come to be felt, could dispense with a catalogue.

'To these'—the leaders enumerated in the catalogue—'Satan

directs his Speech . . . but tells them lastly of a new World and new kind of Creature to be created according to an ancient Prophesie . . .' Here is Milton using the device of prophecy, which plays so large a part in the classical epic. '*To find out the truth of this Prophesie, and what to determin thereon he refers to a full Councell.*' Once more Milton is following the epic tradition. Homer and Virgil are full of 'councils', often with elaborate set speeches for and against the thing proposed. The orations at this debate in Pandemonium occupy all the first part of the second book. They issue in a resolve to enquire into the truth of the prophecy. Then arises the question '*who shall be sent on this difficult search.* Satan *thir chief undertakes alone the voyage. . . . He passes on his Journey to Hell Gates, finds them shut, and who sat there to guard them*'—Sin and Death—'*by whom at length they are op'ned, and discover to him the great Gulf between Hell and Heaven; with what difficulty he passes through, directed by* Chaos, *the Power of that Place, to the sight of this new World which he sought.*' A description of Hell or Hades came to be thought almost a necessary part of any heroic epic. Milton knew, of course, the *Inferno* of Dante, and other mediaeval and more recent descriptions of Hell; he borrows something even from Ariosto. But Dante and Ariosto, like himself, were only following the ancients, for even Dante had long steeped his spirit in the sixth book of the *Aeneid.* Sin and Death may be considered rather mediaeval than classical monsters. But, allowing that they are taken from the Bible and not from Homer or Virgil, we must also admit that Sin at least is imagined by Milton on the model of Ovid's Scylla in the *Metamorphoses.* As for Satan's journey through and beyond Hell, it does not, as it could not, have any direct model in ancient poetry. For all that, it is strictly comparable to the voyages of Odysseus and Aeneas over strange lands and waters.

'God, *sitting on his Throne, sees* Satan *flying towards this world, then newly created; shows him to the Son who sat at his right hand; foretells the success of* Satan *in perverting mankind. . . .*' This is an

instance of that suspension of interest by a temporary change of scene which we observed in Homer, and which is imitated by Virgil. Nothing is gained by an accumulation of examples, but one, simple and instructive, will not be out of place. In the twenty-second book of the *Iliad* Homer is describing the pursuit of Hector by Achilles round the walls of Troy. 'So they ran on swift feet three times about the city of Priam, and all the gods were looking on. And to them the Father of gods and men began to speak'—and so begins a council in Heaven. In this way the attention of the listener, which has been fixed on the contest between the two warriors, is withdrawn from that, until in due course the poet comes back to Hector. That fatal duel is too important an incident in the story to be disposed of in a few words; so, to make the most of it, to prolong and intensify the drama of it, the poet gives us for some time the point of view of the spectators. The speech of God in Milton is otherwise important as a statement of the divine plan and an announcement of what will happen. For that gives added significance to the present by casting upon it the light of the future in the manner we observed when discussing the prophecies in Homer and in Virgil. '*Mean while* Satan *alights upon the bare convex of the World's outermost Orb . . . thence comes to the Gate of Heaven. . . . His passage thence to the Orb of the Sun; he finds there* Uriel *the regent of that Orb, but first changes himself into the shape of a meaner Angel; and pretending a zealous desire to behold the new Creation and Man whom God had plac't here, inquires of him the place of his habitation, and is directed; alights first on Mount Niphates.*' Such changing of shape by divine persons is frequent in Homer, who is followed in this by Virgil. It is true that in the Bible angels sometimes appear in the forms of men; but it is not of the Bible that Milton is thinking so much as of the metamorphoses in the classical poets.

'Satan . . . *journeys on to Paradise, whose outward prospect and scituation is described, overleaps the bounds, sits in the shape of a*

Cormorant on the Tree of Life'—thus in the seventh book of the *Iliad* Athena and Apollo sit on a lofty oak in the shape of vultures—'*to look about him. The Garden describ'd*'. The description of an earthly paradise is not uncommon in the ancient epic. For instance, the gardens of Alcinous in the *Odyssey* are described as of surpassing beauty and fertility, and so is the island of Calypso. Ancient writers know also of the Garden of the Sun, the Garden of Midas, above all the Garden of the Hesperides. That the account in Milton is more elaborate than any of the ancient descriptions is due to the importance of the Garden of Eden for his subject. But he had plenty of predecessors in this elaboration—late Pagan and Christian Latin poets like Claudian and Prudentius, the Garden of Armida in Tasso, the Garden of Adonis in Spenser. All this had been read and meditated by Milton. He goes on: 'Satan's *first sight of* Adam *and* Eve; *his wonder at thir excellent form and happy state, but with resolution to work thir fall. Mean while* Uriel *descending on a Sun-beam*—similarly Iris, the messenger of Zeus in the *Iliad*, is depicted as descending on a rainbow—*warns* Gabriel, *who had in charge the Gate of Paradise, that some evil spirit had escap'd the Deep and past at Noon by his Sphere in the shape of a good Angel down to Paradise. . . .* Gabriel *promises to find him out ere morning. Night coming on*'—Milton's description of night coming on is unusally full of classical memories—'Adam *and* Eve *discourse of going to thir rest; thir Bower describ'd*'—a rather close imitation of a passage at the beginning of the fourteenth book of the *Iliad* in which we read of the flowery couch of Zeus and Hera. 'Gabriel *appoints two strong Angels to* Adam's *Bower, least the evill Spirit should be there doing some harm to* Adam *or* Eve *sleeping; there they find him at the ear of* Eve, *tempting her in a dream*,'—dreams play an important part in the heroic epic—'*and bring him, though unwilling, to* Gabriel, *by whom question'd, he scornfully answers, prepares resistance, but hinder'd by a Sign from Heaven, flies out of Paradise.*' This encounter is altogether in the epic manner, including the

'sign' of the golden scales hung by God in Heaven, for they are obviously the same golden scales as are hung in Heaven by Zeus when Hector meets Achilles (*Il.* XXII, 209 f.).

'*Morning approach't*, Eve *relates to* Adam *her troublesome dream. . . . They come forth to their day labours. . . . God to render Man inexcusable sends* Raphael *to admonish him of his obedience, of his free estate, of his enemy near at hand. . . .* Raphael *comes down to Paradise, his appearance describ'd.*' Raphael's coming and his appearance are described in a way that reminds one at every turn of such passages as that in the fifth book of the *Odyssey* which tells how Hermes was sent by Zeus on a mission to Calypso. The messenger of the gods, whether Iris as in the *Iliad* or Hermes (Mercury) as in the *Odyssey*, is, of course, a useful and perhaps necessary agent for a poet who is to use the machinery of divine intervention. 'Raphael *performs his message, minds* Adam *of his state and of his enemy; relates at* Adam's *request who that enemy is, and how he came to be so, beginning from his first revolt in Heaven, and the occasion thereof; how he drew his Legions after him, perswading all but only* Abdiel *a Seraph, who in Argument diswades and opposes him, then forsakes him.*' Here we begin a long retrospective narrative of the War in Heaven. The great model of all such narratives has been the account of his adventures given by Odysseus to king Alcinous. As for the subject, the myth of a war in Heaven was exceedingly familiar to the ancient Greeks. It is treated at some length in the *Theogony*, a heroic epic attributed to Hesiod, which Milton undoubtedly read, although he has made no certain use of it.

'Raphael *continues to relate how* Michael *and* Gabriel *were sent forth to Battel against* Satan *and his Angels. The first Fight describ'd.*' The fighting described is of the epic order, with the opposing champions defying each other before they use their weapons, which are of Homeric, not Cromwellian, type. At least this is true at first; but afterwards 'Satan *and his Powers retire under Night* (*sub noctem*): '*He calls a Councel, invents*

devilish Engines, which in the second dayes Fight put Michael *and his Angels to some disorder; But they at length pulling up Mountains overwhelm'd both the force and Machins of* Satan'. The invention of gunpowder and 'infernal machines' by the Devil and their employment against the angels have struck later generations as grotesque, and no doubt Milton would have been wiser to keep to his classical precedents, as in all other respects this battle does. Mountains are occasionally flung (by Titans and the like) in the ancient poets. But Milton is perhaps thinking more of the hurling of great stones by the warriors in Homer and Virgil; where heroes hurl stones, angels may hurl mountains. '*Yet the tumult not so ending, God in the third day sends* Messiah *his Son, for whom he had reserv'd the glory of that Victory: Hee in the Power of his Father coming to the place, and causing all his Legions to stand still on either side, with his Chariot and Thunder driving into the midst of his Enemies, pursues them unable to resist. . . .*' The chariot, of course, is Homeric, and the coming of the irresistible Messiah into the battle is like the coming of the irresistible Achilles in pursuit of Hector and the coming of Aeneas in pursuit of Turnus. The very circumstance of bidding the other combatants stand still is taken, as Virgil also took it, from Homer.

'Raphael *at the request of* Adam *relates how and wherefore this world was first created.*' The whole of the seventh book of *Paradise Lost* is an elaboration of this topic, which, of course, is supplied by the very brief account in Genesis. Milton is under no debt here to Homer, nor, to any extent, to Virgil, although Virgil does touch on the subject in the song of Iopas towards the end of the first book of the *Aeneid*, and in the song of Silenus in his sixth eclogue. But the great Roman poet Lucretius had dealt fully with the creation of the world and the creatures in it in his *De Rerum Natura*, and Ovid devotes a considerable number of verses at the beginning of his *Metamorphoses* to an account of the formation of the earth. Though these are not epics of the heroic or Homeric type,

they are epics of a kind, and Milton draws from them, especially from the *Metamorphoses*, freely enough. 'Adam *inquires concerning celestial motions, is doubtfully answer'd, and exhorted to search rather things more worthy of knowledg.*' This describes what happens in the first part of Milton's eighth book. The ancients had an insatiable curiosity about the stars and their apparent motions, the chief poetical authority on the subject being for Milton the *Astronomica* of Manilius, a didactic epic composed not very long after the *Aeneid*. Homer does not trouble himself about astronomy, Virgil not much; but nearly every serious poet of antiquity has something to say about the stars. Evidently for that reason Milton felt he must say something too. But the topic embarrassed him, for the heliocentric astronomy was now taking the place of the old, which was the only system known to the ancients, or at least to the ancient poets. Therefore he leaves the question open and proceeds to a new part of this long retrospective narrative, namely Adam's account of his own and Eve's creation.

In the ninth book Milton resumes the action of his poem. 'Satan, *having compast the Earth, with meditated guile returns as a mist by Night into Paradise, enters into the Serpent sleeping.*' No one in Homer or Virgil actually becomes a mist except, I think, the goddess Thetis in the first book of the *Iliad*. But a good many are wrapped in a mist, which is Homer's way, followed by Virgil, of indicating that they have become invisible. This is how we are to understand the famous 'simile' towards the beginning of the *Iliad* where Apollo, coming to destroy the Greeks, moves 'like night'. That is not a true simile, but a statement that he is invisible. If Apollo makes himself like night, Satan (often identified with Apollo by mediaeval and even seventeenth-century theologians) may make himself like a mist. As for his entering the Serpent, that, of course, comes from the Bible or rather the rabbinic and patristic interpretation of the Bible. But the conception of a divine being in the form of a serpent was extremely familiar to

the ancients; for instance, the god Asklepios (Aesculapius) regularly showed himself to favoured worshippers in serpentine form. 'Adam *and* Eve *in the Morning go forth to their labours. . ..*' There follows the temptation and fall of Eve with the subsequent fall of Adam.

'*Man's transgression known, the Guardian Angels forsake Paradise . . .*' God '*sends his Son to judge the Transgressors . . .* Sin *and* Death . . . *resolve . . . to follow* Satan *thir Sire up to the place of Man . . .* Satan *arrives at* Pandemonium, *in full assembly relates with boasting his success against Man; instead of applause is entertained with a general hiss by all his audience, transform'd with himself also suddenly into Serpents . . .*' The influence here is not Homer or Virgil but Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, especially the fourth book, where the transformation of Cadmus into a serpent is described in words which Milton has remembered and even imitated. '*The proceedings of* Sin *and* Death . . . Adam *rejects the condolement of* Eve; *she persists and at length appeases him . . . He . . . puts her in mind of the late Promise made them . . . God sends* Michael . . . *to dispossess them; but first to reveal to* Adam *future things . . . The Angel denounces their departure.* Eve's *Lamentation.* Adam *pleads but submits: the Angel leads him up to a high Hill, sets before him in vision what shall happen till the Flood.*' In like manner in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* Anchises takes Aeneas up to a height and shows him the visionary forms of those who were to make the history of Rome. This Virgilian episode is the main source of Milton's inspiration for the last books of *Paradise Lost.* The Miltonic vision is a good example of prospective narrative, and serves much the same end or ends as Virgil's. It enhances the interest of the present, and it enables the poet to give a vivid summary instead of a continuous recital of events not essential to the story. The twelfth book carries on the narrative with an account of what was to happen after the Flood. Michael then '*comes by degrees to explain, who that Seed of the Woman shall be, which was promis'd* Adam *and* Eve *in the Fall . . .* Adam *greatly*

satisfied and recomforted by these Relations and Promises descends the Hill with Michael; *wakens* Eve . . . Michael *in either hand leads them out of* Paradise *the fiery Sword waving behind them, and the Cherubim taking thir Stations to guard the Place'*. So Aeneas, leaving Troy, looks back and sees it

> With dreadful Faces throng'd and fierie Armes
> *adparent dirae facies inimicaque Troiae*
> *numina magna deum.*

The result of this analysis (not mine but Milton's) is perfectly plain. Both in its general structure and in its separate episodes *Paradise Lost* is formed with careful and learned fidelity upon the model of the ancient heroic epic.

It is the same with the style. So far as *Paradise Lost* is concerned—and what is true of that is true also of *Paradise Regained*—we find that Milton has created for these poems a special style. Special, because it is not the style of *Comus* or *Lycidas* despite the affinities natural in everything that comes from a writer of marked individuality. What then is it? The answer that Milton would have given is that the style of *Paradise Lost* was such as he conceived appropriate or necessary to the heroic epic. The example he kept before him was Virgil. It is not difficult to prove this, and the outlines of the proof will be given here. But let us have a clear notion of what we hope to prove. It is not a question of an English poet imitating or being influenced by a Latin one. It goes far beyond that. Milton had resolved to do for the English language what Virgil had done for the Latin. But even this does not fully express his purpose, which was, so far as the thing was possible, to re-make the English language in the fashion of the Latin. How could he hope or even wish to do that? The answer is to be found in the prestige of Latin in Milton's day. That was such that people now can hardly be brought to believe it. The vernacular literatures were still fighting for recognition; they had in some ways even lost ground during Milton's lifetime.

There was considerable doubt among educated persons everywhere if anything written in French or Spanish, Italian or English, had much chance of permanent survival. The Greek and Roman authors were the 'classics', and anything not in Greek or Latin could not have the character of a 'classic'. We must also consider that in Milton's day to be educated was almost synonymous with being able to read Latin. If you could also write it, so much the better. Who, for instance, was the generally acknowledged head of letters in Europe a generation or so before Milton? It was not Cervantes or Calderon, it was not Ronsard or Montaigne, of course it was not Shakespeare; it was Joseph Scaliger, a very great scholar certainly, but only a scholar. It was he whom his educated contemporaries described as *princeps literarum*. Milton himself acquired a European reputation as a master of Latin composition before he began serious work on *Paradise Lost*. The wonder is that he did not write it in Latin. It is easy to say that he had the example of Chaucer and Spenser before him. Few if any men of education in Milton's time, however much they loved these poets, ventured to think that they could be matched against Homer or Virgil. Milton undertook to match himself against them in *English*. It was not merely an act of faith in himself but an act of faith in his native language.

His problem then was how to make out of this language an epic style as good as Virgil's. It is not improbable that he was misled here by a false analogy. He was familiar with most of the renaissance poets in French and Spanish, and above all in Italian; and he saw them freely employing Latin words and syntax in the new styles which they were forming in the mother tongues. Why should he not do the same in English? The answer, of course, is that English is not, like Italian and French and Spanish, derived from Latin. The profound difference between it and them comes out in the grammatical structure of the languages. The multiplicity of cases, tenses and moods in Latin procures it this advantage, that the order

of words in a Latin sentence can be varied almost indefinitely, whereas the paucity of these forms in English compels the writer to put his words in an invariable order. In Latin you may say *Brutus occidit Caesarem* or *Caesarem occidit Brutus* or arrange these words in any of the other four orders possible, and the only difference will be one of emphasis. But in English you must say 'Brutus killed Caesar' and that only. Any other arrangement of the words produces nonsense or ambiguity or says the opposite of what you mean. In the finest Latin poetry the order of the words is a source of constant wonder and delight, which Milton felt perhaps as much as any modern man; and it is not surprising if he wished to try the same effects in English. But there is another advantage that accrues to the poet from the elaborate forms of Latin grammar; he is able to construct long, involved and yet perfectly lucid sentences. Now in English it is very difficult to do that in verse, whatever it may be in prose. Yet Milton tried to do it in verse. The result could not be altogether happy in spite of the prodigious genius expended upon it.

> More safe I Sing with mortal voice, unchang'd
> To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil dayes,
> On evil dayes though fall'n, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compast round,
> And solitude.

That, so far as the syntax and the order of words are concerned, might be translated from a Latin poet. Yet here is a case in which everybody must feel that the English language has been enriched by the experiment. But consider a line like this:

> Or hearst thou rather pure Ethereal stream?

Is that English at all? Surely not. Probably most readers do not even follow the construction. It would in fact be totally obscure, did not the phrase, on which the English line is modelled, exist to clear it up. It is to be found in Horace, *seu Iane libentius audis*, 'or if thou hearest rather Janus', that is to

say, 'if you prefer to be addressed in the form "O Janus".' This teaches us that 'pure Ethereal stream' is in the vocative. But English is not thus written. Again in *Paradise Regained* God is made to say

'This is my Son belov'd, in him am pleased.'

Because in Latin one usually said *delector*, 'I am pleased' without the pronoun *ego* is no reason for leaving out the 'I' in English. Anyone reasonably familiar with ancient poetry is struck, when he comes to read Milton, with evidence on every page that the syntax is based almost as often on Latin as on English usage. This perhaps tends to be somewhat overlooked in face of the more obvious evidence of classical influence which is drawn from the vocabulary of *Paradise Lost*. Yet it is more significant. For, while many others latinise in their vocabulary quite as much as Milton, who often proves himself to be in command of forcible and idiomatic English, there is no other poet who goes so far in latinising syntax. It is this more than anything else that makes the ordinary reader feel something exotic about the style of *Paradise Lost*. It sounds like some special kind of language, used by gods perhaps, but scarcely by men. And that, of course, is exactly how Milton intended it to sound.

There is no need to pile up examples here which any intelligent reader can discover for himself. But as respects the mere words it seems possible to defend a view which probably has occurred to others. We have observed that a principal charm of Virgil's style resides in a very subtle alteration or deflection of the normal meaning of quite common words. Milton no doubt felt this charm, but in his own style he sought it, not by varying the normal connotation of words, but by using them in their original meaning when that had been altered by time or ignorance. You may say, that is only the scholar in Milton asserting himself. But besides a scholar he was a poet, and I think it is safe to believe that he knew, what

every poet instinctively feels, that he must use words so as to make 'the common as if it were not common'. That at any rate is the result of his practice. Thus we find him saying

Erroneous, there to wander and forlorne,

where 'erroneous' keeps its original sense of 'wandering'. Of Death he says

So scented the grim Feature,

where 'Feature' must be the Latin *factura*, 'creation', 'creature'. Again he speaks of the golden scales in which God *ponders all events*, where 'ponders' means, as it does in Latin, 'weighs'. In *Paradise Regained* he speaks of *that crude apple that diverted Eve*—a line at which the modern reader must smile, even when he knows that 'crude' means 'unripe' and 'diverted' means 'led astray'.

Sometimes Milton expects a great deal from the reader.

And ore the Celtic roam'd the utmost Isles.

The 'Celtic' is the *mare Celticum* of old geographers, the Celtic *sea*, and the 'Isles' appear to be the Hebrides, one of which a friend of Plutarch's said was to his knowledge haunted by shadowy gods or demons. Or what of this?

They pass the Planets seven, and pass the fixt,
And that crystalline Sphear whose ballance weighs
The Trepidation talkt, and that first mov'd.

The lines are unintelligible without some knowledge of Greek astronomy, as modified by Alphonso the Wise. Milton knew that in its Greek meaning a 'planet' was a 'wandering star', and so he leaves us to infer by contrast that 'the fixt' means the fixed *stars*. According to this astronomy the universe consisted in a number of hollow spheres rotating about the earth, the outermost of these spheres being of crystal and heavy enough to counterbalance a supposed tendency of the rest to be shaken out of their proper courses, this tendency being known as 'the trepidation of the spheres'. It carries no suggestion of *fear*.

'Talkt' is evidently a literal translation of *dicta* and means 'so called'. 'First mov'd' is a literal translation of *primum mobile*, which is outside the spheres and moves them, but is itself moved only by God. All these special meanings are packed into what look at first like fairly simple and ordinary words.

We have already touched upon Virgil's skill in versification. It is not a thing that can be brought home to the reader by any amount of technical exposition, unless he has by nature the power of 'hearing' the music of words; if he has that power, he will not require the technicalities. He will appreciate more or less unconsciously the modulation of vowel and consonant, the manner in which the sound is made to break like a wave from line to line, the pauses, the deliberate slowing and quickening of the metre. Milton had studied all that profoundly and reproduces it in English. This will be clear to anyone who has given consideration to the matter. The blank verse of *Paradise Lost* had no English model; it is a wonderful and successful effort to reproduce the metrical effects of the *Aeneid*. Let the reader recall to his memory or turn back the pages to the passage about the nightingale quoted from the *Georgics*, and then read this from Milton:

> But drive farr off the barbarous dissonance
> Of *Bacchus* and his Revellers, the Race
> Of that wilde Rout that tore the *Thracian* Bard
> In *Rhodope*, where woods and Rocks had Eares
> To rapture, till the savage clamor dround
> Both Harp and Voice; nor could the Muse defend
> Her Son. So fail not thou, who thee implores:
> For thou art Heav'nlie, shee an empty dreame.

Compare that with the Virgilian passage, and it will then be evident that, while the metre is different, the marvellous music is produced by just that variation of pause, and modulation of vowel and consonantal sounds, that we note in Virgil.

Much of the effect in the Latin poet results from the metrical device which it is convenient to call *enjambement*, although in

strict French usage it appears to mean the overflow of the second line of a couplet into the next. This *enjambement* may fairly be called the normal practice of Virgil. It is not so in Homer, for, while there is more variety in Homer's metre than one might suppose from a glance at its appearance on the page, it is normal with him to end the sense, or a complete part of the sense, with the end of the hexameter. I take at random a passage—it comes from the last book of the *Aeneid*—indicating the pauses in the sense by a downward stroke.

> ac velut in somnis, | oculos ubi languida pressit
> nocte quies, | nequiquam avidos extendere cursus
> velle videmur, | et in mediis conatibus aegri
> succidimus; | non lingua valet, | non corpore notae
> sufficiunt vires, | nec vox aut verba sequuntur: |
> sic Turno, | quacumque viam virtute petivit, |
> successum dea dira negat. |

It will be seen that of these seven lines the first, the second, the third, the fourth and the sixth carry the sense over into the next. There is no doubt at all why Virgil seeks *enjambement;* it is to escape the monotony of self-contained lines, which is as disastrous to the musical quality of the heroic hexameter as it is to that of blank verse. Now I take a passage from Milton.

> So saying, a noble stroke he lifted high,
> Which hung not, but so swift with tempest fell
> On the proud Crest of *Satan*, that no sight,
> No motion of swift thought, less could his Shield
> Such ruin intercept: ten paces huge
> He back recoild; the tenth on bended knee
> His massie Spear upstaid; as if on Earth
> Winds under ground or waters forcing way
> Sidelong, had push't a Mountain from his seat
> Half sunk with all his Pines.

The lines run into one another; even the first line and the third do not end on a real pause in the sense.

Again, Virgil is a consummate master of the verse paragraph,

in which not only is the sense complete in itself but a metrical scheme, often very elaborate, is evolved from start to finish. The opening lines of the *Aeneid* will serve as an example.

> Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
> Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit
> litora—multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
> vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
> multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
> inferretque deos Latio—genus unde Latinum
> Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.[6]

One needs perhaps to have a trained metrical sense to follow the musical design of this paragraph in all its intricacy—for it is like a fugue—but anyone may get a good general impression of it. Observe the effect of that return of the last line and a half to continue the rhythmic pattern after its break by the parenthesis.

Here also Milton follows and rivals Virgil. The first paragraph of *Paradise Lost* is rather long for quotation. But the first of the second book will serve.

> High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
> Outshon the wealth of *Ormus* and of *Ind*,
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Showrs on her Kings *Barbaric* Pearl & Gold,
> Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
> To that bad eminence; and from despair
> Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
> Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
> Vain Warr with Heav'n, and by success untaught
> His proud imaginations thus displaid.

It is only with the last word of the last line that the mind and ear can rest, but then they rest completely satisfied. There can be no serious doubt that the art of constructing such paragraphs was learned from Virgil. It had been perfectly learned at least as early as *Lycidas*, which was modelled upon the Virgilian pastoral. Milton was the first English poet to write blank verse

in considered paragraphs; and, since the art of Virgil affects him so profoundly in other ways, we must believe that it affected him in this way also.

In other respects Milton simply follows the epic tradition. Since this is not disputed, the case need not be argued in detail. But it may be worth while to dwell a little upon the similes in *Paradise Lost*, because it has not always been understood that they tend to be of the epic type established by Homer.

> He scarce had ceas't when the superiour Fiend
> Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
> Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
> Behind him cast; the broad circumference
> Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
> Through optic Glass the *Tuscan* artist views
> At Ev'ning from the top of *Fesole*,
> Or in *Valdarno*, to descry new Lands
> Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe.

Here Satan's shield is aptly compared to the moon; but all that follows about the Tuscan artist is irrelevant, though it is just the part we like best.

There are two similes in close succession at the end of the first book. It is the place where the bad angels crowding into Pandemonium are compared first to bees, then later, when they reduce their size, to pygmies and fairies.

> As bees
> In spring time when the Sun with *Taurus* rides,
> Poure forth thir populous youth about the Hive
> In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
> Flie to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
> The suburb of thir Straw-built Cittadel,
> New rub'd with Baume, expatiate and confer
> Thir state affairs.

The point of the simile is only this, that the fallen angels are as numerous as bees. The description of the bees in their

various activities, however delightful—but bees do not fly 'in clusters', that is an error copied from Homer (*Il.* II. 89)—adds nothing to the point.

> Behold a wonder! they but now who seem'd
> In bigness to surpass Earths Giant Sons
> Now less than smallest Dwarfs, in narrow room
> Throng numberless, like that Pigmean Race
> Beyond the *Indian* Mount, or Faerie Elves,
> Whose midnight Revels, by a Forrest side
> Or Fountain some belated Peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees, while over head the Moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the Earth
> Wheels her pale course, they on thir mirth & dance
> Intent, with jocund Music charm his ear;
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

The feelings of the peasant have nothing to do with the likeness of the contracted spirits to fairies. They would be like fairies whether these were seen by a peasant or not.

It is enough to indicate the lines along which the relation of Milton to Homer and Virgil may be pursued. The understanding of that relation is the key to *Paradise Lost* as a work of art.

Most of the English poets since Milton who have essayed the heroic epic have gone to school with him. For that reason we may conclude our study of Milton with a very brief study of them. We must leave out Dryden and the eighteenth century, Dryden because what he meant by a 'heroic' poem was wholly different in style from anything like *Paradise Lost*, the eighteenth century imitators of Milton simply because they are no longer of importance. Cowper's *Task* is not uninfluenced by Milton, but it is hardly an epic, even a didactic epic. The prophetic books of Blake are like nothing else, although one of them is actually called *Milton*. Even the leaders of the romantic movement, much as they admired Milton,

did not imitate him. The style of Wordsworth in the *Prelude* and the *Excursion* is affected by that of *Paradise Lost*, but between *Paradise Lost* and them there is no other resemblance. Landor's *Gebir* to be sure is written in almost slavish following of Milton. But what is the good of discussing what nobody reads? It is not perhaps until we come to the *Hyperion* of Keats that we meet something which cannot be passed over without comment.

It may be asked, 'What of *Endymion?*' But *Endymion* is not an epic, it is a blend (derived through Leigh Hunt) of the Italian versified romance with such English work as *Britannia's Pastorals* and the *Faithful Shepherdess*. But *Hyperion* is a deliberate essay in the Miltonic manner. The poem being a fragment, we cannot tell what the plot was to be. As Keats never showed any skill in narrative, we may (if we like) doubt if the completed *Hyperion* would have equalled *Paradise Lost* in constructive skill. But it must be allowed that Keats has noted and employed many of the devices of the classical epic for advancing and giving variety to the action. Thus after Saturn and Thea have left the vale in which he was discovered sleeping, the poet does not follow them upon their journey, but carries the reader to the palace of Hyperion. We spend some time there, and then

> Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
> Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
> And Saturn gained with Thea that sad place
> Where Cybele and the bruiséd Titans mourned.

We attend a council of the Titans here, but before they have reached a decision we are swept away to the island of Delos, where we meet the young Apollo. Keats is using the method by which Homer keeps the story alive by suspension of interest. Again, in the second book, we have a catalogue of the assembled Titans. This in all probability was suggested by the review of the fallen spirits in the first book of *Paradise Lost*,

although we must not forget that Keats had read Homer in Chapman's translation. Thirdly, the council of the Titans is clearly modelled on the council in Pandemonium, and the Titans' speeches have their parallel in the speeches of Satan, Moloch, Belial and the rest. We are entitled to say that *Hyperion* has the architecture of the classical epic.

It has also much of the style. The vocabulary of Keats has not, and could not be expected to have, the learned stamp of Milton's; still less does he exhibit Milton's syntax. But the sensuous and decorative elements of the Miltonic style—its richness and sound and movement—he has studied with the insight of genius. What for want of a better word is called the 'sublimity' of Milton was less imitable, being a quality of the mind. It is well known that Keats became dissatisfied with *Hyperion*, and one infers that this happened because he felt (with some justice) that in attempting to be sublime like Milton his own style was falling into at least the danger of tumidity. Yet the blank verse of *Hyperion* is, to our ears, technically perhaps the best since Milton; while the blank verse of Tennyson is founded mainly on that of *Hyperion*.

Tennyson did not often attempt the manner of the heroic epic; perhaps he did it only twice: in *Ulysses* and the *Morte d' Arthur*. The *Idylls of the King* are what they profess themselves to be; and poems like *Oenone* and *Tithonus* are also fundamentally idylls. Tennyson always did best in short, or comparatively short, flights, and he may have felt dimly that an epic of the scope of the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost* would take him, as boxers say, 'out of his class'. At any rate neither *Ulysses* nor *Morte d' Arthur* is more than an episode. Both are written in the full epic manner, and it is not to be counted against them that they show traces of modern sentiment, for a poet is not a historian. It is interesting to find Tennyson attempting Homeric simplicity and directness, both in style and in syntax. Up to a point he succeeds, but his art is too much of the elaborate Virgilian kind to make his success in

that complete. Matthew Arnold felt this, but all the same Arnold learnt a good deal from these experiments of Tennyson. Perhaps he learnt even more from Tennyson's translations of Homer.

A special interest attaches to Arnold's own endeavours to recapture the style of the heroic epic, because he more than any other English poet, and on the whole more successfully, took for his master not Milton or Virgil, but Homer himself. He made two attempts; the earlier was *Sohrab and Rustum*, the later was *Balder Dead*. In *Sohrab* there is a good deal that is 'romantic', that reminds us of Keats and Tennyson in colour and in the movement of the verse, which has more variety of pause, and less speed and rush, than Homer's. But in other respects—in simplicity, directness and dignity—it is truly Homeric, although no one could pretend that it has the force and power of Homer. There is no involved syntax as in Virgil and Milton. And the similes are Homeric.

> Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
> His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
> And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
> Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
> Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
> An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
> And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
> Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands.
>
> (669 f.)

What follows after 'porcelain vase' is exquisite but not essential.

Balder Dead is a much bolder experiment. It sheds much of the colour of *Sohrab*, the sense usually concludes or pauses at the end of each line, there is far more accumulation in the Homeric manner of small and apparently inessential details. The details in Homer somehow contrive never to be prosaic or boring; they are both, when translated into ordinary English. Arnold has not been able to escape this danger altogether, so

that there are stretches of *Balder Dead* that are flat and grey. Yet at its best it is very good indeed.

> But through the dark they watch'd the burning Ship
> Still carried o'er the distant waters on
> Farther and farther, like an Eye of Fire,
> And as in the dark night a travelling man
> Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,
> Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up
> Out of the black waste forest, far below,
> Which woodcutters have lighted near their lodge
> Against the wolves; and all night long it flares:—
> So flar'd, in the far darkness, Balder's pyre.
> But fainter, as the stars rose high, it burn'd;
> The bodies were consum'd, ash chok'd the pile:
> And as in a decaying winter fire
> A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks:—
> So, with a shower of sparks, the pile fell in,
> Reddening the sea around; and all was dark.
>
> (197 f.)

That is more Homeric than anything in Milton or perhaps in Virgil. *Balder Dead* may be called a *tour de force*, which is never a good thing in poetry; but, if it is a *tour de force*, it is a fine one.

There has been much poetry of an epic or quasi-epic character written since Arnold, and a good deal of it has been in the classical tradition. But in general the tendency has been to break away from that, to see what can be done with Celtic or Northern mythology or even with quite modern themes. Some of these experiments have been fine and interesting; none seems to have established itself. At any rate our concern is wholly with the classical influence.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIDACTIC POETRY

THE purpose of didactic poetry is, or was, to convey information; from which one is prone to draw the conclusion that it must be the invention of an educated age. The opposite is true; it is the uneducated, not the educated, who delight in the poetry of information. Consider how much of mediaeval literature consists in just that. Much that we now read for pleasure was first heard for profit or instruction. Even among so artistic a people as the Greeks we find that the Muses were the daughters of Memory. They were supposed to 'know everything'—the expression is Homer's—and when he invokes his Muse the appeal is not that he be inspired, but that he be informed. A primitive society, having no written records, must remember its traditions or lose its spiritual identity, and they are most easily remembered when they are put into verse. We cannot wonder that didactic poetry is very old. The earliest European representative of it is the Greek Hesiod, whose date is uncertain—perhaps the second half of the eighth century before Christ. The authenticity of the numerous works attributed to Hesiod has been much debated, and it seems best to treat him here as the founder of a kind or school of epic poetry rather than as the author of any particular poem or poems. The most certainly his is that in which we are most interested, the poem called *Works and Days*. The 'works' are tilling the ground, the 'days' are lucky and unlucky dates. In the midst of his practical instructions the poet offers a great deal of moralising advice suitable for people living in a small way upon the soil. In construction, where Homer is so great, Hesiod is totally incompetent. The *Works and Days* would be the merest jumble, if it were not in some measure held together by the sequence of the seasons, for each season

has its own Works and Days. The style, which is that of the heroic epic, is not really suited to the theme, and for that reason it is often lumpish and unhandy, with none of the bright speed of Homer. In spite of all this the natural poetry of the earth shines through, and the *Works and Days* makes delightful reading. It is utterly honest and unsentimental, and no other poetry comes quite so near the heart of Mother Earth. There is not, perhaps there cannot be, any adequate translation of Hesiod. (Elton's version is elegant, but to make Hesiod elegant is to misrepresent him.) For our purpose this hardly matters, for his direct influence upon English poetry has been almost negligible. It is an indirect influence that counts here, and that is Virgil. The Roman poet took Hesiod for his primary model in writing his *Georgics*, and the *Georgics*, composed with an altogether finer sense of style, though with a certain loss of authentic earthiness, has left a deep mark on the history of modern literature.

It is as difficult to give a true impression of the *Georgics* in translation as of the *Works and Days*, though for a different reason. In the *Works and Days* the matter is everything, the style is incongruous; in the *Georgics* the matter is altogether subordinate to the style, which of its kind is perfect. There is a vigorous translation or paraphrase by Dryden, but to a sensitive ear the sonorous couplets of Dryden, admirable in their own way, give quite a false impression of the Virgilian music with its 'linked sweetness'. The phrase is Milton's, and if I wished to give someone who had not read the original a feeling of what it is like, I should be inclined to quote a few lines from the description in the seventh book of *Paradise Lost* of how God created the world.

> Mean while the tepid caves, and fens and shoares
> Thir brood as numerous hatch, from the Egg that soon
> Bursting with kindly rupture forth disclos'd
> Thir callow young, but feathered soon and fledge
> They summ'd thir Penns, and soaring th' air sublime

With clang despis'd the ground, under a cloud
In prospect; there the Eagle and the Stork
On Cliffs and Cedar tops thir Eyries build:
Part loos'ly wing the Region, part more wise
In common, rang'd in figure wedge thir way,
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
Thir Aerie Caravan high over Sea's
Flying, and over Lands with mutual wing
Easing thir flight; so stears the prudent Crane
Her annual Voiage, born on Windes; the Aire
Floats, as they pass, fann'd with unnumber'd plumes.

That might be a translation from the *Georgics*. Though the style has not the Virgilian ease of movement, it has its largeness and dignity.

The matter of the poem is mixed. The first book treats mainly of the raising of crops, and of weather signs; the second of arboriculture, especially the planting and tending of the vine; the third gives instructions for the rearing of horses and cattle; the fourth and last describes the habits of bees. Mingled with all this is a good deal of moral and patriotic sentiment. Very little is actually taken from Hesiod, but the broad conception of the poem—advice to the farmer combined with praise of the homelier virtues—is entirely Hesiodic. At the same time Virgil in writing the *Georgics* was much influenced by later poets, Greeks who cultivated didactic verse and the Roman Lucretius, whose *De Rerum Natura* had preceded the *Georgics* by about half a century. All this earlier work finds its consummation in Virgil's poem, which for later ages came to supersede its predecessors, at least until quite recent times, when the genius of Lucretius met with fuller recognition. Thus in studying the effects on English literature of the didactic epic we may omit many things, but not the *Georgics*. Its influence is most apparent in the eighteenth century, which gave birth to many didactic epics, generally composed in a kind of blank verse that tried to be Miltonic. One remembers now little

more than their names: Philip's *Cyder*, Somervile's *The Chace*, Dyer's *The Fleece* and so on. Besides these specialised poems one has to consider how far the *Georgics* influenced work which in its turn was influential, such as Thomson's *Seasons* or Cowper's *Task*. There may be little or no deliberate imitation; but it is not really credible that a classically educated poet of their century who wished to describe natural scenery and the procession of the seasons would not at once think of the *Georgics* as the great classical example of how to treat such themes. And it is evident that both Thomson and Cowper had it often in their thoughts. What may be called the diffused influence of the *Georgics* in the later eighteenth century, when there was beginning that reorientation of the poetical spirit in the direction which culminated in *Lyrical Ballads*, has scarcely been fully recognised. It is now known that Wordsworth was early attracted to Virgil.

Didactic poetry, however, was never confined to rustic themes. At least as ancient is the versification of traditional lore about the gods—witness the *Theogony* or 'Generation of the Gods', ascribed to Hesiod—about the stars, about the half divine ancestresses of noble families, about anything that passes for history among unlettered populations. In the great creative period of Greek history, say the fifth century before Christ, when most Greeks, or at least most Athenians, could read, little attention was paid to didactic poetry. But in later times, when there was more learning and less originality, it enjoyed a revival. It suited writers who had more art than genius to have their subject matter provided for them. All they had to do then was to set forth this matter in the most brilliant style of which they were capable. The professed aim of the new didacticism was still instruction, but its real aim was to please the connoisseurs of style. These Greek poets found admirers and imitators in Latin, who often surpassed their models. Of these by far the most influential was Ovid.

His most important didactic poem was the *Metamorphoses*,

which is Greek for 'Changes of Shape'. Greek mythology was full of stories telling how in the childhood of the world gods and heroes were transformed into plants or animals. These stories, with the addition of a few from Italian sources, were collected and retold in the *Metamorphoses* almost without even the pretence of doing anything except entertain the reader. It is a long poem, consisting of fifteen books, and is written in dactylic hexameters, like the *Aeneid*. But Ovid's hexameters are cast in quite a different mould, and make quite a different impression on the reader. The best way of showing this is by quotation. The passage which follows is taken from the thirteenth book, where the sea-nymph Galatea is courted by the ugly giant Polyphemus. The characteristic merits and defects of Ovid's mind and style are clearly exhibited there, and the student will, even within the compass of these few lines, see how much of sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth century verse prolongs the Ovidian manner. Dryden's translation is here entirely adequate, for this is a kind of poetry that Dryden understood.

'Candidior folio nivei, Galatea, ligustri,
floridior pratis, longa procerior alno,
splendidior vitro, tenero lascivior haedo,
levior assiduo detritis aequore conchis,
solibus hibernis, aestiva gratior umbra,
nobilior forma, platano conspectior alta,
lucidior glacie, matura dulcior uva,
mollior et cygni plumis et lacte coacto,
et, si non fugias, riguo formosior horto:
saevior indomitis eadem Galatea iuvencis,
durior annosa quercu , fallacior undis,
lentior et salicis virgis et vitibus albis,
his immobilior scopulis, violentior amne,
laudato pavone superbior, acrior igni,
asperior tribulis, feta truculentior ursa,
surdior aequoribus, calcato immitior hydro,
et, quod praecipue vellem tibi demere possem,

non tantum cervo claris latratibus acto,
verum etiam ventis volucrique fugacior aura.'

'O lovely Galatea, whiter far
Than falling snows, and rising lilies are;
More flowery than the meads; as crystal bright;
Erect as alders, and of equal height:
More wanton than a kid; more sleek thy skin
Than orient shells, that on the shores are seen:
Than apples fairer, when the boughs they lade;
Pleasing as winter suns, or summer shade:
More grateful to the sight than goodly planes;
And softer to the touch than down of swans,
Or curds new turned; and sweeter to the taste
Than swelling grapes, that to the vintage haste:
More clear than ice, or running streams, that stray
Through garden plots, but ah! more swift than they.
Yet, Galatea, harder to be broke
Than bullocks, unreclaimed to bear the yoke:
And far more stubborn than the knotted oak:
Like sliding streams, impossible to hold;
Like them fallacious; like their fountains, cold:
More warping than the willow, to decline
My warm embrace; more brittle than the vine;
Immovable, and fixed in thy disdain;
Rough as these rocks, and of a harder grain:
More violent than is the rising flood;
And the praised peacock is not half so proud:
Fierce as the fire, and sharp as thistles are;
And more outrageous than a mother-bear:
Deaf as the billows to the vows I make;
And more revengeful than a trodden snake:
In swiftness fleeter than the flying hind,
Or driven tempest, or the driving wind.
All other faults with patience I can bear;
But swiftness is the vice I only fear.'

It must have been great fun writing this, and there is no doubt that readers loved it. Of course it displays a shocking

want of that concentration which is one of the virtues of the pure classical style, and Ovid knew this as well as any one else. But he also knew that he always did best when he let himself go. What we have to note is that the excessiveness of Ovid delighted the renaissance as much as the deftness of his phrasing. Besides, he was so imitable. All over Europe Latin verses were composed in the manner of Ovid, and from the scholar poets the influence passed into the poetry of the vernacular. Facility, fluidity, ingenuity, verbal and metrical dexterity became general objects of ambition. So poems like *Venus and Adonis* came to be written. Of all this the fount and origin is unquestionably Ovid.

But he was famous not only for abundance of invention, he was equally admired for ingenuity of thought. He is 'the witty, conceited poet Ovid'. An illustration of this side of his genius may now be given. It is a description of the Flood of Deucalion, the Greek equivalent of Noah's.

> Iamque mare et tellus nullum discrimen habebat:
> omnia pontus erant: deerant quoque litora ponto.
> occupat hic collem: cumba sedet alter adunca
> et ducit remos illic ubi nuper ararat;
> ille super segetes aut mersae culmina villae
> navigat, hic summa piscem deprendit in ulmo;
> figitur in viridi, si fors tulit, ancora prato,
> aut subiecta terunt curvae vineta carinae,
> et, modo qua graciles gramen carpsere capellae,
> nunc ibi deformes ponunt sua corpora phocae.
> mirantur sub aqua lucos urbesque domosque
> Nereides: silvasque tenent delphines, et altis
> incursant remis, agitataque robora pulsant.
> nat lupus inter oves, fulvos vehit unda leones,
> unda vehit tigres, nec vires fulminis apro,
> crura nec ablato prosunt velocia cervo.

(*Met.* I. 291–304.)

Here is Dryden's translation or paraphrase:

> Now seas and earth were in confusion lost;
> A world of waters, and without a coast.
> One climbs a cliff; one in his boat is borne,
> And ploughs above, where late he sowed his corn.
> Others o'er chimney-tops and turrets row,
> And drop their anchors on the meads below;
> Or downward driven, they bruise the tender vine,
> Or tossed aloft, are knocked against a pine.
> And where of late the kids had cropped the grass,
> The monsters of the deep now take their place.
> Insulting Nereids on the cities ride,
> And wondering dolphins o'er the palace glide.
> On leaves, and masts of mighty oaks they browse,
> And their broad fins entangle in the boughs.
> The frighted wolf now swims among the sheep;
> The yellow lion wanders in the deep:
> His rapid force no longer helps the boar;
> The stag swims faster than he ran before.

Narcissus looks into a pool of clear water—the only mirror available to any but the rich in ancient Greece—and there sees a beautiful young boy, who draws near when he draws near, smiles when he smiles, cries when he cries. At last he realises the truth.

> 'Iste ego sum, sensi; nec me mea fallit imago,
> uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque.
> quid faciam? roger anne rogem? quid deinde rogabo?
> quod cupio mecum est: inopem me copia fecit.'

'That boy is me! I see it now, I am not deceived by the reflection of myself. I am consumed by love of myself, I both cause and suffer the flame. What am I to do? Be wooed or woo? Then what shall my wooing be? What I desire is with me: possession has robbed me of possession.'

Absurd! But the poets of the seventeenth century did not think it absurd.

More than any other classical poet Ovid must be regarded as the master of the renaissance, in England as elsewhere. He was not thought even then to be the greatest of Latin poets, although the youthful Milton confesses that to himself he almost seemed so. The pre-eminence of Virgil was always admitted. But one's favourite author is not always or perhaps very often the author one considers the best, and we shall not go wrong in saying that Ovid was the favourite of the renaissance poets. Their own work is often of far greater depth and power, but they love to steep it in the Ovidian graces, the Ovidian wit and sensuousness. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare's two poems and even many of his sonnets are redolent of Ovid. So is a great deal else in Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan literature, including such grave authors as Spenser and Milton. Nor was it merely the style and spirit of Ovid that captivated the renaissance; an equal delight was taken in his stories. It was from him more than from any other ancient source that our ancestors acquired that knowledge of the classical mythology, the absence of which is now so serious an obstruction in the way of understanding some of our greatest poets.

In their own way the middle ages were as deeply devoted to Ovid as was the renaissance. But the middle ages did not know a great deal about the strictly classical poets and had little or no feeling for classical style. Moreover the admiration for Ovid was largely restricted to a small, though influential, class—the educated laity. The more strictly religious could hardly be expected to approve of him. However, the more cultivated writers of the later middle ages are full of references and allusions to Ovid's repertory of stories. For the most part these were found in the *Metamorphoses*, yet not altogether, for Ovid loves to tell a tale, whatever his subject may be. Some of his best are in the *Fasti*, a poem dealing with the Roman calendar, and therefore didactic as much as the *Metamorphoses*. The subject, which seems arid enough to us, was immensely

interesting to the middle ages, which loved anything about times and seasons and the behaviour of the stars. And in fact the *Fasti* is a delightful poem, and not arid at all. But the works of Ovid which both the renaissance and the middle ages found quite irresistible were the *Art of Love*, the *Heroides*, and the *Amores*. Of these only the *Art* can be described as didactic; the *Heroides* and *Amores* will be discussed in a later chapter.

The *Art of Love* (*Ars Amatoria*) was not meant to be taken seriously, though that does not prevent it from being *pessimi exempli*. It is not much read now, for the art of seduction—since that is what in plain language it amounts to—is not really an interesting subject. But in mere finish of style Ovid is here at his best. This, as well as the 'paganism', was what chiefly attracted the renaissance. But it was not what attracted the middle ages. The *Art of Love* was then taken seriously. It was even by some invested with that curious half mystical, half sensual halo which surrounds the chivalrous conception of love. How far that (like other ideals) influenced conduct, it is not easy for a modern man to say; it does not look as if it influenced it much. Nevertheless, by a poetic or polite convention the *Art of Love* is sometimes represented in mediaeval literature as a manual of chivalrous love, which Heaven knows it was not.

Of other didactic poems in classical Latin only one has had sufficient influence to detain us. It is the *Ars Poetica* of Horace. That is not its true title, but we must adopt it here, because it was under this title that the poem was known until almost the present century. Horace never imagined that he had written an 'art of poetry'. What he did was to write a letter—a letter in verse—for two young men called Piso, who evidently cherished literary ambitions, particularly the ambition to write the kind of burlesque play called the satyric drama. Horace gives some advice about this and some general reflections on the poetical drama. Their critical value is for the moment

no concern of ours; it is the influence of the poem that we have to consider, its *literary* influence. This has been very considerable. It was, of course, in the mind of Pope when he wrote his *Essay on Criticism*. There is not much that he borrows directly from Horace, but the other authorities he used, such as Vida's *Ars Poetica* and Boileau's *Art Poetique*, are themselves deeply indebted to the Latin poem. A generation before Pope, Dryden's friend the Earl of Roscommon had written a versified *Essay on Translated Verse*, which is far from contemptible. It was quite natural then that a somewhat imitative young poet should come along, in 1711, with an *Essay on Criticism*. It is an astonishingly brilliant statement or restatement of a point of view which (with whatever modifications and misunderstandings) goes back to Horace. It crystallises in a series of epigrams the literary faith of the greater part of the eighteenth century. The historical importance of the *Ars Poetica*, and that importance can hardly be overestimated, will always be that it is the ultimate source of that faith.

It cannot be necessary to quote from the *Ars Poetica*. It is readily available to students, and there are several translations. Moreover the style is that of Horace's *Epistles*, from which we shall have occasion to quote later on. In the meantime it is incumbent on us to consider for a little some post-classical Latin poets who have written with a didactic intention, for their influence has been great. It will be convenient to begin with Prudentius.

He was born (in Spain) in the year 348, and so was a contemporary of Claudian. But the two men in their work and even in their characters were in vivid and almost violent contrast. Claudian was a Pagan, a good deal of a courtier, a devotee of the great classical poets, whose style he imitated and reproduced with a skill that amounted to genius. Prudentius was a Christian, possibly a monk; his Latin, although he is on the whole a 'literary' poet, is his own; and he looks not back,

but forward to the middle ages, which loved and cherished his verses. He is mentioned here in virtue of a poem called by the Greek title of *Psychomachia*, 'The Warfare of the Soul'. It may be described as an allegorical epic, in which the Vices contend against their opposing Virtues in a series of Homeric combats. The following is the description of Avarice.

> Fertur Avaritia gremio praecincta capaci,
> quidquid Luxus edax pretiosum liquerat, unca
> corripuisse manu, pulchra in ludibria vasto
> ore inhians, aurique legens fragmenta caduci
> inter harenarum cumulos: nec sufficit amplos
> implevisse sinus; invat infercire crumenis
> turpe lucrum et gravidos furtis distendere fiscos,
> quos laeva celante tegit, laterisque ministri
> velat opermento; velox nam dextra rapinas
> abradit spoliisque ungues exercet aenos.
> Cura, Fames, Metus, Anxietas, Periuria, Pallor,
> Corruptela, Dolus, Commenta, Insomnia, Sordes,
> Eumenides variae monstri comitatus aguntur.
> nec minus interea rabidorum more luporum
> Crimina persultant toto grassantia campo,
> matris Avaritiae nigro de lacte creata.
> si fratris galeam fulvis radiare ceraunis
> germanus vidit commilito, non timet ensem
> exserere atque caput socio macrone ferire,
> de consanguineo rapturus vertice gemmas.
> filius exstinctum belli sub sorte cadaver
> adspexit si forte patris, fulgentia bullis
> cingula et exuvias gaudet rapuisse eruentas:
> cognatam civilis agit discordia praedam,
> nec parcit propriis amor insatiatus habendi
> pigneribus, spoliatque suos famis impia natos.[7]
>
> (455–480.)

This was writing of a kind that the middle ages admired and understood. In fact it deserves some admiration for the liveliness of its colour and movement, its touches of genuine

imagination and human feeling. Its very prolixity, the besetting fault of Prudentius, rather endeared him to mediaeval readers, whom no prolixity could deter. Also they liked the allegory. The seven deadly sins were as much persons to them as the twelve apostles. Here is how Avarice comes upon the scene in Dunbar's *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis.*

> Nixt him in Dans come Cuvatyce
> Rute of all evill, and grund of vyce,
> That nevir cowd be content:
> Catyvis, wrechis, and ockeraris,
> Hud-pykis, lurdaris, and gadderaris,
> All with that warlo went:
> Out of their throttis they schot on udder
> Hett moltin gold, me thocht, a fudder
> As fyre-flacht maist fervent;
> Ay as they tumit them of schot,
> Feyndis fild thame new up to the thrott
> With gold of allkin prent.

Dunbar is not here copying Prudentius, whom he is very likely to have read, for he was not devoid of scholarship; but the spiritual affinity, the literary affiliation, is clear.

Prudentius did not create the taste for allegory, but he was the first considerable poet to develop its possibilities. There is plenty of allegory in classical literature, not among the poets but the philosophers and theologians. The way in which it is used by them, especially in the interpretation of Homer, reveals a strange lack of historical imagination, and it is very tiresome to read them on that subject now. Personification, not the same thing as allegory but akin to it, was only too common; figures like *Spes* and *Terror* and *Discordia* stalk at large through the poetry of the first two centuries after Christ. But they are mere abstractions and to us entirely tedious. Prudentius is different. In him the allegory seems more than an allegory, because the figures in it come alive. Though not human beings, they behave as if they were. They remind us

of the allegorical figures in mediaeval churches. It implies a simplicity or sincerity of belief which was something new, and possible only perhaps to a Christian, whose intensity of faith gave him the power to see as actual and living persons not only the heroes of his own creed but even the personifications of paganism, nay the very gods themselves, who had come to make a rather shadowy and moon-lit appearance in the literature of paganism itself. The wide-branching matter of allegory in mediaeval poetry can be no more than referred to here. It is in a manner summed up in the *Roman de la Rose*, the early part of which may be said to have become an English poem in the exquisite translation which used to be attributed to Chaucer. There one may see the end of an evolution which began with such late Latin poetry as the *Psychomachia*, although all kinds of non-Latin influences coming in have partly obscured the fact. Yet the taste for allegory by no means died with the *Roman*, which on the contrary rather stimulated it. It lasted long enough to supply the framework of the *Faerie Queene*.

One form of allegory was especially dear to the middle ages. It is that which involves certain animals. To this also a curious history belongs, if one had time to unfold it. Quite early in antiquity there arose, side by side with the investigations of serious biologists, a kind of animal mythology illustrated by apocryphal anecdotes tending to show the magnanimity of the lion, the fidelity of the dog and so on. The beasts in Aesop's fables have these stereotyped (really human) characteristics. But early religion too had its contribution to make, for a good many animals, some of them fictitious, acquired a sacred character, with the natural result that many strange stories were related about them. In this way there came into existence a mass of traditional lore about the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air which had nothing whatever to do with science. Most of the ancient animal stories current in the middle ages come from Pliny, directly or through his epitoma-

tors. To these, mediaeval authors, not least the authors of Lives of the Saints, contributed a large number of their own. With the coming of Christianity the qualities thus popularly attributed to animals tended to be given a symbolic or religious character. Thus the lion was harmless to virgins (from his love of chastity), the pelican symbolised devotion (because she pierced her breast to feed her young), the stork was a great respecter of conjugal virtue (because he killed the unfaithful she-stork), the peacock was the emblem of pride, and so on. We have Una's lion in Spenser. Certain animals were assigned to holy persons, as the lion to St. Mark and the eagle to St. John. There was a whole mythology about the unicorn. But the creature that won most regard was the phoenix.

There are found in many manuscripts some hundred and seventy lines in elegiac couplets entitled *De Ave Phoenice*, 'Concerning the Bird Phoenix', and attributed to Lactantius, who may have worked upon an older pre-Christian poem. They tell how the phoenix lives in a kind of earthly paradise in a sort of dedication to the Sun. When she has lived a thousand years she begins to feel the burden of old age, and determines to renew her youth, or rather her life, for death to her is not death but rebirth. She builds a nest, which is to be at once her tomb and her cradle, from certain precious and fragrant substances, and, seated upon this, lets her body be consumed by fire. From the ashes is born a wormlike creature, which grows rapidly and insinuates itself into a sort of egg, which bursting in due course reveals the unfledged phoenix. When the young bird is strong enough it moulds what remains from its cremation into a ball, which it carries to the temple of the Sun at Heliopolis in Egypt. There it excites extreme wonder and admiration for its beauty, but presently returns to its native haunt, which is evidently some oasis of the Syrian desert. The story, which in a less elaborate form is found as early as Herodotus (first half of the fifth century before Christ), who heard it in Egypt, must be known in order to

understand how the unique creature, which dies to live again, could be compared to, or even identified with, Christ.

The poem, though composed in a somewhat hectic style, has considerable beauty, which no doubt helped to recommend it as well as the moral. There is room for a short passage descriptive of the happy land in which the phoenix has her home.

> Non ibi tempestas nec vis furit horrida venti
> nec gelido terram rore pruina tegit;
> nulla super campos tendit sua vellera nubes,
> nec cadit ex alto turbidus umor aquae.
> sed fons in medio, quem vivum nomine dicunt,
> perspicuus, lenis, dulcibus uber aquis;
> qui semel erumpens per singula tempora mensum
> duodeciens undis irrigat omne nemus.
> hic genus arboreum procero stipite surgens
> non lapsura solo mitia poma gerit.[8a]

This description has an ancestry that goes back to Homer and is repeated with variations by poet after poet of the ancient world. From the present poem it is taken up by the *Phoenix* in the Exeter Book, which developes it in greater detail. The *Phoenix* is completely permeated by Christian feeling, the *De Ave Phoenice* but incompletely. The end of it, however, is Christian enough:

> A fortunatae sortis finisque volucrem,
> cui de se nasci praestitit ipse deus!
> femina vel mas haec, seu neutrum, seu sit utrumque,
> felix quae veneris foedera nulla colit:
> mors illi venus est, sola est in morte voluptas:
> ut possit nasci, appetit ante mori.
> ipsa sui proles, suus est pater et suus heres,
> nutrix ipsa sui, semper alumna sibi,
> ipsa quidem—sed non eadem quia et ipsa nec ipsa est—
> aeternam vitam mortis adepta bono.[8b]

Observe, besides the obvious allegory, the almost 'metaphysical' play with the idea of self-propagation. We hear a similar strain in *The Phoenix and the Turtle:*

> Property was thus appalled,
> That the self was not the same;
> Single nature's double name
> Neither two nor one was called.
>
> Death is now the phoenix' nest;
> And the turtle's loyal breast
> To eternity doth rest,
>
> Leaving no posterity:
> 'Twas not their infirmity,
> It was married chastity.

We hear an echo again in the nineteenth century in Darley's verses which begin 'O blest, unfabled incense tree'. But the symbolism has changed, as indeed it has in *The Phoenix and the Turtle.*

Allegory and symbolism are not of necessity means of instruction, and we must not pursue them further than as they are employed for edification. So far as that was desired, and in the middle ages nothing was desired so much, Latin literature had plenty to offer. Ancient authors love to moralise. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Seneca and Lucan, and was a main cause of their popularity in mediaeval times. But they are not easy authors, and they are not always moralising. It was not difficult, however, to find authors who were both one and the other. Two were especially favoured: Publilius Syrus and the writer who called himself or was called by others 'Cato'. Each is the author of a collection of versified maxims or *sententiae*, though neither can be the author of the whole collection. Publilius lived apparently in the time of Julius Caesar, and there is no valid grounds for disbelieving that many of the 'sentences' attributed to him did really pro-

ceed from his pen. They are all expressed in iambic trimeters, the normal metre of Latin comedy, from which in all probability a large number were drawn. Some of them became current coin. One—*iudex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur*, 'The judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted'—was long familiar as the motto of the *Edinburgh Review*. All are quite good reading, and there is very little wrong with their latinity. In this respect and in their pithiness they are far superior to the so-called *Dicta* ('Sayings') or 'Distichs' of Cato. Their importance for us, however, is much less, since they were quite out-rivalled by the Distichs in popularity and influence. There is no point in discussing the date or authorship of the Distichs. All we can affirm is that indications exist that there was some knowledge of them at least as early as the fourth century. The name of the author is evidently a pseudonym, and it is idle to speculate whether it was the elder or the younger Cato that was meant in the original attribution of authorship. What we may be sure of is that for the middle ages 'Cato' meant the contemporary of Cicero, the all-but-hero of Lucan's poem, who is there depicted as a typical sage with a philosophy that sometimes approaches Christianity. What is important now is the influence which 'Cato' had upon the mediaeval mind. It was certainly very great. Much of it no doubt arose from the simple fact that the Distichs were read in schools, being a treasury of copy-book maxims. They now appear exceedingly trite, but the trite (supposing it also true) has a way of taking on a renewed significance in times of moral and physical danger, such as were only too common throughout the middle ages. Each *dictum* is expressed in a couplet consisting of two dactylic hexameters—a circumstance which gave occasion for the commonly used title. Here are a few typical examples, rather above than below the average.

> Si deus est animus, nobis ut carmina dicunt,
> hic tibi praecipue sit pura mente colendus.[9]
>
> (I. 1.)

Sperne repugnando tibi tu contrarius esse:
conveniet nulli qui secum dissidet ipse.[10]

(I. 4.)

Nil temere uxori de servis crede querenti:
semper enim mulier quem coniunx diligit odit.[11]

(I. 8.)

Ne timeas illam quae vitae est ultima finis:
qui mortem metuit, quod vivit, perdit id ipsum.[12]

(I. 22.)

Quod iustum est petito vel quod videatur honestum;
nam stultum petere est quod possit iure negari.[13]

(I. 31.)

Insipiens esto, cum tempus postulat aut res:
stultitiam simulare loco prudentia summa est.[14]

(II. 18.)

Quae potus peccas ignoscere tu tibi noli;
nam crimen vini nullum est sed culpa bibentis.[15]

(II. 21.)

Rem tibi quam nosces aptam dimittere noli:
fronte capillata, post est Occasio calva.[16]

(II. 26.)

That, although destitute of literary grace, is not despicable writing, and there is no need to weep over the effect it exercised on the mediaeval mind. How great that was could never be inferred from isolated references to 'Catoun' in Chaucer and similar sources. The Distichs were in the thoughts of all literate persons. Their ethical standard is not very high, but that is true of all proverbial philosophy. What 'Cato' provided was a working morality for the plain man. Chaucer knew this well enough. His references seem half humorous, and there is

not the smallest reason to suppose that he regarded Cato as a great or even a very good writer.

Proverbs, maxims of conduct, stories with a moral—these were what delighted the middle ages at least as much as the long courtly romances. A special variety of the story with a moral is the fable. It had a great vogue. The favourite fabulist of the middle ages was Avianus, whose date is quite uncertain; scholars are disposed to fix it at the beginning of the fifth century. Avianus, if that is how to spell his name, can make no claim to originality; he merely tells once more, in the pallid and uncertain Latin of his time, a number of the fables of 'Aesop', to whom all such stories were attributed. In itself the beast-fable is of very great antiquity, and belongs essentially to oral literature. The Greeks (who hated anonymity) assigned its invention to a Phrygian slave called Aesop. It is certain that fables were current under his name in ancient Greece; but they are no longer extant, and we must be content with later versions and imitations. These consist in the main of the *Fabulae* of Phaedrus, a collection by a Greek versifier called Babrius, and the fables of this Avianus. Phaedrus wrote towards the beginning of the first century. His verses have often force and pungency. He was popular in the middle ages and for long afterwards, till he had a sort of second immortality conferred upon him by La Fontaine, who put many of his best fables into incomparable French. But he was not so popular as Avianus, an altogether feebler poet than Phaedrus, but recommended to the middle ages apparently by the very qualities which damage him with us. A brief quotation will show well enough what he is like.

Anser erat cuidam pretioso germine feta,
  ovaque quae nidis aurea saepe daret.
fixerat hanc volucri legem Natura superbae,
  ne liceat pariter munera ferre duo.
sed dominus, cupidum sperans vanescere votum,
  non tulit exosas in sua lucra moras,

grande ratus premium volucris de morte referre,
quae tam continuo munere dives erat.
postquam nuda minax egit per viscera ferrum
et vacuam solitis fetibus esse videt,
ingemuit tantae deceptus crimine fraudis;
nam poenam meritis rettulit inde suis.
sic qui cuncta deos uno male tempore poscunt,
iustius his etiam vota diurna negant.[17]

Everybody recognises the story, but how incompetent is the telling of it! What a detestable pseudo-literary jargon, indistinct and pretentious, the worst kind of writing! But, as we have remarked so often, the middle ages did not produce critics of Latin style. They cared only for the story, and the *Goose with the Golden Eggs* is certainly a good story. Avianus was popular because he related many such in language that was, or appeared to be, easier than that of Phaedrus. Yet his success would have been less than it was but for the moral tacked on to them, which recommended them to monks and schoolmasters. We can see that a knowledge of his fables was widespread, and we must not think of it as confined to authors who set themselves up as fabulists. Among these we may note Lydgate, with his *Aesop* and some other things, and the Scottish Chaucerian Henryson, whose *Morall Fabilis of Esope* will be found by any one who overcomes the initial difficulty of the language admirable and delightful. The fable in verse has never quite ceased to be cultivated in English. There was a sort of revival of it, probably stimulated by La Fontaine, in the early eighteenth century: witness the fables of Prior and Gay.*

A chapter on didactic poetry is inevitably discursive and incomplete, because its limits are undefined. Perhaps enough has been said to indicate, since nothing more is possible, the range and power of it in the literature of earlier ages. It is now

*The *Fables* of Dryden of course are different and have nothing to do with Aesop.

neglected or despised. 'Didactic poetry,' says Shelley, 'is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse.' This, of course, is begging the question, but it represents the tendency of critical opinion since the time of the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*. That only makes it the more incumbent upon the historian to allow for another point of view. After all it is largely a question of form. Shelley himself can be didactic enough (about republicanism and the like), but this is concealed by his preference for a lyrical or dramatic medium. Many readers have found Wordsworth exceedingly didactic. It is arguable that Shelley and he were more successful in transmuting their material by the force of poetic imagination than Dryden in his *Religio Laici* or Pope in his *Essay on Man*. But what does it come to in the end but just this, that Dryden and Pope were content to follow in the old paths, while Wordsworth and Shelley were not? We have to explore the old paths as well as the new, and it is the old that we have been exploring in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAGEDY

DRAMA begins in religion. The celebrants of some rite mime an incident in their religious history. Thus the incidents connected with the Resurrection were mimed in some mediaeval churches; the original and very simple performance was gradually elaborated, the language of the actors changed from Latin to the vernacular, and an elementary drama evolved which under various extraneous influences became secularised, and finally an independent work of art. This is much the history of Greek drama, except that it never became entirely secularised, at least in the case of tragedy. It accounts for much that appears singular or strangely unmodern in classical tragedy—its seemingly rigid formalism, its lack of what is called realism, the presence throughout of a Chorus that seems designed to do nothing but hold up the action and give away the plot. To these apparent disadvantages, retained by religious conservatism, the tragic poets had to accommodate their art.

They had, besides, to work under a material restriction—the shape of a Greek theatre. Everybody has seen a model or picture of that, and it is easy to understand how it came to assume such a form. If a number of people start a performance in the open air, they will soon have a crowd about them. The crowd will naturally tend to form a ring round the performers; hence the ancient theatre was roughly circular. When people want to see as well as hear, the spectator at the back must be elevated above those in front. So Greek theatres were nearly always cut into a hill-side, up which the seats rose in tiers. The 'orchestra'—the circular floor on which the Chorus danced—was on the ground level. At first the actors seem to have performed in the orchestra; at some later time a narrow stage

was built for them. Behind the stage was a kind of façade, which could be taken for a palace or a temple or even a hut—or could be thought away altogether. There was no curtain, no scenery as we understand it. The ancient dramatist had absolutely none of the resources that the modern can employ for creating scenic illusion. The audience saw everything that was happening. There was nothing the dramatist could do to hold the attention of his audience, if he could not hold it by the power of his situations and the magic of his words.

The whole secret of the Greek tragic poets lies in making use of these very restrictions to obtain dramatic and poetical values of a very remarkable kind. It seems the best way of showing their method to give a brief analysis of a particular tragedy. The tragedy I shall take is that which was taken as an example by Aristotle, under whose authority we can take shelter. It is the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (or *Rex*) of Sophocles.

The story on which is based the plot of the drama was familiar in its outlines to the audience, and, unless it is familiar to us also, we shall quite fail to understand the poet's method. We must begin then by sketching the story. Laius—the name has three syllables—king of Thebes, fell into disfavour with the gods. Being in consequence childless—a shocking misfortune for a primitive monarch—he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. The oracle promised him a son, but added that this son should one day kill his father and marry his mother. So when Jocasta the queen did give birth to a son, it was exposed on the desolate mountain-range of Cithaeron with a piece of iron driven through its ankles. By an extraordinary chance the baby was found still living by a shepherd, from whom it passed into the hands of Polybus, king of Corinth, who being himself childless adopted the infant, now called from his 'swollen feet' Oedipus, as his son and heir. So in Corinth Oedipus grew up in the full belief that Polybus was his father. Then one day he heard a disturbing rumour, which threw doubt upon that. He determined to question the oracle

about it, and set out for Delphi. Having arrived there and put his question, he heard no direct reply but an appalling denunciation prophesying that he would be the slayer of his father and the defiler of his mother. These consequences at least, Oedipus thought, he might avoid by never returning to Corinth; and he took instead the road to Thebes. He had not gone far when he met an old man in a chariot; it was Laius proceeding to Delphi upon another errand, namely, to get advice how to be rid of the Sphinx, a winged monster which had been terrorising Thebes, propounding a riddle to all who passed by and destroying every man who could not read it.

Oedipus did not get out of the way quickly enough for Laius, who struck him as he passed. The younger man struck back, killing Laius and all his attendants except one, who apparently escaped his notice. He proceeded on his way to Thebes, which he found in a state of anarchy because of the disappearance of its king and the ravages of the Sphinx. Oedipus undertook to confront the monster, heard her riddle and answered it; whereat she cast herself from her rock and died. Then the Thebans received Oedipus as their king, and he, in accordance with a custom common in early times, married the widowed queen. Thus the oracle was fulfilled in both its prophecies. For a long time no evil consequence ensued, and Oedipus proved a wise and just ruler. Then Thebes was struck by a plague. When the oracle was consulted for a remedy, it bade the Thebans cast forth the pollution that was among them. This being enquired into, the truth about Oedipus was discovered, and he was driven out or in some other way punished as an utter reprobate.

That was the story. When the play begins, Oedipus has been the ruler of Thebes for many years, during which he has lived happily with Jocasta, who has borne him children. His people almost worship him. But now a pestilence is devastating the city. A mingled crowd of old men, young men and children has gathered to implore mercy of the gods. Apart

from them, but associating himself with them, stands the aged priest of Zeus. To them enters Oedipus. He enquires the reason for the suppliants' behaviour and is answered by the priest, who describes the plague and asks for the king's assistance. Oedipus promises this and explains that he has already done something. He has sent Creon, his wife's brother, to consult the oracle at Delphi, and is now expecting his arrival. Even as he speaks, Creon is seen returning. It is observed that he is wearing a crown of laurel, which means that he is bringing a favourable answer. And yet the *audience* know that the answer must prove fatal to Oedipus. Tragic irony has already begun its work.

Creon now comes upon the scene. But when he is questioned by Oedipus, he replies in strangely ambiguous words. The god, says Creon, promises that Thebes will be saved—if the pollution be driven out of the land. What pollution? Oedipus, the Chorus, Creon himself, do not know. But *we* know. At least, Oedipus goes on, the oracle gave us some indication of what we were to do? Yes, we are to banish or put to death a certain man. What man? The man who killed Laius. Where is the murderer to be found? In this land. How was Laius killed? On a visit to Delphi. (There may have been a pause at this point. Could Oedipus put the next question without trembling? At any rate the audience must have held its breath. But, as in *Hamlet*, the suspense is prolonged.) Did no one see the deed? One man saw it, but all he had to tell was that the king and his attendants were attacked by robbers, who killed them all but himself. When the king has heard this scanty evidence, he solemnly undertakes to discover the truth. And on this ironic note the prologue comes to an end. But consider how these questions and answers, which would have no special interest in themselves, create interest in an audience which knows that the surviving attendant has lied, and is waiting, here and all through the play, for the dreadful truth to leap out and strangle Oedipus.

The Chorus, which consists of Theban elders, now enters and chants a song of prayer and appeal to the appropriate gods to drive away the pestilence. Then Oedipus reappears. He once more affirms his resolve to search out the truth, and utters a solemn curse upon the unknown murderer. This is a magnificent piece of tragic irony, the whole point of which depends on the knowledge of the audience that Oedipus is unconsciously cursing himself. The Chorus hint that the king might take the advice of the aged prophet Tiresias. This is another thrill for the audience, because Tiresias, the confidant and mouthpiece of Apollo, cannot fail to know the truth. In fact Oedipus has already sent for Tiresias; who now arrives, a blind old man led by a young boy. The king appeals to him for help in discovering the truth. All he gets for answer is a request from the prophet that he be permitted to go back on the way he has come. As he will give no reason for his request, Oedipus somewhat excusably loses his temper and retorts that, if Tiresias were not blind, he would be suspected of having killed Laius himself. At this the old man breaks out in fury and openly charges Oedipus with being the accursed thing, prophesying in cruel detail the awful retribution that awaits him. The reader must put himself in the position of the Athenian audience, who with few exceptions believed in prophecy, just as the reader of *Hamlet* must, to get its full effect, believe for the moment in ghosts. It cannot be necessary to insist on the dramatic quality of this scene. The truth has come out—and nobody believes it. Whoever, it is felt, may be the guilty man, it cannot be Oedipus. This appears so evident that the king is led to suspect a plot between Tiresias and Creon to cast the guilt on himself, and thus secure the throne for Creon. On hearing this Creon arrives in haste to defend himself. But his defence is awkward and tactless, and the two men come to an open quarrel. The loud voices are overheard by Jocasta, who intervenes between her husband and her brother. To allay the fears of Oedipus, she compels herself,

apparently for the first time, to reveal how her baby was laid upon the mountain to die. How then could he have killed his father, who met his death so long afterwards on the way to Delphi at a place 'where three roads meet'? What Jocasta does not know is that it was exactly on the way to Delphi and at a place where three roads meet that Oedipus had killed Laius. Seeking to reassure her husband, she has only plunged him into more terrible anxieties. One thing consoles him: the attendant of Laius, now a neatherd immured in the country, declared that the old king was murdered by robbers. If that story is true, then it was someone else, closely resembling Laius, who fell beneath the hand of Oedipus. The man must be sent for and questioned more closely. Is it necessary to add that the dramatic effectiveness of all this depends wholly on one thing, the spectators' knowledge of the story?

After an interval, during which the Chorus sings, there comes on the scene a messenger from Corinth. His business is to report to Oedipus the death of Polybus and offer him the vacant throne. This news is a profound relief to the king's mind, because, as he explains, his father had died from natural causes: therefore no one can now say that Oedipus is a parricide. 'But,' says the messenger, 'you are not the son of Polybus; you are a foundling adopted by him.' Even now, struck perhaps by what the Greeks called *ate* and we, clumsily enough, 'judicial blindness', Oedipus does not see whither all this is tending. But Jocasta does. Utterly overwhelmed, she quietly slips away, leaving Oedipus to infer that she is ashamed of him as an unacknowledged child. Shortly afterwards the herdsman arrives. At first he persists in his story, but finally confronted with the messenger he breaks down and explains how he had rescued the exposed infant, who had now grown up to be Oedipus. He had been afraid to reveal the truth when he recognised in the new king of Thebes the murderer of Laius. The effect of these admissions on Oedipus is what may be

imagined. The crisis has now come. One tragic incident follows another. Jocasta kills herself. Oedipus puts out his own eyes and is sent into banishment.

Of all the great poetic dramas the *Oedipus* is probably the most perfect in construction. But mere technique would not so enthral the interest of the reader, unless he came to it with that due preparation of mind which every great poet has the right to expect. What Sophocles expects from us is a sense of tragic irony. It is in this that the later poets fail, and because they fail in it they are dramatically uninteresting. Consider for instance Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. Of course it was not meant to be acted, and that might be a reason for not seeking any dramatic effects. But it may perhaps be taken for certain that Milton never divined the resources of tragic irony. For that is shown in words as well as situations. Throughout the greater part of the *Oedipus* almost every utterance means more than the speaker realises, and this rivets our interest as much as the action itself. Now Milton attempts nothing like that. The same is true of Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*, of Arnold in *Merope*, of Swinburne and Bridges in their classical dramas. This, almost as much as their deficiency in that sense of the stage in which the Greek tragic poets are so strong, robs their work of dramatic excitement. It is a different matter when we come to style. There the English poets, or some of them, may be not unreasonably compared to their Greek masters. But this will be more appropriately discussed when we come to deal with the English tragedies themselves. For now we must pass to Seneca.

The influence of Seneca on Elizabethan (including Tudor and Jacobean) drama has been variously estimated, but no scholar doubts that it was very great. It long preceded any distinct effect produced by Greek tragedy. Indeed before Milton few English poets were qualified to read, let alone penetrate to the heart of, this difficult form of art. It is none the less true that, while for the Elizabethans classical tragedy

meant Seneca, for Seneca himself it meant the Greek tragic poets, above all Euripides. That is why the study of Seneca must begin with the Greeks, for he is only imitating and adapting them.

The tragedies of Seneca are not without power; but it is not strictly dramatic power. They contain 'strong' situations, which give an opportunity for sounding rhetoric, but between these situations there is no organic connexion. In true drama this connexion results from the play of character. The action, we feel, could only have taken that course because the characters were like that; things should not just happen *to* them. As an old Greek philosopher expressed it, character *is* destiny. Now the persons in Seneca are not characters; they are merely embodiments of a ruling passion or mouthpieces of Senecan eloquence. Nor is it, save on rare occasions, the best kind of eloquence. They are too prone to rant or rave. Again, these plays are disfigured by a passion for the horrible. One almost feels a sense of degradation in reading Seneca after the Attic masters. It will be found later that a good deal can be said for him; but in the meantime these faults must be admitted and illustrated.

Probably the most influential (as it is the most atrocious) of Seneca's tragedies is the *Thyestes*. The plot is the revenge taken by Atreus, king of Mycenae, upon his brother Thyestes, who had seduced his queen and tried to win the kingship for himself. The drama opens with a scene between the ghost of Tantalus, their common ancestor, who has arisen from Hell, and a Fury, who urges the ghost to bring a curse upon his descendants. In the second act Atreus is discovered speaking with a retainer, to whom he unfolds a plan to lure Thyestes to the palace, sacrifice his sons, cook their flesh and induce their father to feed unwittingly upon it. This abominable fable is worked out in unrelenting detail, though with real power and intellectual brilliance. The passage here excerpted is from this second act.

Atreus. novi ego ingenium viri
indocile: flecti non potest, frangi potest.
proinde antequam se firmat aut vires parat,
petatur ultro, ne quiescentem petat.
aut perdet aut peribit: in medio scelus
positum occupanti.
Satelles. fama te populi nihil
adversa terret?
At. maximum hoc regni bonum est,
quod facta domini cogitur populus sui
tam ferre quam laudare.
Sat. quos cogit metus
laudare, eosdem reddit inimicos metus.
at qui favoris gloriam vere petit,
animo magis quam voce laudari volet.
At. laus vera et humili saepe contingit viro,
non nisi potenti fallax. quod nolunt velint.
Sat. rex velit honesta: nemo non eadem volet.
At. ubicumque tantum honesta dominanti licent,
precario regnatur.
Sat. ubi non est pudor
nec cura iuris, sanctitas, pietas, fides,
instabile regnum est.
At. sanctitas, pietas, fides
privata bona sunt: qua iuvat reges eant.
Sat. nefas nocere vel malo fratri puto.
At. fas est in illo quicquid in fratre est nefas.
quid enim reliquit crimine intactum aut ubi
sceleri pepercit? coniugem stupro abstulit
regnumque furto: specimen antiquum imperi
fraude est adeptus, fraude turbavit domum.
est Pelopis altis nobile in stabulis pecus,
arcanus aries, ductor opulenti gregis.
huius per omne corpus effuso coma
dependet auro, cuius a tergo novi
aurata reges sceptra Tantalici gerunt;
possessor huius regnat, hunc tantae domus
fortuna sequitur. tuta seposita sacer

in parte carpit prata, quae cludit lapis
fatale saxeo pascuum muro tegens.
hunc facinus ingens ausus assumpta in scelus
consorte nostri perfidus thalami avehit.
hinc omne cladis mutuae fluxit malum:
per regna trepidus exul erravi mea,
pars nulla generis tuta ab insidiis vacat,
corrupta coniunx , imperi quassa est fides,
domus aegra, dubius sanguis est: certi nihil
nisi frater hostis. quid stupes? tandem incipe
animosque sume: Tantalum et Pelopem aspice:
ad haec manus exempla poscuntur meae.
profare, dirum qua caput mactem via.

Sat. ferro peremptus spiritum inimicum expuat.

At. de fine poenae loqueris: ego poenam volo.
perimat tyrannus lenis: in regno meo
mors impetratur.

Sat. nulla te pietas movet?

At. excede, Pietas, si modo in nostra domo
umquam fuisti. dira Furiarum cohors
discorsque Erinys veniat et geminas faces
Megaera quatiens: non satis magno meum
ardet furore pectus, impleri iuvat
maiore monstro.

Sat. quid novi rabidus struis?

At. nil quod doloris capiat assueti malum;
nullum relinquam facinus et nullum est satis.

Sat. ferrum?

At. parum est.

Sat. quid ignis?

At. etiam nunc parum est.

Sat. quonam ergo telo tantus utatur dolo?

At. ipso Thyeste.

Sat. maius hoc ira est malum.

At. fateor. tumultus pectora attonitus quatit
penitusque volvit; rapior et quo nescio,
sed rapior. imo mugit e fundo solum.
tonat dies serenus ac totis domus

ut fracta tectis crepuit et moti lares
vertere vultum. fiat hoc, fiat nefas
quod, di, timetis.
Sat. facere quid tandem paras?
At. nescio quid animo maius et solito amplius
supraque fines moris humani tumet
instatque pigris manibus. haud quid sit scio
sed grande quiddam est.[18]

These last lines remind us of another passage:

I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth.

(*Lear*, II. iv.)

But what the excerpt from Seneca, and indeed the whole play, most reminds us of is an Elizabethan drama of the type established by *The Spanish Tragedy*. Listen to the ghost of Andrea and Revenge speaking in that too famous play.

Ghost. Awake, Erichtho! Cerberus, awake!
Solicit Pluto, gentle Proserpine!
To combat, Acheron and Erebus!
For ne'er, by Styx and Phlegethon in hell,
O'er ferried Charon to the fiery lakes
Such fearful sights, as poor Andrea sees . . .
Awake, Revenge, if love—as love hath had—
Have yet the power or prevalence in hell!
Hieronimo with Lorenzo is joined in league,
And intercepts our passage to revenge:
Awake, Revenge, or we are woe-begone!
Revenge. Thus wordlings ground, what they have dream'd, upon.
Content thyself, Andrea: though I sleep,
Yet is my mood soliciting their souls.
Sufficeth thee that poor Hieronimo
Cannot forget his son Horatio.
Nor dies Revenge, although he sleep awhile;

For in unquiet quietness is feign'd,
And slumb'ring is a common wordly wile.

(III. 16.)

This is sad rodomontade, and its father is Seneca. The whole of *The Spanish Tragedy* is not like that, far from it; some passages in the madness of Hieronimo have an almost Shakespearian truth and pathos. For the rest, the play is noisy nonsense. What we may observe is the difference between Kyd and Seneca. It is an intellectual difference. Seneca's power of mind almost carries off his bombast; Kyd's does not.

Seneca's power of mind (which to be sure is often no more than cleverness) showed itself chiefly in epigrammatic aphorisms, *sententiae*. They had an astonishing vogue in Elizabethan times. When the modern reader comes upon them he is apt to be disappointed, to find them mostly truisms. A truism is only a truth that is dully or conventionally expressed; it is not the truth in it that repels us but the expression of the truth. The historian must remember that it is only in quite modern times that readers have objected to the obvious. Think of the appalling obviousness of mediaeval moralising. To anyone with the historical sense it will be apparent that Seneca is very far above that level, and nobody contributed more, or even as much, to raising it at the renaissance. In the sense of Pope's definition—'what oft was thought but ne'er so well express'd'—Seneca has a great deal of 'wit'. This was delightedly recognised in the sixteenth century, as well as earlier and later. In old editions of the plays, such as the Elzevir of 1678, which reproduces the notes of Farnaby the Elizabethan scholar, whose influence on readers through his admirably edited texts of classical authors has not yet been justly estimated, though it was certainly immense—in these editions the 'sentences' are printed in italics, apparently for no other reason than to draw attention to them. There is no room to quote many of them; but here is a cluster from the *Oedipus* (699 f.), where Oedipus is threatening Creon.

Oedipus. dubia pio certis solent
timere reges.
Creon. qui pavet vanos metus
veros fatetur.
Oed. quisquis in culpa fuit,
dimissus odit omne quod dubium putat.
Cr. sic odia fiunt.
Oed. odia qui nimium timet
regnare nescit, regna custodit metus.
Cr. qui sceptra duro saevus imperio regit
timet timentes: metus in auctorem redit.[19]

Almost every clause is an epigram.

Where Seneca is at his worst is in certain passages of gruesome description. It seems unfair to charge him with introducing this fashion of writing, or to lay it on his Spanish origin, though he carried it farther than his predecessors. Ovid in describing the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths in the *Metamorphoses* had amused himself with the details of ghastly wounds. Lucan and Statius are as bad as Seneca in this respect and must share some at least of the responsibility which is generally laid wholly to his account, for they were only less popular than he, and Marlowe at any rate seems to be influenced by Lucan more than by any other poet. Still the repulsive descriptions are undeniably there in Seneca. They are not all concerned with cruelty and slaughter; he has an even greater penchant for witchcraft and necromancy. This suited the Elizabethan taste very well. We have heard the ghost of Andrea, which is Seneca pure and simple. Now take some words of the ghost in *Hamlet.*

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away: but that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars shoot from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combinéd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

The Shakespearian ghost, although it comes from Purgatory, speaks language appropriate to a ghost like that of Tantalus in the Senecan play, although Tantalus has risen from hell. So strong was the tradition that a ghost must be a damned and furious creature. Shakespeare takes the tradition, softens and humanises it. But he takes it. Indeed *Hamlet* as a whole is a Senecan play, improved out of recognition. I cannot here give the evidence for a lost *Hamlet*, perhaps by Kyd, preceding Shakespeare's; but we may be sure it was very Senecan. It was a play of the 'Revenge' type, like *The Spanish Tragedy*; and of all these Revenge plays, of which there are a good many, *Thyestes* is the prototype. The important thing about our *Hamlet* is not the debt to Seneca, which is negligible, but the advance it makes upon Seneca. The important thing for Seneca is that the advance is made from him.

There is, of course, one play, if it be true that Shakespeare wrote it, which shows no advance: *Titus Andronicus*. It has indeed a more varied and complex plot than we find in Senecan tragedies, and this no doubt gives it some superiority. But the number of frightful and bloody actions is not below the Senecan average, nor are the characters appreciably above it. Where *Titus* fails in the comparison is in style. It is, of course, early work, and Shakespeare may only have been refashioning an older play. But if he did write or rewrite *Titus*, the fact has this interest, that he had made himself thoroughly familiar with the Senecan form of drama. If he turned away from it (as he did), it was not out of ignorance. He rejected it deliberately.

In some ways, from the mere lapse of time, our view of

Seneca differs widely from that current in the sixteenth century. To us it appears that our early dramatists admired the wrong things in him, at least that they laid too much stress on certain elements in his work and passed over others too lightly. Thus Julius Caesar Scaliger, the Boileau of the sixteenth century, gives this prescription for a tragedy: *res tragicae grandes, atroces, iussa regum, caedes, desperationes, suspendia, exilia, orbitates, parricidia, incestus, incendia, pugnae, occaecationes, fletus, ululatus, conquestiones, funera, epitaphia, epicedia* ('Tragic matters great and dreadful, commands of tyrants, slayings, despairings, hangings, exiles, bereavements, parricides, incests, arsons, fightings, blindings, weepings, wailings, lamentations, deaths, obsequies, elegies'). It was only natural that dramatists should conclude from this that the more of such matters they could cram into a play, the more tragic it would become. The notion lingers in the minds of those who say that a 'tragedy' has taken place, when they mean a fatal accident. But that is not what the word meant to Aristotle or the poets from whom he derived his conception of tragic art.

It should be added that Seneca possessed an authentic lyrical gift. Of course the odes sung by his Choruses have not the imaginative and soaring splendour of his Greek masters, but he is good at what might be called the moralising lyric.

Regem non faciunt opes,
non vestis Tyriae color,
non frontis nota regiae,
non auro nitidae trabes:
rex est qui posuit metus
et diri mala pectoris,
quem non ambitio impotens
et numquam stabilis favor
vulgi praecipitis movet,
non quicquid fodit Occidens
aut unda Tagus aurea
claro devehit alveo,

non quicquid Libycis terit
fervens area messibus,
quem non concutiet cadens
obliqui via fulminis,
non Eurus rapiens mare
aut saevo rabidus freto
ventosi tumor Hadriae,
quem non lancea militis,
non strictus domuit chalybs,
qui tuto positus loco
infra se videt omnia
occurritque suo libens
fato nec queritur mori.[20]

(*Thyestes* 345 f.)

This is not great poetry, but it is graceful and has that ethical flavour which English taste approves or used to approve. The direct influence of Seneca's lyric muse was not strong or lasting, for the choral element was soon cut down or left out even in tragedies of the Senecan type, such as *Titus Andronicus*. But it was retained in 'closet-dramas' of the kind written by Lord Brooke or Sir William Alexander. Most people are familiar with the sombre magnificence of the chorus from Brooke's *Mustapha* which begins 'Oh wearisome condition of Humanity'. Perhaps a more typical, because less original, passage may be given from Alexander's *Tragedy of Darius*.

Who was so happy yet
As never had some cross?
Though on a throne he sit,
And is not vexed with loss,
Yet fortune once will toss
Him, when that least he would;
If one had all at once
Hydaspes' precious stones
And yellow Tagus' gold;
The oriental treasure
And every earthly pleasure,

Even in the greatest measure
It should not make him bold:
For while he lives secure,
His state is most unsure;
When it doth least appear
Some heavy plague draws near,
Distruction to procure.

It might be a translation from Seneca.

One may add that it is not unreasonable to think that in less direct ways the moralising lyric in English, so far as it is not a native product, owed at least as much, before (let us say) the time of Gray, to Seneca as to certain well-known odes of Horace. For in Elizabethan times at any rate the choruses of Seneca were read a good deal more than the Horatian odes.

Having said thus much about Seneca, we must revert for a little to Greek tragedy, because, though much earlier in time, it hardly affected the English theatre until the influence of Seneca had worked itself out. What we have now to consider is the style and diction, as distinct from the structure and dramatic technique, of Greek tragedy. Broadly speaking, there are two (and only two) styles in it: the spoken and the sung, the dialogue and the choruses. Both are of a rich and elaborate stateliness to which there is scarcely a parallel in other literatures. The English reader, accustomed to the Shakespearian adaptation of speech to the speaker, notes that all the characters in a Greek tragedy express themselves, with minute shades of differentiation, in the same style. But the contrast diminishes on examination. However strongly the characters in, say, *Antony and Cleopatra* may be differentiated, there is a broad similarity of style in all their serious utterances. The truth appears to be that a diction of considerable elaboration and studied dignity has been felt by all the great dramatic poets to be an artistic necessity for tragic verse. This applies to the lyrical as well as the spoken parts of a Greek tragedy, but the style of the lyrics is totally different. This hardly comes out

in the English imitations, because we have not like the Greeks a traditional lyrical diction. But in reading a play by Euripides one almost feels, when we pass rather suddenly from a passage of quick and vivid dialogue to a remote and dreamy ode couched in a language touched with archaism and dialect, that one has come upon a new and different poet.

With this in mind let us dwell a little on the *Comus* and *Samson Agonistes* of Milton.

Comus does not profess to be a tragedy or to follow any Greek model; Milton himself calls it a 'Mask'. It is a true enough description; *Comus* is in a line of development from the masques of Jonson and Campion. But it is also the work of a man, a young man, saturated in Greek drama, especially the *Hippolytus* of Euripides. There is no trace of Seneca. The plot is very slight, and managed with little art. But that scarcely matters; *Comus* is to be read for its style. One curious proof may be given of the attention which Milton had bestowed on the form of Greek tragedy. One finds there very often a sequence of single lines exchanged between speakers. This is imitated in *Comus*.

Comus. What chance good Lady hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darknes, and this leafy Labyrinth.
Co. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
La. They left me weary on a grassy terf.
Co. By falshood, or discourtesie, or why?
La. To seek i' th' valley som cool friendly Spring.

And so on for eight more lines. They could not have been written except by a student of Greek drama, for the style of Seneca is not like this.

As for *Samson Agonistes* it was confessedly written on the Greek model, in following of '*Aeschulus, Sophocles,* and *Euripides,* the three Tragic Poets unequall'd yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write Tragedy'. This observation comes from the little essay, prefixed by Milton, to *Samson* entitled *Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is call'd*

Tragedy. One is apt to forget the date, which is 1671. It was written then at the height of the vogue for 'heroic' plays exemplified by Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*. Elizabethan drama was a thing of the past. It is a mistake therefore to represent Milton as in revolt against that drama, for one does not revolt against a dead or dethroned ruler. Simply, in the reaction which followed the vast energy expended on the Elizabethan drama, Milton moved in one direction and Dryden in another. Milton moved back—behind Shakespeare, behind Seneca, to the Greek origins of tragedy. Was he justified in the result? The answer on the whole must be that *Samson* succeeds as poetry and fails as drama.

On the causes of this failure we have already touched, and we need not expatiate on them further. We have now to speak of the manner in which his play is written. The style—as distinguished from the spirit or sentiment, which is often Hebraic and still more often simply Miltonic—is truly Greek. Milton alone of the moderns has reproduced the simple,the apparently simple, grandeur of the Attic masters.

> My race of glory run, and race of shame,
> And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

That is from the spoken part of *Samson*, this is its lyrical close.

> All is best, though we oft doubt,
> What th' unsearchable dispose
> Of highest wisdom brings about,
> And ever best found in the close.
> Oft he seems to hide his face,
> But unexpectedly returns
> And to his faithful Champion hath in place
> Bore witness gloriously; whence *Gaza* mourns
> And all that band them to resist
> His uncontroulable intent,
> His servant he with new acquist
> Of true experience from this great event

With peace and consolation hath dismist,
And calm of mind all passion spent.

That dying fall is exactly Greek. One criticism only may be made: Milton's lyrical style in *Samson* is too like his dialogue. Yet he had long before shown that he could, if he had wished, have composed for *Samson* choruses in the manner of the Greek tragedians.

The Oracles are dumm,
No voice or hideous humm
  Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
  With hollow shriek the steep of *Delphos* leaving,
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspire's the pale ey'd Priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o're,
And the resounding shore,
  A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edg'd with poplar pale,
  The parting Genius is with sighing sent,
With flowre-inwov'n tresses torn
The Nimphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

Lyrical poetry of that kind—elaborate in form and metre, yet logical and not fantastic in structure; packed with allusion and reminiscence of older lays; sober and yet rich in texture—derives from the choral odes of Pindar and the Greek tragedians.

It is not possible to deal adequately with later attempts to naturalise Greek tragedy in English. But in fact they mostly explain themselves. *Prometheus Unbound* (to begin with that) was written not so much as an experiment in a classical form of art as in answer to an unspoken challenge. Shelley was an enthusiastic admirer of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, in

which the hero defies Zeus (more or less identified by Shelley with the Christian God) in defence of suffering humanity. Such an attitude had, of course, all Shelley's sympathy. But he discovered that Aeschylus had gone on to write a *Prometheus Unbound*, in which the hero reached some compromise with Zeus. This to Shelley's mind was making a compact with the principle of evil; so he determined to write his own version of what happened when Prometheus was unbound. That is why it came to be written in the form of a Greek tragedy; it is, according to Shelley, the play that Aeschylus ought to have written. He could not have supposed that the resemblance went much beyond the subject and the general treatment. For one thing his drama is about three times as long as a normal Greek tragedy. The lyrical parts overflow their bounds and may almost be said to drown the whole poem in eddying song, even the blank verse being lyrical in tone and movement. This is contrary to the spirit and tradition of classical art, which would on no account permit one kind of writing to encroach upon another. Before his death Shelley had begun another play in the Greek manner, *Hellas*. It is on the lines of Aeschylus' *Persians* and, so far as it goes, has much more of the form of a Greek tragedy than the *Prometheus*. But, as it is only a fragment, we cannot fairly judge it.

The *Merope* of Matthew Arnold is more than an imitation, it is a replica of a Greek tragedy. All the parts are there, and all in the right proportion. The subject had been carefully selected. It had already been used by Euripides in a play now lost, once famous—famous chiefly on account of a thrilling scene in which Merope discovers just in time that the sleeping youth, whom she has actually raised an axe to kill, is her own son. It has to be said that Arnold completely fails to thrill *us*. He had not learned, perhaps he had not even studied, the dramatic technique in which the general voice of antiquity declared Euripides to be supreme. It is not a little extraordinary that a man who believed that in poetry 'all depends

on the subject' should not have thought it necessary to add 'and on how the dramatist uses that subject'. A subject will not act itself. Perhaps Arnold's choice was not so happy as he thought. The modern reader is not familiar with the story of Merope, and so the modern poet cannot use the method of tragic irony in the Greek way. So far as style and diction go, *Merope* is well written in a subdued and low-toned way designed to reproduce the quiet concentration of the pure Attic style. The choruses are good of their kind, although none perhaps is so good as the fragment from a projected *Dejanira*, which Arnold never completed. Much indeed can be said in commendation of *Merope*. But what is the use of a drama, if it is totally undramatic?

Of the *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus* of Swinburne it may be enough to say that they exhibit much the same faults and merits as Shelley's *Prometheus*. The poet's lyrical impulse carries everything before it, so that even the spoken parts are not much more than lyrics in blank verse. And he has even less than Shelley the power of presenting or controlling a dramatic situation.

How far has the influence of Greek tragedy gone beyond such examples of deliberate imitation? To answer that question would lead us too far into a region of mere speculation. In the past the influence has been checked by two limitations: the restricted number of those who could read the Greek originals, and the absence or paucity of adequate translations. The second disability has been removed, chiefly by Gilbert Murray, and there are signs that this better knowledge has not been without effect. The full effect will not be known for some time.

CHAPTER SIX

COMEDY

COMEDY, as a form of art, originated, like tragedy, in ancient Athens, and has a parallel history, both having developed from rituals in the worship of the god Dionysus. This history lasts till the beginning of the fourth century before Christ, after which comedy begins to diverge on a path of its own. It then becomes what was called by ancient scholars the New Comedy to distinguish it from what was called the Old Comedy. The chief differences were these. The Old Comedy had a Chorus, which was a very important part of it; the New Comedy had not. The Old Comedy satirised and burlesqued known and living persons; in the New Comedy this was forbidden. The Old Comedy was farcical throughout; not so the New. A play of the Old Comedy had little or no plot; in the New Comedy the plot was ingeniously complicated. In the Old Comedy there was little or no attempt at characterisation; in the New a real effort was made to make the characters true to life.

The chief master of the Old Comedy (which may be said to have died with him) was Aristophanes. He is a very great figure in literature, but his direct influence necessarily all but disappeared with the extinction of that form of art in which he excelled and which he so largely helped to create. We cannot imitate him, we can only admire. The New Comedy produced no comparable genius, but it has profoundly influenced the whole history of literature. It is the New Comedy then to which we must give our attention.

Its chief master was the Athenian Menander. Of his plays only fragments, though very considerable fragments, have survived. They enable us to understand, if not altogether to accept, the extremely high reputation which he enjoyed among

his contemporaries and for long afterwards. He was to his art rather what Molière is to French comedy, and he possessed a good many of the Frenchman's literary qualities. The exclamation of an ancient critic, 'O Menander and Nature, which of you copied the other?' indicates for what he was most admired. By 'Nature' the critic meant human nature. But Menander was equally admired for the unforced ease and grace of his style. His direct influence on English drama has been even less than that of Aristophanes. But his indirect influence has been incalculable. For Roman comedy, which has been the immediate influence, simply took over, translating and adapting them, the plays of Menander and other poets of the New Comedy. Plautus and Terence are Menander in Roman dress. To put it less picturesquely but more exactly, Roman comedy is Greek comedy in Latin.

Plautus and Terence differ widely in the temper of their minds and the quality of their workmanship, but in weighing their influence on English comedy we can hardly treat them in separation. Where then are we to begin? It was from Plautus and Terence, either or both, that the author of *Ralph Roister Doister* learned to weave a complex and continuous plot, and to divide his play into acts and scenes. The writers of Elizabethan comedy follow his example. It meant a clean break with mediaeval comedy or farce, or with such a composition as Lyndsay's *Satyre of the Thre Estaitis*. It would be hard to overestimate the importance of this innovation, which has transformed the inner development and the outward form of English comedy. It is in some ways a pity. The Roman comedies give us stock characters acting in stock situations, and whatever ingenuity and freshness may be displayed in their handling, the highest kind of comedy repudiates them, as Aristophanes did and Shakespeare. Yet the plain truth is that hardly anyone except Shakespeare has been able to do without them. The stock characters, the recurrent situations may be somewhat different now; but it is with such characters

and situations that comedy still makes play. In the prologue to his *Eunuchus* Terence gives a list (by no means complete) of the types that constantly reappear in ancient comedy. He mentions the slave who is always running on messages, virtuous wives, unvirtuous mistresses, the parasite, the boastful soldier, the supposititious child, the old man who is taken in by his servant. It is unfair, he adds, to blame the dramatist for sticking to these types. Originality, he thinks, is impossible: *nullumst iam dictum quod non dictum sit prius*, 'nothing is said that has not been said before'. Modern comedy has changed more in appearance than in reality. The same characters appear under different names. For, as Terence says, *amare, odisse, suspicari*, 'love, dislike, suspicion', are the stock in trade of the comic dramatist. And experience, he would certainly have added, has long ago discovered most if not all of the situations in which these passions are most effectively represented.

The modern reader, who expects a comedy to be funny, is very apt to be puzzled by Plautus and Terence. For they are often not funny, or at any rate not funny enough for us. This is particularly true of Terence, for Plautus can develop a farcical situation with skill and verve. But a literary artist—and Terence was such—is entitled to expect that his work shall not be viewed under a misconception. Comedy in his hands is not only, or even mainly, a source of amusement; it is, in Matthew Arnold's expression, a criticism of life. The criticism may not be very profound, it may be conventional and even in some degree sentimental; but it exists. The true question for us now becomes: how far has Terence succeeded in the expression of it? We are confronted with a totally different conception of the nature of comedy from that which we find in Aristophanes or Dickens—farce sublimated by genius. What we now get is a representation of ordinary life as it is lived by ordinary people. Thus viewed, the New Comedy is seen to be a very great artistic invention, whatever we may

think of its Roman interpreters. What else is supposed to be the great discovery of the modern novel?

A curious feature of the New Comedy is the appearance in it of a very modern-looking sentimentality. It is no more than what we call a 'streak' of sentimentality, but it is distinctly there. A kind heart is supposed to atone for almost all offences; many a young man in the Roman comedies anticipates Charles Surface. There are other anticipations. The long lost heir reappears, the poor girl turns out to be a wealthy heiress, the motifs of the novelette repeat themselves. (There is nearly always a 'love-interest' with romantic ups and downs of fortune;) there is a 'villain', who is often a dealer in the 'white-slave traffic'. There are haunted houses, and buried treasure, and substituted babies, and so on. The importance of this for subsequent literature, particularly for comedy and the romance or novel, requires no pointing out. It is true that the situations in which these characters and incidents occur are often handled in a way that shocks our notions of decent behaviour. But these notions are, many of them, quite modern. Think of the treatment that Hero or Imogen receives—and forgives. Or think of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Even so—occasionally in the Roman plays, more frequently, we can see, in the Greek originals—we are surprised by a delicacy of feeling which is rare in our own literature till the nineteenth century.

Some wonder has been felt that Plautus and Terence were not translated into English earlier and more completely than seems to have been the case. But the reason may be guessed. Comedy works, as Pope translating Horace expresses it, with 'known images of life', which is much the same as saying that it holds the mirror up to contemporary society. The society of Athens in the third century before Christ was unfamiliar to that of London in the sixteenth after Christ, and a picture of it, rendered into English, would have puzzled more than satisfied English readers. On the other hand the men who did most to create English comedy as a work of art knew their

Plautus and Terence in the original, and did not want a translation. When Shakespeare began work there was already a stock of English comedies written on the model or at least under the influence of the Romans. It was then unnecessary for him to go to the originals.

In any case the influence of Roman comedy on some of his early work is strong and certain. It is specially notable in *The Comedy of Errors*. This may or may not be a *rifacimento* of an older play; it is beyond question that the plot is taken from Plautus. Two comedies are involved: the *Menaechmi* and the *Amphitruo*. The story unfolded in the *Menaechmi* is this. A merchant of Syracuse in Sicily had twin sons born to him who were perfectly indistinguishable. When they were seven years old, their father took one of them—the one called Menaechmus—along with him on a trading voyage to Tarentum (now Taranto in South Italy). There happened to be a public holiday at Tarentum, and in the crowd Menaechmus became separated from his father. He was found by a merchant from Epidamnus (Durazzo), who took the child with him when he himself returned there. A few days later the disconsolate father died at Tarentum. When news of this double calamity reached Syracuse, the merchant's father changed the name of the twin who had been left at home to that of his brother, Menaechmus. Meanwhile at Epidamnus the merchant who had carried off the original Menaechmus, having no children of his own adopted the boy and made him heir to his considerable fortune, later marrying him to an heiress. Soon after that the merchant was accidentally drowned. It is at this point that the action of the play begins. The Syracusan Menaechmus sets out to look for his brother, and in the course of his travels comes to Epidamnus. Here, of course, everybody mistakes him for the Epidamnian Menaechmus, especially as he cannot deny that Menaechmus is his name. It is easy to imagine the absurd *contretemps* that arise from the mistake, and they are developed with great skill (which must no doubt

be credited to the Greek original) and with that enormous gusto which seems to belong to Plautus himself, and is perhaps his chief title to be called a master of comedy.

The *Amphitruo* is more of a burlesque. It takes a story from the ancient mythology of Greece and makes fun of it. This rather vulgar kind of writing (which has been revived in recent times) is only tolerable when infused with real humour; but it may be said that Plautus supplies this. The story is well enough known. It is enough to say here that, while Jupiter assumes the appearance of Amphitruo (Amphitryon), the husband of Alcmena, Mercury takes on the likeness of Sosia, Amphitryon's servant. Thus when Amphitryon and Sosia return from the war and find Jupiter and Mercury enjoying their privileges, there results a highly complicated comedy of errors. In Shakespeare's play we find that this idea has been grafted (not necessarily by Shakespeare) on the simpler conception of the *Menaechmi*, where there is only one confusion of identities. This was surely a mistake. We have no difficulty in accepting the possibility that Jupiter and Mercury, being gods, transformed themselves into living images of Amphitryon and Sosia. But when we are asked to believe that not only were the Antipholuses identical twins with the same name, but that their servants also were identical twins with the same name, too great a strain is imposed on our powers of belief. As Horace put it, *incredulus odi*, 'I can't believe it, and so I don't like it'. Such a feeling is fatal to any comedy.

One cannot do justice to a dramatist by quoting a little bit of his play; yet here one cannot do more. At most his style and spirit may be suggested. That is all the following brief excerpt from the *Amphitruo* professes to do. . . . The time is night—a night that has been extended by Jupiter for his own purposes to the length of three. The scene is an open space before the palace of Amphitryon. The real Sosia appears and presently observes the false Sosia, that is the god Mercury.

Sosia. certe edepol, si quicquamst aliud quod credam aut certo sciam,
credo ego hac noctu Nocturnum obdormuisse ebrium.
nam neque se Septentriones quoquam in caelo commovent,
neque se Luna quoquam mutat atque uti exorta est semel,
nec Iugulae neque Vesperugo neque Vergiliae occidunt.
ita statim stant signa, neque nox quoquam concedit die.

Mercury. perge, Nox, ut occepisti; gere patri morem meo:
optumo optume optumam operam das, datam pulchre locas.

So. neque ego hac nocte longiorem me vidisse censeo,
nisi item unam, verberatus quam pependi perpetem;
eam quaque edepol etiam multo haec vicit longitudine.
credo edepol equidem dormire Solem atque adpotum probe;
mira sunt nisi invitavit sese in cena plusculum.

Mer. ain vero, verbero? deos esse tui similes putas?
ego pol te istis tuis pro dictis et male factis, furcifer,
accipiam; modo sis veni huc: invenies infortunium.

So. ubi sunt isti scortatores qui soli inviti cubant?
haec nox scita est exercendo scorto conducto male.

Mer. meu' pater nunc pro huius verbis recte et sapienter facit,
qui complexus cum Alcumena cubat amans, animo obsequens.

So. ibo ut erus quod imperavit Alcumenae nuntiem.
sed quis hic est homo quem ante aedes video hoc noctis non placet.

Mer. nullust hoc metuculosus aeque.

So. mi in mentem venit,
illic homo (hodie) hoc denuo volt pallium detexere.

Mer. timet homo: deludam ego illum.

So. perii, dentes pruriunt;
certe advenientem hic me hospitio pugneo accepturus est.
credo misericors est: nunc propterea quod me meus erus
fecit ut vigilarem, hic pugnis faciet hodie ut dormiam.
oppido interii. opsecro hercle, quantus et quam validus est.

(*Amp.* 271–299.)

That is tolerable fooling, with a touch of imagination which in all probability comes from the Greek original. The Comedies of Plautus are mostly farces, not always very decent; but they are carried off by the richness and vivacity of the writing. Sometimes, as in the *Captivi* or 'Prisoners of War' and in the *Rudens* or 'Cable', he touches the finer notes of Menandrian comedy. It was from Plautus chiefly that later dramatists learned to make the most of an amusing situation. We may safely venture on that assertion because we know that the creators of sixteenth-century comedy read, studied, acted and imitated both Plautus and Terence in Latin and in English. That pair were their models, almost their exclusive models, until they learned to surpass or do without their masters. *The Comedy of Errors* is part of the evidence. So in a less obvious way is *The Taming of the Shrew*, which, although the plot does not come from Plautus, is Plautine in spirit.

Shakespeare went on to create a kind of comedy which was essentially new and mostly his own. Naturally enough the old situations now and again reappear, being almost necessary in any form of comedy, but they are treated in a different way, and above all the characters are no longer 'stock' but are individualised. One element would seem to be retained—the intermingling of serious with comic episodes. In the Old Comedy, as we see from Aristophanes, the fun was continuous, and that is evidently true of the mediaeval farce. Indeed it is what we should expect. But in the New Comedy the plot often threatens to take a serious or even a tragic turn before it reaches the happy conclusion. This, of course, is characteristic of the maturer comedies of Shakespeare, and the principle is more likely to have been inherited than rediscovered. He may or may not have read a play of Terence at school or afterwards. At any rate he must have had opportunities of seeing Terence acted, at Westminster school or elsewhere. What the evidence suggests however is that Shakespeare was influenced by the kind of romantic story, full of surprising changes of

fortune, which had been taken up by writers like Greene and Lodge. But this kind of story has its own history. It can be traced back to the so-called Greek novel, and that in turn owes much to the New Comedy, which, as we saw, used from the first the recurrent motifs of romance. The route is more devious, but it leads to the same destination.

Twelfth Night and *As You Like It* had no true successors. The main stream continued to flow down the old channel. It is to Jonson, with his comedy of humours (a mere variant of Latin comedy), that the Restoration dramatists look when they are not looking to the French stage. The future was with the comedy of manners, which in England is Roman comedy adapted to English manners and enlivened with French wit. From Congreve to Goldsmith, from Goldsmith to Sheridan, from Sheridan to Wilde, from Wilde to Shaw we perceive the same fundamental conception of comedy.

The man who, though he borrowed it from the Greeks, did most to familiarise the mind of Europe with that conception was Terence. It is fair to say that, unless one has some knowledge of Terence, the history of comedy does not make sense. Therefore some analysis of his work is unavoidable. For this purpose I choose the *Adelphoe* or *Brothers*, perhaps the most influential of all the seven comedies of Terence. The reader, remembering what has been said a little time ago, will not expect a merely funny play. There are always one or more of the characters in the *Adelphoe* for whom we are feeling sorry. In fact the best way of understanding the play is not to think of it as a comedy at all, at least until we have enlarged our ideas of comedy. It is a serious play dealing in a more or less amusing way with a serious question—the kind of play which Mr. Shaw has written over and over again. Terence has nothing like Shaw's wit and dexterity in argument; but he is a careful, accomplished and delicate artist, the kind of teacher that the Elizabethan stage needed most.

The question debated in the *Adelphoe* is as important now as

ever it was. Which is the best method of education: governing by severity or by indulgence? Here is the *mise-en-scene*. Two young men, brothers, have been brought up on different principles. The elder, whose name is Aeschinus, has grown up at the house and under the care of his uncle Micio, an easy-going old gentleman, who lives in the city; the younger, Ctesipho, has lived under the rigid discipline of his father Demea on the paternal farm. Which son will turn out the better? Human nature has, unknown to both Micio and Demea, already begun to work upon the young men. Aeschinus has been for nine months secretly married to a poor girl called Pamphila, while Ctesipho has fallen madly in love with a harp-player, the property of a *souteneur*. At this point the play begins.

Here is the first line:

MICIO *Storax! — non rediit hac nocte e cena Aeschinus. . . .*

That is to say: '*Micio* (*shouting*): Storax! (*No answer; Micio continues, speaking to himself*). Aeschinus did not come back last night from the dinner.' How many plays since the *Adelphoe* have begun in just that manner! It is the kind of thing that Terence could teach the students of dramatic technique. The soliloquy of Micio develops into a defence of the system he had adopted in his relations with Aeschinus. He is interrupted by a visit from his brother Demea (the father of *both* boys), who catches him as he is leaving his house. They are strongly contrasted types: Micio urbane, humorous, sleek, perhaps a little over-dressed; Demea something of a boor both in manners and appearance. A little of their conversation may be given to show their different points of view.

Mi. quid tristis es?
De. rogas me ubi nobis Aeschinus
siet? quid tristis ego sum?
Mi. dixin hoc fore?
quid fecit?

De. quid ille fecerit? quem neque pudet
quicquam neque metuit quemquam neque legem putat
tenere se ullam. nam illa quae antehac facta sunt
omitto: modo quid dissignavit?
Mi. quidnam id est?
De. fores effregit atque in aedes inruit
alienas; ipsum dominum atque omnem familiam
mulcavit usque ad mortem; eripuit mulierem
quam amabat: clamant omnes indignissume
factum esse. hoc advenienti quot mihi, Micio,
dixere! in orest omni populo. denique,
si conferendum exemplumst, non fratrem videt
rei dare operam, ruri esse parcum ac sobrium?
nullum huiu' simile factum. haec quom illi, Micio,
dico, tibi dico: tu illum corrumpi sinis.
Mi. homine imperito numquam quicquam iniustiust,
qui nisi quod ipse fecit nil rectum putat.
De. quorsum istuc?
Mi. quia tu, Demea, haec male iudicas.
non est flagitium, mihi crede, adulescentulum
scortari neque potare: non est; neque fores
effringere. haec si neque ego neque tu fecimus,
non siit egestas facere nos. tu nunc tibi
id laudi duci' quod tum fecisti inopia?
iniuriumst; nam si esset unde id fieret,
faceremus. et tu illum tuom, si esses homo,
sineres nunc facere dum per aetatem decet
potius quam, ubi te exspectatum eiecisset foras,
alieniore aetate post faceret tamen.
De. pro Iuppiter, tu homo adigi' me ad insaniam!
non est flagitium facere haec adulescentulum?
Mi. ah
ausculta, ne me optundas de hac re saepius:
tuom filium dedisti adoptandum mihi;
is meus est factu': siquid peccat, Demea,
mihi peccat; ego illi maxumam partem fero.
opsonat, potat, olet unguenta: de meo;
amat: dabitur a me argentum dum erit commodum;

ubi non erit fortasse excludetur foras.
fores effregit: restituentur; discidit
vestem: resarcietur; et—dis gratia—
est unde haec fiant, et adhuc non molesta sunt.
postremo aut desine aut cedo quemvis arbitrum:
te plura in hac re peccare ostendam.
De. ei mihi,
pater esse disce ab aliis qui vere sciunt.[22]
(82–125.)

The brothers now separate on different errands, leaving the stage empty, till it is entered by Aeschinus leading the harp-playing girl and followed by her owner, the vile Sannio, who belongs to a type only too familiar in the cities of the ancient world. Sannio tries to recover his property by force, but only gets beaten for his pains. The scene is calculated to tickle the groundlings, who would have no sympathy with such a villain, whatever his 'rights'. But what is Aeschinus doing with the music-girl? That is explained when Ctesipho comes on the scene. It now appears that Aeschinus has carried off the girl in the interests of his brother, who expresses the deepest gratitude. Their different educations have made them both 'bad' and devoted to one another.

The scene now changes; that is to say, the actors now appear before the house of Sostrata, the mother of Pamphila, which stands side by side with that of Micio. Since the ancient theatre was not constructed in a way to make interior scenes easy or even possible, everything had to be said out of doors. What was happening inside a building had to be reported by some one coming out of it. Naturally it was sometimes difficult to find a plausible reason why the reporter should come out. In the present scene Sostrata comes out without any reason at all, or rather against all reason, for anxiety would have kept her in the house. She is anxious on account of her daughter, who is in the throes of child-birth. This is a situation which a modern dramatist would probably avoid; yet it is treated by

Terence with a simple and natural feeling. In the distress of Sostrata—for she and her daughter have no friends in the town—she relies on Aeschinus. But now Geta, one of those faithful slaves who make a pleasant contrast to the roguish slaves who are part of the stock in trade of the ancient comic stage, rushes in with the news that Aeschinus has betrayed them—he has gone off with that music-girl. As a last resort Sostrata decides to appeal to an old friend of the family called Hegio.

Now Demea reappears. He has heard of Ctesipho's part in the abduction of the music-girl, and he is angry and miserable. It is hard for him to believe that he had been so much mistaken in his boy. This makes it easier for Syrus, a clever slave devoted to Aeschinus, to induce the old man to believe that he *is* mistaken. At this juncture Hegio enters. He is full of the supposed desertion of Pamphila by Aeschinus, and Demea, sharing his indignation, departs to have it out with Micio. He comes within an ace of surprising together Syrus and Ctesipho, who each has his reason for avoiding him. However, Syrus, true to his type, produces a fresh supply of plausible lies, which have the effect of setting Demea on a wild-goose chase after Micio.

Henceforward the action, as is proper in a well-conducted comedy, increases its pace. Micio meets Hegio and, having heard his story, hastens to comfort Sostrata. At her door he meets Aeschinus, who is torn between two feelings: distress on account of the suspicion he has incurred, and loyalty to his brother. Micio is now aware of the truth, but retains some resentment or disappointment because his adopted son had not taken him into his confidence, as on Micio's principles of education the lad should have done. So, to punish Aeschinus, he tells him that he has reason to believe that Pamphila is about to marry another man. At this Aeschinus breaks down altogether. Micio consoles him with the promise to recognise Pamphila as his wife. What of Demea? He comes back,

naturally in a bad temper, from his fruitless search for Micio, and now, having found him, begins an altercation in which he has again the worst of it, because his brother cannot or will not share his indignation at the behaviour of Aeschinus, who has actually brought a girl into the house. Demea is 'Victorian'. Imagine then what his feelings are when he discovers that it is Ctesipho who is entertaining the young person. The scene ends with Demea forcing his way into the house. At this point in a modern theatre the curtain would fall, and when it rose again we should be informed that we were now before the house of Sostrata. There was no curtain in the ancient theatre, any more than in Shakespeare's; but this was never felt to be a difficulty. The notion that elaborate scenery is necessary to create dramatic illusion is mistaken. There can never be *complete* realism in stage properties. The stage itself is a convention from the start; and the more 'real' you try to make it, the more inclined the spectator is to look for flaws in your production. He is more distracted than helped by this, whereas the imagination, left to itself, readily accepts almost any situation.

Micio comes out of Sostrata's house, where he has been making arrangements for the marriage of Aeschinus and Pamphila. Simultaneously Demea bursts out of Micio's house, which, it will be remembered, is next door. Micio approaches his brother.

De. eccum adest
communi' corruptela nostrum liberum.
Mi. tandem reprime iracundiam atque ad te redi.
De. repressi redii, mitto maledicta omnia:
rem ipsam putemu'. dictum hoc inter nos fuit
(ex te adeo ortumst) ne tu curares meum
neve ego tuom? responde.
Mi. factumst, non nego.
De. quor nunc apud te potat? quor recipis meum?
quor emis amicam, Micio? numqui minus
mihi idem ius aequomst esse? quid mecumst tibi?

quando ego tuom non curo, ne cura meum.
Mi. non aequom dici'.
De. non?
Mi. nam vetu' verbum hoc quidemst
communia esse amicorum inter se omnia.
De. facete! nunc demum istaec nata oratiost?
Mi. ausculta paucis nisi molestumst, Demea . . .
De. mitto rem: consuetudinem amborum . . .
Mi. mane:
scio; istuc ibam. multa in homine, Demea,
signa insunt ex quibu' coniectura facile fit,
duo quom idem faciunt saepe, ut possis dicere
'hoc licet impune facere huic, illi non licet',
non quo dissimili' res sit sed quo is qui facit.
quae ego inesse illis video, ut confidam fore
ita ut volumu'. video eos sapere intellegere, in loco
vereri, inter se amare: scire est liberum
ingenium atque animum: quovis illos tu die
redducas. at enim metuas ne ab re sint tamen
omissiores paullo. O noster Demea,
ad omnia alia aetate sapimus rectius;
solum unum hoc vitium adfert senectus hominibus:
adtentiores sumus ad rem omnes quam sat est:
quod illos sat aetas acuet.
De. ne nimium modo
bonae tuae istae nos rationes, Micio,
et tuos iste animus aequo' subvortat.
Mi. tace:
non fiet. mitte iam istaec: da te hodie mihi:
exporge frontem.
De. scilicet ita tempu' fert:
faciundumst.[31]

(793–806: 820–840.)

Micio to all appearance has scored again; his plan of education seems to have justified itself. But Demea is not really convinced; at least not entirely. He himself has lived hard and spare; married and had a family, for whom he has done his

best; yet everybody, including the son he has brought up, regards him as a curmudgeon. On the other hand everybody likes Micio, who has never taken any trouble about anything or anyone. But suppose Micio were asked to continue his generosity to the point where it began to interfere with his own comfort? Demea resolves to try the experiment. He gets hold of Aeschinus and suggests to him that it would be a good thing if the wall between the houses of Micio and Sostrata were broken down, so that the families could live together. Aeschinus is delighted with the suggestion, but Micio, when it is put to him, looks rather blue. No sooner has he conceded this point, when another is raised: why should he not marry Sostrata? She is the widow of an old friend and has a sort of claim upon him. Micio is upset more than ever. But his habit of giving Aeschinus everything he wants has made him the kind of man who cannot say no; so he agrees to marry Sostrata. Finally he is wheedled into presenting Hegio, who is a poor man though his social equal, with a considerable slice of his own property. Thus in the end the laugh is as much against Micio as Demea. It is now Micio who grudges the expense: Demea is all for it.

Mi. quid istuc? quae res tam repente mores mutavit tuos?
quod prolubium? quae istaec subitast largitas?
De. (*now speaking seriously*). dicam tibi;
ut id ostenderem, quod te isti facilem et festivom putant,
id non fieri ex vera vita neque adeo ex aequo et bono,
sed ex adsentando indulgendo et largiendo, Micio.
nunc adeo si ob eam rem vobis mea vita invisa, Aeschine, est,
quia non iusta iniusta, prorsus omnia omnino obsequor,
missa facio: effundite emite, facite quod vobis lubet.
sed si volti' potiu', quae vos propter adulescentiam
minu' videti', magis inpense cupiti', consulitis parum,
haec reprehendere et corrigere me et secundare in loco,
ecce me qui id faciam vobis.

(984–995.)

Here or almost here the play ends. There are some farcical scenes in it, as there could not fail to be in any ancient comedy, but it is not these that stamp the play with its peculiar character. The *Adelphoe* is a comedy if you like, but a comedy which contains an idea, worked out with all the skill of the born and practised dramatist—comedy of the kind in which Shaw is the modern master. The special danger to which it is liable is that the characters may become merely the mouthpieces of certain views of the dramatist. One remembers what was said, but not who said it. That is what many people feel about Congreve and Wilde and Shaw. Perhaps one only feels it less about Terence because he never says anything so witty as they. Yet Micio and Demea, though types, are clearly distinguished, and live with something, if only something, of the life imparted to their types by Molière or Dickens.

One really must pass over the numerous early imitations of Terence on the Tudor and Elizabethan stage, and come straight to Jonson, whose influence was strong for a whole generation after his death. Jonson, of course, had Plautus and Terence at his fingers' ends; but he does not exactly imitate them in his comedies any more than he imitates Seneca in his *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. Yet one may affirm that neither these tragedies of his nor the comedies could have been written, if Seneca and Terence had not written before him. It is greatly to his credit that he rejected the bombast that disfigures Roman tragedy; it is equally creditable that he applies the lessons of Roman comedy in an original manner to the English scene. Quite early in his career he had felt himself called upon to 'lash'—that is the consecrated word—the crimes and follies of the age. This gives his comedies a markedly satirical bent. It is not difficult to blend comedy with satire of the Roman kind, which deals in types, not individuals. That is why much in the *Sermones* of Horace reads like a monologue from some Roman comedy. The psychology of 'humours' exploited by Jonson gave a specious appearance of novelty to his method. But, as

Ben could not have failed to see, the exploitation of humours is a large part of the business of Roman comedy. His Bobadill for instance is paralleled by the *miles gloriosus*, 'the bragging soldier', of Plautus.

The sort of comedy which followed the Restoration is a form or development of the comedy of manners inherited from antiquity. Direct influence of Plautus and Terence is not easy to prove, although there was always a certain amount of adaptation (especially of Terence) going on among the minor dramatists. French influence is, of course, strong and obvious, though it may have been a little over-estimated; Congreve is not really like Molière. In any case French comedy admittedly grew out of Roman, so that we are led back to Terence after all. (In spite of this derivation Restoration comedy has many points of difference from its ultimate original. Its characters belong to the fashionable world, it is interested in little except love-intrigues, and its whole desire is to be witty.) It would be absurd to deny that Roman comedy deals largely in love-affairs, as perhaps all comedy must; but, as we saw in the case of the *Adelphoe*, it does not make them the only things worth talking about. Again, classical comedy is distinctly bourgeois. Its moral standard is not very high, but it is reasonably humane. The famous line in Terence, *homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto*, 'I am a man; nothing that belongs to man is, I think, no concern of mine', expresses the finer temper of the Roman plays. The morality of Restoration comedy is not humane; its ladies are minxes and its gentlemen cads; nor can all the wit in the world—and who is wittier than Congreve?—alter that fact. It is noted here merely as a point of difference, which after all did not maintain itself very long. In Farquhar, in Steele, finally in Goldsmith, the cynicism disappears, and something more like the spirit of Terence reasserts itself. Comedy becomes bourgeois again.

With Sheridan we enter on a new phase; call it rather a new combination of older elements. Congrevian comedy is

revived, but Congrevian cynicism gives place to the humanity of Goldsmith. Sheridan is not so witty as Congreve, nor so rich in human sympathies as Goldsmith; but his new combination is exceedingly effective. No doubt much of the effect is due to his remarkable sense of the stage. The penalty which he pays for that, though an unnecessary one, is that his conversations are often rather stagey. There is in him too, perhaps from the same cause, a recrudescence of that not quite honest morality which teaches that an impulsive generosity is the sum of virtue. There is not much use in blaming the playwrights; they gave the public what it liked. Sheridan also discovered, or instinctively knew, that audiences favour a comedy about high life or about exclusive circles in society quite as much as a comedy about people like themselves. That tradition has maintained itself rather steadily. Wilde is not the only successful dramatist whose people are fashionable or high-born or compose a clique. Mr. Shaw's as a rule are not, yet they are exclusive enough in a way of their own. They belong to an intellectual aristocracy, and a select one at that.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LYRIC POETRY

Like a poet hidden
  In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
  Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

I quote these words from Shelley because they express the modern or romantic conception of the lyric poet. To him inspiration comes from within, not without; he 'looks in his heart and writes'. He is moved by some power mysterious and original, and sings as the lark sings, instinctively and untaught.

The facts teach us a different lesson. The entirely original poet does not exist; if he did, we could not understand him. He must occupy some ground in common with his audience. He cannot live in the world unaffected by it. In particular the poet's mind is for ever echoing with words and rhythms that have been suggested to it. He may be so far original that he can make new combinations of these, but he needs them in order to make the combinations. In this sense there has rarely been a more original poet than Shelley himself. Yet Shelley is normally content with traditional forms and the commonest human emotions. It is with these traditional forms that a historical sketch of the present order has to deal. Lyrical poetry, however spontaneous, must come within the survey of the historian.

Yet he must begin by remarking on some unbridgeable distinctions between the classical and the modern or mediaeval lyric. It is only when these are understood that we can fairly estimate the influence of the one upon the others. What then are these differences? In the main they are two: one of form,

and one of metre. As to form, the ancient lyric was almost always composed in stanzas. There is reason to believe that lyric poetry originates in what the Greeks called a *molpe*, a combination of dance and song. Inspiration affects the body as well as the mind of the primitive poet. What is rather hard for a modern man to grasp or to remember is that the communal *molpe* evidently comes first; individual inspiration is secondary. The individual dancer catches fire from the others, is excited to a pitch higher than theirs, takes the lead in the *molpe* and adds something of his own to it. It is long indeed before he becomes independent of his fellow-dancers. Now the communal dances are normally of the kind called 'round'; a limited number of steps and movements is repeated over and over again. Inevitably the song that accompanies such a dance will fall into stanzas. That is why the ballad, which was originally a song-accompanied dance, is always found in stanzas. But in the number, variety and complication of its stanza-forms Greek went far beyond any other ancient language, and if you find anything like it in modern literature, that will generally be due to Greek influence. Not only was there this great variety in the stanzas, but each was framed with architectural exactness. That looseness or freedom of structure which is one of the characteristics and often one of the charms of English verse was not permitted within the classical stanza.

This regularity is intimately connected with the Greek metrical system. In English verse the voice stresses certain syllables, that is to say, pronounces them more emphatically than the others. The description of a line is determined by the number of these stresses in it. But in Greek and Latin verse—for the Romans took over the Greek scansion—the voice dwelt longer upon certain syllables than upon others. By dwelling longer on them is meant taking a longer time to pronounce them. This is called scanning by quantity—that is, quantity of time. English verse does not consider the question of time at all. Thus Milton can say:

Eternal wrauth
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.

And Tennyson can say:

The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices.

The italicised lines are both lines of blank verse, but the first can hardly be pronounced fast, or the second slowly, enough. But every line of the same description in classical verse takes exactly the same time to pronounce. Thus Virgil can say:

quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum

and

olli sedato respondit corde Latinus,

and because the voice dwells twice as long on a long syllable (—) as on a short (∪), these two lines occupy precisely the same time in pronunciation.

It is in lyrical poetry that this essential difference is most deeply felt, because the metrical arrangement of the classical stanza cannot be varied, whereas in the English lyric it might almost be said that the metre exists in order to be varied for the sake of the sound-values so won. Secondly, rhyme is normal in, and almost necessary to, English lyrical verse; whereas classical poetry dispenses with rhyme. It follows from all this that the classical lyric cannot be truly reproduced in English. English hexameters, alcaics, sapphics and so on are only classical in appearance. Stress is made to perform the function of quantity, and that it can never really do. If then we ask what the modern lyric has got from the ancient, we can only answer, suggestion and stimulus. But this it has received abundantly.

The standard form of ancient lyrical verse is the ode, a Greek name for a Greek thing and meaning no more originally than 'song'. What we now understand by the word is something

like Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* or Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*. Of that more elaborate form the chief master in antiquity was Pindar. His influence on English poetry can be traced clearly enough. But it has been obscured by misconception. We need not regret this, because to some extent the misconception was the cause of Pindar's influence. It was mainly due, this misapprehension, to an expression in Horace, who in the second ode of the fourth book of his *carmina* observed that Pindar wrote 'in numbers set free from law' (*numeris lege solutis*). It is not clear even now what Horace meant, but perhaps he was thinking of the dithyrambs for which the Greek poet was famous. The dithyramb did encourage rapid changes of metre, although, of course, this is not at all the same thing as having no metrical scheme whatsoever. (Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* will give a fair idea of the kind of freedom allowed.) Unfortunately the expression in Horace was taken to mean that the odes of Pindar which have been preserved to us—only fragments of his dithyrambs have been preserved—are without metrical design. Pindar, it was believed, was so carried away by the vehemence of his inspiration that he did not bother about the form of his stanzas at all. This impression was confirmed by the manuscripts. The mediaeval scribes did not understand lyrical metres, and did not know how to divide the lines. So when they were confronted with a choral ode, they wrote it out continuously like prose. In fact the victory odes, which alone of Pindar's work have come down to us intact, are composed in stanzas of perfect regularity.

Although this had been discovered by at least some scholars before the time of Cowley, the *Pindarique Odes* of that poet were written under the influence of the old misunderstanding. They were much admired, not altogether undeservedly, but their merits, such as they are, are totally unlike Pindar's. He may have had some inkling of that himself, for he was not without scholarship and was able to say with as much truth

as wit, that, if anyone were to translate Pindar literally, it would look as if one madman had translated another. For all that he probably thought that he too was being borne along on the tide of an overpowering poetic imagination, whereas he is mainly engaged in spinning ingenious fancies; while for the exact and profound metrical science of Pindar he substitutes, for the most part, irregular stanzas, often displeasing even to the eye. The importance of the *Pindarique Odes* is now merely historical and consists mainly in this, that Dryden took over the form from Cowley and produced work in it that had great and lasting consequences. This was the two St. Cecilia odes, especially the later one, *Alexander's Feast*. Immense, perhaps excessive, praise has been showered upon this ode; our business is not to challenge the verdict but to record it. What a classical scholar may do is to ask the reader to disabuse his mind of any notion that *Alexander's Feast* is like Pindar. It is a splendid piece of poetical rhetoric, far above Cowley's mark but following Cowley's lead. Although the stanzas are irregular enough, there is a real and not unsuccessful attempt to fit the changes of rhythm to the changes of mood. Even if the *Feast* now strikes us as rather too like the libretto for an opera by Handel, it is a masterpiece of its kind. We can detect its influence for a century and more.

It is not possible to deal with the very numerous odes which were composed more or less on the Drydenian model before the influence of Gray's odes, which was almost greater than that of Dryden's, began to show itself. The *Odes* of Collins produced no such effects, at least until the time of Coleridge, whose admiration is to some extent reflected in his own odes. This admiration has continued ever since. But Collins is not an easy poet to judge, because what is true of one section of his work is not true of the other. He has the power of quiet statement of emotion in exquisite words as very few English poets have had it, and here he recalls Greek poetic art more truly than Gray. On the other hand some of his odes, such

as that on the *Passions*, are in places turgid and rhetorical, with many personifications and apostrophes, in the style of the Roman poets of the empire rather than of the Periclean or Augustan age. These elaborate compositions are in the Pindaric tradition, although only one of them, the *Ode to Liberty*, is divided into regular strophe, antistrophe, epode; and the rest assume the 'Pindarique' license of Cowley and Dryden. Others, including the mutilated ode on *Highland Superstitions*, are composed in a recurrent stanza. There are fine touches of imagination and true lyrical inspiration in all the work of Collins, but he succeeds best in those less ambitious poems which may be said to belong more to the Horatian than the Pindaric school. Of these there will be something to say as our discussion proceeds.

We now come to the two famous odes of Gray, *The Bard* and the *Progress of Poesy*, which are both written in avowed imitation of Pindar. It is certain that no eighteenth-century poet was better qualified for such an attempt. Gray as a scholar was comparable to Milton, and he was not only able to read Pindar in his own language but to scan his lines; most of his predecessors had been unable to do either one or the other. Hence his odes are really Pindaric, at least in externals. They are formed of a regular strophe, followed by an antistrophe which corresponds to it in every respect, and is followed in turn by an epode. The triple arrangement of strophe, antistrophe and epode may be repeated more than once. This metrical scheme is adopted and carefully preserved by Gray, apparently for the first time in English poetry. Moreover he has studied the art of Pindar and seen that it was based on certain principles of composition. To Gray's predecessors Pindar was the artless child of genius.

What then was Pindar really like? All I can do is to translate in prose the opening of the first Pythian ode, in which the reader will recognise a passage imitated in *The Progress of Poesy*. He will have to imagine for himself the verbal

splendour, the sudden crashes and long reverberations of Pindar's style, which is something unique in literature.

'Harp of gold, O treasure in which Apollo and the violet-haired Muses have equal right, thou to whom the tread that begins the proud dance hearkens, whose signs the minstrels obey when with trembling string thou strikest up the prelude that leads on the dance-conducting music! Yea, the bladed thunderbolt of ever-during fire thou dost quench. On the sceptre of Zeus sleeps, drooping his rapid wings on this side and on that, the eagle, king of birds, upon his crooked head thou hast shed a dark cloud, a pleasant seal upon his eyelids; in his slumber he heaves his supple back, spell-bound by thy waves of melody. Nay, the brutal god of war, laying aside the cruel point of his spear, gladdens his heart with sleep, for thy enchantments soothe the minds of the very gods by the art of Leto's son and the deep-bosomed Muses. But all things that love not Zeus are dismayed when they hear the voice of the Pierides, on land and on the raging waters; among them he that lieth in grim Hell, the enemy of the gods, Typho with the hundred heads, the nurseling once of the famed Cilician cave; yet now the sea-shore above Cumae and Sicily weighs hard upon his hairy breast, and a sky-supporting pillar holds him fast, white Etna, that throughout the year nurses the biting snow and belches from her hollow places pure springs of unapproachable fire; by day these torrents pour a lurid stream of vapour, but in the dark a red and rolling flame carries into the level sea a thunderous tide of rocks.'

That was the sort of material which Gray had to work into ordered stanzas. Has he succeeded?

> Awake, Aeolian lyre, awake,
> And give to rapture all thy trembling strings . . .
> On Thracia's hills the Lord of War
> Has curb'd the fury of his car,
> And dropt his thirsty lance at thy command.
> Perching on the scept'red hand

Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feather'd king
With ruffled plumes and flagging wing:
Quench'd in dark clouds of slumber lie
The terror of his beak, the lightnings of his eye.

It would be extremely unjust to call this a property eagle, but he is not the eagle of Pindar, which is not only more truly imagined but carries conviction, whereas Gray is far from convincing us that he believes in the existence of his eagle, which for him is merely decorative. The fact is that the genius of Gray had not much affinity with that of Pindar. It was meditative and elegiac, so that when he depicts the passions or attempts the sublime he has recourse to rhetoric. His real master in these odes is Dryden after all. Yet, when that has been said, one comes back to them as on the whole the most successful attempts in the language to reproduce the Pindaric ode. That is a fine achievement.

One need not spend time on the Pindaric imitators of Gray, numerous though they were, in the eighteenth century. The poets of the romantic movement cannot be so dismissed. The Pindaric form of ode was much favoured by Coleridge, with very unequal success. What occasions some surprise is that he reverts to the practice of writing in irregular stanzas. So does Wordsworth, at least in the *Intimations of Immortality* ode. There is perhaps no direct influence of Pindar on either Coleridge or Wordsworth; by their time the elaborately constructed ode had been acclimatised in England and had almost forgotten its origin. Scott never tried the form, and Byron would perhaps have been well advised not to try it. The case of Shelley is somewhat problematical. He is in certain qualities of his genius the most Pindaric of our lyric poets, but it is not clear that he was in any marked degree influenced by Pindar. The *Ode to Naples*, an elaborate structure of recurrent strophe, antistrophe and epode animated by a spirit of high enthusiasm, has the best claim to be called Pindaric. Other odes of Shelley (like the vast majority in the language) are composed in

stanzas of a single mould. This, of course, is what we find in Keats, although Keats, in general, prefers a more elaborate stanza. What had happened was that the Horatian ode-scheme, which involves a comparatively short repeated stanza, had been affected by the complex polyphonic schemes of Pindar and produced a mixed, yet beautiful, form.

We may say then that before 1830 three main types of the more elaborate ode had established themselves: that of the *Intimations of Immortality*, that of the *Ode to Naples*, that of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. Each goes back, through various modifications, to Pindar. Tennyson, who knew the true character of the original, nevertheless has a preference for the irregular model of the *Intimations* ode, as in his poem on the death of the Duke of Wellington and the beautiful early *Ode to Memory*. He may have considered it a specially English invention, from which fine effects could be got. Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven* is also irregular; and other examples occur to the mind. Matthew Arnold goes in for monodies rather than odes in the proper sense of the word; they are mostly irregular. There has never been a dearth of odes in the Keatsian style. The more intricate manner of the *Ode to Naples* has perhaps deterred most poets; but Swinburne, for whom technical difficulties existed to be overcome, produced several such odes, which are at least triumphs of metrical skill. It is probable enough that Swinburne, and not improbable that even Shelley, was thinking less of Pindar than of the choral odes in Greek tragedy, although these are on a smaller scale. But that would make little difference. The odes in tragedy belong to the same genre—the choral lyric—as the odes in Pindar.

Compared with the influence of Pindar, that of Anacreon is slight and unimportant. But it exists and within narrow limits is even marked. Anacreon lived a generation before Pindar and in a very different society, luxurious and *raffinée*. His genuine works have been almost entirely lost; what we now read are imitations, by a long succession of sometimes

very graceful versifiers, of his more frivolous manner. The subjects are wine and love, or the pretence of it; and about these two poles anacreontic poetry has never ceased to revolve. One thing that made him easy to imitate was an admirable, if not wholly ingenuous, simplicity of style; another was the extreme simplicity of his metre. In its commonest form it goes like

A ring, a ring, of roses,

and so on with little variation. You feel that anybody could do this sort of thing. Yet not many have succeeded. Cowley tried with his *Anacreontics*. They were famous in their day, but they do not now seem very good—not so good as some things of the kind in Cotton or the *Busy, curious, thirsty Fly!* of William Oldys. Herrick has an excellent version of one of the most famous of the *Anacreontea*, that which tells how on a stormy night a young boy was sheltered by the poet, but when he was warm and dry shot an arrow into the heart of his host and flew away laughing, for he was the god of love. Both subject and treatment are typical of this genre. No one can read long among the minor poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries without seeing how the style appealed to them. And not to minor poets only, for Prior felt the attraction. The fashion lasted at least to the time of Moore, who translated and imitated Anacreon with great assiduity. Then poetry became more serious.

There can be little doubt that the classical author who has had the longest and deepest influence on our lyrical poets is Horace. Yet when we seek to measure it, we are at once beset by difficulties. How these arise has been already in some degree explained, and what follows only carries the explanation a little farther. The radical differences that exist between classical and modern verse come out with particular clearness in Horace, because his art emphasises them. His odes are for the most part composed in recurrent stanzas of four short lines. Now a

preponderant number of English lyrics are composed of four-lined stanzas of no great compass, so that the contrast between them and the Horatian odes in metre, together with the presence of rhyme in the English verses and its absence from the Latin, is brought home to us with a peculiar sharpness. There was never any possibility of such a misunderstanding about the metres of Horace as led to so much confusion about Pindar. They were always recognised and schoolboys learned to scan them. To compose Latin verses in the alcaic or some other Horatian metre was considered a proof of scholarship, and many gave it. If it could be done in Latin, why not in English? Because, as we have seen, the difference between quantitative and accentual or stress scansion makes it impossible.

Next there is the insuperable obstacle of word-order. The artist in Latin style approved himself by his skill in arranging the position of his words. It was an art in which no one has ever excelled Horace. We must find room to quote a short ode, which has the additional interest of having been translated by Milton in a metre which he felt would produce on English ears much of the effect produced by the Latin. It hardly does that; but the question of metre can be put aside while we study the order of the words.

Quis multa gracilis te puer in rosa
perfusus liquidis urget odoribus
  grato, Pyrrha, sub antro?
    cui flavam religas comam,

simplex munditiis? heu quotiens fidem
mutatosque deos flebit et aspera
  nigris aequora ventis
    emirabitur insolens,

qui nunc te fruitur credulus aurea,
qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem
  sperat, nescius aurae
    fallacis! miseri, quibus

intemptata nites. me tabula sacer
votiva paries indicat uvida
suspendisse potenti
vestimenta maris deo.

(*Carm.* I. 5.)

Here is Milton's translation, which he describes as *Rendred almost word for word without Rhyme according to the Latin Measure, as near as the Language will permit.*

What slender Youth bedew'd with liquid odours
Courts thee on Roses in some pleasant Cave,
Pyrrha for whom bindst thou
In wreaths thy golden Hair,
Plain in thy neatness; O how oft shall he
On Faith and changed Gods complain: and Seas
Rough with black winds and storms
Unwonted shall admire:
Who now enjoyes thee credulous, all Gold,
Who alwayes vacant, alwayes amiable
Hopes thee; of flattering gales
Unmindfull. Hapless they
To whom thou untry'd seemst fair. Me in my vow'd
Picture the sacred wall declares t' have hung
My dank and dripping weeds
To the stern God of Sea.

When this version is compared with the original it will be seen that Milton is continually being forced by English grammar (which he seems always to be attempting to reduce to Latin rule) to abandon the order of words in Horace. 'Who now enjoyes thee credulous, all Gold' is not idiomatic English; it is indeed barely intelligible without the Latin to keep us right. That is the result of trying to keep the order of words in Horace, who can place *credulus* next to *aurea* without the smallest danger of being misunderstood. And the effect is beautiful; no other conceivable arrangement would be so

good. What applies to this phrase applies to every other in the ode. It is a miracle in the art of placing words so that each shall reflect, and have reflected upon it, the utmost significance and poetical value of which it is capable. We cannot do it in English.

Look again at the Latin ode and at Milton's translation, and you will observe another thing. The Latin words tend to be longer than the English. (There are about a hundred words in Milton to sixty-six in Horace.) For quantitative scansion a large supply of long words is a necessity, if the metre is not to collapse like a heap of pebbles. English with its super-abundance of little, and yet indispensable, words like 'a' and 'the' cannot support the weight of classical metre; and that is another great reason why the *carmina* cannot be truly represented in our language.

If then Horace is strictly inimitable, how can he have affected English poetry? The answer is: in his subjects, in his spirit and temper, in certain qualities of his art. The perfection of that art within its own limits—its mere finish—has never been denied. One cannot be expected to analyse it here, even if such an analysis could ever be satisfactory. One element of it we have already touched upon, the infinite skill in ordering the words. Another is a conciseness or economy of words so finely managed that only the student of style observes it. A third element is that classical virtue, quietness of statement controlling deep emotion, although perhaps in Horace the emotion never gets beyond a certain depth. These Horatian qualities have always been admired in ages that understood them. The eighteenth century was one of these ages. Thus Collins succeeds better in those odes of his which have a Horatian quality than in his more Pindaric efforts. An example is his *Ode to Evening*. Its character is clear enough from the internal evidence, but it is made clearer by the circumstance that the metre of this poem is that of Milton's translation of the Pyrrha ode. That gives us an interesting comparison.

If ought of Oaten Stop, or Pastoral Song,
May hope, O pensive *Eve*, to soothe thine Ear,
Like thy own brawling Springs,
Thy Springs, and dying Gales,
O *Nymph* reserv'd, while now the bright-hair'd Sun
Sits in yon western Tent, whose cloudy Skirts,
With Brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy Bed:
Now Air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd Bat,
With short shrill Shriek flits by on leathern Wing,
Or where the Beetle winds
His small but sullen Horn,
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight Path,
Against the Pilgrim born in heedless Hum:
Now teach me, *Maid* compos'd,
To breathe some softened Strain,
Whose Numbers stealing thro' thy darkning Vale,
May not unseemly with its Stillness suit,
As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial lov'd Return!

Collins is one of the most classical of our poets when he writes in this style, and here and elsewhere, as in the ode on Thomson's death and the *Dirge in Cymbeline*, he has been able to give his verse some of that *curiosa felicitas*—that natural-seeming grace which is the result of art—that was anciently attributed to Horace.

Only a very self-confident critic would pretend to determine the limits of Horace's influence upon the English lyric. No formal demonstration being possible, one must go by personal impressions. There is not much use in looking for evidences earlier than the renaissance, for the middle ages, though appreciating Horace the satirist, made surprisingly little of the *carmina*. These came into their own at the renaissance, winning ecstatic praise from critics like the elder Scaliger. He, of course, was a Latin scholar, and this may remind us that one is most likely to find the marks of Horatian influence in poets who

were themselves scholars. Thus one can hardly go wrong in detecting it in some of Ben Jonson's most exquisite work. *Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair* . . . shows the concise elegance and picked phrase of Horace, nor does that stand alone. Many of Campion's lyrics have a Horatian grace, and Campion like Jonson was an excellent latinist. We cannot say so much of Herrick, but he was certainly familiar with the *carmina*; while in spirit, if not in form, he is one of the most Horatian of all our poets. There is, of course, a seventeenth-century 'quaintness' in Herrick which we do not feel in the classical Horace, but it is in no way unlikely that Herrick (who was one of the 'sons' of Ben) made a study of so congenial a master. For always in dealing with this period we must remember how very Latin men's education was. It calls for a man of powerful originality, such as Herrick scarcely was, to shake off the influences of his education.

We have had evidence that the youthful Milton studied Horace, and it may be that the delicacy and concentration—so different from what we find in the mass of contemporary verse in his time—which we find in his early work, owe something to this study. There is at least no doubt in the case of Marvell, who calls what is perhaps his most famous poem a *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland.* It is interesting on many grounds, one of which is the metre. It is an attempt, comparable to and perhaps a little more successful than Milton's, to reproduce in English the effect of Horace's alcaics.

> He nothing common did, or mean,
> Upon that memorable scene;
> But bow'd his comely head
> Down, as upon a bed.

It is also interesting for its recognition of the fact that the range of Horace's subjects took in war and politics as well as love and wine. In his lighter mood the Latin poet has found a dis-

ciple in Matthew Prior. No doubt *The merchant, to secure his treasure* and *Dear Chloe, how blubbered is that pretty face!* have a touch of sentimental prettiness, which is absent from Horace. But they are delightful exercises in Horatian vein, the second being obviously influenced by one of the most famous of the *carmina*, the lyrical dialogue between Horace and Lydia. Prior sought to follow Horace upon a more serious theme, for like the master he wrote a *Carmen Saeculare*. It is a failure; indeed the original is not vintage Horace.

We have reached the eighteenth century, the most Horatian in our literature. If we look for actual imitations of the *Odes*, though we find a good many, we may be a little surprised at not finding more. It is the Horatian criticism of life, the Horatian view of what constitutes good writing, that is prevalent. Translations of the *carmina* there were in plenty, beginning with Dryden, if we accredit him to eighteenth-century literature and call his paraphrasing translation. His finest essay in this kind is thus entitled: *The Twenty-Ninth Ode of the First Book of Horace Paraphrased in Pindaric verse*. This, of course, is quite illegitimate but is justified by the result. One need not linger over more orthodox translators like Creech and Francis and Smart. They show the never-ending interest in the *carmina*, but they could not affect the form of English lyric poetry, their whole endeavour being rather to impose that form on Horace. He must be read in the original if he is to stimulate and excite. Gray and Collins read him in the original. We have seen how Collins was influenced, and we may be sure that Gray also was influenced, although Gray was so variously learned that we find influences of all kinds simultaneously playing upon his work. Yet some of his shorter odes seem conscious of Horace. Gray had his followers, like Mason and Warton, who are sometimes weakly Horatian; but we are in no way bound to concern ourselves with them. With Cowper we must. The numerous minor pieces of Cowper often show an urbanity, a *mitis sapientia* or 'gentle wisdom'

combined with technical accomplishment, which may fairly be thought Horatian. But essentially there is a wide difference between the uncensorious epicureanism of Horace and the Christian mildness of Cowper. Moreover the English poet's verses lack the colour and perfume of the Latin, and the accomplishment of Cowper is not consummate like that of Horace. It can hardly need saying that Cowper was an excellent classical scholar for a writer of his date.

The greater nineteenth-century poets were in general too serious-minded for Horace, or could not labour happily on the small scale of the *Odes*; that was left to the writers of occasional verse, academic *jeux d'esprit* or *vers de societé*, of which the century produced a long and brilliant list from Praed to Calverley and later. Yet much of Tennyson's work has a very Horatian look. Compare for instance, these stanzas:

> Non semper imbres nubibus hispidos
> manant in agros aut mare Caspium
> vexant inaequales procellae
> usque, nec Armeniis in oris,
>
> amice Valgi, stat glacies iners
> menses per omnes aut Aquilonibus
> querqueta Gargani laborant
> et foliis viduantur orni:[25]
>
> (*Carm.* II. ix.)

and

> To night the winds begin to rise
> And roar from yonder dropping day:
> The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
> The rooks are blown about the skies;
>
> The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
> The cattle huddled on the lea;
> And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
> The sunbeam strikes along the world:
>
> (*In. Mem.* XV.)

There is no actual imitation, but Tennyson might be translating a lost ode of Horace. It is due to a similarity of talent and a readiness to take infinite pains in perfecting their rather self-contained, vignette-like stanzas. There was no similarity of temperament.

It is hardly possible to go further without rashness. I leave it to others to call Keble 'the Christian Horace', but I suggest that the early work of Bridges might repay the study of those who look for Horatian qualities. Matthew Arnold wrote a *Horatian Echo*, but in general, when Arnold is modelling himself on the ancients, it is rather the Greek than the Roman poets that he takes for his model. One discovered with a little surprise that Kipling was devoted to the *Odes*; but his clever imitations only added to the proof that the *Odes* cannot be imitated.

During the nineteenth century the passion of love became more and more the subject of lyric poetry. The absence or moderation of this passion in Horace led, if not to a depreciation of his odes, to the elevation of Catullus into an equal, perhaps a superior, place. Our view will depend on what we require of the lyric poet. The style of Catullus is perfect for its purpose, and the emotion it conveys has a power and sincerity that are irresistible. But the historian of literary influences cannot give him a comparable place with Horace. Moreover the actual masterpieces of Catullus are few and short; and this, while perhaps intensifying the force of his appeal, has restricted its range. In other words he has strongly influenced some poets, but only some. Among these we must include Ben Jonson, who has admirably imitated Catullus. Even before Jonson's time the little poem which begins *Passer, delicae meae puellae*, 'Sparrow, the pet of my mistress', had become a favourite; it must have suggested Skelton's *Phyllyp Sparowe*, although Skelton takes only the suggestion. But the English poet who owes most to Catullus is no doubt Landor, who read him with critical attention and treasured everything he wrote.

Traces of his admiration are scattered about his minor poems. Another admirer was Tennyson, as one learns from his verses on Sirmio. Yet another was Swinburne. Catullus was in the blood and memory of these three, and this could not happen without some effect upon their modes of thinking and writing. Yet to say in any particular case 'Here we perceive the influence of Catullus', 'Here it is absent', is not so easy.

The mediaeval lyric developed on lines of its own, hardly touched by the poets of whom we have been speaking. It is necessary to remember that the middle ages had their own *Latin* lyrics, which were not without effect on the vernacular. But the influence was reciprocal, at least in the case of the secular lyrics. These, often the composition of 'wandering scholars', in many cases merely put into the learned language what had already been expressed in their mother tongues. They embody a mediaeval, not a classical, spirit. In a way this is true even of the Latin hymns, some of which are old enough to have been composed at a time when the vernaculars had not yet taken a coherent form. Here the question of priority is settled by dates. If the oldest Latin hymns seem to breathe a mediaeval spirit, it is because they contributed in an exceptional degree to create that spirit. At least there is nothing classical about them. The situation we have to envisage is this. Throughout the middle ages Latin and English lyrics, sacred and profane, continued to be written and sung and recited, the English gradually prevailing over the Latin. The growth was simultaneous, although unequally progressive. We must never lose sight of this simultaneity.

The middle ages owed little to the *Odes* of Horace; Anacreon, Pindar, Catullus were to them little more than names. But there was some Latin lyric poetry with a claim to be regarded as classical which they knew very well and admired very much. Such were the choruses in the tragedies of Seneca and the lyrics inset in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Best of all they knew the *Liber Cathemerinon* or 'Book of Hours' of Prudentius.

It consists of ten longish hymns suited to various times and occasions in the life of a monastery. They are written in a variety of metres, rhymeless and scanned according to the classical system. The language too is more classical than mediaeval. But the thought, the feeling in these hymns is completely mediaeval. It was this no doubt rather than his latinity or poetry or even his Christianity which commended him to the mediaeval monasteries. It is a great pity that Prudentius is so much abandoned to the mediaeval vice of prolixity, for he has the genuine lyrical inspiration. Nor is his technique contemptible. Here is a passage from the fifth hymn, written to be sung *ad incensum lucernae*, 'at the lighting of the lamp'.

Pendent mobilibus lumina funibus
quae subfixa micant por laquearia,
et, de languidulis fota natatibus,
lucem perspicuo flamma iacit vitro.

credas stelligeram desuper aream
ornatam geminis stare trionibus,
et, qua bosphoreum temo regit iugum,
passim purpureos spargier hesperos.

O res digna, Pater, quam tibi roscidae
noctis principio grex tuus offerat,
lucem, qua tribuis nil pretiosius,
lucem, qua reliqua praemia cernimus!

tu lux vera oculis, lux quoque sensibus;
intus tu speculum, tu speculum foris;
lumen, quod famulans offero, suscipe,
tinctum pacifici chrismatis unguine;

per Christum genitum, summe Pater, tuum,
in quo visibilis stat tibi gloria,
qui noster Dominus, qui tuus unicus
spirat de patrio corde Paraclitum;

per quem splendor, honor, laus, sapientia,
maiestas, bonitas et pietas tua
regnum continuat numine triplici,
texens perpetuis saecula saeculis.[26]

How prophetic that is of centuries of Christian literature!

CHAPTER EIGHT

ELEGIAC POETRY

THE first thing to be done by the reader of this chapter is not to misunderstand the title.

Elegiac poetry in antiquity is not necessarily concerned with death and mourning; most frequently it is concerned with love. This was the result of historical causes, which need not be expounded here. But there is the fact; most of the love-poetry in Latin is to be found in elegies. The name however is quite unimportant, for an elegy simply meant to the Romans a poem written in elegiac couplets, and an elegiac couplet was simply a pair of lines, of which the first was a dactylic hexameter and the second a dactylic pentameter.

The best known of the Roman elegiac poets are Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Whatever their relative importance in the judgment of modern critics, in historical importance the work of Ovid so completely transcends theirs that we shall have little occasion to dwell on the poetry of Tibullus and Propertius. There are even parts of the work of Ovid himself, and that in elegiac verse, on which we need not dwell: the *Fasti*, for instance, and the *Tristia* with the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, which he wrote in exile. It is the poems that deal with love, or what he calls love, that gave Ovid his prodigious celebrity. These are the *Amores* or 'Loves', the *Ars Amatoria* or 'Art of Love' and the *Heroides* or 'Heroines'.

Of his influence upon mediaeval literature we can speak only in general terms. There can be no question that it was considerable; the frequent references, allusions, borrowings prove that. He was not excluded from the monasteries, at least from all of them, largely because he supplied an endless number of stories which, with a little manipulation, could be used to enforce a moral. Secular persons, supposing them literate, as

sometimes happened in all the mediaeval centuries, though naturally with increasing frequency towards their end, would, of course, read the amatory poems with less scruple, though one may doubt if they had much or any feeling for the irony which underlies many of Ovid's narratives of the loves of gods and 'heroines'. Chaucer, who has a fine sense of irony, perhaps suspected it in Ovid; but, if he did, he nowhere indicates his suspicion. We can be quite sure that Gower and Lydgate and Occleve cherished none. On the whole it is safe to say that of the classical poets Ovid found most favour in the middle ages. But he did not in any way affect the form of mediaeval poetry. The mediaeval poets freely adapt and borrow from him; they use his stories, they quote his 'sentences'. But they mediaevalise his sentiment and utterly change his form.

Formal imitation came with the renaissance. It was first, naturally enough, attempted in Latin, and with remarkable success. It is still possible to read some of the Latin elegists of the renaissance with pleasure—they were chiefly Italians, like Politian, it was rather long before the English latinists did much—and at one time they were read with a passion of admiration. That is a fact of real importance in the history of European literature. It suggested the reflection: If Ovid can be imitated in Latin, why not in Italian or French? Why not in English? The problem was much harder to solve in English than in any of the Romance languages, which have grown out of Latin. Perhaps the first successful, or relatively successful, answer in English poetry was made by Marlowe. He translated—it is not exactly known when, but pretty certainly before his plays, because the mistakes of which the translation is full are those of an immature rather than a rusty scholar—the *Amores*, which the publishers entitled, not incorrectly, *The Elegies of Ovid.* For the medium of his translation Marlowe chose the 'heroic' couplet, the favourite metre of Dryden and Pope. It was a stroke of genius. Marlowe had found the nearest equivalent to the elegiac couplet of Ovid with its

luscious matter, antithetic manner, and end-stopped metre. His version—loose and inaccurate, but catching the general sense—of one of the elegies will give a fair idea of the *Amores*. Here is the original.

Flete meos casus: tristes rediere tabellae:
  infelix hodie littera posse negat.
omina sunt aliquid: modo cum discedere vellet,
  ad limen digitos restitit icta Nape.
missa foras iterum limen transire memento
  cautius atque alte sobria ferre pedem.
ite hinc difficiles, funebria ligna, tabellae,
  tuque negaturis cera referta notis,
quam puto de longae collectum flore cicutae
  melle sub infami Corsica misit apis.
at tanquam minio penitus medicata rubebas:
  ille color vere sanguinolentus erat.
proiectae triviis iaceatis, inutile lignum,
  vosque rotae frangat praetereuntis onus.
illum etiam qui vos ex arbore vertit in usum
  convincam puras non habuisse manus:
praebuit illa arbor misero suspendia collo;
  carnifici diras praebuit illa cruces;
illa dedit turpes raucis bubonibus umbras,
  volturis in ramis et strigis ova tulit.
his ego commisi nostros insanus amores,
  molliaque ad dominam verba ferenda dedi.
aptius hae capiant vadimonia garrula cerae,
  quas aliquis duro cognitor ore legat;
inter ephemeridas melius tabulasque iacerent,
  in quibus absumptas fleret avarus opes.
ergo ego vos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi:
  auspicii numerus non erat ipse boni.
quid precer iratus nisi vos cariosa senectus
  rodat, et immundo cera sit alba situ?[27]

(I. 14.)

This is how Marlowe translates:

> Bewail my chance: the sad book is returned.
> This day denial hath my sport adjourned.
> Presages are not vain; when she departed,
> Nape by stumbling on the threshold started.
> Going out again, pass forth the door more wisely,
> And somewhat higher bear thy foot precisely.
> Hence luckless tables, funeral wood, be flying,
> And thou the wax stuff'd full with notes denying,
> Which I think gather'd from cold hemlock's flower,
> Wherein bad honey Corsic bees did pour.
> Yet as if mix'd with red lead thou wert ruddy,
> That colour rightly did appear so bloody.
> As evil wood thrown in the highways lie,
> Be broke with wheels of chariots passing by.
> And him that hew'd you out for needful uses,
> I'll prove had hands impure with all abuses.
> Poor wretches on the tree themselves did strangle:
> There sat the hangman for men's necks to angle.
> To hoarse screech-owls foul shadows it allows,
> Vultures and Furies nestled in the boughs.
> To these my love I foolishly committed,
> And then with sweet words to my mistress fitted.
> More fitly had they wrangling bonds contained
> From barbarous lips of some attorney strained.
> Among day-books and bills they had lain better,
> In which the merchant wails his bankrupt debtor.
> Your name approves you made for such like things,
> The number two no good divining brings.
> Angry, I pray that rotten age you wracks,
> And sluttish white-mould overgrow the wax.

In this, as in the rest of these poems, there is little or no passion. Yet, though they are often shameless enough, they are not cynical in the way that Donne's *Elegies*, which have clearly been suggested by them, are cynical. Donne no doubt had read Marlowe's version and may have taken his title of

Elegies from that; but of course he was familiar with the original, which in fact he was better qualified to understand than Marlowe. The tone of the *Amores* is more successfully recaptured in Carew's *Rapture*. To return to Marlowe, he used the couplet in his *Hero and Leander*, based on the Latin version of a Greek poet who was called, by himself or others, 'Musaeus', but really a magnificent and original essay in a new *dolce stilo*, which may fairly be described as neo-Ovidian. He had obtained complete mastery of his medium and established it for this kind of poetry. For some reason Shakespeare preferred a stanza form when he wrote *Venus and Adonis*, which in other ways is even more Ovidian than *Hero and Leander*. But it was Marlowe's example that prevailed, as it deserved to do. Thus Chapman not only completed the unfinished *Hero and Leander* but composed nearly all his own Poems in Marlowe's metre. The *Banquet* is a slightly comic attempt by a most un-Ovidian person to show how Ovid might have written, if he had seen a lady in her bath. And succeeding poets, including, as we noted, Donne, accepted the couplet as right for Ovidian themes; and it was so accepted by Waller and Dryden and Pope.

The pleasure which Ovid gave to his admirers at the renaissance and as late as Pope was as much intellectual as aesthetic. Quintilian says of him *nimium indulget genio suo*, 'he is too much delighted with the play of his own intelligence'. Look back for a moment to the passage (in effect a love-poem) already quoted from the *Metamorphoses*, in which the love-lorn Cyclops addresses Galatea. How the poet goes on and on from one similitude to another! Think what encouragement such writing was capable of giving to the young author of *Venus and Adonis*. But in that passage the ingenuity of the poet is of a simple and almost naïve kind. Elsewhere it becomes paradoxical to the verge, or beyond the verge, of absurdity, as in the lines already quoted from the plaint of Narcissus. The elegy just given in Marlowe's version is an average specimen

of Ovidian 'wit'. How popular these 'conceits' became in Elizabethan and Jacobean times is familiar to all students of the period. It need not be supposed that poets were reading Ovid all the time; they were simply following a literary fashion. The point is that Ovid started the fashion. The greatest poets followed it.

> Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
> For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!
> Is't not enough to torture me alone,
> But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
> Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
> And my next self thou harder hast engross'd:
> Of him, myself, and thee I am forsaken;
> A torment thrice threefold thus to be cross'd.
> Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
> But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;
> Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;
> Thou cans't not then use rigour in my gaol:
> And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,
> Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.
>
> (Sonnet CXXXIII.)

It is obvious enough who is the literary ancestor of that style.

No part of Ovid's work was more popular or more admired both in mediaeval and in renaissance times, than the *Heroides*. They are brilliant and preposterous in almost equal proportions. For instance, Ariadne, abandoned on a lonely island by Theseus, sits down to compose a long and eloquent epistle to her faithless lover, having somehow got hold of writing materials. She writes, not like a legendary princess, but like an extremely intelligent Roman lady. It was Ovid's way of making the myths interesting. It is something like what Mr. Shaw did in *Caesar and Cleopatra*; and, of course, it is highly entertaining. But there is more in the *Heroides* than just that. Although his women are creatures of impulse and unrestrained emotions, Ovid sympathises with them, perhaps for that reason, and

understands them. In her epistle to Paris Helen reveals herself in a fashion to which we shall hardly find a later parallel until we come to Chaucer's Criseyde. Of course, the originality of Ovid may not be so great as it appears to us in the absence of the literature which he had before him and we have not. The Greek poets of the Alexandrine period were skilled in feminine psychology, as Apollonius proves in his delineation of Medea. Nor did Ovid invent the poetical epistle; Horace had already used the form, but his *Epistles* are addressed to living people, and their literary associations are with satire. The *Heroides* are essentially different, being rhetorical exercises of the kind we discussed in connexion with Lucan. The historian observes that it was the Ovidian, not the Horatian, epistle that influenced our poets first. There is in Donne a *Heroicall Epistle* with the sub-title *Sapho to Philaenis*, which is written in express imitation of the *Heroides*, particularly of the letter there named *Sappho to Phaon*. It was the most famous of all the *Heroides*. Here is the final paragraph.

ecquid ego precibus? pectusne agreste movetur?
an riget? et Zephyri verba caduca ferunt?
qui mea verba ferunt, vellem tua vela referrent:
hoc te, si saperes, lente, decebat opus.
sive redis, puppique tuae votiva parantur
munera, quid laceras pectora nostra mora?
solve ratem, Venus orta mari mare praestat eunti.
aura dabit cursum: tu modo solve ratem.
ipse gubernabit residens in puppe Cupido;
ipse dabit tenera vela legetque manu.
sive iuvat longe fugisse Pelasgida Sappho,
non tamen invenies cur ego digna fuga.
hoc saltem miserae crudelis epistola dicat;
ut mihi Leucadiae fata petantur aquae.[28]

I give, for a reason, the version made of this passage by Pope. It is far from accurate, but it is only fair to remember that he was a boy when he made it, and that texts in his day, and still

more in Marlowe's, were apt to contain many errors and inferior readings.

> Gods! can no pray'rs, no sighs, no numbers move
> One savage heart, or teach it how to love?
> The winds my pray'rs, my sighs, my numbers bear,
> The flying winds have lost them all in air!
> Oh when, alas! shall more auspicious gales
> To these fond eyes restore thy welcome sails?
> If you return—ah why these long delays?
> Poor Sappho dies while careless Phaon stays.
> O launch thy bark, nor fear the wat'ry plain;
> Venus for thee shall smooth her native main.
> O launch thy bark, secure of prosp'rous gales;
> Cupid for thee shall spread the swelling sails.
> If you will fly—(yet ah! what cause can be,
> Too cruel youth, that you should fly from me?)
> If not from Phaon I must hope for ease,
> Ah let me seek it from the raging seas:
> To raging seas unpity'd I'll remove,
> And either cease to live or cease to love!

It is fascinating to watch the progress of a great artist. Here you find the youthful Pope admiring a passage in Ovid sufficiently to translate it, struggling with partial success to make a good job of it, neglecting a good deal in the original that he may get the antitheses right and the rhythm which he feels in his bones that he can master. The poem lies dormant in his mind, and a good many years later, when his art is mature, he writes *Eloisa to Abelard.*

> Of all affliction taught a lover yet,
> 'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!
> How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,
> And love th' offender, yet detest th' offence?
> How the dear object from the crime remove,
> Or how distinguish penitence from love?
> Unequal task! a passion to resign,
> For hearts so touch'd, so pierc'd, so lost as mine.

Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,
How often must it love, how often hate!
How often hope, despair, resent, regret,
Conceal, disdain,—do all things but forget.

Such is the effect of Ovid—or rather of the author of *Sappho to Phaon*, who was not Ovid but an accomplished imitator of his manner—upon the mind of a poet who had studied his art with sympathy.

While it is true that the elegy became the principal vehicle for love-poetry in Latin, it continued to be used also in its modern (and original) sense. The lament is one of the most natural forms of lyrical expression, and it must not be supposed that the elegiac poets monopolised it. It would in like manner be a serious mistake to attribute to classical influence all the laments and elegies in English verse. We may however affirm that in its more elaborate and considered forms the mournful elegy can be traced to classical sources. One line of descent goes back to Ovid and the other Latin elegists. As a change from him we may take the beginning of a noble poem by Propertius that sounds like the rolling of muffled drums. It is the dead Cornelia lamenting her fate. (Cornelia was the wife of Paullus, both being members of ancient houses.)

Desine, Paulle, meum lacrimis urgere sepulchrum:
  panditur ad nullas ianua nigra preces;
cum semel infernas intrarunt funera leges,
  non exorato stant adamante viae.
te licet orantem fuscae deus audiat aulae;
  nempe tuas lacrimas litora surda bibent.
vota movent superos: ubi portitor aera recepit,
  obserat herbosos lurida porta rogos.
sic maestae cecinere tubae, cum subdita nostrum
  detraheret lecto fax inimica caput.
quid mihi coniugium Paulli, quid currus avorum
  profuit aut famae pignora tanta meae?

num minus immites habuit Cornelia Parcas?
en sum, quod digitis quinque legatur, onus.[29]

It has been more usual in Christian ages for the living to lament the dead than for the dead to be represented as lamenting their own case. In antiquity it was often, as here, the other way. It makes no difference to the character of the poetry, although the tone in antiquity is more pessimistic. This is a special kind of poetry, and it has not affected more than a certain class of poems. It is however a pretty large class. Pope again will supply us with an example—the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. In spite of the reference to angels it is thoroughly classical in sentiment and expression.

What can atone (oh ever-injur'd shade!)
Thy fate unpity'd, and thy rites unpaid?
No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier.
By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd!
What tho' no friends in sable weeds appear,
Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year,
And bear about the mockery of woe
To midnight dances, and the public show?
What tho' no weeping Loves thy ashes grace,
No polish'd marble emulate thy face?
What tho' no sacred earth allow thee room,
Nor hallow'd dirge be muttered o'er thy tomb?
Yet shall thy grave with rising flow'rs be drest,
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
There the first roses of the year shall blow;
While Angels with their silver wings o'ershade
The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made.

That is a transfusion into English of the Latin elegiac manner. Of course the thing had been done before and was to be

done afterwards, and in the same metre, but never perhaps so perfectly. The most famous of English elegies, Gray's, is in a different metre, the quatrains that had been used by Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis*. It is impossible in view of the result to regret this; but it obscures something that would have been quite clear if Gray had written in couplets, namely that the *Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard* derives as clearly from Roman elegy as the poem just quoted from Pope. The diction, style and thought of the *Elegy* are only less Latin than those of Milton, but the thought, or at least the sentiment, of the poem, being such as comes home to all men, has caused the *Elegy* to be held a masterpiece of pure English, which in fact it is not. Its deserved reputation, combined with the romantic reaction against the Popian couplet, tended to make elegies thereafter take stanzaic forms. They also appeal more and more now to the feelings and less to the intelligence. Ovid and Pope have been considered rather heartless.

An elegy has a natural tendency to become a eulogy, regret for the dead passing into the remembrance and celebration of his virtues. The tendency was strengthened by the Roman custom of pronouncing an *éloge* at the interment of any man of high birth or distinction. Such an *éloge* had only to be put into verse to give the kind of elegy we are now to discuss. It was often called an *epicedium*, and that is the meaning of the word 'epicede' when used, for instance, by Donne, who practised and varied the form with great assiduity. Such tributes to the dead become almost excessively common in the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century. The most famous no doubt is Ben Jonson's elegy on Shakespeare, which ought not to be taken (as it sometimes is) as revealing Ben's whole mind about Shakespeare, of whom in his lifetime he was rather critical. He did not really believe that, since Shakespeare wrote, Plautus and Terence

> now not please,
> But antiquated and deserted lie.

The piece is to be understood as an *éloge*, although one need not doubt the sincerity of the great line,

He was not of an age, but for all time.

For Jonson was a critic, and that criticism happens to be true. A still better critic, Dryden, was nearly always excellent at these tributes; his lines *To the Memory of Mr. Oldham* are not unworthy to stand with Jonson's poem. Another admirable example is Tickell's elegy on the death of Addison. All these are clearly in the classical tradition. And so, although the fact is disguised by the extraordinarily unclassical style, are the *Anniversaries* of Donne.

From tributes to the dead one cannot, in any systematic discussion of the elegy in all its forms, dissociate complimentary verses addressed to the living. The following extract from Propertius has great interest as the criticism of a contemporary poet on Virgil.

me iuvet hesternis positum languere corollis,
quem tetigit iactu certus ad ossa deus;
Actia Vergilium custodis litora Phoebi,
Caesaris et fortes dicere posse rates,
qui nunc Aeneae Troiani suscitat arma
iactaque Lavinis moenia litoribus.
cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Grai!
nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade.
tu canis umbrosi subter pineta Galaesi
Thyrsin et attritis Daphnin harundinibus,
utque decem possint corrumpere mala puellas
missus et impressis haedus ab uberibus.
felix, qui viles pomis mercaris amores!
huic licet ingratae Tityrus ipse canat.
felix intactum Corydon qui temptat Alexin
agricolae domini carpere delicias!
quamvis ille sua lassus requiescat avena,
laudatur faciles inter Hamadryadas.
tu canis Ascraei veteris praecepta poetae,
quo seges in campo, quo viret uva iugo.

tale facis carmen docta testudine quale
Cynthius impositis temperat articulis.
non tamen haec ulli venient ingrata legenti,
sive in amore rudis sive peritus erit.
nec minor his animi est; aut, si minor ore, canorus
anseris indocto carmine cessit olor.[30]

(II. xxxiv. 59–84.)

The chief English master of this species of the elegy is Dryden. A good example is his Epistle to Congreve. That eulogies of living persons should be embodied in open letters to them or in dedications is very natural. Nobody can read far in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature without coming on these in tiresome profusion. What we are considering here is the letter which has a literary descent from the Latin elegiac poets. The letter in verse may take as many forms as the letter in prose. We shall find this exemplified when we have to speak of the Epistles of Horace, the associations of which are with satire, not elegy. Of the elegiac letter the chief model was Ovid, one of whose works is called *Epistolae ex Ponto*. His letters contain a large autobiographic element, and this too has started a tradition, although the Epistles of Horace are fully as personal as Ovid's. Between them they form an origin, although their direct influence on the rather numerous verse-letters in English perhaps does not amount to very much.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PASTORAL

THE pastoral or eclogue or bucolic poem was—a rare circumstance in the history of literature—in all essentials the invention of a man to whom we can give a name and a date. He was Theocritus of Syracuse, and he flourished (as old scholars said) about the year 280 before Christ. The pastoral was never by the Greeks themselves considered a very important form, and the reputation of Theocritus has been largely posthumous. In some ways he appeals more directly to modern taste than the great, austere masters of the strictly 'classical' age. He is now seen for what he is—the greatest and most delightful as well as the first of the pastoral poets. But it was not always so. For centuries his fame was partly eclipsed by that of Virgil, who as a young man was stirred to admiration and then imitation of Theocritus. In this way the *Eclogues* of Virgil came to be written, and it was the *Eclogues*, not Theocritus himself, that created the *furore* that was excited at the renaissance for pastoral verse. The reason is simple enough. The *Eclogues* are in Latin, the *Idylls* of Theocritus in Greek, and somewhat difficult Greek at that; and the people who could read Greek easily at the renaissance were fewer than is often supposed. As for the middle ages, they hardly knew there had ever been a poet called Theocritus, whereas the fourth eclogue of Virgil was revered by them almost as a piece of Holy Writ.

We, however, must begin with Theocritus. His poems, to which the scholars of Alexandria gave the name of *Idylls*, are few and short. Yet they are remarkably varied in character. Although we call him a pastoral poet, they are not all pastorals. They may be divided into three main groups: the pastorals proper, certain poems that are in the nature of mimes, others that have an epic character. Yet the division between them is

not so marked as this description may suggest, for the personality of the author, certain qualities of his art, his never-failing interest in country matters and country people, give a certain unity to all that he has written. Besides, to deal with Theocritus under different headings in different chapters of this book would be more confusing than helpful. Accordingly the present chapter will include in its survey every variety of poem that is to be found in the Greek bucolic poets—Theocritus, Bion and Moschus—and in their Latin successors and imitators.

The origin of the pastoral proper seems to be this. In Greece, and in Sicily and South Italy (where there was a Greek population in Graeco-Roman times) it was a custom of shepherds, goatherds and the like to play on some kind of rustic flute or pipe. It would often be used to accompany a country song, for it is doubtful if the ancient Greeks ever thought of composing music without words. These songs were certainly sometimes traditional; in which case the executant had only to remember the words and the tune. But the shepherds had also the habit of improvisation—they could, and they did, make up verses on the spot. Some, of course, did it better than others, and between these performers competitions were arranged with a prize for the successful competitor. The method was this: one competitor made up a verse, then the other capped it with one as good or better, until the judge was able to decide which ought to have the prize. For the most part the shepherds' verses would be rude and artless—they were sometimes rude in both senses of the word—but every now and again a good line would be struck out, and remembered, and used again. No doubt every village could boast of some, perhaps long dead, poet, who had been better than his fellows, and a whole lay of his—simple love-song or lament—might be preserved in the inaccurate but tenacious memory of the folk. Here then lay the material for a new poetic genre, if only some master in the *art* of poetry should take it up. It was taken up by Theocritus. The difficulties of his task were enormous, and

his success in overcoming them has obscured the splendour of his achievement. He had to present the rustic Muse in a guise in which she would be welcomed by a reading public, almost exclusively urban, which was accustomed to an elaborate and, by the time of Theocritus, somewhat sophisticated poetic diction, and which knew hardly anything about the country. So Theocritus had to forge a new diction, made out of the old poetic language infused with elements drawn from the Sicilian doric of the shepherds he knew best; he had to regularise the metre; he had a little to idealise the shepherds' life without spoiling its flavour. The idyll is the creation of this man's genius, and it is created out of authentic materials.

I translate from Theocritus part of a typical pastoral of the kind called *amoebean*, in which shepherd answers shepherd. Here it is neatherds who sing against each other, and in quatrains, not as usual in single lines or couplets. Both are very young, one called Menalcas and the other Daphnis; a passing goatherd is called in to judge between them. The names are worth observing, as it is from Theocritus that the famous names of pastoral verse—Lycidas, Thyrsis, Amaryllis and the rest—originally come. Menalcas begins.

Me. Ye dells and rivers, sprung from the gods, if ever yet Menalcas the syrinx-player sang a song that pleased you, pasture his lambs for love of him; and if ever Daphnis come with his heifers, treat him just as well.

Da. Ye springs and feeding-places, sweet nurselings of the earth, if Daphnis makes music like the nightingales, fatten this herd of his; and if Menalcas drives a flock here, may he have all the pasture that heart can desire.

Me. There the sheep and there the goats bear twins, there bees fill their hives and oaks grow taller where Milon treads; but if he go away, dry is the shepherd then and dry the fodder.

Da. Everywhere is spring, everywhere are pastures, everywhere udders are rich in milk and young things grow where beautiful Nais comes; but if she go away, parched is the cowherd and more parched the cows:

Me. Goat, husband of the white she-goats, you whose range is the endless brushwood—to the water here, you blunt-nosed kids!—go to him, for he is in it, and say 'Milon, Proteus, though a god, was a herdsman—and of seals!'

Da. Give not me the land of Pelops, give not me the gold of Croesus, nor to run faster than the winds; but in the shelter of this rock will I sing, holding you in my arms, my lovely fellow-herdsman, and looking out upon the Sicilian sea.

This type of pastoral is represented in more than one of Virgil's *Eclogues*, as for example the third, from which are taken the following lines, Menalcas answering Damoetas.

Da. triste lupus stabulis, maturis frugibus imbres,
arboribus venti, nobis Amaryllidis irae.

Me. dulce satis umor, depulsis arbutus haedis,
lenta salix feto pecori, mihi solus Amyntas.

Da. Pollio amat nostram, quamvis est rustica, Musam:
Pierides, vitulam lectori pascite vestro.

Me. Pollio et ipse facit nova carmina: pascite taurum,
iam cornu petat et pedibus qui spargat arenam.

Da. qui te, Pollio, amat, veniat quo te quoque gaudet;
mella fluant illi, ferat et rubus asper amomum.

Me. qui Bavium non odit, amet tua carmina, Maevi,
atque idem iungat vulpes et mulgeat hircos.[31]

It will be observed that the responses in this variety of the pastoral are antiphonal; the second singer takes up the words of the first and moulds his reply upon them in form and to some extent in sound. This has been rarely attempted in modern pastoral verse. But we do find, in Spenser and others, shepherd answering shepherd in balanced dialogue. It was a fairly common practice among the minor poets of the eighteenth century, and it was amusingly parodied in Wolcot's *Bozzy and Piozzi*. The nineteenth century apparently dropped it more or less completely, until it was partly revived in John Davidson's *Fleet Street Eclogues*. The passage from Virgil reminds one of another thing, that the pastoral poet frequently

brought in friends or enemies of his own in the guise of shepherds. Thus Pollio was a historical character, and so evidently were Bavius and Maevius, although their real names were probably different. The practice did not originate with Virgil, for he found it in Theocritus, but he carried it much farther, with the result of increasing the element of make-believe, which to some extent was present in the pastoral from the first. It rather displeases modern taste, especially when it takes the extreme form it did in the later seventeenth century, above all in France, where court ladies dressed up as shepherdesses. But that was a passing fashion, and nobody now reading Theocritus, or even Virgil, has his pleasure in any way disturbed by the thought of possible impersonations.

The shepherd's song often took the form of a lament for a lost love or a dead comrade. Of such laments not only Greek but all popular literature is full.

> 'Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral strain. I the singer am Thyrsis from Etna, and this is the sweet voice of Thyrsis. Where were ye, nymphs, when Daphnis was wasting away, Oh where were ye? In the lovely glades of Peneus? or of Pindus? For certainly ye were not staying by the large river of Anapus, nor on the specular mount of Etna, nor beside the sacred water of Acis.' (Theocr. I. 64–69.)

Then comes Virgil:

> Quae nemora, aut qui vos saltus habuere, puellae
> Naides, indigno cum Gallus amore peribat?
> nam neque Parnassi vobis iuga, nam neque Pindi
> ulla moram fecere, neque Aonie Aganippe.
> (*Ecl.* X. 9–12.)

Then Milton:

> Where were ye Nymphs when the remorseless deep
> Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?
> For neither were ye playing on the steep,
> Where your old *Bards*, the famous Druids ly,

Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where *Deva* spreads her wisard stream.

The most famous lament for a dead shepherd in Greek poetry is not by Theocritus, but by a disciple of his called Moschus. The dead shepherd is not really a shepherd, but a fellow-poet, Bion of Smyrna, who had died young—poisoned, according to Moschus, by some enemy. This *Epitaphius Bionis*, as it was called in antiquity—the reader of Milton will remember the *Epitaphium Damonis*—is a singularly beautiful poem, though it lacks the force and freshness of Theocritus. There is only room to quote the most celebrated lines.

'Alas, when the mallows die in the garden, and the green parsley, and the strong-growing, curly anise, they have a second life and grow into another year; but we, the tall and strong, we men, the wise ones, so soon as we are dead, unhearing in the hollow earth sleep deeply a very long, an endless, unawakening sleep.'

Wordsworth remembered this in his last sonnet on the Duddon:

Still glides the Stream and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the great, the mighty and the wise,
We Men, that in our morn of youth defied
The elements must vanish.

The influence of the *Epitaphius Bionis* on English poetry has indeed been considerable. It was translated into Spenserian stanzas by Chapman, and Chapman's translation, falling into the hands of Shelley, gave him the metre and perhaps the suggestion of *Adonais*, which here and there clearly reflects the language of Chapman.* Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis* also shows its author's familiarity with the poem of Moschus.

But no other pastoral lament has had anything like the same effect upon subsequent poetry as the tenth eclogue of Virgil.

* This was pointed out to me by Mr. W. K. Pyke-Lees.

This is a proof of what can be done by pure style, for in the eclogue there is much that is imitative, conventional, even slightly absurd. The occasion of the poem was the tragic death in Egypt of a fellow-poet, and in all probability a friend, of Virgil called Cornelius Gallus. He is represented as breathing his last in Arcadia among the sympathetic shepherds, to whom he bemoans the cruelty of Lycoris, who had deserted him. This Lycoris, who may really have been a *diseuse* called Cytheris, had been celebrated by Gallus in his elegies—for he was a love-poet. It is probable that Virgil felt a more intimate and personal grief at the death of Gallus, unhappily slain by his own hand under some cloud of disgrace, than Milton felt at the death of King. But the sadness exhales itself in song in the golden air of Arcady. It is the tenth eclogue—the *Gallus*, as it was called—that first effectively brought Arcadia into the pastoral, superseding Sicily, the land of Theocritus, as the spiritual home of pastoral poets.

The *Gallus* is framed on the first idyll of Theocritus, or rather on the lament for Daphnis which forms the latter part of it. Sometimes Virgil follows the Greek with almost literal fidelity, often he expands and varies or departs from it. After some introductory lines, which are merely in the nature of a prelude, Virgil begins the lament with the passage already quoted, *Quae nemora* etc.; almost translated from Theocritus. He proceeds, still in the footprints of his master:

> illum etiam lauri, etiam flevere myricae;
> pinifer illum etiam sola sub rupe iacentem
> Maenalus et gelidi fleverunt saxa Lycaei.[32]

This fancy of Nature lamenting the death of her son appears elsewhere in Virgil, as if it clung to his imagination. Thus of a warrior fallen in battle he says, with a beautiful intonation,

> te nemus Angitiae, vitrea te Fucinus unda,
> te liquidi flevere lacus.[33]
>
> (*Aen.* VII. 759, 60.)

It is unnecessary to illustrate how far this belief or sentiment has penetrated English poetry. Very likely it would have found expression if Virgil had never written; indeed it had been expressed before him, being a primitive and half instinctive emotion. The fact remains that it was Virgil's example that encouraged later pastoral poets to follow him in this matter.

> venit et upilio; tardi venere subulci;
> uvidus hiberna venit de glande Menalcas.
> omnes 'Unde amor iste?', rogant, 'tibi?' venit Apollo:
> 'Galle, quid insanis?' inquit; 'tua cura Lycoris
> perque nives alium perque horrida castra secuta est'.
> venit et agresti capitis Silvanus honore,
> florentes ferulas et grandia lilia quassans.[35]
>
> (*Ecl.* X, 19–25.)

This, too, has found its echo:

> Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
> Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent . . .
>
> His head was bound with pansies overblown,
> And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
> And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
> Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
> Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
> Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
> Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
> He came the last . . .
>
> (*Adonais* XXX, XXXIII.)

And again:

> But now my Oate proceeds,
> And listens to the Herald of the Sea
> That came in *Neptune's* plea,
> He ask'd the Waves, and ask'd the Fellon winds,
> What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain? . . .
> Next *Camus*, reverend Sire, went footing slow,
> His Mantle hairy, and his Bonnet sedge,

Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.
Ah; Who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the *Galilean* lake . . .

(*Lycidas*, 87–92; 103–109.)

But it is impossible to trace all the threads drawn from the *Gallus* which have been woven into the texture of pastoral poetry.

Spenser has more independence of Virgil than might have been expected. But he was familiar with the *Eclogues*, and apparently with Theocritus. The 'Aeglogue' which is called *August* in the *Shepheards Calender* is a spirited example of the 'amoebean' idyll. The immediate model may have been Virgil, but Spenser at least knew that Virgil's own model was Theocritus. When, however, it comes to the pastoral elegy or lament, Spenser for the most part goes on lines of his own, reminding us more of *The Faerie Queene* than of Virgil. In *Astrophel*, which is a lament for the death of Sir Philip Sidney, he has in his mind, in the latter part of the poem, the lament for Adonis (*epitaphius Adonidis*) attributed to Bion, the poet whose own death was lamented by Moschus. Here are some lines translated from the Greek:

'A cruel, cruel wound has Adonis in his thigh, but a greater wound Cytherea bears in her heart. About the lad there lying his own dogs howl, and the mountain nymphs weep aloud, and Aphrodite with loosened hair roams through the thickets, a mournful, dishevelled, unsandalled thing, the brambles tearing her as she goes and stripping her of her sacred blood; and, wailing shrilly, through the long glades she rushes, raising the Oriental cry of "my husband" and "my son". About him the dark blood pulsed out beside his navel and, spreading from his thighs, encrimsoned his breast. . . .

'She saw, she marked the unstaunched wound of Adonis, she saw the red blood on the wasting thigh—at once she flung

wide her arms and shrilled, "Wait for me, Adonis; poor Adonis, wait for me, that I may reach to you for the last time, and fold you in my arms, and fasten my lips on yours. . . ." ' Now here are some lines from *Astrophel:*

> She, when she saw her love in such a plight,
> With crudled blood and filthie gore deformed,
> That wont to be with flowers and gyrlonds dight,
> And her deare favours dearly well adorned;
> Her face, the fairest face that eye mote see,
> She likewise did deforme, like him to bee.
>
> Her yellow locks that shone so bright and long,
> As sunny beames in fairest somers day,
> She fiersly tore, and with outragious wrong
> From her red cheeks the roses rent away;
> And her faire brest, the threasury of joy,
> She spoyld thereof, and filled with annoy.
>
> His palled face, impictured with death,
> She bathed oft with teares, and dried oft:
> And with sweet kisses suckt the wasting breath
> Out of his lips like lilies pale and soft:
> And oft she cald to him, who answerd nought,
> But only by his lookes did tell his thought.

Shelley also must have been thinking of the *Epitaphius Adonidis*—was it not this that suggested the strange name Adonais?—when he wrote:

> 'Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
> As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
> Leave me not!' cried Urania . . .
> 'Stay yet awhile! Speak to me once again;
> Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live' . . .
> (*Adonais* XXV, XXVI.)

But the shepherd's grief often has another subject: the cruelty or faithlessness of the beloved. The most famous descant of

this kind in Theocritus is that in which the Cyclops Polyphemus pleads vainly with the sea-nymph Galatea. It is really a humorous poem, the humour consisting in this, that the great one-eyed monster, who is so terrible a figure in the *Odyssey*, is now represented as a timid lover. The success of such an attempt depends wholly on the tact of the writer; and the tact of Theocritus (who has an excellent gift of humour) is here adequate. It seems hardly necessary to illustrate this by quotation, as we have already read Ovid on the subject. The Cyclops idyll had been imitated before Ovid by Virgil in the second eclogue, which the reader is invited to consult. It has had some effect on English poetry. Thus the Cyclops offers country gifts to Galatea, if she will leave the sea and live with him. Well, that is the motive of Marlowe's '*Come live with me and be my love . . .*', and of some, by no means the least pleasing, of Shenstone's verses. Above all it has suggested passages in Tennyson's recreation of a Theocritean idyll which begins *Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height.* Here we have something which, if it has not the golden ease and naturalness of Theocritus, yet comes nearer to him in matter and manner than anything else in the language. The student will learn more about the Greek pastoral from it than from a volume of commentary.

> Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
> What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
> In height and cold, the splendour of the hills? . . .
> And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
> For Love is of the valley, come thou down
> And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
> Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
> Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
> Or foxlike in the vines . . .

It is time to pass to another variety of pastoral, that exemplified by the fourth eclogue of Virgil. This strange poem has no Theocritean 'prototype, nor indeed any certain literary

ancestry, although we cannot doubt that it was to some extent modelled on lost Greek writings; the poet of the *Eclogues* was not yet independent of models. It is addressed or dedicated to Gaius Asinius Pollio in the year (40 B.C.) when that patron or friend of the poet was consul. On that account the fourth eclogue received the title *Pollio*. It was perhaps the last of the eclogues to be written, and we detect in it a loftier, more epic utterance than in the rest. Here Virgil has moved definitely away from Theocritus. But that is due not to any dissatisfaction with Theocritus, but to the new subject, which calls for a more epic strain than is appropriate to a rustic theme. The subject is the birth of a child, who will restore the golden age. What child was in Virgil's mind, or if it was a human child at all, is unknown. That, however, was not the view of the Christian Church almost, it would seem, from the first preaching of the Gospel in Rome to the end of the middle ages. In Christian eyes the child was obviously the infant Jesus and Virgil almost or altogether a prophet. In this fashion the *Pollio* acquired an adventitious importance beyond its intrinsic merit as poetry, although that merit is not small.

The belief in a golden age, that is a time when men were sinless and happy, living an unadventurous life sustained by the fruits of the earth, which supplied them without tillage or harvesting, is found in the mythology of most nations. It early met with criticism among the Greeks. The historians could find no evidence for it, and at least one great school of philosophy, the Epicurean, rejected it altogether. But the poets were unwilling to give it up; and the most poetical of ancient philosophers, Plato, even found a way of putting it on a quasi-scientific basis. He maintained the opinion (by no means indefensible) that civilisation had risen, flourished and been violently destroyed over and over again. With this hypothesis he combined another, not so defensible, that memories of former civilisations were embodied and preserved to us in myths. Since some of these myths told of a golden age, Plato

was prepared to believe that such had really existed. It would be the full flowering of civilisation before it began to wither again. Since Plato held it to be a necessary part of his hypothesis that civilisation would continue to flourish and be destroyed in the future as in the past, he drew the conclusion that there would be a golden age in the future. One ought to know this theory in order to understand the full meaning of Virgil and Shelley.

Some of the Virgilian details make us think of the Hebrew prophets; but this does not prove that Virgil had read the Septuagint. Much the same details are found in nearly all pictures of the golden age.

> At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu
> errantes hederas passim cum baccare tellus
> mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.
> ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae
> ubera, nec magnos metuent armenta leones.
> ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.
> occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
> occidet; Assyrium vulgo nascetur amomum.[36a]

But the disposition to sadness—a thing quite different from pessimism—which Virgil shares with Euripides among ancient poets, leads him to add:

> pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis,
> quae temptare Thetim ratibus, quae cingere muris
> oppida, quae iubeant telluri infindere sulcos.
> alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae vehat Argo
> delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella,
> atque iterum ad Troiam mittetur magnus Achilles.[36b]

Beautiful words, which cannot really be translated. The attempt was made nevertheless by Pope, whose *Messiah*, professedly a paraphrase of Isaiah, is in fact an effort to emulate the *Pollio*. In consequence perhaps of this double intention, it

strikes us as almost a travesty of Isaiah without recapturing the grave enchantment of Virgil.

> All crimes shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail;
> Returning Justice lift aloft her scale;
> Peace o'er the World her olive wand extend,
> And white-rob'd Innocence from heav'n descend.
> Swift fly the years, and rise th' expected morn!
> Oh spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born!
> See Nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
> With all the incense of the breathing Spring:
> See lofty Lebanon his head advance,
> See nodding forests on the mountains dance:
> See spicy clouds from lowly Saron rise,
> And Carmel's flow'ry top perfumes the skies!

That is the eighteenth-century style. Here, inspired by the same eclogue, is the lyrical romantic style.

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream . . .
>
> A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
> Fraught with a later prize;
> Another Orpheus sings again,
> And loves and weeps and dies.
> A new Ulysses leaves once more
> Calypso for his native shore . . .
>
> Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
> Cease, must men kill and die?
> Cease, drain not to its dregs the urn
> Of bitter prophecy.
> The world is weary of the past,
> Oh, might it die or rest at last! (*Hellas, last chorus*).

In spite of Pope and Shelley and Tennyson—see *Ulysses*,

> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew —

in spite of them and others the importance of the *Pollio* was greater for the middle ages than for modern times. Because of it Virgil was regarded an inspired precursor of Christianity—*anima naturaliter Christiana*, 'an instinctively Christian soul'—and therefore suitable for study by children at school. This made things easier for the teacher, because in pagan days Virgil was a school-book, and the teacher knew his way about that. In some ways that was a pity, because grammar and syntax were taught out of Virgil, who uses them like a poet and is constantly varying normal usage. The consequence was that mediaeval Latin grammars got more and more confused, so that it became necessary for the scholars of the renaissance to re-write them, which they did by observing the usage of Cicero, a much safer because more normal authority. Their work ought not to be represented as an attempt to kill Latin as a living speech. No one ever spoke as Virgil writes. In spite of that the middle ages did well to read Virgil, even to read him under some misapprehensions. The depth and power of his influence on them can only be divined as one divines the influence of the Psalms upon the modern mind. What makes any exact estimate impossible is the unresisted tendency of the mediaeval spirit to transform what it read or heard into something in harmony with itself. For the middle ages Virgil became a figure of romance, about whom the strangest stories were current. The reader may find some in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a book which everybody read who could read in these centuries. But the great thing is that they read Virgil too; and more than all else they read the *Pollio*.

We come now to another side of the astonishing versatility of Theocritus, his mimes. The mime was not, like the pastoral, an invention of his own; he had at least one predecessor in the

genre to whom he owed much. It had certain characteristics, which taken together distinguished it sharply from other forms of Greek poetry. The great epic and dramatic poets had seen human life as a drama played out, as we might say, before the eyes of God. To put it in another way, they look—as Aristotle, meaning something rather different, expressed it—for the universal in the particular; they were not interested in the particular for its own sake. But the writer of mimes was. What interested him was how people conduct themselves, how they walk and talk, how they eat and sleep. They went in for what is called truth of observation, like modern novelists. That is why their work appeals more directly to modern taste than any other kind of ancient poetry, although the ancients themselves ranked it comparatively low.

It is natural to suppose that Theocritus tried his hand at mime-writing before he worked out the new genre of the pastoral. At any rate many of the pastoral idylls are full of those 'realistic' touches on which the mime-writer prided himself. Indeed in the case of some of the idylls it is not easy to decide whether we have before us a pastoral or a mime. Theocritus is as good at the one as at the other. In fact the mimes are probably more popular to-day than any of the pastorals. One in particular has captivated the moderns, the *Adoniazusae* or 'Women at the festival of Adonis'. The festival is at Alexandria in Egypt—then a Greek city—but the women are Syracusans resident there. One is called Gorgo, the other Praxinoe. Gorgo calls on Praxinoe.

Gorgo (*to the maid*). Is Praxinoe at home?

Praxinoe (*coming to the door*). My dear Gorgo! What a time it is since you called.—Yes, I'm at home. I'm surprised to see you even now. (*To the maid.*) Eunoe, look out a chair for the lady. And put a cushion on it.

Go. Thank you so much.

Pr. Do sit down.

Go. Truly we live in a vain show. I got here by the skin of

my teeth, Praxinoe. What crowds of people! What miles of carriages! Cavalry boots everywhere, and men in uniform . . . And there's *no* end to this street—you do live at the back of beyond.

Pr. It's that half-wit of a husband of mine. He came to the end of the world here and took—I won't say a house, a hole—to stop us from being neighbours, just out of a nasty spirit, the spiteful beast—he's always like that.

Go. Don't make such remarks about your husband, my dear, in front of the little one. Look, woman, how he is staring at you. (*To the child.*) It's all right, little Zopyrus, sweetheart; she is not speaking about papa.

Pr. Goodness gracious, the baby understands!

Go. (*To Zopyrus.*) Nice papa!

Pr. Why, that papa the other day . . . well, the other day I said, 'Dad, buy soap and rouge at the shop'. Back he came with salt, the great big stick!

Go. My man Dioclides is just as bad; money burns a hole in his pocket. Yesterday he got five dog skins—fleeces he called them—at seven drachmas each, the rags of old wallets, perfect rubbish. It's just one thing on the top of another. (*Changing the subject.*) Grab your cloak and shawl, and let's be off. Let us go to the palace of our rich king Ptolemy to see the Adonis. I hear the queen is getting up something fine.

Pr. Everything is grand in a grand persons house.

Go. What stories of sights you have seen with your own eyes you will be able to tell any one who did not see them! . . . It must be time to start.

Pr. (*who seems to like proverbs.*) It's always holiday time with those who have nothing to do.—Eunoe, lift the water and put it back where everybody can get at it, you wasteful thing! Cats like to sleep soft. Hurry, bring the water quick.—Water is what one needs first, and she brings the soap! Never mind, give it me.—Not so much, extravagant!—Now pour the water over my hands.—You wretched creature, what do you mean by wetting my blouse?—Stop now. I have washed my

hands, as it pleased God. . . . Where is the key of the big chest? Bring it here.

Go. Praxinoe, that loose-fitting blouse is highly becoming. Tell me—how much did the material cost you off the loom?

Pr. Don't mention it, Gorgo! More than eight pounds of good money. And I worked myself nearly to death over the embroidery.

Go. Well it has turned out a success.

Pr. Thank you for these few kind words. (*To Eunoe.*) Fetch my scarf, and set my hat on at the fashionable angle. (*To Zopyrus.*) No, I will *not* take you, child. G–r–r! biting horse!—Cry as much as you like, I won't have you lamed.—Let's go—(*To maid.*) Phrygia, take baby and play with him, call the dog indoors, and lock the front door.

Their subsequent adventures are in the street, where the women go on chattering in the same way.

This excerpt from a mime is enough to show how mistaken is the impression that classical art is classical because it could not be anything else. The truth is that classical art (in its purest form) is based on a deliberate rejection of such realism as that of the mime. The reader must be left to draw his own conclusion from this; it is at least a somewhat sobering consideration.

One other Theocritean idyll which has the character of a mime calls for mention. It is the *Pharmaceutriae*, and comes second in the traditional order of the *Idylls*. This is the monologue of Simaetha, a girl who has been deserted by her lover. To get him back she has recourse to magic, appealing for success in it to Artemis in her character of Hecate, queen of witches, and to Selene, the Moon-goddess. It could not be represented fairly except by quoting the whole of it, since each part explains the other. The scene is probably a garden, with the moon overhead. There Simaetha does her magic with the aid of a slave-girl called Thestylis. No poem has a more

wonderful atmosphere; we seem to breathe magic and moonlight, passionate love, sweet and bitter memories. It is thus utterly different from the *Adoniazusae*. We are again touching life, but it is a life far more mysterious, profound and disturbing. In some ways the most interesting thing about the poem is that it is utterly and typically 'romantic'; it is as romantic as Coleridge or Keats. It shows how careful we must be when we draw historical limits between the 'classical' and the 'romantic'. Here are the last words.

> 'Farewell, O Queen, and turn your horses towards Ocean; and I will bear my longing even as I have borne it. Farewell, bright Moon; farewell, you other stars that follow the chariot-rail of quiet Night.'

Is that 'classical' or 'romantic'? It is both.

The poem has been a good deal imitated. The second part of Virgil's eighth eclogue is modelled upon it, and Virgil in turn found his imitators here. But it is disappointing to find that what chiefly interests them seems to be the magic. This is attractive to the folklorists, since the poets often contrive to bring in some piece of rustic magic or superstition known to themselves. But the passion, which makes the Theocritean idyll one of the great love-poems of the world, is not attempted by these successors or, if attempted, falls altogether short of the original.

After all the chief effect produced by the mime-like idylls was to intensify the dramatic element in the pastoral proper, so that at last it became almost inevitable that we should get the pastoral play, of which perhaps the first and most famous examples were Tasso's *Aminta* and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini. It was under their influence, though without borrowing much, that Daniel composed his *Queene's Arcadia* (1605), described by him as a 'Pastorall Tragi-comedie'. He was followed by Fletcher with *The Faithful Shepherdess*, written in a style which makes one think of Keats's *Endymion*. Ben Jonson began, but

never finished, *The Sad Shepherd*. There was an interesting development of the genre in Scotland, where Allan Ramsay with his *Gentle Shepherd* (1725) and Alexander Ross with his *Helenore* (1768) adapted it to the conditions of rural Scotland. They were perfectly well aware of the classical ancestry of their way of writing.

The history of the pastoral is too long to be given here even in outline. The *Eclogues* of Virgil served as model or stimulus to later Latin poets, such as Calpurnius Siculus and Nemesianus. Their pastorals have survived and permit themselves to be read; but their influence on English literature, if it exists, is negligible. It is well known that a new lease of life came to bucolic poetry with Petrarch and the Italian renaissance. Many of the scholars tried their hands at Latin eclogues more or less in the manner of Virgil, yet sometimes not without a certain independence. In particular a note of satire or invective creeps in, which is rather new. Milton had Italian authority for introducing the 'Peter' passage into *Lycidas*; indeed Spenser had introduced similar passages before into *The Shepheards Calender*. Of these Italians the most celebrated was Baptista Spagnuoli, who in his character of Latin-writing poet called himself Mantuanus. Shakespeare, who rather enjoys poking fun at Latin scholars, makes Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* refer to him as 'good old Mantuan'. It is not clear why he had so great an influence, for his eclogues seem now devoid of charm, the work of a humourless schoolmaster. But he had it, even on Spenser, even perhaps on Donne. Another Italian was Aeneas Sylvius, a man famous on many counts, who supplied most of his matter to Alexander Barclay, whose *Eclogues* are the first English pastorals. Much later the form was taken up with far greater artistry and genius by Spenser. Even apart from the *Calender* he might be said to have almost an addiction to pastoral forms. A number of his minor poems adopt that guise or disguise, while *The Fairie Queene* itself is full of pastoral elements.

After Spenser pastoral poems became almost too common, though not merely because Spenser had set the fashion; the fashion was European. But *The Shepheards Calender* had very great influence in at least two ways: it permitted a great range and variety of metres, whereas the classical pastoral is almost invariably written in hexameters; secondly, it encouraged pastoral poets to look for their material at home, and not in Arcadia or Sicily or Italy. The result is that the classical influence on nearly all these Elizabethan and Jacobean pastorals is superficial and indirect. This is true of Nicholas Breton, of Drayton, of Wither, of Browne of Tavistock and others. For nearly all the Elizabethans tried the pastoral in one form or another. There was an especially strong tendency for it to become lyrical—a kind of rustic or would-be-rustic song. It was Milton who brought the pastoral Muse back to her classical haunts. *Lycidas*, the greatest of all pastoral poems, is also the most traditional. The most imitative are perhaps the *Pastorals* of Pope, which are little more than a pastiche of bits paraphrased from Virgil and others. Pope had in Ambrose Philips a contemporary pastoralist who tried, in the Spenserian tradition, to accommodate the bucolic poem to the English countryside, although his style is quite unlike Spenser's and not unlike Pope's. Pope chose to regard him as a rival and (so it is said) persuaded Gay to ridicule him in *The Shepherd's Week*, which burlesques the conventions of pastoralism. The burlesque is more charming, and even truer to the English scene, than either Philips' or Pope's serious efforts. Nor did it kill the taste for pastoral poetry, which continued to be written and read. It even affected other forms, and it is arguable that Parnell's *Hermit* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* are almost as much pastoral as didactic poems. In the middle of all this Gray quietly wrote his *Elegy*, the best-loved stanzas of which have always been those that have a pastoral colour.

The first effective protest came from George Crabbe,

On Mincio's banks, in Caesar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the golden age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where fancy, leads the way?

These are lines which had been revised and almost rewritten by Dr. Johnson, who heartily approved of the sentiment they expressed.* One does not readily think of Crabbe's grim pictures of East Anglia as pastoral poetry, but they are in fact the pastoral seen in reverse. His salutary protest fortunately did not kill the pastoral, but it made it impossible to write it in the manner of Pope or even of Shenstone. Tennyson wrote *English Idylls*, which do not show him at his best, but also *Come down, O maid*, which nearly does. Again it seemed proved that the pastoral caught fresh life when the poet went back to the ancient sources. And the impression is confirmed by *Adonais* and *Thyrsis*.

The last variety of idyll among those attributed, not always correctly, to Theocritus is that called the *epyllion* or 'little epic'. It gets its name from the circumstance that it treats an episode, of brief or no great compass, in the diction and metre of the Homeric epic. The episode is regularly drawn from the legendary history of the heroic past, the poets instinctively or prudently avoiding those parts of it which had already been treated by Homer. They did not aim at the sublime but at the pictorial, and it is more than possible that sometimes at least, as in the *Europa* of Moschus, the poet had an actual painting in his mind or before his eyes. At any rate the writers of 'little epics' fully accepted the maxim *ut pictura poesis*, 'poetry should be like painting', which Horace no doubt adopted from Alexandrine literary criticism, the *epyllion* being a characteristically Alexandrine invention. There is no need to linger

*I suppose 'fancy' means the poetical imagination, which sees things as they are and not as others may represent them.

over it, as its effect upon English poetry has been largely confined to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. It is not that the *Idylls of the King* directly imitate Theocritus, but their method is much the same, and this is as it were acknowledged by the title which Tennyson gave his poem. For the English poet, like the Greek, was content to treat his matter in separate episodes instead of working it all up into a single organic whole like the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost*. And his style with its delicate exactness of observation has a remarkable affinity with that of Theocritus. I will make one quotation and be done with the matter. It comes from an *epyllion*, in which Castor and Pollux come unexpectedly upon the brutal king of the country (Bebrycia by the Hellespont), who has a standing challenge to all strangers to box with him.

'Beneath a precipice they found a running spring bubbling over with clear water; at the bottom you could see pebbles as white as frost or crystal; there was a wood of firs close by that grew to a great height, and silvery planes and cypresses with their green tops, and all the fragrant flowers that blossom in the fields towards the end of spring—the hairy bees like to work on them. There, sitting in the sun, was a monster of a man, a dreadful sight, his ears split with stiff punches; his tremendous chest and broad back were domed with flesh of iron like a statue hammered out of metal. On his hard upper-arms, just under the shoulder, the muscles stood out like big round stones that a torrent has worn smooth with its large eddies.'

The reader must imagine this meaning conveyed in language and metre of the utmost smoothness and finish — like Tennyson's.

> At last, it chanced that on a summer morn
> (They sleeping each by either) the new sun
> Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,
> And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
> Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
> And bared the knotted column of his throat,

The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.

(*Enid and Geraint.*)

Tennyson must have had the Theocritean passage in his memory; but that is comparatively unimportant. The important thing is that, but for Theocritus, the *Idylls of the King* would have been different, or perhaps never come into existence at all.

CHAPTER TEN

SATIRE

THE Romans liked to think that satire was a Roman invention. The claim cannot be allowed without some qualification, but it contains enough truth to make it natural and up to a point justifiable. For the kind of satire which has influenced the history of literature was the work of Roman poets. They may be named at once: Lucilius, Horace, Persius, Juvenal. No Greek will be mentioned in this chapter.

Of Lucilius extremely little is known, his voluminous works having all but completely perished. It is evident from ancient testimony that he possessed vigour, learning and originality, with a sense of humour (perhaps rather hearty than fine) and a taste and talent for invective. He wrote the Latin of his time (the end of the second century before Christ) with idiomatic purity except where it was variegated with Greek words, their Latin equivalents not yet existing. Lucilius wrote on a wide variety of subjects, but much too rapidly, so that he was often prolix and careless. These were grievous defects in the eyes of Horace, who from the very beginning of his literary career was animated, like the youthful Pope, with a passion for what the latter called 'correctness'. It meant not only the refusal of any licences in grammar or metre, but a love of artistic finish for its own sake. When Horace, for reasons that need not be considered at this time, decided to continue the Lucilian tradition, he could not radically alter it, because it was a genre, and every genre had its own style, that being one of the great principles of classical art. At the same time Horace thought it possible to retain much of the native force and savour of Lucilius' verse while purifying it of its faults in expression and in metre. On the other hand it was not a possible course for a young man—Horace began his career as

a satirist, not a lyric poet—and a young man without influential connexions and with a political past that had to be lived down—to attack public men with the libellous ferocity of Lucilius. Probably he felt little regret on that score, for he was never a good hater. And what he loved best in the old poet was not his invective but those parts of his work in which he unconsciously revealed himself.

> ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> credebat libris; neque si male cesserat, usquam
> decurrens alio, neque si bene; quo fit, ut omnis
> votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
> vita senis.[37]
>
> (*Serm.* II. I. 30–34.)

It was on this quality of his master's work that Horace dwelt with most fondness, and he reproduced it in his own. Satire becomes with him a revelation of character, what in prose is called 'confessions'.

The charm of Horace's satire (both the *sermones* and the *epistolae*) is chiefly compounded of two things: this revelation of character, and the flavour of his latinity. Not many readers have been able to resist the attraction of Horace's personality, but it needs an educated palate to taste the quality of his satiric style. For Horace is not here using, as he uses in his *Odes*, a highly wrought poetic diction, the beauty of which, like that of a picture or a statue, belongs to no particular time or place. He is using the language of conversation, that is such conversation as might be heard among men of literary and philosophical tastes when talking at their best. Now it is difficult for a contemporary not in the set, it is almost hopeless for a modern and a foreigner to appreciate the fine shades of such talk or even, sometimes, to understand it at all. Yet Horace has, more than any other ancient writer, the art of admitting or seeming to admit us—it comes to the same thing—into intimacy with him; catching as it were the idiom of his mind, we catch the idiom of his phrases. But this needs

reading and re-reading. It will not be supposed that it is easy to make literature out of conversation. The task which Horace undertook was supremely difficult, and could not be mastered at once. The style he aimed at, and finally perfected, had, if it was to resemble conversation, to avoid too marked an appearance of smoothness and finish. Lucilius had gone to extreme lengths and almost made a virtue of colloquial roughness. The problem was to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, and this Horace contrived to do. His slippered ease never becomes slipshod. His apparent negligence is studied, his occasional harshness of phrase or roughness of metre is calculated. To seem artless is his art. That is a rare accomplishment—so rare in Latin literature that one cannot think of any later poet who possessed it. Persius, who for the most part formed his style on that of Horace, elaborates it with Meredithian self-consciousness. He had beyond a doubt studied Lucilius, and he may have thought that Horace, in refining the crudities of Lucilius, had sacrificed too much of the old poet's vigour and raciness. But the roughness of Persius is not a natural roughness like that of Lucilius; it is forced and unnatural. To this he adds (absurdly enough in so young a man) an element of oddity, such as we expect to find in a 'character'. This peculiarity was destined to exercise a vast influence on the earlier English satirists. It is now, happily, out of fashion.

There is some danger of over-simplifying our conception of Horatian satire. It is not always urbane, it is not always in good taste, it is sometimes trivial. It was not difficult for people like Donne or Jonson (who liked to think of himself as a sort of reincarnation of Horace) to point to passages in his satires which appeared to supply a precedent for certain ill-mannered passages in their own. But such passages in Horace belong to the Lucilian tradition, and are not truly characteristic of him. The eighteenth century understood him better. Addison and Goldsmith in their essays, Prior and Cowper in their less didactic pieces, have much of the true

Horatian spirit. But it is many-faceted, and none of these reveals all its sides. Let us look at the first book of the satires or *sermones*, as they are sometimes called, 'conversations'. The subject of the first satire (which may actually have been written last, to serve as an introduction to the rest) is expressed in its opening lines,

> Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo, quam sibi sortem
> seu ratio dederit seu fors obiecerit, illa
> contentus vivat, laudet diversa sequentes?

'How does it happen, Maecenas, that nobody lives contented with the lot that choice or accident has put in his way, but commends those who follow quite different pursuits?' (It will be observed that the sentence is strictly illogical, but pleasingly so; that is Horace's art.) The theme of the second satire is summed up in the last line: *dum vitant stulti vitia in contraria currunt*, 'fools, seeking to escape one set of faults, run into the opposite set'. The third satire (characteristically) pleads for charity in judging the faults and follies of men. In the fourth Horace defends himself against the charge of attacking certain people with excessive asperity. The fifth is really a versified letter or journal describing a trip from Rome to Brindisi. The sixth is autobiographical. The seventh is a mere anecdote, and a stupid one at that. The eighth is put in the mouth of the garden-god Priapus, who describes some black magic he saw. The ninth gives an account of the poet's encounter with a bore. The tenth defines his relation to Lucilius. In a single short book what a range of interests!

These ten satires are of very unequal merit. The most celebrated is probably the ninth, in which Horace tells us what he suffered from an importunate acquaintance. The whole charm of the piece lies in the telling. The humour is of the kind (supposed by some to be peculiarly English and American) that takes pleasure in a story against oneself. The satire has often been imitated, but the original is still unrivalled. One

can see that it was much in the thoughts of Donne when he was writing his *Satyres*. It is not addressed to any named person; and, although it is easy to suggest that it is addressed to the reader, the suggestion is not so convincing in the case of an ancient as of a modern poet. It is perhaps more likely that the satire was originally a verse-letter to a friend. When it was published, the reader took the place of the friend. Another way of putting it is to say that Horace makes a friend of the reader. Now that is both true and important. Horace seems to be the first classical author who does this, and it gives him a unique position. His work has the quality of intimacy, a quality absent from the great Athenian poets. It appears in the delightful account of his journey to Brundisium (*sat.* V), although this is said to have been modelled closely on a similar account in Lucilius. It may be so; but in this kind of writing the personal touch is everything, and only the author can give that. But to the lover of Horace none of the satires is so endearing as the sixth, in which he tells Maecenas, who of course was a very important person, of his own childhood and early struggles. Nothing quite like this had appeared, so far as we know, in literature before, and there is nothing quite like it afterwards until we come to Plutarch or even Montaigne.

The second book of the satires, published later than the first, shows greater maturity of style and thought, and on the whole a gentler irony. He makes fun of certain 'paradoxes' maintained by the Stoics, against which he employs that humorous commonsense which was natural to him. The interest of Horace in philosophy was in no way exceptional at that time; it was a subject on which every educated man was expected to have an opinion. What is exceptional in Horace is his quiet refusal to embrace any system with the fervour its votaries held to be its due. Temperamentally one should have thought him inclined to Epicureanism; indeed in one agreeable phrase he describes himself as *Epicuri de grege porcus*, 'a pig from

Epicurus' herd'. But that is only his fun. When a mere boy he had fought under the eagles of Brutus, a convinced Stoic, who had killed himself rather than surrender to Caesarism. He had no animus against Stoicism, no prejudice in favour of Epicureanism. Simply he did not like fanaticism. It was this dislike perhaps more than anything else that attracted him to Aristippus, who said that the end of life was the pleasure of the moment, since one could live only in the moment: therefore one should cultivate the art of living. That appealed to Horace, who understood, of course, that Aristippus did not confuse the art of living with the pursuit of merely sensual pleasures, which quickly ends in making that art impossible. But even this would not quite do for Horace, who in his heart continued to hanker after a more austere and puritanic ideal. How many men are like that! Horace is their poet.

Besides this increased preoccupation with philosophy—moral philosophy, for Horace has no head for metaphysics—we observe in the second book a disposition to defend himself against misunderstanding, to define with greater precision the points in which he differs from Lucilius. There is, both in the *Sermones* and in the *Epistles* (which are considerably later) a great deal of literary criticism, both good and bad. There is no political satire, which marks a wide divergence from Lucilius, who was full of it. But there is plenty of social satire, much of it concerned with table-manners; and this is the least agreeable part of his work. Two things may be said for Horace: he did not care for these terrible dinners himself, and the description of them was one of the standing topics of ancient satire, which he evidently felt that he could not simply avoid.

Of the *Epistles* a little has been said or implied already. There are two books of them, and the second, which contains or has added to it the so-called *Ars Poetica*, is in all probability the last work that came from his hand. The *Epistles* are not all satirical, and what satire is in them has become little more than a gentle irony. But they belong to the same genre and therefore

exhibit the same style as the *Sermones*. The main subjects too are the same: literary criticism and the Horatian philosophy of life. In fact we now realise something that was implicit in the earliest of his satires, that the real subject of Horace is himself. This is as true of him as of Montaigne or Charles Lamb.

It follows that he cannot be imitated. Pope in his *Imitations of Horace* is not imitating him in the ordinary sense of the word; he is only following his example, for the real subject of Pope's satires is Pope—a very different person indeed! Thus the history of satire begins (if we leave out Lucilius) with a writer to whom there could be no real successor. It had to begin all over again, and the true founder of satire as a continuous tradition is Juvenal. Juvenal could be imitated, for he is, or affects to be, the impersonal castigator of the sins and follies of men; and that is a role which any one may play. Thus the demonstrable effect of Juvenal on later satirists is much greater than that of Horace. Yet we may ask ourselves if the actual influence of Horace has not gone deeper. It is remarkable how the most Juvenalian of authors wish to be thought, and perhaps have even persuaded themselves that they are, more like Horace. Which proves how deeply he sank into their minds. It is a natural result of the difference between the two poets that Juvenal has often been translated with a measure of success, Horace never. Yet we must make some effort to show the qualities which have been so much admired.

This is the beginning of the satire (I. ix) in which Horace describes his encounter with the 'bore'.

> Ibam forte via Sacra, sicut meus est mos,
> nescio quid meditans nugarum, totus in illis.
> accurrit quidam notus mihi nomine tantum,
> arreptaque manu 'quid agis, dulcissime rerum?'
> 'suaviter, ut nunc est,' inquam, 'et cupio omnia quae vis'.
> cum adsectaretur, 'num quid vis?' occupo. at ille
> 'noris nos' inquit; 'docti sumus'. hic ego 'pluris
> hoc' inquam 'mihi eris'. misere discedere quaerens,

ire modo ocius, interdum consistere, in aurem
dicere nescio quid puero, cum sudor ad imos
manaret talos. 'o te, Bolane, cerebri
felicem!' aiebam tacitus, cum quidlibet ille
garriret, vicos, urbem laudaret. ut illi
nil respondebam, 'misere cupis' inquit 'abire;
iamdudum video: sed nil agis; usque tenebo;
persequor hinc quo nunc iter est tibi'. 'nil opus est te
circumagi: quendam volo visere non tibi notum:
trans Tiberim longe cubat is, prope Caesaris hortos'.
'nil habeo quod agam et non sum piger: usque sequar te.'
demitto auriculas, ut iniquae mentis asellus,
cum gravius dorso subiit onus.[38]

After more of this kind of thing a friend appears.

haec dum agit, ecce
Fuscus Aristius occurrit, mihi carus et illum
qui pulchre nosset. consistimus. 'unde venis?' et
'quo tendis?' rogat et respondet. vellere coepi,
et prensare manu lentissima bracchia, nutans,
distorquens oculos, ut me eriperet. male salsus
ridens dissimulare: meum iecur urere bilis.
'certe nescio quid secreto velle loqui te
aiebas mecum'. 'memini bene, sed meliore
tempore dicam: hodie tricesima sabbata: vin tu
curtis Iudaeis oppedere?' 'nulla mihi' inquam
religio est'. 'at mi: sum paulo infirmior, unus
multorum: ignosces: alias loquar'. huncine solem
tam nigrum surrexe mihi! fugit improbus ac me
sub cultro linquit. casu venit obvius illi
adversarius et 'quo tu turpissime?' magna
inclamat voce, et 'licet antestari?' ego vero
oppono auriculam, rapit in ius: clamor utrimque:
undique concursus. sic me servavit Apollo.

These verses will illustrate Horace's conception of satire as a revelation of character. They have had great influence. In reading Elizabethan satire one is constantly coming on passages

where the satirist represents himself as conversing with some anonymous character, who is generally a type, like Horace's 'bore'. The method is open to imitation; the peculiar agreeableness, the delightful turn of phrase, are Horace's own. Hear him now as a critic of life.

> Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus,
> hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons
> et paulum silvae super his foret. auctius atque
> di melius fecere. bene est. nil amplius oro,
> Maia nate, nisi ut propria haec mihi munera faxis.
> si neque maiorem feci ratione mala rem
> nec sum facturus vitio culpave minorem,
> si veneror stultus nihil horum, 'o si angulus ille
> proximus accedat qui nunc denormat agellum!
> O si urnam argenti fors quae mihi monstret, ut illi,
> thesauro invento qui mercennarius agrum
> illum ipsum mercatus aravit, dives amico
> Hercule!' si quod adest gratum iuvat, hac prece te oro:
> pingue pecus domino facias et cetera praeter
> ingenium, utque soles custos mihi maximus adsis.
> ergo ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbe removi,
> quid prius illustrem satiris musaque pedestri?
> nec mala me ambitio perdet nec plumbeus Auster
> autumnusque gravis, Libitinae quaestus acerbae.[39]
>
> (II. VI. 1–19.)

This, it may be thought, is no very lofty philosophy, and such as it is it may provoke a smile. 'All I have asked of life I have got,' says Horace, 'and I am content.' It was, you see, so little that he asked—only a small landed estate in a healthy and picturesque part of the country, enough to live on comfortably and provide an occasional dinner for his friends, not to have to work for his living, and to know all the best people in Rome. Did this fit him to be a satirist? It is difficult to ply the lash with sufficient heartiness, if you are fairly happy yourself and like to see others happy. It was not easy perhaps for Horace to work himself into a high state of virtuous

indignation, nor does he seem to have personal enemies on whom he wishes, like the miserably sensitive Pope, to take vengeance. A satirist ought to feel satirical. Hence many have thought that Horace is not acrimonious enough. But even in satire acrimony is less effective than irony.

We may now quote a passage of literary criticism.

> Interdum vulgus rectum videt, est ubi peccat.
> si veteres ita miratur laudatque poetas
> ut nihil anteferat, nihil illis comparet, errat:
> si quaedam nimis antique, si pleraque dure
> dicere credit eos, ignave multa fatetur,
> et sapit et mecum facit et Iove iudicat aequo.
> non equidem insector delendave carmina Livi
> esse reor, memini quae plagosum mihi parvo
> Orbilium dictare; sed emendata videri
> pulchraque et exactis minimum distantia miror;
> inter quae verbum emicuit si forte decorum, et
> si versus paulo concinnior unus et alter,
> iniuste totum ducit venditque poema.
> indignor quicquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
> compositum illepidumve putetur, sed quia nuper,
> nec veniam antiquis, sed honorem et praemia posci.
> recte necne crocum floresque perambulet Attae
> fabula si dubitem, clament periisse pudorem
> cuncti paene patres, ea cum reprehendere coner
> quae gravis Aesopus, quae doctus Roscius egit:
> vel quia nil rectum nisi quod placuit sibi ducunt,
> vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et quae
> imberbi didicere, senes perdenda fateri.[40]
>
> (*ep.* II. I. 63–85.)

This is not really good criticism, because it lacks the historical sense. To blame Livius for not being 'correct' is like blaming the ballads for being 'rude'. But Horace does not mean to attack the old poets so much as to defend himself against what he regards as unfair criticism; and this he was fully entitled to

do. Pope, whose own criticism lacks the historical sense, has 'imitated' this passage with extraordinary brilliancy.

All this may be; the people's voice is odd,
It is, and it is not, the voice of God.
To *Gammer Gurton* if it give the bays,
And yet deny the *Careless Husband* praise,
Or say our fathers never broke a rule;
Why then, I say the public is a fool.
But let them own, that greater faults than we
They had, and greater virtues, I'll agree.
Spenser himself affects the obsolete,
And *Sydney's* verse halts ill on *Roman* feet:
Milton's strong pinion now not heav'n can bound,
Now serpent-like in prose he sweeps the ground,
In quibbles angel and archangel join,
And God the Father turns a school-divine.
Not that I'd lop the beauties from his book,
Like slashing *Bentley* with his desp'rate hook,
Or damn all *Shakespear*, like th' affected fool
At court, that hates whate'er he read at school.
But for the wits of either *Charles's* days,
The mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease;
Sprat, *Carew*, *Sedley* and a hundred more,
(Like twinkling stars the miscellanies o'er)
One simile, that solitary shines
In the dry desert of a thousand lines,
Or lengthen'd thought that gleams through many a page,
Has sanctify'd whole poems for an age.
I lose my patience, and I own it too,
When works are censur'd, not as bad but new;
While if our elders break all reason's laws,
These fools demand not pardon, but applause.
On *Avon's* bank, where flow'rs eternal blow,
If I but ask, if any weed can grow;
One tragic sentence if I dare deride,
Which *Betterton's* grave action dignify'd,
Or well-mouth'd *Booth* with emphasis proclaims,

(Tho' but, perhaps, a muster-roll of names)
How will our fathers rise up in a rage,
And swear, all shame is lost in *George's* age!
You'd think no fools disgrac'd the former reign,
Did not some grave examples yet remain,
Who scorn a lad should teach his father skill,
And, having once been wrong, will be so still.

The imitation is more brilliant than the original and proportionately more impressive, though perhaps not really more effective as satire. But the spirit is different. Pope hopes to give pain; Horace never does that.

Horace has been read and admired in all ages, which means that his influence has always been operative. Yet it is not easy to estimate, because the essential quality of his work could not, as we have observed, be reproduced. The probability is that we under-rate his influence at certain epochs. The fact that he was regarded as a moralist, at least in his satirical work, pleaded for him with the schoolmasters, so that he was a good deal read in schools. As a moralist, he was acceptable to the middle ages. When Virgil leads Dante into the circle of the great heathen poets in the *Inferno*, their names are mentioned: Homer, Horace 'the satirist', Lucan and Ovid. These, with, of course, Virgil himself and Statius, who is met later in the *Purgatorio*, were the classical poets most admired by the chief poet of the middle ages. Homer he could not read, and took on trust; the satires of Horace he undoubtedly read. Yet where are the evidences of this in Dante or elsewhere in the mediaeval centuries? There is a very large amount of satirical verse in their literature, and one would expect a good deal of it to show traces of the influence of Horace. But we do not find this. There is ridicule and invective in abundance; but this is not what Horace, or even Juvenal, understood by satire. The objects of mediaeval satire were generally institutions, such as the orders of monasticism or chivalry, whereas the Roman satirists attack named persons on specific charges. But

it is the paradox of mediaeval literature that, while it extends a boundless, uncriticising admiration to the classical authors, and while it pillages them for facts and sentiments, it does not take them as models for imitation. Thus it is highly original in form and spirit, while the material on which it works is for the most part just the debris of classical literature. There are, of course, eminent exceptions; Langland and Chaucer, for instance, have both their English material. But the average mediaeval poet is a *remanieur*. Since it was not possible to mediaevalise Horace, as in a sense it was possible to mediaevalise Ovid and Statius, even Lucan and Virgil, he was left alone, and we are left to guess at the stimulus received from him, from allusions, quotations of some moral sentiment, and such partial indications. The matter must be left at that. But look at Chaucer. He has the humour, the irony, the rather easy-going and self-indulgent temperament, the absence of fanaticism, the warm humanity of the Roman poet. But the world of Chaucer was so different, the forms and conventions of his art so far from those of Horace, that the spiritual affinity of the two men does not find expression in comparable ways. Perhaps the most Horatian by nature of all our poets is not influenced by Horace.

With the renaissance came an utter change. What the nature of this change was, is not so well understood as it should be. It is true that the old conception of the renaissance as the rediscovery of something the middle ages did not know does not any longer hold the field. Many manuscripts of classical authors were discovered; but they were mediaeval manuscripts. They had been there all the time, and mediaeval scholars had read them. But something *was* rediscovered—the sense of style, at any rate of classical style. For the first time in a thousand years the artistic beauty of the ancient poets was revealed to their readers. Even so great a poet and critic as Dante had found in Virgil a guide rather than the incomparable master of style. It may be said—I have said it myself—that the

middle ages could not be expected to feel the beauty of Latin poetic form because they did not know classical Latin well enough; and that when, at the renaissance, scholars did know it well enough, they felt the beauty at once. But this is not what happened. Men suddenly became awake to the verbal loveliness of the classical poets, and *then* passionately threw themselves into the study of them. The scales fell from their eyes and they saw. That is the miracle, and no one can explain exactly when or how it happened.

After it did happen, Horace appeared no longer merely as a moralist but as one of the most exquisite of literary artists. This was most evident in the *Odes*, of which the middle ages had taken little account, and these were now exalted beyond all other lyrical poetry whatsoever. The art of the *Sermones*, more difficult to appreciate, was not felt in the same way, and there was a tendency to regard its studied negligence as a defiant roughness. This could hardly be maintained in the case of the later and more elaborate of the *Epistles*, especially the longest and most elaborate of all, the *Epistola ad Pisones*, which was then habitually designated the *Ars Poetica*. It was supposed to contain Horace's considered views on poetry as an art, and as such became the bible of the new school of literary criticism which inevitably came into existence as an expression of the new feeling for classical style. In this way, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, Horace had come to be generally accepted as the arbiter of taste in poetry, a position he retained almost unchallenged until well into the eighteenth century. Throughout that long period his influence works undiminished or with increasing efficacy.

In the field of satire, which we are now reviewing, the Horatian doctrine of 'correctness' did not seem to the earlier critics of the school to be fully applied, if it was applied at all. The result was that the writers of verse-satire considered themselves not so much entitled as bound to eschew grace and smoothness of diction and metre. It was Dryden who first

among English satirists effectively disposed of this misconception by bringing into satire his magnificent versification. Pope carried correctness still further. Indeed, although very unlike Horace as a man, as a satirist he comes nearer him than any other English poet in virtue of the concentration, lucidity and finish of his style, although he prefers to say a thing pointedly where Horace would prefer to say it naturally.

The notion that the satirist ought deliberately to sacrifice the graces of style appeared to be confirmed by the practice of Persius, who composed, about half a century after Horace, a few satires, which were published after his early death. It is difficult to say what makes a book succeed. The style of Persius is so harsh, mannered and obscure that one might have expected his little volume to remain unread or rarely opened. On the contrary it at once became and remained popular, and this popularity continued till about Dryden's time or even later. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that the verses of Persius have a strong, harsh flavour, like that of a crab-apple, which can appeal to a jaded taste. Another class of readers might be attracted by the moral sentiments, which are often powerfully expressed. The chief reason, at least in the seventeenth century, and some time before it, is that people then liked a more caustic tone in satire than Horace usually affects. Whatever the reasons for it, we find traces of his influence at least as late as Pope; and we cannot deny him the position of a minor classic.

A short quotation, reasonably free from obscurities and with a biographical interest, will give some notion of Persius' manner. The words are addressed to his master in philosophy, the Stoic Cornutus.

> cum primum pavido custos mihi purpura cessit
> bullaque succinctis laribus donata pependit,
> cum blandi comites totaque impune Subura
> permisit sparsisse oculos iam candidus umbo;
> cumque iter ambiguum est et vitae nescius error

deducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes,
me tibi supposui: teneros tu suscipis annos
Socratico, Cornute, sinu; tum fallere sollers
adposita intortos extendit regula mores,
at premitur ratione animus vincique laborat
artificemque tuo ducit sub polluce vultum.
tecum etenim longos memini consumere soles,
et tecum primas epulis decerpere noctes:
unum opus et requiem pariter disponimus ambo,
atque verecunda laxamus seria mensa.
non equidem hoc dubites, amborum foedere certo
consentire dies et ab uno sidere duci.

(V. 30–46.)

The translation that follows is by Conington. The reference in the first lines is to the change of dress which was required by Roman custom when a boy reached the the age of about seventeen. The boy, whose toga had a purple stripe woven into it, was under pretty strict surveillance. When he adopted the *toga virilis*, he had much greater freedom.

'When first the guardianship of the purple ceased to awe me, and the boss of boyhood was hung up as an offering to the quaint old household gods, when my companions made themselves pleasant, and the yet unsullied shield of my gown left me free to cast my eyes at will over the whole Subura'—a busy quarter of Rome—'just when the way of life begins to be uncertain, and the bewildered mind finds that its ignorant ramblings have brought it to a point where roads branch off—then it was that I made myself your adopted child. You at once received the young foundling into the bosom of a second Socrates; and soon your rule, with artful surprise, straightens the moral twists that it detects, and my spirit becomes moulded by reason, and struggles to be subdued, and assumes plastic features under your hand. Aye, I mind well how I used to wear away long summer suns with you, and with you pluck the early bloom of the night for feasting. We twain have one

work and one set time for rest, and the enjoyment of a moderate table unbends our gravity. No, I would not have you doubt that there is a fixed law that brings our lives into accord, and one star that guides them.'

That Persius should have become a Stoic is not without importance in the history of satire. Horace would not commit himself to any system of thought; he looked at them all in a sympathetic, yet detached and ironical way, marvelling at the things some people could believe. The typical satirist however is not like that. There are certain things and persons that he feels impelled to denounce, and you cannot denounce in a satisfactory way unless you possess convictions. The Stoic philosophy could be held with conviction, and was so held by many admirable persons. The Stoic believed that to be good was in the long run the same as to be reasonable, and this made it possible to regard the vices as so many forms of folly. But he did not on that account look upon human pravity with indulgence; on the contrary he was among the most austere of moralists. This austerity he practised in his own life, although he did not carry it so far as it was carried by the Cynics, a sect from whom the Stoics borrowed a good deal. A cynic, as the word is now used, is the exact contrary of the ancient Cynic. The cynic thinks that virtue (if it exists at all) is of no great consequence; the Cynic thought that nothing was really important except virtue. 'Nothing is good but goodness' was his motto, and the practical inference which he drew from it was that all the luxuries and even the comforts of life ought to be cast from us. Such asceticism put them and the Stoics in a strong position for denouncing the weakness and follies of men. It was therefore natural that the ancient satirists should be attracted to Stoicism or Cynicism. The contribution of Persius to the development of satire was that he brought into it a note of reprobation on which Horace had not cared to harp. His weakness is that what he knows of the world is drawn more from books than experience—the books being

not only Lucilius and Horace but a whole library (mostly written by Stoics) of semi-popular treatises on ethics, full of wise saws and modern instances. A Roman satirist could always illustrate his theme by examples culled from them.

Perversely difficult and obscure as Persius is, he was more imitable than Horace. It is pretty clear that he had some influence on Donne, though direct imitation is absent. There was some spiritual affinity between them in their determination to put harsh truths into harsh words—as it were to depoeticise 'poetry.' But Persius did this less from some inward compulsion than because he had adopted a cult of 'manliness' from a notion, found among the extremer Stoics, that the truth could not be told in beautiful words. This notion infests the history of satire. The 'manliness' of Hall and Marston and Ben Jonson, of Oldham and Churchill and Gifford, is a sore trial to the modern reader.

Juvenal, of whom we must now speak, has much of this quality too, but he has such a genius for style that we forget it in reading him. In fact we forget everything except the power and address of the satirist's blows. It is the more remarkable because Juvenal does not, like Dryden and Pope, attack individuals. Even when he seems to do so, it is not the individual he is attacking so much as the human type of which that individual is a representative. So if he inveighs against Hannibal, he is not intent on hurting the man; he is attacking the love of military glory as embodied in Hannibal. This famous passage may, before we go farther, be quoted, as it will form the text of much that may be said. It comes in the tenth satire (147–167).

> expende Hannibalem: quot libras in duce summo
> invenies? hic est, quem non capit Africa Mauro
> percussa Oceano Niloque admota tepenti
> rursus ad Aethiopum populos aliosque elephantos.
> additur imperiis Hispania, Pyrenaeum
> transilit. opposuit natura Alpesque nivemque:

diducit scopulos et montem rumpit aceto.
iam tenet Italiam, tamen ultra tendere pergit.
'acti' inquit 'nihil est, nisi Poeno milite portas
frangimus et media vexillum pono Subura.'
o qualis facies et quali digna tabella,
cum Gaetula ducem portaret belua luscum!
exitus ergo quis est? O gloria! vincitur idem
nempe et in exilium praeceps fugit atque ibi magnus
mirandusque cliens sedet ad praetoria regis,
donec Bithyno libeat vigilare tyranno.
finem animae, quae res humanas miscuit olim,
non gladii, non saxa dabunt nec tela, sed ille
Cannarum vindex et tanti sanguinis ultor
anulus. i, demens, et saevas curre per Alpes
ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias.[41]

I will here insert Johnson's imitation of this in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (191–222).

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes let Swedish Charles decide;
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
Behold surrounding kings their pow'r combine,
And one capitulate, and one resign;
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain.
'Think nothing gain'd,' he cries, 'till nought remain,
On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
And all be mine beneath the polar sky.'
The march begins in military state,
And nations on his eye suspended wait;
Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
And Winter barricades the realms of Frost;

He comes, not want and cold his course delay;—
Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's day:
The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,
And shows his miseries in distant lands;
Condemn'd a needy supplicant to wait,
While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.
But did not Chance at length her error mend?
Did no subverted empire mark his end?
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress and a dubious hand;
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

That is not so terse, accomplished and witty a piece of writing as the original, but it is hardly less impressive.

Since he stands at the head of the second great stream of classical influence upon English satire, we are drawn to consider in what respects Juvenal differs from Horace. But first, that the question may be fairly posed, we must observe, and set aside, those elements in ancient satire which both poets have in common merely because they are inherited. We have seen over and over again that in every ancient art—for it is just as true in sculpture or painting as in literature—there was a traditional element, an irreducible residuum essential to the very existence of that art, something without which it could not preserve its identity. When we take the special case of satire, we observe that from the first it was the expression of indignant virtue. It is so even in Horace, however much qualified by his liking for people; it is clearly so in Persius, eminently in Juvenal; and there seems no doubt that it was eminently so in Lucilius. Now it is arguable that the satirist must in any case be an indignant moralist. But if that be so, is not the range of his subjects greatly restricted? Will he not find himself in the position of Crabbe when he cries, 'I preach

for ever; and I preach in vain'? There are at least two answers to this. The first is, there is an immense variety of ways of doing wrong, so that the satirist may pass from one to the other as often and as quickly as he pleases. The second is found in the tendency among ancient moralists to look on sin as a form of ignorance or folly. (Even Socrates did this.) It was easy to draw the obvious, if illogical, conclusion that folly is a kind of sin. That drew into the satirist's net many things that to us do not seem reprehensible at all. For instance, the fine arts generally have a poor time of it with him; they were apt to be regarded as emasculating influences, and therefore bad. Again, it was unmanly—and therefore bad—to pay great attention to your personal appearance. To use scent, or wear your hair long, or gargle, or play the lyre, or sing, or act on the stage, or dance, or walk with a mincing gait, or talk in a high-pitched voice—these and much else, which we should regard as, at the worst, irritating affectations, are condemned as if they were crimes. Horace is not so bad for this kind of censure as Juvenal or even Persius; but it is one of the traditions of satire. Thus when we look at the subject matter of Horace and Juvenal, and at the general tone of indignant morality in both, we see that they have a good deal in common.

When that traditional element is set apart, their differences emerge with great clearness. The chief may be expressed by saying that the art of Horace is personal, the art of Juvenal impersonal. We have perhaps said all that can usefully be said in a running commentary upon the Horatian type of satire. It is a revelation of the man himself. Although he is very far from a voluminous author, we know him better than any other ancient writer, with the possible exception of Cicero, who wrote hundreds of letters that have been preserved, and was never happier than when speaking about himself. But who knows Juvenal? He is nothing but a denunciatory voice. It is possible to learn a great deal about a man from his dislikes. But this is only possible when the dislikes are particular and

personal. The dislikes of Juvenal are general; he hates what other people hate. It may be said, What of the third satire, which is an attack on foreigners, or of the sixth, which is an attack upon women? Well, Juvenal *may* have detested foreigners, and it is possible that he loathed the whole female sex. But it is equally possible, and far more probable, that he chose to attack foreigners and women because they were such obvious and inexhaustible objects of attack. There are so many picturesque oddities about foreigners, and so many scandals about women. It seems that a good many words have been wasted on the question of the sincerity or insincerity of Juvenal. It is to misunderstand the nature of that rhetoric of which his satires are almost the supreme example. In the schools of rhetoric a lad was made to speak for or against a thesis or a character. His own views or sentiments did not come into the matter at all; the sole question was how effectively he presented the case for or against. In his satires Juvenal is counsel for the prosecution. He may, for all we know, have liked Greeks and respected women. If he did, no ancient reader would have called him insincere on account of the satires. But, this being so, Juvenal remains a veiled figure to us.

The second great difference between him and Horace is a difference of style. The style of Horace is conversational, that of Juvenal is declamatory; Horace imagines himself talking to a friend, Juvenal addresses an audience. No two styles in the same tradition could produce more divergent results. That of Juvenal owes nothing to that of Horace; it is far more like the style of Lucan. This is not so much the result of conscious or unconscious imitation as of the fact that the same influences—those of the rhetorical schools—went to mould the style both of the *Bellum Civile* and of the *Saturae*. In the one poet as in the other everything is sacrificed to rhetorical effectiveness. If the reader will now look back to the passage about Hannibal, he will see how true that is. It is bad history, bad psychology, in a sense it is even bad poetry. But it is superb, it is triumphant,

rhetoric. And observe: it would not be nearly so good if it were in prose; the swing and pulse of the metre, the striking arrangement of the words, add greatly to the effect. We are entitled to infer that there is a place in literature for the poetry of rhetoric. The nineteenth century was inclined to deny this; but no previous century had denied it.

The main qualities of the style are plain to inspection. One is the constant search for point, for epigrammatic sententiousness. No one has ever excelled Juvenal here. The fact that many of his *sententiae* turn out on examination to be the commonplaces of all morality, is no objection to them but a merit; for nothing is harder, nor is there anything better worth doing, than to express in a new and striking way what everybody knows to be true. Almost any passage in the satires will show this. I choose one in which the lesson inculcated is peculiarly trite. See how Juvenal puts it (*Sat.* XIV. 303–21).

> tantis parta malis cura maiore metuque
> servantur, misera est magni custodia census.
> dispositis praedives amis vigilare cohortem
> servorum noctu Licinus iubet, attonitus pro
> electro signisque suis Phrygiaque columna
> atque ebore et lata testudine. dolia nudi
> non ardent Cynici; si fregeris, altera fiet
> cras domus, atque eadem plumbo commissa manebit.
> sensit Alexander, testa cum vidit in illa
> magnum habitatorem, quanto felicior hic qui
> nil cuperet quam qui totum sibi posceret orbem
> passurus gestis aequanda pericula rebus.
> nullum numen habes, si sit prudentia: nos te,
> nos facimus, Fortuna, deam. mensura tamen quae
> sufficiat census, si quis me consulat, edam:
> in quantum sitis atque fames et frigora poscunt,
> quantum, Epicure, tibi parvis suffecit in hortis,
> quantum Socratici ceperunt ante penates;
> numquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit.[42]

It is not the sententiousness that is new in satire—that was always there—it is the epigrammatic or paradoxical expression of it.

The next remarkable quality of Juvenal's style is what I will call, for shortness, its realism. Always he fiercely desires to make us see the thing he is describing, to give us the illusion almost of touching, tasting and smelling it. A good deal of rhetoric is content with vague and imposing generalities. Not so Juvenal's. He has the eye of a painter for the telling detail, and, what is more, the power of rendering it in words. Hear him on lodgings in Rome.

> nos urbem colimus tenui tibicine fultam
> magna parte sui; nam sic labentibus obstat
> vilicus et, veteris rimae cum texit hiatum,
> securos dormire iubet pendente ruina.
> vivendum est illic ubi nulla incendia, nulli
> nocte metus. iam poscit aquam, iam frivola transfert
> Ucalegon, tabulata tibi iam tertia fumant:
> tu nescis; nam si gradibus trepidatur ab imis
> ultimus ardebit quem tegula sola tuetur
> a pluvia, molles ubi reddunt ova columbae.
> lectus erat Codro Procula minor, urceoli sex
> ornamentum abaci, nec non et parvulus infra
> cantharus et recubans sub eo de marmore Chiron,
> iamque vetus Graecos servabat cista libellos
> et divina opici rodebant carmina mures.[43]
>
> (III. 193–207.)

Such strongly coloured and unsparing fidelity of description was not a new thing in literature. It was characteristic of the mime, and (if we may trust our scanty evidence about him) it was to some extent characteristic of Lucilius. It shows itself in Horace and in Persius. But no satirist had used it with such mastery as Juvenal. His descriptions seize the eye like a picture by Brueghel. He saw that the one thing you must not be in satire is vague. It is no good shadow-boxing. You must hit,

and hit hard, somebody or something we can clearly see. Nothing is so tiresome as protracted scolding of unnamed sinners.

The realism of Juvenal often led him into passages of extraordinary grossness. We must note that, because plainness of speech about the various forms of human sensuality became, mainly from his example, a convention in English satire. It must not be thought, however, that Juvenal introduced indecency into this way of writing. We find it in Horace, on whom it sits ill, and even in Persius, where it seems even more incongruous. Clearly it was a tradition, and by all accounts there was a great deal of it in Lucilius. There is little doubt that Lucilius was here following Aristophanes, to whom he was rather deeply indebted. But the indecency in Aristophanes was itself traditional, being a survival of the gross jesting that was permitted or encouraged at the ancient festival of Dionysus, out of which Greek comedy arose. The indecency in Lucilius and his followers was justified by them on moral grounds. It was not right, they thought or said, to be mealy-mouthed in denouncing vice. That may or may not be true; but it is not an argument that can be used by an artist. Unless the indecency can be poetically justified, it has no business to appear in poetry. Whether it is so justified in Juvenal, must be a matter of taste; it is certain that a great deal of it is unnecessary.

Finally it has to be observed of Juvenal's style that he has completely rejected the studied roughness in diction and metre which had lasted in satire at least until Persius. It is true that he permits himself liberties both of diction and metre which we do not find in the epic or elegiac poets. But Juvenal takes them simply to exercise the privilege of a satirist; and he takes them sparingly, and with an ease and dexterity that removes all sense of harshness. There never was a more finished and assured artist in his own way than Juvenal. It is not certain that this was fully understood by our earlier satirists. But Dryden saw it, and in all probability it was the example of Juvenal that

encouraged the English poet to write satire, not as Donne or Oldham had written it, but in the most accomplished versification at his command.

Roman satire can hardly be pursued with profit beyond Juvenal. Invective, such as one finds in Claudian, is not satire, which attacks the sin rather than the sinner, or attacks the sinner not on personal grounds but as an embodiment of the sin. In mediaeval literature there is indeed a vast amount of satirical writing both humorous and serious. So far as English literature is concerned, one may see the humorous kind in Chaucer, the serious in Langland. But what we are tracing here is the influence of a particular genre—Latin verse satire—upon English poetry, and when we look for that in the middle ages we look almost in vain. It is not because they were ignorant of the Roman satirists. Horace and Juvenal were eagerly read in many of the monasteries and among the educated laity. Juvenal was the more popular. The number of manuscripts of the *Saturae* in existence shows that he was copied and recopied in the *scriptoria*. For he was a moralist; the sins he condemns are real sins, and, if he paints them in lurid colours and illustrates them with scarifying details, that would rather recommend him than not to the mediaeval preachers. Even his satire on women would hardly seem extravagant to many holy men, who have used language about the sex nearly as strong as Juvenal's and without his excuse, such as it is. Non-clerical readers would not peruse the satire for homiletic purposes, but for other reasons. We need not doubt that Chaucer and Langland had read Juvenal or some of him. Indeed Chaucer quotes him (The Wife of Bath's Tale, 1192 f.):

> Juvenal seith of poverte, myrily,
> 'The poure man, whan he goth by the weye,
> Bifore the theves he may synge and playe'.

cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator (X. 22). Of course, that is far from proving that Chaucer had read Juvenal; he may have

borrowed the quotation. But there is no doubt that he had the opportunity of reading so popular a classic if he wished. The fact remains that he is not in any recognisable way affected by Juvenal. And this is true of mediaeval poetry in general, except when it is in Latin, when we do find traces of imitation. The middle ages did not perceive, what in fact many critics still do not perceive, that in classical art a form is to a very great extent nothing but a style. Ancient satire is a style. Mediaeval satirists went their own ways, and wrote as Langland wrote or Lyndsay in his *Satyre of the Thre Estaitis*.

It was after the renaissance with its discovery of the importance of style in classical art that the influence of the Roman satirists first becomes visible. This, however, did not happen suddenly. We can see certain writers feeling their way towards the classical form, Wyatt, for example, and Gascoigne. Where they fail is in vividness, concentration, and that stabbing wit which are the special qualities of good satire. There is plenty of satirical writing in Spenser; but he, following the example of Mantuan and other Italians, prefers to use for it the medium of the pastoral, as Milton was to do later in *Lycidas*. But the influence of Roman satire is unmistakable in Hall and Marston. It is Hall who says:

> Follow me, who list,
> And be the second English satirist.

Though he has sometimes been reproved for making this claim or boast, it is on the whole justified in the sense in which he understood satire. For Hall really has studied and understood the art of Juvenal—it is Juvenal, not Horace, who is his master—in a way none of his English predecessors had done. His matter he finds at home, but it is matter comparable to that of the Latin poet, who has taught him among other things that the foibles and affectations of men are fully as good a subject for satire as their crimes. Then he had the right instinct when he chose for his medium that iambic couplet which Dryden

and Pope adopted and developed for their satire; and, though naturally Hall cannot use it with their finished ease, he uses it with vigour and comparative correctness. This was an important service to literature. For any kind of epigrammatic verse the rhymed couplet is far and away the most effective medium, and the more polished it is, the more certain is the effect. Hall also saw that satire must be picturesque, and his detail is often excellent. Marston is more rough and ready, but he has a good share of that attacking spirit which satire must have, if it is to be read. He, too, is of the school of Juvenal. But after that Horace comes more into fashion. It was Horace, not Juvenal, who was the model in satire for Jonson and for Donne. The idea, firmly embraced by Jonson, that he strongly resembled Horace, was a curious piece of self-deception. He was not in the least like Horace, for he was full of the very things that Horace avoided—prejudices, controversial passion, private vendettas. He was probably the more manly and independent character, but he was undoubtedly opinionated and quarrelsome. Yet he saw himself in Horace, whom he honestly regarded as a severe and rough-tongued *censor morum*. It is possible by isolating certain parts of the *sermones* to get this impression, just as it is possible to misinterpret the studied negligence of their style as contempt of the formal graces. This is evidently what Jonson did. Instead of making himself like Horace, he said that Horace was like himself.

The *Satyres* of Donne are not so easily explained. That is what one might expect in the case of a poet who resembles no one else. Donne's wide learning included the Latin poets, and we may take it that he was studying them with ardour at the time when he was writing these essays in satire. In form—though not in finish—they belong clearly to the Horatian school; that is to say, he is conversational in manner rather than declamatory. Actually he borrows hardly anything directly, although it is clear that Horace is often in his mind, especially

that famous satire of the 'bore'. In the main he carries on the tradition founded by Hall, whom he rivals in picturesqueness of detail, and excels in power and subtlety of mind. It is not a Latin mind in the least, and therefore we feel a disharmony in the *Satyres*, which is emphasized by the harsh and broken rhythms which Donne may, like others of his time, have thought could claim the authority of Horace, and still more of Persius, or may simply have regarded as natural in the expression of the satiric temper. There is some justification for both these opinions, but not enough for the extremer experiments of Donne. We should admit that in these *Satyres* Donne is often merely and defiantly careless, which the two Latin poets never are. You can always scan Horace and Persius.

The rather large quantity of satirical verse written between Donne and Dryden does not much concern us. It is largely political in character, whereas Horace, Persius and Juvenal all carefully avoided contemporary politics. There was also, in this verse, no small degree of theological controversy or rancour, from which the Latin satirists were completely free.* Both political and religious issues enter violently into *Hudibras*. But *Hudibras* is not, in the classical sense, a satire at all. If it is, it is satire of an original kind. Although Butler was very widely read in ancient literature, neither the form nor the substance of his poem owes anything, beyond the very numerous allusions, to classical sources. Cleveland and Marvell are more traditional than Butler in style and metre, but they are not much more classical. They have simply taken over from Hall and Donne the closed couplet and the notion that the satirist may say what he likes; they are not thinking of much beyond that. If any Roman influences them, it is rather Juvenal than Horace; but they would have written in much the same way if they had never opened a Juvenal. We note, however, a change

*What Juvenal urges against Jews and Egyptians, when it is not mere racial prejudice, is based on humanitarian sentiment, not on theological dogma.

of interest from social to political subjects, and this was to continue. What Cleveland regards as satire is mere railing, and therefore he has no longer any importance, though he was popular in his day. Marvell is a very fine poet, but not in his satires. They are vigorous and effective in a downright, John-Bullish way, which is not the way of Juvenal, to whom the resemblance is superficial; Juvenal is a great artist in words. There is, no doubt, on the face of it a likeness between the third satire of the Roman, in which he makes an attack on the Greeks and other foreigners in Rome, and the lines in which Cleveland attacks the Scots, and those in which Marvell attacks the Dutch. But it was not Juvenal who suggested these attacks. Cleveland wrote against the Scots and Marvell against the Dutch simply because they were bursting with indignation against them. Much the same can be said about young Oldham with his onslaught upon the Jesuits. All this is English, not Latin; only the *form* is Latin.

This brings us to Dryden. As he is our first great satirist (excluding Langland), whatever influenced him becomes important. We therefore turn with particular interest to see in what way he was influenced by the Roman satirists. That he knew them well, is certain; and towards the end of his life, but after he had composed his own satires, he translated, with some help from his sons, the whole of Juvenal and Persius. He acknowledged a certain affinity between his satiric art and that of Juvenal, and one can see that it exists. His style is essentially rhetorical or declamatory, and he possesses, in a far higher degree than any of his English predecessors, the Juvenalian skill in planting his blows just where and when he chooses. He has mastered all the devices for annihilating an opponent. There had been plenty of force in some who had gone before him, but it was often wasted or misdirected. Every stroke of Dryden's is made to tell, and in this respect he strongly resembles Juvenal. Did he learn this dexterity from Juvenal? It is exceedingly probable that he did, perhaps half-consciously,

learn some of it, for there never was a more teachable writer. It goes with his genius for criticism. He would draw a good deal of Juvenal, and of Horace too, into his blood as he read them. At any rate he would be keenly aware that they were masters in their different styles. They did not bungle or fumble as his English predecessors were so apt to do. They did not let themselves be carried away by the strength of their feelings. However hard they hit, the directing brain was always cool. It was often possible to detect in the satirist a feeling of amused or contemptuous superiority to his victim. Above all, nothing was allowed to interfere with the technical perfection of the writing.

All this we find in Dryden. But how far are they the result of studying and imitating the art of the ancients? The question is hard to answer. We have, it is true, *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* from the hand of Dryden himself, and it is natural to look for the answer there. But this essay was written after, not before, *Absalom and Achitophel* and the other masterpieces; and the impression one gets from reading it is that Dryden is here reflecting on the literary affiliation of his satires in a way which had not occurred to him when he was writing them. For when we look into the matter we find that all his satires were occasional. They were not drawn from him by any desire to imitate or rival the ancients, but by the occurrence of unpredictable events. It was not Juvenal that made him a satirist, but Shaftesbury and Shadwell. Of course we might still say that, having resolved or been persuaded to attack Shaftesbury, he chose Juvenal for his model. Yet it will not be easy to prove this. There were other and probably stronger influences at work upon him. *Absalom* was not his first essay in satire. A good while before he had written against the Dutch very much in the style of Marvell. He had also been impressed by the satires and criticism of Boileau. Is the satire of Dryden anything more than the application of Boileau's precepts of correctness, sobriety and good sense to

what might be called the native satire of Hall and Donne and Marvell?

We cannot say yes to that question either. Dryden has a large contribution to bring of his own. It is character-drawing. There is not much of this in the ancient satirists—a portrait of the musician Tigellius in Horace, a portrait of Crispinus in Juvenal—and it is not done with much real insight. Juvenal in particular has little skill in characterisation; we cannot believe in monsters of iniquity or embodiments of some ruling passion. In much the same way the seventeenth-century satirists depict types rather than individuals. But Dryden gives us real people. It is for these characters that we now chiefly read his satires. We conclude that Dryden, whether he realised it or not, invented a new kind of satire. It is no wonder that in his *Discourse* he is puzzled how to relate it to ancient satire. To call it 'Menippean' is, of course, absurd. It is a new thing. This appears in more ways than one. For example, the ancients normally wrote on a theme; a satire with them was a descant on some vice or folly, which they assailed where they found or imagined it embodied in this or the other person. Dryden on the contrary likes to have a plot, with characters figuring in it as in a play or an epic. And he has a different purpose or object. He says indeed that 'the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction'. That, of course, is what all these satirists say, but nobody quite believes them. Certainly nobody can believe it in the case of *Absalom* or *Mac Flecknoe*. Dryden was not amending vice in them, he was simply having a go at Shaftesbury and Shadwell. He proceeds to say, 'he who writes honestly, is no more an enemy to the offender, than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease; for those are only in order to prevent the chirurgeon's work of an *Ense recidendum*, which I wish not to my very enemies.' This is not hypocritical, though Dryden was not really playing the part of the kindly physician. He was not a malevolent or implacable man. That was an immense

advantage to him, because it enabled him to see any good or admirable trait in a character whom he was attacking. To allow some good in your opponent adds greatly to the force, because it adds to the credibility, of your case against him. That is one thing Juvenal had failed to see.

Between the last satires of Dryden and the first of Pope a good deal was written in a satirical vein, sometimes by eminent hands. But we must pass it over, including even the verses of Prior and Swift, and come at once to Pope himself. He openly proclaimed himself an admirer and follower of the ancients. In satire his acknowledged master was Horace. These professions go rather beyond the facts. Pope's real master was not Horace but Dryden. The Popian couplet is in the main a development of Dryden's, and the satirical portraits, which are the most telling feature of Dryden's satire, are the most telling features of Pope's. In these all-important respects the younger poet is simply the disciple of the older. Yet there is a measure of truth in the belief (no doubt honestly held) of Pope, that he had gone back to the classics. He had taken to heart the Horatian poetic with a thoroughness that Dryden never showed. We are apt to forget how much Dryden put into those 'heroic' plays of his, and that these came before the great satires. The style of the plays makes excessive use of the rhetorical figures of 'amplification'; a thought or sentiment is elaborated, developed, expanded, till the poet has exhausted the resources of his ingenuity and his vocabulary. Dryden came to satire a past master in this way of writing. True, the style of his satires is much more concentrated, but even in them Dryden likes to vary and repeat what he has said in one couplet, in a succession of others. This kind of rhetoric is incontestably classical; you see it in Ovid, in Lucan, in Juvenal. But you do not see it in Horace, and you do not see it in Pope. Whatever is said in Horace is said finally and once for all. And the same is true of Pope, who is perhaps the least diffuse poet in the language. His art is to say everything as concisely as is con-

sistent with lucidity. There is no reason to suppose that he learned it from Horace; it was instinctive with him. But we may be sure that he was confirmed in this natural tendency by the practice and precept of Horace, at any rate when these were recommended to him by critics like Boileau and Walsh. It is therefore fair to say that the art of Pope in satire is more Horatian than that of Dryden, who develops a theme rather in the manner of Juvenal.

One cannot be sure when Pope discovered his genius for satire, but it was probably much earlier than his published work indicates. It is not credible that he read Dryden on Og or Doeg without thinking to himself, 'This is something I too could do'. Besides he had a disposition to satire. This reveals itself as early as *The Rape of the Lock*, although in form that is a mock-heroic poem. So is the *Dunciad*. But no one supposes that the *Dunciad* is anything but a satire; indeed it is little more than the expansion in a brilliant succession of episodes of the central idea of *Mac Flecknoe*. In the interval between these two poems their author had secured his position, which in his young days had been too weak to make it safe for him to indulge his genius for satirical portraiture; he had now fame, money and powerful friends. He could say what he pleased, and it pleased him—he said it was in self-defence—to hurt the feelings of a great many people. Pope had a genuine hatred of bad writing, just as a scientist or a scholar hates inaccuracy. Unfortunately he could not help making every question that came in his way a personal question. There was something large, generous and tolerant in the very rage and scorn of Dryden; but Pope is merely intent on giving pain. He was not really concerned to protect the morals of the community, nor had he any real grudge against society, which after all had treated him pretty well. He just had his knife in certain people. They had wounded him, or he suspected them of a design to wound him; and he suffered until he had made them suffer. This extreme sensitiveness to pain made him an artist in inflicting it. Probably

none of his victims felt such pangs as himself. But it made him a very great satirist.

It was apparently a suggestion from Bolingbroke which led Pope to try what he could do in direct imitation of Horace. At any rate the result was remarkable. We had Pope's manner and conception of satire now adjusted to the framework and the very language of Horace. It is nothing like translation; it would be better described as an attempt to say what Horace would have said if he had written in English and been Pope's contemporary. The method was not invented by Pope, but he perfected it. The ingenuity with which he finds English parallels to the allusions of Horace is considerable, but it sometimes gives his work an appearance of parody, which he did not always intend. He began with the first satire of Horace's second book of *sermones*. The opening words give us a good idea of Pope's mastery of the new manner.

> Sunt quibus in satira videar nimis acer et ultra
> legem tendere opus; sine nervis altera quidquid
> composui pars esse putat, similesque meorum
> mille die versus deduci posse. Trebati,
> quid faciam praescribe. 'quiescas.' ne faciam, inquis,
> omnino versus? 'aio.' peream male si non
> optimum erat: verum nequeo dormire. 'ter uncti
> transnanto Tiberim somno quibus est opus alto,
> irriguumque mero sub noctem corpus habento.
> aut si tantus amor scribendi te rapit, aude
> Caesaris invicti res dicere, multa laborum
> praemia laturus.' cupidum, pater optime, vires
> deficiunt: neque enim quivis horrentia pilis
> agmina nec fracta pereuntes cuspide Gallos
> aut labentis equo describat vulnera Parthi.[44]

In what follows Pope converses with his friend Fortescue, a lawyer, who corresponds to Trebatius.

> *P.* There are (I scarce can think it, but am told),
> There are, to whom my Satire seems too bold:

Scarce to wise Peter complaisant enough,
And something said of Chartres much too rough.
The lines are weak, another's pleas'd to say,
Lord Fanny spins a thousand such a day.
Tim'rous by nature, of the Rich in awe,
I come to Counsel learned in the Law:
You'll give me, like a friend both sage and free,
Advice; and (as you use) without a Fee.

F. I'd write no more.

P. Not write? but then I think,
And for my soul I cannot sleep a wink.
I nod in company, I wake at night,
Fools rush into my head, and so I write.

F. You could not do a worse thing for your life.
Why, if the nights seem tedious,—take a Wife:
Or rather truly, if your point be rest,
Lettuce and cowslip-wine; *Probatum est.*
But talk with Celsus, Celsus will advise
Hartshorn, or something that shall close your eyes.
Or, if you needs must write, write CAESAR's Praise,
You'll gain at least a *Knighthood*, or the *Bays*.

P. What? like Sir Richard, rumbling, rough, and fierce,
With ARMS, and GEORGE, and BRUNSWICK crowd the verse,
Rend with tremendous sound your ears asunder,
With Gun, Drum, Trumpet, Blunderbuss, and Thunder?
Or nobly wild, with Budgel's fire and force,
Paint Angels trembling round his falling Horse?

Everyone must feel the cleverness of the adaptation. It is rather wittier than the original. But then Horace was not seeking to be witty, but only to defend himself, with some irony but real modesty too, against what he thought rather hard criticism. Pope, while taking the same ground, is not in the least apologetic, and contrives within the space of less than thirty lines to get in quite a number of rapier-thrusts at this person or the other. Nobody is attacked in the Horace passage. The tone is quite different.

Pope shows up better as a man when he is on comparatively neutral ground—no ground is ever entirely neutral when he is on it. Since Horace made literary criticism one of the principal topics of his conversation-pieces, we are led to quote the famous parallel to the famous lines in the first epistle of the second book of the *Epistolae*.

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes
intulit agresti Latio. sic horridus ille
defluxit numerus Saturnius, et grave virus
munditiae pepulere; sed in longum tamen aevum
manserunt hodieque manent vestigia ruris.
serus enim Graecis admovit acumina chartis,
et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit,
quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile ferrent.
temptavit quoque rem, si digne vertere posset,
et placuit sibi, natura sublimis et acer;
nam spirat tragicum satis et feliciter audet,
sed turpem putat inscite metuitque lituram.
creditur, ex medio quia res accersit, habere
sudoris minimum, sed habet comoedia tanto
plus oneris, quanto veniae minus. aspice, Plautus
quo pacto partes tutetur amantis ephebi,
ut patris attenti, lenonis ut insidiosi,
quantus sit Dossenus edacibus in parasitis,
quam non adstricto percurrat pulpita socco;
gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere, post hoc
securus cadat an recto stet fabula talo.[45]

We conquer'd France, but felt our Captive's charms;
Her Arts victorious triumph'd o'er our Arms;
Britain to soft refinements less a foe,
Wit grew polite, and Numbers learn'd to flow.
Waller was smooth; but *Dryden* taught to join
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,
The long majestic March, and Energy divine.
Tho' still some traces of our rustic vein
And splay-foot verse, remain'd, and will remain.

Late, very late, correctness grew our care,
When the tir'd Nation breath'd from civil war.
Exact *Racine*, and *Corneille's* noble fire,
Show'd us that France had something to admire.
Not but the Tragic spirit was our own,
And full in *Shakespear*, fair in *Otway* shone:
But *Otway* fail'd to polish or refine,
And fluent *Shakespear* scarce effac'd a line.
Ev'n copious *Dryden* wanted, or forgot,
The last and greatest Art, the Art to blot.
Some doubt, if equal pains, or equal fire
The humbler Muse of Comedy require.
But in known Images of life, I guess
The labour greater, as th' indulgence less.
Observe how seldom ev'n the best succeed:
Tell me if *Congreve's* Fools are Fools indeed?
What pert, low Dialogue has *Farquhar* writ!
How *Van* wants grace, who never wanted wit!
The stage how loosely does *Astraea* tread,
Who fairly puts all Characters to bed!
And idle *Cibber*, how he breaks the laws,
To make poor *Pinky* eat with vast applause!
But fill their purse, our Poet's work is done,
Alike to them, by Pathos or by Pun.

Here we have a dubious analogy founded on bad history. But that does not affect the extraordinary brilliance of the writing. Is it too much to say that Horace was the making of Pope in his later and most accomplished manner? The supreme expression of that manner is probably the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, which serves as prologue to the *Imitations*. The most celebrated passages in it are no doubt the character of Atticus, that is Addison, and the character of Sporus, who is Lord Hervey. Horace had nothing to teach him here. It is when Pope is autobiographical, as Horace so often is, that we see how Horatian, in spite of a radical difference of temperament, Pope could be.

'But why then publish? *Granville* the polite,
And knowing *Walsh*, would tell me I could write;
Well-natur'd *Garth* inflam'd with early praise;
And *Congreve* lov'd, and *Swift* endur'd my lays;
The courtly *Talbot*, *Somers*, *Sheffield* read;
Ev'n mitred *Rochester* would nod the head,
And *St. John's* self (great Dryden's friend before)
With open arms receiv'd one Poet more.
Happy my studies, when by these approv'd!
Happier their author, when by these belov'd!
From these the world will judge of men and books,
Not from the *Burnets*, *Oldmixons*, and *Cookes*.

It was this passage that Lamb 'with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening' quoted when somebody said he thought that 'you of the Lake School did not like Pope'. When he had finished the quotation 'his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?" '

On the very day when the first Dialogue of the Epilogue to Pope's *Imitations* was published, appeared the *London* of Samuel Johnson. It proved rather the more popular of the two. Pope had been the undisputed head of English poetry for so long that almost any promising successor would be sure of a welcome. *London* was certainly promising, but it must have been itself suggested by the *Imitations*. It is not, however, Horace that Johnson 'imitates', but Juvenal, in particular the third of that poet's satires. It was a good choice, for it shows the art of Juvenal at its best. It has a unity not possessed by the other satires, and the vignette-like descriptions in which it abounds have a peculiar brilliancy. It can hardly be said that *London* rivals its model in these respects, but it has plenty of vigorous and some moving passages. Juvenal had said in a famous sentence:

nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se
—quam quod ridiculos homines facit.

(152, 3.)

'Luckless poverty has no more bitter ingredient than that it makes men ridiculous.' This becomes in Johnson:

> Of all the griefs that harrass the distress'd,
> Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
> Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart,
> Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

One feels the sincerity of that. At the same time one cannot help remembering that Johnson preferred London to anywhere else as a place to live in, and that does bring into question the sincerity of the wish expressed by the imaginary speaker of the poem—who, we must admit, is not Johnson himself—that he is determined to shake the dust of London from his feet. Yet Johnson knew, if any man did, the sufferings of the poor man of letters in the capital, and this is the true subject of *London*. On that at least Johnson was an authority.

No one could suggest the presence of even a trace of insincerity in the later, and much finer, 'imitation' to which Johnson gave the noble and sonorous title of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. The reader of satire has often an uncomfortable feeling that the satirist is making a claim to a moral superiority over his victims to which he is not entitled. We do not feel this in reading Horace, for Horace never seems to make the claim. But Juvenal makes it, and so does Pope; and we are not persuaded that their motives have the purity claimed for them. But we do believe it in the case of Johnson. Sir Walter Scott says: 'The deep and pathetic morality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander dry over pages professedly sentimental'; and Scott knew about the vanity of human wishes. The satire followed is the tenth of Juvenal, and Johnson's poem keeps the scheme of that and runs on parallel lines with it. But it is in no sense a translation, it is hardly even a paraphrase. And it has a Christian tone which is absent, of course, from the original. For all that it is a very Latin poem, expressing a sort of Christian Stoicism with an emphatic and earnest eloquence very Roman of its kind.

There was abundance of satiric verse in the eighteenth century. The authors had Juvenal and Horace a good deal on their lips, but in practice they rarely went to these original sources; their actual models were Dryden and Pope. Since their average of merit cannot be put high, we are not under the necessity of discussing them. The best remembered is Charles Churchill, who attacked living contemporaries, especially in literature and on the stage, with something of the verve of Dryden, but without Dryden's authority and sense of style. He is an intellectual gladiator rather than a genuine satirist. But he is superior to his successor Gifford, whose style is intolerably crude and insensitive. All we can say of these writers, who are mentioned only because their influence in their own day gives them some historical importance, is that they carried on the tradition of Juvenalian satire. But a little more needs to be said about Cowper, a surprising amount of whose work is satire or at least has a satirical tendency.

If Johnson and these others belong to the Juvenalian school of satire, it is equally plain that Cowper belongs to the Horatian. For Horace he had an early affection, which expressed itself in translating the two famous satires of the 'Journey' and the 'Bore' or, as Cowper more aptly calls him, the 'Impertinent'. The style and metre of these translations indicate that Cowper had made a close study of Prior. Although they are schoolboy stuff, they are worth reading because they contain the germ of that later manner of Cowper's which, at its best, comes as near the humane humour and accomplished ease of the best *sermones* and *epistolae* as any English poet has attained. That he felt this affinity himself can hardly be doubted, and it led him to follow the Horatian model in the *Poems* of 1782, which are mostly satires or, as Horace would have said, *sermones*, 'conversations'. In fact the first has the title *Table Talk* and has a motto from Horace. It and the others—*The Progress of Error, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, Charity, Conversation, Retirement*—are written in the couplets which Dryden and Pope had made

the accepted vehicle for satire. But the couplets of Cowper do not remind us of Pope; they have their own movement and character. It is impossible not to respect the motive of Cowper in writing these poems, for he genuinely, and not in obedience to a literary convention, desired to make society better than he found it. And one must admire the easy, natural flow of his verse. But as satire it will not do. Satire may be effective without being hostile, but not without being pungent. To be pungent, it must be concentrated, brilliant, quotable—and short. A long satire is a mistake; one reads the sixth of Juvenal or *Absalom and Achitophel* by paragraphs. Cowper is prolix, he sermonises, at times he drones; and the large number of good lines is not large enough to carry the reader on. In a later satire, *Tirocinium*, a criticism of Public School education, the tendency to sermonise has grown upon the poet, and the thing becomes a tirade. On the other hand nothing could be better in its unpretending way, nothing more Horatian, than the *Epistle to Joseph Hill*. It is a pity that Cowper did not give us more of such epistles. We should then have had something like an English equivalent to the *epistolae* of Horace.

Cowper was perhaps the last considerable English satirist who was directly influenced by the classical poets. Some of Burns's most effective writing is satirical, but in this the models he followed were not Latin. Nor did Juvenal or Horace in any way influence Crabbe, who had a strong satirical bent. Of the romantic poets only Byron showed real power as a satirist. *The Vision of Judgment* and *Don Juan* place him among the masters in that kind. But neither Horace nor Juvenal has anything to do with either of them. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* belongs indeed to the school of Juvenal. But it is not inspired by him, but by Dryden, Pope, Gifford. It is legitimate, of course, to say that, if Juvenal had never written, there would have been no *English Bards* or, if there had been, it would have taken a different form.

The poets of the Victorian age were not much given to satire

of the formal Roman kind. Clough might have given us something of the sort, if he had lived longer; but we cannot discuss possibilities. One master of verse, if not of poetry, was definitely a satirist; but nothing that Gilbert wrote was classical either in form or sentiment. It may be that satire on the Roman model has disappeared for ever from English literature. But it is never safe to make prophecies of that kind. In fact there has been of late years a certain revival of Popian satire. We must not make the common mistake of confusing a dead language with a dead literature. No literature is dead so long as it is read and influences the minds and pens of authors. Horace is as much alive as any contemporary poet. His chances of survival are just as good; continental critics would say better. A student of literary influences must, of all people, look upon literature as a living and perhaps immortal body.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE EPIGRAM

THE epigram has acquired such an air of being smart and modern that it would probably not surprise people to be told that it was a somewhat recent invention. In fact it is the oldest form of written literature. For what is an 'epigram'? Merely something written upon a surface capable of receiving it. At first what people wrote down were things they particularly wished to remember. A simple community particularly wants to remember its laws and customs, a family desires to have a written record of its titles to the property it owns or an inscription on the tomb of some distinguished member, an individual may wish to carry about with him a piece of wood or lead engraved with a magic formula for blessing or cursing. Such were the first 'epigrams', and many have survived. They were not always, but they were often, perhaps generally, in verse, which is more memorable than prose. In ancient Greece, where every activity that could be made into an art was so made, it was felt that epitaphs on famous men, inscriptions on temples or on offerings to the gods—that these at least should be entrusted to an artist in words, that is, in these early times, to a poet.

It is obvious that an epitaph or a dedication ought not to be in the modern sense epigrammatic. It is not wit that is expected of the composer but appropriateness. Accordingly the early Greek epigrams have that quality; their grave and solemn beauty depends on their *not* being 'epigrammatic'. Some of them touch the perfection of the pure classical style. They are untranslatable for just that reason. It is not so hard to give a suggestion of their quality in Latin, a kindred language and as well adapted as Greek for the writing of inscriptions. I will therefore give Cicero's translation of what is perhaps the most

famous of all the ancient Greek epigrams, that on the Spartans who fell at Thermopylae.

> dic, hospes, Spartae nos te hic vidisse iacentes,
> dum sanctis patriae legibus obsequimur.

The Latin is, compared with the Greek, somewhat maladroit and infelicitous; neither is it quite accurate. But it retains the simplicity of the original, a simplicity more eloquent than any number of words and the result, not of course of a happy accident, but of the most profound and subtle art.

It did not appear to the makers of the earliest epigrams that they were engaged in the creation of literature. But, as the art of poetry, by which is here meant epic and elegiac poetry, developed, it became inevitable that epigrams too should be written in their diction and metre. Henceforward the epigram was a genre of its own. During the great age of Greek literature an epigram was composed only to celebrate some historical event, or to be inscribed on some tangible object. But in the centuries which followed the death of Alexander the Great poets, especially minor poets, began to compose epigrams on imaginary occasions or for imagined objects, such as the mirror of Aphrodite or the bow of Artemis, and a multitude of little poems of this kind, some of them very pretty, came into existence. The range of subjects was enlarged. In particular the amatory epigram was cultivated, a variety which the old poets never touched or thought of touching. The original sense of the word has now been lost. What we get from these later writers are merely brief love-poems.

The great repository of these epigrams—amatory, funerary, dedicatory—is the Greek Anthology, which in its fullest form is a very large collection indeed. They are drawn from nearly a millenium of Greek history and they run between the extremes of merit. But they have nearly all one characteristic—they rather avoid than aim at epigrammatic point. This distinguishes them from the type of epigram of which the Roman

poet Martial is the great exponent. It will therefore be found convenient to make a distinction between the types, calling one the Greek type of epigram, and the other the Latin.

Both have influenced English poetry, the Latin obviously, the Greek more than is often realised. Much of Landor's finest work was done in conscious following of the Greek model. We shall hardly find a better example than *Rose Aylmer*, which is perhaps too well known to be quoted again. It is not quite in the grand, simple manner of the early poets; it is Hellenistic rather than Hellenic; but it is Greek enough, and extremely beautiful. The famous epitaph on himself which begins:

> I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,

is also in the Greek manner, none the less because the quoted line comes from one of the most quarrelsome, though not the least lovable, of poets. Another epitaph, written on the death of Southey, is not so well known but what it may be quoted.

> Friends, hear the words my wandering thoughts would say,
> And cast them into shape some other day;
> Southey, my friend of forty years is gone,
> And, shattered by the fall, I stand alone.

That is in the reticent Greek manner.

It must not be thought, however, that the average Greek epigram attained, or even sought to attain, a very lofty standard of poetry. It was content to be 'natural, simple, affecting' or else to be elegantly 'sophisticated'. It seems worth quoting some lines written by Akenside to be an inscription for a grotto; for they show, more adequately than better poetry would do, what a great number of the epigrams in the *Anthology* are really like.

> To me, whom in their lays the shepherds call
> Actaea, daughter of the neighbouring stream,
> This cave belongs. The fig-tree and the vine,
> Which o'er the rocky entrance downward shoot,

Were placed by Glycon. He with cowslips pale,
Primrose and purple lychnis, decked the green
Before my threshold, and my shelving walls
With honeysuckle covered. Here, at noon,
Lulled by the murmur of my rising fount,
I slumber: here my clustering fruits I tend,
Or from the humid flowers at break of day
Fresh garlands weave, and chase from all my bounds
Each thing impure or noxious. Enter in,
O Stranger, undismayed. Nor bat nor toad
Here lurks; and, if thy breast of blameless thoughts
Approve thee, not unwelcome shalt thou tread
My quiet mansion: chiefly if thỹ name
Wise Pallas and the immortal Muses own.

It is, however, naturally and properly, the best epigrams of the *Anthology* that have most strongly affected English poetry, and of these the epigrams of love and death. Thus Tennyson was clearly attempting the manner of the Thermopylae epigram when he wrote his epitaph for General Gordon:

Soldier of God, man's friend, not here below,
But somewhere dead, far in the waste Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has borne no simpler, nobler man.

The art of Tennyson does not conceal itself as the Greek does; one feels too sensibly that the poet *is* attempting the heroic style. In a rather different way, again, one is conscious of a too deliberate effort to impress in Housman's epitaph on a mercenary army. It is powerful and moving, but it has not the unrhetorical naturalness of the best Greek epigrams.

The amatory epigram offers a wide field for speculation. We have seen that it tended to become nothing more or less than a brief love-lyric, a form in which English poetry has always been exceptionally rich. There is no question here of borrowing. English poets had composed many exquisite lyrics of love before the Palatine Anthology was put together.

But what was the effect of the Anthology when it came to be known? If it started Anacreontic poetry, is it likely to have been totally inoperative in the commonest of all forms of the lyric? The difficulty of the Greek was gradually overcome by more and more complete translation both into Latin and English from the time of Sir Thomas More onwards. Herrick would know something of these translations, and a large number of the pieces in the *Hesperides* might have been suggested by pieces in the Anthology. Only we do not know that they were. And Herrick is only one of many. We are left to speculation.*

The Latin epigram was invented by men of letters. There are a few of this type even in the Anthology, but it was in Latin literature that the new kind was developed. It is the epigram with a sting in its tail. We find it in a rudimentary form as early as Catullus.

> nulli se dicit mulier mea nubere malle
> quam mihi, non si se Iuppiter ipse petat.
> dicit: sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti,
> in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.[46]

('My name is writ in water'—did Keats know this epigram?) Here is another by Catullus of the same quality.

> odi et amo: quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
> nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.[47]

It may be said that these are rather pungent examples of the Greek sort than epigrammatic in the Latin way, for they do not contain the element of surprise or paradox in the conclusion. We find this, however, in a couplet which must have been written not much later than the age of Catullus.

> marmoreo Licinus tumulo iacet, at Cato nullo,
> Pompeius parvo: credimus esse deos?[48]

*The two last sonnets of Shakespeare come from the Anthology.

This was the kind of epigram which the Romans carried to perfection. Although the evidence has disappeared, we are entitled to assume that the form was 'polished and refin'd' in the period between Catullus and Martial, so that, when Martial took it up, he had an instrument made to his hand, although there can be no doubt that he used it with a versatility, a wit and adroitness beyond any of his precursors. He was born in Spain some time before the middle of the first century—Roman Spain where people were educated in Latin—and came to Rome as a young man, where he hung loose upon society and drifted into literature, 'oblig'd by hunger and request of friends'. This explains the number of complimentary versicles in his collected works. Although the compliments are often preposterous enough, the verses themselves are generally pleasing. Martial's workmanship, often expended upon trifling or inconvenient subjects, is always admirable. From the moral point of view not much can be said for him, but he does not, any more than Ovid, strike one as a bad man. His public wanted improper epigrams from him, and got them, though not so many as is often implied. They are nearly always saved, from the artistic point of view, by their wit and their craftsmanship; which is more than can be said of the imitations of them which astonish as much as disgust us in poets like Jonson and Herrick.

He wrote only epigrams, unless we count certain short, but interesting, prefaces in prose to the several editions of his verse. His range is therefore necessarily limited, though he often escapes from the social scene at Rome, the stock subject of his epigrams, into the country, or Spain itself, in little poems of an almost idyllic quality. Stevenson (a great admirer of Martial) has some lines addressed to a gardener, which might be translated from the Latin poet.

> Friend, in my mountain-side demesne,
> My plain-beholding, rosy, green,

And linnet-haunted garden ground,
Let still the esculents abound . . .

Iuli iugera pauca Martialis
hortis Hesperidum beatiora
longo Ianiculi iugo recumbunt:
lati collibus imminent recessus
et planas modico tumore vertex
caelo perfruitur sereniore,
et curvas nebula tegente valles
solis luce nitet peculiari.[49]

This, however, is not the kind of verse for which Martial became famous, but things like

non amo te, Sabidi, nec possum dicere quare:
hoc tantum possum dicere, non amo te.[50]

or

qui pinxit Venerem tuam, Lycori,
blanditus, puto, pictor est Minervae.[51]

or

exigis ut donem nostros tibi, Quinte, libellos.
non habeo sed habet bybliopola Tryphon.
'aes dabo pro nugis et emam tua carmina sanus?
non' inquis 'faciam tam fatue'. nec ego.[52]

or half a hundred more. In epigrams of this type Martial has had innumerable imitators but hardly an equal. They belong to literature in virtue of their form, which is consistently admirable. If we look for a due admixture of wit and style in our own epigrammatists, we shall probably have to award the palm to Matthew Prior.

Yes, every poet is a fool:
By demonstration Ned can show it:
Happy, could Ned's inverted rule
Prove every fool to be a poet.

Again,

> To John I owed great obligation;
> But John unhappily thought fit
> To publish it to all the nation:
> Sure John and I are more than quit.

Rochester's famous epitaph on Charles II, 'Here lies our sovereign lord the King. . . .' Martial would have been glad to put into Latin verse; and the same may be said of many other English epigrams. They belong to his school. His influence on English literature is partial and limited, but it has been continuous since Elizabethan times. Thus Mr. Belloc has written a number of epigrams in the Roman manner (though some in the Greek), and younger poets still practise the art with occasional success. But the tendency now is to use the epigram to get an emotional rather than an amusing effect. Many of Housman's shorter lyrics are epigrams in disguise. These are more classical in form than in spirit. We must also rule out the kind of epigram which we find in writers like Wilde or Chesterton, which is so often the unexpected denial or reversal of a common assumption. That is a form of wit of which the ancients were incapable or disdainful.

APPENDIX

1. Which of them assumed arms with the greater right, we may not know: each has a great judge on his side; the victorious cause pleased the gods; the lost cause, Cato. Nor were they equally matched. Pompey, declining into the vale of years and grown more pacific by long wearing of the civilian's gown, has at last been taught by peace to forget the general and, a candidate for popularity, to lavish gifts upon the multitude, to give his sails wholly to the breeze of public favour and to take delight in the applause accorded him in the theatre he had built; he would not seek fresh sources of strength, but trusted largely to the good fortune that had hitherto been his. Abides the shadow of a mighty name. So an oak standing lofty in a fruitful field, laden with the trophies of an ancient folk and the dedicated offerings of their captains, no longer clinging to the earth with strong roots is held in place by its own weight, and stretching out its branches through the air makes a shadow not with its foliage but its bole; yet though it totters ready to fall at the first blast of the storm, while round it so many trees uprear themselves in their strength, it alone is worshipped. Caesar on the other hand had no such fame or reputation as a captain, but a moral force that would not rest, the mere feeling that it was inglorious to win by any means but war. This was a man of passionate and indomitable will to force his way wherever ambition and resentment called, to press on and on, to exploit the favour of fortune, bearing down whatever stood in his way as he sought the heights, and glorying to open a path by destruction.

2. What question, Labienus, do you say should be put? Whether I should resolve to fall a free man in arms or to look upon tyranny? Whether it makes no difference if life be short or long? If it be true that no violence can hurt the good man, that Fortune wastes her threats when virtue fronts her, that it is enough to will that which is righteous, that the honourable is never the successful? This we know, and Ammon will not plant the knowledge more deeply in our hearts. All we but hold of the powers above, and even when the oracle is dumb we do nothing without the will of God; neither does the deity need any utterance of words, but at our birth our creator has said once and for all what it is lawful for us to know. Did he choose the barren sands that he might prophesy to a few and bury the truth in this dust? And is the seat of God aught but earth and sea and air and heaven and virtue? What more do we ask of the divine? God is all that you see, all that you feel.

3. O great and greatest husband! O thou too noble for my bed, was Fortune permitted power over so great a head? Why did I wed thee

against God's laws, if I was doomed to make thee unhappy? Now take vengeance upon me, yes such as I shall willingly pay.

4. Here Mercury observes the waste wild woods, the holy places of Mars, and shudders at the sight where, fronting the shadow of Mount Haemus, his savage mansion is girt by a thousand forms of frenzy. With iron its sides are clamped, with iron the worn threshold is barred, on columns of iron rests the roof. The ray of Phœbus strikes against it and is wounded, the very light dreads that dwelling, and a sinister glare makes dim the stars. Like place, like sentries; on the threshold leaps forth the maniac Onset, and blind Wickedness, the blood-red Rages and the bloodless Fears; beside them stands Treachery with hidden sword and Discord with her two-edged glaive. Echoes the hall with many a fearful sound; grim Valour stands in the midst, and gloating Fury, and Death with blood-boltered face sits there in arms. No blood on the altars save that shed in war, no fire save that snatched from burning cities. Trophies won from every land cover the walls, the roof is carved with the forms of conquered peoples and city-gates in ruins and battling ships and empty chariots and faces ground beneath their wheels; you can almost hear the groans; so vividly is depicted all the violence, all the wounds. Everywhere, but nowhere without a scowl, the god himself may be seen. . . .

Scarcely had the winged god of Maenalus [Mercury] begun his search for the lord of the temple, when behold the earth was shaken, horned Hebrus [a river of the region] bellowed, flung back in broken waves: then that beast of war, the horse, swept into the valley, foaming over the frightened grass, a sign of the advent of the god, and the doors shut with adamant eterne burst open. Bright with the blood of savage beasts, he comes in his chariot, he and no other, dyeing the wide fields with a rain of death; behind him spoils of war and weeping multitudes.

5. Cytherea [Venus] urges them to the gathering. 'Go now, sisters, while the air enjoys the morning sun before the sweating noon, while the Morning Star, my planet, riding in the van upon his dew-dropping steed, wets the yellow fields.' So speaking, she plucks the memorials of her love [*adonium* flowers, named from Adonis; anemones]. Then the rest of the band fell upon the many-coloured dells; you would think that the swarms, intent on plundering Hyblaean thyme, were pouring forth, what time their kings move their waxen camp, and the honey-carrying host, let out from the hollow of a beech, makes a buzzing about the herbs of their choice. The floral glories of the meadows are despoiled; one girl twines lilies with dark violets; one decks herself with the delicate marjoram; another goes starred with roses, another white with privet flowers. Thee too, Hyacinth, mourning your doom in that sad letter [the diphthong *ai*, 'alas', counted as one

letter] and Narcissus they cull, once lads in their glory, now famed buds of the spring: thou, Hyacinth, born at Amyclæ; Narcissus was the child of Helicon: thou wert smitten by the swerving quoit; he was deceived by love of the watery image: thee Apollo, beating his brow, him Cephisus with broken reed, bewails.

6. Arms and the man I sing, who from the shores of Troy, driven wandering by his destiny, came first to Italy and the Lavinian shore—much tossed was he on land and water by the violence of gods by reason of the unforgetting wrath of Juno; suffering many things also in war, until he could found a city and bring his household gods into Latium—from whom is sprung the Latin race and the Alban Fathers and the bulwarks of imperial Rome.

7. Avarice, girt with a large apron, is eager to seize with her cupped hand whatever thing of value greedy Luxury had left, gaping open-mouthed on pretty trifles and picking up bits of gold that had fallen among heaps of sand; nor does it satisfy her to have filled her ample lap; she loves to stuff filthy lucre into her pouches and to load her purse to bursting point with her thievery; and these she hides with concealing left hand and veils with the covering of her helpful side; for her right hand swiftly sweeps up her filchings and plies its brazen talons on plunder. Care, Greed, Fear, Anguish, Perjury, Paleness, Corruption, Treachery, Falsehood, Sleeplessness, Vileness—the various handmaids of Hell sweep along in the monster's train. Nor less in the meantime the Crimes leap like ravening wolves working mischief over all the field—the Crimes, sprung from the black milk of Avarice, their mother. If a man in the same service has seen the helmet of his born brother flashing with yellow gems, he does not fear to draw his sword and strike his head with the edge that should have aided him, being resolved to tear the jewels from that fraternal crest. If a son has chanced to spy the body of his father slain by fortune if war, he gleefully snatches the belt gleaming with discs of gold, his gory spoil. Civil war makes booty of kin, men's insatiable lust of gain does not spare their own children, and their sinful greed plunders their own sons.

8a. There no tempest rages nor shuddering violence of wind, neither does frost cover the ground with its icy dew; no cloud stretches its fleece high over the plain, nor does the rain-storm fall from heaven. But in the midst is a fountain, which men call the fountain of life, clear, gentle, overflowing with sweet water, which bursting forth once a month waters all the wood twelve times a year. Here are trees of a sort that rise with tall stem and bear ripe fruit that will not fall to the ground.

8b. Ah bird fortunate in its lot and in its end, to whom God himself has given the power to be born of itself! Be she female or male or neither

or both, happy is this bird that observes no treaties imposed by love; to her death is love, in death is her sole delight; that she may have the power to be born, she eagerly desires to die before. Herself is her own child and father and heir, nurse of herself, her own nurseling evermore, having herse'f indeed—but not the same because both herself and not herself—obtained life eternal by the boon of death.

9. If God is Mind [or Soul] as poems tell us, let him before all be worshipped by you with pure thoughts.

10. Avoid contradicting yourself; the man who is in disagreement with himself will agree with nobody.

11. Do not be too ready to believe your wife when she complains about the servants, for a wife always dislikes anyone her husband likes.

12. Fear not the end of life; the man who dreads death loses the very life he is living.

13. Ask for what is just or is seen to be honourable, for it is foolish to ask for what may rightly be refused.

14. Play the fool when the circumstances or the business calls for that; to pretend to be foolish at a suitable time is the highest wisdom.

15. Refuse to forgive yourself for the offences you commit when drunk; it isn't the wine that's to blame, but the wine-bibber.

16. Do not let a matter go which you shall recognise as suited to you; opportunity wears a forelock, but is bald behind.

17. A certain man had a goose teeming with a rich production, being such as often laid golden eggs in its nest. Nature had laid down this law for the grand bird, that it must not produce two eggs at a time. Its owner, however, fearing the disappearance of the object of his greed, could not bear to wait for the realisation of his profits, for he expected to obtain a great prize from the death of a bird rich in so constant a benefit to him. After he had driven his cruel knife through its unprotected entrails and seen it empty of the eggs it used to lay, he groaned aloud; he had been outwitted for the crime of such a misdemeanour; for it was on that account that he paid the penalty due to his sin. (*Moral*): When people wrongly ask everything from the gods, the gods more justly refuse to fulfil for them even their prayers of a single day.

18. *At.:* I know the man's nature for unteachable: bent it may be, not broken. Therefore before he strengthens himself or prepares his force, let him be attacked first, that he may not attack me while I do nothing. He will either destroy or be destroyed; for him who strikes the first blow the crime lies in a middle course. *Servant:* Has ill repute among the people no terrors for you? *At.:* The chief advantage of sovereignty is this, that the people is forced to praise as well as endure the actions of its lord. *Ser.:*

Whom fear compels to praise, fear also makes to hate. But he who sincerely seeks the glory of good repute will wish to be praised in men's hearts rather than their voices. *At.:* Sincere praise often falls to the lot even of a man in humble station, but insincere to none but the mighty. Let these will what men do not wish. *Ser. :* A king should will what is honourable: there is none that will not wish that as well as he. *At. :* Wherever a king may only do what is honourable, he reigns on sufferance. *Ser. :* Where there is no respect or care for justice, where sanctity, piety, faithfulness are absent, a kingdom cannot stand. *At. :* Sanctity, piety, faithfulness are private virtues: let monarchs go on what course they please. *Ser. :* I think it wicked to injure a brother, even if he be bad. *At. :* Whatever is wicked in a brother's case is not wicked in his. For what has he left untouched by crime, or where has he refrained from sin? He took away my wife by adultery and my kingdom by treachery: the ancient glory of my rule he won by a fraud, by a fraud he wrought havoc in my house. In the lofty sheepfolds of Pelops there is a noble beast, a mystic ram, leader of a precious flock. Over all its body the fleece is a hanging mass of gold; its back confers on new kings of the race of Tantalus the power to bear their gilded sceptres, whoever possesses this ram is king, the luck of that great house goes with him. In a secluded part the sacred animal securely crops the mead, which is enclosed by a stone wall protecting the beast of destiny. Him my brother, daring a giant crime, and in his treachery taking as partner in the sin the consort of my bed, carried off. This is the source of all the evil that has flowed between us; I have wandered throughout my realm a trembling exile, no part of my family is safe from his plotting, my wife has been debauched, loyalty to the throne has been shaken, my household is in evil case, my children perhaps not mine; nothing is certain but that my brother is my foe—Why are you amazed? Do something; the time is come. Pluck up courage. Look at the example of Tantalus and Pelops; it is to this that my hands are called. Declare in what way I am to slaughter that accursed head. *Ser. :* By the sword let him be slain and give up his hostile ghost. *At. :* You speak of the punishment's end, not of the punishment; it is *that* I desire. Let a mild prince kill; in my kingdom death is a boon. *Ser. :* Does no brotherly affection move you? *At. :* Begone, brotherly affection, supposing you have ever been in our house. Let come an awful band of Furies and the spirit of Discord, and Megaera, shaking a torch in either hand; not great enough is the frenzy with which my heart burns, I would be filled with a more prodigious passion. *Ser. :* What strange thing are you plotting in your madness? *At. :* Nothing that can assume the limits of an ordinary rage; no deed will I leave undone, and none is enough. *Ser. :* The sword? *At. :* Not enough. *Ser. :* What of fire? *At. :*

That too is not enough. *Ser.:* What weapon then will such rage employ? *At.:* Thyestes himself. *Ser.:* That is a worse thing than wrath. *At.:* I say so too. Amazement and confusion shake my heart and whirl it within me; I am swept along, and I know not whither, but I am swept along. The earth bellows from its inmost depths, the sky though cloudless thunders, the palace cracks as if all its roofs were shattered, the household gods have moved and averted their faces. Let it come to pass, let that crime come to pass which ye fear, O gods! *Ser.:* What then wilt thou do? *At.:* Something mightier than my own soul and greater than all wont and beyond the limits of all human ways swells high and presses on my sluggish hands. What it is, I know not; but it is something great.

19. *Oedipus:* Kings are wont to fear the doubtful as if it were certain. *Creon:* He who has empty fears confesses them real. *Oed.:* Whoever has been in fault, when he is let go hates everything that he thinks doubtful (*i.e.* suspects). *Cr.:* In this way hatred is produced. *Oe.:* He who fears hatred too much does not know how to be a king, it is fear that guards kingship. *Cr.:* He who sways the sceptre with the ferocity of a harsh rule fears those that fear: terror comes back to its author.

20. A king is not made by wealth, nor by the purple of a Tyrian robe, nor by the insignia of a royal brow, nor by beams that glitter with gold. A king is he who has laid aside fear and the evil thoughts of a sinful heart, who is not moved by uncontrolled ambition and the inconstant applause of the headlong multitude, nor by all the West digs from its mines, or the Tagus with golden wave brings down in its bright channel, nor by all that the threshing-floor glowing with Libyan harvests beats out; who will not be utterly shaken by the falling path of the crooked thunderbolt, or the east wind sweeping the sea, or the swelling of the windy Adriatic as it raves with cruel waters; who is not subdued by the warrior's lance or the naked steel; who, firm-set in a safe place, sees all things beneath his feet and does not complain of death.

21. *Sosia:* Yes, sir! if there is anything of which I am perfectly and absolutely sure, it is that the Night Man went to bed drunk last evening. The Plough don't move an inch in the sky, and the moon hasn't shifted from the place she rose in; the Belt of Orion, the Evening Star, the Pleiades do not set. To such a dead stop have come the stars, and the night won't make way at all for the day. *Mercury (aside):* Go on, Night, as you began: oblige my father. It's a fine thing you're doing for a fine fellow, and a sound investment for yourself. *So.:* I don't believe I ever saw a longer night—except just one, when I was flogged and strung up for a whole night afterwards. Yet even that night by Jove wasn't a patch on this one for length. My private opinion is that the Sun's asleep, as tight as an owl. I bet he did

himself a bit too well at dinner. *Mer.* (*aside*): *You* say so, you rascal? Do you think the gods are like yourself? Just see what a warm reception I shall give you, you blackguard, for your ill words and deeds. Just come here, if you please, and you will find yourself for it. *So.:* Where are the whore-mongers, who hate to lie alone? This is a lovely night for getting full value out of a dear piece of goods. *Mer.* (*aside*): According to what this chap says my father is doing the right and sensible thing, lying lovingly with Alcmena in his arms and taking his fun. *So.:* I'll go with my master's orders to Alcmena. (*Seeing Mercury.*) But who is this fellow I see standing in front of the house at this time of night? I don't like it a bit. *Mercury* (*aside*): This is the world's champion poltroon. *So.:* Now I think of it, that chap wants to give me a new dressing down. *Mer.* (*aside*): He's scared; I'll make fun of him. *So.:* I am done for; there is a tingling in my teeth; I bet he means to celebrate my arrival with lots of punch. It's pure kindness on his part of course. Seeing my master has kept me awake, this chap now proposes to put me to sleep. My number is up. Look, I ask you, what a build, what muscles!

22. *Micio:* Why are you so glum? *Demea:* Are you asking me where our Aeschinus is? Why am I so glum? *Mi.* (*aside*): I told you it would be like this. (*Aloud.*) What has he done? *De.:* What has he done? A fellow ashamed of nothing, in awe of nobody, considering that *he* is not bound by the law. I pass over his former misdeeds, but what is his latest exploit? *Mi.:* What *is* it? *De.:* He has broken down the door and burst into the house of a stranger; beaten all the servants and their very master within an inch of their lives, and carried off a woman for whom he had a fancy; everybody cries out that it is a perfect scandal. The stories I have been told on my way here, Micio! He is the talk of the town. Surely, if he wants an example, doesn't he see his brother putting his back into his job, living a frugal and sober life in the country? *He* never did anything like this. When I make these charges against him, I make them against *you*, Micio. You spoil him. *Mi.:* You will not find anything more unjust than a man who does not know what he is speaking about, who thinks nothing right but what he has done himself. *De.:* What are you driving at? *Mi.:* My point, Demea, is that your judgment is here at fault. It is not wickedness, believe me, for a young fellow to want a mistress or to drink hard, no, nor for him to break down doors. If you and I didn't do it, it was because our finances did not permit of it. That being so, are you giving yourself the credit for what you were prevented by poverty from doing? That's not fair; for, if the means had been forthcoming, we should have done it. Moreover, if you had any sympathy, you would let that other son of yours do it now, while he is young enough for it, rather than

make him do it all the same at a less fitting age, when at long last he has kicked your corpse out of doors. *De.:* My God, you are driving me mad! Not wickedness for a young fellow to behave so? *Mi.:* Please! Don't bore me on this subject any more. You gave me your son to adopt; he became mine: if he commits an offence, Demea, it is I who suffer; I get the biggest share in that. He buys delicatessen, he drinks a good deal, he uses scent—I do the paying. He has a love-affair—he will be supplied by me with cash, as long as it is forthcoming; when it isn't, maybe he will find himself shut out. He has broken down a door—it will be repaired. He has torn a dress—it will be mended; and, thank God, I have got the wherewithal, and so far I have not felt the pinch. In one word, either stop it, or appoint anybody to judge between us. I will prove to him that you are more mistaken than I am in the matter. *De.:* You poor fish! Learn the business of being a father from others who know what it really is.

23. *De.:* Here he comes, the ruin of both my sons. *Mi.:* Do control your temper and be yourself again. *De.:* I have controlled it, I am myself again, I will no longer speak a word against you; let us consider the facts. Was it not agreed between us—the suggestion actually came from you—that you wouldn't seek to manage my son, nor I yours? Answer me that. *Mi.:* It is true; I do not deny it. *De.:* Then why is he at this moment carousing in your house? Why have you received my son there? Why are you buying a mistress for him, Micio? Is it somehow less just that I should have the same claim on you as you have on me? Seeing I do not take charge of your son, don't you take charge of mine. *Mi.* (*paving the way for a little joke*): You're wrong. *De.:* Wrong? *Mi.:* Yes, for it is an old by-word that friends have their goods in common. *De.* (*sarcastically*): How witty! Is that a natural speech in the circumstances? *Mi.:* Listen to a word or two, if it is not over much trouble to you, Demea. . . . *De.:* Never mind the money, it's the morals of the two—— *Mi.:* Stop; I know; I was coming to that. There are many indications in a man, Demea, which readily permit one, when two people are often doing the same thing, to form a guess of such a sort that you can say, 'This one can do it and get away with it; the other can't', not because of any difference in the thing, but in the doer. I see these indications in them, so that I am sure they will turn out all right. I see that they have sense and intelligence, that they are modest, that they are devoted to one another; you can see that they are gentlemen; you can get them to come back any day. Perhaps you are afraid that they are a bit slack in money matters. My dear Demea, we are always wiser when our age is different. The one fault that old age brings to men is this: we are all too keen on money. It is a fault in which they will be sufficiently sharpened by time. *De.:* Well, Micio, only see

that these fine arguments of yours and that lofty detachment do not prove your ruin. *Mi.:* Hush! That won't happen. Drop this worrying now, leave everything to me, look cheerful. *De.:* Evidently that must be the way of it; I must do so.

24. *Micio:* What is this you are doing? What has happened to change your character so suddenly? What whim is this? What is the meaning of this unexpected generosity? *De.:* I will tell you; I have done it to prove to you that your reputation with these boys for kindliness and geniality is not the fruit of the purity of your way of life nor of your justice and goodness either, Micio, but comes of giving in to them, indulging and squandering money on them. (*Turning to his sons.*) Now, Aeschinus, if my way of life is odious to you for the reason that I do not humour you in absolutely everything right or wrong, I wash my hands of the business. Spend money like water, do whatever you like. But in those matters in which on account of your youth you do not see far enough, are too impulsive in your desires and are thoughtless, if you prefer to have my reproof and criticism, with my backing at appropriate times—well here I am to do that for you.

25. Not for ever do the rain-showers drop upon the sordid fields or squally tempests evermore vex the Caspian sea, nor in Armenian lands, dear Valgius, does the ice remain unmelted through all the months or the oak groves of Garganus thresh beneath the northern blasts or are the mountain ashes reft of their leaves.

26. The lamps hang on swinging cords; they glimmer, fastened to the fretted roof, and, fed by the sluggish liquid in which it floats, the flame casts its light through the transparent crystal. You would think that over our heads stood a starry space decked with the Northern Wain, and that, where the plough-tongue guides the ox-borne yoke, red stars of evening are sprinkled all about. Thing worthy, O Father, to be offered thee by thy flock at the beginning of the dewy night—light than which thou givest nothing more precious, light whereby we receive all other desirable things! Thou art the true light to our eyes, the true light to our minds; the mirror Thou within and the mirror without us; receive Thou the light I thy servant offer, dipped in the oil of the chrism that gives peace; in the name of Christ thy son, Father supreme, in whom is set for ever thy glory visible, who being our Lord and thy Only Begotten breathes the Comforter from the Father's heart; through whom glory, honour, laud, wisdom, majesty, thy goodness and loving-kindness preserve the Kingdom by the divine Trinity, weaving age into age for evermore.

27. Weep my evil chance; back have come my tablets with a gloomy answer; the cursed writing says 'Not to-day'.

There *is* something in omens; as Nape was on the point of going a moment ago, she stumbled at the threshold and stopped. Next time you are sent out, girl, remember to cross the threshold more carefully, and sedately to lift your foot well over it.

Away with you, grumpy tablets, you coffin-boards! Away with you, wax crammed with disobliging characters!* I believe you were gathered from the blossom of the tall hemlock by Corsican bees who sent it here with their evil-reputed honey. 'But,' say you, 'we are a lovely red, deep-dyed with vermilion.' Why, that is the colour of blood. Let me kick you out, unprofitable timber, to lie at the street-crossing, and may you be crushed by the weight of the passing wheel! More, I will prove that the man who cut you from a tree to make you useful had sin-stained hands. That tree provided some wretched neck with the means of hanging itself, and it provided the executioner with his accursed cross. It afforded a dismal shade to hooting owls, and bore upon its branches the eggs of vulture and screech-owl. To these tablets I committed my love in my madness and entrusted soft words to be carried to my lady! More fitly would they contain long-winded bail-bonds for some lawyer to read in dry tones. A better place for them would be among day-books and ledgers, in which some miser might bemoan the extent of his disbursements. Yes, I have found you double in fact as in name; the very number was unlucky. What doom shall I call down upon you save this—that corroding age may gnaw you, and your wax turn white with disgusting mould?

28. Shall I gain anything by supplications? Is that barbarous heart moved or not? And do my words fall short and are carried away by the winds? The winds that carry my words away, I could have wished to carry back your sails: that work was meet for you, sluggard, had you been wise. Or if you do come back, and gifts to pay your vows are preparing for your bark, why do you break my heart by your delaying? Lift anchor; Venus, born of the sea, offers the sea to your voyaging. The breeze will give you a fair course; only lift anchor. Cupid, seated in the stern, will steer with his own hand; with his own delicate hand he will furl and unfurl the sail. But if it is your pleasure to flee far from Pelasgian Sappho, nevertheless you will not find a reason why it is right to flee from me. Let at least a letter, though heartless, tell me that in my unhappiness; so that I may seek my death in the waters of Leucadia.

29. Cease, Paullus, to importune my grave with your tears; to no supplications is the dark door flung open; when once the dead has passed

*The 'tablets' consisted of two wooden boards fastened together and waxed on their inside faces. The message was written on the wax with a pointed instrument.

within the jurisdiction of the world below, the ways are shut fast with inexorable adamant. Though it may be that the god of the dim hulk shall hear your prayers, surely your tears will be drunk by the unhearing shore. Vows move the gods above, but when the Ferryman [Charon] has had his fee, the gloomy gate shuts its bar upon the grassy pyre.* Such was the burden of the mournful trumpets when the cruel torch was applied and took my head from the bier. What did it avail me to have Paullus for my husband, the chariot of my ancestors, the noble pledges of my chastity.† Did Cornelia find the Fates less harsh? Lo, I am a weight that may be picked up with five fingers.

30. My delight be it to loll beneath the weight of last night's flowers, I whom the love-god with unerring aim has pierced to the marrow; let it be Virgil's to celebrate the Actian shore, where Phoebus keeps guard, and the brave ships of Caesar—Virgil, who even now is rousing to new life the 'arms' of Trojan Aeneas, and the walls he founded on 'Lavinian shores'.‡ Give place, Roman writers; give place, writers of Greece! There is coming to birth something greater than the Iliad. Your song, Virgil, is of Thyrsis and Daphnis with their polished reeds under the pine-clumps of Galaesus, and of how a maid can be seduced by ten apples and a kid from the udder it has been nuzzling. Happy you, who can buy love cheap for a little fruit—though Tityrus himself finds her unresponsive to his minstrelsy! Happy Corydon, who can venture to fondle the inviolate Alexis, his rustic master's joy! Though, tired with his fluting, he must take a rest, he wins applause among the easy-going Hamadryads.|| You put into song the precepts of the old poet of Ascra [Hesiod], in what field the crop grows green, on what ridge the grape.§ On your learned lyre you make such music as the Cynthian god [Apollo] harmonises by the touch of his fingers. Yet will not these songs displease any reader when they come to him, whether he be a novice or a master in love. Not less truly inspired here,¶ though less lofty in utterance, the tuneful swan has not retreated before the rude strain of a goose.**

31. *Daphnis:* A sad thing is the wolf to the folds, rain to the ripe fruits, winds to the trees, the angry moods of Amaryllis to me. *Menalcas:* A sweet thing is moisture to the crops, the wild strawberry to the weaned

*This clause, seeming to make little or no sense, has been emended, but without any certainty.

†Children are often called 'pledges' in Latin poetry.

‡The reference is to the *Aeneid.*

||The reference is to the *Eclogues.*

§The reference is to the *Georgics.*

¶Apparently in the *Eclogues.*

**See *Ecl.* ix. 35.

kids, the pliant willow to the mothers of the flock, Amyntas alone to me. *Da.:* Pollio loves my Muse, though she is country-bred: Pierian Maids, pasture a calf for your reader. *Me. :* Pollio himself also makes new songs: pasture a bull, such as already threatens with his horn and scatters the sand with his hooves. *Da. :* Whoever loves you, Pollio, let him come where you also are glad to have come; let honey flow for him, and the thorny bramble bear incense. *Me. :* Whoever does not hate Bavius, let him love your songs, Maevius, and let him also yoke together foxes and milk he-goats.

32. Him even the laurels, even the tamarisks wept; him as he lay under the lonely rock even pine-bearing Maenalus and the stones of cold Lycaeus wept.

33. Thee the grove of Angitia, thee Fucinus with glassy wave, thee the watery pools wept.

35. Came too the shepherd; slowly came the swineherds; wet from the winter's chestnuts came Menalcas. All ask, 'Whence has this passion come upon you?' Came Apollo: 'Gallus,' he says, 'wherefor indulge this madness? Your love Lycoris has followed another among snows and rough camps. Came too Silvanus with rustic honours on his head [*i.e.*, garlanded], shaking fennel stalks in bloom and tall lilies.

36a. But, for thee, O Child, the earth without tillage will produce abundantly as thy earliest gifts the gadding ivy with the foxglove and colacasium mingled with the gay acanthus. Of their own accord the she-goats will bring home their milk-swollen udders, nor will the cattle be in fear of mighty lions. Your very cradle will bring forth sweet flowers for you. Destruction also will come upon the serpent, and destruction on the treacherous herb of poison; but all about will grow the Syrian frankincense.

36b. Yet will there abide some few traces of the old world of sin, to bid men tempt the main with ships, gird their towns with bulwarks, and cleave furrows in the earth. Then will there be a second Tiphys and a second Argo to carry chosen heroes; moreover there will be other wars, and the great Achilles will be sent a second time to Troy.

37. He used to entrust his secret thoughts to his books as to loyal friends; never, whether he had had a stroke of bad luck or of good, having recourse to any other confidant. The result is that the life of the old gentleman is completely revealed, as if it had been limned in a votive picture.

38. I happened to be walking along the Sacred Way, as is my custom, working in my head at some poetic trifle and wholly absorbed in that. There rushes up to me a man whom I know only by name, who grabbed my hand and said, 'How do you do, my dear old chap?' 'Nicely, for the

moment; you have my very best wishes'. As he persisted in following me, I said (to choke him off), 'Will that be all?' But what he said was, 'You ought to know me; I am an educated man.' At this point I replied, 'You will be so much the more valuable an acquaintance'. In a fever to get away from him I sometimes walked fast, sometimes stopped, sometimes whispered in my servant's ear, while the sweat ran down to my ankles. 'O Bolanus,' I said to myself, 'how I envy you your power of flying into a passion!' while the fellow chattered ten to the dozen, praising the streets, the city. When I replied not a word, 'You're abominably anxious to get away', says he; 'I have noticed it for some time. But it's no good, I mean to stick to you. I will go with you all the way wherever you are now going from here'. 'There is no necessity for you to be taken on such a round: I wish to call on somebody you do not know; he is laid up and it's a long way on the other side of the Tiber, near Caesar's Park.' 'I have nothing to do, and I am not a lazy man; I will go with you all the way'. I let my ears droop like a depressed donkey when a rather heavy load has been put on his back. . . . During these proceedings, behold, up hurries Aristius Fuscus, a dear friend of mine and a man that had a thorough knowledge of the fellow. We stopped. 'Where do you come from, and where are you hurrying to?' he asks and is asked. I began to twitch his cloak, to grasp his very unresponsive arms, nodding, squinting to him to rescue me. Smiling with malicious pleasure at the joke, he pretended not to understand, while my liver was inflamed with choler. 'Surely there was something you said that you wished to discuss with me in private.' 'I haven't forgotten, but I shall tell you on a more suitable occasion: to-day is the Jewish sabbath; do you want me to offend the circumcised?' 'I have no scruples, 'said I. 'But I have; I have not quite got your strength of mind; I am no better than the next man. You will excuse me; I will speak with you at another time.' To think that this day should have risen so darkly ominous to me! Off goes the traitor and leaves me under the knife. As luck would have it, my man was encountered by another who was at law with him. There is a yell from the latter, 'Where are you off to, you dirty scoundrel?' and 'May I take you to witness?' [This is addressed to Horace.] I let him touch my ear, and he hurries my man to the law-courts. There was shouting on both sides, a mob collected. In this way Apollo saved my life.

39. This was something I had prayed for: a piece of land of no great extent, where there should be a kitchen-garden and a spring of ever-running water near the house, and a bit of woodland to boot. The gods have done even better and more lavishly, and I am grateful. I ask for nothing more, O son of Maia [Mercury, the god of good fortune], but that you make these gifts my own. If I have never increased my means

by evil practices and am not going to make them less by any vice or fault, if I am not such a fool as to regard such wishes as these, 'If only that corner next my little estate, that at present spoils its shape, were added to it! If only a bit of luck would reveal to me a crock of silver as it did to that farm-servant who found a hoard and bought with it the very field he ploughed, made a rich man by the favour of Hercules!' if I am perfectly satisfied with what I have got, this is my prayer to you now, 'Make fat its master's flock for him and everything else of his except his brains, and continue as before to be my powerful guard and helper. So when I move from town to my eyrie among the hills, what should I rather glorify by my satires and prosaic muse?' Then back-stairs intrigue will not be the death of me, nor will the oppressive south wind and feverish autumn, from which the cruel goddess of undertakers draws her profit.

40. Sometimes the public sees the truth; sometimes it goes wrong. If it admires and praises the old poets to such an extent that it prefers nothing to them, or considers nothing equal to them, it errs. If it believes that they speak sometimes in obsolete, often in unpolished, language, and admits that many of their expressions are slovenly, then its taste is sound and it agrees with me and its judgment has the support of good sense. I am no hostile critic of the verses of Livius, which, I remember, cane-loving Orbilius [Horace's school-master] used to read out to me when I was a small boy, nor do I think they ought to be rubbed out; what astonishes me is that they should be thought faultless and beautiful and little short of perfect (the truth being that) if a single fine word or a comparatively neat verse or two happens to strike the eye, it carries off and recommends the whole poem. I am vexed that something should be condemned, not because it is thought to be crudely or inelegantly, but because it is thought to have been recently, composed, and that we are asked, not to make allowance for the early poets, but to honour and reward them. Were I to doubt whether a comedy by Atta treads the saffron- and flower-strewn stage correctly or not, almost all the older generation would exclaim that there was no shame left in the world, since I am trying to criticise what solemn Aesopus and accomplished Roscius have acted: either because they regard nothing as right except what has won *their* approval, or because they consider it disgraceful to follow the opinions of their juniors and to admit in their old age that what they learned in their beardless youth should be rubbed out.

41. Carefully weigh Hannibal: how many pounds will you find in the consummate general? This is he whom Africa beaten by the Mauretanian ocean and Africa near the tepid Nile, and back to the tribes of Ethiopia and different elephants, is not large enough to hold. Spain is added to his

command, the Pyrenees he crosses in one leap. Nature has set in his path the snow-clad Alps: he splits the crags and rends the mountain-range with vinegar. Now Italy is in his grasp, yet on he presses. 'Nothing,' he says, 'is achieved unless I burst the gates of Rome with my Punic soldiery and plant my standard in the heart of the Subura.' Heavens, what a face, meet for what a portrait, when the African beast was carrying the one-eyed commander! And what is the upshot? Oh Glory! He, even he, is beaten and flees headlong into exile and there, in his greatness and his fame, sits a dependent at the court of a potentate, till it seem good to the Bithynian despot to hold his levée. The life which once turned the world upside down will meet its end not from swords or stones or spears, but from that ring which took vengeance for Cannae and punished the shedding of all that blood.* Go, madman, rush over the grim Alps, that you may delight boys and make a subject for their speeches!

42. Wealth acquired with such trouble is preserved with disproportionate alarms and anxieties; the guardianship of vast wealth takes away one's peace of mind. Licinus, who is rolling in money, has a regiment of slaves under orders to keep watch all night with fire-buckets in a row, being terrified for his electrum and statues and pillars of Anatolian marble, his ivory and slabs of tortoise shell. The cask of the naked Cynic does not catch fire;† if you smash it, another habitation will be made to-morrow, or the same one will be clamped with lead and kept. When Alexander saw the man—and that man was 'great'—who lived in the cask, he felt how much happier was he, who coveted nothing, than he who claimed the whole world for himself, destined as he was to suffer perils equal to his achievements. Give us wisdom, and thou hast no divinity; we it is, we, who make a goddess of thee, Fortune. Yet should one ask me what is a sufficient measure of wealth, I will give my answer: as much as hunger, thirst and cold require; as much as you found enough in your little Garden, Epicurus, as much as the house of Socrates contained before that. Nature never says one thing and wisdom another.

43. The city we live in is, much of it, shored up by slender props—that's the way the house-agent prevents a collapse and, when he has patched over a gaping crack in the old wall, bids us sleep in peace, though the crash may come at any moment. I must live in a place where there are no fires, no nocturnal alarms. Ucalegon [a neighbour] is already calling for water and moving his bits of furniture, your third storey is smoking already, and you don't know it; for if the alarm begins on the ground floor, the last man

*Hannibal committed suicide by sucking poison from a ring he wore.

†The reference is to the 'tub of Diogenes', which was not a tub but an enormous cask of earthenware.

to burn will be the one who is protected from the rain by nothing but the tiles, where the gentle doves lay their eggs [and, it is implied, drive the tenant of the garret distracted by their cooing]. Codrus [a hard-up author] was the owner of a bed too small for Procula [a dwarf], six pipkins to adorn his sideboard, *item* a little beaker and a recumbent figure of Chiron in marble underneath it, while an ancient chest kept his Greek books, which were gnawed by barbarian mice.

44. There are some who think I am too cutting in my satire and push that kind of writing beyond its proper limits; another set are of opinion that whatever I have composed is flabby stuff, and that a thousand verses like mine can be spun in a day. Advise me what to do, Trebatius. 'Stop.' You mean, not make verses at all? 'I do.' Deuce take me if that wouldn't be the best plan; but I can't sleep. 'Those who need to sleep sound should anoint themselves and swim three times across the Tiber, then soak themselves in wine before going early to bed. Or, if you are carried away by such an enthusiasm for writing, boldly attack the subject of unconquered Caesar's victories; he is quite likely to make it worth your while? I should love to, my good old friend, but I have not got the qualifications: it isn't everybody who can describe battalions bristling with spears, or Gauls breaking their lances and being killed, or the wounded Parthian falling from his horse.

45. Vanquished Greece vanquished her rude conqueror and introduced her arts into rustic Latium. So it came about that the rough Saturnian metre ran its course, and what offended good taste was driven out by refinement. Yet traces of rusticity remained and still remain. It was long before the Roman genius applied itself to letters, and it was during the peace that succeeded the Punic wars that it first enquired what useful lesson might be got from Sophocles and Thespis and Aeschylus. An attempt was also made at adequate translation, and the result was satisfactory, for the Roman genius is naturally both aspiring and acute; it has a sufficient endowment of the tragic spirit and can rise to the sublime; but it naïvely supposes that correction is not work for a gentleman and shrinks from undertaking it. There is a notion that comedy involves less labour because it draws its matter from everyday life; but it is more laborious, since fewer excuses are found for it. Look at the way in which Plautus supports the role of a young fellow in love, a heavy father, a seductive procurer, what a Hercules Dossenus turns out among the hungry diners-out, with how loose a slipper he scurries over the stage; for his one idea is to put money in his purse. What cares he whether his play be well or ill constructed?

46. My wench says that she would rather marry me than any one else, even if Jupiter himself were to ask her. That is what she says, but what a

wench says to an impatient lover should be written on wind or running water.

47. I hate and love; perhaps you ask why. I do not know, but I feel that it is so, and the feeling is torture.

48. Licinus [a rich nobody] lies in a tomb of marble, but Cato in none, and Pompey in a small one. Do we believe that there is a God?

49. The few acres of Julius Martialis, more fruitful than the Garden of the Hesperides, sink down upon the long ridge of the Janiculum. We have a good view of wide openings in the hills, and the crest, gently swelling to a plateau, enjoys a more cloudless sky and, when a mist conceals the winding valleys, gleams solitary with a light of its own.

50. I do not love thee, Sabidius, nor can I say why. This only I can say: I do not love thee.*

51. The artist who painted your Venus, Lycoris, did it, I imagine, to flatter Minerva.†

52. You badger me to present you with my books, Quintus. I have not got copies, but Tryphon the bookseller has. 'Do you expect me, while in my senses, to give hard cash for your effusions and buy your verses? I shall do nothing so silly.' Neither shall I.

*'I do not love thee, Dr. Fell. . . .'
†The rival of Venus in beauty.

INDEX

Achilles, 11 ff., 55.
Adelphoe, 127 ff.
Adonais, 179, 181, 193.
Adoniazusae, 187 f.
Aeneas, 61.
Aeneas Sylvius, 19.
Aeneid, Chapter Two, A, 39.
Aeschylus, 116 f.
Aesop, 94.
Akenside, 241 f.
Alexander (Sir W.), 112 f.
Allegory, 86 ff.
Allusiveness, 43.
Amores, 84, 159.
Amphitruo, 123 f.
Anacreon, 146 f., 156, 243.
Apollonius (Rhodius), 31, 165.
Arcadia, 178.
Argonautica, 30 f.
Ariosto, 54.
Aristophanes, 120, 121, 126, 220.
Aristotle, 13, 17, 38, 187.
Arnold (M.), 73 f., 103, 117 f., 121, 155, 177.
Ars Amatoria, 84.
Ars Poetica, 84 f., 159, 201, 209.
Astronomy, 65.
Avarice, 86, 87.
Avianus, 94 f.

Balder Dead, 73 f.
Barclay (Alexander), 191.
Bard (Gray's), 143.
Belloc, 246.
Bible, 26, 27, 54, 55, 58, 59.
Bion, 180 f.
Boccaccio, 48 f.
Boethius, 156.
Brooke (Lord), 112.
Browne (Sir T.), 42.
Butler, 224.
Byron, 237.

Caesar, 36 f., 40 f.
Campion, 152.
Carew, 163.
Catalogues, 15, 32, 53.
Cato, 37, 41.
'Cato,' 91 f.
Catullus, 155 f., 243.
Chapman, 23 f., 72, 163, 177.
Chaucer, 16, 48 f., 93 f., 160, 165, 208, 221.
Churchill, 236.
Cicero, 186, 216, 239 f.
Claudian, 50 f., 85, 221.
Cleveland, 224 f.
Coleridge, 25, 51, 141, 145.
Collins, 142 f., 150 f., 153.
Comedy (Greek), Chapter Six, *passim*.
(Roman), Chapter Six, *passim*.
(of humours), 127.
(Restoration), 127, 136.
Comedy of Errors, 123 f.
Comus, 61, 114.
'Conceits,' 164.
Congreve, 127, 135, 136.
Cowley, 141 f., 147.
Cowper, 70, 78, 153 f., 198, 236 f.
Crabbe, 192 f., 215 f.

Daniel, 190.
Dante, 43, 54, 207, 208.
Darley, 91.

Davidson (J.), 175.
Death, 54.
Destiny (*fatum*), 30 f.
Devil, 47.
Dickens, 121, 135.
Diomedes, 19.
Dolon, 19.
Donne, 162 f., 165, 169, 198, 200, 221, 223 f.
Drama (Greek), 97 f.
Dryden, 42, 49, 70, 76, 79, 96, 142, 143, 145, 153, 163, 169, 170, 171, 209 f., 220 f., 225 f.
Dunbar, 87.

Eclogues, 172, 175 ff.
Elegy (Gray's), 169.
Elegy (Roman), 159 ff.
Éloge, 169 f.
Eloisa to Abelard, 166 f.
Enjambement, 67.
Epic, Chapter One.
Epigram, Chapter Eleven.
Epistles (of Horace), 165, 171, 201.
Epistulae ex Ponto, 171.
Epyllion, 193 f.
Essay on Criticism, 85.
Eunuchus, 121.
Euripides, 104, 117.
Exeter Book, 90.

Fable, 94 f.
Faerie Queene, 31, 88, 191.
Fasti, 83 f.
Fletcher, 190.
Flood, 81 f.

Gallus, 178 f.
Gay, 95.
Georgics, 76 f.
host, 101, 107, 109 f.
Gilbert, 238.
Golden Age, 183 f.
Goldsmith, 127, 136 f., 192, 198.
Grammar (Latin), 186.
Gray, 113, 142 f., 153, 169, 192.
Greek Anthology, 240 ff.

Hall, 222 f.
Hamlet, 109 f.
Hannibal, 45 f.
Hell, 54, 104, 110.
Hellas, 117, 185.
Henryson, 95.
Hero and Leander, 83, 163.
Heroides, 84, 164 f.
Herrick, 152, 243, 244.
Hesiod, 75 ff.
Homer, Chapter One, A (*passim*).
Homeric Audience, 9 f., 16.
„ Materials, 11 f.
„ Method, 20 f.
„ Similes, 26, 27 f., 69 f.
„ Style, 22 f., 26 f., 32 f.
Horace, 43, 53, 84 f., 124, 135, 141, 147 ff., 165, 193, 196 ff., 207, 209.
Housman, 242, 246.
'Humours,' 135.
Hyperion, 71 f.

Idylls, 172 f.
Idylls of the King, 13, 194 f.
Iliad, 9 f., 14 f., 18 f., 30 f.
Imitations of Horace, 230 f.
Intervention of gods, 16, 18, 21, 46.
Irony (tragic), 20, 100, 103.
„ (Horace's), 200, 208.
„ (Ovid's), 160.

Jason, Life and Death of, 13.
Johnson, 193, 214 f., 234 f.

Jonson, 53, 127, 135 f., 152, 169 f., 190 f., 198, 223, 244.
Juvenal, 212, 213 ff.

Keats, 51, 71 f., 141, 146, 190, 243.
Keble, 155.
Kyd, 107, 108, 110.

Landor, 71, 155 f., 241.
Langland, 208, 221.
Latin style, 61 ff.
Literary Criticism, 205 f., 232 f.
Livius (Andronicus), 205.
Lucan, 13, 35 ff., 91, 92, 109, 207.
Lucilius, 196 f., 198, 201.
Lucretius, 58, 77.
Lycidas, 61, 68, 191, 192.
Lydgate, 95.
Lyly, 43.
Lyndsay, 120, 222.
Lyric Poetry, Chapter Seven, *passim*.
Lyric (Ancient), 139 f.
„ (Mediaeval Latin), 156.

Magic, 47.
Manilius, 59.
Mantuan, 191, 222.
Marlowe, 44, 83, 160 ff., 166, 182.
Mars, 48, 49.
Marston, 222 f.
Martial, 241, 244 f.
Marvell, 152, 224 f.
Menaechmi, 123 f.
Menander, 119 f.
Merope, 117 f.
Messiah, 58.
Messiah, 185.
Metamorphoses, 14, 59, 60, 78 ff., 109, 163.
Metre, 32 f., 139 f., 148 f.
„ (Virgil's), 34 ff.
„ (Ovid's), 79.
Milton, 10, 15, 17, 26, 33, 45, Chapter Three, *passim*, 76 f., 83, 103, 114, 139 f., 148 f., 169, 176 f., 179 f., 191, 192, 222.
Miltonic style, 61 f., 64 f.
„ versification, 66 f.
Mime, 186 ff.
Molière, 120, 135, 136.
Molpe, 139.
More, 243.
Morte d' Arthur, 72.
Moschus, 177, 193.
'Musaeus,' 163.
Muse, 14, 53, 75.
Mythology, 43, 79.

Narcissus, 82, 163.
Narrative (Prospective), 60.
„ (Retrospective), 21.
Nativity Ode, 116.
Novel, 122, (Greek), 127.

Ode, 140 f.
Odyssey, 9 f., 17, 20 ff.
Oedipus, 46 f.
Oedipus (of Seneca), 108 f.
(of Sophocles), 98 ff.
Oldham, 221, 225.
Omens, 17, 47.
Oracle, 98 f.
Ovid, 14, 43, 45, 54, 81 ff., 109, 159 ff., 182.

Paradise Lost, 15, 17, 31, 40, 45, Chapter Three, *passim*.
„ *Regained*, 61.
Parnell, 192.
Pastoral, Chapter Nine.

Persians, 117.
Persius, 198, 210 ff.
Personification, 49.
Phaedrus, 94.
Pharmaceutriae, 189 f.
Pharsalia, 13, 36 ff.
Philips, 192.
Phoenice (*de Ave*), 89 f.
Phoenix, 89 f.
Phoenix, 90.
Phoenix and Turtle, 91.
Pindar, 116, 141 ff., 156.
Plato, 183 f.
Plautus, 120 ff.
Pollio, 183.
Pope, 24 f., 27, 35, 85, 96, 122, 163, 165 f., 169, 184 f., 192, 196, 202, 206 f., 228 ff.
Prior, 95, 153, 198, 236, 245 f.
Prodigies, 17.
Progress of Poesy, 143.
Prometheus Bound, 116 f.
„ *Unbound*, 116 f.
Propertius, 167 f., 170 f.
Prophecy, 47, 54, 55, 101.
Prudentius, 85 f., 157 f.
Psychomachia, 86 f.
Publilius, 91 f.
Pyrrhus Speech, 44.

Quintilian, 163.

Ralph Roister Doister, 120.
Ramsay, 191.
Rape of Proserpine, 50 f.
'Realism,' 219.
Revenge, 107, 110.
Rhetoric, 38 f., 217 f., 228.
Rochester, 246.
Roman de la Rose, 88.
Roscommon, 85.

Samson Agonistes, 103, 114 f.
Satan, 37, 53 f.
Satire, Chapter Ten.
Scales (Golden), 65.
Scaliger (Joseph), 62.
„ (J. C.), 53, 111, 151.
Scott, 235.
Sejanus, 135.
Seneca, 38, 44, 91, 103 ff., 110, 135.
'Sentences,' 108, 218.
Sermones, 135.
Shakespeare, 16, 43, 44, 50, 81, 83, 107, 110, 120, 126, 132, 163, 164, 169, 191.
Shaw, 127, 135, 137, 164.
Shelley, 36, 96, 103, 116 f., 138, 141, 145, 179, 181, 185.
Sheridan, 127, 137.
Silius (Italicus), 45 f.
Sin, 54.
Skelton, 155.
Sohrab and Rustum, 73.
Spanish Tragedy, 107 f.
Spenser, 83, 175, 180 f., 191 f., 222.
Statius, 45 ff., 109, 207.
Stevenson, 244 f.
Stoic, 41, 201.
Stoicism, 42, 201, 212 f., 235.
Suspense of Interest, 16 f., 55, 71, 100 f.
Swinburne, 103, 118, 156.

Taming of the Shrew, 122, 126.
Tennyson, 13 f., 22 f., 26, 27 f., 33 f., 51, 72 f., 140, 146, 154 f., 156, 182, 186, 193, 194 f., 242.
Terence, 120 ff., 127 ff.
Theatre (ancient), 97 f., 130, 132.
Thebais, 45 ff.

Theocritus, 14, 172 ff.
Theogony, 57, 78.
Theseus, 49 f.
Thompson, 146.
Thomson, 78.
Thyestes, 104 ff.
Thyrsis, 177, 193.
Tickell, 170.
Titus Andronicus, 110.
Trojan War, 11 ff.

Venus and Adonis, 81, 163.
Verse-Chronicle, 12 f., 46.
Virgil, 10, Chapter Two, A, 39 f., 140, 170, 172, 175 f., 207.
Virgilian Style, 32 f., 64 f.
,, metre, 34 f., 66 f., 140.

Wilde, 127, 135, 137, 246.
Words (Order of), 63 f.
Wordsworth, 27, 71, 96, 145, 177.
Works and Days, 75 f.

Zeus (Will of), 15.

AUTHORS QUOTED

I

GREEK

Bion, 180 f.
Homer, 22, 28.
Moschus, 177.
Pindar, 144.
Theocritus, 174 f., 187 f., 190.

II

LATIN

Anon, 243.
Avianus, 94 f.
'Cato,' 92 f.
Catullus, 243.
Cicero, 240.
Claudian, 50 f.
Horace, 63, 148 f., 154, 197, 199, 202 f., 204, 205, 230, 232.
Juvenal, 213 f., 218, 219, 234.
Lactantius? 90.
Lucan, 40, 41 f., 42.
Martial, 245.
Ovid, 79 f., 81, 82, 161, 165.
Persius, 210 f.
Plautus, 125.
Propertius, 167 f., 170.
Prudentius, 86, 151 f.
Publilius Syrus, 92.
Seneca, 105 f., 109, 111 f.
Statius, 48.
Terence, 128 f., 132 f., 134.
Virgil, 33 f., 35, 67, 68, 140, 175, 176, 178, 179, 184.

III

ENGLISH

Akenside, 241 f.
Alexander, 112 f.
Arnold, 73, 74.
Chapman, 23 f.
Chaucer, 49, 221.
Collins, 151.
Crabbe, 193.
Dryden, 80, 82.
Dunbar, 87.
Gray, 144 f.
Hall, 222.
Johnson, 214 f., 235.
Jonson, 169.
Keats, 71.
Kyd, 107 f.
Landor, 241.
Marlowe, 162.
Marvell, 152.

Milton, 33, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 76 f., 114, 115 f., 116, 140, 149, 176 f., 179 f.
Pope, 24 f., 166 f., 168, 185, 206 f., 230 f., 232 f., 234.
Prior, 245, 246.
Shakespeare, 44, 91, 107, 109 f., 164.
Shelley, 96, 138, 179, 181, 185.
Stevenson, 244 f.
Tennyson, 22 f., 27 f., 34, 140, 154, 182, 186, 194 f., 242.
Wordsworth, 177.



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