Elizabethan Drama Study Guide

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Introduction

From the Elizabethan Age come some of the most highly-respected plays in Western drama. Although it is generally agreed that the period began at the commencement of Queen Elizabeth I's reign in 1558, the ending date is not as definitive. Some consider the age to have ended at the queen's death in 1603, while others place the end of Elizabethan Drama at the closing of the theatres in 1642. Elizabeth I was a strong, resolute monarch who returned England to Protestantism, quelled a great deal of internal turmoil, and unified the nation. She was also a strong supporter of the arts, and this sparked a surge of activity in the theatre. During her reign, some playwrights were able to make a comfortable living by receiving royal patronage. There was a great deal of theatrical activity at Court, and many public theatres were also built on the outskirts of London. Theatre was a popular pastime, and people of all walks of life attended. Although women were not allowed onstage, they did attend performances and often made up a substantial part of the audience. The theatre also drew many unsavory characters, including pickpockets, cutpurses, and prostitutes. Because of the perceived bad influence of the theatres, the Puritans were vocally opposed to them and succeeded in shutting them down in 1642. Some of the most important playwrights come from the Elizabethan era, including William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe. These playwrights wrote plays that were patterned on numerous previous sources including the Greek tragedy, Seneca's plays, Attic drama, English miracle plays, morality plays, and interludes. Elizabethan tragedy dealt with heroic themes, usually centering on a great personality who is destroyed by his own passion and ambition. The comedies often satirized the fops and gallants of society.

Themes

Anti-Semitism

Hatred of Jews prevailed in Elizabethan society, and this is reflected in plays of the period. Two of the strongest examples of plays containing strong anti-Semitism are Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In Marlowe's play, Barabas, the Jew of Malta, is a cruel, egotistic, and greedy man. In Elizabethan times, he was played in a confrontational and somewhat comic manner, with the actor wearing a red wig and a long hooked nose. Shylock, the Jewish merchant in *The Merchant of Venice*, is also presented as a greedy, vindictive man. Shakespeare tempers his character, however, with a bit more humanity than is found in Barabas. Elizabethan anti-Semitism was fueled in 1594 when Queen Elizabeth's Jewish doctor was executed on the charge of trying to poison her.

Disguise

Disguise is a device that is used frequently by the characters in Elizabethan Drama. It is a way in which characters gain information that would be otherwise withheld from them. For example, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Rosalind discovers that her true love, Orlando, is indeed in love with her while she is disguised as a boy. Some critics also believe that disguising female characters in male garb afforded the men and boys who were playing these roles to spend part of the play in costumes that were more comfortable and familiar.

Humours

Elizabethan psychology was based on the theory of four bodily humours□blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Proper physical and mental health supposedly depended upon a proper balance among these humours. A particular emotion or mood was associated with each, and it was believed that if a person had too much of one humour in his body, that particular emotion would be emphasized. With the production of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, a new species of comedy devoted solely to the interplay of these elements was created, known as the "comedy of humours." The humours were prevalent forces in the tragedies as well. Hamlet is described as the "melancholy Dane," thus implying that he has a slight mental imbalance.

Revenge

Revenge is one of the most prominent themes in Elizabethan drama. In the plays, it is often motivated by the visitation of a ghost who delivers the story of his murder to the character who must now become the avenger. Such is the case in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, as the Ghost of Don Andrea recounts his death, calls for revenge, and

then sits onstage to watch his enemies meet their fate. Revenge is also the motivator in *Hamlet*, as the Prince of Denmark vows to avenge his father's murder. In her article "Common Plots in Elizabethan Drama," Madeleine Doran reflects upon why the subject of revenge was so popular:

> Why the motive of revenge should enjoy such popularity
> from the early days of Elizabethan down to
> Caroline times naturally provokes speculation. That
> it had deeply sympathetic affinities with the conditions
> of actual life we must suppose. Yet its very endurance,
> even after it had lost its vitality, as the
> commonest counter-motive in tragedy, suggests
> something besides imitative Realism. Its persistence
> may have been to some extent owing to its great usefulness
> for play construction in furnishing so practicable
> a method of counteraction.

The Supernatural

In Elizabethan times, people were very superstitious, and many people believed in the supernatural. Queen Elizabeth had a personal astrologer whom she would consult regularly; and, as Diane Yancey notes, "Almost every village had an old woman who could be persuaded to cast a spell to protect cattle from illness or keep one's lover faithful and true." Given this context, it is not surprising that supernatural elements are found in many Elizabethan plays. Fairies, ghosts, and witches often figure prominently in the action. Ghosts are very important in revenge tragedies and are often used as a catalyst to spur the action. Several Elizabethan plays contain a ghost who recounts his own murder, thus beginning a cycle of revenge. Such is the case in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Sprites and fairies were also popular characters of the time. One only needs to read Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to find a play that is populated with fantastical creatures.

Style

Asides

Asides are brief comments spoken privately to another character or directly to the audience. They are not heard or noticed by the rest of the characters onstage. The character would suddenly turn toward the audience and deliver the aside from behind his hand, thus hiding it from the rest of the players. This technique was used often by Elizabethan dramatists as it helped to let the audience in on the character's thoughts.

Blank Verse

Blank verse is unrhymed poetry that still contains a rhythm and meter. This was the primary form used by Elizabethan playwrights, although prose and many other forms of poetry are also found throughout their plays. Serious characters of high stature and nobility often speak in blank verse, especially when discussing important issues, while comic and lower class characters are less likely to do so.

Iambic Pentameter

Iambic pentameter is the rhythm used in Elizabethan blank verse. Each line has five two-syllable units, or "feet," with the second syllable of each unit receiving the heaviest stress. Iambic pentameter is relatively close to the natural form of spoken English. For example, "She WENT to SEE a PLAY a-BOUT a KING" is a line of iambic pentameter.

Insults

Name-calling was an art form during the Elizabethan Age, and this is reflected in the plays from that period. Characters often engage in "verbal dueling" by hurling creative slurs at one another, hoping to get the upper hand by delivering the best insult. Shakespeare was a master at creating these insults. Insults such as, "You ungrateful fox!" "You overweening slave!" and "Thou art a boil! A plague-sore!" are sprinkled liberally throughout his plays. He was not the only playwright to use this technique, however. The art of creating insults was common in Elizabethan times, and all of the playwrights used them to some extent.

Puns

Elizabethans were fond of word plays, and they especially appreciated puns; so, Elizabethan dramatists make great use of puns throughout their plays. One of the most skilled in the use of puns and wordplay was Shakespeare. One famous example occurs

in *Romeo and Juliet*. As Mercutio lies dying from a sword wound, he says to his friend, Romeo, "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man."

Rhymed Couplets

Rhymed couplets are two lines of poetry that rhyme, as in, "Well, I will in, and do the best I can; To match my daughter to this gentleman" from Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Rhymed couplets often signal the end of a scene or act for the audience.

Scenery and Settings

Most Elizabethan Drama was performed on a bare stage with no scenery and no sets. Therefore, to let the audience know where and when the action was taking place, playwrights would begin scenes with lines that establish place and time. For example, the opening line of Act IV, Scene I of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* lets the audience know right away where they are: "Yonder's the shop, and there my fair love sits." Sometimes settings were conveyed by the use of placards that would be hung onstage immediately prior to the scene. These would tell the audience in what town or village the action was taking place.

Soliloquy

A soliloquy is a speech that narrates a character's thoughts. It tells the audience what is going on in a character's mind by allowing him to think out loud. The most famous soliloquy in all of drama is the "To be or not to be" speech from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In it, Hamlet ponders whether or not to kill himself and considers the consequences of each decision. The term "soliloquy" is sometimes confused with the term "monologue"; the two are different, however. In a monologue, the character is actually speaking directly to the audience as opposed to narrating his thoughts out loud. With a soliloquy, from the character's point of view, there is no one else present.

Violence

In most Elizabethan plays, the violent acts occur offstage. These acts are then reported by a character who narrates what happened for the audience and the others onstage. This convention allowed Elizabethan dramatists to include huge battles as part of the "action" of their plays without the theatres having to hire hundreds of actors to perform the plays. Also, horrific acts of brutality that are difficult to execute onstage are often more effective when described than when actually shown. The audience must use their imaginations to visualize the carnage, often creating a scene in their mind, much worse than ever could be created on the stage. The Elizabethan dramatists borrowed this tradition from Greek tragedy. The tradition changed, however, with the development of the "blood tragedy" (also known as "revenge tragedy"). In these plays, acts of violence

are performed onstage, in full view of the audience. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is one of the best-known plays of this genre.

Historical Context

Master of Revels and Censorship

Every play had to be submitted to the Master of Revels for licensing before performance. He acted as the official censor and would often force the deletion of passages or references that were deemed offensive. Gerald Eades Bentley, in "Regulation and Censorship" from *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642*, observes that

> most of the censoring activities were intended to eliminate from the stage five general types of lines or scenes: 1. Critical comments on the policies or conduct of government. 2. Unfavorable presentations of *friendly* foreign powers or their sovereigns, great nobles or subjects. 3. Comment of religious controversy. 4. Profanity (after 1606). 5. Personal satire of *influential* people.

The Office of Revels was originally established to select and supervise all entertainment of the sovereign, but as time progressed, its power grew. In 1581, a patent was issued that centralized the regulation of all plays and players with the Master of Revels. The man holding this position became quite powerful and prestigious, for he could significantly change the tone and intent of any production through censorship or could prevent the production from occurring altogether. The position was also very lucrative, as the Master of Revels received a tidy sum for each play that was licensed.

Puritans

The Puritans were extremely zealous Protestants who held strict views on matters of religion and morality. They shunned all forms of entertainment, including music and dancing, because they believed that these diversions turned a person's thoughts away from concentration upon the Bible and spiritual matters. Puritans considered the theatre to be an ungodly institution and vocally denounced it as "wicked" and "profane." Throughout the Elizabethan era, they actively campaigned against the public playhouses because they felt that such institutions threatened England's morality. Numerous Puritan writers produced pamphlets warning against the dangers of attending the theatre and attacked the actors as sinners and heretics. As John Addington Symonds notes in his essay "Theatres, Playwrights, Actors and Playgoers," "The voices of preachers and Puritan pamphleteers were daily raised against playhouses." The Puritan mindset eventually prevailed, and they succeeded in closing down all of the public theatres in 1642.

Plague

The bubonic plague, or "Black Death," which had begun in southern Europe, originally made its way to England around 1348. Although this was well before the Elizabethan era, the effects of the plague continued to be felt for centuries. Plague broke out frequently, and London was visited by the dreaded disease in 1563, 1578-1579, 1582, 1592-1593, and 1603. During the outbreak of 1603, over 30,000 people died. One reason the plague was so devastating was the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in the city of London. Fleas carried by rats spread the plague, and the overcrowded conditions provided ample breeding grounds for the disease-carrying creatures. These conditions also caused the disease to spread quickly once someone had been infected. The term "plague-sore" is an insult that can be found in the drama of the time. This is a reference to the visible sores that would cover a person's body once he had contracted bubonic plague.

Royal Patronage

Actors were subject to the same laws as vagrants and were in danger of arrest if they could not prove that they had a permanent residence. In order to avoid persecution, they sought a noble patron to support and promote them. They became servants of the nobleman, thus providing him more prestige. In return, the nobleman would protect them if they got into trouble. He did not pay them regular wages or allowances, however. In 1572, noble patronage became very significant because of a law that was passed allowing only registered servants of a nobleman to go on tour. Since touring was one of the main sources of income for theatre troupes, it was necessary for them to gain patronage to survive.

Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli was a sixteenth-century Italian philosopher who was famous for the political theories put forth in his book, *The Prince*. Machiavelli believed in man's capacity for determining his own destiny, and in his book, he describes how it is possible for one to usurp power through treachery. *The Prince* is considered by some to be a "manual of tyrants," while others claim that Machiavelli was just describing the existing world as opposed to teaching people how things should be. Machiavelli's work was widely known throughout England, and his ideas inspired several Elizabethan playwrights. Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* has been described as a work of "Machiavellian policy," and the ghost of Machiavelli actually appears at the opening of the play.

Protestantism

Queen Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary, daughter of Katherine of Aragon and King Henry VII, was queen from 1553 to 1558, immediately prior to Elizabeth. She was a devout Catholic and gained the nickname "Bloody Mary" for her attempts to suppress

Protestantism by executing many of its leading adherents. During Mary's reign, Elizabeth concealed the fact that she was Protestant, but when she ascended the throne, Elizabeth restored Protestantism to England. She was not so vicious a queen as her half-sister had been, however. As Dick Riley and Pam McAllister relate in *The Bedside, Bathtub and Armchair Companion to Shakespeare*, "As Queen, Elizabeth fined Catholics who refused to attend services of the official church, but there was no widespread persecution of those who clung to the old faith, and Elizabeth tried to ensure that services and prayers were conducted in a way that both Catholics and Protestants could in good conscience attend." Her moderate policies brought a stronger unity than England had enjoyed for several years.

Movement Variations

Boys' Companies

Boys' companies were performing troupes that were made up entirely of young boys. The practice of using boys in the English theatre dates back to the early 1500s, when choirboys sang and performed at court for the king, and during Elizabethan times, these acting companies were still usually under the training and direction of a choirmaster. During the latter part of the 1500s, boys' companies were very popular. Their popularity faded around the turn of the century, however, due to several scandals that took place. In 1597, Nathaniel Giles, manager of the Chapel Children, was charged with kidnapping boys and forcing them into servitude as actors, and in 1600, Henry Evans, another manager of the Chapel Children, involved the boys in several politically controversial plays. Public support for the troupes waned, and boys' companies dissolved around 1608.

Court Masques

Masques were short entertainments that were held at Court as one part of a royal evening of entertainment. They were much shorter than regular plays. Masques usually contained romantic and mythological themes and consisted of elaborate settings in which players posed, danced, and recited poetic lines of dialogue. Nobles and guests of the Court would often take part, and although women were banned from appearing on the public stage, they were allowed to participate in Court masques. Queen Elizabeth I held very few court masques during her reign, but when James I took the throne, masques were revived with increasing grandeur and magnificence. Ben Jonson was the primary writer of masques during James I's reign, but other playwrights also tried their hand at the form.

Inn Courtyards

Many acting troupes performed in the courtyards of English inns both before and after permanent theatres were built. The inns were usually multi-storied, U-shaped buildings, and they prefigured the design of the public playhouses. Players constructed a rough stage made of boards on trestles at one end of the courtyard, and audience members would stand in the yard to watch the performance. Well-to-do patrons brought their own chairs and watched from the balconies overlooking the courtyard. Playing at inn courtyards was sometimes difficult for acting troupes because their performances could be interrupted or even cancelled if the business at the inn was brisk.

Interludes

Interludes were short plays that were often performed during a break in a royal or noble banquet. They were typically nothing more than a small scene or conversation between two or more persons. Diane Yancey sees interludes as an important link to English secular drama: "By shying away from religious themes, the interludes made it acceptable for the later Elizabethan dramatists to write plays that had little, if anything, to do with the Bible."

Miracle plays

Miracle plays were also known as "mysteries," from the Latin word *ministerium*, which means "act." They were performed on Corpus Christi and other feast days, and they depicted biblical history. Residents of English towns would gather along the streets to watch the plays, which were performed on moveable stages known as "pageant wagons." Several miracle plays would make up an entire cycle; the first play was presented, and then its wagon would move along to the next stop on the street while another wagon moved in to take its place. The second part of the play was performed on this pageant wagon, and then it would move along, and so on. This would continue until the entire history of the Bible had been told. Because of this convention of staging, these productions were also known as "cycle plays." The structure of miracle plays had an important influence on English history plays. As Diane Yancey notes, "Histories borrow medieval techniques found in miracle plays, including rearranging historical events, using anachronisms, and writing a subplot that parallels the main plot."

Morality Plays

Morality plays were religious plays that first appeared in the fourteenth century. They most likely had their beginnings when popular outdoor preachers began telling stories that applied biblical teachings to the problems of daily living. They began as biblical allegories but gradually became more and more secularized. They were one of the major links between the religious and professional stages. Oscar Brockett observes, in "Theatre and Drama in the Late Middle Ages," that "Elements of the morality play persisted into Shakespeare's time. But as the morality play was increasingly secularized during the sixteenth century, the distinctions vanished between it and the type of play commonly labeled 'interlude.'"

Private Theatres

Indoor, roofed theatres were known as "private theatres" during Elizabethan times, even though the public could attend the performances. These playhouses catered to a more aristocratic audience and were different from the public theatres in many ways: they accommodated less than one-half as many spectators; they charged considerably higher admission prices; seats were provided for all spectators; and candles were used

for illumination. The Blackfriars, the first private theatre, opened its doors in 1576. Coincidentally, this is the same year the first public theatre opened. It was built as part of a former monastery. Until 1610, private theatres were used exclusively by boys' companies. After that time, the popularity of the children faded, and the private theatres passed into the hands of adult troupes.

Public Playhouses

The first permanent theatre in England opened in 1576. It was called The Theatre and was built by James Burbage, who based its design upon the English inn courtyards. It formed a model for numerous English playhouses that were to follow. It is not known exactly what Elizabethan playhouses looked like because no detailed drawings still exist, but some extant sketches from audience members in attendance do remain. From these drawings, along with some written reports and other documents, historians have concluded that most of the Elizabethan playhouses were similar in structure. They were many-sided, open-air structures, made of a timber frame covered with clay plaster or mortar. They had three tiers of galleries with a thatched roof covering only the gallery seating area and the rear, housed-in part of the stage. This stage-house was also called a "tiring house" because it was the area in which the actors *attired* themselves for the plays. The playing area was an open-air platform that jutted out into the middle of the yard, and the lower-class patrons would stand on the ground surrounding the stage; thus they were known by the term "groundlings." Aristocratic patrons would pay more to sit in the tiered galleries, and very wealthy patrons could pay to actually be seated onstage.

Representative Authors

George Chapman (1559-1634)

George Chapman was born in 1559 in the town of Hertfordshire, near London. He was the second son of Thomas and Joan Chapman. Little is known of his early life except that he attended Oxford in 1574 but left before completing his degree. From 1583 through 1585, he was in the household of Sir Ralph Sadler, although his exact position there is somewhat unclear. It seems that Chapman served in the military in 1591 and 1592 but returned to London prior to 1594. Chapman's earliest drama, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, was produced in 1596, and he quickly gained a reputation as a talented playwright. Chapman wrote approximately twenty-one plays between 1596 and 1613, but his output was very sporadic. Some years he wrote no plays, instead concentrating his efforts on translating the poetry of Homer. Chapman experienced financial troubles throughout his life and spent some time in debtor's prison. His fortune changed for a brief time in 1603, when he was given a position in the household of the young Prince Henry. Henry undertook sponsorship of the Homer project. During this time, Chapman also wrote plays for the Children of the Chapel, and the company produced Chapman's most famous tragedies: *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604) and two plays on Byron (1608). When Henry died in 1612, Chapman once again found himself in financial trouble. Very little is known about the last twenty years of his life. He died on May 12, 1634.

Thomas Dekker (c. 1572-1632)

The exact date of Thomas Dekker's birth is unknown. In a document from 1632, he speaks of his "three-score years," and this is the basis for the assumption that he was born in or around the year 1572. He is thought to have been born and raised in London, but little is known about his life prior to January 1598, when his name begins to appear on the payment books of Philip Henslowe, theatre owner and financier of two London theatre companies. From 1598 to 1600, Dekker wrote eight plays for The Lord Admiral's Men and collaborated on twenty-four others. In 1600, his most famous play, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, was produced. The play is notable for its realistic depiction of everyday life in seventeenth-century London as well as for Dekker's strong use of romantic fantasy in his depiction of characters. The play was extremely popular with London audiences. Around 1606, Dekker turned to writing pamphlets. His most notable works of this genre are *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606) and *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). In 1610, he returned to writing plays, but many of his later works have been lost. Even though Dekker was a talented playwright, he was never able to make a comfortable living. As Diane Yancey notes in *Life in the Elizabethan Theater*, "Thomas Dekker was a talented and overworked man who spent his life in hopeless poverty." He served several prison terms for debt, with the longest being the six-year period from 1613 to 1619. Dekker was last heard from in 1632. It is assumed that this was also the

year of his death, as there is a record of one "Thomas Decker householder" being buried on August 25th.

Thomas Heywood (c. 1573-1641)

Thomas Heywood was a prolific writer who claimed to have written and collaborated on more than two hundred plays. He is most famous for his plays dealing with contemporary English life. Heywood was born in Lincolnshire to the Reverend Robert and Elizabeth Heywood. His family was fairly well off, and he is believed to have studied at Cambridge University. However, he did not complete his degree. On June 13, 1603, Heywood married Anne Butler. It is uncertain how many children the couple had. There are baptismal records for eight Heywood children, but there is no way to verify if these were all sons and daughters of the dramatist or children of another Heywood family. By 1598, Heywood was gaining recognition as a comic writer, although most of his significant literary activity was done between 1600 and 1620. His best-known play, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, was produced during this period, in 1603. After the death of his first wife, Heywood married his second wife, Jane Span, on January 18, 1633. In his later years, Heywood served as City Poet and produced several pageants for the Lord Mayor. He was buried on August 16, 1641, in Clerkenwell.

Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

Ben Jonson was born in 1572 in Westminster. His stepfather was a master bricklayer, and Jonson briefly took up this trade in his youth. He also spent a brief time as a soldier, returning to England and marrying sometime prior to 1592. Upon his return to England, Jonson became an actor and by 1597 was working as a dramatist for the theatrical entrepreneur Phillip Henslowe. Jonson's first play, co-written with Thomas Nashe in 1597, was *The Isle of Dogs*. It was deemed offensive and landed Jonson in jail for a brief time. Then, in 1598, Jonson was arrested for killing a fellow actor in a duel. In that same year, however, Jonson also gained his first dramatic success with the play *Every Man in His Humour*. This play was the first instance of a new comic form known as "the comedy of humours," and it turned him into a celebrity. Jonson became a favorite of King James I and wrote over thirty masques for court performance. In 1616, King James I made him poet laureate, the official poet of the court. This position also came with an annual pension, allowing Jonson to live out his life comfortably. Jonson suffered a severe stroke in 1628 and died in Westminster on August 6, 1637.

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)

Thomas Kyd was born in London in November 1558, the son of Thomas Kyd, a scrivener, and his wife, Anna. Kyd went to Merchant Taylors' school but did not enter a university. From about 1587 to 1593, Kyd was in the service of a lord. He began to write plays, and it was during this time that Kyd had his greatest theatrical success, with the production of *The Spanish Tragedy*. It was wildly popular with Elizabethan audiences

and established Kyd as the founder of a new genre of Elizabethan Drama known as "blood tragedy." The exact date of the very first production of *The Spanish Tragedy* is unknown. Things seemed to go along fairly smoothly until 1591, when Kyd ran into some very serious trouble due to his earlier acquaintance with the dramatist Christopher Marlowe. During a government search, some antireligious papers were seized in Kyd's home, and he was accused of atheism. He was arrested and tortured but was freed after maintaining that the papers belonged to Marlowe and had become inadvertently mixed with his own belongings when the two shared a room for a brief time. Kyd was eventually freed, but the lord he served was not convinced of his innocence. He released Kyd from service in 1593. Kyd was unable to obtain other financial assistance and died in August 1594 in great poverty.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, the eldest son of master shoemaker John Marlowe and Katherine Arthur. Marlowe attended Cambridge, quickly distinguishing himself as a brilliant university student. During his time at Cambridge, Marlowe became part of Queen Elizabeth's secret service and carried out several secret missions for the crown. After receiving his degree in July 1587, he went to London, where he became an actor and dramatist for the Lord Admiral's Company. During that same year, both parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* were performed on the London stages, catapulting Marlowe into celebrity status. Marlowe lived a reckless life and had several scrapes with the law. In 1591, Marlowe's former roommate, playwright Thomas Kyd, was imprisoned and tortured after authorities found heretical writings in Kyd's room. Kyd, who was also taken in for questioning, insisted that the writings belonged to Marlowe. Marlowe was released without incident, however, possibly due to his earlier ties with the secret service. Marlowe's life ended when he was only twenty-nine years old. On the night of May 30, 1593, he was stabbed in the head during a barroom brawl. He died instantly.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon. He was the third of eight children. At age eighteen, Shakespeare married the alreadypregnant Anne Hathaway. They would eventually have three children. Very little is known about Shakespeare's life from 1583 to 1592. By 1594, however, he had joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men, serving as both an actor and a playwright. By the end of that year, six of his plays had already been performed. In 1599, Shakespeare and other members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men financed the building of the Globe Theatre, and The Lord Chamberlain's Men continued to mount popular performances there, including many of Shakespeare's plays. The Lord Chamberlain's Men became the foremost London company, performing at Court on thirty-two occasions between 1594 and 1603. After his ascension to the throne, James I granted the Lord Chamberlain's Men a royal patent, and the company's name was changed to the King's Men. Shakespeare's talent as a playwright was widely

recognized. He became one of the wealthiest dramatists of his day and lived a comfortable life. He retired to Stratford in 1610 and died on April 23, 1616. In 1623, actors Henry Condell and John Heminge published his plays as a collection known as the First Folio.

Representative Works

Everyman in His Humour

Ben Jonson's *Everyman in His Humour* was first produced in 1598 by Shakespeare's company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men. It is Jonson's first important play and is also the first play to be labeled a "comedy of humours." Humours were bodily fluids that were believed to control a person's temperament. If an individual had too much of any one humour, he would exhibit that characteristic to excess. In the play, Jonson emphasizes these "humours" and achieves his comic effect by exaggerating each character's quirks, almost to the point of caricature. The play was extremely popular and raised Jonson to the position of a celebrity. Because of its popularity, other playwrights also began to copy the style. *Everyman in His Humour* was originally published in 1601, and a revised version appeared as one of the plays in Jonson's folio of 1616.

Hamlet

Perhaps Shakespeare's most well-loved play, *Hamlet* was first produced around 1600 with Richard Burbage, the leading actor of Shakespeare's company, in the title role. It is believed that Shakespeare himself played the ghost of Hamlet's father. *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy that tells the story of the melancholy Prince of Denmark, who vows to avenge his father's murder by killing his uncle, the king. It was well received by Elizabethan audiences who were probably already somewhat familiar with the story. *Hamlet* was first published as a quarto in 1603. *Hamlet* has been the subject of much discussion and writing and is still considered, by many, to be the finest play Shakespeare ever wrote.

The Jew of Malta

The Jew of Malta, first produced in 1592, is Christopher Marlowe's play of Machiavellian policy. Though it is described on the title page of the 1633 edition as a tragedy, it is really a dark, satirical comedy. The play recounts how Barabas, a rich Jew, is deprived of his wealth by Farnese, the Christian governor of Malta, in order that some long-overdue tribute money is paid. Farnese justifies this extortion by saying that Malta is accursed for harboring Jews at all, and he gives Barabas the choice of becoming a Christian and giving up only half his wealth or remaining a Jew and losing it all. Barabas chooses the latter. This was a very important play for Marlowe. As Robert E. Knoll notes in his article presented in *Christopher Marlowe* of the *Twayne's Authors Series*, "Written in the chronological middle of his career, *The Jew of Malta* is a benchmark in Marlowe's development and is an important play for several reasons; it exhibits the direction of his growth, and, in addition, it had a notable influence on Marlowe's greatest contemporaries." Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is said to have been directly influenced by this play. While popular with audiences from the beginning, the success of

The Jew of Malta was increased in 1594 when Queen Elizabeth's Jewish doctor was executed on the charge of trying to poison her. This inflamed anti-Semitism among the Elizabethan people, and they flocked to the theatre to see the evil Barabas get his due. The play was first published in a quarto edition in 1633.

The Shoemaker's Holiday

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is based upon three tales about shoemakers from Thomas Deloney's book, *The Gentle Craft* (1598). It is a delightful domestic comedy that depicts the pleasant, simple lives of apprentices and tradesmen. In it, a young nobleman courts the daughter of the Lord Mayor of London, disguised as a Dutch shoemaker. Elizabethan audiences were delighted by the depiction of the everyday lives of contemporary Londoners. This was Dekker's best play and remained a favorite among Londoners for many years. The first published edition appeared in 1600, but the play was so popular that it was republished in 1610, 1618, 1624, 1637, and 1657.

The Spanish Tragedy

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* was wildly successful and propelled Kyd into fame. The story deals with a father's desire to avenge his son's death. Although this was not a new story in Elizabethan Drama, the style of *The Spanish Tragedy* was something that was relatively new to London. Instead of having the violence narrated in the traditional fashion, Kyd moves it onstage; most of the carnage and brutality take place right in front of the audience. This was an innovation that sparked an entirely new genre in England that came to be known as "blood tragedy." As William Green notes in his essay "Elizabethan Drama," Kyd "set a pattern for playwrights who invigorated the drama with their 'unclassical' shows of violence on the stage." It was not only the violence, however, that made Kyd's play unique and popular. The piece also contains skillful rhetoric that serves to sustain the tension. The rhetoric actually functions as action within the play and is an example of Kyd's great skill with language and poetry. References by other playwrights and parodies of *The Spanish Tragedy* indicate that the play was popular from its first staged edition in 1586 through about 1615. The earliest published edition available to us is from 1592. It claims, however, to be a corrected edition of an earlier published version.

Tamburlaine the Great

Part one of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* was produced circa 1587. The play was so successful that Marlowe immediately wrote a sequel. Both parts were published in 1590. These were the only published works of Marlowe during his brief lifetime. The story is based upon the career of the Mongolian conqueror Timur the Lame, or Tamerlane, who overthrew the Turkish Empire in 1402. Tamburlaine is an ambitious character who overcomes all resistance through the use of both arms and

rhetoric. Throughout the course of the play, he gains allies, conquers kings, and succeeds in winning the affection of the woman of his dreams. While the Elizabethan audiences appreciated the story of *Tamburlaine*, it was the poetry that really set this play apart from other plays. Previous drama had often been halting and didactic in its speech, but with this production, Marlowe took Elizabethan Drama to a higher level of eloquence and sophistication. As R. C. Bald notes in his introduction to *Six Elizabethan Plays*, "Before his time dramatic verse had usually been rhymed, but Marlowe's sense of style gave the new measure a strength and dignity previously lacking in dramatic verse."

A Woman Killed with Kindness

Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* was first produced in 1603. The play dealt with contemporary English life and is recognized as one of the finest examples of domestic tragedy in English drama. English audiences appreciated stories that depicted elements of their everyday lives and thus were charmed by Heywood's play. In it, a devout husband, Frankford, is betrayed by his wife when she is unfaithful to him by surrendering her honor to a house guest. She repents, however, and confesses her evil deed. Instead of seeking vengeance and retribution, Frankford continues to treat her with kindness. She is eventually so overcome by guilt and sorrow that she punishes herself and dies of remorse. Therefore, instead of being killed by her husband's wrath, she is ultimately killed by his kindness. The play is considered Heywood's masterpiece, due to his skillful handling of a story that has a unique twist. Heywood preserves sympathy for his heroine throughout the play while still delivering the proper moral message. The first known printed edition of the play appeared in 1607.

Critical Overview

Attending the theatre was an extremely popular pastime during the Elizabethan era. One of the main reasons that the theatre was able to flourish during the sixteenth century was that Queen Elizabeth herself was a supporter of the arts. She enjoyed attending theatrical entertainments and that legitimized the activity for the rest of the citizens. Most of the populace loved going to the theatre, and as Jeffrey L. Singman notes in his book *Daily Life in Elizabethan England*, "There was a constant and insatiable demand for plays, and actors became very popular figures□the first 'stars.'" But not everyone was thrilled with the theatre's popularity. There were some who shunned it and others who actively campaigned against it. The Puritans were particularly vocal in their opposition to the English playhouses, and numerous treatises and pamphlets were written, warning citizens of the evil and immorality that could be found festering in these amusements. The first major assault came in 1577, in John Northbrooke's *A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes*. This was soon followed by Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* in 1579. As Oscar Brockett comments, "Both works railed in the harshest terms against the theatre as an instrument used by the Devil to encourage vice and to take people away from honest work and other useful pursuits." These attacks were answered by theatre supporters, with the most famous response being Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poetry* in 1595. While Elizabethan audiences continued to enjoy theatre, the philosophical battle continued to rage, and the Puritans finally succeeded in closing the theatres in 1642.

Elizabethan drama did not disappear, however; the theatres were reopened in 1660, and the works of these fine playwrights were once again brought to the stage. The reputation of the great works of Elizabethan Drama grew steadily in England and throughout the rest of the world. They have consistently been performed and appreciated up to this day; people still look to this era as one that produced some of the finest drama in all of theatre history. In attesting to the significance of Elizabethan drama, John Gassner writes, "No one with even the slightest interest in English literature needs to be told that its greatest period is the Elizabethan Age, and no one familiar with that period is likely to depart from the consensus that its major literary achievement is the drama." R. C. Bald also weighs in with this superlative praise of the Elizabethan playwrights: "Even if Shakespeare had never lived, the last fifteen years of Queen Elizabeth's reign and the reign of King James I would still be the greatest period in the history of English drama." Plays from this period are still produced all over the world, and Shakespeare is recognized by many as the greatest playwright of all time. His works are considered timeless and universal, and they still resonate, even four hundred years after his death. Diane Yancey notes, "The number of Shakespearean acting companies and theater productions that exist today also bears witness to the continuing importance of Elizabethan drama." The Elizabethan playwrights created a body of work that has withstood the test of time. Their work has had a lasting influence on all succeeding generations of theatre artists and audiences.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Kattelman holds a Ph.D. in theatre from Ohio State University. In this essay, Kattelman discusses how Elizabethan plays can provide insight into that historical time period.

Works of theatre are always a reflection of the society in which they are created. By studying plays, one can learn a wealth of information about the beliefs, lifestyle, and politics of the time in which they were written and produced. Such is the case with Elizabethan Drama. If one looks carefully at the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and their fellow playwrights, many interesting and topical details come to light. Because the theatre shows human interaction, thus revealing manners and thoughts, it can provide insight into the nuances of a time that may not come to light by just studying names, dates, and facts. It can also shed light upon the important issues and topics of the day. It is a "barometer" of the times. Just as citizens of today might stand around the water cooler discussing last night's episode of a popular television show, so the Elizabethans would discuss the latest "hot" play by Heywood or Dekker. Just as future generations may learn something of the present day from current films and television programs, so too can historians learn a great deal about a time period by studying popular entertainments.

One of the things that can be learned by studying Elizabethan Drama is the way people celebrated holidays and special occasions. In Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, for example, the following lines reveal that the day before Lent [Shrove-Tuesday] was a holiday that was celebrated with feasts featuring pancakes: "Besides, I have procur'd that upon every Shrove-Tuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell, my fine dapper Assyrian lads shall clap up their shop window and away." Here, the phrase "pancake bell" provides a clue into the holiday celebration. While it may take some further study to completely understand this reference, it is an interesting bit of information that can lead to a deeper understanding of this particular holiday. Plays also reveal a great deal about what took place at common ceremonies. Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* opens with a wedding celebration where the guests, "With nosegays and bride-laces in their hats, dance all their country measures, rounds, and jigs." This line reveals a bit about the wedding guests' apparel and tells what kind of dances were popular at wedding receptions; thus, from just one line of dialogue, one can get a glimpse of the activities that took place at an Elizabethan wedding. Of course, seeing the play staged with historical accuracy would provide even more insight into the occasion. References in theatrical dialogue also point to other plays and entertainments that were popular at the time. The following lines from *The Shoemaker's Holiday* indicate that *Tamburlaine* was a recognizable name for Elizabethan audiences, probably due to the popularity of Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Tamburlaine the Great* a few years prior: "Sim Eyre knows how to speak to a Pope, to Sultan Soliman, to Tamburlaine, an he were here, and shall I melt, shall I droop before my sovereign."

In addition to details about ceremonies and entertainments, an enormous amount of information about societal protocol can be gleaned from the dialogue of Elizabethan plays. Take, for example, another line from*The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Here, the Lord

Mayor discusses his daughter's possible betrothal with a man of the Court. He comments that it is not a good idea because his daughter is not of the same class as her would-be husband, "Too mean is my poor girl for his high birth; poor citizens must not with courtiers wed." This brief line points to the strong class system that was present in England. The Lord Mayor's comment shows that it was improper for one to marry someone who was not his or her social equal. This was a common theme in Elizabethan Drama. Another example occurs in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* when Sir Charles notes what a good match Anne and Sir Francis are due to their equal positioning on the social ladder: "You both adorn each other, and your hands methinks are matches. There's equality in this fair combination; You are both scholars, both young, both being descended nobly." In fact, many Elizabethan comedies are based upon the predicament of youngsters falling in love with someone who is above or below their own station in life. People could relate to this topic and enjoyed the humorous complications that resulted from characters trying to overcome this hurdle.

Crime was also a popular topic with Elizabethan audiences, who loved to see plays based upon well-known criminal cases of the day. It seems that audiences have always been fascinated by accounts of macabre acts that they have heard about from their daily news sources, and Elizabethans were no different. They loved to see these cases acted out, often with much blood and gore. One of the most famous of this genre is a domestic tragedy published in 1592 by an anonymous author. Its full title is *The lamentable and true tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham in Kent, who was most wickedly murdered by the means of his disloyal and wanton wife, who for the love she bare to one Mosbie, hired two desperate ruffians, Black Will and Shakebag, to kill him*. For the sake of simplicity, this title is usually shortened to *Arden of Feversham*; the full title, however, gives a clue as to the draw these true crime stories had for an Elizabethan audience. By describing the story in a lengthy title, the author let Elizabethans know that they were going to see something exciting, sordid, and possibly somewhat gory. Because the story was based on an actual incident, the audience would not only see the events dramatized but would also find out what eventually happened to the criminals. For example, in the epilogue to *Arden of Feversham*, the fate of each perpetrator is recounted:

Thus have you seen the truth of Arden's death.
As for the ruffians, Shakebag and Black Will,
The one took sanctuary, and, being sent for out,
Was murdered in Southwark as he passed
To Greenwich, where the Lord Protector lay.
Black Will was burned in Flushing on a stage;
Greene was hanged at Osbridge in Kent;
The painter fled and how he died we know not.

Evidence suggests that plays based on actual crimes were common throughout the Elizabethan period. Many of the play texts are lost to us, but their titles are still available. As John Addington Symonds notes, "Plays founded on these subjects of contemporary crime were popular throughout the flourishing age of the Drama, is abundantly proved by their dates and titles, and preserved in several records."

Filmgoers of today, in fact, are not very different from Elizabethan audiences in regards to their enjoyment of the reenactment of famous crimes. Some of our most popular and enduring films and characters are based upon books inspired by real criminals and their heinous deeds. For example, both Norman Bates of *Psycho* and Buffalo Bill of *Silence of the Lambs* were inspired by the serial killer Ed Gein and the gruesome acts he committed in a Wisconsin farmhouse in 1957.

Plays can also illuminate the morality present during a particular time period. Ethics and religious beliefs have always been an important part of society, and thus, they are also an important part of that society's entertainments. Morality is a very strong factor in Elizabethan Drama because theatre was expected to teach the citizens a lesson in addition to entertaining them. The theatres became an important "school" for the Elizabethan people because citizens of all walks of life attended. It was one of the few activities that the nobility and the lower classes had in common. In his book, Symonds describes the wide array of people that could be found at the theatre: "the public to which these playwrights appealed was the English people from Elizabeth upon the throne down to the lowest ragamuffin of the streets; in the same wooden theatres met lords and ladies, citizens and prentices, common porters and working men, soldiers, sailors, pickpockets and country folk." He calls the Elizabethan theatre a "school of popular instruction." Since a large part of the populace attended the theatre, it was a great place to disseminate information and to teach moral lessons to a large cross-section of people. Sometimes these lessons were taught in a subtle manner, by the outcome of the action; at other times they were delivered to the audience in a very direct manner. An excellent example of this direct address occurs in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. In the play, Anne has had an adulterous affair with one of her husband's friends. She has repented, however, and now deeply regrets her actions. She confesses her disgrace and shame and also warns the women in the audience with the following, very pointed lines:

(*To the audience*) O women, women, you that have
yet kept
Your holy matrimonial vow unstained,
Make me your instance. When you tread awry,
Your sins like mine will on your conscience lie.

The lesson here is clear: women stay faithful to your husbands! It is not surprising that the theatre was expected to instruct as well as entertain during Elizabethan times. The drama had descended from religious mystery and morality plays, so playwrights had a long history of including moral lessons in their texts. Tragedies were particularly blatant in putting forth a moral message. In fact, historian D. J. Palmer conjectures, in "Elizabethan Tragic Heroes," that this is one of the reasons Elizabethan tragedies are so complex and contain so many characters:

All Elizabethan tragedies in fact try to illustrate several
lessons at once, by incorporating within their
actions a whole series of tragic catastrophes, each

with its own significance. From this point of view, therefore, the most appropriate kind of tragic hero for the Elizabethan dramatist was the figure whose progress through the play would involve as many other characters as possible, so providing opportunities for emphasizing a maximum number of moral lessons.

Tragedies also delivered some very pointed political messages as well. They were sometimes a rallying point for patriotism and served to remind the public that it was important to be loyal to the sovereign, as the following passage from Marlowe's *Edward II* indicates:

Strike off their heads, and let them preach on poles!
No doubt, such lessons they will teach the rest,
As by their preachments they will profit much
And learn obedience to their lawful king.

Here, heads that "preach on poles" refers to the common practice of placing traitors' severed heads on pikes around the city, after their beheading. They served as gruesome reminders of what might happen if one angered the monarch.

These are just a few examples of how dialogue in Elizabethan Drama can provide insight into that historical time. The plays educated the Elizabethan audience on proper morals, behavior, and customs, and they can also educate the modern reader. Plays are particularly fruitful places to find information about bygone eras because they recreate how people actually lived. As Symonds observes,

At all periods of history the stage has been a mirror of the age and race in which it has arisen. Dramatic poets more than any other artists reproduce the life of men around them; exhibiting their aims, hopes, wishes, aspirations, passions, in an abstract more intensely coloured than the diffuse facts of daily experience.

Elizabethan Drama provides a window into a wide spectrum of that society because it appealed to all walks of life, and the plays dealt with citizens of all walks of life. They were part of the essential fabric of the times. Perhaps Laura K. Egendorf best sums it up in her introduction to *Elizabethan Drama* when she states, "Unlike modern times, when Shakespeare's plays are often considered high culture, the Elizabethans considered the theater to be essentially pop culture□the plays were the movies and television of the sixteenth century."

Source: Beth Kattelman, Critical Essay on Elizabethan Drama, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Smith explores links between public punishment and drama in Elizabethan England.

The famous Triple Tree, the first permanent structure for public hangings, was erected at Tyburn in 1571 during the same decade which saw the construction of the first permanent structure for the performance of plays. At Tyburn seats were available for those who could pay and rooms could be hired in houses overlooking the scene; the majority of spectators stood in a semicircle around the event while hawkers sold fruits and pies and ballads and pamphlets detailing the various crimes committed by the man being hanged. Other kinds of peripheral entertainment also occurred simultaneously. In short, hangings functioned as spectacles not unlike tragedies staged in the public theatres. The organization of spectators in these two arenas and the official localization of these entertainments, despite their long and hitherto divergent histories, through the erection of permanent structures during Elizabeth's reign suggests the close alliance between these communal worlds in early modern England. Evidence also suggests that theatre and public punishment provided entertainment to upper and lower classes and that both events were generally well attended. Contemporary letters abound in accounts of executions and hangings, details of which are interspersed amid court gossip and descriptions of Parliament sessions. In a letter to Dudley Carleton, for example, John Chamberlain describes the hanging of four priests on Whitsun eve in 1612, noting with mild surprise the large number of people, among them 'divers ladies and gentlemen' who had gathered to witness the event which took place early in the morning between six and seven.

I am not alone in suggesting links between these modes of popular public spectacle. Greenblatt argues for the implicit presence of the scaffold in certain kinds of theatre when he writes

> the ratio between the theater and the world even at its most stable and unchallenged moments, was never *perfectly* taken for granted, that is, experienced as something wholly natural and self-evident. . . . similarly, the playwrights themselves frequently called attention in the midst of their plays to alternate theatrical practices. Thus, for example, the denouement of Massinger's *Roman Actor* (like that in *The Spanish Tragedy*) turns upon the staging as a mode of theater in which princes and nobles take part in plays in which the killing turns out to be real. It required no major act of imagination for a Renaissance audience to conceive of either of these alternatives to the conventions of the public playhouse: both were fully operative in the period itself, in the form of masques and courtly entertainments, on the one hand, and public maimings and executions on the other.

Presumably the relationship between theatre and the scaffold worked both ways: if dramatic deaths could suggest public maimings and executions, the latter could as easily and as vividly evoke their theatrical counterparts.

Indeed contemporary narratives about public hangings and executions, whether fictional or documentary, frequently insist on the analogy. I would like to consider two such narratives, Dudley Carleton's documentary letter to John Chamberlain describing the near hangings of Cobham, Markham and Grey in 1604 and Thomas Nashe's fictional narrative about the execution of Cutwolf witnessed by Jack Wilton.

Carleton details in vividly theatrical terms the trial, hangings and near executions of several conspirators, including two priests, implicated in a plot to harm King James I shortly after his ascension to the throne in 1603. The letter moves from a casual narrative to a concentrated exposition of the drama as it unfolded. Carleton begins his account with the hangings of two papist priests: 'The two priests that led the way to the execution were very bloodily handled; for they were cut down alive; and Clark to whom more favour was intended, had the worse luck; for he both strove to help himself, and spake after he was cut down. . . Their quarters were set on Winchester gates, and their heads on the first tower of the castle.' This was followed by the execution of George Brooke whose death, Carleton points out, was 'witnessed by no greater an assembly than at ordinary executions', the only men of quality present being the Lord of Arundel and Lord Somerset. Three others, Markham, Grey and Cobham, were scheduled to be executed on Friday; Carleton narrates the sequence of events as they occurred retaining information about their narrow escape from the gallows until the very end:

> A fouler day could hardly have been picked out, or fitter for such a tragedy. Markham being brought to the scaffold, was much dismayed, and complained much of his hard hap, to be deluded with hopes, and brought to that place unprepared. . . . The sheriff in the mean time was secretly withdrawn by one John Gill, Scotch groom of the bedchamber . . . The sheriff, at his return, told him [Markham] that since he was so ill prepared, he should have two hours respite, so led him from the scaffold, without giving him any more comfort . . .

Lord Grey's turn followed and he spent considerable time repenting for his crimes and praying to be forgiven, all of which, Carleton wryly remarks, 'held us in the rain more than half an hour'. As in the case of Markham, the execution was halted, the prisoner being told only that the sequence of executions had been altered by express orders from the King and that Cobham would die before him. Grey was also led to Prince Arthur's Hall and asked to await his turn with Markham. Lord Cobham then arrived on the scaffold but unlike the other two, came 'with good assurance and contempt of death'. The sheriff halted this execution as well, telling Cobham only that he had to first face a few other prisoners. Carleton then describes the arrival of Grey and Markham and the bewildered looks on the three prisoners who 'nothing acquainted with what had

passed, no more than the lookers on with what should follow looked strange one upon another, like men beheaded, and met again in the other world'. 'Now' Carleton continues, 'all the actors being together on the stage, as use is at the end of the play', the sheriff announced that the King had pardoned all three. The last-minute pardon, always a possibility in executions, arrive in time to save at least three of the conspirators. Carleton concludes his account by noting that this happy play had very nearly been marred 'for the letter was closed, and delivered him unsigned; which the King remembered, and called for him back again. And at Winchester there was another cross adventure: for John Gill could not go so near the scaffold that he could speak to the sheriff, . . . but was fain to call out to Sir James Hayes, or else Markham might have lost his neck.'

The initial hangings of the priests and George Brooke and the last-minute pardons to Cobham, Markham and Grey are invoked by the sheriff as examples of the 'justice and mercy' of the monarch. But Carleton's narrative, despite its support of this view, hints at the possibility of reading the King's final sentence as indecision rather than a calculated balancing of justice and mercy. The King resolved this issue 'without man's help, and no man can rob him of the praise of yesterday's action', Carleton tells us, but goes on to explain that

> . . . the Lords knew no other but that execution was
> to go forward, till the very hour it should be performed:
> and then calling them before him, he [the
> King] told them how much he had been troubled to
> resolve in this business; for to execute Grey, who was
> a noble, young, spirited fellow, and save Cobham,
> who was as base and unworthy, were a manner o injustice.
> To save Grey, who was of a proud, insolent
> nature, and execute Cobham, who had shown great
> tokens of humility and repentance, were as great a
> solecism; and so went on with Plutarch's comparisons
> in the rest, till travelling in contrarieties, but
> holding the conclusion in so indifferent balance that
> the lords knew not what to look for till the end came
> out, 'and therefore I have saved them all.'

Strikingly absent from the King's reasoning is any consideration of Markham, who we remember 'almost lost his neck' and who we have been told earlier was expressly ordered to go first to his death by the King. Did the manner of the last-minute pardon deliberately arrange for the possibility that if any hanging took place, Markham, who seemed in the king's disfavour, would be the only one to lose his neck? Remarkably Carleton himself mimics the power of abeyance in his method of narration, retaining the surprise of the outcome until the very end and keeping his reader confused even as the court had been.

The extended theatrical metaphor used by Carleton emerges also in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1987) which concludes with Jack

Wilton's narration of his experiences in Bologna where he witnesses the execution of Cutwolf, a notorious murderer. The promised account of Cutwolf's wrack upon the wheel proves to be tortuous and we are led to it through yet another narrative, this time by Cutwolf himself who, before he dies, provides an 'authentic' account of the villainy that has led him to the wheel. Jack reproduces Cutwolf's 'insulting narration' as he terms it because of its punitive value:

> Prepare your ears and your tears, for never, till this thrust I any tragical matter upon you. Strange and wonderful are God's judgements; here shine they in their glory. . . Murder is wide-mouthed, and will not let God rest till he grant revenge. . . Guiltless souls that live every hour subject to violence, and with your despairing fears do much impair God's providence, fasten your eyes on this spectacle that will add to your faith.

Several points in this exhortation are worth noting. Not by accident, this dramatic narrative has been reserved for the conclusion of the work. Jack here invites the reader to witness the spectacle of the execution, and as we shall see, the reader's role, initially analogous to Jack's, gradually merges with that of the crowd; that is, his role as witness gradually transforms into a more ambiguous one, somewhere between spectator of and participant in the torture. The incident, we are told, exemplifies God's glory and though we know that Jack refers here to the idea of divine retribution, the words suggest that he might be referring also to the nature of the execution itself as it dwells on torture rather than quick death. Jack insists that 'guiltless souls' who have not yet experienced violence but who live in constant fear of it can hope to strengthen their faith in the Almighty from this vision. In other words, this spectacle of torture should produce effects such as might follow a divine vision. Most importantly, the event on which we are expected to 'fasten' our eyes provides, according to Jack, a supreme example of the enactment of divine revenge. Like Carleton's narrative which purported to illustrate monarchical power even while it exposed its arbitrariness, Jack's account, despite its claim about illustrating divine authority, emphasizes instead its precarious similarity to mortal vengeance.

Cutwolf follows this dense exhortation with a long-winded narrative of the murder of Esdras of Granado. He prefaces his story with a strange assertion of his dignity: 'My body is little but my mind is as great as a giant's. The soul which is in me is the very soul of Julius Caesar by reversion. My name is Cutwolf, neither better nor worse by occupation than a poor cobbler of Verona□cobblers are men, and kings are no more.' The analogies between body and mind and body and soul seek to offset the ugliness of the speaker, 'a wearish, dwarfish, writhen-fac'd cobbler' as Jack describes him. But while they serve to dignify the speaker, they work in reverse as well: Cutwolf's insistence on the manhood of kings and his reminder about the public death of Julius Caesar suggest not a fantastic and unreal substitution of important figures for common villains, but a very *possible* replacement, whose reality would have been apparent to the spectators and to contemporary readers of this narrative (indeed, only some years

earlier in 1587, Mary Queen of Scots had been beheaded on English soil). And as visitors to London such as Thomas Platter note, the heads of several traitors from noble families graced London Bridge and provided a constant source of tourist attraction. The thirty to thirty-five heads on display at any given time intended to provide a grim warning to those entering the city but descendants of the 'traitors' frequently regarded the heads of their forbears as trophies of past glories. The thin line that divided royalty from traitors who nearly managed to seize the throne was evident daily to travellers and residents in the city and Cutwolf's highly suggestive substitution of royal bodies for criminal ones was, as I hope to show, implicit in all executions, especially narrated or dramatized ones like that being described here by Nashe.

Cutwolf's mesmerizing narrative follows this bold preface detailing similarities between his death and that of royal traitors. Cutwolf tells the crowd that to revenge the murder of his elder brother he had hunted Esdras for twenty months across Europe. He describes his joy at finally chancing upon him on the streets of Bologna: 'O, so I was tickled in the spleen with that word; my heart hopped and danced, my elbows itched, my fingers frisked, I wist not what should become of my feet nor knew what I did for joy.' His emotions parallel the mirth of the crowds who have also 'made holiday' to view Cutwolf's torture. Cutwolf then describes how he visited Esdras at his lodgings the next morning and confronted him with the murder of his brother. Faced with Cutwolf's determination to bury a bullet in his breast, Esdras eloquently tries several arguments to stay Cutwolf's revenge. He first promises money, then eternal service, and proceeds to request that his arms and legs be cut off and he himself left to live a year in prayer and repentance. When this fails, he requests that he might be tortured: 'To dispatch me presently is no revenge; it will soon be forgotten. Let me die a lingering death□it will be remembered a great deal longer.' Is the narrator, himself to be tortured and allowed to die slowly, perhaps taunting his spectators into revising their sentence on him through this ambiguous request spoken by a similar murderer? Or is he suggesting his inevitable power as a lingering example for the future, as one who through this double narration will remain forever in memory and in print? After all, pamphlets and ballads enumerating various atrocities committed by criminals circulated during such executions and popularized the figures thus condemned. The ambiguous nature of the condemned man, both powerful and powerless, both mesmerizing the crowds and used by them as part of their festivity, seems to have been an inherent element of execution rituals. A similar ambivalence becomes a central ingredient also in Charles's execution performed more than half a century later, an event treated in detail in Chapter 6.

Esdras continues to reason with Cutwolf, alternating between promises and pleas, but his murderer remains undeterred. Cutwolf relishes the moment to the fullest and seems to be offering Esdras what he asked for earlier, a lingering mental torture. He even presents himself as a divine avenger:

There is no heaven but revenge. . . Divine revenge,
of which (as of the joys above) there is no fullness
or satiety! Look how my feet are blistered with following
thee from place to place. I have riven my
throat with overstraining it to curse thee. I have

ground my teeth to powder with grating and grinding
them together for anger when any hath named
thee. My tongue with vain threats is bollen and waxen
too big for my mouth. My eyes have broken their
strings with staring and looking ghastly as I stood devising
how to frame or set my countenance when I
met thee. I have near spent my strength in imaginary
acting on stone walls what I determined to execute
on thee.

Cutwolf thus presents himself as the frightening figure of death himself, one who has rehearsed the drama of this encounter again and again. Esdras continues to plead for time, claiming that bodily torture would delay his death and provide him with an opportunity to save his soul. His assailant, however, determines to extend his power beyond the grave: 'My thoughts travel'd in quest of some notable new Italianism whose murderous platform might not only extend on his body, but his soul also.' In a spectacular *coup de theatre* he asks Esdras to renounce God and swear allegiance to the devil. The reader thus perceives a seemingly bewildering set of relationships: Esdras has requested that he be tortured rather than killed in order that he might have time to save his soul; Cutwolf, as if in response to this request, orders Esdras to give his soul to the devil and forswear all hope of salvation; and Esdras, in direct opposition to his earlier request and hoping to be saved from death, seizes the opportunity and gives Cutwolf more than he had hoped for by renouncing God and salvation completely. Does Cutwolf's request function as a test of the victim's authenticity in professing a desire to save his soul? At any rate Esdras's response actually takes Cutwolf by surprise:

Scarce had I propounded these articles unto him but
he was beginning his blasphemous abjurations. I
wonder the earth opened not and swallowed us both,
hearing the bold terms he blasted forth in contempt
of Christianity . . . My joints trembled and quaked
with attending them; my hair stood upright, and my
heart was turned wholly to fire . . . The vein in his
left hand that is derived from the heart, with no faint
blow he pierced, and with the full blood that flowed
from it writ a full obligation of his soul to the Devil.

Having thus forsworn salvation, Esdras expects to be spared. Thus when his assailant asks him to open his mouth and gape wide, he does so without demur. The entire event, described by Cutwolf as the enactment of a ceremony, parodies Catholic communion rites and Esdras seems to regard Cutwolf's request as another stage in this enactment. Cutwolf's description of what follows, Edsdras's murder, is significant in its choice of words: 'therewith made I no more ado, but shot him full into the throat with my pistol. No more spake he, *so did I shoot him that he might never speak after*, or repent him' (emphasis added). The revenge directs itself specifically against the spoken word for it alone, as the narrative strives to show throughout, retains the supreme power to create reality. To Cutwolf at least, not Esdras's actions but his sworn allegiance to the devil,

which he has no time to retract, damns him to hell. His murderer in a final paean to revenge allies himself clearly with God and heaven: 'Revenge is whatsoever we call law or justice. The farther we wade in revenge the nearer come we to the throne of the Almighty. To His scepter it is properly ascribed, His scepter he lends unto man when He lets one man scourge another.' This appropriation of godly powers incenses the crowd who apparently reserve the honour for themselves: 'Herewith, all the people (outrageously incensed) with one conjoined outcry yelled mainly: "Away with him, away with him! Executioner, torture him, tear him, or we will tear thee in pieces if thou spare him."' Their desire to torture Cutwolf parallels Cutwolf's earlier treatment of Esdras and both actions mimic the Almighty's ever-vigilant vengeance invoked throughout this narrative.

We arrive thus to the centrepiece of Jack's story, the torture of Cutwolf, a festive communal celebration which both fascinates and unsettles Jack; presumably the reader too would find the culinary metaphors used to describe the occasion both fascinating and horrifying. I quote the passage in full:

At the first chop with his wood-knife would he fish
for a man's heart and fetch it out as easily as a plum
from the bottom of a porridge pot. He would crack
necks as fast as a cook cracks eggs. A fiddler cannot
turn his pin so soon as he would turn a man off
the ladder. Bravely did he drum on this Cutwolf's
bones, not breaking them outright but, like a saddler
knocking in of tacks, jarring on them quaveringly
with his hammer a great while together. No joint
about him but with a hatchet he had for the bones he
disjointed half, and then with boiling lead soldered
up the wounds from bleeding. His tongue he pulled
out, lest he should blaspheme in his torment. Venomous
stinging worms he thrust into his ears to keep
his head ravingly occupied. With cankers scruzed to
pieces he rubbed his mouth and his gums. No limb
of his but was lingeringly splinter'd in shivers.

The analogies comparing the executioner to a fisherman, a cook, a fiddler, a drummer and a saddler present Jack's fascination with the scene, shared also by the crowd who have instigated the tortures. 'This truculent tragedy of Cutwolf and Esdras' produces its desired effect on Jack who, sobered by the scene, marries his courtesan and leaves 'the Sodom of Italy' to live an honest life thereafter in England.

Contrary to being a sharp contrast to England, the Italy of Jack's narrative provides an exaggerated version of events such as public executions witnessed around London. This 'truculent tragedy' might easily provide a narrative of staged public punishments in England, and the reaction of the crowds, though it disgusts Jack, differs hardly at all from similar reactions by English crowds to the deaths of personalities such as the Earl of Strafford and Archbishop Laud in the seventeenth century. Jack's disgust does,

nevertheless, underscore the stance of many literary figures as they both exploit and criticize London's fascination with the spectacle of death. The author's ambivalent stance combining horror and fascination may be treated as typical of many Elizabethan depictions of punishment whether in popular narratives of travel or on the public stage. These accounts of public punishment exploit the reader's fascination with the spectacle of death but, by evoking horror and revulsion, they mock his reliance on spectacles of torment for entertainment. As Jonathan Bate describes it, the 'structure of the [Nashe's] story leaves the reader with more than a sneaking sympathy for what has been said on the scaffold, especially as the act of execution has a clinical cruelty which makes it in effect no different from the act for which it is a punishment. The narrative has made us discover the Italian within all of us.'

A series of questions may be raised about these documents, especially Nashe's detailed narrative. Is Cutwolf the devil's emissary who deceives Esdras into damning himself or a divine agent avenging an unjust murder? Is the executioner a victim of the people's desire to see some sport or an agent of vengeance? Does the text negate or authorize the power of the word? Do the events constitute 'a truculent tragedy' as Jack claims or do they enact a festive communal ritual? Some of these ambiguities and paradoxes, especially the ambivalent positions of the victim, the crowd and the executioner, so clearly dramatized in Nashe's fictional account, were inherent to the ritual of execution itself and occurred also at actual executions in the Elizabethan and Stuart periods.

Nashe's account also provides a prose analogy to numerous tragedies of revenge enacted on the Elizabethan and early Stuart stage; it incorporates many ingredients that have been identified with this dramatic genre: obsessive revenge pursued by a melancholy revenger who physically and mentally degenerates through his pursuit of the victim, inordinate delay characteristic of this pursuit, the ambivalent tension between revenge and justice that remains unresolved, the viciously circular nature of revenge that destroys many in its course, and the public death of the revenger himself often performed in the midst of communal celebration and festivity. Nashe's theatrical account incorporates all the major ingredients of the Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

This alliance between theatre and public punishment evident in Carleton's and Nashe's narratives and throughout the early modern period could be extended even farther: the masked and hooded dramatist, both present and absent from his production, invites comparison with the hangman. Like the hangman, the dramatist created spectacles and functioned as an entertainer whose efficiency was subject to the strictest scrutiny and criticism. Even his precarious position, as servant both to the Crown which sanctioned his activity and the populace who viewed his spectacle, compares with the hangman's. The hangman functioned as the most important instrument of the law; dramatists also repeatedly envisaged themselves as holding an analogous position. Thomas Heywood, for example, in *The Apology for Actors* (1612) insists on the moral efficacy of stage plays which could incite confessions from villains by the mere spectacle of horror and villainy. He cites three instances where spectators, moved by the dramatic events they witnessed, confessed to previous crimes and were thus brought to justice. One of his examples, a woman who at the end of a performance confessed to having poisoned her

husband seven years earlier, also provides a remarkable instance of what Hamlet seems to expect from Claudius (and less directly from Gertrude) after the staging of *The Murder of Gonzago* when he tells us

I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ.

The power of theatre to provoke transformation had become commonplace in the period and receives ironic treatment in a later tragedy, *The Roman Actor*, where Caesar tries to cure avarice in Philargus by staging a play. The comic resolution of the staged play in which a miser repents of his earlier folly finds little satisfaction in Philargus who would prefer a tragedy: 'had he died / As I resolue to doe, not to be alter'd, / It had gone off twanging.' Philargus thus resolves to guard himself against the possibility of transformation, only to contend with the frustration of Caesar who demands that he 'make good vse of what was now presented? / And imitate in thy suddaine change of life, / The miserable rich man, that expres'd / What thou art to the life?; when thwarted in this desire to see Philargus transformed by theatre, Caesar orders that he be hanged instead. Renaissance familiarity with the concept that theatre could provoke transformation may be gauged by the recurrence of this idea on the stage, whether it is invoked seriously as in *Hamlet* or treated ironically as in *The Roman Actor*.

Depictions of evil and tragedy on the stage, as Heywood argues, performed both punitive and psychological functions. And like tragedies in general, public executions and hangings served both as a negative example and a reminder that past villainies would not remain undiscovered or unpunished forever. The sentiment expressed by Samuel Johnson in the late eighteenth century, that there was no point in hanging a man if it was not going to be done in public, certainly prevailed in the earlier period and provided philosophical justification for the staging of both real and spectacle dismemberment, actual and theatrical tragedy, in early modern England. 'Cruelty,' Colin Burrow argues, 'is part of Shakespeare's world, and it generates a high proportion of the energy of his drama'; the attitude applies to Renaissance drama in general and perhaps even to the public execution of Charles I by Parliament in 1649, a theatrical spectacle which historically demarcates a boundary for this period.

I do not intend to collapse these modes of spectacle completely but to suggest that the close connection between these forms of popular public entertainment may be worth exploring in detail. The theatre and the scaffold provided occasions for communal festivities whose format and ends emerge as remarkably similar. More specifically, I would like to use the erection of the Triple Tree and the public execution of Charles I as events which frame a period remarkable for its vibrant, intense and highly competitive dramatic creativity. Both forms of festivity underwent radical scrutiny in later years, though the removal of hangings and executions from the public arena occurred only

considerably later. Despite their divergent histories in later years, theatre and the scaffold merged in January 1649 to provide an unique and unprecedented spectacle of public tragedy and apparent political liberation. I trace the influence of the scaffold on the development of theatre in the late sixteenth century and the contribution of theatre to the staged political drama of the mid-seventeenth century.

The close alliance between these popular entertainments emerges most vividly in plays of the late sixteenth century such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. But even plays such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, Jonson's *Sejanus* and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* which do not stage hangings and executions invoke the format of public punishments, frequently to undermine the state's efficacy in staging deaths as a deterrent to further crimes and sometimes to mock the audience's reliance on the value of death as entertainment. Kyd's tragedy, which simultaneously invokes the spectacle of death and threatens to destroy the frame that separates theatre from the scaffold, more than any other early play insists on the precarious distance that separates staged dramas of death from public punitive events such as hangings.

Traditional criticism regards Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* as important primarily for its historical position at the head of the revenge tradition. Its violence has frequently been attributed to Senecan models and its dramatic deaths, including the spectacular *coup de theatre* in the closing scene, analysed primarily for their influence on Shakespeare's dramaturgy. And yet, though the Senecan influence has been well documented, critics have only recently drawn attention to contemporary cultural practices such as public hangings at Tyburn to explain the play's particular fascination with the hanged man and the mutilated and dismembered corpse. No other play of the Renaissance stage dwells on the spectacle of hanging as Kyd's does and the Senecan influence will not in itself account for the spectacular on-stage hangings and nearhangings in the play.

During Elizabeth's reign 6160 victims were hanged at Tyburn and though this represents a somewhat smaller figure than those hanged during Henry VIII's reign, Elizabethans were certainly quite familiar with the spectacle of the hanged body and the disembowelled and quartered corpse. In Kyd's treatment of the body as spectacle, we witness most vividly the earliest coalescence of the theatrical and punitive modes in Elizabethan England. Kyd also heightens the ambivalence inherent in the public hanging as spectacle and deliberately weakens the frames that separated spectators from the spectacle.

Source: Molly Smith, "Theatre and Punishment: Spectacles of Death and Dying on the Stage," in *Breaking Boundaries: Politics and Play in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1998, pp. 17-40.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay excerpt, Hunter explores the roots of Elizabethan drama, arguing that "it was the perception of the individual voice as justified" that had the most impact on the fledgling movement.

A standard assumption of literary history is that a group of young men, born of "middle-class" parentage in the 1550s and 1560s and graduating from Oxford or Cambridge between 1575 (Lyly) and 1588 (Nashe) created between them the normal forms of Elizabethan Drama, casting behind them the primitive techniques and attitudes of preceding generations, designated "Tudor Drama," "Late Medieval Drama," or whatever other diminishing title distaste elects to supply. I call this assumption "standard" not because I seek to denigrate it (in the recurrent modern mode); there is much evidence that these young men perceived themselves, and were perceived by contemporaries, as constituting what would nowadays be called a radical movement and that the movement marked the beginning of something genuinely new. But the very obviousness of the general point leaves a number of supplementary questions unanswered because not asked. In particular I wish to ask the question *how* this group came to achieve their effect on drama. The question is a purely instrumental one that does not seek to go beyond the evidence generally available in the words they wrote. This leaves, of course, the further issue of the status we give to these words. If we are to understand what the "University Wits" say as a simple description of the facts of the case, then we must suppose that it was expertise in classical culture that led to the creation of the new drama. But this connection seems to be part of the rhetoric of their social situation rather than expressive of any vital link that joins university culture to popular drama. I shall argue that the link can be seen more clearly in terms of the central issue of Elizabethan intellectual life□the theological debate about the relation of individual conscience to the established hierarchies of the world. I shall argue that it was the perception of the individual voice as justified (in all senses of that word), even when socially isolated, that released the more obvious formal and literary powers we easily recognize. That the University Wits despised the popular theater they found when they came to London can hardly be disputed. The university milieu which had given them their claim to importance had anchored their sense of identity in the Humanist learning they had acquired there, their fluent command of a battery of Greco-Roman names, historical and fictional stories, self-conscious logical and rhetorical devices, tags and quotations, which provided the lingua franca of Humanist-educated Europe. In social terms these were, of course, means of defining an elite status, and they seem at first to offer only resistance to a demeaning function in popular entertainment, where (as Shakespeare was to point out) "nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand." Robert Greene more than once tells us how he suffered a sad decline into playwriting; and even though his narrative is more interesting as myth than as history it is worth pausing on. In *Francesco's Fortunes* (1590) we hear that Francesco (the Greene alternate) "fell in amongst a company of players, who persuaded him to try his wit in writing of comedies, tragedies, or pastorals, and if he could perform anything worthy of the stage, then they would largely reward him for his pains." And so

Francesco "writ a comedy which so generally pleased all the audience that happy were those actors in short time that could get any of his works, he grew so exquisite in that faculty." In Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) the story has become even more slanted. Roberto (the same hero, with another name) has come to an impasse in the Bohemian life he had thought to lead. He has been out-smarted and made penniless by the prostitute he planned to control. He is thrust out of doors, and sitting against a hedge he vents his wrath in English and Latin verses. On the other side of the hedge there happens to be a player, who now approaches Roberto:

Gentleman, quoth he (for so you seem), I have by
chance heard you discourse some part of your grief
. . . if you vouchsafe such simple comfort as my ability
will yield, assure yourself that I will endeavour
to do the best that either may procure your profit or
bring you pleasure; the rather for that I suppose you
are a scholar, and pity it is men of learning should
live in lack.

Roberto, wondering to hear such good words . . . uttered
his present grief, beseeching his advice how he
might be employed. Why easily, quoth he, and
greatly to your benefit; for men of my profession get
by scholars their whole living. What is your profession,
said Roberto. Truly sir, said he, I am a player.
A player, quoth Roberto, I took you rather for a gentleman
of great living, for if by outward habit men
should be censured, I tell you you would be taken for
a substantial man. So am I where I dwell (quoth the
player) reputed able at my proper cost to build a
windmill.

The player goes on to indicate that he has greatly prospered by penning and playing folktales and moralities. "But now my almanac is out of date." He now needs a graduate, like Roberto, to catch the more sophisticated tastes of the present "in making plays . . . for which you shall be well payed if you will take the pains."

Roberto, perceiving no remedy, thought best to respect
of his present necessity to try his wit and went
with him willingly; who lodged him at the town's
end [in a brothel]. . . . Roberto, now famoused for an
arch-playmaking poet, his purse like the sea sometime
swelled, anon like the same sea fell to a low
ebb; yet seldom he wanted, his labors were so well
esteemed.

His new profession earns him the muchneeded money, but money earned under these circumstances is seen to be incapable of securing moral stability. Roberto so despises those from whom he earns his money that he can only define his difference from them by cheating them: "It becomes me, saith he, to be contrary to the world, for commonly when vulgar men receive earnest they do perform; when I am paid anything aforehand I break my promise". His money is spent among criminals and debauchees to support a way of life which produces execution for some and repentance before death for Roberto. It is at this point that Greene can proceed to warn "those gentlemen his quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making plays" (Marlowe, Peele, [? Lodge/Nashe] and "two more that both have writ against these buckram gentlemen") to "never more acquaint them [the players] with your admired inventions".

The story as thus told is a powerful one. But as far as the history of Elizabethan drama is concerned, the details leave much to be desired. There is no evidence that Greene's dramatic talents had the electrifying effect he describes. And we should note that he tells much the same story about his prose romances of love. In *The Repentance of Robert Greene* (1592) we hear not only that the "penning of plays" turned him into a swearer and a blasphemer, but that

> These vanities [plays] and other trifling pamphlets I penned of love and vain fantasies were my chiefest stay of living, and for those my vain discourses I was beloved of the vainer sort of people who, being my continual companions, came still to my lodgings, and there would continue quaffing, carousing and surfeiting with me all the day long.

Greene is much clearer about the status he is losing than about the skills he is acquiring. He implies that all he has to do to succeed is to turn his university-trained cleverness toward the writing of popular literature and lo! he will grow "exquisite in that faculty." The extant popular plays of Greene, Peele, and Lodge, however, do not at all support this idea; they are quite unlike any model the university could have provided from the works of Seneca, Plautus, or Terence. In their multitudes of characters, their wide range across space and time, their carelessness of plot consistency, their interest in romantic love, their reluctance to stay inside the boundaries of genre, their tendency to heavy moralizing, such plays fit almost exactly the terms of neoclassical scorn with which Sir Philip Sidney had greeted the English plays of the early 1580s. *James IV The Edward I*, *Battle of Alcazar*, *Alphonsus of Aragon*, and *A Looking Glass for London and England* all fall easily under Sir Philip's rubric of "mongrel tragicomedy [with] some extreme show of doltishness" and are in fact much more like those warhorses of the popular stage, *Clyomon and Clamydes* or *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, than they are like anything in classical drama.

What, then, did the university contribute toward a new theatrical creation that was not provided by a professional knowledge of the stage? The evidence that contemporary comment provides is extraordinarily evasive. In the second part of the Cambridge play

The Return from Parnassus (1601-03) the graduates Philomusus and Studioso seek to follow along the Greene path and try to secure employment as actors and scriptwriters from the leading actors of Shakespeare's company, Burbage and Kemp. The brush-off they receive indicates some of the impediments that still lay, even in the next decade, in the path of those who sought to travel from a Humanist education to a career in the popular theater. Kemp tells the graduates: "Few of the university men plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid and that writer Metamorphosis and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter."

Kemp's entirely plausible expression of what we can recognize as the recurrent tension between the stage and the academy seems to be confirmed on the other side of the same coin by the rhetoric of self-definition that the Wits themselves indulge in. Nashe, for example, relies entirely on attainments in the classical languages to make his distinction between authentic and merely imitative playwrights. In his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589) entitled "To the gentlemen students of both universities" Nashe tries to draw an impassible line between authentically learned men and those hangers-on or pretenders that he refers to ironically as "deep read schoolmen or grammarians," students, that is, who have never passed from the grammar school to the university. These will, he assumes, display the superficialities of a classical education; but it will be easy to detect them as outsiders masquerading as insiders, for they are "at the mercy of their mother tongue, that feed on naught but the crumbs that fall from the translator's trencher." These are essentially lower-class persons whose incapacities betray them as existing only at the intellectual level of the "serving man" or of the dealer in "commodities" (that is, the merchant).

Nashe's attack on lower-class pretenders to learning becomes more specific in the famous following passage in which he deals with the kinds of plays that such grammar-school authors are capable of writing. Again, the central issue is ignorance of Latin: such men can "scarcely Latinize their neck-verse if they should have need"; they are the "famished followers" of "English Seneca" (often thought to refer to Thomas Newton's 1581 collection of Seneca's plays), because they are incapable of reading the original; and yet they "busy themselves with the endeavors of art"□where "art" has the sense of specialized knowledge that is found in such phrases as "Master of Arts." It looks, from much of the reference in this passage, as if Thomas Kyd is the playwright most particularly aimed at. And indeed if *The Spanish Tragedy* came out in 1588 (as is often supposed) then Kyd must have provided in 1588/89 an obvious example of a nonuniversity playwright with a great theatrical success on his hands. The obvious objection to such identification is that *The Spanish Tragedy* has few if any of the characteristics specified; indeed it is unusually full of Latin verse, some of it, apparently, of Kyd's own composition, and if the play within the play was actually performed in "sundry languages" then it also contained considerable dialogue in French, Italian, and Greek as well. Such evidence, however, tells us little about the intention that prompted Nashe's words. "Grub Street hacks," "outsiders" are clearly necessary to the selfdefinition of any group seeking to lay claim to the "inside" position, and Nashe is no more likely to have been in search of accuracy and justice, when he attached names to labels, than Pope was in *The Dunciad*. If a Kyd had not existed, Nashe would have had to invent him (as, in the passage in question he very nearly did).

If Thomas Kyd was in fact merely a famished follower of authentic graduate playwrights, then it is a great gap in nature that we do not know who these men were or what they wrote; there are not even plausible candidates. It seems more rational to suppose that there were no such model playwrights; and this probability is reinforced by the parallel case of Shakespeare. Greene's famous 1592 attack on Shakespeare as yet another despicable outsider, jumped-up actor, and jack-of-alltrades ("Johannes fac totum"), pranking himself in the "feathers" he has stolen from the graduates, has no more detail of evidence to support it than appears in the case of *The Spanish Tragedy. Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III* are indeed plays that draw on a considerable, even if only grammar-school, acquaintance with the classics. If this derived from new work in drama by the University Wits, then once again one must note that the lines of filiation have disappeared. But it is more probable that the whole issue of "authentic" and "imitative" dramaturgy is only the fantasy of a socially insecure group of graduates, anxious to destabilize the opposition.

To deny the accuracy of such polemical rhetoric is not, however, to deny altogether the creative importance of this generation of University Wits in the history of Elizabethan drama, though it is certainly to deny their claim to tell the whole story in their own terms. One fact remains, which must not be underplayed or denied: the success of Marlowe's First Part of *Tamburlaine* (usually dated 1587) completely fulfilled the self-confidence of the group of graduates to which he belonged. Here at last we have a work of popular entertainment which openly claims classic status, whose presence visibly altered the landscape in which it appeared and charged its environment with new meanings. Of course, given the general lack of information, it is impossible to say that there were no popular plays like *Tamburlaine* written before *Tamburlaine;* but the self-consciousness of innovation which pervades its language, the comments of contemporaries, the immediate appearance of imitations, all combine to tell us that this was seen as an originating event, even if it was so only because it was so seen. The originality of *Tamburlaine* was not noted primarily, however, in terms of dramaturgy. His contemporaries spoke of Marlowe as above all a poet, and the Prologue to *Tamburlaine* shows that Marlowe agreed with them. But the point being made is not only about versification, narrowly conceived; it is rather a point about the spirit that speaks through a poetry which is (as Michael Drayton was later to remark) "all air and fire" or (to quote Marlowe himself) "Like his desire, lift upward and divine." And this is, it will be noticed, a return to dramaturgy by the back door. For the theatrical function of a poetry as distinctive and powerful as that of *Tamburlaine* is to require of the auditor that he follow the action inside a particular given focus. In crude terms one can say that in *Tamburlaine* Marlowe presented the history of the outsider, the man of talents rather than of background, not in the traditional terms of social marginality but locked into a system of values where energy and desire are everything and need the great outside only to secure the greatest resonance "like the fa-burden of Bow bell," as Greene remarked. Set against the hero's unfettered expression of individual will, the "insiders" of *Tamburlaine* are seen as passive, conformist, hesitant, as if only waiting to be taken over or destroyed by the individual whose force comes from believing in himself more than in anything outside.

It is time to ask the question how far the Marlovian vision and the Marlovian verse that conveys it are the product of a particular kind of education or representative of what we understand to have been the aspirations of the group of University Wits. Certainly there is little, if anything, in it that can be charged against imitation of classical authors read at university. But it is a mistake (as I have suggested above) to think that the focus of university education in this period was literary. The excitement of intellectual life in the sixteenth century came less from classical poetry than from the controversies of theology and from the techniques by which these could be conducted (see Kearney). From today's point of view the whole interest of such activities looks merely technical; but if we are to understand the excitement roused in the spirit of the times we can hardly afford to stop there. Clearly in such matters as the acceptance or rejection of sacraments, the belief or disbelief in the efficacy of works, the view taken on the mediation of the saints, the status of Purgatory, the function of vestments, we are dealing with the interlocking parts of total systems, where one false move can betray a whole understanding of the life of man, not only in eternity but in the daily life of earth as well. If the excitement of *Tamburlaine* can be seen to grow out of the intellectual energies generated in such disputes, then it becomes possible to argue that the play reflects its graduate generation at a deeper level than those we have so far considered.

Writing in 1588, Robert Greene spoke of the self-confident energy of Marlowe's verse as the expression of atheism: "daring God out of his heaven with that atheist Tamburlaine". Perhaps it is improper to make too much of the vocabulary used here. The context of the comment (Greene's jealousy of Marlowe's success) is not one likely to guarantee accuracy in the critical remark made. And "atheist" was in this period only a term of general abuse, with little necessary connection to specifc doctrine. On the other hand Marlowe was soon to acquire, and perhaps already had acquired, a considerable reputation as a freethinker. The idea that the power of *Tamburlaine* is directly connected to "atheism" may indeed point us toward more complex issues than are usually attached to Greene's scandals, for there are a number of interesting connections, which are largely obscured by the archaic vocabulary.

The more modern image of Marlowe is often presented in terms of that largely fictional genus "the Renaissance man"□Burckhardt's creatively amoral egotist, whether seen as artist (Aretino, Michelangelo, Cellini) or as prince (Cesare Borgia, Julius II, Bernabo Visconti). But "Renaissance individualism," at least as it reached England, had rather different sources. And these take us back to the question of atheism once again. The key figures in such general growth of individualism as one can observe in England are neither artists nor the sacred monsters of royalty (egotism in the powerful is a characteristic so constant that it is hard to imagine it as having a history); they are rather the purveyors of reformed theology, Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and their native disseminators. The "Renaissance man" type of egotist who defines his individuality *against* orthodoxy is necessarily limited in the range of imitation he can inspire, for it is integral to his stance that he remain exceptional. Luther, however, and the other reformers, embodied individualism not against but inside orthodoxy, and indeed declared the sense of self to be the necessary basis of "true" orthodoxy. In this form the sense of the unique centrality of individual consciousness could penetrate throughout the culture of Europe to a degree not possible for the tyrants and exploiters of an older

mode. And this was, as I say, the form in which "the Renaissance" pervaded England, so that, in England at any rate, the New Learning or Humanism inevitably explored classical forms and attitudes inside a world filled with the noise of challenge to intellectual conformity. In his search for justification by faith alone the individual could no longer hope to discover his identity by finding his place in any external system, for faith can only be felt and known inwardly. The doctrine of the slavery of the will (the *servum arbitrium*) required, paradoxically, that the individual remain in continued personal contact with the sources of God's Grace if he was to hope for eventual escape from the chains of Satan's power. The Reformed individual was thus continually caught up as protagonist in the largest and most terrifying drama that can be imagined, required to struggle and ask and decide and achieve, in a Satanic world, and without any external mediation. It would be surprising if this raw demand for extraordinary human capacity, marking the eventual irrelevance of external restraint, could be kept out of other areas of life, most significantly those where individual destiny must mean something more like secular fulfillment than loss of self in the Grace of God. Of course, even the states which endorsed the Reformation struggled continuously against its antinomian tendencies, especially as these manifested themselves in political contexts. In England the hundred years or so between the 1530s and the 1640s saw a continuous effort to maintain system, order, consensus, in loyalty to the nation, the sovereign, the church, the tradition (as reinterpreted). Not all the weapons available to the state were equally effective, however. Nationalist fervor, suspicion of and contempt for foreigners, was a powerful means of securing consensus against the Pope, the Spaniards, and the Jesuits, but these positions were most powerfully argued by radical believers in the unmediated presence of Christ in the individual life. The corrosive solution that dissolved the foreign threat also ate into the English hierarchy.

The political argument against individualism was weakened on yet another front. The language of intellectual argument for loyalty inherited, inevitably, the language of Erasmian Humanism, of persuasion to civil order by the civilized consent of an educated elite (such as is addressed in the ironic mode of More's *Utopia*, for example) of finely disputable interpretations of uncertain texts (as in Erasmus's New Testament), of specialized and technical knowledge allowed to develop its own pragmatic justification ("arts" of war, health, navigation, algebra were all published in English in the fifties and sixties). The English "Renaissance" book with probably the widest influence, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* ("Foxe's Book of Martyrs") of 1563, was not only an epic of nationalism but also an epic of humble individualism (of widows, cooks, fishermen, brewers, and bricklayers, as well as scholars and clergymen) divinely justified in their rejection of the institutions of social control. The conflict depicted is not in the high romantic mode of *The Golden Legend*, set in exotic regions and the remote past. Foxe presents his readers with the recent and the local, describing lives rooted in the commonplaces of the ordinary and inculcating truth more by the evidence of shared experience than by any doctrinal argument. In all these cases, I would argue, a sense of the potential power of the unmediated individual, though disseminated primarily in religious terms, is bound to have created, in imagination at least, an idea that every self is capable of fulfillment and definition by resistance to conformity or convention. This is certainly the note in Elizabethan drama that we hear sounded clearly, for the first time, in *Tamburlaine*. The energetic individualism that appears in *Tamburlaine* has little or

nothing to do with the "Renaissance individualism" of the late Quattrocento princes. Tamburlaine starts from nowhere and his dizzying rise to power is entirely self-generated out of assumptions that have nothing to support them in the world outside. He is totally free of the complacency of power, turning his eyes, as soon as he has achieved any one thing, to further horizons where he can test himself still further. The attitude of mind that is depicted here seems to be one that it is not inappropriate to consider as an atheistic version of the Lutheran soul in its search for justification through faith□atheistic because in this case the believer has simply excluded God from the equation and concentrated his faith on himself, at once justifier and justified.

Source: G. K. Hunter, "The Beginnings of Elizabethan Drama: Revolution and Continuity," in *Renaissance Drama: Renaissance Drama and Cultural Change*, edited by Mary Beth Rose, Northwestern University Press, 1986, pp. 29-52.

Adaptations

Hamlet was adapted to film by Laurence Olivier in 1948. Many still consider this the best version of the play ever recorded. Olivier gives a stunning performance in the title role. The film was released by Universal-International and is now available on home video.

The British Broadcasting Company has produced several excellent audio book versions of Shakespearean plays. Their version of *Hamlet* is performed by Kenneth Branagh and features Derek Jacobi. It is published by Bantam Doubleday Dell. This audio book contains the fulllength, unabridged version of the play.

Christopher Marlowe's epic work *Tamburlaine the Great* has been recorded on audio cassette by The Center for Cassette Studies.

The Marlowe Society maintains a website on Christopher Marlowe at http://www.marlowesociety. org with comprehensive information on Marlowe's life, a newsletter, and links to other interesting information.

Topics for Further Study

Research the various aspects of Elizabethan costume. If you were a nobleman or noblewoman of the time, how would your costume be different than those of the lower classes? What are some of the elements of your dress that would indicate your social status?

What do you think a typical day was like for members of an Elizabethan acting troupe? What were some of the difficulties they might encounter in trying to prepare for a performance?

Elizabethan Drama gives some clues into the remedies, medicines and herbs used to cure ailments during that time period. What were some of these treatments? Do we still use any of them today?

Compare and Contrast

1600s: Women are not allowed to perform in plays, and all the female roles are played by boys or men.

Today: Some of the most notable and highly respected performers are women.

1600s: Names do not have a standard spelling. Shakespeare's name appears in several variations, including: Shakespeare, Shaksper, and Shakespere.

Today: Names are spelled consistently, and, for legal purposes, each person's signature is consistent as well.

1600s: Most plays are performed outdoors during the day to take advantage of the natural light. Plays performed indoors must be lit by candlelight.

Today: Most plays are performed indoors in the evening. They are illuminated by electric lighting.

1600s: One of the most common surgical procedures is bloodletting, done through an incision in a vein or the application of leeches.

Today: Thousands of sophisticated surgical techniques are available that have been proven safe and effective.

1600s: There are no sewers or drains, except for the gutter which runs down the middle of the street. Garbage is dumped into the gutters and accumulates there until the rain washes it away.

Today: There are sophisticated sanitation systems that maintain the cleanliness of cities and help to prevent the spread of disease.

What Do I Read Next?

The bubonic plague, or "Black Death," was one of the worst natural disasters in history. Between 1347 and 1352, the plague swept through Europe causing widespread hysteria and death. One third of the population of Europe died from the outbreak. It affected many aspects of daily life and was also reflected in the art and literature of the time. Philip Ziegler's *The Black Death* (1969) provides an in-depth look at this horrific catastrophe.

The Globe Theatre has been rebuilt in Bankside, London, just a few yards from the site where the original playhouse once stood. Theatrical entrepreneur Sam Wanamaker did extensive research in order to be as authentic as possible to the original. The story of the theatre's reconstruction and the research that went into this ambitious project makes for fascinating reading and also provides a great deal of information about the Elizabethan theatre in general. One book on the subject is *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt* (1997), edited by J. R. Mulryne, Margaret Shewring, Andrew Gurr, and Ronnie Mulryne.

Will Kempe was one of the principal actors of Shakespeare's company. He was famous for his comic roles, and Shakespeare wrote many of the clown characters in his early plays specifically for Kempe. He originated the roles of Bottom and Falstaff. The other members of Shakespeare's company were interesting characters in their own right. There have also been many intriguing Shakespearean actors down through the ages, and their lives make for fascinating reading. Bernard D. N. Grebanier's *Then Came Each Actor: Shakespearean Actors, Great and Otherwise, Including Players and Princes, Rogues, Vagabonds, and Actors Motley, from Will Kempe to Olivier and Gielgud and After* (1975) provides a look at what went on behind the scenes during Shakespeare's time and also contains some insightful information about Shakespearean actors that were to follow.

In the latter part of the sixteenth century, Spain was the major international power. Spain's leader, King Phillip II, was very disturbed that Elizabeth had converted England to Protestantism, and he pledged to conquer the heretics in England and convert them to the Church of Rome. To accomplish this aim, he sent his "Invincible Armada" of 125 ships sailing toward the English Channel in May of 1588. His fleet was met by English ships and soundly defeated. John Tincey's *The Spanish Armada* (2000) is a thoroughly researched look at this fascinating battle.

Further Study

Graham, Rob, *Shakespeare: A Crash Course*, Watson-Guptill, 2000.

This concise volume is filled with fun facts and information about Shakespeare and his plays. It is filled with color photographs and plates. The information is all presented in small snippets, making the book informative and very easy to read.

Gurr, Andrew, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 2d ed., Cambridge University Press, 1996.

This is a thoroughly researched, in-depth look at the lives of the Elizabethan people who attended the playhouses. It contains a list of documented playgoers and a list of references to playgoing that have been found in historical sources.

Sales, Roger, *Christopher Marlowe*, St. Martin's Press, 1991.

This biography presents a fascinating look at Marlowe's brief life. In addition, it contains critical essays on Marlowe's major works and an extensive bibliography.

Weir, Alison, *The Life of Elizabeth I*, Ballantine, 1998.

This is a clearly written, thoroughly researched biography of England's greatest queen. Noted historian Alison Weir does an excellent job of bringing the time period to life for the reader. The book contains numerous plates and full genealogical tables of the royal family.

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Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literary Movements for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LMfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LMfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literary Movements for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Literary Movements for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535