FOURTH EDITION

THE LONGMAN ANTHOLOGY BRITISH LITERATURE

VOLUME 1B • THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

See The Ambassadors, Cover, 1533
Hans Holbein the Younger
anamorphosis > distorted perspective

Frontispiece from Saxton's *Atlas*, 1579.

ANGLE PARKER
INSERT ON DRIVE
WINDOW.
MOTORCYCLES
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UNEXPIRED TIM
MAY BE USED ON A
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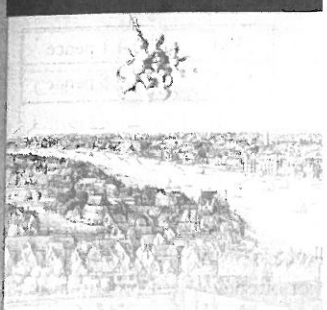

POPULATION[1]

NATIONAL POPULATIONS (IN

	England	Scotla
1500	3.3[3]	0.5
1700	5.6[4]	1.23

LIFE EXPECTANCY

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1603 25,045 Londoners die of the p
1625 26,350 Londoners die of the p
1665 55,797 Londoners die of the p

DAILY LIFE

CURRENCY

4 farthings	1d. (1 penny)	Or be $1
12d.	1s. (1 shilling)	Or wo $1
5s.	1 crown	Or wo $6(
20s.	1£ (1 pound)	Or app toc
21s.	1 guinea	On app toc

8. London became the largest city in Euro
9. Historical equivalences for the purchasi different results. A calculation based on consumer goods; and those consumer g are meant only to be suggestive.

POPULATION[1]

NATIONAL POPULATIONS (IN MILLIONS)[2]

	England	Scotland	Ireland
1500	3.3[3]	0.5	0.5–0.8
1700	5.6[4]	1.23	1.8–2.0

URBAN POPULATIONS[5]

	London	Edinburgh	Dublin
1500	40,000–50,000[6]	12,000	5,000–7,000
1600	200,000[7]	30,000	15,000
1700	575,000[8]	40,000	60,000

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy at birth is about 48 years in Elizabethan England, lower in cities where poor sanitation and crowded conditions cause the plague and other diseases—such as typhus, small pox, consumption (tuberculosis), syphilis, scurvy—to spread more easily. The plague is half as severe in the rich parishes in the city center as it had been in 1563 and 83.3% of all deaths are in the poorer areas at the periphery of the city.

1563 17,404 Londoners die of the plague.
1603 25,045 Londoners die of the plague.
1625 26,350 Londoners die of the plague.
1665 55,797 Londoners die of the plague.

DAILY LIFE

CURRENCY[9]

4 farthings	1d. (1 penny)	One silver penny would be worth approximately $1.23 today.
12d.	1s. (1 shilling)	One shilling would be worth approximately $12.06 today.
5s.	1 crown	One crown would be worth approximately $60.30 today.
20s.	1£ (1 pound)	One pound would be worth approximately $241.20 today.
21s.	1 guinea	One guinea would be worth approximately $253.26 today.

WAGES

	1590s	1663–1683
Craftsmen	18 pence/day	30 pence/day
Laborers	12 pence/day	18 pence/day

12 pence = 1 shilling
20 shillings = 1 pound

1. Any population figures before 1801, when the first official census was taken, are only hypothetical.
2. The population of today's United Kingdom is 60,943,912 (July 2008 est.).
3. 1.5% of England's population lived in London.
4. 11.5% of England's population lived in London.
5. The population of today's London is over 7.6 million (a figure reported in October 2008).
6. Ten European cities had more inhabitants; six had a similar number.
7. Only Naples and Paris had more people than London; Constantinople had twice as many people as London.
8. London became the largest city in Europe, and by 1750 it had 600,000, as many people as Constantinople.
9. Historical equivalences for the purchasing power of a given sum are very approximate. Different types of calculation provide quite different results. A calculation based on wages, for instance, yields a different figure from a calculation based on the prices of basic consumer goods; and those consumer goods thought essential to daily life change drastically over time. These conversions, then, are meant only to be suggestive.

Cost of Goods

1532	1 bushel of barley: £0.490; 1 bushel of beans: £0.361: 1 pound of beef: £0.865; 1 gallon of beer: £2.651
1590	1 bushel of barley: 2.001; 1 bushel of beans: 1.947; 1 pound of beef: 2.127; 1 gallon of beer: 4.304
1663	1 bushel of barley: 2.554; 1 bushel of beans: 2.251; 1 pound of beef: 3.116; 1 gallon of beer: 7.651

Cost of 4-pound loaf of bread (in London)

1590	4.1 pence
1663	5.8 pence

Food and Drink

Food production can be precarious during the 16th century, as it is dependent on local agriculture, which is susceptible to poor harvest. Bread is an important staple in the diet of all classes. In the upper and middle classes, roasted game and seafood also play prominent roles. The poor often get their protein from milk, eggs, and nuts. Sugar and imported spices are cost-prohibitive and often used to demonstrate social position, but even the lower classes grow some spices in their gardens. Because of unsanitary water supplies, ale is the main beverage for people of all ages. The average adult man consumes about a gallon a day; however, the alcohol content is much less than we know today.

Apparel

Men of the upper and middle classes typically wear a ruff (a separate ruffled collar worn at the neck), codpiece (a pouch that attached to the crotch area of a man's breeches), breeches (pants that stopped just below the knee, each leg was separate), stockings (long socks that covered the entire calf), a doublet (close-fitting, buttoned jacket), and a jerkin (sleeveless jacket worn over the doublet).

Women of the upper and middle classes typically wear a ruff (a separate ruffled collar worn at the neck), bodice (covered from the neck to waist, usually laced closed), sleeves (separate garments), skirt, and farthingale (wheel-shaped stiffening below the waist to which the skirt was pinned).

Most Elizabethan clothing is made from wool or linen, with some items of leather or, for the formal wear of the upper classes, silk. Fashions of the lower classes largely follow those of the upper classes except they rely on cheaper, durable fabrics and styles that allow greater freedom of motion.

Rulers

Oliver Cromwell

Charles II

Rulers
The Tudors
Henry VII, King of England, Lord of Ireland (1485–1509)
Henry VIII, King of England, Lord of Ireland (1509–1547), King of Ireland (1541–1547). His six wives were Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr.
Edward VI, King of England and Ireland (1547–1553), son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour
Mary I, Queen of England and Ireland (1553–1558), daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon
Elizabeth I, Queen of England and Ireland (1558–1603), daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn
The Stuarts
James I, James VI, King of Scotland (1567–1615), King of England and Ireland (1603–1625), son of Mary Queen of Scots and Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley
Charles I, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1625–1649), son of James I and Anne of Denmark

Rulers

Commonwealth of England
Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector c
Richard Cromwell, Second Lord I
Restoration of the Stuart M
Charles II (Charles Stuart) King c (1660–1685), son of Charles I anc

WS 1564-1616
JM 1608-74

Timeline

1500 10% of men and 1% of wom
1509 Henry VIII becomes King of E
1516 Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (p
1517 Luther protests the Roman C
1534 The Act of Supremacy decla England," and thus, he severs a
1538 Henry VIII is excommunicat
1547 Henry VIII dies; Edward VI (
1553 Edward VI dies of tuberculos of Aragon) from the throne for restore Catholicism. With the s sors, his cousin Lady Jane Grey briefly. The attempt quickly fail Queen of England and Ireland.
1558 Mary I dies; Elizabeth I (daug Anne Boleyn) becomes Queen
1563 John Foxe publishes his *Acts Latter and Perilous Days*—later v *of Martyrs* (page 1063).
1565 The Royal Exchange is built commercial headquarters for Lo
1570 William Baldwin's prose ficti *the Cat, Concerning Diverse Wor* in 1552 but not published until
1576 Blackfriars, once a Dominica
1587 The Catholic Mary Queen of guilty of complicity in a plot to
1587 The Rose Theatre opens.
1588 English naval forces defeat th
1590–1596 Edmund Spenser's *The*
1591 Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil an* (page 680).
1592 Shakespeare begins career in
1595 The Swan Theatre opens.
1598 Christopher Marlowe's *Hero c*
1599 The Globe Theatre opens.
1601 Robert Devereux, Earl of Esse rebellion.
1602 William Shakespeare's *Twelfth*
1603 Queen Elizabeth dies; James I Scots and Henry Stuart, Lord D
1603 Unaware of Elizabeth's death, his Irish forces in armed conflict
1604 The short version of Christoph lished (page 1111).

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1590	4.1 pence
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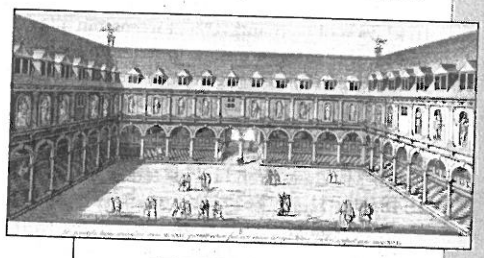
Rulers

Rulers
Commonwealth of England
Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1653–1658)
Richard Cromwell, Second Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1658–1659)
Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy
Charles II (Charles Stuart) King of Scotland (1649–1685) and King of England and Ireland (1660–1685), son of Charles I and Henrietta Maria of France

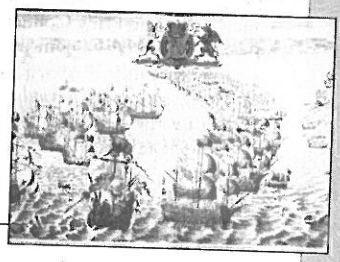
WS 1564-1616 MC 1623-73
JM 1608-74

Timeline

1500 10% of men and 1% of women in England can sign their names. ✓
1509 Henry VIII becomes King of England, Lord of Ireland.
1516 Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (page 716)
1517 Luther protests the Roman Catholic Church's sale of indulgences.
1534 The Act of Supremacy declares Henry VIII to be the "only supreme head on earth of the Church of England," and thus, he severs allegiance to the Pope and Roman Catholicism.
1538 Henry VIII is excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church.
1547 Henry VIII dies; Edward VI (son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour) becomes King of England and Ireland.
1553 Edward VI dies of tuberculosis. Edward attempts to exclude Mary (daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon) from the throne for fear that she would restore Catholicism. With the support of Edward's advisors, his cousin Lady Jane Grey assumes the throne briefly. The attempt quickly fails and Mary I becomes Queen of England and Ireland.



1558 Mary I dies; Elizabeth I (daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn) becomes Queen of England and Ireland.
1563 John Foxe publishes his *Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Days*—later widely known as the *Book of Martyrs* (page 1063).
1565 The Royal Exchange is built by Thomas Gresham as a commercial headquarters for London merchants.
1570 William Baldwin's prose fiction, the *Marvelous History Entitled Beware the Cat, Concerning Diverse Wonderful and Incredible Matters*, is written in 1552 but not published until 1570 (page 790).
1576 Blackfriars, once a Dominican monastery, opens as a theater.
1587 The Catholic Mary Queen of Scots is beheaded having been found guilty of complicity in a plot to murder Queen Elizabeth I.
1587 The Rose Theatre opens.
1588 English naval forces defeat the Spanish Armada.



1590–1596 Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (page 824)
1591 Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (composed in 1582) is published posthumously (page 680).
1592 Shakespeare begins career in London.
1595 The Swan Theatre opens.
1598 Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is published posthumously (page 1092).
1599 The Globe Theatre opens.
1601 Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, once Queen Elizabeth's favorite, is executed for his rebellion.
1602 William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is first performed (page 1215).
1603 Queen Elizabeth dies; James I (James VI, King of Scotland; son of Mary Queen of Scots and Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley), becomes King of England and Ireland.
1603 Unaware of Elizabeth's death, Hugh O'Neill surrenders after nine years of leading his Irish forces in armed conflict against the crown.
1604 The short version of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* is published (page 1111).

1604 William Shakespeare's *Othello* is performed for King James I and his guests at Whitehall Palace (page 1272).
1605 Guy Fawkes is captured in the act of attempting to blow up the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder.

1607 Jamestown is established as the first English settlement in North America.
1608 John Smith returns to England (page 1194).
1610 Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* is first performed (page 1468).
1611 *The King James Bible* is published.
1618 The Thirty Years' War begins.
1619 The banqueting house, Whitehall, is designed by Inigo Jones.

1620 Hic Mulier and Haec-Vir, two pamphlets published within a week of each other, explore issues of gender and apparel (page 1458).
1621 Lady Mary Wroth publishes the first Petrarchan sonnet sequence in English by a woman, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (page 1609).
1625 James I dies; Charles I (son of James I and Anne of Denmark) becomes King of England, Scotland, and Ireland.
1631 John Donne dies (page 1586).
1637 Rioting breaks out in St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, when Charles I imposes the *Book of Common Prayer* on Scots Presbyterians.
1640 "The Short Parliament," the first called by Charles I in 11 years, discusses the king's abuses of power.
1641 Treaty of London is signed granting concessions from Charles I to the Scots Covenanters who had rebelled in the Bishops' War of 1639–1640.
1641 Catholics rebel in Ireland.
1641 The House of Commons passes the Grand Remonstrance, a list of grievances against actions by ministers of Charles I.
1642 30% of men and 10% of women in all of England are literate.
1642 All theaters are shut down in London.
1643 Parliament is purged of those hostile to trying Charles I for treason, and the Rump Parliament is formed.
1643 The Solemn League and Convent, both a military league and a religious covenant, is formed by the Scottish Covenanters and the English Parliamentarians against Charles I and the Royalists.
1644 The Globe Theater is demolished by Puritans, and Sir Matthew Brend builds tenement houses on the site.
1648 The Thirty Years' War ends with the Treaty of Westphalia.
1649 Charles I is beheaded, and Parliament abolishes the monarchy, the Privy Council, and the House of Lords.
1649 The Rump Parliament declares England to be a Commonwealth.
1651 Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*
1652 Act for the Settlement of Ireland sentences the rebels of the Confederacy (1641–1652) to be executed and have their lands confiscated.
1653 Oliver Cromwell dismisses the Rump Parliament.

1653 The Barebone's Parliament forms, every member nominated by Oliver Cromwell.
1654–1655 Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell summons the First Protectorate Parliament.
1656–1658 Second Protectorate Parliament.
1659 The Rump Parliament is reinstated by Cromwell's son.
1659 John Lambert and Charles Fleetwood set up a Committee of Safety to rule the Parliament instead of the Rump.
1660 The Royal Society is founded.
1660 General George Monck, commanding the English army in Scotland, reopens the Long Parliament by restoring those Presbyterians purged in 1648.
1660 The Long Parliament is dissolved after creating the Convention Parliament, which invites Charles II to become the English monarch.
1660 Charles II issues the Declaration of Breda, in which he makes known the terms of his acceptance of the crown of England.
1666 Great Fire of London
1667 John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (page 1726)

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The Early Modern Period

An Experimental Age

John Milton claimed that in *Paradise Lost* his aim was to produce a work that "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." Milton's ambitious boast provides us with a useful key to one of the principal goals of writers in the English Early Modern period—namely, their desire and need to produce work that was new and different from what had gone before, however carefully they acknowledged the past and reused and rethought what had already been written. Virtually every writer included in this section of the anthology can be read as an experimental figure, pushing the boundaries of what was possible in a literary text, more akin perhaps to James Joyce or Virginia Woolf than a writer of realist fiction or a poet following well-trodden paths of lyric style. At the start of this period, in the early sixteenth century, John Skelton invented his own style of English poetry, "Skeltonics," based on short lines of six syllables, enabling him to produce work of great satirical force; Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, concerned that the English lyric lacked the sophistication of the Italian tradition, translated and adapted the sonnets of Petrarch, inventing new English rhyme schemes and styles in the process, as well as complex love poems that often told the reader more about the fears and anxieties of the courtier than they did about the lady in question. In the middle of the century William Baldwin composed a new form of prose fiction that could be regarded as the first novel in English. Toward the end, in one of the most creative periods of English literary history, major writers such as Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser experimented with new types of poetry, Sidney writing the first sonnet sequence in English, as well as a loosely constructed prose romance, the *Arcadia*, while Spenser, perhaps the most original and innovative poet who had ever written in English, tried out a whole variety of new verse forms, from the populist *Shepheardes Calendar* to the elitist *Fowre Hymns*, producing his own stanza form in his epic-romance, *The Faerie Queene*. John Donne created a distinctive literary voice in his forceful and unsettling erotic and divine poetry, as, in a different way, did George Herbert in his exploration of the meaning of the church and Christian faith in *The Temple*. Women writers also worked hard to forge a literary identity, Isabella Whitney and Lady Mary Wroth writing often angry and despairing lyrics representing the woman's powerlessness in courtship rituals; Aemilia Lanyer producing the first "country house," a poem that represented the sadness at the dissolution of an ideal female community; and other women producing a particularly female approach to the Christian faith.

Virtually every writer included in this section of the anthology can be read as an experimental figure, pushing the boundaries of what was possible in literary text . . .

If anything, English drama was even more willing to push the boundaries of what was possible. The professional stage dates only from the 1560s and became a mass phenomenon in the 1580s, a development few could have predicted.

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Drama was not taken seriously as a literary form until Ben Jonson produced a folio of his works in 1616, the same year that King James published a similar collection of his political and religious writings. Nevertheless plays did reach a wide audience and, with large theaters such as the Globe, accommodated an audience of 2,000 to 3,000, a significant section of the London population regularly went to see plays before the theaters were closed on the orders of Oliver Cromwell in 1642. Plays had to grab an audience's attention or they risked being trumped by rival companies and fierce "Wars of the Theatres" broke out as companies sought to lure audiences in. Drama thrived in such conditions, especially given the lack of precedents, playwrights being forced to live on their wits and "make it new." The first great star of the new age of commercial theater was Christopher Marlowe, who transformed what it was possible to achieve on stage with the production of *Tamburlaine* in 1587, probably the most influential play of that period, which spawned a host of imitations and helped to characterize a particular, bombastic style of relentless tragedy, based on powerful, overbearing protagonists speaking mighty, rolling lines of blank verse. *Dr. Faustus*, another major play, rethought and adapted the miracle and morality plays that had characterized English drama before the commercial age, and it is a sign of this controversial work's enduring success that generations of readers have not been able to agree whether the play is a subversive or fundamentally conservative work.

The range and variety of Shakespeare's work is stunning, from his early Roman comedy, *The Comedy of Errors*, and historical epic sequence of three plays chronicling the reign of Henry VI (one of the great successes of the early 1590s, even if now it has been relegated to a minor position in his canon), through the major tragedies (written between 1599 and 1607), to the romances, Shakespeare did not stand still. There had been plays about powerful and impressive Moorish and Turkish tyrants, such as Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Robert Greene's *Selimus* (1594); no one, however, raised such a figure to tragic status as Shakespeare did when he wrote *Othello*. Ben Jonson, one of his major rivals, created works that were clearly designed to compete with Shakespeare's in the marketplace. While Shakespeare's company produced romantic comedies based on confusion of identities and genders, most notably, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, Jonson wrote comedies of humors, city satires that exposed human greed and folly, such as *Everyman in His Humour*, *The Alchemist*, and *The Devil Is an Ass*.

Historical Perspectives

We see the past through lenses that show us something of the world we are living in. How we mark periods in history depends less on an objective evaluation of evidence than on our sense of its relation to our own present. The centuries between 1500 and 1700 have been termed the "Renaissance," and, more recently, "the early modern period." They were also centuries in which Europe and England saw a massive change in Christian religious thought and practice; this has been called the "Reformation." What do these names mean, and what do they tell us about our understanding of this single and continuous stretch of time?

However we describe these centuries, they encompassed events that altered the ways people lived and thought. In 1500 England, and the rest of the nations of Europe, were Catholic. Apart from its few communities of Jews, Christendom was united by a universal church whose head was the Pope in Rome, and its faithful prayed according to a common liturgy in Latin. The shape of the cosmos was determined by Aristotelian physics and what could be deduced from the scriptural story of creation. It was believed that the earth was the center of the universe and composed of four elements—earth, air, fire, and water; that the human body was a balance of these elements; and that nature, read as if it were a book, revealed a divinely sanctioned moral order. Christian subjects generally respected their national or positive law, which they saw as a mirror of God's law of nature and providentially guaranteed; they assumed it would protect them from tyranny as well as anarchy. A person's place in society tended to be fixed at birth; the majority of folk lived in country villages, worked the land, and traded in regional markets.

By the end of the seventeenth century, much—though not all—of this way of life had vanished. Certain of its features would remain in place for the next hundred years, as historians who study *la longue durée* ("the long term" from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century) during which social, political and economic structures change very slowly, remind us: land continued to be farmed by methods followed "time out of mind"; manufacture was still largely done by individuals on small, handmade machines. Religion continued to determine every aspect of life; science and art, politics and economics were discussed in terms supplied by religious thought and institutions. But Christianity was no longer of one piece. Europe had become divided by the establishment of Protestantism in the Low Countries, Scandinavia, and most of Germany. England and Scotland were also Protestant, but with a difference: the first conformed to the doctrine and practices of the Church of England, the second to the requirements of Presbyterianism. Ireland, speaking its Celtic language and retaining many of its ancient customs, remained Catholic despite English attempts at conquest and conversion. Catholics in England, always suspected of subversive intentions, were barely tolerated. Sects proliferated: among them were Anabaptists, Puritans, and Quakers; commonly, their religious doctrines called for massive social change. Cosmic order, too, had changed; it was no longer thought of as geocentric, nor did its elements consist of four primary materials. A natural philosophy based on experimental methods had begun to reshape the disciplines of physics, medicine, and biology; such ancient authorities as Aristotle, Galen, and Pliny were no longer unquestioned. Though sketched in principle by Sir Francis Bacon in his treatise on scientific inquiry, *Novum Organum* ("the new instrument"), published in 1620, a systematic investigation of nature was not underway before the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, when scientists in England consolidated their status as intellectuals by forming the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge—an organization vigorously supported by the new Stuart king, Charles II. But the worldview that this investigation would help to confirm was already evident early in the seventeenth century. The work of the Italian physicist Galileo Galilei on gravitational force had demonstrated that the most elementary laws of nature were mathematical; the German astronomer Johannes Kepler had confirmed that the universe was heliocentric; the English physician William Harvey had

Religion continued to determine every aspect of . . .

established that the body was energized not by the eccentric flow of "humors" but by a circulation of blood to and from the heart; and the Dutch cosmographer Gerhardus Mercator had discovered the means to navigate the globe safely by accurately mapping latitude and longitude. An international trade, now hugely stimulated by the development of colonies in the Americas, promised wealth to investors willing to take risks and prosperity to the towns and cities in which they lived.

In England, social and political life had been transformed by the activities of city-dwellers . . .

In England, social and political life had been transformed by the activities of city-dwellers, or "burgesses," many of whom were merchants, and also by a civil war. Involving English, Scots, and Irish subjects and parties, it had been fought over religious and social issues but also on a matter of principle. British subjects were to be governed by a monarch whose authority and power were not absolute but limited by law and the actions of Parliament, a legislative assembly representing the monarch's subjects. As a whole, the nation was conceived of as a "mystical body politic"; as the radical Bishop of Winchester John Ponet had declared, the monarch's office—not his person—was sacred. Towns and cities became crowded even as they expanded with new streets, marketplaces, and buildings for private as well as public use. Country folk, flocking to these burgeoning urban centers, succumbed to diseases created by filth and overcrowding and died younger than did their rural relatives. But England was becoming a nation of city dwellers, and everyone knew of "citizens" who had gained wealth and station in these exciting, if also terrifying, cities.

The Humanist Renaissance and Early Modern Society

The period from 1500 to 1700 has been understood as a "Renaissance"—literally a "rebirth." Many of its features had already been registered in that earlier renaissance of the twelfth century, particularly an interest in classical authors and their modes of expression in logic and rhetoric. By 1400, however, Italian scholars had begun to reread with fresh eyes the works of Greek and Roman authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. What was "reborn" as a result was a sense of the meanings to be discovered in the here and now, in the social, political, and economic everyday world. Writing about the intellectual vitality of the age, the French humanist François Rabelais had his amiable character, the giant Gargantua, confess that his own education had been "darksome, obscured with clouds of ignorance." Gargantua knows, however, that his son will be taught differently:

> Good literature has been restored unto its former light and dignity, and with such amendment and increase of knowledge, that now hardly should I be admitted unto the first form of the little grammar-school boys . . . I see robbers, hangmen, freebooters, tapsters, ostlers, and such like, of the very rubbish of the people, more learned now than the doctors and preachers were in my time.

These comically overstated remarks nevertheless convey the spirit of the Renaissance: learning was no longer to be devoted only to securing salvation but should address the conditions of ordinary life as well. More important, it should be disseminated through all ranks of society.

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Albrecht Dürer, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1521.

The writers and scholars responsible for the rebirth of a secular culture, derived in large measure from the pre-Christian cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, have been known as "humanists," because they read "humane" as well as "sacred" letters; their intellectual and artistic practices have been termed "humanism." They cultivated certain habits of thought that became widely adopted by early modern thinkers of all kinds: skill in using language analytically, attentiveness to public and political affairs as well as private and moral ones, and an acute appreciation for differences between peoples, regions, and times. It was, after all, the humanists who began to realize that the classical past required *understanding*. They recognized it as unfamiliar, neither Christian nor European, and they knew, therefore, that it had to be studied, interpreted, and, in a sense, reborn. From its inception in Italy, the work of the humanists traveled north and west, to France, the Low Countries, Germany, the Iberian peninsula, and eventually the British Isles.

. . . learning was no longer to be devoted only to securing salvation but should address the conditions of ordinary life as well.

At the same time, the cultures of these regions were changing in unprecedented ways. As much as an older world was being reborn, a modern world was being born, and it is in this sense that we can speak of these centuries not only as the Renaissance but also as the "early modern period." Its modernity was registered in various ways, many of them having to do with systems of quantification. Instruments for measuring time and space provided a knowledge of physical nature and its control. Sailing to the new world in 1585, Sir Walter Raleigh made use of Mercator's projection, published in 1568. Means were designed to compute the wealth that was being created by manufacture and trade. Money was used in new and complex

ways, its flow managed through such innovations as double-entry bookkeeping and letters of exchange that registered debt and credit in inter-regional markets. The capital that accumulated as a result of these kinds of transactions fueled merchant banks, joint-stock companies, and—notably in England—trading companies that sponsored colonies abroad. Heralded with enthusiasm by William Drayton in 1606, the Virginia colony was reflected in a more muted fashion five years later in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In England especially, wealth was increasingly based not on land but on money, and the change encouraged a social mobility that reflected but also exploited the old hierarchy. The effort to ascend the social ladder could prove ruinous, as George Gascoigne's career confirmed. But riches could also make it possible for an artisan's son to purchase a coat of arms and become a gentleman, as Shakespeare did. More important, moneyed wealth supported the artistic and scholarly institutions that allowed the stepson of a bricklayer to attend the best school in London, to profit from the business of the theater, and to compose literary works of sufficient brilliance to make him Poet Laureate—as Ben Jonson did. "Ambition is like choler," warned Francis Bacon; it makes men "active, earnest, full of alacrity and stirring." But if ambition "be stopped and cannot have his way, it becommeth adust, and thereby maligne and venomous." Early modern society was certainly both active and stirring, but the very energy that gave it momentum could also lead to hardship, distress, and personal tragedy.

Writing for a New Age

The sixteenth-century was a time of discontinuities and lost possibilities as well as spectacular advances and transformations.

The sixteenth-century was a time of discontinuities and lost possibilities as well as spectacular advances and transformations. Henry VIII was known throughout Europe as a monarch sympathetic to humanist ideas and educational programs in the first half of his reign. Many writers were enthusiastic about his reign and his desire to transform England into a modern European nation after the austere and straightened reign of his father Henry VII. However, after his divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the break with Rome in 1532, Henry became increasingly despotic and unpredictable, becoming notorious as a tyrant among many of his more enlightened subjects. It would have been hard to predict the end of the reign from its promising beginnings.

English history and literary history is characterized by such breaks and unforeseen changes. The English adaptation of the European sonnet, for example, was hardly a smooth process. Chaucer adapted sonnet forms in his longer narrative poems in the late fourteenth century; Wyatt and Surrey adapted Italian sonnets at Henry's court that were republished in the first major anthology of English lyric poetry Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557); and after Sir Phillip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* (composed 1582, published posthumously 1591) there was a vogue for sonnet sequences in the 1590s, which appeared to have died out until it was revived by the publication of William Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609 (some of which may have been written in the 1590s). This does not tell the whole story of the complicated nature of English literary history. Sonnets came in and out of vogue, and other verse

forms dominated the literary scene at different points in the century. At the court of Edward VI, more obviously Protestant types of literary verse were promoted by significant intellectual figures, some of them like John Bale returning from exile in the last years of Henry's reign. Allegorical and political poetry experienced a resurgence; and there was an attempt to establish a native English Protestant tradition that looked back to the figure of the plowman (represented most famously in the works of William Langland), intimately connected to the soil and the land, and so able to tell the truth about the corruption of the court. One of the most important writers in Edward's reign was William Baldwin who wrote what many consider to be the first English novel, *Beware the Cat* (page 790) and was the leading light behind the collaborative project *A Mirror Magistrates*, one of Shakespeare's favorite works. *A Mirror* was begun in the reign of Edward VI, but it was not published until 1559, because it fell afoul of the censors in 1555. *A Mirror* is very much a product of a militant Protestant literary culture, but after the death of the young king from tuberculosis in 1553, the work was not received sympathetically at the Catholic court of Edward's half-sister Mary.

A Mirror was one of the most important literary texts of the second half of the sixteenth century and went through a number of different editions and versions well into the seventeenth century. The work consists of a series of verse laments by ghosts of dead political figures who usually lament their own failings and ask the assembled group of writers to learn from their mistakes. The team of writers led by Baldwin comment on the particular tragedy and point a moral for the readers to learn from. The work revises the well established genre of advice literature, the mirror for princes (showing monarchs how to rule through a series of negative and positive examples of government), refocusing attention on the individual magistrates as a governing class. Had Edward VI not died so young, it is likely that similar forms of literature would have proliferated in subsequent years and changed the shape and nature of English literary history.

But this is not the only way to look at English literature and history in the sixteenth century. It used to be an orthodox judgment to see the reign of Mary Tudor (1553–1558) as an attempt to artificially revive a long-gone Catholic sensibility and impose it on the English people from above. Recent research, proposed by Eamon Duffy, sees the map of English religious history in a very different way. For Duffy, it is Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Protestant revolutionaries who sought to impose their vision on a reluctant English people. Rather than translators of the Bible and advocates of a break with Rome being those who correctly read the religious desires of the nation, it was, in fact, adherence to the traditional idea of the late medieval church. Whereas Protestants wanted people to read the Bible and determine their own understanding of the word of God, Marian Catholics placed much greater importance on the institution of the church itself and its ability to interpret God's word for an obedient people, concentrating more on liturgy and ritual than sermons and exegesis. Hence, the widespread Catholic taunt, "Where was your church before Luther?"

In Mary's reign many Protestants went into exile in Switzerland, France and the Low Countries, developing their own ideas and their own version of English history, especially in Basel and Geneva, which became centers of resistance to Mary's regime. One of the main achievements of the exiles was the Geneva Bible, often popularly known as the "Breeches Bible," because the translator claimed that Adam and Eve made trousers ("breeches") out of leaves to cover their nakedness. The

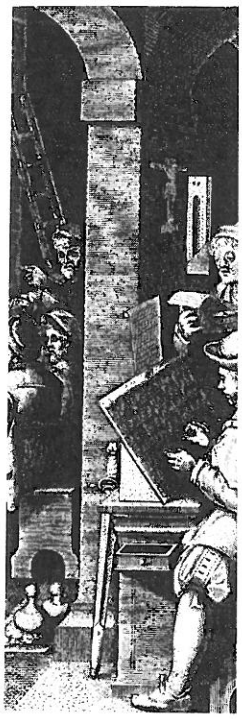
Geneva Bible was first published in 1563 and went through several editions, becoming the most popular English Bible in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, principally because it was the most widely available and the cheapest. The Bible had an extensive commentary which directed readers to see the history of the church as a battle between the good Protestant forces and the evil Catholic Church of Rome. It had a crucial influence on later English writing. For example, Edmund Spenser cast the duplicitous Duessa as the Whore of Babylon from the Book of Revelation, the seductive and diabolical figure of the Catholic Church in the last days of the world, a reading that could only have been derived from the Geneva Bible.

The other major achievement of the exiles was John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian Church*, first published in 1563, a work deemed so important by the Elizabethan authorities that a copy had to be kept in every cathedral church (the principal church connected with a bishop) in the country (see page 1063). Foxe's purpose was to explain that the Protestant church did have a history and was not merely the brainchild of a few disgruntled clergymen. Foxe saw the medieval church as a divided institution, a battleground between those good men who wished to spread the word of God as widely as possible and those evil and deluded priests who wished to suppress the truth and control the people for their own purposes. Like the Geneva Bible, Foxe's history also had a significant impact on the course of English literary history, providing Protestants with a story that they could call their own.

. . . religious history was complex and conflicted in the sixteenth century.

The point to be made is that religious history was complex and conflicted in the sixteenth century. Battle lines were drawn between Catholic and Protestant interpretations and contingent events often determined the course of English history and its literature. However, we must not imagine that divisions were always clear-cut. As the work of Alison Shell has demonstrated, Protestant and Catholic writers borrowed liberally from each other's work, often sharing a common religious and literary language. It is not always easy to tell apart the work of writers such as George Herbert, an Anglican priest, and Robert Southwell, a Catholic martyr. To take another important example, John Donne uses both Catholic and Protestant ideas and vocabulary in his work, perhaps the product of his upbringing as a Catholic and his later conversion to Protestantism, perhaps simply a sign of complicated religious times that tolerated significant overlap between varieties of the same faith.

One of the great surprises for people living at the end of the sixteenth century was that Elizabeth lived so long. The longest reigning monarch since Henry I (1087–1135), the fourth son of William the Conqueror, Elizabeth had been seriously ill at various points in her reign and had not been expected to survive. Historians often make a distinction between the first half of her reign from about 1558 to 1585—when Elizabeth was undoubtedly a shrewd, popular, and successful monarch who united the disparate factions of her kingdoms—and the second half of her reign, when, whatever her merits, many of her leading subjects tired of her style of government and were looking forward to the reign of her successor, whoever that might be. Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, encouraged a particular style of obeisance in which courtiers paid homage to her as if she were a love object, and she was notorious for encouraging young male favorites, most notably in her later years Robert Devereux, first Earl of Essex, who was eventually



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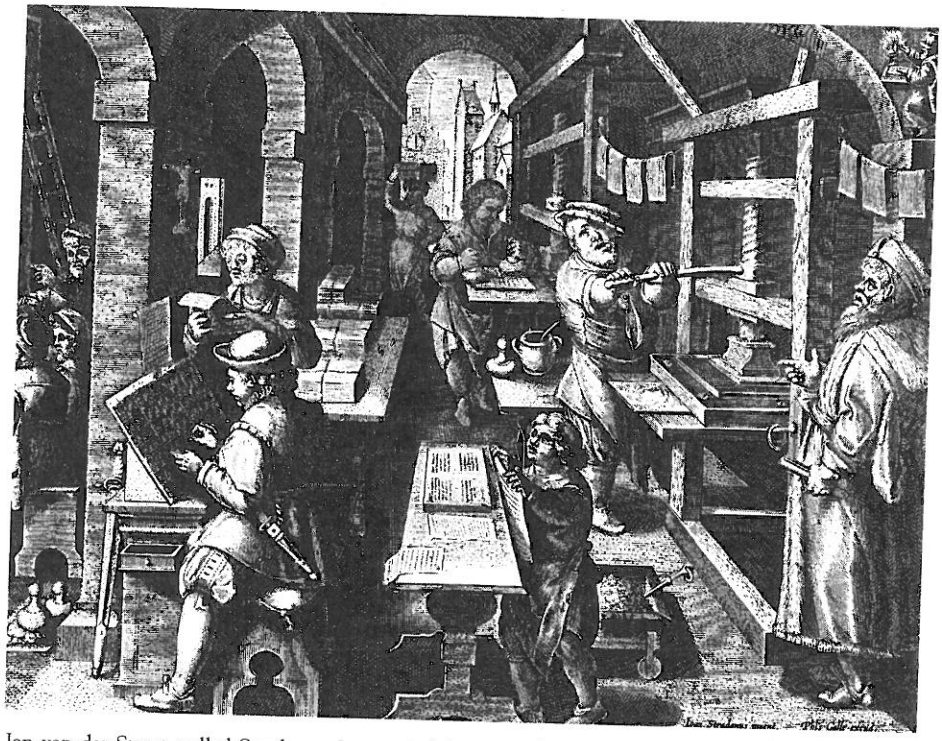

Jan van der Straet, called Stradanus, Impressio Librorum (Book Printing): Plate 4 of the *Nova Reperta* (New Discoveries), late 16th century.

executed after he led a desperate and suicidal rebellion against her in 1601. One of the great ironies of English literary history is that the literature that we often think of as the golden age of Elizabethan writing was produced in the late 1580s and 1590s, a disastrous decade characterized by desperate uncertainty, famine, and political disasters (not least the protracted and terrifying war in Ireland, which nearly bankrupted the crown). The work of Marlowe, Sidney, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Donne was all the product of turbulent times. Moreover, had Elizabeth died earlier, much of it would either never have been written or would have appeared in a very different form.

Many features of Renaissance and early modern culture are again in transition today . . .

Many features of Renaissance and early modern culture are again in transition today: the printed book, which once superseded the manuscript, is now challenged by computer-generated hypertext; the nation state, which once eclipsed the feudal domain and divided "Christendom," is now qualified by an international economy; and the belief in human progress, which was once applauded as an advance over the medieval faith in divine providence, is now subject to criticism, in large part because of such kinds of injustice and inequity as slavery, colonialism, and the exploitation of wage labor—all factors in the growth of early modern England and other states in Europe. As modern and postmodern readers, we have a special affinity with our early modern counterparts. Like them, we study change.

History and Epic

The political life of the sixteenth century was dominated by the genius of a single dynasty: the Tudors. Its founder was Owen Tudor, a squire of an ancient Welsh family. Employed at the court of Henry V, he eventually married Henry's widow, Catherine of Valois. The first Tudor monarch was their grandson, Henry, Earl of Richmond, who defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485 to become Henry VII. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, whom Richard III had succeeded—a fortunate event for the people of England, as it united the two parties by whom the crown had been disputed for many decades. Once Henry, who represented the House of Lancaster (whose emblem was a red rose) was joined to Elizabeth, a member of the House of York (signified by a white rose), the so-called "Wars of the Roses" were at an end. Henry VII's bureaucratic skills then settled the kingdom in ways that allowed it to grow and become identified as a single nation, however much it also comprised different peoples: the midlands and the north were distinguished from the more populous south by dialectal forms of speech; and to the west, in Cornwall and Wales, many English subjects still spoke Cornish and Welsh. Ireland, across the sea to the west, and the Scottish highlands to the north were still largely Gaelic speaking. While the Anglo-Normans had invaded Ireland in the twelfth century, it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that the English pursued the subjugation of Ireland by colonizing plantations and conducting a brutal military campaign that produced famine, massacres, and the forced relocation of people. But this supposed English fiefdom remained rebellious and effectively unconquered for Elizabeth's entire reign. Its resistance to English rule was crushed only in 1603, an event that marked the end of an independent Ireland for three hundred years. Oliver Cromwell's account of the massacre of the city of Drogheda in 1649, related in his *Letters from Ireland*, illustrates a later instance of the brutality typical of the English conquest of Ireland. Scotland, to the far north, was a separate and generally unfriendly kingdom with strong ties to France until James VI of Scotland became James I of England. His accession to the English throne in 1603 began a process that would end with the complete union of the two kingdoms in 1707. And there were even more remote regions to consider: England's colonization of the Americas began under Elizabeth I, progressed under James I, and allowed the English to think of themselves as an imperial power.

Writing history offered a way to reinforce the developing sense of nationhood, a project all the more appealing after the creation of an English church and the beginnings of what was thought to be a British empire. Medieval historians had concentrated on the actions of ambitious men and women whose lives reflected their good or bad qualities; early modern historians wrote about events and their manifold causes. William Camden's *Britannia* and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (the source for many of Shakespeare's plays) celebrate the deeds and the character of the early peoples of the British Isles. The land itself became the subject of comment: William Harrison wrote a description of the English counties (included in Holinshed); John Stow surveyed the neighborhoods of London; and Michael Drayton, a Stuart poet, wrote a mythopoetic account of England's towns and countryside entitled *Poly-Olbion*. As a history, however, it is Richard Hakluyt's collection of travel stories, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*, that has proved most memorable over time. It reports in magnificent

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detail the exploration of the Americas in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Accounts of this wild and fruitful land fired the imaginations of English readers, who, it was hoped, would decide to promote and even participate in the laborious task of colonization. Describing landfall on the coast of Virginia in 1585, Arthur Barlow evoked the image of a paradise, "where we smelled so sweet and so strong a smell as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kind of odoriferous flowers. . . . I think in all the world the like abundance is not to be found." Attempts to occupy this land of incredible natural wealth were determined by two principal objectives: securing profitable trade with the Indians, and possessing land from which to extract such resources as timber, furs, fish, and eventually, tobacco. The hope of finding gold was on everyone's mind. The Chesapeake Bay and its environs were settled by men interested in commerce, often at great personal expense. The Massachusetts coast attracted Puritan divines and their flocks, and while these colonists also profited from trade, matters of faith were supposed to be their principal concern. By celebrating a national identity, these and other contemporary narratives reveal their thematic connections with the epic, a genre of poetic fiction. But they do not conform to that genre as contemporary poetry represented it—expressing heroic grandeur not only in action but also in the musical verse form and elevated language of the epic tradition.

The masterpieces of early modern English epic are represented by Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Spenser imitated continental models to create an English Protestant epic-romance, an optimistic projection of Elizabethan culture. The realities of Elizabeth I's reign were indeed far from the poet's vision of things, but they were nonetheless very impressive. England's cities had grown to be centers of world commerce, and the bold explorations of such men as Sir Francis Drake testified to the nation's seafaring power. In the figures of his poem, Spenser embodied the energies producing this expansive growth. His virtuous knights overcome monstrous threats to order, peace, and tranquillity. Aspects of the queen's own genius are reflected in his heroines. Like the warrior maiden Britomart, Elizabeth I assumed a martial character when England was in danger from abroad; like his Queen Mercilla, she was supposed to be gracious to her enemies—a trait somewhat belied by her speeches to Parliament agreeing to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Like the virgin Una, she stood for what the poet and most of his readers believed was the one true faith: Protestantism. And like Spenser's enigmatic and distant Queen Gloriana, the Faerie Queene of the title, she exercised her authority and power in unpredictable ways: secrecy and dissimulation were her stock in trade. To her subjects, her majesty was awful and sometimes terrifying. But she was also mortal, and at her death, few could have foreseen the new and divided nation that would come into being with the accession of James I.

England's cities had grown to be centers of world commerce . . .

The new king was greeted with mixed feelings. On the one hand, his claim to the throne was not disputed; on the other hand, he came from Scotland, long an enemy of England and always a source of anxiety to those who sought dominion over the British Isles as a whole. Although educated by the humanist George Buchanan, whose treatises praising republican government were widely known and read, James, as his own treatise *The True Law of Free Monarchy* shows, favored absolute rule and

believed that a monarch should be *lex loquens*, the living spirit of the law, and therefore not bound by the terms of national or positive law. His personal conduct appeared to be dubious. His critics represented him as frequently unkempt and claimed that he preferred to hunt deer rather than to take charge of matters of state. Disputes with the House of Commons over money to support the Crown's activities were frequent. Reports of intrigue with Catholic Spain shattered the nation's sense of security; an attempt in 1605 to blow up the Houses of Parliament, revealed as the Gunpowder Plot, caused a near panic. These and other kinds of unrest grew more intense when James's heir, Charles I, proved to be even more autocratic than his father. Charles's queen, Henrietta Maria, the daughter of Henry IV of France, was a Catholic, and it was rumored that she was treacherous. Religious controversy raged throughout the British Isles, and the struggle over the authority and power of the monarch culminated in a bloody civil war. Across England and Scotland, forces loyal to the king fought the army of Parliament, led by Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan Member of the Commons. The war, which lasted from 1642 to 1651, ended with the defeat of the royalists.

. . . the struggle over the authority and power of the monarch culminated in a bloody civil war.

In 1649 Charles I was captured and executed by order of Parliament, and England began to be governed as a republic. She was no longer a kingdom but a Commonwealth, and this period in her history is known as the Interregnum, the period between kingdoms. The long-advocated change, now a reality, could hardly have begun in a more shocking way. The monarchy had always been regarded as a sacred office and institution, as Shakespeare's Richard II had said:

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
> The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord.

But in the course of half a century, the people had proved themselves to be a sovereign power, and it was politically irrelevant that Charles, on the block, exemplified a regal self-control. As the Parliamentarian poet Andrew Marvell later wrote of the King's admirable courage at his execution: "He nothing common did or mean / Upon that memorable scene . . . Nor called the gods with vulgar spite / To vindicate his helpless right."

The conflict itself, its causes and its outcome, have been variously interpreted. As a religious and cultural struggle, the Civil War, also known as the Wars of Three Kingdoms, expressed the resistance of Scots Presbyterians and Irish Catholics to the centralizing control of the English church and government. As a revolution in government, the conflict was defined by common lawyers, energized by Puritan enthusiasm, and marked the nation's transition to a society in which the absolute rule by a monarch was no longer a possibility. The people themselves had acquired a voice. To some extent this was a religious voice. Puritans who professed a belief in congregational church government were generally proponents of republican rule. Their dedication to the ideal of a society of equals under the law was shared by men and women of other sects: the Levellers, led

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by John Lilburne, who argued for a written constitution, universal manhood suffrage, and religious toleration (for God, Lilburne wrote, "doth not choose many rich, nor many wise"); the Diggers, led by Gerrard Winstanley, who proposed to institute a communistic society in the wastelands they were ploughing and cultivating; the Quakers, led by George Fox, who rejected all forms of church order in deference to the inner light of an individual conscience and, insisting on social equality, refused to take off their hats before gentry or nobility; and the Ranters, who denied the authority of Scripture and saw God everywhere in nature. Without widespread acceptance of the egalitarian concept that had initiated the Protestant reformation—all believers are members of a real though invisible priesthood—it is hard to see how the move from a monarchy to a representative and republican government could have taken place.

The most comprehensive contemporary history of the war, *The True Historical Narrative of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England,* by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, was not published before 1704, but the troubled period found an oblique commentary in what is arguably England's greatest and certainly most humanistic epic poem: Milton's *Paradise Lost,* in print by 1667. Milton's career was inextricably bound up with the fate of the Commonwealth. Educated at Cambridge and with his reputation as a poet well established, Milton had begun by 1649 to contribute to a defense of Puritanism and the creation of a republican government. Despite worsening eyesight, he published *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* a sustained and eloquent apology for tyrannicide, after the execution of Charles I; and in his *Eikonoklastes* ("image-breaker"), written after he was made Latin secretary to the new executive, the Council of State, he derided attempts by royalists to celebrate Charles I in John Gauden's pamphlet *Eikon Basilike* ("image of a king"). In 1660, disturbed by the proposed restoration of Charles Stuart, soon to be Charles II, Milton—now completely blind—published his last political treatise, *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Commonwealth.* It presented the case for a republicanism that had already lost most of its popularity: the government of the Commonwealth had adopted measures that resembled the autocratic rule of the monarchy it had overthrown. Meanwhile, the composition of *Paradise Lost* was underway. Indebted to many of Spenser's themes in *The Faerie Queene,* Milton infused his subject—the fall of the rebellious angels and the exile from paradise of the disobedient Adam and Eve—with the spirit of the account in Genesis. His poem is the product of a doubly dark vision of life. Sightless and suffering again what he felt were the constraints of a monarchy, Milton's story of exile from paradise spoke to his own and England's loss of innocence and painful acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil during the period of the war and its aftermath. His *Paradise Lost* and its sequel, *Paradise Regained,* express the most provocative ambiguities of contemporary English culture; they were—and still are—praised as rivalling the epics of Homer, Virgil, and Dante in their power and scope.

Drama

Drama provided another perspective on English life. While epics depicted the grander aspirations of the nation, its human character was expressed in stage plays, masques or speaking pageants, and dramatic processions. These forms exploited the material of chronicle to illustrate not only the virtues of heroes but also their foibles and limitations; history's villains warned viewers that evil would be punished, if not by civil

While epics depicted the grander aspirations of the nation, its human character was expressed in stage plays . . .

authority then by providence. Writing tragedy based on history and legend, Marlowe and Shakespeare complicated the direct moralism of medieval drama. Rather than portraying characters who became victims of their own misdoings, rising to power only to fall in disgrace, the early modern stage showed virtue and vice as intertwined—a hero's tragic error could also be at the heart of his greatness. The origins of evil were seen as mysterious, even obscure. Some sense of this moral ambiguity can be traced to the tragedies of the Roman philosopher Seneca, which were translated into English and published in 1581. English drama reproduced many of their features: the five-act structure, rapid-fire dialogue punctuated by pithy maxims, and images of tyranny, revenge, and fate illustrated by haunting dreams and echoing curses.

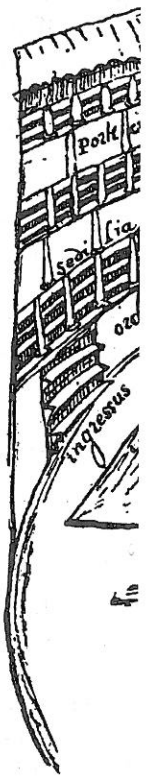
If tragedy turned away from straightforward piety, so did comedy. The medieval drama of Christian salvation, in which the hero's struggle against sin was ended by his acknowledgment of grace, was replaced with plays about the wars between the sexes and between parents and children. Much of this material was modeled on the comedies of Plautus, a Roman playwright, and on the tales or *novellas* of contemporary Italian writers. Playwrights like Ben Jonson also found a wealth of material in the improvisatory Italian *commedia dell'arte*, with its stock characters of the old dotard, the cuckolded husband, the damsel in distress, and the mountebank or quack. *The Alchemist*, chiefly a satire on confidence men and their credulous victims, those tradesmen and entrepreneurs seeking a quick and easy return on investments (especially in the Americas), concludes somewhat ironically by giving the prize to the burgess Lovewit, who disdains censorious critique in favor of a genial wit. An even more topical form of comedy combined some of these continental traditions with themes and figures specifically drawn from London life.

The stage was generally regarded as responsible for both illustrating social failings and stirring up discontent. Although some, like the playwright Thomas Heywood, praised plays as a form of instruction for the unschooled, others, like the Puritan pamphleteer Philip Stubbes, asserted that plays "maintain bawdry, insinuate foolery, and revive the remembrance of heathen idolatry." As Stephen Gosson wrote in *Plays Confuted in Five Actions:*

The stage was generally regarded as responsible for both illustrating social failings and stirring up discontent.

> If private men be suffered to forsake their calling because they desire to talk gentlemen-like in satin & velvet, with a buckler at their heels, proportion is so broken, unity dissolved, harmony confounded, that the whole body must be dismembered, and the prince or head cannot choose but sicken.

The fear was not only that the tricksters of drama would be the objects of emulation rather than scorn, but also that the actors' masquerade of identities would spur social instability in the public theater's audience, ranging from the groundlings in the pit to the gentry in the higher-priced seats. Parliament had tried to maintain social order by regulating, through sumptuary laws, what style and fabrics persons of a particular rank could wear. A subject's experience of the



Arend von Buchell, *The Su*
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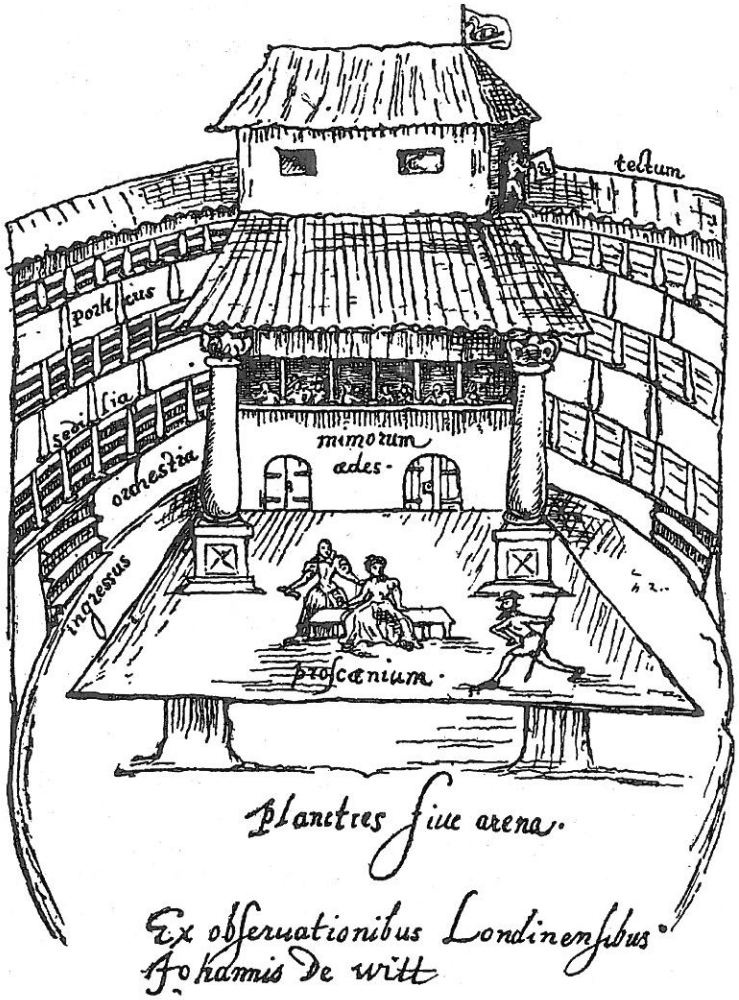
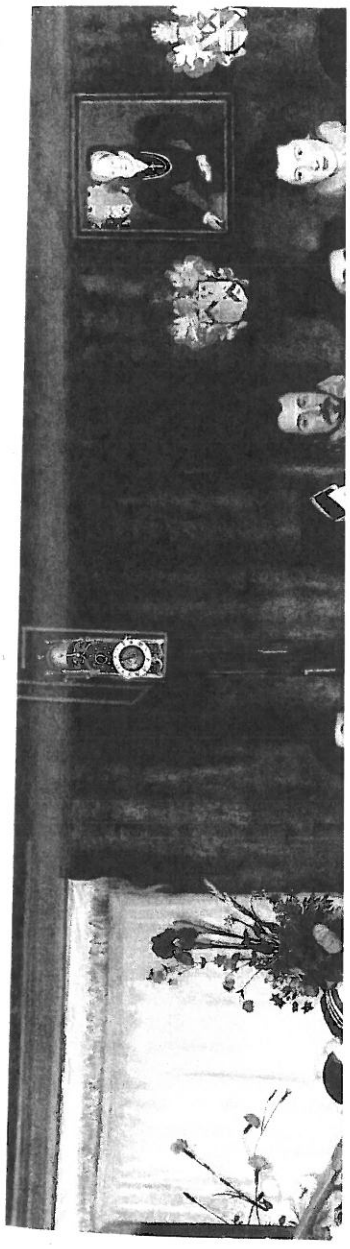


Arend von Buchell, *The Swan Theatre*, after Johannes de Witt, c. 1596. The only extant drawing of a public theater in 1590s London, this sketch shows what Shakespeare's Globe must have looked like. The round playhouse centered on the curtainless platform of the stage (*proscenium*), which projected into the yard (*planities sive arena*). Raised above the stage by two pillars, the roof (*tectum*) stored machinery. At the back of the stage, the tiring house (*mimorum aedes*), where the actors dressed, contained two doors for entrances and exits. There were no stage sets and only movable props such as thrones, tables, beds, and benches, like the one shown here. Other documents on the early modern stage are the contract of the Fortune Theatre, where *The Roaring Girl* was performed, and stage directions in the plays themselves. Modeled on the Globe, although square in shape, the Fortune featured a stage forty-three feet broad and twenty-seven and a half feet deep. Stage directions include further clues: sometimes a curtained booth made "discovery" scenes possible; trapdoors allowed descents; and a space "aloft," such as the gallery above the stage doors, represented a room above the street. Eyewitness accounts fill out the picture. In the yard stood the groundlings who paid a penny for standing room, exposed to the sky, which provided natural lighting. For those willing to pay a penny or two more, three galleries (*orchestra*, *sedilia*, and *porticulus*) provided seats—the most expensive of which were cushioned. Spectators could buy food and drink during the performance. The early modern theater held an audience of roughly eight hundred standing in the yard, and fifteen hundred more seated in the galleries. According to Thomas Platter, who had seen Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in 1599, "everyone has a good view."

theater, where commoners played the parts of nobility and dressed accordingly, might discourage observation of these laws, which were repealed in 1633.

Londoners enjoyed two kinds of theater: public and private. The public theaters were open to all audiences for a fee and were generally immune from oversight because they were located outside the City of London, in an area referred to as the Liberties, notorious for prostitution and the sport of bear-baiting. London's two biggest theaters were located there: the Fortune, and the more famous Globe, home to Shakespeare's company. Private theaters—open only to invited guests—were located in the large houses of the gentry, the Inns of Court (the schools of common law), and the guildhalls; the best known, Blackfriars, was housed in an old monastery. Their performances were acted almost exclusively by boy actors, although the popularity of these companies was short-lived. James I, annoyed by the send-up of the Scots court in *Eastward Ho!*, a play that Ben Jonson had a part in writing, dissolved his queen's own company, known as the Queen's Revels Children. The most private and prestigious stage of all remained the royal court. Of exclusive interest to this audience was the masque, a speaking pageant accompanied by music and dancing, staged with elaborate sets and costumes, and acted by members of the court, including the Queens Anna and Henrietta Maria. But in 1649, a Puritan Parliament, disgusted with what it considered to be the immorality of the drama, banned all stage plays, and the theaters remained closed until the Restoration in 1660.



Lyric Poetry and Romance

In early modern England, epic narratives, stage plays, and satire in all forms were genres designed for audiences and readers the writer did not know, a general public with varied tastes and background. Lyric poetry, prose romances, and tales were more often written for a closed circle of friends. Circulated in manuscript, these genres allowed a writer's wit to play on personal or coterie matters. Here writers could speak of the pain of love or the thrill of ambition, and both reveal and, in a sense, create their own identities in and through language. By imitating and at the same time changing the conventions of the lyric, particularly as they were illustrated by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarch, English poets were able to represent a persona, or fictive self, that became in turn a model for others. Unlike Petrarch, who saw his lady as imbued with numinous power before which he could only submit, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sidney imagined love in social and very human terms. In the struggle to gain affection and power, their subjectivity took strength from their conquests as well as their resistance to defeat. The origins of the lyric in song are attested in the verse of Thomas Campion, much of which was actually set to music. Its uses in pastoral (whether erotic or spiritual) are illustrated by poets as different as Robert Herrick, John Donne, and Andrew Marvell. At times, its objects of adoration could be divine or mystical, as in the verse of George Herbert and Henry Vaughan. Women poets, such as Lady Mary Wroth and Katherine Philips, reworked the conventions of the love lyric to encompass a feminine perspective on passion and, equally important, on friendship. Sonnet sequences were popular and, reflecting a taste for narrative romance, often dramatized a conflict between lovers. Shakespeare wrote the best-known sonnets of

Color Plate 19 Order on the Eve of the Civil War. Cornelius Johnson, *Arthur Capel, 1st Baron Capel, 1604–1649, and His Family*, c. 1640. This painting in the style of Van Dyck portrays the royalist Arthur Capel, who was executed the same year as Charles I. In the background appear gardens, perhaps those of his home at Little Hadham. *(Copyright © National Portrait Gallery, London.)*

the period. His cast of characters—including the poet as principal speaker, his beloved male friend, a rival poet, and a fickle lady—appear as protagonists in a drama of love, betrayal, devotion, and despair. Some poets embedded their love poetry in prose narratives that told a story, as the Italian poet Dante Alighieri had in his sequence of songs and sonnets to the lady Beatrice entitled *The New Life*. A brilliant tale of seduction frames George Gascoigne's lyrics in his *Adventures of Master F. J.*, and Sidney's eclogues (pastoral poems) punctuate the long and complicated narrative of his prose romance, *Arcadia*.

Prose romances also provided images of new kinds of identity. Stories of marvels surrounded the lives of the powerful and exotic, such as Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (the source for Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*) and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalind*, while tales of lower-class artisan-adventurers illustrate the enthusiasm with which early modern writers and readers embraced a freedom to reinvent themselves. The romantic notion of the "marvelous" gained a new meaning in tales of tricksters and of sturdy entrepreneurs who survived against all odds—they represented the creative energies possessed by plain folk. The short fiction of Thomas Nashe, Thomas Deloney, and the hilarious (and anonymous) *Life and Pranks of Long Meg of Westminster* conclusively break with the delicate sentimentality of pure romance and, appealing to a taste for the ordinarily wonderful, point the way for such later novelists as Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, and Charles Dickens.

. . . tales of tricksters and of sturdy entrepreneurs who survived against all odds—represented the creative energies possessed by plain folk.

The spirit of romance infused narratives of travel as well, many of which made little distinction between fact and fantasy. Sir John Mandeville's fifteenth-century *Travels*, in print throughout the sixteenth century, responded to the growing curiosity of Europeans about the wonders of nature in distant lands, which harbored whole peoples who were pictured as utterly different from anything known at home. The wonders reported in popular collections of travel narratives like Samuel Purchas's immensely popular *Purchas His Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in All Ages* (1613) were designed to attract, not repel, readers, but a horror of the "other" was nevertheless implied in many of these accounts. Shakespeare's Othello holds the Venetian senate spellbound when he reports that parts of the world are inhabited by "Cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi," as well as "men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders." In *The Tempest*, such claims are parodied in the figure of Caliban: despite Prospero's accusations, Caliban bears a very human aspect and is no monster. The lure of distant lands could also attract the social critic who sought to devise images of an ideal world in order to better the real world. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* projects a fantasy of a communal state that does double duty by pointing both to the inequities of English society *and* to the absurdities of reforms that assume men and women can be consistently reasonable. Literally describing a utopia, a "nowhere," his treatise is also effectively a dystopia, a work describing a "bad place." Neither Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) nor James Harrington's *Commonwealth of Oceans* (1656)—each a true utopia suggesting a radical reform of political and intellectual life—emulate More's embrace of both utopian and dystopian perspectives. But the dystopias of later writers, such as

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (an anagram for "nowhere," 1872) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949), impressively illustrate the hazards of idealistic and visionary social thought.

Changing Social, Political and Personal Roles

The imaginative work of "self-fashioning" in early modern lyric and romance kept pace, to a degree, with actual social change. During this period, a person was born into a place—defined by locale, family, and work—but did not necessarily remain there. The social ladder was traveled in both directions. An impecunious member of the gentry, a second son of a poor squire, or a widow whose noble husband had left her without a suitable jointure or estate could sink below the rank to which they had been born and effectively become a "commoner." In turn, a prosperous artisan, a thrifty yoeman, or an enterprising merchant could eventually become a member of the gentry—folk who were entitled to signal their identity by a coat of arms and were not supposed to do manual work. The new rich were sometimes mocked for seeking advice in conduct books regarding the proper behavior for gentlefolk, but no one could overlook the change in their status. More important, representatives of the "middling sort" were gaining political power. They generally had the right to vote for a member of the House of Commons, and they regularly held local office as bailiffs, magistrates, or sheriffs, and served on juries in towns and villages throughout the kingdom. They administered property, engaged in business, and traded on international markets. Creating much of the wealth of early modern England, they defined the concept of an economic class independent of social rank or family background: "What is Gentry if wealth be wanting, but base servile beggery?" asked Robert Greene. The idea that a person inherited a way of life was undercut by evidence of continuous shifts in both urban and rural society.

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The situation for women in particular exhibited a certain ideological ambivalence. Ancient philosophy and medieval theology had insisted that *woman*kind was essentially and naturally different from *man*kind, characterized by physical weakness, intellectual passivity, and an aptitude for housework, childcare, and the minor decorative arts. That some women had distinguished themselves in occupations traditionally reserved for men was understood to signal an exception; in general, social doctrine imposed rigid codes of behavior on men and women. This thinking was countered by the text of Scripture—but also and increasingly by evidence from history, which revealed that ordinary women had undertaken all kinds of activity and therefore that a woman had the same range of talents as a man. Literary representation and authorship reflected some of this argument.

Departing from medieval social norms, humanists had stressed that men should be educated in the arts as well as arms, and writers like Sir Philip Sidney, illustrating the sensitivity of men to emotional life, devised characters whose masculinity was amplified by attributes that were conventionally associated with women: passion, sympathy, and a certain self-indulgence. The frustrated lover of his sonnet sequence

Astrophil and Stella is both resourceful and humorously pitiable. Flexibility with respect to categories of gender is also a feature of much lyric poetry; the male poet's beloved is sometimes another man. Shakespeare's sonnets are the chief example of homosexual verse in this period, but homoerotic innuendo, often suggested as a feature of a love triangle, is common in all genres of writing. In Marlowe's poem *Hero and Leander*, the youth Leander loves the girl Hero and attracts the sexual attentions of the sea-god Neptune.

Ideas as well as social forms and practices were also changing. The repeated shifts in religious practice—from medieval Catholicism to Henrician Protestantism, then back to the Catholicism dictated by Queen Mary I, and then on to the Anglican Church of Queen Elizabeth I—revealed that divine worship could alter its form without bringing on the apocalypse. More subtly, the emerging capitalist economy produced a conceptual model for cultural exchange. Just as material goods flowed through regional and national markets, entering a particular locale only to move elsewhere, sometimes over great distances, so might ideas, styles, and artistic sensibilities. Drama especially conveyed how fluid were the customs, codes, and practices that gave society its sense of identity. The enthusiasm for stage plays was motivated in part by an interest in role-playing: if an actor who in real life might have been born a servant could perform the part of a king in a play, then might he not also perform the part of a king indeed? Was there more to being than performing? This mutability was both liberating and dangerous, as Shakespeare showed by dramatizing the protean powers of Othello's false friend, Iago, who chillingly boasts, "I am not what I am."

. . . the emerging capitalist economy produced a conceptual model for cultural exchange.

The Business of Literature

Writers throughout this period often had to depend on patrons for support in order to produce their work. Patrons often employed writers as secretaries, carrying out important administrative tasks, and employed skilful writers who were adept at producing text to order. Or, they admired the work of writers and wanted to encourage literary endeavour. The Sidney family supported a number of writers, including Ben Jonson, who writes about his relationship to them in his country house poem, *To Penshurst*, not without a series of barbs which hint at the uncomfortable position of a writer for hire who has to see himself as little better than the workers on the family estate. The advent of print opened up new possibilities for writers, who were able to disseminate their work to a wider audience without having to deal with a patron. This was, however, a hazardous route as publishing did not generally provide a substantial living for a writer. Michael Drayton, a poet who appears to have had a fraught and complicated relationship with his patrons, insulting a number in printed works when they failed to value his work as highly as he did, lived a comfortable enough life but died leaving only a few pounds in his estate.

The advent of print opened up new possibilities for writers . . .

The relationships between writers and patrons often helps to explain a number of issues that are not apparent if we read a work without a knowledge of the conditions under which it was probably written. John Donne's poem, "Twickenham Gardens"

seems on first reading like a jilted lover's misogynist tirade against a cruel mistress. However, if we bear in mind that Lucy, Countess of Bedford, one of Donne's most important patrons, owned the estate, then the chances are that the poem is a shared joke that was read by both men and women. It is hard to imagine that the countess did not know of this work or that Donne, who was grateful for her help, wrote this work as a sly attack on a generous supporter. Knowing about the conditions of writing often opens up new possibilities for the reader and different ways of reading works that might seem to have an obvious significance but are actually more nuanced and complex pieces of literature than they appear to be.

Virtually nothing written by Donne was published in his lifetime and he preferred to circulate his work in manuscript. Other writers were much keener to reach a wider audience by having their work printed and published. Inevitably, this led to conflict with the authorities who were not always keen to let anything appear in print. A rudimentary system of licensing texts was established so that anything submitted for publication was supposed to be vetted and approved by the censors headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is clear that, while the desires of the state may well have been draconian, the system did not operate very effectively and most cases of censorship were reactions to a work that caused offense once it was printed. John Stubbs wrote a pamphlet, *The Discoverie of a gaping Gulf whereunto England is like to be swallowed* (1579), which attacked the queen's projected marriage to François, Duke of Alençon, and he had his right hand severed as a result (this punishment did not prevent him from having a successful career as a Member of Parliament, loyal to the crown, afterward). Thomas Middleton wrote a scandalous play, *A Game at Chess* (1624), which openly attacked the Spanish ambassador and caused a diplomatic incident. But it ran for nine consecutive nights before it was banned. Nevertheless, many writers resented the fact that their work was subject to the state control and the possibility of censorship, a factor that influenced the ways in which writers produced their work.

The most eloquent attack on a state-controlled press was by Milton, whose *Areopagitica* protested the practice of licensing books before their publication—that is, before readers had a chance to make up their minds about what these books contained. He drew on ideas of democracy that were current in ancient Athens and on the Puritan notion that good emerges only in contact with evil. "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue," he announced, because no true virtue is untested, unchallenged, unexamined; it is valid only when it has deliberately and consciously rejected what is false. The journalistic enterprise of this period fostered the right to free speech and a free press that is now the bedrock of modern democracies.

Nature and Change

Language and style were changing notions of the world and of God's design in creating it. Habits of thought that had prevailed during the medieval period now seemed to be incompatible with knowledge derived from the experience of nature. Europeans had inherited from classical philosophy an idea of creation as a vast aggregate of layered systems, or "spheres." Supposedly centered on the densest matter at the earth's core, they emanated outward and upward, ending finally in the sphere of pure spirit, or the ethereal presence of divinity. The entities in these layered

spheres had assigned places that determined their natures both within their particular sphere and in relation to other spheres. Thus gold, the most precious metal, was superior to silver, but it was at the same time analogous to a lion, a king, and the sun, each also representing the peak of perfection within its particular class of beings. Human nature was also systematized, with the body and personality alike regulated by a balanced set of "humors," each of which consisted of a primary element. The earth, water, air, and fire that made up the great world, or macrocosm, of nature also composed the small universe, or microcosm, of the individual man or woman, whose personality was ideally balanced between impulses that were melancholic (caused by a kind of bile), phlegmatic (brought on by a watery substance), sanguine (bloody), and choleric (hot tempered). Excessive learning, the contemplation of death, the darkness of night, and isolation were all associated with melancholia, a diseased condition that in more or less severe form is represented in such disparate texts as Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and Milton's *Il Penseroso*.

Habits of thought that had prevailed during the medieval period now seemed to be incompatible with knowledge derived from the experience of nature.

This view of creation was important for artists and writers because it gave them a symbolic language of correspondences by which they could refer to creatures in widely differing settings and conditions. In a sense, it made nature hospitable to poetry by seeing creation as a divine work of art, designed to inspire not only awe but also a kind of familiarity. Things were the likenesses of other things. Particularly in so-called "metaphysical" poetry, whose chief exponent is John Donne, human emotional experience is compared to the realms of astronomy, geography, medicine, Neoplatonic philosophy, and Christian theology. These correspondences are created through strikingly unusual metaphors, which some have called metaphysical conceits, from the Italian *concetto* ("concept"). The result is a pervasive sense of a universal harmony in all human experience.

Such analogies were not always respected, however. Increasingly, they were questioned by proponents of a kind of vision that depended on a quantitative or denotative sense of identity or difference. Poetic metaphor might not be able to account for creation in all its complexity; instead, nature had to be understood through the abstractions of science. By the seventeenth century, it was becoming difficult to regard creation as a single and comprehensive whole; natural philosophers and scientists in the making wanted to analyze it piece by individual piece. As John Donne wrote of the phenomenon of uniqueness in his elegy for Elizabeth Drury, *The Anniversary:*

> The element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him, where to look for it.
> And freely men confess, that this world's spent,
> When in the Planets, and the Firmament
> They seek so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out again to his Atoms.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
> All just supply, and all Relation:
> Prince, Subject, Father, Son, are things forgot,

Wenceslaus Hollar, *Parliamentarian soldiers in Yorkshire destroying "Popish" paintings, etc.* Illustration to *Sight of the Transactions of these latter yeares*, by John Vicars, 1646.

> For every man alone thinks he has got
> To be a Phoenix, and that there can be
> None of that kind, of which he is but he.

The earth had been decentered by the insights of the astronomer Nicholas Copernicus, who in the 1520s deduced that the earth orbits the sun. This "Copernican revolution" was confirmed by the calculations of Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler, and our solar system itself was revealed as but one among many. With traditional understandings of the natural order profoundly shaken, many thinkers feared for the survival of the human capacity to order and understand society as well. Ironically, Donne complains of radical individualism by invoking the emblem of the Phoenix, the very sort of traditional metaphor that constituted the coherence he claims has "gone." But whereas the symbol in an emblem book carried with it the myth of the bird's Christ-like death and rebirth, the image of the rare bird takes on a newly skeptical and even satirical meaning in *The Anniversary:* it becomes the sign of a dangerous fragmentation within nature's order. Donne's audience would have been familiar with such symbols from emblem books, poems, and coats of arms, as well as in interior decoration, clothing, and the printers' marks on title pages of books. They were also featured on the standards or flags carried in the Civil War—antique signs in a decidedly modern conflict.

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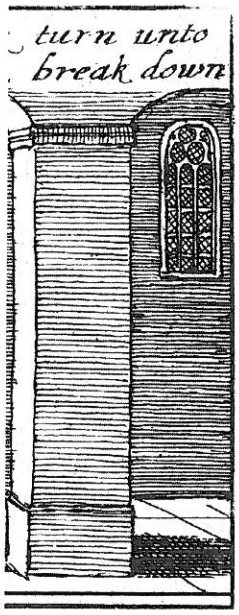

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The War and the Modern Order of Things

The Wars of Three Kingdoms ended with the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, but the society that Charles II was heir to was very different from the one his grandfather, James I, had come from Scotland to rule. The terms of modern life were formulated during this period, even though they were only partially and inconsistently realized. They helped to shape these essentially modern institutions: a representative government under law, a market economy fueled by concentrations of capital, and a class system determined by wealth and the power it conferred. They supported a culture in which extreme and opposing points of view were usual. Milton's republican *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was followed by Thomas Hobbes's defense of absolute rule, *The Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651). Hobbes rejected the assumption that had determined all previous political thought—Aristotle's idea that man was naturally sociable—by characterizing the natural condition of human life as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." A civil state, said Hobbes, depended on the willingness of each and every citizen to relinquish all his or her rights to the sovereign, which is the Commonwealth. The vigorous language of Puritan sermons, preached and published during the 1640s and 1650s, was replicated in the corantos and diurnals of the period. These new forms would eventually lead to the sophisticated commentary of eighteenth-century journalism. Nationalism, however problematic, was registered in history and epic, as well as in attempts to colonize the Americas and to subdue the Gaelic peoples to the west and the north. Irish poems supporting the Stuarts and lamenting the losses of the Cromwellian wars would become rallying cries during the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century nationalist risings against English control, eventually to result in Ireland's inclusion in the 1801 Union of Great Britain.

Intellectual thought, mental attitudes, religious practices, and the customs of the people fostered new relations to the past and a new sense of self.

Intellectual thought, mental attitudes, religious practices, and the customs of the people fostered new relations to the past and a new sense of self. While Milton was perhaps the greatest humanist of his time, able to read and write Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, his contemporaries witnessed the disappearance of the culture of Petrarch, Erasmus, and More—humanists who had fashioned the disciplines of humanism. As more particularized portraits of individual life emerged, new philosophical trends promoted denotative descriptions and quantitative figurations of the world. Shortly after the Restoration of Charles II, the Royal Academy of Science would form a "committee for improving the English language," an attempt to design a universal grammar and an ideal philosophical language. This project, inspired by the intellectual reforms of Francis Bacon, would have been uncongenial to the skeptical casts of mind exhibited by Erasmus and More. The abstract rationalism of the new science, the growth of an empire overseas, a burgeoning industry and commerce at home, and a print culture spreading news throughout Europe and across the Atlantic, would continue to be features of life in the British Isles through the eighteenth century.

For additional resources on the early modern period, including an interactive timeline of the period, go to *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* Web site at www.myliteraturekit.com.