WOMEN IN

ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN TRAGEDY:

A Study of the
Principal Conventions and Influences
Governing the Treatment of Women Characters in English Tragedy.

1579 - 1625

WOMEN IN ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN TRAGEDY.

C O N T E N T S.

Introduction.

Although Elizabethan and Jacobean drama as a whole has provoked more study from critics than almost any other period of literature, we find that characterisation apart from Shakespeare's has received comparatively little attention. The works of the other great dramatists of the period are, naturally, estimated at their proper value, but it would appear that the inter-relation of the habits and tendencies of one dramatist with those of another has not, in view of the total amount of Elizabethan criticism, received its just amount of interest. The tendency has always been to regard Elizabethan and Jacobean drama as a collection of plays with Shakespeare's at the head. The result is that the tragedy of the period 1579 to 1625 is not, as a rule, looked upon as a homogeneous mass of work dictated by the same dramatic formulae governing construction of plot, handling of material and methods of characterisation. This is particularly true of the last, and especially of the characterisation of women. We have been content to accept the great women of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy without seeing what relation they bear one to the other, what means the dramatist has used to make his women effective, or whether he has even troubled to distinguish them very far as an order of beings distinct from men and therefore likely to provide him with fresh dramatic opportunities, with a new range of images and tones.

The dominating subject in Elizabethan dramatic criticism has been, and still is, in spite of the more critical trend of modern thought, Shakespeare. Recent study on the lines taken by Professors Stoll and Schücking

has led to a change in the views held on Shakespearian tragedy and characterisation. "Others abide our question; thou art free," is no longer representative of criticism. Yet, although the position from which Shakespeare is viewed has changed, and we have descended from the altitudes of the Higher Criticism of the last century, he himself and his works have not ceased to fascinate.[1] The difference lies in the attempt now made to regard him as an "Elizabethan" and not merely as Shakespeare. Accordingly, no separate section has been devoted in this study to his women, though whenever possible or relevant they have been introduced for purposes of comparison and contrast, and discussed in some detail should the plays in which they occur fall naturally into the grouping adopted. A section devoted exclusively to Shakespeare's women would, if it were to add to the already considerable literature on the subject, endanger the proportion and balance of the whole, and would also run the risk of lapsing into a critical method the unsoundness of which was proved in the last century - that of detaching Shakespeare from his world and his stage, and exalting him at the expense of his fellow writers. He is a product of his age, and his women ought as far as possible to stand side by side with those of his contemporaries, Greene, Webster, Middleton, and Beaumont and Fletcher.

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1. The publication within a short time of each other of Mr. J.M. Robertson's slender volume: "The Genuine in Shakespeare" and Sir E.K. Chambers': "William Shakespeare" in two volumes is perhaps an allegory of modern criticism.

1. Early Senecan Imitations.

The most important influence in determining the style and effects to be sought by the first Elizabethan tragic dramatists[1] was Seneca's "chamber-drama." During the late 'eighties took place the intermingling of Senecan motives and certain more popular elements (particularly the new and absorbing theme of romantic love)[2] which resulted in the evolution of the Revenge Tragedy - the most typical product of "English Seneca." The plays within this group preserve most clearly the Senecan conventions which were retained in a modified form as the influence of Latin tragedy "becomes more and more diffused and elusive, as, stream-like, it loses itself with other tributaries in the great living ocean of Elizabethan drama." 3.

Seneca's own tragedies might at first sight raise the hopes of one engaged in a study of women in Elizabethan drama, for the parts they afford to women are always of considerable importance. Women are not inferior to men, but a different order of beings who suffer in their own way. This capacity, however, limited, for distinguishing between men and women in more than name Seneca inherited from Euripides, who had invested the heroines of the remote, often barbarous Greek legends with human griefs and passions. Seneca used the same classical legends for his dramatic purposes - the stories of Medea, Phaedra, Clytaemnestra, Andromache, Hecuba and

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1. Sackville and Norton in "Gorboduc" (1561): and, within our period, Wilmot in "Tancred and Gismunda" (a version produced in 1591 of the Inns of Court play "Gismond of Salerne," 1567-8): and Hughes in "The Misfortunes of Arthur," (1588).
2. And mediaeval disregard for the unities, together with an indefinite number of characters.
3. F.L. Lucas: "Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy."

the Trojan women, in all of which the women dominate the action. With these examples of womanhood exalted to the chief position, we might expect to find the earlier Elizabethans likewise not only making extensive use of female characters but also portraying women of a genuinely tragic stature. Certain types of womanhood, it is true, are taken over by the imitators of Seneca and are passed on to the popular stage, but at first they show but little grasp of the dramatic possibilities of the woman's part.

Of these the type originating in Medea is most clearly distinguishable. Seneca's Medeá is an example of the tragedy queen, declaiming in floods of rhetoric till the unending fortissimo becomes monotonous. Seneca searches in his rhetorical stock-in-trade for the most impressive figures with which to emphasise her strength and inflexibility of purpose:

> "Quae ferarum immanitas
> quae Scylla, quae Charybdis Ausonium mare
> Siculumque sorbens quaeve anhelantem premens
> Titana tantis Aetna fervebit minis?
> non rapidus amnis, non procellosum mare
> Pontusve Coro saevus aut vis ignium
> adiuta flatu possit imitari impetum
> irasque nostras; sternam et evertam omnia." 1.

The part of Medea, however, affords scope for some subtlety of development and for the blending of light and shade, as Euripides' treatment had shown. His Medea ranges through varying shades of emotion. She is a woman torn by conflicting passions, sometimes fierce, sometimes gentle, but never monotonous or strident. Seneca's Medea is little

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1. Seneca: Loeb Classical Library: "Medea," ll. 409-415.

more than a rhetorical abstraction.[1] The same criticism applies to two women in "The Troades," who exert some influence upon certain women in Elizabethan tragedy. These are Hecuba, the old woman left destitute by Fate, and Andromache, type of the distressed young wife and mother.[2]

Though Seneca was prepared to give women a prominent position in his dramas, yet he showed no subtlety in the treatment of their lives and actions, and no understanding of the workings of a woman's mind. This is not the result of traditional, outworn plots, nor is it due to following models barren of suggestion. Euripides' Medea is alive. Her part shows the heroic tradition blended with fresh poetic insight. She is a true woman, prey to every storm of emotion, yet able to rise above them to heights of resolution which the dramatist's art renders credible. The Medea of Euripides is a psychological study, whereas Seneca's is an incredible monster. Seneca's passion for rhetoric, due to the decay of tragedy as an acted form, once again betrays him in his "Troades." Euripides understood that genuine grief finds utterance in a few broken words. His Andromache's speeches are disjointed, composed of short, broken sentences. Rhetoric is never sought for its own sake. The emotion of Euripides' women is sincere and heartfelt; it is respected by the poet, who, in deference to it, attunes the note of this tragedy of women to pity rather than terror.

Some reference to Seneca's Greek models appears to

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1. Seneca has occasional impressive touches of rhetoric, such as Jason's speech which concludes the play:
"Per alta vade spatia sublimi aethere
testare nullos esse, qua veheris, deos."

2. cf. Isabella in "The Spanish Tragedy:" Cornelia in "The White Devil," The Andromache type we see in Constance ("King John"), and Elizabeth ("Richard III.")

be in place in order to show that his women, so conventional and flashily impressive, have been made living realities by another dramatist. The difference in handling and interpretation rests mainly upon difference of time and race. Seneca wrote for Roman society in Nero's reign, when the Roman mind was blunted and brutalised. Euripides inherited a great and still living dramatic tradition, Seneca nothing.[1.] Euripides' plays were intended for performance before a critical audience numbering probably some twenty-five thousand, Seneca's for declamation by one man before a small circle. His listeners demanded a more direct and obvious stimulus, hence the accumulations of high-sounding words and the freely-described horrors. As Lastly, they were not acted by a complete cast, ~~so that~~ the spoken word could not be reinforced by variety of tone and gesture, and therefore ~~seemed to call~~ for a rhetorical rather than a dramatic emphasis.

The Renaissance in Italy, France, and England led to a re-discovery of Latin tragedy, and in the first two countries in particular to many imitations,[2.] which followed very strictly the rules of dramatic composition formulated by both Italian and French critics from Aristotle and Horace. In England, Seneca's "Tenne Tragedies" appeared in translation in 1581,[3.] but as early as 1523 Skelton had awarded an honourable place in

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1. Ennius, Pacuvius and Accius, his predecessors, created nothing distinctively Roman.

2. In Italy by Cinthio (1504-73) and Dolce (1508-68) in particular. In France by Jodelle(mid-sixteenth century) and Garnier (do.)

3. i.e. the collected edition. Individual plays had appeared long before.

his "Garlande of Laurell" to "Senek full soberly with his tragedies," and later writers and critics almost without exception place him as first and greatest of the ancient dramatic writers. Only Ascham, who had studied Greek under Sir John Cheke, questions his absolute superiority, writing in "The Scholemaster" (pr. 1570), "Sophocles and Euripides far ouermatch our Seneca in Latin,[1] namely in oikonomia et Decoro, although Senecaes elocution and verse be verie commendable for his tyme." In Court and University plays Senecan influence is clearly visible in form, choice of subject, and mechanical devices. The authors of these plays did not, however, absorb and reproduce the energy of Seneca's best tragedies as did the authors of the more romantic plays which appeared later. "Gorboduc" (1562), the earliest English tragedy in blank verse,[2] which has received commendation from Sidney and Pope, is tedious reading. The characters, men and women alike, are stiff, frigid and lifeless. Videna, the queen, has not even the vigorous ferocity of Seneca's heroines. Her sorrow for the death of Ferrex, and the overwhelming desire for vengeance which drives her to murder her younger son Porrex, cannot be adequately expressed within the limits of rigid, monotonously exact blank verse. Marcella, prince Porrex's mistress, has a slight, almost negligible part, important only in showing that even in a strictly classical Inns of Court play, the theme of romantic love could yet unobtrusively appear. But as "Gorboduc" is

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1. N.B., even here "our Seneca."

2. "Jocasta" (1566) was an adaptation by Gascoigne of Dolce's "Giocasta."

representative of a learned drama[1]. which finally was forced to yield pride of place to the popular play, it cannot be said that the women exerted any influence upon the subsequent development of feminine characterisation,

In spite of its lifelessness, "Gorboduc" is superior in literary merit to Hughes' "Misfortunes of Arthur" (1587), a close but inept imitation of Senecan models. Even when it appeared it was a survival, without the apology of literary merit for its redemption from oblivion. The author's Pegasus is unequal to the higher flights of Senecan rhetoric, and falls headlong from the empyrean. This is the best the poet can do for the last battle in the west between Arthur and Mordred:

> "The weapons hide the Heauens; a night composde
> Of warrelike Engines ouershades the field.
> From euery side these fatall signes are sent:
> And boystrous bangs with thumping thwacks fall thick." [2].

Guenevra, Arthur's queen and Mordred's mistress, is a slavish imitation, even verbally in her speeches, of Seneca's Clytaemnestra, and the sentiments which she utters are imitated from nearly all Seneca's guilty heroines. Mr. J.W. Cunliffe devotes an appendix of twenty-five large pages to the Senecan passages in the play and their Latin parallels.[3]. Hughes' fidelity to his model leads him to copy Clytaemnestra's passing remorse, which causes her when first she hears of Agamemnon's return to

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1. Sackville and Norton observe the decencies of the stage with a stricter care than Seneca. "The authors murder their characters with a restrained economy of horrors," as Mr. F.L. Lucas observes.

2. "Early English Classical Tragedies," ed. J.W. Cunliffe: "Misfortunes of Arthur," Act IV, Sc.2., ll. 112-115.

3. In his book "The Influence of Seneca upon Elizabethan Tragedy," Appendix II, pp. 130-155.

suggest to her lover that they should part. This episode is not adequately explained in Seneca's"Agamemnon," though just before AEgisthus' entry and Clytaemnestra's transient repentance her Nurse has been endeavouring to persuade her to break off her guilty relations. Hughes allows Guenevra to express her love for Mordred in language which contains no hint of vacillation:

> "My love, redoubled love, and constant faith
> Engaged unto Mordred works so deep
> That both my heart and marrow quite be burnt,
> And sinews dried with force of wontless flames.
> Desire to joy him still torments my mind:
> Fear of his want doth add a double grief." 1.

Her lady, Fronia, however, prevails upon her to return to the paths of virtue. Hughes' frantic search for effect, which allows Guenevra to express her love in such immoderate terms, renders the episode absurd, for it makes her recantation within so short a time incredible. Guenevra veers from one extreme to the other in two successive scenes. In Act I Sc.2 she searches heaven and earth for words strong enough to convey the full force of her dire intentions towards Arthur, and unshakeable love for Mordred. Quite unexpectedly, after a few pious platitudes from Fronia, she announces at the end of the scene that

> "Shame is not so quite exiled but that
> I can, and will respect your sage advise."

In Sc.3 her sister Angharat finds her repentant and determined to kill herself, an intention she finally abandons, and departs instead for the "cloister next hereby," only pausing long enough for a brief scene with Mordred in which

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1. "Misfortunes of Arthur," Act I, Sc.2., ll. 62-68.

she makes known to him her change of heart. It is an extreme example of thinking from scene to scene, for Hughes' main plot could have dispensed with Guenevra entirely. The two and a half scenes in which she has a part bear no relation to the rest of the play. Hughes' legend supplied him in Guenevra with a modified Clytaemnestra ready made, but though he threw her into his play (in deference perhaps to the principle: "What's a play without a woman in it?") he had very little idea what to do with her. He lets her rave and change her mind and then drop out of the action. This casual attitude shows how little the dramatic possibilities of the woman character were appreciated. Hughes' story, with the interrelations of the king, the queen, and Mordred, could be worked up to an interesting and truly dramatic climax; & . Guenevra's character, in particular, could be made an absorbing study by a sympathetic and skilful dramatist. Hughes, blindly imitating a kind of play into which his too abundant material could not be squeezed, and with no feeling for the mind and character of a woman, made nothing of his opportunity.

"The Misfortunes of Arthur" forms a link between the politic and frigid "Gorboduc" and "Tancred and Gismunda," one of the very few early tragedies on love alone.[1] The introduction of the love between Guenevra and Mordred, although not an indispensable part of the plot, connects it with those tragedies in which love is the subject,

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1. Indeed, with "Romeo and Juliet" (pr.1597), it is the only love-tragedy before the Jacobean period. In no other plays of the Elizabethan period - not even excepting "Anthony and Cleopatra" - does the tragic fate of two lovers form the entire plot.

partly or wholly. It is remarkable, in view of the large incidental part played by love in later Elizabethan tragedy and the exaltation of love upon the Jacobean stage to the chief place, that the materials for illustrating its initiation and transitional stages are so scanty. Apart from "Gismond of Salerne" (1568), which reappeared in blank verse and slightly altered in treatment as "Tancred and Gismunda" (1591), no plays remain to give any clues to the stages through which this most interesting of subjects passed.[1] The young authors of "Gismond" - they were gentlemen of the Inns of Court - showed decided initiative in looking for dramatic material to the Italian 'novelle,' which had begun to make their way in England in translation about 1560. When the various collections of Italian and French tales made by Whetstone, Pettie, Fenton, Riche etc., were laid under tribute for tragic plots, it is natural to find love as an essential part of the drama. There is a suggestion in Brooke's Preface to his "Romeus and Juliet" (1562) that this subject had been dramatically treated even earlier: "I saw the same argument lately set forth on a stage with more commendation than I can look for (being there much better set forth than I have or can do); yet the same matter penned as it is, may serve to the like good effect."

Whether this refers to a play performed in England or not, "Gismond of Salerne," both in its original and later form, remains the first example of a love-tragedy. It initiates a kind of drama in which a woman inevitably takes a part ~~and~~ which competes with, and may eclipse, that of any man in the play, and this, not by virtue of her posi-

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1. Mention should be made of Whetstone's "Promos and Cassandra" (1578), which, though written in dramatic form, was never acted. It reads more like a long narrative poem than a play, but is important in so far as it represents another departure from the classical influences governing early English drama.

tion as Queen or as a great figure in a saga of great events - as in the case of Medea and Clytaemnestra - but merely as the exponent of the force and interest of the love theme giving tragic intensity to private lives and fortunes. It marks an advance in the possibilities of tragic drama as a whole and of the woman's part in particular when we find an author writing as did Wilmot, reviser of "Gismond of Salerne:" [1]. "It is most certaine (right vertuous and worshipfull) that of all humane learning, Poetrie (how contemptible soever it is in these daies) is the most ancient, and in Poetrie, there is no argument of more antiquitie and elegancie than is the matter of Love; for it seemes to be as old as the world, and to beare date from the first time that man and woman was: therefore in this, as in the finest mettall, the freshest wits have in all ages shown their best workmanship, ---." Wilmot, however, writing in an age singularly distracted between varying conventions in the matter of love, immediately hedges a little, and experiences a quaint doubt whether a love-story can be regarded as a suitable offering for his patrons, both of them married and mothers. With the old "Gismond" rather than Boccaccio in his mind, he solves the difficulty by contrasting the "modestie and innocencie of that age" with "the ordinary amorous discourses of our daies." In spite of his reservations, he has unconsciously ranged himself upon the side of the popular drama already carrying all before it with "The Spanish Tragedy."

This preface, and the play itself, illustrate

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1. In his Preface "To the right worshipfull and vertuous Ladies, the L. Marie Peter and the Ladie Anne Graie:" "Tancred and Gismunda," Malone Society Reprints.

a hesitation natural in a transitional stage. The author admits the importance of love in human life as a motive for conduct and an inevitable part of the life of men and women. On the other hand, he was writing when the Puritan attacks upon poetry - the amorous above all - and the stage had been in progress for a dozen years. He wrote for a "learned" stage, that of the Inns of Court, so he would in all probability have been aware of academic and pedagogic objections to love as a subject for poetry or drama. For these reasons he doubtless felt obliged to justify his choice of the old love-tragedy of "Gismond of Salerne" to furbish up for a learned entertainment.

Behind the theme of love as taken up by Wilmot and his predecessors of the Inner Temple is a long tradition intimately connected with courtly and aristocratic life. The ideal of chivalric love, a mediaeval institution which, while leaving on the whole untouched the ordinary dealings of men with women, yet had a deep influence over the literary work of the Middle Ages, remained as a tradition appearing again and again in Elizabethan writings.[1] "Tancred and Gismunda" shows something of the influence of this ideal of courtly love. Guiscard's expression of his devotion in terms of service at once recalls the mediaeval "amour courtois:"

> "This entercourse of our affections,
> I her to serve, she thus to honour me,
> Bewraies the truth of our elections."[2]

This lofty ideal is strangely re-inforced with a prudery which nowadays at least we associate only with the bourgeoisie. The lovers never appear together upon the stage

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1. e.g. "The Faerie Queene:" sonnet sequences: romances of the "Arcadia" type, etc.

2. "Tancred and Gismunda," Malone Society Reprints, Act III, Sc.3., ll. 719-721.

apart from the dumb shows preceding each act. Their love is kept free, to a great extent, from any suggestion of grossness in thought or expression. Gismunda's and Guiscard's passion, so far as their own words are concerned, is so much idealised in the play as to bear but little relation to life.

This is a striking point in view of the other tradition behind the play, that of Boccaccio's novelle. The story of Tancred and Ghismonda is the subject of the first story of the fourth day of the Decameron. Boccaccio treats it with a frankness and understanding which make it, in one sense, ordinary. It is not commonplace, but ordinary in that rank and wealth are not insisted upon, although they lead to the catastrophe. Yet, although the passion of love transcends all limitations of birth and class distinction, there is a clear aristocratic strain running throughout the story. The restraint imposed by rank is the matter upon which the plot turns. Ghismonda's "misconduct" is doubly reprehensible because it defies all the standards of birth and breeding so clearly set up throughout the Decameron.[1] Both the earlier and later Elizabethan dramatic versions of the story show the playwrights tacitly accepting high birth as necessary for the chief characters of a tragedy. This leads them to forgo the universal human element dominant in Boccaccio's story. Guiscardo, the "giovane valletto" of the novella, becomes Guiscard the County Palurin, so that what had been the source of tragic interest in the Italian original is ir-

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1. Boccaccio makes Tancred's wrath against his daughter the result of aristocratic prejudice against Guiscardo, not of paternal jealousy.

revocably lost. The Elizabethans deprive Tancred of any justification for his behaviour, and the surreptitiousness of Gismunda's love loses its point.

Unmistakable Senecan influences appear in "Tancred and Gismunda" in addition to the mediaeval and Italian traditions. There are, of course, the more general signs of Senecan imitation in the management of the action, diction, super-natural beings, Chorus, etc., but the chief point which affects the women is the re-appearance of the Senecan confidante in the guise of Lucrece, Gismunda's aunt.[1] She passes between Gismunda and her father, the two opposing parties in the play, to plead for her as Phaedra's nurse pleaded with Hippolytus on behalf of her mistress. Lucrece stands, like the Nurse of Seneca's tragedy, for discretion and restraint, endeavouring to preserve that happy mean in passion which the younger woman is prepared to disregard. She is a more individual figure than Gismunda, though by no means a carefully-studied character. Her attitude towards her niece, and her advice both to her and to Tancred, impart a human touch to the moralising:

> "For well I wot, my neece was never wrought,
> Of steele, nor carued from the stonie rocks.
> Such stearne hardnes we ought not to expect
> In her ----------" [2].

Moral earnestness and a certain dignity in these early writers caused them to raise Lucrece above the level of Seneca's Nurses. In actual situation she most nearly corresponds to Phaedra's Nurse, but there is a great gulf between them. Lucrece is Gismunda's equal in birth, and

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1. The Nurse appears in three of Seneca's important plays, "Medea," "Hippolytus," and "Agamemnon."

2. "Tancred and Gismunda," Act II, Sc.2., ll. 396-399.

her superior in age, experience, and the deference which she commands, whereas Phaedra's Nurse is a servant, looking up to her mistress from an inferior position. The latter is willing to forward her mistress' passion for Hippolytus as best she can; Lucrece is no party to Gismunda's secret meetings with Guiscard. On the contrary, when she cannot compass it by straightforward means, she advises Gismunda to give up her desires for her father's sake:

> "My counsel is, you shall not sturre,
> Nor further wade in such a case as this:
> But since his will is grounded on your love,
> And that it lies in you, to saue or spill,
> His old fore-wasted age: you ought t'eschew
> The thing that greeues so much his crazed heart,
> And in the state you stand, content yourself." 1.

Lucrece's sentiments are in accord with the moral aims of the play, and display also a simple dignity that suits well with her rank and position.

In both versions of the story of Tancred and Gismunda, Cupid is introduced as the "deus ex machina" who sets the tragic action in motion. This inevitably lessens the human interest, for the love in consequence does not rest upon any human impulse, but upon the arbitrary self-assertion of a god:

> "This princely pallace, will I enter in,
> And there inflame, the faire Gismunda, so
> Inraging all her secret vaines within,
> Through firie love, that she shall feele much wo." 2.

Perhaps the authors devised this as a means for preserving to Gismunda some innocence. To show her upon the

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1. Act II, Sc.3., ll. 487-503.

2. Act I, Sc.1., ll. 72-75.

stage as entering of her own volition into a surreptitious union would be to take away from her "modestie and innocencie." To make it clear at the beginning that a supernatural power was responsible for the tragic complication[1]. was partially to exonerate the lovers. Tancred's responsibility for his deed of revenge is also somewhat lessened by the introduction of Megaera and the Furies in a dumb show and the first scene of Act IV. The old "Gismond of Salerne" is even more explicit; Proserpina is made to throw "a stinging snake" into Tancred's breast so that he shall murder his daughter.

This overlay of pseudo-classical convention makes it almost impossible to determine the attitude taken towards Gismunda by her creators. Wilmot's second Introduction to the Gentlemen Students of the Inner Temple makes his moral intention amply clear: "I am sure she (i.e. Gismunda) shalbe safe from the Tragedian Tyrants of our time, who are not ashamed to affirme that ther can no amarous poeme sauour of any sharpnes of wit, unlesse it be seasoned with scurrilous words ------- my purpose in this Tragedie, tendeth only to the exaltation of vertue and suppression of vice, with pleasure to profit and help al men, but to offend or hurt no man." To achieve this end it was necessary to bowdlerise the Italian story, as by no stretch of the imagination could Boccaccio be said to fulfil Wilmot's narrow moral aims. Hence the paraphernalia of gods and furies, and the strict decorum which

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1. See also Act III, Sc.1, in which Cupid again appears to relate the misadventures he has already caused, so that we are in no danger of forgetting that the lovers are compelled by a power beyond them.

kept the lovers apart save in the dumb shows.[1] The change in Guiscard's social station deprives Gismunda's defiance of her father and his rage of most of their effectiveness. The life which pulsates throughout Boccaccio's story of impetuous passion is replaced by Senecan and English moralising.

Yet Gismunda is not an altogether lifeless heroine. Even when Senecan tradition and Puritan decorum have done their worst we find Gismunda's naive innocence attractive. She is poles apart from Boccaccio's sophisticated widow, who knew "più che a donna per avventura non si richieda." The moral scruples which directed Wilmot's writing caused him also to curb the floods of Senecan eloquence. There is very little to bring into the foreground the physical aspects of love.[2] Guiscard's acceptance of love as service, already noted,[3] helps to strengthen the more exalted note. The play is the outcome of a period in which dramatic writers accepted simply and honestly the ethical responsibilities of literature. There is no evidence to support Mr. J.W. Cunliffe's description of Gismunda as "a terrible example of disordered passion."[4] The phrase is too strong to apply to one whose love runs so decorous a course. We have seen how the authors strove to keep the moral tone lofty, and succeeded at the expense of the heroine's vitality.

The language of "Tancred and Gismunda" to some extent reflects the conventions of "English" Seneca.

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1. Were it not for these, indeed, we should hardly be able to follow the progress of the plot.
2. cf. Boccaccio's story.
3. supra, p. 13.
4. Cambridge History, Vol.V: Early English Tragedy, Ch.4.

There are the usual lengthy references to classical myth and legend, such as the Chorus's recital of the names of faithful wives,[1] and Cupid's catalogue of the heroes over whom he has triumphed.[2] They are, however, used in a manner which distinguishes them from the practice of Seneca himself and that of Hughes, his most slavish imitator. The gentlemen of the Temple and Wilmot confine them to the speeches of the Chorus and the supernatural actors. They are not dragged as rhetorical embellishments into the speeches of the principal performers. This judicious restraint of the unbridled eloquence too often found in Seneca adds considerably to the effect of Gismunda's replies to her father and laments over Guiscard's heart. Her speeches are long, but they are not forced. The language is sometimes natural. The following speech, for instance, though it illustrates the prevalent "cleverness" with words, is composed and quiet, couched in the diction of every day:

> "Deare heart, too dearely hast thou bought my love:
> Extreamely rated at too high a price.
> Ah my sweet heart, sweet wast thou ón thy life,
> But in thy death thou provest passing sweet.
> A fitter hearce than this of beaten gold
> Could not be lotted to so good a heart." [3]

The simplicity of expression at moments of great emotional stress is one of the interesting features of this play, for it is something new in English drama. The speeches in Seneca's plays sound forced and strained, while Hughes' efforts at rhetorical heightening are farcical. Gismunda

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1. Act II, Sc.3.

2. Act I, Sc.1.

3. Act V, Sc.2, ll. 1609-1616. Gismunda has just received her lover's heart in a golden cup from Tancred.

and Guiscard both remain in possession of themselves throughout their trials. Tancred is the only character to lapse into Senecan bombast,[1] and he is a type directly in the Senecan tradition, so that it would have been almost impossible for the learned authors to refrain from making him speak according to type.[2] We also find in "Tancred and Gismunda" certain set lyrical passages - founded ultimately on classical precedent - which in the English dramas are specially allotted to the theme of love:[3]

> "Wert thou not mine, deare hearte, whil'st that my love
> Daunced and plaied upon thy golden strings?
> Art thou not mine, dear hart, now that my love
> Is fled to heaven, and got him golden wings?"[4]

This fashion of lyrical variations in connection with love-themes was artfully extended in "The Spanish Tragedy,"[5] and given a beauty that has haunted the ears of the world ever since in "Romeo and Juliet."

"Tancred and Gismunda," though not a play of outstanding merit, is yet interesting in so far as it represents a breaking away from the narrower Senecan tradition, although the outward and visible signs of that tradition still remain. In spite of the crudeness and immaturity of the play, and in spite of the sacrifice to the edifying aim of the writers of the most absorbing

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1. In Act IV Sc.2 in particular.
2. Compare Seneca's Thyestes and Atreus.
3. See "Locrine," (Malone Society Reprints). The only point of interest in this unsatisfactory play is the use of lyric passages both by and about the women. Locrine catalogues Estrild's beauties in the way beloved by the sonneteers: "Those roseall cheekes mixt with a snowy white
   That decent necke surpassing yvorie," etc.
   (Act IV, Sc.2.)
   Guendolin laments her desertion by Locrine in the worst Marlowe-cum-water style (Act V, Sc.3.)
   "Locrine hath forsaken Guendoline
   Behold the heauens do waile for Guendoline,
   The shining sunne doth blush for Guendoline,"
   etc., etc.
4. Act V, Sc.2, ll. 1625-1628.
5. See post, pp. 26 and 27.

parts of the original story, we yet succeed in retaining our interest in the climax of this emasculated tragedy. We can summon up a genuine interest in Gismunda's reception of her father's horrible gift. It does not matter that neither Wilmot nor the gentlemen of the Temple succeeded in presenting upon their stage

"The passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn."

What is of importance is that, within the restricting bonds imposed by semi-classical form and style handled by dramatists who had nothing of the divine fire, and did not hold with conviction that love was a matter of tragic scope, the passions and emotions of two lovers can yet by their own power escape from such restraints. This augurs well for the time when the subject is taken up by dramatists unhampered by the restrictions of a learned stage and society, and themselves sensitive to the reactions of men and women to the passion which Wilmot himself described as "old as the world and bearing date from the first time that man and woman was."

Too many plays of the opening decades of Elizabeth's reign have vanished for us to say of any one that it is the first of its species. Nevertheless Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" (1585-88),[1.] perhaps the most popular of all Elizabethan tragedies, shows clearly and on a larger scale than any of its contemporaries still

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1. Mr. F.S. Boas, in the Introduction to his edition of Kyd's works (pp.XXVI-XXXI), debates the question of the probable year of its first appearance. He narrows it down to some time between 1585 and 1588. A.W. Ward and Prof. Schelling both assign it to 1588 with a query.

extant the fusion of national and classical elements. Among the plays extant it represents the culmination of the Senecan drama and the starting-point of a new tragic species. Senecan influence as it appears in the general conduct of the play, machinery, devices for dramatic effect, and choice of theme, has been so often discussed as to render any further reference here unnecessary. In nothing is its novelty so apparent as in the use of the woman's part.

Belimperia - her name alone is a proof of Kyd's flair for the theatre, for it satisfies the ear and raises the imagination - is the fore-runner of such women as Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra and Vittoria Corombona. It is, perhaps, easy to overrate Kyd's achievement in creating her when we look at the tragedies immediately contemporary, "Tancred and Gismunda" and "Locrine." When we relate her to her successors we see how far short of true greatness Kyd falls in his presentation of a woman's heart. In the amount she is given to do in the action, in her relations with the other characters, in the treatment afforded to her own, she is far ahead of any woman who had appeared in earlier plays, and even of the majority of those appearing a little later. Belimperia is the first woman character in Elizabethan tragedy who is at all complex. In crises her spirit is undauntedly masculine, but she is capable of displaying womanly tenderness to her lover. Yet this is not so much due to Kyd's sympathetic understanding of a woman's mind and character[1]. as to his instinctive grasp of a dramatic light

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1. There are no sudden revelations of a life beyond dramatic life in one brief sentence or even in a single line such as we find in the women's parts when written by the greatest dramatists of the later period. The nearest Kyd approaches to penetration of a woman's heart is in Belimperia's wild attempt to save Horatio from Lorenzo - Act II, Sc.4, ll.56-57, F.S.Boas' edition:

"O saue him, brother; saue him, Balthazer,
I loued Horatio, but he loued not me."

and shade. He saw very clearly that the woman's part could be effectively exploited for dramatic purposes. We feel that Hieronimo's dictum was his own:

"What's a plaie without a woman in't?" 1.

Belimperia's part is, perhaps, more "Senecan," or even classical, than anything else in the play. We have seen that in Seneca's own tragedies a woman could fill the rôle of protagonist as well as a man, if the plot demanded that she should. She was capable of deeds as violent as those of a man - Medea killed her children almost as easily as Atreus those of Thyestes. If need arose, she could die with as Stoic a calm. Phaedra in dying sets an example to Theseus:

"Quid facere rapto debeas nato parens
disce a noverca: condere Acherontis plagis." 2.

Cassandra, about to be dragged away to death, holds back her executioners:

"Ne trahite, vestros ipsa praecedam gradus." 3.

Belimperia, without filling the chief part in "The Spanish Tragedy," is yet inextricably involved in both crises of the play, the murder of Horatio and Hieronimo's plot of revenge. She meets the men upon equal terms, not as the lover only, or as the obedient daughter. Although she plays the part of the lover well, that is not her most important rôle. Her strength of mind and in-

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1. Act IV, Sc.1, l.196.

2. "Hippolytus," ll.1199-1200.

3. "Agamemnon," l.1004.

flexible determination are the qualities which Kyd always keeps before us.

In these respects Kyd does not hesitate to represent her as superior even to Hieronimo, who wavers in his purpose of revenging Horatio till Belimperia's reproaches spur him on to devise a plan. She does not scruple to contrast his delay and inaction with her own resolution:

> "Hieronimo, for shame, Hieronimo,
> Be not a historie to after times
> Of such ingratitude unto thy Sonne.
> My selfe, a stranger in respect of thee,
> So loued his life, as still I wish their deathes,
> Nor shall his death be unreuenged by me." 1.

As a contrast to Hieronimo's inaction even when he has evidence of his son's murderers in his hands, Kyd shows us Belimperia's promptness to set the machinery of revenge in motion. Although she is imprisoned she contrives to throw down a letter to Hieronimo to tell him the names of the assassins. This letter is written in her blood, a detail which, though doubtless mainly prompted by the desire to provide a thrill, (with the assistance of "red incke"), does nothing to diminish the impression of Belimperia as a strong-minded and resourceful woman. She is sparing of her words once she has wrought Hieronimo to the pitch of planning a prompt revenge:

> "Hieronimo, I will consent, conceale,
> And aught that may effect for thine auaile,
> Ioyne with thee to reuenge Horatioes death." 2.

After she has thus promised her aid, she says very little

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1. Act IV, Sc.1, ll. 14-22.

2. Act IV, Sc.1, ll. 46-48.

more, and stabs Balthazer and herself with no words beyond those she is given to speak in the inset play.

Kyd endows her with other qualities besides those of resolution and firmness of purpose, so that she is not left as an abstraction of masculine determination and nothing more. He does not show her as possessed of any exclusively feminine accomplishments, though the information that she "hath practised the French" brings her for a moment from the background of intrigue into the quiet of the study. Her wit is the characteristic that singles her out from the women preceding and immediately following her. The sharpness of her retorts to the sentimental love-sick Balthazar is new. These retorts approximate to conversation in a way impossible in the lengthy speeches of "Gismond of Salerne," although the "stichomuthia" of Seneca's tragedy is obviously their origin:

> Lor. "Sister, what means this melancholie walke?
> Bel. "That for a while I wish no company.
> Lor. "But heere the Prince is come to visite you.
> Bel. "That argues that he liues in libertie.
> Bal. "No, Madame, but in pleasing seruitude.
> Bel. "Your prison, then, belike is your conceit." [1]

Kyd was still more original in not only allowing a woman wit, but letting her employ it to snub her would-be lover, although he is a prince. It is the woman, too, who takes part in the cleverly artificial exchange of lyrical couplets loaded with metaphor and classical allusion:

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1. Act I, Sc.5., ll. 77-82.

Hor. "The more thou sitst within these leauy bowers,
The more will Flora deck it with her flowers.

Bel. "I, but if Flora spie Horatio heere,
Her iealous eye will thinke I sit too neare." [1.]
etc.

To allow the woman to take her share in this extempore verse-making argues that the dramatist himself regarded her as capable of holding her own with a man in wit as well as sterner pursuits.

We find in "The Spanish Tragedy," however, another of those numerous inconsistencies in the woman's part which served to such good stage purpose. Kyd was undoubtedly faced with some difficulties in fitting Belimperia's two love-affairs neatly into the play without making her appear inconstant. He does not altogether surmount this obstacle, and if we separate the love-story from the play as a whole it is unsatisfactory. We can be sure, however, that in the excitement of acting we should not take ~~it~~ to heart Belimperia's expressions of love for Andrea in her opening scene, and her change to Horatio and subsequent zeal for revenging him. Kyd found that Belimperia's share in the play was too good to lose, and, working from scene to scene for the maximum of thrills, he flung in a perfunctory explanation of Belimperia's behaviour:

"Yet what auailes to waile Andreas death,
From whence Horatio proues my second loue?
Had he not loued Andrea as he did,
He could not sit in Bel-imperias thoughts.
But how can loue find harbour in my brest
Till I reuenge the death of my beloued?
Yes, second loue shall further my reuenge:
Ile loue Horatio, my Andreas freend,
The more to spite the prince that wrought his end." [2.]

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1. Act II, Sc.4, ll. 24-27 and ff.

2. Act I, Sc.4, ll.60-69.

Not so very many speeches before this, she has given proof of her love for the dead Andrea,

> "Who, liuing, was my garlands sweetest flower,
> And in his death hath buried my delights." 1.

When Kyd has inserted some kind of explanation of Belimperia's relations with Horatio, he allows her to forget all about Andrea. This leads to an unintentionally humorous situation, with Belimperia and Horatio making love under the benevolent eye of Andrea's Ghost which seems to have shed such earthly passions as jealousy.[2.] Once Kyd has conveniently slurred over Belimperia's change of heart, he makes the most of the lyrical interchanges of lovers protestations as a relief in the gathering plot, nor have we any reason to believe that they are intended to be other than sincere:

> "My heart, sweet friend, is like a ship at sea,
> She wisheth port, where riding all at ease,
> She may repair what stormy times have worne:
> And leaning on the shore, may sing with joy,
> That pleasure followes paine, and blisse annoy." 3.

It is evident that the inconsistency in Belimperia's part did not trouble Kyd or the ghost or the audience, at all. The love-scenes with Horatio, and Belimperia's subsequent connection through him with the revenge-plot, were too good theatrical material to be lost for an inconsistency which would be passed over without question.

No moral purpose troubles Kyd as it troubled Hughes or the authors of "Gismond of Salerne" or Wilmot. In

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1. Act I, Sc.4, ll. 4-5.

2. Though we notice that the Ghost appears to consider Belimperia his in the Elysian fields.

3. Act II, Sc.2, ll.7-11.

"The Misfortunes of Arthur," purely moral considerations determine Guenevra's course of action, while in "Tancred and Gismunda" the lovers are always kept apart. The love theme in "The Spanish Tragedy," on the other hand, is presented on "romantic" lines. The lovers come together and declare their passion in terms of lyrical hyperbole. There is no hint of self-restraint in the arbour scene.[1] Kyd makes Belimperia's passion as strong as the hatred which drives her to revenge, thereby showing that he understood these elemental emotions in a woman. Revenge seems to be as dear to her as her love for Horatio had been. No sense of right and wrong, however primitive and undeveloped, holds her back. Revenge to her is not (that) "kind of wild justice." Revenge is justice, calling for no more scruple or hesitation on her part than the hangman feels in discharging his duty.

Belimperia, proud, witty, resourceful and courageous, stands head and shoulders not only above the women who have preceded her in English tragedy, but also above most of her immediate contemporaries. Kyd's ingenuity caused him to enhance still further the value of her part by introducing the pathetic figure of the old Isabella, Horatio's mother.[2] With the tradition of Medea and Clytaemnestra behind him, Kyd has created a woman of the utmost effect upon the stage, able to hold her own with men and treated by them as an equal. She is not distinguished by any of the peculiarly feminine traits of weakness which ~~was~~ were so often referred to later by both male

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1. Act II, Sc.4.

2. The value of this contrast will be discussed in greater detail in a more appropriate context: Chapter III, "The Revenge Tragedy," pp. 136 - 137.

and female characters upon the stage. When the plot of revenge is set on foot she asks for no quarter on the grounds of the frailty of her sex. She takes her share in the dangers attendant upon the action and kills herself as a matter of course, with the Stoic resignation already noted in Seneca's tragic heroines. Kyd, and perhaps Middleton, were the only dramatists in the period to ignore the tradition that women are weak both in body and resolution. Their hardness is in later plays softened by small touches which accentuate some feminine points, such as personal beauty or attractiveness in the eyes of men, or unsuspected nerves which take revenge upon them, as in the case of Lady Macbeth. Kyd pays no heed to such matters. We are given a general impression that Belimperia is beautiful, and we know that three men love her, but women as a sex to be sharply opposed to men evidently mattered little in Kyd's dramatic scheme. He has combined with the tradition of the Senecan tragedy-queen the Italianate love-couplets, the quatrains and sonnets of the young University wits, and thereby left an ineffaceable impression of a woman with two sides to her nature. She is something more than an imitation Medea; she is even further removed from that all-too numerous Elizabethan brood, who, being women, could be wooed and won by almost any man who took the trouble.[1] Belimperia is something new, a woman with a certain degree of complexity in her part, almost an individual. She is therefore interesting in herself, and doubly so in view of the famous line of women of which she is the first.

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1. We see the short shrift which an undesirable suitor receives at her hands, supra p.25. For a discussion of the "wooed and won" principle of feminine characterisation, see IV, "The Domestic Tragedy."

II. The Chronicle Play.

Plays such as "Gorboduc," "The Misfortunes of Arthur," and "Locrine" (entered 1594, but doubtless performed earlier), link English Senecan tragedy with that large and important section of early Elizabethan drama, the chronicle play. This group is in many ways more representative of the age than any other kind, for the plays it contains are full of abounding life and energy, distinguished by fervent national feeling, and largely independent of foreign influences. Not all of them are "sad stories of the death of kings," but a large proportion fulfil that simple mediaeval conception of tragedy formulated by Chaucer in the Monk's Prologue:

> "Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bokes maken us memorie,
> Of him that stood in great prosperitee,
> And is y-fallen out of heigh degree
> Into miserie, and endeth wrecchedly."

Towards the end of the 'nineties the historical play turned more and more to comedy, as can clearly be seen in Shakespeare's "Henry IV" plays (1597-98), in which the serious plot is pushed into the background by the exuberant figures of Falstaff and his boon-companions. But before the chronicle play waned in popularity after the turn of the century, it had ranged over the whole field of English history as it was then understood, from the mythical Lear and Locrine to Elizabeth herself, as well as including within its elastic limits plays upon popular heroes both of fact and fiction.[1] Although the women in the

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1. From among the many surviving plays of the kind only a few will be examined, comprising representatives of the true chronicle from its early appearance and including the Henry VI and Richard III plays, as well as examples of later developments.

chronicle plays never attained to any high degree of greatness, they are of interest as showing the first tentative steps taken by dramatic writers towards using the woman's part for purposes of relief and variety from the essentially masculine wars and intrigues.

With "Gorboduc" and "The Misfortunes of Arthur" we can class Legge's "Richardus Tertius" (1579) as a direct Senecan derivative. The only connection between these plays and the true chronicles is subject, for in style and treatment of their matter they betray their classical ancestry. Legge's play is chiefly interesting in showing how the best-intentioned Senecan imitator could not confine the material of the Richard-saga into one strictly classical play. He was forced to write a trilogy and abandon the unities. His stage is thronged with figures, and some incongruity results from making a crowd of mediaeval English citizens talk in Latin hexameters. The women lament in true Senecan fashion. Prof. Churchill points out the close resemblance to the part of Phaedra in Seneca's "Hippolytus," and the parallel between Elizabeth's parting with her son and Andromache's with Astyanax in the "Troades."[1] By these means Legge added to his play enough of the antique colouring to counterbalance his various innovations. Although "Richardus Tertius" is no more than a literary curiosity, with "Gorboduc" it marks an important step - the recognition that English chronicles provided a corpus of material as rich as, and more pertinent than, the cyclic legends of the classical drama,

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1. Prof. G.B. Churchill has an exhaustive analysis of Legge's Senecan borrowings and imitations in his article "Richard III up to Shakespeare," Palaestra, Bd. X.

to which, with the Bible, tragedy had hitherto been limited.

"Locrine" best represents the half-Senecan, half-popular type of historical play. While the usual "Senecan" characteristics of dumb shows, ghosts etc. are retained, concessions are made to vulgar tastes in the shape of comic episodes introduced at the expense of sense and coherence. It is not a direct ancestor of the true chronicle play, for which we must turn to two dramas which, though not published till the last decade of the XVIth century, were probably acted some years earlier. These are "Jack Straw" (entered 1593) and "The Famous Victories of Henry V" (entered 1594).[1.]

Both deal with actual historical fact, and both are far removed from Senecan imitations in style as well as subject, "Jack Straw" being described in the Stationers' Register as "an enterlude." Neither has a tragic theme, unless the death of Straw may be regarded as such, and both are very crude pieces of work. Neither called for any save the slightest female parts - Katherine in "The Famous Victories" and the Queen-Mother in "Jack Straw." The crude attempt made in the part of the former to depict coquetry and love-making stands out in clear contrast to the general tone of the play, but no hint is given that the authors had any grasp of pattern or relief, though they had an appreciation of variety. The love-making was merely an episode utilised as they used everything actable in the Henry V tradition. [1.] The anonymous author

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1. The chief interest of her part for us is that it was the foundation of Shakespeare's scene between Katherine and Henry.

of "Jack Straw" appears to make more ~~of an~~ effort to differentiate between the men, masters of policy and action, and the Queen-Mother, one of the weaker sex not genuinely at home among the rapidly moving events of Straw's rebellion. Twice in her brief part she shows herself conscious of her sex, in such a way as to make us aware of her timid and less politic mind:

> "This ~~is~~ strange, unwelcome and unhappy news
> Of these unnatural rebels and uniust
> That threatens wracke unto this wretched land
> Aye me, affright my woman's mazed minde." [1.]

When she hears of the possible defection of one of the King's supporters she reveals that simple faith which presumably was felt to be natural in a woman unused to the time-serving of the political world:

> "I cannot think so good a gentleman
> Would entertaine so base and vild a thought.
> Nor can it sink into my woman's head
> ---
> So true a bird should file so fair a neste." [2.]

Neither play shows any attempt at characterisation either male or female, but both are interesting in that they represent something that does not derive directly from classical example - that is, an almost entirely womanless drama. Wherever a woman appears in a play based upon fact or well-known literary sources filling a rôle that is not set out for her in these sources,[3.] then the dramatist tacitly, even unconsciously, acknowledges that women have become necessities upon the stage, and therefore that stage re-

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1. "Jack Straw," Tudor Facsimile Texts, Act I.
2. Act I.
3. As, for example, in the little study of Lady Anne in "Richard III," the part of Lady Macbeth, and the introduction of the Lady Salisbury episode into "Edward III."

presentation of human character and action has entered upon a new phase.

When women of striking personality are depicted in the chronicle plays, they do not, in the majority of cases, represent an original imaginative effort on the dramatist's part. They are those who have played a part in history that can no more be ignored by the writer engaged in presenting that period upon the stage than it had been by the prose-chronicler. Only those women who have triumphed over time by virtue of something unusual and spectacular in deeds and personality take a conspicuous share in the action. They were given to the dramatist by the chronicler and he had at first no more to do than to dress their rôles in appropriate rhetoric and provide them with effective entrances and exits. Such women are Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc and Margaret of Anjou, women whose character approximates to the masculine, and whom the dramatist can handle without finesse; weaker women will exist as their foils. Possibly the Senecan tradition behind the dramatist made it easy for him to accept such strong-minded women as natural figures in his dramatis personae. They would not come to him as a revelation of something new after the Medea and Clytaemnestra of the Tenne Tragedies.

Such women are to be found in "The Troublesome Raigne of King John" (pr. 1591)[1]. which shows the chronicle play entering upon a new phase. "Jack Straw" and "The Famous Victories" employ a very archaic technique. The

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1. The date of production in Sir E.K. Chambers places between 1587-1591, probably c. 1588.

scenes are loosely connected, for each play is imagined scene by scene, not even in an ordered sequence, certainly not as a plot or pattern. Both are descended from a mixed and extended mediaeval Interlude which had few and unimportant women or none at all. "The Troublesome Raigne" marks a great advance upon the other two in its handling of female characters, although probably only a very few years separate them from each other.

Holinshed's material, upon which the dramatist drew, offered him two women capable of holding their own with the men in strength of character and in stage effectiveness. This fact alone explains the divergence between "The Troublesome Raigne" and its predecessors. A plot had been chosen, in no way connected with a love story, in which at least two women were inescapably prominent. Furthermore, the chronicle provided some information as to the personal relations existing between these women, Eleanor and Constance:

"Surelie queene Elianor, the kings mother, was sore against her nephue Arthur, rather mooued thereto by enuie conceiued against his mother, than upon any just occasion giuen in behalfe of the childe, for that she saw, if he were king, how his mother Constance would looke to beare most rule within the realm of England, till hir sonne should come to lawfull age, to gouerne of himselfe." 1.

Such a suggestion of character ready made at once gives a new interest to the women's parts. In this play they are full of energy, and subject to passions such as envy, which are not peculiar to stage-life. Here a

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1. Holinshed. ed. W. G. Boswell Stone p. 47

dramatist of insight and a more advanced technique could have seized the opportunity to create two women who were individuals, differing from each other in countless ways. Both, however, are cast in the self-same mould, although they are women of a different stamp and placed in situations which would normally rouse in them widely differing emotions. The masculine element in Eleanor's character is more noticeable only because she appears more frequently upon the stage than Constance, and therefore has greater opportunities for displaying it. She has, moreover, the luck on her side. Constance, when for a moment or two her star is in the ascendant and she has Eleanor in her power, shows herself not a whit more womanly than her rival:

> "Constance doth live to tame thy insolence;
> And on thy head will now avenged be
> For all the mischiefs hatched in thy brain." 1.

To this Eleanor replies in the same spirit:

> "Contemptuous Dame, unreverent Duchess, thou
> To brave so great a Queen as Elianor.
> Base scold hast thou forgot that I was wife
> And mother to three mighty English kings?" 2.

Here, it may be noted, she is made to show one aspect of the early dramatic view of women in chronicle plays, as wives and mothers of men of rank and state, the makers of history.

Constance and Eleanor have a common bond of ferocity to unite them. Certain scenes, however, show as common to both that trait which men have been pleased to regard as peculiarly feminine - shrewishness. The

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1. "The Troublesome Raigne," printed in the Appendix to the Variorum "King John," ed. H.H. Furness, Part I, Scene VII, ll. 4-6.

2. ibid., ll. 7-10.

Queen of England and the Duchess of Brittany quarrel in - if it is not a paradox - refined Billingsgate. These "flytings" seem to be relics of mediaeval satire on women. Such dramatic models as the interlude did not spare women - to look no further back than "The Foure PP" in which the greatest liar is the Palmer who has the effrontery to say:

> "In all places where I have ben,
> Of all the women that I haue sene
> I never sawe, nor knewe, in my consyens
> Any one woman out of paciens."

The motive of the railing women would be part of the ordinary dramatist's stock-in-trade. The importance and interest of these scenes in "The Troublesome Raigne" is the manner in which they are introduced in a serious play. No satire upon women is intended. One at least of the railers had received from the chronicler an especial tribute to her clear, statesman-like mind:

"All this" (i.e. the succession of John) "was done chieflie by the working of the kings mother, whom the nobilities much honoured and loued. For she being bent to prefer hir sonne John, left no stone unturned to establish him in the throne, comparing oftentimes the difference of government betweene a king that is a man, and a king that is a child." [1].

The place given to this attempt to make dramatic capital out of the rivalry of two women is of some interest. They represent the intrusion of personal emotions into a play primarily concerned with a struggle for power. While the men remain absorbed in the checks and counter-checks of intrigue, the women are moved by more circum-

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1. "Shakespeare's Holinshed," W.G. Boswell Stone. p.46

scribed emotions which at the same time are concerned with the larger rivalries which actuate the behaviour of the men. When John and Philip of France have met to discuss the policy of their respective countries, Eleanor and Constance break out with their personalities. They show the nature of their emotion by the terms in which they abuse each other. Each expresses something more than mere personal hatred, for each regards the other as responsible for the impending war between England and France. It is not long before Eleanor breaks out against Constance:

> "Misgovern'd gossip, stain to this resort,
> Occasion of these undecided jars." [1].

Not to be outdone, Constance retorts:

> "But who so blind, as cannot see this beam,
> That you, forsooth, would keep your cousin down,
> For fear his mother should be us'd too well." [2].

The "flytings" introduce a new and vivid thread into the commonplace texture - the mere chronicle - fabric--of the play. Because the exchanges of discourtesies between the ladies are racy, of the earth, if not of the kitchen, standing out in sharp opposition to the grave terms of state and government, it is they upon whom is focussed the interest of the watcher. These women can be credited with the achievement, unusual at this date, of distracting attention from the men and from the "drum and trumpet" business of the chronicle play. That they achieve this, even though their part is a comparatively short one and occurs in the middle of a scene in which the men have the

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1. Part I, Sc.2, ll. 94-95.

2. ibid., ll. 116-118.

important share, shows how effective the human touch could be even in this immature form.

Another interesting and novel feature in the women's parts is the marked difference between their speech and that of the men. Occasionally we find a classical allusion, such as Eleanor's in a speech to Arthur:

> "Peace, Arthur, peace, thy mother makes thee wings
> To soar with peril after Icarus." 1.

In the very next line, however, she addresses him more naturally as "youngling." She uses the Bastard's own idiom when she talks to him. She swears a common oath - "Dare lay my hand," and her jests are of the usual quality of Elizabethan stage jokes. In short, Eleanor is a welcome change from the general run of stage-queens. As soon as the dramatist tries to bring out the difference in Constance's position he relapses into the usual rant imitated from Seneca. Her speech is adorned with classical allusions, and the pace becomes slow and stilted:

> "My tongue is tuned to story forth mishap.
> When did I breathe to tell a pleasing tale?
> Must Constance speak: Let tears prevent her talk.
> Must I discourse? Let Dido sigh, and say,
> She weeps again to hear the wrack of Troy." 2.

Yet this speech would have been better had it remained stilted to the end; the author allows it to lapse into bathos:

> "Two words will serve, and then my tale is done:
> Elinor's proud brat hathrobb'd me of my son." 3.

Lady Fauconbridge, when she wishes to give vent to her

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1. ~~Act~~ Part I, Sc.2., ll. 108-109.

2. Sc. X, ll. 24-28.

3. ibid., ll. 29-30.

grief and shame drags in the inevitable classical allusion:

> "Upbraid me rather with the Roman dame
> That shed her blood to wash away her shame." [1]

Elianor, the only woman in the play with no griefs to lament, never lapses from her vigorous bourgeois speech.

The dramatist, then, was only successful to any degree at all in representing one side of his women. The outspoken, bold, masculine type he could represent with vigour. The mere woman as Constance sometimes, and Lady Fauconbridge always, was, he was unable to make into anything more than a mouth-piece for rhetoric. The spectacle of Constance bereft of her son, and of Lady Fauconbridge publicly shamed, evoked no human pity or tenderness in the dramatist. "The Troublesome Raigne," although it marked a very great advance upon the preceding historical dramas in the parts it afforded to women, yet, by the limitation it displays in the treatment of the feminine side of a woman's nature, ~~it~~ shows how far away still is any genuine comprehension of female character upon the stage.

Shakespeare's "King John" (c. 1595), though it appeared only a few years later than "The Troublesome Raigne" upon which it was based, yet shows a reversal of parts. In the earlier play, Eleanor was the more important of the women. Now attention is focussed upon Constance, and the masculine woman has given place to the womanly woman. The difference between the two is effect-

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1. Scene I, ll. 396-397.

ively brought out. On the one hand we have the clear-headed, cool Eleanor, and on the other Constance, a creature moved by impulse, even muddle-headed as compared with her calm and lucid rival. Her furious retort to Eleanor's accusation of infidelity is the reply of a woman who says the first thing that enters her mind,[1] for so far from giving Eleanor the lie, it conveys the exact opposite of her meaning. This is characteristic of Shakespeare's Constance, a woman of impulse and sensibility.

The traits of the virago, so prominent in "The Troublesome Raigne," are either softened in the later play or completely hidden. The scene between Constance and Eleanor after the latter has been captured[2] has no counterpart in Shakespeare's "King John." There is nothing in the later play to set against her expression of physical violence in "The Troublesome Raigne:"

> "Why fly I not upon the beldame's face,
> And with my nails pull forth her hateful eyes?" 3.

On the other hand, the potency of her tongue as a weapon is much increased. She is capable of biting sarcasm, as when she bids Austria "hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs." Her only weapon is her tongue; it is, also, her sole means of defence. Her words and moods are all that she has to pit against ruthlessness and intrigue. Shakespeare isolates Constance by making John, Philip and Austria men of greater dignity both of speech and bearing than could be achieved by the author of the

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1. Variorum "King John," Act II, Sc.1, ll. 129-138.
2. "The Troublesome Raigne," Scene VII; and see supra. p. 36.
3. " " " " IV, ll. 143-144.

old play. At the same time he accentuates Constance's feminine weakness. She is

> "Oppresst with wrongs, and therefore full of feares,
> A widdow, husbandles, subiect to feares,
> A woman naturally borne to feares." 1.

Thus we have the impression of passionate single-handed resistance by one woman against the affairs of three mighty kingdoms which, Juggernaut-like, crush her beneath their irresistible onward march. Her motherhood, aroused to fight for her son, is of no avail against the ends of statecraft and policy which must be served.

In his pursuit of this effect it is difficult not to feel that Shakespeare overreaches himself. The "high-astounding terms" in which Constance voices her sorrow seem too mighty for that single theme:

> "To me and to the state of my great grief
> Let kings assemble: for my grief's so great
> That no supporter but the huge firm earth
> Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit,
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it." 2.

In spite of the admiration often accorded to Constance's speeches in this scene the impression they give is that of tearing a passion to tatters. Genuine emotion is exhausted, and gives place to that ingenious word-play which mars "Richard II." We feel that the poet is making Constance's passion a means for displaying his "smartness:"

> Blanche. "The Lady Constance speaks not from her faith
> But from her need."

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1. "King John," Act III, Sc.1., ll. 15-17.

2. Act III, Sc.1., ll. 70-74.

Const. "O, if thou grant my need,
Which only lives but by the death of faith,
That needs must infer this principle,
That faith would live again by death of need.
O then, tread down my need, and faith mounts up;
Keep my need up, and faith is trodden down." 1.

Such elaborations are not in keeping with the truly dramatic representation of great sorrow; they belong to the rhetorical phase of serious drama.

Eleanor's part is clearly second in importance to Constance's. When she appears she is in essentials the Eleanor of "The Troublesome Raigne," but a more finished character owing to Shakespeare's superior craftsmanship. She is as blunt and direct in her speech as the earlier Eleanor, as can be seen from her devastatingly honest comment upon the issue between Arthur and John, to whom she says that it depends upon

"Your strong possession much more than your right
Or else it must go wrong with you and me:
So much my conscience whispers in your ear,
Which none but heaven and you and I shall hear." 2.

Eleanor's own speeches are not designed with the sole intention of bringing out her ferocity. One line in a speech of Chatillon's suffices to show the kind of part she played in the struggle:

"With him along is come the mother queen,
An Ate, stirring him to blood and strife." 3

The vigorous breadth of her speech in "The Troublesome Raigne" is toned down, as can be seen in the episode between John, his mother and the Faulconbridges.[4] In

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1. Act II, Sc.1., ll. 210-216.
2. Act I, Sc.1., ll. 40-44.
3. Act I, Sc.1., ll. 62-63.
4. Act I, Sc.1.

Shakespeare's play Eleanor is more reserved in her approbation of the Bastard. Both her speech and bearing are more queenly than ~~is the case~~ in "The Troublesome Raigne," so that her essentially masculine strength is rather felt than expressly mentioned. She is never permitted to overshadow Constance. In the scolding-scene between the two women - probably too successful to be left out entirely - the note is less harsh and their voices less raucous. The dramatist is now less interested in the competitive side of the scolding match and more interested in the dramatic value of the opposition between the two women.

Shakespeare gives wider associations to the personal antagonism between Eleanor and Constance, which accordingly dominates the scene to a greater degree than was the case in "The Troublesome Raigne." To Constance, Eleanor is a "monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth." Their hatred expresses itself in the attempts of both to win Arthur. Eleanor is more cunning than Constance in making use of Arthur persistently as one of her chief weapons. She strikes at her adversary through her son, knowing that she is most likely to hurt by those means:

"His mother shames him so, poor boy, he weeps." 1.

Much more feminine strategy is displayed by both Constance and Eleanor. In "King John" we are given, too, the masculine attitude towards the female quarrels. The Dauphin Lewis breaks in impatiently and ungallantly:

"Women and fools, break off your conference."

Yet Lewis, to judge by his love at first sight for Blanche,

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1. Act II, Sc.1., ll. 166.

is by no means a woman-hater. Philip temporarily silences Constance's persistent attacks upon Eleanor:

> "Peace, lady! pause, or be more temperate:
> It ill beseems this presence to cry aim
> To these ill-timed repetitions." [1].

In "The Troublesome Raigne" the scolding-scene was inserted in a bigger, more important scene, and was not related to the larger theme, but confined to the women only. Now the men take a part in it, and we understand that they find it jarring.

In addition to the readjustment of the importance of Eleanor's and Constance's parts, some alterations are to be seen in those of Lady Faulconbridge and Blanche. In the old play, the former was on the stage throughout the entire scene in which her infidelity is discussed and conjectured. Shakespeare handles this scene with greater delicacy of touch. He banishes Lady Faulconbridge from the stage for the greater part of it. When she confesses her past offence to Philip she does so in more moderate language than that used in "The Troublesome Raigne". The episode is presented in much better taste than in the earlier play, though the delicacy of the later version must not be exaggerated.

The figure of Blanche is shadowy and the love between her and the Dauphin is thinly and conventionally treated, though it has some solid basis in history, since it is recorded that they fell deeply in love at first sight. Blanche, however, is nothing more than a pawn in the political game, a "peace-weaver." In "The Troublesome Raigne"

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1. Act II, Sc.1., ll. 195-197.

there is a suggestion of a preference for Philip Faucon-bridge, which causes Blanche to accept the Dauphin reluctantly. The later version removes even that small suggestion of personality.

Shakespeare's Constance displays all the passion and rant that the author of "The Troublesome Raigne" might have been expected to put into the part. Constance as a mother up in arms for her child's rights does not carry much conviction to modern judgment. Yet to the contemporary audience accustomed to Senecan bombast whenever deep feeling was to be expressed, Constance, "sad and passionate," doubtless appeared the very essence of motherhood, at least of stage motherhood. She could not protest too much, for the maternal passion was an attribute of the sex which always provided a certain amount of dramatic capital. It is very largely the preciousness of her manner of speech which makes Constance unreal. Apart from this Elizabethan affectation she is the counterpart of Seneca's Hecuba, and though the dramatist's handling of her part shows a mind much more open to the variety of tone which a woman can contribute to a play, her effectiveness remains a stage effectiveness.

The years between 1590 and 1600 represent the heyday of the historical drama. A large number of plays appeared, notable among which as representative of the true chronicle type are the three Henry VI plays (Folio 1623) and "Richard III" (pr.1597). In addition to these plays on the fortunes of the houses of York and Lancaster - a subject of especial interest to Englishman at the time, for the wars of the Roses were recent history, and had led up to the firm establishment upon the throne of the House of Tudor - in addition to these, there are plays

upon earlier authentic history, Marlowe's "Edward II" (pr.1594), "Edward III," (pr.1596), "King John," and Richard II" (pr.1597). These plays represent much of the best work done in this branch of the drama, and show most clearly the distinctive features of the "chronicle play."

Throughout the plays on the Wars of the Roses one woman character of great importance appears, namely Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI. By reason of her strength of character she stands out clearly in the stormy times in which she lived. She led the Lancastrian cause, a sufficient tribute to her personality, for a woman without masculine strength of mind could never have succeeded in so arduous a task. Such a woman would appear to be a "gift" for a dramatist at all susceptible to Senecan influence. Margaret, however, is not consciously a Senecan tragedy-queen, though in character she resembles Medea and Clytaemnestra.

Both Halle and Holinshed record Margaret's activities during the Wars of the Roses, Halle giving a fuller description of her: "the queene ----- was a woman of a great witte, and yet of no greater witte than of haute stomacke; desirous of glory and couetous of honour; and of reason, pollicye, counsaill, and other giftes and talentes of nature belongyng to a man, full and flowyng; of witte and wilinesse she lacked nothyng, nor of diligence, studie, and businesse she was not unexperte; but yet she had one poynt of a very woman, for, often tyme, when she was vehement and fully bente in a matter, she was sodainly, lyke a wethercok, mutable and turning." 1.

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1. E. Halle: "The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke," p.208. (Paginal reference to edition of 1809.)

All the characteristics mentioned by the chronicler are to be found in the dramatised Margaret, although the mutability of the "very woman" is only once to be seen, when, having dismissed Suffolk, her lover, she immediately recalls him, saying "O, go not yet." But on matters of state she nevers displays any hesitation. So unexpected a trait in one addressed as "Iron of Naples" is not, however, mentioned at all in Holinshed, so that if his chronicle were the source it would be natural for the authors not to introduce it into their dramatic representation.

It is certain that the Margaret of iron will is more suitable to the events described in the Henry VI plays. Her traits of masculine strength and determination lead her to actions which are revolting to the modern mind at least. She takes part in the murder of Richard, Duke of York, displaying a savagery which is a mockery of her sex. Although, as has been said, no specifically Senecan influence can be observed in the Henry VI trilogy, this scene[1] is strongly reminiscent of the episode in Seneca in which Medea murders her children and taunts Jason.[2] Not only are Margaret's own speeches inspired, like Medea's, with the spirit of hatred and cruelty, but those of her enemies also recall the rhetorical abuse heaped upon her classical prototype by Jason and his fellow-sufferers:

> "She wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France;
> Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth! --
> ---- Thou art more opposite to every good
> As the Antipodes are unto us,
> Or as the south to the Septentrion.
> O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!" [3]

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1. "3 Henry VI," Act I, Sc.4.
2. "Medea," ll.978-end.
3. "3 Henry VI," Act I, Sc.4, ll.111-112, 134-137.

The Medea tradition seems to have established itself firmly in the minds of the early Elizabethan dramatists.

There is a very slight "love-interest" in "2 Henry VI" which might be expected to bring out more womanly feelings in Margaret. Unimportant though the love-theme is in the play, it is given more weight by the dramatists than it received from the chronicler, who merely says: "The marquess of Suffolk by great fauour of the king, and more desire of the queen, was erected to the title and dignity of duke of Suffolk." [1]. The dramatists turned aside from the chronicle of political events to elaborate from this bare hint a love-scene between Suffolk and Margaret. This scene appears both in "The First Part of the Contention" (pub.1594), and "2 Henry VI," though in the latter play Margaret's part is equal in length to Suffolk's, whereas before it was shorter. Into the vexed question of the relationships of these groups of plays it is impossible to enter in detail. According to Mr. Peter Alexander,[2]. who receives the qualified support of Prof. A.W. Pollard and that of Sir E.K. Chambers,[3]. "The First Part of the Contention" and "The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York" (pub.1595) are no more than Bad Quartoes of the plays we know as 2 and 3 Henry VI. In putting forward this theory[4]. Mr. Alexander goes against the generally accepted theory that 2 and 3 Henry VI represent the working up

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1. W.C. Boswell-Stone: "Shakespeare's Holinshed," p.244.

2. "Shakespeare's Henry VI and Richard III," Introduction by A.W. Pollard.

3. "William Shakespeare," Vol.I, pp. 281-289

4. with which Mr. J.M. Robertson in the Post-script to his "Shakespeare Canon: Part IV," disagrees, though he does not devote any space in the main part of this volume to debating it.

of the two earlier plays, the point of chief importance being how far Shakespeare's hand can be seen in the revision. However this may be, there is no fundamental difference in the love-affair with Suffolk between the Margaret of "The First Part of the Contention" and "2 Henry VI." The second play represents her more effectively chiefly because her share in the scene is longer. In tone and spirit there is little to choose between them. Both scenes show her cursing those who have banished Suffolk, upbraiding him and then endeavouring to soothe him as gently as is possible in one so ferocious. The scene in "2 Henry VI" is not so remarkably superior to that in "The First Part of the Contention" as to call for a study of their inter-relation. Its interest lies in its unexpected insertion among the "drum-and-trumpet" business of this typical chronicle play. Its appearance suggests that the love-theme was regarded as a desirable variation, but its lack of relation to the main plot, and its isolation, show that it did not necessarily call for a coherent or comprehensible preparation or dénouement. We hear nothing of the love of Margaret and Suffolk until the scene in which they part.[1] It is impossible to say definitely that "1 Henry VI" has given us, by means of the Suffolk-Margaret episodes it contains, an understanding of their relations in "2 Henry VI," for there is no conclusive evidence to prove that it came first.

The raucous note is never long absent from Margaret's voice, and is especially noticeable in "3 Henry

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1. This is strongly reminiscent of the casual way in which Guenevra is thrown into "The Misfortunes of Arthur," except that Margaret has interests beyond those of love.

VI" where she has greater scope for rant. There is much in common between the Margaret who roundly curses her enemies and Eleanor of "The Troublesome Raigne." The dramatist's technique was not equal to passion and decent restraint, though, to judge by the ancedotes of Queen Elizabeth, there was less dignity in anger in those days. In "The First Part of the Contention" Margaret bursts out:

> "Hell-fire and vengeance go along with you.
> There's two of you, the diuell make the third.
> (To Suffolk)
> "Fie womanish man, canst thou not curse thy enemies?" 1.

In "2 Henry VI" the harsh, unlovely tone is somewhat modified and partially concealed under a more elaborate phraseology:

> "Mischance and sorrow go along with you!
> Heart's discontent and sour affliction
> Be playfellows to keep you company!
> There's two of you: the devil make a third
> And threefold vengeance tend upon your steps." 2.

The spirit that moves her is, however, the same in both plays. This love, which is little more than another manifestation of her tigress-like disposition, appears once again in "2 Henry VI" when Margaret has received sure proof of her lover's death. The dramatists responsible for her part allowed her to come upon the stage with Suffolk's head, a touch which shows that they did not ~~look~~ see at Margaret in a different light because she was a woman. She gives voice to a desire for revenge which fits perfectly with the character that has been kept up throughout the play:

> "Think therefore on revenge and cease to weep." 3

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1. "The First Part of the Contention:" Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles, p.39.
2. "2 Henry VI," Act III, Sc.2, ll.300-304.
3. "2 Henry VI," Act IV, Sc.4, l.3.

If we assume "2 Henry VI" to represent a working up of the material offered by "The First Part of the Contention" we can see that a little more is made of the love episode, though no advance is shown in differentiating between a man's and woman's emotions, for Margaret and Suffolk speak in identical terms. In "3 Henry VI" we see Margaret as a mother, but motherhood stands to her for little more than the fulfilment through her son of her own ambitious hopes. Courage rather than filial affection is the bond between son and mother. Margaret's ruthless murder of young Rutland, the Duke of York's son, shows how far the dramatists were from any definite idea of womanly gentleness or mother love. Margaret's outbursts of furious grief when her son has been murdered are little more than mechanical expressions of mingled rage and sorrow:

> "Butcher and villains! bloody cannibals!
> How sweet a plant have you untimely cropp'd!
> You have no children, butchers!" 1.

Margaret's character is, on the whole, consistently masculine. The author only remembers from time to time to recall the essential differences of sex, in connection with motherhood, love, and, once, with clothes. This last episode once more recalls the enmity between Constance and Eleanor in "The Troublesome Raigne," for it illustrates the petty jealousy that the dramatists regarded as characteristic of a woman. The hatred between Margaret and Eleanor Cobham, wife of the Protector Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, is a figment of the dramatist's imagination. Actually the Duchess's ambitions, which led her to dabble

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1. "3 Henry VI," Act V, Sc.5, ll.61-63. And compare also "Macbeth," Act IV, Sc.3:- "He has no children."

in witchcraft, brought about her disgrace in 1441, and Margaret was not crowned Queen of England until 1445. In "The First Part of the Contention" and "2 Henry VI" Maragret's hatred of Eleanor results from feminine jealousy of the latter's superior wealth, and, in particular, of her rival's consciousness of the Queen's poverty:

> "She sweeps it though the court with troops of ladies,
> More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife.
> Strangers in court do take her for the queen.-----
> She vaunted 'mongst her minions t'other day
> The very train of her worst wearing gown
> Was better worth than all my father's lands." [1].

Her hatred finds vent in physical violence, an extreme to which even Eleanor and Constance do not go. This brief episode[2]. is couched in the same vigorous, bourgeois speech as the similar scenes in "The Troublesome Raigne." In reply to Henry's attempts to soothe her, the outraged Duchess of Gloucester retorts prophetically:

> "Good king look to 't in time.
> She'll hamper thee and dandle thee like a baby:
> Though in this place most master wear no breeches,
> She shall not strike Dame Eleanor unrevenged."

The scene is broken off in time, however, to prevent the two "noble dames" from degenerating into common scolds.

The dramatist or dramatists responsible for the women in 2 and 3 Henry VI commanded little range or variety of tone. Margaret, in her love and hatred alike, is the strong-minded masculine heroine. Eleanor of Gloucester is a dim reflection of Margaret, less effective because

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1. "2 Henry VI," Act I, Sc.3, ll.75-77: 82-84. Her father's poverty is thus mentioned by Holinshed: "King Reiner hir father, for all his long stile (i.e., King of Naples, Sicily and Jerusalem) had too short a purse to send his daughter honorable to the king hir spouse."

2. "2 Henry VI," Act I, Sc.3, ll. 136-145.

of the comparatively small part she has to play. Only the scolding-match shows an attempt to make dramatic capital out of what men have been pleased to regard as a feminine habit, in some circles, while the Queen's jealousy of the Duchess's dress shows another effort to approach the feelings of a woman. Neither woman is, however, regarded as a creature whose feelings find other means of expression, whose idiom differs from a man's. Margaret the mother is exactly the same as Margaret the fighting queen. Her son inherits her own martial spirit, and to the extent that he shows his courage, to the same extent she loves him.[1] For Henry, a weakling according to her code, she has neither sympathy nor understanding.

With the two Richard III plays - "The True Tragedy of Richard III" (entered 1594) and Shakespeare's (pr.1597) - the Senecan tradition definitely fuses with the chronicle play. "The True Tragedy" opens in the Senecan style popularised in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy," Clarence's Ghost entering with words of blood and revenge:

> "Cresce cruor sanguinis, satietur sanguine cresce,
> Quod spero scitio. O scitio, scitio vendicta." [2]

Clarence's Ghost is followed by symbolic figures of Truth and Poetry who relate the events leading up to the action which is about to take place. The scene was modelled either on "The Spanish Tragedy" or its ancestors. In Shakespeare's - and, according to some, Marlowe's - play, attention is focussed upon one character, Richard's,

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1. In this she resembles Volumnia.

2. "The True Tragedy of Richard III:" Malone Society Reprints.

while the other personages only serve to contribute to the importance of the central figure. In "The True Tragedy," the part of Mistress Shore affords scope for some Senecan moralising upon Fortune, but, apart from this detail, no Senecan touches are apparent in the characters to bring them into line with the points of construction noticed. The women in the play are unimportant. The situation of Elizabeth, Edward IV's widow, is Senecan; she corresponds to Hecuba, deprived of husband, children and kingdom, but nothing is made of the resemblance. The princess Elizabeth is given a slight individuality, and even a crude initiative when she tries to keep evil news from her mother,[1.] or when she endeavours to reconcile her step-brothers,[2.] but nothing more is made of these very slight hints.

Shakespeare's women in "Richard III", although they are given little more distinct individuality, yet remain in the memory both of readers and spectators. The women are hardly required as characters, for Richard's own personality dominates the scene. They are used as a kind of chorus to bring before us different aspects of Richard's villainy. The author has departed from historical fact in order to achieve this effect, for contrary to all records he has introduced Queen Margaret to personify the Nemesis which pursues Richard to his doom. Her part brings together the scattered episodes of the long struggle of the Wars of the Roses. Although the rose of York is flourishing in its "glorious summer,"

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1. "True Tragedy," Scene IX, l.817.

2. " " " II, ll. 108-116.

Margaret never allows us to forget the "winter of discontent" which has passed for a short time for Richard but not for herself. Margaret gives unity to the play, and brings to it the suggestion of a range extending beyond that of Richard's own brief and anxious reign. The women's part, in particular Margaret's, is to keep before us the larger issues resulting from Richard's deeds.

All the women appear before us in their relation to Richard, and to that extent only do they show any individuality. The tone of their speeches is dictated by the effects of his actions upon themselves. Elizabeth from her very first appearance professes hatred and horror of him. His mother, the aged Duchess of York, curses him, and Margaret's fiercest maledictions are directed against him. There are no shades of character to be studied in the women of "Richard III." Their very impotence and inability to arise and revenge their wrongs makes them so much the more effective as a chorus to the action. They fill out the play, and give a kind of cosmic significance to otherwise limited events. It is fitting that women, creatures who can take comparatively little part in actions which decide the fate of a whole nation, should stand by to show how such actions affect those not directly concerned in them. The part of Queen Margaret is most effective for the purpose, for once she was able to hold her own with the men in war and intrigue, but now, deprived of power, and crippled by age and grief, she can do no more than curse. Yet her very curses are felt by her former enemies, now bound to her by the same affliction, to be of more effect than their own. Elizabeth, driven to despair, turns to her for help:

"O thou well skill'd in curses, stay awhile
And teach me how to curse mine enemies." [1].

The women's parts reach their climax when Richard himself is abashed by the sight of the misery he has caused. He has a moment's fear when he attempts to drown their voices:

"A flourish, trumpets! strike alarum, drums!
Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
Rail on the Lord's anointed." [2].

His mother's prayer, that her curse may

"in the day of battle, tire thee more
Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st" [3].

silences him as nothing else can. Yet when the action is over it is Margaret who remains in the memory as leader of this chorus, which to dramatic effect adds an almost lyric driving force.

Lady Anne and Elizabeth serve to show up a side of Richard's villainy unawakened by Margaret or his mother. Both, by their half-unwilling submission to his power of fascination and eloquence, throw an additional side-light upon his perverted genius. The scene between Richard and Anne over Henry's bier is thrown in just as is the Margaret - Suffolk scene in "2 Henry VI." It is unnecessary to look for a penetrating study of feminine weakness in Anne's part. She only exists for her relationship to Richard, to add one more to the ghosts who afflict him before the final battle. She is a further sacrifice to the centralising impulse in the play. The

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1. "Richard III:" Act IV, Sc.4, ll.116-117.
2. ibid., ll.148-150.
3. Act IV, Sc.4, ll.188-189.

scene with Elizabeth[1]. is an inartistic repetition of a device already used, spun out till it loses power to hold the audience, whereas the novelty and melodramatic setting of the scene between Anne and Richard, together with its compactness, ensure its success upon the stage. Dr. Johnson's criticism of the Elizabeth - Richard episode is well merited: "On this dialogue 'tis not necessary to bestow much criticism: part of it is ridiculous, and the whole improbable."

"Richard III," however, marks an advance in the handling of women in the chronicle play. They are not, it is true, regarded as distinct personalities, but are treated from the point of view of the chief male character. They enhance and contribute to the grim harmony of the whole play. They are a background rather than separate characters. The "choric" method, though it cannot be overlooked in reading, only reaches its fullest effect when the play is presented upon the stage.

A similar use of the woman's part links "Richard II" with "Richard III." "Richard II" is even more a man's play, with no place for a woman in it except as subordinate to, and passive under, the actions of the men. The two chief women, the Queen and the Duchess of York, are of necessity slight personalities, for they played no great part in history. Shakespeare, however, made some significant alterations in their parts. Richard's queen is a grown woman in the play, whereas in reality she was a child of some ten or twelve years of age. The Duchess of York, Aumerle's mother, did not actually go herself to Bolingbroke to win pardon for her son's treachery. That scene is Shakespeare's

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1. Act IV, Sc.4, ll.196-430.

own invention. Both the women have very small parts to play in the tragedy; the number of their appearances upon the stage is strictly limited. Both the queen and the Duchess are shown at crises in their lives, the queen parting from her husband and the Duchess threatened with the loss of her son. The scenes follow consecutively, and we see that no fundamental distinction is made by the dramatist between the sorrow of lovers and maternal grief. Both scenes are marred by faults of fantastic expression and mere cleverness, weaknesses which throughout lessen the tragic power of the play. The episode of the Duchess and Aumerle is, however, more moving than the parting between Richard and his queen. The simplest of instincts, mother-love, which dictates all the Duchess's actions, makes for a corresponding simplicity in her character - one reason for the jarring incongruity of her speech. Coming after the scene between Richard and the queen where passion evaporates in prettiness of expression, this episode at first strikes a truer note, though gradually it becomes more difficult to recognise the essential sincerity, almost lost in overtones.

The queen lives only in Richard's sorrows; all her appearances on the stage are pauses in the unfolding of his tragedy, when the sorrow yet to come is foreshadowed by her presentiments, and that which has already accumulated is bewailed. Her first speech is an omen:

> "Methinks
> Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb
> Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
> With nothing trembles; at some thing it grieves
> More than with parting from my lord the king." [1]

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1. "Richard II:" Act II, Sc.2, ll.9-13. "The Spanish Tragedy," also, illustrates the dramatic use of the "divining hearts" of women which "forethink ill" to their lovers:

> Hor. "What means my love?
> Bel. "I know not what myself,
> And yet my heart foretells me some mischance."

She never attains the stature of a human being. Her part is to bear a lyric burden to the tragedy. There is a resemblance between the choric commentary upon the action in classical tragedy, and the queen's part. It appears in general effect and impression rather than in any conscious or organised development along such lines. Except in word, the queen is never actively involved in Richard's fate. That fastastic playing with words and the associations they call up greatly enhances the remoteness of her part from the main stream of action. Both the garden scene (III, 4) and that of her parting from her husband (V, 1) are couched in language too smooth and suave to drive home the conviction that we are watching two lovers in agony. Richard, the deposed king, bereft of honour and wife, is the "fair rose," the "map of honour," a "most beauteous inn." The dialogue slips imperceptibly into rhyme, so that the smooth lyric effect of the scene is increased, but at the expense of dramatic fitness. The poet appears to revel in sorrow, to play with words, till spontaneous emotion is completely forgotten.

The Duchess, because she is moved by simple and genuine emotion, stands out more life-like. She is as deeply involved in events as the queen is remote from them. The latter walks, sighing, in a garden far away from the tottering of thrones, while the older woman is in the midst of the hurry and bustle of dangerous events. Shakespeare has succeeded in showing something of the single-mindedness of a woman when she strives to go to the root of any trouble, passing over all attendant difficulties. Aumerle, her son, is involved in a conspiracy against Bolingbroke, a conspiracy which her husband pro-

poses forthwith to unmask to the usurper:

York "Thou fond, mad woman,
Wilt thou conceal this dark conspiracy?
A dozen of them here have ta'en the sacrament,
And interchangeably set down their hands,
To kill the king at Oxford.

Duchess "He shall be none;
We'll keep him here; then, what is that to him?"[1].

Always the dramatist aims at keeping her in touch with reality, though, as we have seen, he is betrayed by his love of words. She hears the drab, sordid side of Richard's downfall, a vivid contrast to the pathetic side shown in the scene before. From that she is plunged into a personal sorrow which leaves her no time to dally with grief for Richard, again a contrast between her and the queen who has made, like her husband, a luxury of sorrow.

Because "Richard II" is not, like "Richard III," a play which centres in one dominant personality to whom everything leads up, the women, instead of being bound to Richard by a personal relationship of hatred or fascination, serve as a chorus of general lamentation. The queen, a pathetic figure, enhances the poignancy of the weak king's overthrow. The easy-moving verse, slipping so naturally into rhyme, raises still higher the barrier between the characters and reality, for "Richard II" is a tragedy which takes place at several removes from reality.

The plays on the Wars of the Roses are the best representatives of the "epic" type of chronicle play. The women who take a part in them are not of an "infinite

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1. Act IV, Sc.2, ll.95-101.

variety," but what they lack in that respect is compensated by their energy. Whether they are leading an army like Margaret of Anjou, or calling down curses on those who have wronged them, like Elizabeth Woodvile, they are intensely alive. No attempt is made to show the many facets of a character; until "Richard III" it is by their capacity for action that women are judged and deemed worthy of dramatic representation by the side of men. Where more than one woman character of any importance appears, little attempt is made to vary the substance and accents of their speech. Their actions are dictated by masculine ambition and determination to gratify it.[1.] Except for a certain harping upon motherhood, only the most rudimentary attempts are made to mark the difference of sex.[2.] Even the episode between Margaret and Suffolk is incidental, and does not show a side of the queen's character far removed from the masculine temper she displays throughout.

"Richard II" and "Richard III" have shown a departure into more fanciful realms of treatment. The lyric touches already noted in the women's parts[3.] in earlier plays are here applied to a different purpose. They are carried throughout the play. In "Richard III" the action temporarily stops dead when the women appear. By their denunciation of his crimes they collect together in the mind of the spectator all he has seen of Richard's villainy, and, at the same time, by their forebodings of evil, they suggest something of what is to come. But

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1. e.g., Margaret and the Duchess of Gloucester in "2 Henry VI." Chance favours Margaret, for she is a queen and has more power on her side.
2. As, for example, the rivalry between Margaret and Eleanor on the question of dress: supra, p. 53.
3. In "Tancred and Gismunda:" "Locrine:" "The Spanish Tragedy:" see supra, pp. 20, 26, 27.

for the women, the innocents who are suffering from the crimes of the guilty, we might chance to be carried away by Richard's cunning in disposing of obstacles such as Clarence and Hastings, who can scarcely be said to have any more principles than himself, and certainly have far fewer brains. The bonds of hatred and common sorrow which bind the lesser women to Margaret, the presiding genius, are skilfully woven by the dramatist into the fabric of the play.

Yet, in spite of this passive part as a chorus of lamentation, the women are in no way weaklings. In their final scene even Richard is daunted, for they represent certain fundamental forces and feelings which no tyrant can abrogate. We know that Nemesis will make good their causes and forebodings. In "Richard II," although the same kind of choric use of the women is to be found, that feeling of strength even in impotence is lost as a result of Shakespeare's continual aiming at cleverness, which too often descends to quibbling. The lyrical impulse of the women's speech dissipates itself in word play. At its best, however, this play shows poetical qualities of a high order, which, together with a certain similarity in the situation and treatment of the two kings, makes it possible to put Marlowe's "Edward II" with it.

This play contains one woman whose share in the action is larger and more active than that generally assigned to her sex in Marlowe's work. That she is not a more convincing character is due partly, perhaps, to Marlowe's own heedlessness of women as dramatic material, but mostly to the need of compressing the long-drawn out processes of history into the two hours traffic of the stage. Isabella, wife of Edward II, in actual fact turned from love to hatred of her husband, but only

after enduring many years of neglect and insults from him. Holinshed, while recording her revolt, puts it down to weakness and ill counsel, saying: "What will not a woman be drawne and allured to, if by euill counsell she be once assaulted?" Of illicit love between her and Mortimer he says nothing. Marlowe develops the love-affair - by now a "sine qua non" - but he does so at the expense of credibility. However cynically women are regarded, however "fleeting and perjured" men may be pleased to regard them, it is impossible to pass complacently over Isabella's change from Edward to Mortimer. It is only in this one matter of love that women of Elizabethan drama were so cavalierly treated. Their inconstancy is largely a matter of one collapse or unmotived transfer in each case, for in other matters they give no impression of instability.

"Edward II," written like other chronicle plays from the man's point of view, could not be expected to concern itself too closely with the stages by which a woman falls out of love with her husband and into love with another man, her husband's enemy. In the circumstances in which she has lived, with a husband who neglects her for a favourite, her change is easy to understand.[1] It is the abruptness with which she transfers her affections which is so difficult to accept. No hint is given of any wavering in her affection for Edward; indeed some twenty lines before she falls out of love she has thus declared her feelings for him:

> "Heauens can witnesse, I loue none but you,
> From my imbracements thus he breakes away;
> O that mine armes could close this Isle about,
> That I might pull him to mee where I would,

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1. It is less incredible than her affectionate speeches to Edward before her change to Mortimer.

Or that these teares that drissell from mine eyes
Had power to mollifie his stonie hart,
That when I had him we might neuer part." [1.]

In view of this and other speeches of a like tenor, it is a shock to find her saying after a very brief interval:

"So well hast thou deseru'de, sweete Mortimer,
As Isabell could liue with thee for euer." [2.]

Her self-justification comes too late in the play to make her change reasonable:

"In vaine I looke for loue at Edwards hand,
Whose eies are fixt on none but Gaueston." [3.]

Such mutability without adequate explanation had to be accepted in good faith for the purposes of plot. The device must have been used as a stock dramatic convention. We have seen it repeatedly in the plays already discussed. Belimperia has taken Horatio as her second love with only a most perfunctory explanation. Guenevra changed her mind with grotesque rapidity; Elizabeth and Anne both yielded to Richard, their greatest enemy. When plot had to be served, or dramatic effect could be gained, by the sacrifice of consistency in the women's parts, then any sudden revolution of feeling was easily accepted.[4.] Marlowe allows Edward and Gaveston to hint that Isabella is in love with Mortimer,[5.] but she herself gives no sign of such affection. On the other hand, Mortimer's

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1. "Edward II," Malone Society Reprints, Scene VIII, ll.1169-1175.
2. Scene VIII, ll.1215-1216.
3. ibid., ll.1217-1218.
4. Prof. E.E. Stoll in his "Shakespeare Studies," Chap.III, Section 2, discusses the convention of the "slanderer believed," which, like that of the inconstant woman, called for equal readiness on the part of the audience to lay aside for the time normal standards of judgment and behaviour.
5. Scene IV, ll.470-471: Scene VIII, l.1168.

part of the Machiavellian schemer would gain much by a love-intrigue with the King's wife, so that consistency and probability in the woman's rôle are sacrificed to the demands of the man's part. The episode furnishes proof of the extent to which behaviour and character were governed by certain non-realistic conventions which everyone was content to accept within the theatre.

The lack of interest shown in the woman's rôle in "Edward II" is the more glaring because of the insight into character displayed in the king's part. The processes by which Isabella's love for Edward grows cold could have formed an interesting study. No effort is made along such lines; she remains a stage-puppet with no life apart from that demanded by plot and action. Since such limitations do not appear in the parts of the chief male characters, we cannot put down the deficiency to lack of artistic skill. The handling of Edward's character shows that at this comparatively early stage of dramatic development (1590-'93) a man could have some inner life of his own, some existence apart from plot alone. Certain phrases, compelling attention by their depth and intensity of feeling, show unmistakeably that the tragic situation, if it involved a man, was, to a great dramatist at least, more than a matter of stage effect. In the murder scene in "Edward II" [1] there are short phrases which express more clearly than any long speech the torment endured by a sensitive mind. With these intenser poetic phrases Isabella is connected as part of that happy state the recollection of which increases Edward's despair:

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1. Scene XXIII.

"They give me bread and water, being a king ----
Tell Isabell the queen, I lookt not thus
When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
And there unhorst the Duke of Cleremont." [1].

Her own part, however, does not inspire Marlowe to such flashes of tragic intensity as Edward's. For him she remains a stage figure only.

The poetic impulse which is so clearly expressed in "Edward II" and "Richard II" prepares for the division between the epic type of chronicle play and that in which alarms and excursions no longer provide the bulk of the interest. The verse of "Richard II" in particular is of that mellifluous kind which we instinctively associate with love-poetry, so that it is an easy transition for the mind from "Richard II" to "Edward III." This play shows the true chronicle beginning its inevitable expansion beyond the narrow limits of an historical subject. From plays such as those on the Wars of the Roses nothing new could be expected without the addition of something outside mere historical fact. Before the chronicle play proper had attained its brief spell of popularity, "The Spanish Tragedy" had held the stage and continued to do so even during the florescence of the historical plays. The Elizabethan public had before it a play which showed the crudest of human passions, with "history" - if such a title could be applied - only as a background. Perhaps even to an Elizabethan audience the marches and intrigues of kings grew a little wearisome, remote as they were from the lives of those who watched them. From an audience doubtless alive to its own instinctive promptings we might

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1. Scene XXIII, ll.2707: 2713-2715.

reasonably expect a deep interest in plays of which love formed a part. Marlowe, of all Elizabethan play-wrights the one to whom women and their possibilities mattered least, had been obliged to drag a love-theme into "Edward II." In his other plays, in "Tamburlaine" and "Dr. Faustus," they mattered only as symbols of beauty - the incentives and crowns of adventure, who with the power of loveliness

"launch'd a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium."

The chronicle plays so far, though women had had by no means a small share in several of them, showed no romantic impulse in the treatment of their parts. Such women as have filled a large rôle have been mature in years. Though no actual reference is made to Eleanor's age in "King John," we know her to be old. Margaret in the Henry VI plays soon outgrows any vestiges of youth which she brought from Anjou, and even at the beginning gives no impression of inexperience or immaturity in her speeches or actions. The women whom we know to be young, like Blanche, are unimportant. The young woman upon the stage came into her own with the firm establishment in popular favour of the love-tragedy. In the earlier chronicle plays the ruling passions of the women were not those befitting the part of an immature girl. Hatred and ambition there were in plenty, but these are rather the characteristics of a mature woman, who has lived in a perpetual atmosphere of courts and intrigues. When love makes a perfunctory appearance in the earlier chronicle plays, it seems to be in deference to an unescapable popular demand. Then it is of the most casual, unemotion-

al kind, suggesting no interest on the part of the dramatist.[1] So obvious a thing as the beauty of the woman loved is ignored. Suffolk never says anything of Margaret's beauty, no word, that is, to show that he is looking on her with the eye of a lover. At the most, he addresses her as "fair Margaret," and once, inappropriately enough, as "gentle Queen."

All this shows that the chronicle play, so long as it clung to Holinshed, was barren ground for the growth of a love story. "Edward III" shows the grafting of an exotic love theme on to the native stock. The two kinds of subject are clearly to be distinguished. The story of Edward and the Countess of Salisbury is not woven into the historical part of the play, but remains apart as a mainly irrelevant prologue to the action. The wars in France and the story of the Black Prince are both treated in the conventional historical manner, though more polished in expression and of greater poetic merit than most of the plays which had already appeared.

The episode of the king and Lady Salisbury is based upon one of Bandello's "novelle," translated by Painter in his "Palace of Pleasure."[2] As it is of Italian origin the love story is not casually treated, and the woman's part receives as careful handling as the man's. For a time we leave the "stately tent of war" for the gardens of a castle and for a mode of thought and feeling that is typically Italian. Here the chronicle play draws near to romantic tragedy, for the episode of the Countess of Salisbury shows the characteristics

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1. Contemporary poetry provides a striking contrast. All poets professed some interest in love, and had a stock of phrases and emotions upon which to draw.

2. "The Palace of Pleasure," ed. J. Jacobs, Vol.I, novel 46.

of love-drama. The language in which Edward expresses his passion bears a close resemblance to that of contemporary love poetry. We catch in such lines as these suggestions of Shakespeare's sonnets:

> "There is no summer but in her cheerefull lookes.
> Nor frosty winter but in her disdayne." [1.]

Here we have a repetition of the favourite pastoral convention:

> "To musicke every sommer leaping swaine
> Compares his sunburnt louer when shee speakes." [2.]

A little further on there is the inevitable cataloguing of the beauties of the beloved:

> "Her hair, far softer than the silke wormes twist
> Like to a flattering glas, doth make more faire
> The yelow Amber:-'like a flattering glas'
> Comes in too soone; for, writing of her eies,
> Ile say that like a glas they catch the sunne,
> And thence the hot reflection doth rebounde
> Against my brest, and burnes my hart within.
> Ah, what a world of descant makes my soule
> Upon this voluntarie ground of loue!" [3.]

This elaborately poetic speech is not confined to the king. The Countess welcomes Edward with words which at first bring again to mind a sonnet of Shakespeare's:

> "Let not thy presence, like the Aprill sunne,
> Flatter our earth, and sodenly be done.
> More happie do not make our outward wall
> Then thou wilt grace our inner house withall.
> Our house, my liege, is like a country swaine
> Whose habit rude and manner blunt and plaine
> Presageth nought, yet inly beautified
> With bounties, riches and fair hidden pride." [4.]

The episode is written throughout in ~~such~~ this cloyingly sweet

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1. Shakespeare Apocrypha: "Edward III," Act II, Sc.1, ll.42-3.
2. ibid., ll.107-8.
3. ibid., ll.114-122.
4. Act I, Sc.2, ll.141-149.

verse, over-lavish in its use of ornament and rhetorical devices.

Details bring the Countess before us as an individual. Almost the first speech made by the king in her praise shows her as a mistress of mimicry, a gift never before noted in a woman on the stage:

> "What a strange discourse
> Unfolded she of Dauid, and his Scots!
> 'Euen thus' quoth she, 'he spake,' and then spoke broad
> With epithites and accents of the Scot.
> 'And thus' quoth she, and answered then herself." [1.]

For the first time we see a woman in serious English drama endowed with a homely quality. Credit cannot be given to the dramatist, however, for originality; he found his woman ready created. Yet his initiative must be acknowledged in including in a chronicle play a portrait of a woman not only more nearly full-length than anything that has gone before, but graced here and there with small and intimate details.

The conclusion of the English version of the Italian story of the Countess of Salisbury marks a departure from the source - an alteration which enhances the Countess's charm. The original rewards the Countess's integrity with marriage to Edward, and consequent elevation to the crown of England. With a greater innocence of mind - and a stricter regard for truth - the dramatist represents Edward as conquered by her loyalty, desisting from his pursuit with these words:

> "Arise, true English ladie, whom our Ile
> May better boast of then euer Romaine might
> Of her, whose ransackt treasurie hath taskt
> The vaine indevor of so many pens:

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1. Act III, Sc.1, ll.27-31.

Arise: and be my fault thy honors fame,
Which after ages shall enrich thee with." [1.]

The touch of "true English ladie" suggests that the dramatist aimed at a glorification of English womanhood, showing that his patriotism now embraced more than admiration for his country as a "royal throne of kings." [2.]

These love-scenes show the freshness and innocence of the early Elizabethan dramatic writers before decadence held up women as targets for the shafts of cynicism and immorality. True earnestness inspires the Countess's speeches in defence of her honour, though we may feel that in following the analytic discussions of his Italian original the dramatist has allowed the lady to protest too much. Her speech beginning "As easie may my intellectual soule," [3.] though artificial in the metaphorical turn which it employs, shows none of the self-consciousness which defaces the apologies of the "good" women of Jacobean drama. The Countess rebukes the king for his sake rather than on behalf of her outraged virtue. His fault is examined for its own evil, and for the betrayal of his true self which it will bring with it. She seeks for no reward, and receives none in the shape of material gain - a refreshing departure from Bandello's 'novella.'

The part of the Countess shows the fusion of the warlike qualities of the women of the chronicle plays with the more subtle qualities distinguishing a woman's

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1. Act II, Sc.2, ll.194-199.

2. With this may be compared the end of Lyly's "Euphues and his England," where the author eulogises Elizabeth's virtue and chastity, both of which redound to the greater glory of her country.

3. Act II, Sc.1, ll.235-242.

mind. She defies the king of Scotland and his force, but when she is relieved from danger, her sense of humour and buoyant spirit prevent her from displaying orthodox feminine weaknesses. Her strength of mind is directed to ends different from those aimed at by Margaret or Elinor. The Countess starts with many of the qualities which distinguish those earlier queens of the chronicle plays, but the demands made upon her are those which assail a woman only. She is the first "womanly" woman upon the serious stage, for she is directly confronted with a dilemma peculiar to a woman. Yet at the same time she is not simplified into a mere object of love - the treble part in a love duet. Belimperia, never subtle, thought and acted like a man, even when most a woman. The Italian story inset in a typically English play illustrates very clearly the different attitude towards women in the two races. The Italian 'novelle' specialised in the various aspects of the "affaire du coeur." Lip-service in plenty was paid to womanhood, but there was little deep-seated respect for it. The changed ending of the episode of Edward and the Countess, together with the words in which Edward addresses her, perhaps go to prove that, in the earlier Elizabethan plays at least, the Teutonic respect for women, noted so particularly by Tacitus in the "Germania," survived the Italianate manners and literature introduced into England, and found its expression upon the stage. The replies of the Countess to Edward's entreaties show, in the English adaptation of the story, an unself-consciousness and dignity lacking in the artificial, over-skilful logic of the Italian.

"Edward III" has shown the approach of the chronicle play in one direction towards the romantic drama.

Greene's "James IV," a chronicle play in name only, shows the subordination of any historical interest to the romantic theme. Once again the fertile Italian sources provide the story. The characters are given a pseudo-historical dress, but the details of the plot are taken from Cinthio's "Ecatommithi," the first novel of the 3rd day, which is the story of Arrenopia.[1] In Greene's play, the women are given a charm and freshness that makes them most lovable and gracious. Greene was the first Elizabethan dramatist who understood the nature of women. It would seem that he had had knowledge of one woman - his wife - whose beauty of character he could not forget although he neglected her. Loyalty was her greatest virtue - she looked after Greene on his deathbed, when he was in dire poverty and friendless. In "James IV," at least, the fidelity of the two principal women is their most admirable quality. Greene's women are enriched by his own gift of single-minded simplicity, for the heroines of the Italian original always show signs of the exquisite but artificial world of romance in which they lived.

So many different types of woman have not appeared before in a single play. We have seen how the earlier dramatists, confronted with two different women, could not create two distinct pictures. The same characteristics in each were sought for and emphasised. Greene, with a gift of understanding, draws clearly four different women. There is the Countess of Arran, a dignified, noble lady, full of wise precepts which are the fruit of actual observation, and therefore ring true, un-

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1. P.A. Daniel and W. Creizenach have independently traced the plot to this source. Greene may possibly have known also Cinthio's play "Arrenopia," based on the same story.

like the stock Senecan moralisings. Ida, her daughter, displays a genuine love of retirement, and a scorn for pomp and circumstance which, simple and sincere in their expression, never appear forced or unnatural. Lady Anderson, the Queen's benefactress, is yet again different; a homely and simple housewife. Lastly, the queen Dorothea, one of Greene's happiest creations, completes a quartet which represents the most notable achievement in the characterisation of women as yet to be seen.

The man-like qualities of mind are no longer of chief importance, for the women are not regarded from the same angle as the men. As in "Edward III," they are confronted with a kind of problem far removed from affairs of state and personal ambitions. "James IV" is the first serious play in which the love motive might lead to enmity between two women, for Dorothea and Ida are, in a sense, rivals. Greene, however, does not mar his play with any base passion such as jealousy, which is characteristic of the Gonerils and Regans of Elizabethan drama. He allows no complications to obscure the dominant traits in Ida and Dorothea. Ida's coquetry with Eustace is innocence itself:

Eustace "In needles then there lurkes
Some hidden grace I deem beyond my reach.
Ida "Not grace in them good sir, but those that teach.
Eust. "Say that your needle now were Cupid's sting ----
Ida "Good Lord sir no, for hearts but pricked soft
Are wounded sore, for so I heare it oft. --------
Should life and death within this needle lurke,
Ile prick no hearts, Ile pricke upon my worke." 1.

Her refusal of the king's advances is dictated by an instinctive purity of mind, reinforced by spirit and independence:

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1. "James IV," Malone Society Reprints: Act II, Sc.1, ll.787-805.

Countess. "Ida, come in, and sir if so you please,
Come take a homelie widdowe's entertaine.
Ida "If he haue no great haste, he may come nye.
If hast, tho he be gone, I will not crie." [1].

One sympathises with Ateukin's despondent remark: "I see this labour lost, my hope is vaine."

Dorothea is the only woman in the play who is called upon to exercise initiative in taking a deliberate risk, for Ida and her mother fill passive rôles. Dorothea's part shows the last traces of the mannish spirit which informed the women of the early chronicle plays. It is not without some hesitation that she consents to "jet in breeches like a squire," but the very way in which she expresses her hesitation proves her spirit. She is the deserted wife, but she is above the endless lamentation hitherto considered proper for the part. Spirit and misfortune at last go together. The masculine qualities that Dorothea shows are resolution and courage, but allied to these are feminine quickness of wit, humour and tenderness. With her metamorphosis from queen of Scotland to a squire who "seeks to liue in Irish warres," the disguise theme enters serious drama.

Dorothea, in spite of her temporary change of sex, does not lose that characteristic of gentleness which distinguishes the most attractive of the sex. Her temporary lapse of courage, and the pathos of her situation as she wanders in disguise with a dwarf as her only protection, win the sympathies of the audience more completely than would an incessant, unvaried flow of cheerfulness:

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1. Act II, Sc.1, ll. 929-932.

"Ah Nano, I am wearie of these weedes,
Wearie to weeld this weapon that I bare:
Wearie of loue, from whom my woe proceedes
Wearie of toyle, since I haue lost my deare.
O wearie life, where wanted no distresse,
But every thought is paid with heavinesse." 1.

The skill of the dramatist does not allow her to proceed too long in this vein. After her cry of fear, "We are descried, oh Nano, we are dead" her spirit is roused by Jaques' insults, and she bursts out:

"Callet, me strumpet, Catiue as thou art,
But euen a princesse borne, who scorne thy threats,
Shall neuer French man say, an English mayd,
Of threats of forraine force will be afraid." 2.

This short scene shows how a writer of Greene's natural tact and understanding could, in a brief space, show several sides of a woman's character. Here Dorothea's womanly weakness which seeks for comfort, her humour, and her unconquered spirit all unite. It is a far cry from the plays in which the only variation from man-like strength was shrewish scolding.

Of Dorothea's unswerving loyalty to her husband and her generous forgiveness, the two most beautiful things in the play, not much need be said. So sure is Greene's touch in presenting them that it is difficult not to believe that Dorothea is endowed with the qualities of some woman he knew. She is always natural, a sufficient proof of Greene's understanding of the qualities which make a noble woman. Her refusal to invoke her father's aid against her husband, and her subsequent apology for all loyal wives, are the finest touches in this beautiful sketch:

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1. Act IV, Sc.4, ll.1744-1749.

2. ibid., ll.1791-1794.

"As if they kill not me, who with him fight.
As if his brest be toucht, I am not wounded,
As if he waild, my joyes were not confounded:
We are one heart, tho rent by hate in twaine:
One soule, one essence doth our weale containe:
What then can conquer him that kils not me?" [1].

Nano the dwarf, when he expresses his belief that nobility and queenliness such as Dorothea's cannot be hidden under a disguise, pays his tribute to her character:

"Aske you why? what may a Queene
March forthe in homely weede and be not seene?
The Rose although in thornie shrubs she spread:
Is still the Rose, her beauties waxe not dead.
And noble mindes altho the coate be bare,
Are by their semblance knowne, how great they are." [2].

It is impossible to catch and put into words the spirit that has gone to make the women in "James IV" so attractive. We can see artlessness, reverence for women and many other qualities, but we cannot find and set down the secret of its freshness and wholesomeness. The Italian source is treated with native vigour and attractive naiveté. The position of the Countess in "Edward III" and the Lady Ida in this play is alike, but Greene differs from the author of "Edward III" in never for a moment dallying with the sophisticated arguments of the original. "James IV," though a tragi-comedy, must be placed with the serious drama by reason of the gravity with which the main theme is treated. It introduces the disguise motive into serious drama, and especially that form of it in which the wronged woman takes to the disguise.[3]. Of conventional rhetorical devices, two can be found in this play which, though not actually used by the women, are inspired by them. One is that very

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1. Act III, Sc.3, ll.1480-1485.

2. Act III, Sc.3, ll.1492-1496.

3. A convention later to be extensively used by Beaumont and Fletcher; q.v. post, Chap.V, Section A.

popular Euphuistic introspection in which one idea is tossed to and fro in the mind, while the character hesitates as to what course to pursue. James, vacillating over the meditated murder of Dorothea, thus argues with himself:-

> "What, murther of my Queene?
> Yet to enjoy my loue, what is my Queene?
> O but my vowe and promise to my Queene?
> I, but my hope to gaine a fairer Queene.
> With how contrarious thoughts am I withdrawne!
> Why linger I twixt hope and doubtfull feare:
> If Dorothea die, will Ida loue?" [1].

The other device - one of rhetoric - suggests the influence of Marlowe's Zenocrate speech:

> "Go to mine Ida, tell her that I vowe
> To raise her head, and make her honours great.
> Go to mine Ida, tell her that her haires
> Sal be embollished with orient pearles, ----etc." [2].

This speech also recalls the mode of expression so frequently seen in contemporary love-poetry, a style already noted in "Edward III."

Both plays, "Edward III" and "James IV," show, the former the approach to, the latter the loss of the historical play in, the romantic drama based on non-English subjects. In spite of the exotic themes, the innocence and freshness of the best Elizabethan dramatists, and their "joie de vivre," gave new life to artificial and conventional subjects. The Italian sources used did not present the 'novella' at its best. Boccaccio was a more perfect master of his art than Bandello and Cinthio, his followers. It was to second-rate sources that the English dramatists, with a few exceptions, went for sub-

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1. Act II, Sc.2, ll.1139-1145.

2. Act V, Sc.5, ll.1176-1179.

jects, but what they borrowed they made at this date exclusively English. Both plays glorify the name of English womanhood, its fidelity and courage. Through Lady Anderson, Greene voices his praise of English women:

> "What wondrous constancie is this I heare?
> If English dames their husbands loue so deer,
> I fear me, in the world they have no peere." [1.]

After 1595 a more restrained note can be detected in plays based on authentic historical material. Comic episodes increase in importance and encroach upon the space formerly taken up with battles and political intrigue, while the characters use language more nearly approximating to that of everyday life. Shakespeare's "Henry IV" and "Henry V" plays mark the climax of the play which makes use of genuine historical material. These plays are not tragedies even in the old sense assigned to the term by Chaucer:

> "The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,
> And fillen so that ther nas no remedie
> To bringe hem out of hir adversitee."

Military scenes in great number no longer provide the chief attraction even in plays such as "Henry V," blatant in its attitude of "My country right or wrong." [2.] We find that the comic heroes, Pistol, Fluellen and Gower, are allowed to encroach upon such military scenes as appear in "Henry V." The play of "Sir John Oldcastle" (1598) shows yet another way of treating genuine histori-

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1. Act V, Sc.5, ll.2332-2334, and cf. supra, p.72.

2. although this play goes back more closely in spirit to the historical plays of the preceding five years than its other contemporaries on authentic history, e.g. "Henry IV," "Oldcastle," There were earlier parallels for the successful king, e.g., "Edward I."

cal material. The king is no longer the central figure from whom the action springs, although the plot is chiefly concerned with a conspiracy against him.[1] The hero of the play is a commoner, the king's friend. This innovation is to be seen in other plays which appeared, one some years earlier - "Sir Thomas More" (c.1590) - but the majority about the close of the century - for example, Heywood's "If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody" (1604-5). Still later, in those revivals of the historical play, "Henry VIII" (1612-1613), and "Perkin Warbeck" (pr. 1633), the practice is continued, Wolsey in the former and Warbeck himself in the latter filling rôles as important as those of any king in the earlier plays.

There is no peculiar thread of development to distinguish the women's parts. Plays such as "Sir John Oldcastle," "Sir Thomas Stukeley" (pr. 1605), and "When you See Me," (1604), go back in style to the early chronicles and allow little importance in a serious connection to the women's parts.[2] When the chronicle assimilated itself to comedy there was no female type to take the place of the tragedy-queen who was not only unsuitable in the new kind of historical play but was also worked out as an effective stage character. When the historical play went back to earlier models for guidance in the handling of material the women's parts suffered equally, for, as we have seen, in most of the early plays there was no room for women other than of the Eleanor - Margaret type. Shakespeare's superior dramatic technique enabled him to use the women in his later chronicle plays to show up a different side of his men. Yet even his

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1. The Scroop conspiracy which forms the subject of Act II Sc.2 of "Henry V."

2. "Oldcastle," it is true, allows a serious part to a woman, but Lady Oldcastle is of no intrinsic importance to the plot. She appears only as an appendage of her husband.

deserts her husband for reasons never adequately explained. Even when we are prepared to accept this convention, Heywood puts another difficulty in the way with his oversentimental handling of the situation. He does not wish to damn her completely by allowing her to leave her husband willingly for Edward, therefore she is made to display a reluctance to sin which, had it been more moderately expressed, would have had more power to convince:[1].

> "Well, I will in; and ere the time begin
> Learn how to be repentant for my sin."

Like her prototype Anne Frankford, she repents, and in as stagey a manner:

> "Let me go with thee, Shore, though not as wife
> (Yet as thy slave) since I have lost that name,
> I will redeem the wrong that I have done thee
> With my true service, if thou wilt accept it." [2].

Heywood's sentimental cast of mind shows itself most clearly in the scene between Shore's wife and her rival Elizabeth.[3]. In a paroxysm of generosity both women kneel before the king each imploring him to love the other best. Tears flow in torrents, and the whole effect is ludicrous. In his efforts to keep the audience's sympathy with his guilty heroine, Heywood has overstepped the bounds of restraint.[4].

"Edward IV" is an exception, the outcome of its

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1. Prof. E.E. Stoll in his "Shakespeare Studies," Chap. VII, Section 5, discusses the peculiarly tender conscience which prevailed among Elizabethan stage sinners. The worm that dieth not gives them no peace - they sin, know they are sinning, but do not refrain. This convention may help to explain Jane Shore's self-reproach which, however, does not keep her from wrong-doing.
2. I Edward IV, Act V, Sc.4.
3. II Edward IV, Act II, Sc.2.
4. Jane's wearisome self-abnegation is only redeemed by one dash of spirit when her former hangers-on refuse to help her in her adversity (III,2):
   "First, let me die, ere I do put my trust
   In any fleering spaniel of you all."
   Generally she exceeds even the seventy times seven limit in forgiving her enemies.

the women who took a part in them could not be developed very far. These plays appeared in the latter half of the nineties, after the species had been tried upon the stage for some five years, so that, if the women's parts had lent themselves to peculiarly effective dramatic treatment, we could naturally expect the playwrights to have exploited them to the full. We find, however, that no further advance beyond the tragedy-queen type has been made in strictly historical drama. Innovations such as have been noted in "James IV" and "Edward III" result from the blending of romantic elements with serious history.

The descent of the historical play to a middle level is nowhere more clearly seen than in Heywood's "Edward IV" (pr.1600: acted c.1594). This playwrights's sympathy with, and understanding of, erring womanhood, brings the play close in spirit to his domestic tragedy, "A Woman Killed with Kindness." The shifting of interest from the royal figure to one humbler in station is, as a result of Heywood's natural predilection for the bourgeois, carried to a further length than in any other historical play. As a general dramatic rule the bourgeois element is confined to the comic parts, but in Heywood's play it forms the tragic theme. When the king appears it is never in full court, but always among citizens or country folk. There are no battles on the scale of the Wars of the Roses, no marching and counter-marching. The tragedy is that of Jane Shore and her husband, both well-to-do but unpretentious citizens who are caught up against their wills in the affairs of the king.

Heywood's study of Jane Shore is unfortunately marred by the convention of the inconstant wife,[1] who

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1. noted supra, pp. 64-66: see also "The Domestic Tragedy," post, pp. 193-195.

deserts her husband for reasons never adequately explained. Even when we are prepared to accept this convention, Heywood puts another difficulty in the way with his oversentimental handling of the situation. He does not wish to damn her completely by allowing her to leave her husband willingly for Edward, therefore she is made to display a reluctance to sin which, had it been more moderately expressed, would have had more power to convince:[1].

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author's bent of mind, to the general rules of historical drama, and the character of Jane Shore would perhaps be more in place in an avowedly domestic tragedy such as "A Woman Killed." The historical theme is worked up by a dramatist who is interested more in his own class of people than in the deeds of kings, and who had little capacity for projecting himself into the life of pageantry, plots and alarums, which to the citizen educated by the sequence of chronicle plays constituted "history."

The earlier historical plays were occasionally made to serve ends of political propaganda and, in one or two cases, of morality. In those plays which were intended to appeal to the patriotism or partisan feeling of the audience, we find that the women are the targets for the dramatists' arrows. It is not at once obvious why the vilification of a woman should be regarded as a particularly satisfactory means of hitting out at a country which was England's enemy.[1] Such, however, is Peele's aim in his wretched play "Edward I." The idea behind his choice of a woman to blacken may have been that a woman's vices and cruelties can with very little effort be made to appear meaner and more despicable than a man's. Only women of a very exceptional type and in very propitious circumstances could plan or act or sin on a grandiose scale. Peele's object in flinging mud at Eleanor of Castile is, however, obvious, for in view of the enmity between England and Spain at the time (1590-91), the very mention of "Castile" would rouse patriotic feeling, while

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1. It is perhaps parallel to the habit of insulting a man through his mother, to the Oriental mind especially the worst form of abuse.

the sight of Eleanor, a Spaniard, held up to scorn and contempt, would satisfy all the jingoistic sentiments of the onlookers. Good, patriotic Englishmen at that time would despise as well as hate the Spaniard, for in 1588 the regal Armada had been defeated by a force far its inferior in size, strength, and equipment. Yet it is astounding that a woman of such noble character and pious memory as Eleanor of Castile, near whose monument at Charing Cross Peele himself must have lived and worked, should have been insulted in such a lamentable piece of hack-work as "Edward I." Peele runs the gamut of pettiness, meanness and absurdity, until he reaches a great sin - adultery, and that with a low-born friar. Now at last the King, who has not been seriously concerned with his wife's other misdeeds, (to him, presumably, peccadilloes,) is roused. This is the crowning point of the queen's iniquity, and the most convincing way Peele could find of bespattering with mud the living nation to which the long-dead Eleanor had belonged.[1.]

"I Henry VI" contains, in the part of Joan of Arc, an example of the same vilifying of an enemy, this time of one who had been victorious at England's expense. The qualities of a masculine mind which could be forgiven in Margaret of Anjou who was a queen, and above all English by marriage and identification of interests, could not be passed over in a peasant woman. Whereas Margaret had been credited with initiative and a gift for leadership, Joan's ability in the same direction was a manifestation of the black art, for in no other way could she, a

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1. Adultery is, on the Elizabethan stage, the inevitable goal of any woman unfavourably viewed. As a woman's "virtue" had come to mean one virtue only out of many, so any serious defect in her character must express itself in unchastity. See post, IV, "The Domestic Tragedy," passim.

mere woman, have succeeded in defeating Talbot, the terror of the French. Her visions of the Virgin were sent by the devil, for Heaven could not possibly fight against the English. Joan had lived in an age in which God and the devil still walked among men - especially the devil. She was judged by another age hardly less superstitious and fiercer in its patriotism, therefore the verdict recorded in "I Henry VI" was logical and natural to the English mind. Once again, adultery was a matter of course with her, treachery her daily practice, and Joan of Arc was condemned as a criminal upon the stage to satisfy the demands of the "little Englander" of that time.

The women who are idealised to serve the ends of propaganda are as misrepresented as those vilified for similar purposes. Heywood, of all dramatists the most unsuitable, chose the life of Queen Elizabeth for the subject of "If You Know Not Me," a play intended to glorify the queen as the defender of the reformed faith. He was unable to keep the gentle sentimental note from her part, so that we are presented with a pious Elizabeth aspiring towards martyrdom:

> "My God doth know
> I can no note but truth; that with heaven's King
> One day in choirs of angels I shall sing."

At once we think of the comment of the Spanish ambassador upon a similarly-expressed ambition of the queen's to become a nun and live in a cell - "this woman is possessed by a hundred thousand devils." Heywood aims at a vindication of English Protestantism by means of Elizabeth, its champion, and we can imagine the fervour of the

applause when at her coronation she is presented by the Lord Mayor with an English Bible. A similar purpose is shown in Rowley's play on Henry VIII, "When You See Me, You Know Me." (1604), in which the most un-romantic side of Henry's matrimonial affairs incidentally appears. His sixth wife, Catherine Parr, conducts a kind of debate with the bishops Bonner and Gardiner on the Protestant versus the Catholic faiths. Her zeal for religion nearly costs her her head, but she emerges triumphant as an example of Protestant truth and wifely duty.

One or two curious survivals or adaptations of the morality form appear among the historical plays. Such plays as "A Knack to Know a Knave" (1592), "Nobody and Somebody" (1592) and "The Whore of Babylon" (1604) show this influence very clearly, while "The Birth of Merlin" (c.1597) contains a slighter hint of the old tradition in the two women's parts, Constantia and Modestia. It is even to be seen in "The Mayor of Queenborough" (1596-1601) in the use of the ticket-name Castiza,[1] for a woman who is little more than the embodiment of the abstract virtue of Chastity. In the two earliest plays, "A Knack to Know a Knave" and "Nobody and Somebody," the morality influence does not appear in the parts of the women, but is confined to a small group of abstract characters and those representing the professions, such as Honesty, Courtier, Priest, Coneycatcher, etc. "Nobody and Somebody" shows the women as figures of comedy rather than of serious drama.

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1. later used again by Tourneur in "The Revenger's Tragedy."

The parts of Modestia and Constantia are of no individual merit, but are interesting in so far as they point forward to the trick common among later dramatists of labelling their women characters even in serious or poetic plays.[1] In "The Birth of Merlin" these two women are loosely connected with the plot by means of love affairs which are made to reveal those particular qualities which distinguish the sisters Modestia and Constantia. The dramatist responsible for their parts does not trouble to clear up the confused relations between the sisters and their respective suitors. Modestia, however, uses marriage as a means of displaying her singular piety and purity, not only refusing to be married herself but "saving" Constantia from such a fate. To the latter's plea of motherhood as a justification for marriage - usually guaranteed to awake a spark of response in the most modest of Elizabethan stage women - she receives the following damping reply:

> "Who can enjoy it without sorrow, rather?
> And that most certain where the joy's unsure.
> Seeing the fruits that we beget endure
> So many miseries, that oft we pray
> The Heavens to shut up their afflicted day:
> At best we do but bring forth Heirs to die
> And fill the coffins of our enemy." [2]

That the dramatist takes Modestia seriously would appear to be indicated by the manner in which her words infect Constantia, who is filled with zeal for the godly life, waves her husband aside with the words "pray, trouble me no further" and outdoes her sister's Philistine gloom with such observations as:

> "All our Life
> Is but one good betwixt two Ague-days,
> Which from the first fever we have time to praise
> A second Fever takes us." [3]

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1. notably Tourneur. The custom of bestowing ticket-names was, of course, much older in comedy.
2. "The Birth of Merlin:"Shakespeare Apocrypha, Act I, Sc.1 ll.115-119.
3. " " " " Act III, Sc.2, ll.117-121.

It would almost seem that the author took a jaundiced view of life and the means of propagating it, for as a contrast to the wise virgins who fled from marriage he shows us the wicked Artesia who has lured the king into the folly of marrying her. Such a whole-hearted "taedium vitae," though distinguishing some of the more thoughtful of the later writers, such as Webster, is non-existent among the majority of the true Elizabethan writers.

Dekker's "Whore of Babylon" calls for a word chiefly as a literary curiosity. Some suggestion of the influence of "The Faerie Queene" appears in the choice of names - Fideli, Florimell, Parthenophil, etc. The play reproduces in allegorical form the religious position in England under Elizabeth, and is intended as an attack on Rome, and a glorification at the same time of England and her queen.

As the plays on authentic historical material waned in popularity, those dealing with mythical or pseudo-historical themes increased in number. They appeared when the impulse which kept the chronicle-play within narrow historical bounds was spending itself, and when it was becoming increasingly clear that from the "epic" form nothing new could be expected. One genuine chronicle-play must be very like another, but plays on subjects in which the dramatist's imagination could expand unchecked by historical considerations afforded more scope for variety. From such plays as Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" and Greene's "James IV" (1589), "George a Greene" (ditto) and "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" (1591) came the "romantic" influence to be found in "The Mayor of Queenborough" and "The Birth of Merlin." This is not to say that the two groups are alike in tone and

spirit. The later plays are tragedies of lust and murder, far removed from the light and life of Greene's work. Their "romantic" bias consists in magnifying the importance of the love theme. "The Mayor of Queenborough," usually regarded as Middleton's work, shows even as early as 1596 one of his chief characteristics, that of heaping vices upon a woman. His Roxena is a portrait of a revoltingly wicked woman. We have seen female villains before, but the early chronicle plays have been free from the details of illicit love which make the "Mayor of Queenborough" so gross.[1] When the subject was introduced it had, in keeping with the masculine type of heroine, been treated as a side issue, as it was in the lives of many of the men. Margaret of Anjou's love for Suffolk showed up another and not unfavourable aspect of her character, for she was faithful and even gentle with him, as far as this was possible for one with a "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide." Roxena's love, on the other hand, is a means to the gratification of personal ambition. She is without a scruple; a triumphant end more than justifies the means:

> "If lost virginity can win such a day,
> I'll have no daughter but shall learn my way."

The malignancy which is so clearly shown in Middleton's representation of Bianca Capello[2] already appears in the abandoned Roxena, a woman devoid of any gleam of the fascination and greatness of soul which wins admiration for her fellow-sinners such as Vittoria Corombona.

Artesia, the treacherous queen in "The Birth of Merlin," provides another example of the female villain

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1. This objectionable feature is the more noticeable in view of the general purity of tone of Elizabethan drama.

2. see post, pp. 258 - 260.

with no redeeming feature except a kind of hardened courage. In her part something of an issue wider than Roxena's personal ambition makes an appearance. She hopes by marriage with the leader of her enemies, Aurelius, to betray Britain to her fellow-Saxons. Both Roxena and Artesia are in different ways and degrees examples less obvious than Eleanor of Castile and Joan of Arc of intentional distortion of fact or probability for nationalist ends. Roxena represents the denigration of a harmless character with a slight though definite connection with accepted legend.[1] Artesia is imaginary. She has been thrust into the legend to serve, like Roxena, patriotic ends. Both are associated with the invading Saxons, and the thought of invasion even at as distant a date as the Vth century was to the popular dramatist like a red rag to a bull. The vilification of Rowena may also have been prompted by the dramatist's desire to enliven by some highly spiced episode the interest of the chronicle material, now wearing somewhat thin.

The varieties of chronicle which appeared in the last decade of the XVIth century have been noted, together with the women, who have not changed very much from play to play. Either they have been unimportant from the point of view of plot and action, or, when important, they have been standardised. This may be accepted as a general rule for the women who appear in the chronicle play during its period of greatest popularity.

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1. Nennius says very little of the historical Rowena who is the foundation for the dramatised Roxena, but nothing that he has to say is in any way discreditable to the lady.

At the beginning of the new century the historical play had practically died out, apart from the small group inspired by the death of Elizabeth and the increase of anti-Catholic feeling.[1] Yet when we might expect this type of play to be entirely forgotten, examples of it re-appear, bearing the impress of later tastes and dramatic conventions. They are more polished productions than the earlier type, for some twenty years' additional experience is contained in them. They are the work of dramatists well skilled in their craft, Shakespeare, Fletcher and Ford.[2] We might expect the women characters to show a corresponding increase in subtlety and design, but apart from Katherine of Aragon, they are disappointingly unoriginal. The historical setting appears to cramp the style of a mature playwright. The world in which the action passes - a world of events, principles and reasons - sets personal emotion at a discount. Moreover, after the death of Elizabeth it became less natural and easy to portray a woman exercising a manlike control of policy and influencing men by force of character rather than by "sex appeal." The best chronicle plays are those in which any element of personal feeling is most successfully suppressed. The cruder plays, such as "The Troublesome Raigne" and "The Famous Victories," show how the scenes in which the impersonality of history gives place to the more impetuous rush of passion, hatred or love, stand apart from the main body of the drama. These scenes are the more enduring, for they stand out, imperfectly

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1. i.e., "Sir Thomas Wyat:" "When You See Me:" "If You Know not Me:" "Whore of Babylon:" all between 1602 and 1604.

2. "Henry VIII" (1612-13) - Shakespeare and Fletcher, ~~F~~. "Bonduca" (1616) - Fletcher: "Perkin Warbeck"(1634) - Ford.

expressed though they are, from a mass of material which could only interest a narrowly patriotic audience. The stage is hardly the place for the representation of history, no matter what the period.[1] Even writers of skill and some insight, like Fletcher and Ford, cannot overcome the limitations inevitably imposed by the historical play. Shakespeare is more successful[2] because in using the story of Katherine of Aragon he was treating an historical event which had been produced by personal and even domestic desires. She was not a woman of action, though undoubtedly she had a strong personality, and the strength of will that is found with dignity, while it is well known that she was greatly loved by her subjects. It is not easy to determine whether the Katherine of the play is the outcome of a tradition which had grown up round the real queen, or whether her part is dictated by the general dramatic ideal of the wronged wife. Most probably reality and convention met to decide the treatment of her part.

Piety, dignity and true humility, were qualities which had distinguished the real Katherine. Allied with these in the play is a touch of shrewdness which redeems her from any danger of inert insipidity. To Cardinal Wolsey she recalls the spirituality which should distinguish all his deeds and words. The woman, with right on her side, rebukes the pillar of the Church:

> "My learn'd lord cardinal
> Deliver all with charity."[3]

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1. Mr. John Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln" begins where the Elizabethan plays end. He uses as dramatic material the personal emotion generated by deeds of historical significance.
2. It is generally accepted that he was responsible for the part of Katherine in "Henry VIII."
3. "Henry VIII," Act I, Sc.2, ll.142-143.

Her piousness is no mere facile lip-service, but a deep concern for the things commonly forgotten in the rush of worldly business. When Buckingham's servant has accused his master of treason, Katherine thus brings before him the deadly peril in which he may involve himself:

> "Take good heed
> You charge not in your spleen a noble person
> And spoil your nobler soul." [1]

It is from Wolsey, her enemy, that she receives the most sincere tribute to the charity and wisdom she has already displayed on behalf of the king's over-burdened subjects:

> "I do profess
> You speak not like yourself; who ever yet
> Have stood to charity and display'd the effects
> Of disposition gentle and of wisdom
> O'ertopping woman's power." [2]

In Katherine's part a kind of ironical use is made of the "weak woman" convention. When the two Princes, temporal and spiritual, endeavour to pit their authority against her outraged dignity she disarms them with her simplicity:

> "My lord, my lord,
> I am a simple woman, much too weak
> To oppose your cunning. You're meek and humble-
> mouth'd:
> You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,
> With meekness and humility; but your heart
> Is cramm'd with arrogancy, spleen and pride."etc. [3]

When she has routed the "churchmen's habits" who have tried to win her consent to Henry's will, she excuses

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1. "Henry VIII," Act I, Sc.2, ll. 142-143.
2. Act II, Sc.4, ll. 84-88.
3. Act II, Sc.4, ll. 105 et seq.

herself in words which contain a hint of irony:

> "Pray forgive me
> If I have used myself unmannerly;
> You know I am a woman, lacking wit
> To make a seemly answer to such persons." [1.]

Katherine is far removed from the venomous Margaret of Anjou whose first impulse was to curse, and who, even when she was on the point of a final separation from her lover, could cry out to him,"Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemies?" Yet Katherine is never a patient Griselda, for her speeches display considerable insight into character, and a thoughtful turn of mind which never characterised the meek, unreasoning, faithful wife of mediaeval or Elizabethan tradition.[2.]

The two last examples of the historical play proper show no originality in their treatment of the women's parts. Neither "Bonduca" nor "Perkin Warbeck" affords their authors the scope of "Henry VIII." Bonduca herself cannot be other than ferocious, for all that is known of the war-like Boadicea makes it impossible for her to be otherwise. What quality of tone was to be imparted depended, however, upon Fletcher, and he has only succeeded in making her repellent. Everything she says is uttered in a strident voice. In her opening speech indeed, she may be said to express herself like a hysterical feminist:

> "Twice we have beat them, Nennius, scatter'd 'em;
> And through their big-boned Germans, on whose pikes
> The honour of their actions sits in triumph,
> Made themes for songs to shame 'em: And a woman

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1. Act III, Sc.1, ll. 176-179.

2. The part of Anne Bullen in "Henry VIII"is designed to throw up Katherine's worth. Henry, like the "base Indian," is prepared to throw away for a frivolous, empty-headed young woman," a pearl Richer than all his tribe."

A woman beat 'em, Nennius; a weak woman,
A woman beat these Romans." [1]

To this outburst Caratach dryly retorts:

"So it seems,
A man would shame to talk so."

Fletcher cannot allow the situation to develop naturally without making Bonduca underline the paradox of her position, as in the almost hysterical emphasis on "woman" in her opening speech. That Caratach is allowed his retort shows also that the dramatist is not taking his central figure very seriously.

Whenever the women in this play show any of the traits which gave a kind of individuality to similar women in the earlier chronicle plays, they are mercilessly snubbed. Bonduca, who, if legend was to be at all respected, was an astute and courageous commander, is roundly rated by Caratach, her inferior, though a relative, for giving an order:

"The woman fool! Why did you give the word
Unto the carts to charge down, and our people
In gross before the enemy? We pay for't ----
Why do you offer to command? The devil,
The devil and his dam, too! who bid you
Meddle in men's affairs?" [2]

The play, in spite of bearing Bonduca's name for a title, is better adapted to exalt the magnanimity of Caratach than her courage. When Fletcher wrote, the women's rôle in tragedy was connected only with love. Shakespeare gave us Lady Macbeth, and the women of King Lear, as well as Desdemona and Katherine, figures of universal significance although they were created when the conventions

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1. "Bonduca," Act I, Sc.1.

2. " Act III, Sc.1.

governing the treatment of women were gradually hardening into a few fixed moulds. Beaumont and Fletcher completed the process, for the great majority of their fifty-two plays deal with love in some form. Bonduca is not in love, nor associated with the love-intrigues of others, and the dramatists, though they work her up with rhetorical energy, can take no real interest in her at all. Sources demanded that she should have a masculine temperament,[1] but this is resented by the men in the play, and made a matter for reproach from her own side, and execration from the enemy. The dramatists who created Bonduca had lost the old elasticity. They worked for a stage less prompt to see heroism; certainly less likely to see it in unlikely places.

Ford appeared to embark upon his historical play in a somewhat aggrieved spirit, if we may judge from the Prologue to "Perkin Warbeck:"

> "It is become more justice to revive
> The antic follies of the times than strive
> To countenance wise industry."

Perhaps it is not remarkable that his attempt was unsuccessful. His other tragic work,[2] indeed, hardly suggests that historical drama would be his forte. He was writing in an age which called for more polished dramatic work, so that Ford would be incapable of ranging over the historical field with the light-hearted ease of his Elizabethan forbears. Furthermore, he limited him-

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1. It is worth noting, however, that even this is minimised by attributing to her that inevitable female characteristic, instability; v. Act I, Sc.2, where, under the influence of Caratach's rebuke of her immoderate boasting, she finally suggests that peace be made with the enemy: "for now I love these Romans."

2. see post: "The Jacobean Tragedy," Section B, Ford.

self by choosing for his hero a shadowy creature inadequate for tragedy both in history and on the stage.[1] This, in turn, reflects upon the heroine, Lady Katherine Gordon, who actually leaves Dalyell, one of the two really impressive figures in the play, for the weak and spineless Warbeck. She degenerates into the sentimental Aspatia - Bellario type,[2] raised a little above their level by beautiful tributes such as her father's:

"Kate, Kate, thou grow'st upon my heart like peace."[3]

Ford evidently felt that the crowning glory of this gentle, loveable woman must be absolute fidelity, for he magnificently disregards Bacon's historical evidence and makes her swear:

"To die a faithful widow to thy bed;
Not to be forced or won: O never, never."[4]

In reality she married three further husbands.

With Perkin Warbeck the historical play dealing with actual personages passes from the stage. But the chronicle play had not survived in its full glory, with its own distinctive merit, much after 1599. By then its possibilities had been realised and exploited to their fullest extent. Further plays of the kind would be variations upon a theme already hackneyed. Moreover, enthusiasm, innocence, and the rushing force of imagination had all weakened, with the inevitable result that the plays, deprived of all that gave them strength, individuality and lasting value, received the impress of other

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1. Ford's Warbeck displays none of the charm with which Bacon credited him.
2. v. post, "The Jacobean Tragedy:" Section A. Beaumont and Fletcher.
3. "Perkin Warbeck," Act I, Sc.2.
4. " " Act V, Sc.3.

types and gradually merged with them. Long before the species had died, however, the women's parts had been worked out. Elizabethan history was a record of stirring events, not of the interplay of character and personality, which immediately curtailed to a very great degree the possibilities of using women effectively in historical drama. We may say that Margaret of Anjou represents the limit reached in the characterisation of women in the chronicle play.[1] Other plays contain variations upon her theme, or an unconsciously "artistic" use of the women for lyric relief.

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1. There are, of course, exceptions such as Katharine of Aragon, and the women in pseudo-historical plays or episodes.

III

The Revenge Tragedy.

The "Spanish Tragedy" (1588 approx.) marks the first appearance upon the Elizabethan stage of the revenge motive in tragedy. This type of drama remained popular throughout the period, and included some of the finest plays of the time. Though this class of play is numerically not large, the works it includes show much variety in the treatment of the women's parts.

We have come now to a kind of play which of necessity shows women in emotional parts. Unlike the chronicle play the revenge play has always at least one woman in it. A play which exploited the popularity of historical subjects could dispense with feminine interest. Whether the dramatist felt it desirable to give space to a woman depended upon the historical subject chosen. If it happened to be one in which a woman had originally played a stirring part, she passed from history to the play. If not, the brief appearance of a royal or noble mother, a casual love-scene, the terms of a political marriage, are his only acknowledgment of the existence of another sex.

From the very beginning of the revenge play, on the other hand, women took a large part in the plot. Love and revenge went hand in hand in many of the Italian 'novelle,' translations of which were an inexhaustible mine for the Elizabethan playwright. When the dramatist was forced to invent or improve on a plot, he soon learnt to understand the dramatic value of a woman as a foil to a man, as a source of lyrical emotion and pathos. He could create a pathetic, innocent maiden to set off by contrast the lurid character of a man involved in shameful court intrigues, as Castiza sets off Vendice in "The Revenger's Tragedy." The helpless

woman, through whom the villain could still further torment his victim, is another variation to be seen in Marston's "Antonio's Revenge." A different type altogether is the strong-minded woman who assists in executing a plan of revenge - of such a kind is Belimperia. Again, there is the gentle woman steeled by her injuries into joining the quest for revenge. Such women can be found in "Antonio's Revenge" - Maria, - and Chettle's "Hoffman," - Martha. Two varieties emerge as forming the foundation for the conception of women's parts in the revenge tragedies. These are the pathetic and strong-minded types. The former throughout retains most clearly a kind of consistency in treatment, for it is kept apart from the main stream of action, and appears more as a chorus of woe than as an active participator in the plot. The latter gradually becomes more confused, but is always so treated as to gain by contrast with the pathetic type. At first we find the women involved in the scheme of revenge as a result of injuries which they have received at the hands of him whom they pursue - for example, Belimperia. Then - in Tourneur, who represents the middle stage of the revenge tragedy - the women stand outside the revenge plot, though they are unwittingly involved to some extent in the intrigues which this plot sets in motion. As the revenge plays draw near to the end of their course in Webster's two tragedies, the women are found as victims of the plots which are launched against them as the result of rash or sinful deeds which they themselves have committed.

The revenge tragedies fall into two groups. The first is that in which the women in love take a share in the plot of revenge. This type of the strong-minded woman is derived from Seneca's tragedy-queens, Medea, Clytaemnestra. Due to Senecan influence, also, is the fortitude with which the women as well as the men meet death, or, if not actual

death, great risks which they accept with Stoic calm. In the first group are "The Spanish Tragedy," "Hoffman," (1602), and "The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois" (1604). The second group consists of those plays in which the woman fills a passive role, such as "Antonio's Revenge" (1599), "Hamlet," and "The Atheist's Tragedy" (1603). When we come to "The Revenger's Tragedy," (1607) we find that the women have no knowledge of the revenge plot, but are affected by it. This play is the half-way stage between the plays already mentioned and Webster's two tragedies, generally regarded as the last of this 'genre.'[1] In "The White Devil" (1611) and "The Duchess of Malfy" (1617) the part of avenger is not confined to any one individual. The actual executant of revenge was a tool in the hands of those greater in position, who gave him the commission. He was an unscrupulous adventurer, ready to murder for money, instead of the prince's or duke's son of the earlier plays. In both plays his victims are women. This degradation followed inevitably from the process of theatrical debasement of the revenger, which reached its culmination in "Vendice." Webster's "Duchess of Malfy" shows what might be expected to be the normal change in the part of the woman as the position of the revenger was altered. One would expect the "good" woman of the play to be the victim, and this is actually the position of the Duchess. "The White Devil," on the other hand, shows the wicked woman, Vittoria, as the victim of a revenge plot. There is a similarity, however, in the position of these two women, so unlike in charac-

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[1] By Webster's time the 'revenge' motive was almost indistinguishably fused with the Italianate vice and palace intrigue which made the material of the so-called Romantic tragedy of Beaumont and Fletcher and their successors.

ter. Both suffer for their love, the Duchess because she values it too slightly in the eyes of her proud brothers, Vittoria because, spurred on by ambition, she sets it too high and brings about the murder of her lover's wife, and draws down on herself the wrath of those too highly placed for her to defy them after his death.

The dramatists handle in different ways the more Senecan conception of woman herself as an avenger. Of the women in the first three plays only Belimperia is allowed actually to kill, and her act of vengeance is at the last moment swiftly despatched. There is no torture, or mocking, or rant out-Heroding Herod to alienate sympathy from her. Her offer to help Hieronimo in his scheme of revenge is simple and emphatic:

> "Hieronimo, I will consent, conceale,
> And ought that may effect for thine auaile,
> Ioyne with thee to revenge Horatio's death." [1]

Even her most emphatic protests of vengeance we can receive with sympathy and recognise as proportionate to her wrongs:

> "My selfe should send their hatefull soules to helle,
> That wrought his downfall with extreamest death."

It is worthy of note that Belimperia is presented to the audience from the very beginning of the play as a woman capable of undertaking revenge for one she has loved. She clearly subscribes to the doctrine of "an eye for an eye." Her first comment on the narrative of Andrea's death is:

> "Would thou hadst slaine him that so slew my love." [3]

She is represented throughout as cool and strong-minded. Her womanly qualities appear in her love-scenes only; elsewhere

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1. "The Spanish Tragedy," Act IV, Sc.1, ll.46-48
2. " " " " " " " ll.28-29
3. " " " Act I, Sc.4, ll. 30

Kyd is at very little pains to differentiate her from a man. The theme of revenge was of primary importance, and men and women were adjuncts of the plot, not yet separate entities. The man takes the initiative in preparing the plot, but the woman plays an equally active part in discharging it. Yet there is one small point to be remembered in the part of Belimperia as revenger, that in "The Spanish Tragedy" there were two villains to despatch. Kyd may have given one part which involved actual killing to Belimperia in order to make the disposal of the two villains easier. On the other hand, it is impossible to deny the extreme effectiveness of a woman - especially one as majestic and impressive as Belimperia - coolly and promptly killing a man and then stabbing herself. Nothing like it had been done before, and Kyd, in giving such a part to a woman, reveals his stage-craft, and natural genius for creating effective situations.

Such a rôle as that of Belimperia could count on imitation, but we do not find in either "Hoffman" or "The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois" that the woman in love takes as large a share in the actual execution of vengeance. In Chapman's play we see one woman fairly close to Belimperia in courage and spirit; she is, however, not the mistress of the man to be avenged, but his sister. Charlotte, sister of Bussy d'Ambois, outdoes Belimperia in masculine spirit and ferocious vows of revenge, and reproaches to those who delay in carrying it out. She is

> "So wilde, so mad,
> She cannot live, and this unwreakt sustaine.
> The woes are bloudy that in women raigne.[1]
> The Sicile gulfe keepes feare in lesse degree;
> There is no Tyger, not more tame then shee.

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1. N.B. this conception of a woman who has been injured and broods on revenge.

---------- Medea
With all her hearbs, charmes, thunders, lightnings
Made not her presence, and blacke hants more dreadfull."[2]

As this speech suggests, the part of Charlotte shows Senecan influence - influence, that is, direct from the original Seneca - more clearly than Kyd's work. Chapman was a classical scholar, and it is reasonable to expect that he knew the original as well as "English" Seneca. The part of Charlotte shows an advance upon Belimperia's. The latter is equal with Hieronimo in strength of mind and purpose, whereas Charlotte is shown as superior to the men in courage and determination. She is made to say:

> "I would once
> Strip off my shame with my attire, and trie
> If a poore woman, votist of revenge,
> Would not performe it with a president
> To all you bungling foggy-spirited men."[3].

All this parade of masculine temper is not allowed by the dramatist to pass unchallenged by the men in the play. Her brother, who should be the revenger, possibly with a not incomprehensible touch of annoyance at her reproaches of his delay, thus rebukes her:

> "Good Sister, trouble not your selfe with this:
> Take other Ladyes care: practise your face."[4].

It is Charlotte who, in disguise, demands an active share in killing Montsurry, her brother's murderer, a desire only frustrated by finding him already fatally wounded.[5]. Her situation in the play differs from Belimperia's in that there was no villain who could be assigned to her as

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2. "The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois," Act IV, Sc.1.
3. " " " " " Act III, Sc.1.
4. Ibid.
5. Chapman's classical training in restraint must have prevented his allowing Charlotte's hatred to spend itself, like Alice Arden's, in senseless mutilation of a murdered man.

legitimate prey. She differs from Belimperia also in having only sisterly affection as a link between Bussy and herself. Nevertheless, in the three plays she is closest to Belimperia in spirit and in her attitude towards the matter of revenge.

Tamyra, wife of Montsurry the villain, is actually parallel to Belimperia in situation. We are told that she is prepared to assist in revenge, but, in spite of her prayer to the spirit of Revenge to "flye, and here Fixe thy steele foot-steps," [1] she has very little to do with the plot. Her part shows a common Elizabethan inconsistency. She lives in open hatred with her husband, but Chapman never gives the smallest explanation of this situation. She urges on Clermont d'Ambois to murder Montsurry, then bursts out with "O it breakes my heart" when the deed is accomplished. Perhaps uppermost in Chapman's mind was the tag:

"Varium et mutabile semper Femina."

Tamyra is the passive woman, to balance the violent Charlotte, whose language reflects the strained outbursts of Seneca's Medea and Clytaemnestra. Tamyra's part sets off Charlotte's; the two types of women are balanced, though Chapman is not notably successful in bringing either to life. He goes back to Seneca much more conscientiously than the other writers of revenge tragedies.

"Hoffman" may, perhaps, be classed with the second group of plays, those in which the woman in love has not an active part in the working-out of the revenge scheme.

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1. op. cit., Act I, Sc.1.

Lucibella, the young woman, closely corresponds to Ophelia. As so much concerning the early history of the play of "Hamlet" before the 1603 and 1604 quartos can only be conjectured, it is impossible to say definitely how much Chettle owed to the part of Ophelia for his Lucibella. One fact, however, emerges clearly, that Chettle has made the better dramatic use of the madness of his heroine. He makes it the means whereby Hoffman's murder of Otho, son of his enemy, is discovered. To the extent of involuntarily revealing the secret of the man who has caused her insanity, Lucibella is involved in the plot of revenge. In addition, she regains her wits through the shock of discovering the author of her lover's murder, and is present at the death of Hoffman, though she has no part in the plot which leads to his capture. Lucibella, in herself colourless and unimportant, has a special interest in that, with Ophelia, she shows the stage convention of madness transferred to the part of the young woman.[1.]

The second group of plays consists otherwise of "Hamlet," "Antonio's Revenge," and "The Atheist's Tragedy." As the women in love play a passive part in these three plays, there is less distinction made between their characters than in the plays already discussed. Their very names - Mellida in "Antonio's Revenge" and Castabella in "The Atheist's Tragedy" - show the effect at which the dramatist aimed. Both show that certain qualities were by this time considered essential for women in such positions as theirs. They had to be pathetic figures, injured by

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1. The question of the part played by the convention of madness will be discussed later.

the villain of the play, to whom they served as another means of tormenting the revenger, who is still the hero. So far are they from taking any active share in the plot that they seem to have been introduced into the action only for the purpose of making still blacker the villainy of the evil-doer. Both women - Mellida even more than Castabella - seem to be imagined solely from the point of view of the men characters. They only appear to show their relations to the men in the play, never to give any glimpse of themselves as individuals. As far as the men think of them with love or hatred, as far as they can show by their parts another side of the men characters, as far as they serve for passages of lyrical relief, so far only do they live.

Mellida is only allowed to appear upon the stage twice, and in one of those scenes she is not visible to the eye but speaks from beneath the stage to Antonio. The other scene, in which she is upon trial for her alleged unchastity, is very short. She has no existence of her own. Her speeches are only concerned with her love for Antonio. She shows no resentment at the indignity her father has inflicted upon her. Of all the women in the tragedies of revenge she is the most obviously a stage puppet, created chiefly to satisfy the convention that demanded a mistress for the hero. We are told of the trick that Piero her father plays upon her, but we are not shown Mellida's actual reception of it. Marston maintained one note in her part throughout, - the pathetic note. He tries to make her innocent and trusting, but overlooks the difficulties put in his way by the plot, which aims at making Piero, her father, appear as villainous as possible. Her natural reaction is forgotten when Piero ascribes to Antonio's instigation the plot to prove her unchaste. She offers no comment upon it; indeed, we are given to understand, by her own death

through grief at hearing of Antonio's death, that it has made no impression upon her love for him. In pursuing the effect of pathos, Marston has sacrificed any pretence of probability. He has made Mellida appear impossibly trusting, and foolish, rather than innocent. She cannot even die except to the tune of this miserable couplet:

> "Therefore I'll leave thee; farewell, mart of woe,
> I fly to clip my love, Antonio!" [1]

Castabella, though given a larger part and appearing more often upon the stage, is cast in the same mould as Mellida. Tourneur has aimed at producing the same type of woman, but he has succeeded in making Castabella a more definite character than Mellida. This is largely because his plot is more manageable than Marston's, more compact and less unwieldy. Tourneur's conception of an innocent young woman is much the same as Marston's,[2] but Castabella emerges as a more tangible person than Mellida, if only because of the unpleasant twist which Tourneur gives to her story. Marston does not show his Mellida in actual contact with anything which could soil her purity, and though we may feel that such "fugitive and cloistered virtue" is of little worth, he has at least succeeded in creating and maintaining some kind of an impression of chastity. Tourneur's Castabella appears in contact with such a woman as her mother Levidulcia, whose name is a sufficient indication of her character, and she is allowed to take part in smutty repartee.[3] For this juxtaposition Tourneur's own peculiar

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1. "Antonio's Revenge," Act IV, Sc.2, ll.301-302.

2. Marston and Tourneur were astoundingly alike in their plays; no other two Elizabethan dramatists are so alike. But in Tourneur the morbid streak is more clearly seen, and is more active in determining the cast of thought in his plays.

3. "The Atheist's Tragedy," Act I, Sc.3.

bent of mind is responsible. He was unable to create a woman whose words and bearing were alike those of one innocent in thought. Too much is said - especially by herself - of Castabella's purity, while her situation throughout the play does not allow her to display it in deed.[1] It is the dramatist's failure which renders her, like Mellida, a type rather than a woman. She is fixed in character by her name and her first appearance, and is never allowed to deviate from that line. She is as passive a sufferer as Mellida, except for her one display of activity at the end of the play, where she leaps up to the scaffold to be executed with Charlemont, her lover. She has a curious lapse from virtue and devotion to her lover in the middle of the play, when she permits herself to be married to another man. One would have thought that the correct procedure for Castabella in such a position would have been suicide. When the play has drawn to its end, and its moral has been duly pointed, we see why Castabella has been kept alive. Tourneur's treatment of the part of her husband, Rossard, is one of the most objectionable features of the play; Castabella remains chaste only through her husband's disability - a subject for jest to her. Yet the ticket-name, Castabella, can only mean one thing; she is a stage 'pure' heroine as the type was hazily conceived in the early seventeenth century.

Both Mellida and Castabella are intended to serve one purpose; they stand for the side of goodness and trust in Heaven against the powers of evil. Marston's treatment is less diagrammatic than Tourneur's, who, as the title suggests, has written a kind of warning pamphlet against irreligion. Nevertheless, Marston makes Mellida proclaim her trust in Heaven in explicit terms:

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1. For a heroine who, while exposed to all possibilities of a delicate situation, ~~but who~~ throughout remains innocent in mind, see "Romeo and Juliet."

"Heaven permits not taintless blood be spilt."[1].

Piero does not actually resort to the atheist's arguments with Mellida, for he has no reason for using them against her. Marston has no specifically religious aim such as Tourneur's, so Piero is never definitely ranked against God in a spiritual sense.

D'Amville, on the other hand, opens the play by expressing unequivocally his atheistic views of life. The whole tragedy is based on this religious question. When Charlemont wishes to revenge his wrongs upon D'Amville, the ghost of his father, who has been murdered by the atheist, appears to say to him:

> "Attend with patience the success of things
> But leave revenge unto the King of kings."[2].

It is amusing to see the prompt, but unexpected, way in which the Deity rewards such simple faith. D'Amville is about to cut off his nephew's head. He is apparently at the very point of bringing to a successful conclusion all his machinations, when "As he raises up the axe he strikes out his own brains, and staggers off the scaffold."[3]. He dies, testifying to the greater Power which he has hitherto refused to acknowledge, and thus the moral of the play is pointed, and Charlemont and Castabella avenged:

> "Nature is a fool. There is a power
> Above her that hath overthrown the pride
> Of all my projects and posterity,
> For whose surviving blood
> I had erected a proud monument,
> And struck 'em dead before me-----
> But you power
> That struck me knew the judgment I deserved,
> And gave it."[4].

The idea, and the sentiments expressed in D'Amville's

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1. "Antonio's Revenge," Act IV, Sc.1, l.151.
2. "The Atheist's Tragedy," Act II, Sc.6.
3. " " " Act V, Sc.2.
4. Ibid.

speech, suggest some rough and ready idea of the Greek Nemesis. Castabella, when struggling against D'Amville in the graveyard, shows the horror with which the avowed atheist was regarded. D'Amville speaks thus:

> "Nay then invoke
> Your great supposed protector; I will do't.
>
> Cast. Supposed protector! Are ye an atheist? Then
> I know my prayers and tears are spent in vain."[1].

The courage which makes her ready to die with her lover, Charlemont, is used to drive home still further the moral of the play, rather than as a feature which particularly distinguishes this type of woman.

Castabella, although filling a more important part than Mellida was given in her play, only emerges as slightly more real and complete than her predecessor, since she appears in a greater variety of dramatic mood and circumstance. As she is obviously used also as a pawn in the working out of D'Amville's tragedy, she cannot go far on the path towards reality or probability. Both she and Mellida, compared with even as colourless and unimportant a character as Chettle's Lucibella, show how different can be the parts played by women conceived in the same tradition. Castabella and Mellida are outside the revenge motif of the play. They only exist as puppets, whereas even as slight a creature as Lucibella has some clearly-defined part in the development of the action. Neither Marston nor Tourneur had the gift for making probable, much less sympathetic, the meekness and innocence of the defenceless young girl. One more readily sees the reason for this deficiency, especially in the case of Tourneur, when his evil women are studied. A man who could so readily depict unmitigated depravity could not without great versatility

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1. ~~op. cit~~., Act IV, Sc.3.

make convincing his picture of innocence. His imagination had too much affinity with the blackness he describes for him to be able to maintain Castabella unscathed by the depravity of all who surround her. She uses their idiom in speech. Marston makes of Mellida a fool. She appears upon the stage too little for us to know much of her, and her very few entrances show her up as unbelievably credulous and blind to the obvious.

"Hamlet" alone among the tragedies of revenge contains no important parts for women.[1] This is the result of Shakespeare's handling of a story which originally offered far more decisive and clean-cut parts to the women than those they play in his version. The first Quarto of 1603 probably contains traces of the original play of Hamlet, generally assigned to Kyd and dated about 1588. This Quarto shows the Queen in a more definite light, as sharing in her son's secret, and aiding him in revenge. It is impossible to think that Kyd did not give the women some sensational interest, by keeping them closely in touch with the revenge theme. The identification of Gertrude with Hamlet's revenge may represent to some degree Kyd's original scheme. The skilfully vague manner in which Shakespeare uses the Queen's part in Q2 is discussed later,[2] but he handicaps himself in some respects by this very vagueness. Mr. T.S. Eliot points out[3] that Gertrude is fundamentally

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1. Competent acting of the play may give Ophelia and the Queen some importance as parts of Hamlet's world.

2. v. post, pp. 141-144.

3. In "The Sacred Wood"; "Hamlet and his Problems," p.

too negative ~~in~~ a character to be a fit object to give rise to Hamlet's disgust with women, since she is too colourless and commonplace to make such an impression upon the sensitive Hamlet.[1] On the other hand, it would be impossible to heighten her criminality without giving rise to a totally different set of emotions in Hamlet. So we see Shakespeare departing from Kyd's positive treatment of women for a more interesting method of exploitation which, however, partially fails because of the nature of the story and the position of the women in it. He was seriously handicapped by the inadequacy of the women, and the impossibility of making them larger characters without readjusting the balance of the action. More attention and space for the women meant less for Hamlet, upon whom the plot turns, and, in view of the Hamlet Shakespeare created, that would, for the dramatist at least, have been an impossible proposition.

As the part of Ophelia stands in the edition of 1604 it has small dramatic value in so far as its contribution to the action is very slight. She is a type like other passive women in the revenge plays already discussed. She is of the same family as Mellida and Lucibella, however much the genius of the dramatist may have disguised the resemblance. She has a greater charm than they, for she is less obviously a type. One of the factors which go to produce the impression of Shakespeare's "universality" is the often negligent ease with which he shows us even his secondary characters from different angles, or turns different facets of them to the light, or, at the least, bestows upon them flashes of discernment or some quicken-

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1. A point upon which we take issue. No matter how ordinary one's mother may be, to find her ready to commit incest is certain to make an ineffaceable impression upon any mind, more especially on one as sensitive as Hamlet's.

ing from his own inexhaustible reserves of pregnant and felicitous speech. From all this Ophelia benefits in her degree. We see her through the eyes of other people, by sudden graphic tributes to her gentleness and purity:

> "Lay her i' the earth
> And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
> May violets spring. I tell thee, churlish priest,
> A ministering angel shall my sister be,
> When thou liest howling." [1]

In madness and death alike she gathers to herself the associations of flowers and snatches of song. Unconsciously she inspires the gravediggers' rude jests. We see her in amiable converse, strengthened by one touch of shrewdness, with her brother before his departure abroad. Claudius, in the midst of his fears and perplexities, can address her gently and kindly. All these small touches go to make her part fuller of colour, less monotonous than those of her counterparts in less life-giving hands. Both Ophelia and Mellida have moved in courts, yet only Ophelia - as in her description of the 'intact' Prince Hamlet, "The mirror and the rose," - shows evidence of a sense of worldly and courtly standards. She is, however, rather brought before us through other people than through herself. Moreover, her connection with Hamlet himself gives her a reflected individuality, which renders critics and students of the play too prone to overestimate the importance of her position. No matter what the approach to the play, whether Dowden's or Mr. J.M. Robertson's, the personality of Hamlet remains fascinating as a supreme manifestation of Shakespeare's power. Inevitably, therefore, the relations of Ophelia to this extraordinary character win her a not al-

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1. "Hamlet," Act V, Sc.1, ll.232-236.

together merited interest, out of proportion to the intrinsic value of her own part.

For Ophelia remains a variation upon a well-established motive, and alone among the women of Shakespeare's great plays is undistinguished by any initiative which makes her leap into life. It may be said that one negative quality individualises her, that of her indefinite attitude towards Hamlet.[1] If she really was in love with Hamlet, her lack of spirit during her father's attack upon the honesty of his intentions is very hard to understand.[2] It marks her out as super-passive, and as such she is fixed throughout the play. The unanswered questions which cluster round Hamlet and Ophelia spring from the changes of purpose and proportion to which the history of the text bears imperfect witness. The further Shakespeare developed Hamlet along his own lines, the less he was able to do with Ophelia's part. A hero who easily generalises "Frailty, thy name is woman" offers an unpromising subject for sustained love-interest. This would also be out of place among the aspects of filial revenge which form the subject of the play. The plot itself as handled by Shakespeare forced Ophelia yet further into the background.[3] She does not add anything new to our knowledge of Hamlet himself; her scene with him merely affords another opportunity for the expression, in terms of bitterest cynicism, of the misogyny which has poisoned his mind.

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1. In this she is parallel to the Queen in Q2.

2. If we are meant to deduce anything from this, it is that her filial sense was stronger than her disposition to love, and hence she could never have become Hamlet's trustworthy ally.

3. Even if Kyd made the utmost use possible of her part in the lost "Hamlet," it is not possible to imagine that she could ever have been much more than part of the background.

Ophelia is a passive figure, nor does her passivity contribute to the action, as in the case of Mellida. The latter served to show up yet another aspect of Piero's villainy, and to add one more to the wrongs which Antonio was to revenge.

The very slenderness of the part Ophelia plays precludes the possibility of building up the character discovered by certain commentators. There is not enough of her shown to make it possible, and what she has to say is not sufficiently arresting to allow of much conjecture as to her personality. In view of the "nunnery" scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, and the former's bitter generalisation on women, we wonder how Mrs. Jameson can argue that Hamlet is deeply in love with Ophelia with "precisely the kind of love which such a man as Hamlet would feel for such a woman as Ophelia."[1] Allowing sentiment its full play, she thus views the relations between them:

> "I think that the mighty intellect, the capacious, soaring, penetrating genius of Hamlet, may be represented, without detracting from its grandeur, as reposing upon the tender virgin innocence of Ophelia, with all that deep delight with which a superior nature contemplates the goodness which is at once perfect in itself, and of itself unconscious."[2]

But the delight of this superior nature in contemplation does not prevent him from emphatically and brutally disclaiming any more faith in Ophelia than in other women. Nor does Ophelia's perfect goodness prevent her from consenting to spy on Hamlet,[3] or from lying to him. Mrs.

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1. "Shakespeare's Heroines: Ophelia."

2. op. cit. supra. The note of lofty patronage implied is not unattractive!

3. Probably the prevailing Elizabethan views of filial duty would almost absolve Ophelia from blame.

Jameson's rhapsodies are due to an all too prevalent refusal to admit that the Bard could bring together in one play a character of little importance or individuality, and one who has attracted to himself more study along the most varied lines of approach than perhaps any other imaginative creation. She considers a hero and heroine in an imaginary play, not the actual text before us. The hero is the 'intact' Hamlet, before our play begins, and the heroine an Ophelia whose character has not been affected by such a father as Polonius.

We can find in Ophelia the distinguishing conventions of the type to which she belongs. Pathos, meekness, gentleness, and unrebellious submission to sorrows that befall her, all are perfectly exemplified in her. Her meekness and gentleness show themselves in her attitude during the lectures she receives from her father and brother. With the former, true to the tradition of family life of the period, she never ventures to remonstrate, or to assert any independence of judgment. It is possible to construe as mildly self-assertive her reply to her brother's homily:

> "I shall the effect of this good lesson keep
> As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
> Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
> Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own rede." [1.]

Laertes' brief dismissal of this counter-homily indicates that he did not look upon Ophelia as a responsible person to direct his conduct. As has already been said,[2.] her spiritless acceptance of Polonius' aspersions upon Hamlet's honour is incredible, if she is to be regarded as in any

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1. Act I, Sc.3, ll.45-51.

2. v. p.117 supra.

way a 'heroine.' She says no word in his defence beyond a reiteration of the apparent genuineness of his vows.[1] To this apathy Mellida's silence upon hearing the monstrous accusations brought against Antonio is parallel. Not only does Ophelia make no movement towards defending Hamlet, but she also assents meekly to Polonius' prohibiton not to see or speak with him more. This is very possibly a reflection of the severity with which children were brought up during this period. Even Juliet did not venture to defy old Capulet openly, though she was prepared to circumvent him in secret. Desdemona disobeyed her father, married Othello, and perished miserably. Apart from her, we find no "good" woman character openly going against her father's commands.[2] Yet Ophelia outdoes all others in her placid acceptance of what we must assume to be harsh injunctions then as now.

The attitude taken by Ophelia towards Hamlet causes us to wonder whether Shakespeare intended the relations of the two to be considered seriously by the audience. In view of Hamlet's general attitude towards women in the play, it is difficult to believe that, no matter what had happened before, there is any love left in him for Ophelia, much less the exalted passion attributed to him by Mrs. Jameson and other sentimental critics. The

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1. It almost justifies Hamlet's attitude towards women, in which case he is less obviously a type of the "melancholy" man as claimed by Professor Schücking.

2. Not even the Gonerils and Regans flatly 'answer back.' They go about their opposition with a horrible retention of some of the forms of filial deference: "O Sir, you are old." It is interesting, also, to compare the English treatment of Boccaccio's story of Tancred and Ghismonda. In the Italian story she bluntly defies her father; in the English play she acts in secret, and is overwhelmed with misery when she is found out.

wily king Claudius, after he has heard the conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia, puts into words the feeling that has been growing on us throughout the interview:

> "Love! His affections do not that way tend." [1.]

On the other hand, Hamlet's outburst over Ophelia's grave may be quoted against this view:

> "I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
> Cound not, with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum." [2.]

This episode of the two men ranting against each other is entirely foreign to the consistent treatment of Hamlet's character throughout the play. So glaring is it, that we find the dramatist inserting a little later an explanation of a sort:

> "I am very sorry, good Horatio,
> That to Laertes I forgot myself....
> But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
> Into a towering passion." [3.]

The scene is not of Shakespeare's own invention, nor does it show that active and interested acceptance which leads to re-creation. Its inconsistency and stagey absurdity point to an earlier episode which tickled the fancy of the groundlings. Here it is surely evident that the bare bones of the old structure show through. The scene was retained simply because it was a sensational hit. It jars on anyone concerned with the artistic completeness of Hamlet's character. However that may be, the explanation Shakespeare offers suggests that irritation with Laertes rather than grief for

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1. Act III, Sc.1, l.162.
2. Act V, Sc.1, ll. 263-265.
3. Act V, Sc.2, ll. 75-79.

Ophelia led to Hamlet's display. The scene may therefore be discounted as a serious expression of love for Ophelia.

In the German play, "Fratricide Punished," ("Der Bestrafte Brudermord"), which is taken to represent a crude version of the old Hamlet which served Shakespeare as a model,[1] the love affair is negligible. Miss Landsberg even argues that in the play from which Shakespeare took his starting-point Ophelia actually formed one of the opposite party, and consented willingly to act as a kind of decoy. This rôle, she argues, was a dramatic necessity owing to Kyd's turn of the construction of the story. He could not follow the original, and show Ophelia as the prince's friend, without developing the love-intrigue for which there was no room in the already sufficiently crowded action. With such an action a dramatist's only alternatives are to represent Ophelia as definitely against Hamlet in the eavesdropping scene, or to put down to weakness of character the unhesitating manner in which she allows herself to be used as a decoy. The latter method made for greater simplicity. It was now natural for her to fade into the background and for Hamlet to cease to take any deep interest in her, so that the revenge theme is never threatened by any invasion from the love theme. This is the method followed by Shakespeare, and a probably quite instinctive grasp of dramatic fitness led him to suggest rather than define, so that the love-interest in "Hamlet," though slight, is not trivial or banal. It is, as it were

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1. Professor Schücking: "Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays," p.68.
Gertrud Landsberg: "Ophelia, die Entstehung der Gestalt und ihre Deutung."
J.M. Robertson: "The Problem of Hamlet," pp.42-48.
Charlton M. Lewis: "The Genesis of Hamlet," Chap.V.

enlarged by the questions it raises, so that we are apt to overlook its slightness. Yet after a consideration of Kyd's unfailing sense of the theatre and of characters and situations which would appeal to an audience in search of thrills, it seems very probably that in the lost "Hamlet" he made some definite use of the part of Ophelia. Shakespeare inherited this, but because he gave a new twist to the part of Hamlet he cut down that of Ophelia and reduced her practically to a cipher.

In connection with Ophelia the place of the convention of madness in the revenge tragedies may be discussed. This device to secure theatrical effect appears prominently in the three earliest plays of the period, "The Spanish Tragedy," "Hoffman," and "Hamlet." In all three plays it is one of the women who goes completely mad, as distinct from the partial or assumed madness of the protagonist. This may result from a feeling that a woman, one of the weaker, more unstable sex, would be more likely than a man so to succumb to a crushing weight of woe. The device, again excepting the doubtful parts of Hieronimo and Hamlet, is only used in the parts of the pathetic women, in which it succeeds in deepening the impression sought by the dramatist.

In "The Spanish Tragedy," the old woman Isabella, Horatio's mother, strikes the note of pathos by losing her senses through grief at her son's murder. The episode of Isabella's madness is not linked up with the main action of the play, nor does Kyd exploit it ad nauseam. He betrays no morbid anxiety to plumb the darkest depths of the subject. This, indeed, is characteristic of the pathetic tradition of madness in the revenge tragedies. [1] The

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1. cf. Webster's use of the madmen in "The Duchess of Malfy," in which we catch a glimpse of the dark side of the malady. Lear's madness, also, opens up the black side of imagination - "Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination."

device in Kyd's hands contributes nothing to the plot, unless it be, unintentionally, a further increase in our sympathy for Hieronimo and Belimperia when they plan their revenge. He exploits the new motive with good stage effect, for, when "The Spanish Tragedy" appeared, nothing had been done on the popular stage with the tradition of pathetic madness. There had been madness in Seneca, in "Hercules Furens," and of a sort in the native drama in Herod's raging, but the pathetic figure of the mother weeping for her children had never been carried to the lengths of madness. It is only a step further than the wild lamentations of Hecuba and the pathetic outbursts of Andromache, and to these two women it is highly probable that Kyd's Isabella owes her conception.

Lucibella in "Hoffman," and Ophelia in "Hamlet," are both represented in the same way in the mad scenes. More dramatic use is made of Lucibella's madness, which serves to betray the villain's secrets to those whom he had wronged. In both parts we find the same return to childish memories, snatches of old songs, obscure references to nursery legends and games of childhood, while throughout the scenes as a 'leit-motif' runs the remembrance of the deed that caused madness. In "Hamlet" the mad scenes are completely detached from the main action. They are lyrical interludes in the grim plot, when fierce action is momentarily suspended while all join in a common sorrow and wonder that

> "a young maid's wits
> Should be as mortal as an old man's life." [1]

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1. "Hamlet," Act IV, Sc.5, ll.159-160.

Castiza, in "The Revenger's Tragedy,"[1] who corresponds to the young girls already discussed, shows in her part how this type of drama had changed. Castiza and Castabella are drawn on similar lines, but whereas the latter has a definite part in the action, and was involved in the fortunes of the hero, the former had no such opportunity afforded her of taking a share in the plot. Events take their course without any knowledge on the part of Castiza of the way in which matters were shaping. She is tempted, but the only means she has of resisting is words, and we quickly find that protest after protest of virtue becomes not only tedious but nauseating. Her opening speech gives the key to her character:

> "How hardly shall that maiden be beset,
> Whose only fortunes are her constant thoughts!
> That has no other child's part but her honour,
> That keeps her low and empty of estate:
> Maids and their honours are like poor beginners;
> Were not sin rich, there would be fewer sinners.
> Why had not virtue a revenue? Well,
> I know the cause, 'twould have impoverished hell." [2]

Virtue asserted in such self-righteous, calculating terms, rings false to modern ears. On the other hand, the stage technique of the Elizabethans must be remembered. The dramatists never allowed anything important to remain obscure;[3] in this way Castiza's incessant harping upon her virtue is understandable. Unless this explanation is accepted, it must be held to betray an author more at home with guilt and perversions than with innocence and simplicity. Again, the action of "The Revenger's Tragedy" takes place in inky darkness, so that Tourneur had to ensure that every gleam of light should reach the audience.

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1. A play which represents the half-way stage in the development of the species.

2. "The Revenger's Tragedy," Act II, Sc.1.

3. vide Professor Schücking: "Character Studies in Shakespeare's Plays," Chaps. I and II.

As he underlined Castiza's virtue lest it should be forgotten in the general tangle of vicious plot and counter-plot, so in asides and soliloquies he constantly reminds the readers that Vendice and Hippolito are only playing a part, and that shortly Treachery and Vice will receive their just reward. Nevertheless, we have an uncomfortable feeling that Tourneur has not succeeded in distinguishing perfectly between true and seeming virtue. Castiza does not ring quite true. She is stagey to a degree. Tourneur simplifies his good characters, so that they do not attain to the most shadowy of lives. He could not make of goodness a quality to stand on its own merit, impressive without resort to many words. He seemed not to be at home with an unblemished character; he excelled in a character such as that of Vendice, an intermediary between Heaven and Hell. Some subtle twist in Tourneur's own mind seems to have enabled him to grasp to the full the dramatic possibilities of such a character. Vendice does not embrace the worse part solely through the necessity for playing a part. A kink in his own nature made him perfectly at home in it. The part of Vendice enabled Tourneur to make the best of both worlds. He kept a grip upon the "moral" side by emphasising Vendice's mission as a revenger, and at the same time leaves no side of vice without its appropriate word.

Tourneur, though he failed as an interpreter of true virtue, made good stage use of the women of the "Revenger's Tragedy." The scene[1] in which the mother, Gratiana, tempts her daughter Castiza is very effective as a theatrical tour de force. Gratiana opens with a well-turned persuasive speech to her daughter. It is

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1. Act II, Sc.1.

a fine example of the deliberate reversal of accepted standards of living which appears throughout the play upon the lips of all the characters except Castiza:

> "good honourable fool,
> That wouldst be honest, 'cause thou wouldst be so,
> Producing no one reason but thy will.
> And 't has a good report, prettily commended,
> But pray, by whom? Poor people, ignorant people.
> The better sort, I'm sure, cannot abide it.
> And by what rule should we square out our lives
> But by our betters' actions?" [1].

This is well countered by Castiza:

> "I cry you mercy! lady, I mistook you!
> Pray did you see my mother? which way went you?
> Pray God I have not lost her." [1].

Later the same device is used again:

> Cas. "Mother come from that poisonous woman there.
> Gra. Where?
> Cas. Do you not see her? She's too inward then!" [1].

This and the later scene[2] in which the situations are reversed and Gratiana pleads with Castiza who has apparently resolved to yield to her mother's importunities, are very effective in a flashy way. It is never possible to forget altogether the doubtful tone of the dialogue, the coarse terms so carelessly uttered by Castiza, and the poisonous atmosphere of the whole play, which hangs like a pall even over those scenes which are intended to give virtue its opportunity.[3].

The part of Castiza is an episode only indirectly connected with the main action of the tragedy. It

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1. op. cit., Act II, Sc.1.

2. Act IV, Sc.4.

3. This is especially true of the second scene (IV, 4) in which Gratiana has undergone a metamorphosis of character which leaves us gasping.

provides one more sin for which the ducal house will have to account to Vendice and his brother. Castiza is a little further removed from the plot than Castabella, Mellida and Ophelia. The two latter were unwittingly caught up in the action. They did not escape from it, but were destroyed by the forces with which they were innocently involved. Castabella emerged safely, for the play was the Honest Man's Revenge as well as the "Atheist's Tragedy," and she was the honest man's mistress. Castiza is never brought into the main scene of action, the court. She is never in contact with Lussurioso, the villain of her separate drama. She does not even know of the peculiar circumstances attaching to her relations with the duke's son, namely that her own brother has tempted her. The part of Castiza is added for the sake of sensation to a play which could stand without her. Such a situation between mother, brother, and sister must have stimulated jaded appetites. In addition to making this appeal to the lower tastes of the audience, Castiza was almost perfunctorily used as a means of discharging the Renaissance poet's obligation to "gild the philosophic pill." Hence the reiteration on Castiza's own lips of her purity. Her part is not a study of unconscious innocence, but a careless acknowledgment that goodness of some kind still existed. It would be easy to forget this fact after a few scenes with Lussurioso, Spurio, the Duchess and the rest. Castiza belongs to the same family as Castabella, and is even akin to Mellida and Ophelia. The differences in Tourneur's treatment of his young women characters represent differences in mind and moral outlook in himself and foreshadow also the differences in the later period which are consistently revealed in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Throughout the early revenge tragedy, down to "The Atheist's Tragedy" (1603) the type of the young girl in love is employed. "The Revenger's Tragedy" has shown a change in this part. Castiza, the woman in this play who corresponds to the general type, is not in love with anyone, and remains only very indirectly related to the main theme. "The Revenger's Tragedy" shows the part lessened in significance. We have seen the part of the woman almost equal in importance that of the man, as in the case of Belimperia, or sink to insignificance, as with Mellida, and, in a lesser degree, Ophelia. After "The Revenger's Tragedy," only "The Second Maiden's Tragedy" (circa 1611) shows a survival of this type of woman. There is not a trace of her left in Webster's two plays.

"The Second Maiden's Tragedy" recalls "The Revenger's Tragedy" in certain features. It is less offensive to good taste than Tourneur's play, chiefly because it is less full-blooded. It represents the final degeneration of the tragedy of revenge in the hands of a second-rate dramatist. The tone of "The Second Maiden's Tragedy" is sentimental. The dramatist aims chiefly at edification; accordingly a flabby religious ideal is held up with unctuous righteousness by the "good" characters, the Lady and Govianus. Alongside of this there is also a moral ideal, maintained particularly in the part of the Lady. Since neither of these is inspired with any genuine earnestness, the effect is neither impressive nor convincing. Apart from these weaknesses in the spirit of the piece, the play suffers from the softening down of the revenge theme. Hitherto that has been firmly maintained[1].

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1. Except in "The Atheist's Tragedy;" but in this play the spirited figure of D'Amville the atheist imparts the necessary vigour.

although the angle from which the revenger is viewed has shifted. In "The Second Maiden's Tragedy" the wrong inflicted by the Tyrant is hardly worth the name, so that little cause is given for revenge. He removes the dead body of the Lady from its tomb, a deed which scarcely seems to call for Govianus' cry on learning of it:

> "O piteous wrongs!
> Inhuman injuries, without grace or mercy."[1.]

The effect of Govianus' outburst and his prayer, "O heaven, put armour on my spirit," before he embarks upon his revenge, is ludicrous. Even this attenuated revenge theme is not introduced till the play is nearly ended (IV, 4). Then in order to bring it in, hasty recourse is made to the conventional paraphernalia of the Ghost. At this point the dramatist verges upon parody, for he employs a female spectre. The stage direction gives an unusually full indication of the sort of effect aimed at:

> "On a sudden, in a kind of noise like a wind, the doors clattering, the tombstone flies open, and a great light appears in the midst of the tomb; his lady as went out" (sic) "standing before him all in white, stuck with jewels, and a great crucifix on her breast."

The play ends in an operatic finale, with the jewel-decked ghost standing by. This is a reductio ad absurdum of the conventional machinery, now deprived of the vigour which in earlier examples enables us to forget that it is essentially ludicrous.

The scene between Castiza and Gratiana in "The Revenger's Tragedy," in which the mother tempts the daughter, is repeated in this play, though considerably

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1. "Second Maiden's Tragedy," Act IV, Sc.4.

shorn of its effect. Castiza's sarcastic retort to her mother's honied words of temptation[1] is faintly echoed here, but it lacks the brevity and force of its model:

"Can you assure me, sir,
Whether my father spake this, or some spirit
Of evil-wishing, that has for a time
Hir'd his voice of him to beguile me that way,
Presuming on his power and my obedience?
I'd gladly know, that I might frame an answer
According to the speaker." [2]

Not only is the temptation scene imitated, but also the lightning conversion of Gratiana at the point of her son's daggers. The only difference is that Govianus brings about the change of heart by means of a pistol reinforced with pious words, whereas Vendice and Hippolito rely more upon the persuasive power of their weapons alone. This scene[3] between Helvetius the father, the Lady, and Govianus, shows to the full the sentimental religious tone of the play. The utter absurdity of the rejoicing over the sinner that has repented, faute de mieux, does not seem to be in the least apparent to the well-intentioned dramatist:

Lady. "Now, sir, I honour you for your goodness chiefly,
You're my most worthy father, you speak like him;
The first voice was not his; my joy and reverence
Strive which should be most seen; let our hands, sir,
Raise you from earth thus high, and may it prove
The first ascent of your immortal rising
Never to fall again."

The part of the Lady - she remains nameless throughout - in "The Second Maiden's Tragedy" shows the deterioration to mawkishness of the part of the woman in love, just as

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1. v. supra, p. 127
2. op.cit., Act II, Sc.1.
3. op.cit., Act II, Sc.2.

the play itself illustrates the complete degeneration of the revenge tragedy. In the hands of a poor dramatist, who squeamishly refused to face the brutalities which his theme forced upon him, the revenge tragedy has become almost a parody of its former self.

Throughout the tragedies of revenge already discussed can be traced another very distinct type of female character, which serves as a complement to the young, beautiful woman. This is the elderly woman who has come into close contact with life and reality. She has been married, and is often represented as a widow. The dramatist as a rule contrasts this woman with a young inexperienced girl who, at the opening of the play, is generally seen full of hope at what appears, before it is blasted by the machinations of the villain, an existence of the fairest promise. The two parts dovetail into each other. Taken together, they supply those qualities and thoughts which the dramatists seemed to think essential in the women's parts. It was the duty of women in the revenge tragedies to add to the play some gentler and more gracious elements. They softened to some degree the harshness and brutality of the theme. It is a woman who holds up for a brief space the approaching catastrophe of "The Spanish Tragedy," to exchange with her lover vows and promises couched in verse which, though artificial, yet carries us away to a lover's Arcadia. The dying fall of Ophelia's swan-song is heard faintly but distinctly as the tragedy gathers way towards the climax, and for an instant recalls imaginary and living listeners from hatred, perplexity and fear to pity and tenderness.

If the part of the young woman were not so conceived as to awake the softer emotion of pity, then this

duty devolved upon the older woman.[1] If, on the other hand, the girl was the passive sufferer, the older woman schemes with the men for revenge.[2] The satisfaction we derive from the women of the better revenge tragedies is due to the blending of the two types. Before the appearance of Tourneur's two plays, these two distinct sets of women are never actively opposed. They remain friends, allies of the same party according to their capabilities for rendering active assistance in the business of revenge. When the revenge plays which derive more or less directly from Kyd lose freshness and vitality, then the possibilities of drawing fresh sensations from the women are considered.[3] Although there are variations in the treatment of the parts of the women before Tourneur, the two kinds remain distinct. The result has undoubtedly been to give us, by means of two complementary types, a picture of woman more "in the round." Through women's eyes we have been made to see more than one aspect of the wicked deed which has spurred otherwise honest, trustworthy men to revenge.[4] We are shown its direct or indirect effect upon two women. Sometimes the bounds are extended, and we see the reaction of each woman to a different deed of villainy. In "The Spanish Tragedy," both women are affected by the murder of Horatio. In "Hoffman," each has a separate sorrow to lament, but they

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1. e.g., Isabella and Belimperia in "The Spanish Tragedy."

2. e.g., Mellida and Maria in "Antonio's Revenge."

3. Nothing, apparently, had been learnt from the chronicle plays concerning the opposition of women characters. The earlier chronicle plays made much of the scolding match. Probably the comic element in such an opposition made it unfit for the revenge plays, in which the only humour was grim and sardonic.

4. cf. the similar effect in "Richard III" where the choric scene between the women shows us different facets of Richard's villainy.

are drawn together in a common cause - vengeance upon the author of their calamity.

The part of the older woman remains clear and distinct throughout the revenge tragedies; it is never allowed to merge with the opposite type. We even find that these parts are given more individual treatment as the revenge plays grow in popularity. In Tourneur's two plays the experienced women are decidedly the more interesting. Their very experience, lurid as it evidently has been, gives them the advantage of energy and life over the young girls, whose virtue is by comparison "fugitive and cloistered." In "Hamlet" the Queen is a more solid, clearly-cut figure than the shadowy Ophelia.[1] "Antonio's Revenge" gives the Duchess Maria a bigger part than Mellida, though she remains a more conventionally-imagined character than Tourneur's and Shakespeare's parallels. "Hoffman" shows the Duchess Martha in a part calling for firmness and courage, as opposed to the pathetic rôle of Lucibella. "Bussy d'Ambois" is ruled out at present, for Chapman does not include this type of woman. "The Spanish Tragedy" is the only play of the series in which the older woman's part is definitely subordinate to that of the younger.

This shows clearly that the two types supplemented each other, for we have already seen that the part of the younger woman has lessened in importance as the revenge tragedies matured. This increase in the individuality of the mature woman, and the gradual emergence of something approaching personality in her, may indicate deliberate selection and preference by the dramatists.

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1. Though in Q2 she is a less definite character than the women of the other plays, as ~~both~~ she is still further subordinated to the dominating interest of Hamlet's part.

If this is too modern and exacting a standard of dramatic composition to apply to those days of rapid output, then the explanation must be the playwright's material, which forced the choice upon him. In any case whether he purposely selected for development the part of the more experienced woman, or not, it is certain that such a part agreed much better with the theme of revenge than that of the ingénue. It would be wrong both from an artistic and realistic point of view to allow a child like Mellida to plunge actively into the depths of cruelty and treachery into which the avengers were inevitably sucked. We cannot imagine her assisting at the Thyestean banquet offered to Piero. To take another example - for there the villain is Mellida's father, and even Marston could not so far infringe the canons of good taste - Ophelia is not adapted to take the smallest part in the holocaust at the end of "Hamlet." We may feel shocked at Maria's share in the horrible episode of Piero's death, but it is not such an outrage on decency as any connection of Mellida with the business would be. In "Hamlet" the Queen, of tougher stuff as well as riper experience than Ophelia, is not out of her proper sphere in the death-scene, nor is her violent end an offence against artistic decorum. Even Tourneur does not carry his search for sensation to the length of involving his young girls in the black side of his revenge plays.[1] We can accept the involuntary participation of the innocent woman in the schemes of revenge, and see it as another crime to be put down to the villain's account and expiated by violence and sudden death. A sudden transition from simplicity such as Mellida's or Ophelia's

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1. Not, that is, voluntarily and consciously. As has already been pointed out, Castiza is ignorant throughout of the schemes of Vendice.

to a capacity for intrigue and cruelty is an impossible revolution of character, impossible even for the most sensational and haphazard of Elizabethan dramatists.[1] On the other hand, we cannot refuse to imagine a mature woman, who is represented as having had experience and knowledge of a life which we assume not to have been sheltered, playing an active part in the avenging of wrongs which have ruined the happiness she has so long enjoyed.

The part of Isabella in "The Spanish Tragedy" has already been discussed. When she is regarded as representative of a type, it can be seen that Kyd has not developed her far. Belimperia is a remarkably full character, needing no indirect additions from the part of Isabella. The only feature lacking in the picture of Belimperia is pathos. She has been drawn as too strong-minded and independent a woman to give way to laments, therefore these are made the chief characteristic of Isabella's part. Her laments for Horatio are no longer than Hieronimo's, but her woman's grief is more extreme, and drives her eventually to madness. She is a kind of semi-chorus in the outburst of grief at the discovery of Horatio's murder. Later, when Hieronimo ceases to lament and turns his mind to action, (Act IV, Sc.1), Isabella brings us back to the first subject, the grief caused by the murder of Horatio, thereby winning our sympathy for the plot to be put into practice by Hieronimo and Belimperia.[2] The part of Isabella shows the first stage of development in the treatment of the subsidiary woman's role. It anticipates Shakespeare's use of his women in

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1. Against this may be weighed the change in Martha ("Hoffman"), but here we have a dash of religion to soften it. (v. infra, p.140)

2. Act IV, Sc.3.

Richard III.[1] Through her, as through the group of women in Shakespeare's play, we see from a new angle the effect of Horatio's death. In both plays, the women's[2] laments keep alive in the memory the original crimes that have set the revenge plots on foot. Therefore we have in mind simultaneously the crime and the vengeance. Their part is the ground-bass on which the elaborate melody is built up.

Isabella is the only example of the older woman in a passive and simple rôle. When we come to "Antonio's Revenge" and "Hoffman," we find her filling a much more important and varied part. We have already seen that in these two plays the younger women are relegated to minor positions, and in the latter play Lucibella is mad. It is inevitable, therefore, that the older woman should take any initiative that the dramatist wishes to give to the women's parts. "Antonio's Revenge" shows most clearly the difference between the earlier and later treatment of the same type of woman. The Duchess Maria, Antonio's mother, is from the first presented as a more definite person than Isabella. The latter's opening words fix her as an echo of Hieronimo:

"My husbands absence makes my heart to throb." [3]

Her next words are pitched in a tone identical with her husband's:

Hier. "Heere, Isabella, helpe me to lament;

Isa. "What worlde of griefe; my sonne Horatio!
O, wheres the author of this endles woe?" [4]

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1. "Richard III," Act IV, Sc.4.

2. Not Belimperia in "The Spanish Tragedy," for she is to be placed with Hieronimo in the active part of the play.

3. Act II, Sc.5. l.34.

4. Act II, Sc.5. ll. 36-39

Maria is represented as gentle and uncomplaining, but at the same time a moral tone, superficial no doubt, but more individual than any quality contained in the laments of Isabella, marks her out as a positive character in so far as it suggests a mind capable of reflection:[1].

"O Luceo, fortunes gilt
Is rubd quite off from my slight tin-foild state
And poore Maria must appear ungrac't
Of the bright fulgor of gloss'd maiestie." [2].

The dramatist's grip of her part seems to loosen as the play proceeds. It is true that "Antonio's Revenge" is a confused play, but the relations between the villain Piero and Maria show it worse confounded. We are not clearly told whether Maria is being forced against her will to marry Piero.[3]. The following speech suggests that she is:

"O thou cold widow bed, sometime thrice blest
By the warm pressure of my sleeping Lord:
Open thy leaves, and whilst on thee I tread
Groan out, 'Alas, my dear Andrugio's dead.'" [4].

On the other hand, if she is being driven into a hateful marriage, her husband Andrugio's ghost is not only severe but unreasonable when it says:

"Disloyal to our Hymeneal rites,
What raging heat reigns in thy strumpet blood?

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1. Marston was evidently acquainted at first hand with original Seneca, as the interspersed Latin tags show, so that Maria's reflections are in keeping with the general tone of the play.

2. Act I, Sc.2. ll. 155–158.

3. N.B. the attempt of the murderer to marry his victim's widow recalls to mind "Hamlet." There is a certain resemblance also between the parts of Antonio and Hamlet.

4. ~~op. cit.~~, Act III, Sc.2. ll. 1276–1279.

I pardon thee, poor soul. O shed no tears,
Thy sex is weak ----------
I was empoison'd by Piero's hand.
Join with my son to bend up strain'd revenge,
Maintain a seeming favour to his suit
Till time may form our vengeance absolute." [1].

The first part especially is hard on Maria, in view of her speech immediately preceding, and the ghost seems guilty of inconsistency when, after levelling at her the stock accusation of fickleness and weakness, he bids her persist in the marriage project as part of the revenge plot. Marston has simply been availing himself of the stock commonplaces suggested by his themes, and his dramatic opportunism is still further shown by the manner in which, after the visitation of the ghost, the hitherto plaintive Maria emerges as a woman as repulsive to sensitive feelings as Antonio and his fellow-conspirators. She is not, indeed, given a very large share in the blood-thirsty dialogue, but when she appears in the scene of Piero's murder it is in a peculiarly repulsive connection. She is a prime mover in the horrid banquet served to Piero. After that, her reversion to the type of the dignified lady mourning for her past calamities[2]. has no effect upon the reader. She remains in the memory as part and parcel of the horrors of "Antonio's Revenge."

The Duchess Martha, the chief woman character in "Hoffman," is conceived on similar lines; that is, her character changes when she learns of Hoffman's wholesale murders, and finds that she can serve as a decoy to bring him to his death. As the play of "Hoffman" is better constructed and more vigorous and compact than "Antonio's Revenge," we are able to get a more definite idea of her

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1. ~~op. cit.~~., Act III, Sc.2. ll. 1283-1284, 1290-1296

2. Act V, Sc.3.

part than of Maria's. The train of circumstance leading to the change in Martha is clearly set out. We are introduced to her as a revered, religious woman, who utters her grief without the hyperbole indulged in by Isabella and Maria. There is the same sententious touch as in the part of Maria, but Martha's moralising is weightier and has a wider scope:

> "The wise, the fool, the rich, the poor,
> The fair, and the deform'd fall; their life turns air:
> The king the captain are in this alike:-
> None hath freehold of life, but they are still
> When death, heav'n's steward comes, - tenants at will!
> I lay me down, and rest in thee my trust!
> If I wake never more, till all flesh rise,
> I sleep a happy sleep; sin, in me, dies." [1]

Hoffman himself for the first time wavers in the deed he intends to perpetrate, the murder of so good and gracious a lady. Throughout the ensuing scene in which Hoffman deceives the Duchess with a false account of her son Otho's death, she does not strain words to breaking-point like Isabella and Maria. In the manner characteristic of her throughout, she speaks with restraint:

> "If this that you protest be true, your care
> Was like a long reprieve; the date worn out,
> The execution of my woe is come,
> And I must suffer it with patience." [2]

When she hears the true story of Hoffman's cruelty, she says with the same restraint:

> "I'm confident to hear all cruelty,
> And am resolv'd to act some, if no hand
> But mine will else attempt the murd'rer's end." [3]

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1. "Hoffman," Act IV, Sc.3. Martha has just come to Hoffman thinking that her son Otho, whom he has murdered, is alive. She is lying down to sleep, while Hoffman, as the audience knows, is waiting to murder her in her sleep.

2. Act IV, Sc.3.

3. Act V, Sc.1.

Chettle has made a more convincing character of the Duchess Martha. We do not revolt from her in her pursuit of Hoffman to his death. This is because Chettle's revenger - hero is allowed to go to further lengths of villainy than Antonio, so that we are prepared to side unreservedly with those who are seeking to destroy him. Thus the Duchess's change from a grave and dignified lady to a woman willing to match treachery with treachery is made credible, and the complete absence of rhetorical outbursts enables us to see her as a clearly-defined figure. She is not a profound character. Chettle had not any sudden revelation to make of the eternal changeless secrets of human nature. His Duchess is a competently devised and executed stage-part, from whom we can easily see that the type of the mature, experienced woman has been developed far beyond the passive rôle assigned it by Kyd, and the obscure if slightly more active part allotted to it by Marston.

Once again in "Hamlet" we come to the same pause in the development of the part of the older woman as we found in that of the 'ingénue.' It has already been seen that Ophelia is the most passive of the passive young girls. The part of the Queen is more difficult to determine, especially in the Second Quarto. In the First Quarto of 1603 she is given a more definite position and allowed to side explicitly with Hamlet. In Q1 the Queen's part is worked out along the conventional lines of the older woman. As we do not know how much of the lost play of Hamlet is to be found in this Quarto, it is impossible to say whether Shakespeare has adopted entire into his first shaping of the play the early version of the Queen's part. In two important respects she differs from the Queen of Q2. Hamlet makes her privy to the murder of his father,

and, with Horatio, she knows of Claudius' attempt on Hamlet's life, for which Guildenstern and Rosencrantz have to pay the penalty. Another point in Q1 which brings her into line with the conventional development of the older woman is her expressed willingness to aid Hamlet:

"Hamlet, I vow by that maiesty,
That knows our thoughts, and lookes into our heartes,
I will conceale, consent, and doe my best,
What stratagem soe're thou shalt devise." 1.

The Queen is represented in Q1 as a not very subtle character. On comparison of her part with that of Maria, we understand better how conventional it is. The earlier appearances of the Queen prior to Hamlet's revelation of the murder of his father are of no intrinsic interest. They tell us that she is genuinely fond of her son, who is her "joy and halfe heart." She gives an impression of obtuseness and kindly stupidity. This is most clearly revealed by her silence throughout Hamlet's bitter tirades. 2. Had the dramatist thought of her as in the least sensitive, or as possessed of wit a little above the average, he would have allowed her some fragments of self-expression. We must believe, in view of this, that Shakespeare, even in Q1, while he followed previous example in bringing the Queen into the secret of the revenge plot, made an innovation in representing the older woman as ordinary, undistinguished by any especially fine or interesting traits of character.3. Her speech

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1. Furness: Variorum Edition of Q1, Vol.II, p.71, ll.1544-1547.

2. Especially is it difficult to credit her silence in face of Hamlet's shrewd jests upon second marriage.

3. cf. the Duchess Martha in "Hoffman."

in Q1 is commonplace also.[1] In short, the Queen of the first version of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is not a character over whom we linger. Her only positive actions are those which stamp her clearly as one of a type.

Shakespeare's purpose in departing so far from the general lines of treatment followed by his contemporaries in revenge tragedies is more evident in Q2, in which the Queen is a yet more negative character. His Hamlet was so imagined as to make a rather stupid, unimaginative queen necessary. She could not be at all sensitive, for if she were, the situation created by her incestuous marriage would not arise. Hamlet would not have cause to rail upon the sex, exclaiming: "Frailty, thy name is woman." In Q2, however, unless the ambiguities ~~were~~ are the results of textual vicissitudes, the Queen's part is left indefinite. She does not clearly range herself upon her son's side. We are left uncertain as to whether or not she was privy to Claudius' murder of his brother. The interview between the Queen and Hamlet in Q1 has its parallel in Q2, but in the latter scene we are left with as incomplete an understanding of Gertrude as we had before. Though we may feel doubtful whether the Queen had any knowledge of the murder of her husband, not for a moment can we think that she has any share in Hamlet's plans against Claudius. The most Hamlet asks of her is that she will not reveal to Claudius that he is but "mad in craft." The part of the Queen, therefore, appears to be slighter even than in Q1, though what she has given to her to say and do has a lifelike ease and naturalness which give

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1. cf. the rhetoric of Maria in "Antonio's Revenge," and the hyperbole of Isabella in "The Spanish Tragedy."

solidity to her character. In fact, because of the further limitation of the part and the fading out of the cut and dried lines of convention, Gertrude gains in interest. We are prepared to ask questions about her. We find ourselves wondering about her, asking what it was in her that caused the old and young Hamlet to love her so well, and why she was faithless to the king and willing to exchange Hyperion for a satyr. Then there is the never-answered question, how much did she know of the murder of the elder Hamlet. Out of the conventional figure of the mature woman Shakespeare - or at all events the Hamlet text - has created a problem.

Although we are ready and eager to ask questions about Gertrude, we cannot forget that she derives her individuality, like Ophelia, largely from Hamlet. Her ignorance of his proposed vengeance, though it makes her a more sympathetic figure, is not introduced into the play for that purpose only. Of greater importance is the manner in which it serves to detach Hamlet more completely from the other characters of the play. The uncertainty, never dispelled, of her part in the murder of the king, enables the audience to enter more whole-heartedly into Hamlet's outbursts against women, because they feel that his mother has given him ample cause. It helps them to guess at the depth of his anguish of mind. So, although the Queen is not given one definite action in the play, her passivity contributes more to the effect both of the drama as a whole and of her own part in particular than the "action" of Maria or Martha.

In Tourneur's two plays we find that the older woman has advanced to a definitely new stage. His treatment of his mothers was dictated by the manner in which he

chose to represent the young girls in his plays. Castabella and Castiza are sufficiently explained by their names. Ticket names are also affixed to the older women and before the play is read it is easy to guess what to expect from women called Levidulcia and Gratiana. They are extremes of a certain kind of character, but they fit well into plays all the characters of which are extremes. Levidulcia in "The Atheist's Tragedy" sometimes arouses the question whether she is a caricature of wickedness. But the purpose of the tragedy, the vindication of an omnipotent God, requires all its "characters" to be taken seriously. Up to the scene of her death she is an example of uncircumscribed incontinence. Yet when her husband discovers her with Sebastian her lover, and both lover and husband are killed, she bewails her lost honour:

> O! in their wounds
> I feel my honour wounded to the death.
> Shall I out-live my honour? Must my life
> Be made the world's example?"[1]

This speech is an example of the over-explicit technique characteristic of most Elizabethan stage repentances, with an added emphasis due to Tourneur's controlling aim.

Levidulcia represents lust, unrelieved by any virtue until her belated recollections of her "honour." She is entirely cut off from the plot of D'Amville and Charlemont in which her daughter Castabella is involved. She helps to black in more heavily the background of vice against which Charlemont and Castabella stand out all the more clearly. She is not a remarkably effective figure and the situations in which she appears are of slight theatrical value. Even as a symbol of depravity she misses fire, for she is not moved by an inner force of devilry, so that her

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1. "The Atheist's Tragedy," Act IV, Sc.5.

speech, calculated by Tourneur to rouse loathing and horror, resounds emptily. Her absurd and monotonous pursuit of every man she meets has the same over-explicitness as her repentance, and resembles the personification of a morality play, rather than a truly dramatic character.

Gratiana, the mother in "The Revenger's Tragedy," is a more interesting character than Levidulcia - the result of Tourneur's clever stage-craft. She is presented in a "strong" situation, succumbing to her son's persuasions and, in her turn, trying to persuade her daughter into becoming the mistress of the Duke's son. Her speech after capitulation is more suavely vicious than Levidulcia's, so that we can feel genuine loathing for her. The climax of the scene has already been discussed.[1] It is one of the most thrilling moments of a very exciting play. By his introduction of the base motive of money, Tourneur has made Gratiana even more repellent. Only Sir Giles Overreach could sympathise with the avarice which drives Gratiana to sacrifice her daughter. Tourneur hints at her greed for filthy lucre in the first scene in which she appears.[2] Of her dead husband she says:

> "Indeed, he was a worthy gentleman,
> Had his estate been fellow to his mind."

When Vendice presses a bribe into her hand she exclaims:

> "Ay, these are they --------
> That enchant our sex. These are
> The means that govern our affections - that woman
> Will not be troubled with the mother long
> That sees the comfortable shine of you." [3]

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1. See supra, p. 127.
2. "The Revenger's Tragedy," Act I, Sc.1.
3. Act II, Sc.1.

As Tourneur has succeeded in degrading Gratiana even further than Levidulcia, her repentance is more impossibly theatrical. When Vendice accuses her of playing the bawd, she lies glibly, until he reveals himself as the tempter. Then, made of "easy wax," she repents forthwith. Tourneur now makes the mistake of repeating his former effective scene between mother and daughter, only reversing the situation. Then, reconciled and repentant, Gratiana passes from the stage with the tag:

> "O happy child! faith, and thy birth have saved me.
> 'Mong thousand daughters, happiest of all others:
> Be thou a glass for maids, as I for mothers." [1]

As Tourneur, in search of sensation, deliberately de-naturalised the part of the innocent young girl, so he deliberately degraded that of the mature woman. In "The Atheist's Tragedy," Levidulcia is not actively opposed to Castabella. The latter knows nothing of her mother's private life. The opposition there is a silent matching of two kinds of character. In "The Revenger's Tragedy" the conflict of the two types is open. This is the first revenge tragedy in which this additional sensation is found, but such an opposition was inevitable once the two kinds of character were so sharply distinguished.

Throughout the tragedies of revenge in their prime we have seen that the two types of woman appeared in every play, and that the elder was treated with more individuality than the younger. Looking from play to play we find that the latter part is more or less alike in each play. Differences are only superficial, and the common types lie near the surface. At first sight, the older women appear to show far greater variety, and the general resemblance is more difficult fo find. It is there, however, throughout,

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1. Act IV, Sc.4.

from Martha the dignified to Levidulcia the abandoned. Both display the wisdom - or folly - they have learned from experience. Both are "worldly" in that they have a kind of mundane philosophy, the one of calm resignation, the other of the pagan "carpe diem." Both are used by the dramatist to fill out his scheme with the qualities and elements which only women "of a certain age" can bring with them.

It is a thankless task to attempt to confine within the narrow bonds of a type the stateliness of Vittoria Corombona and the elusive charm of the Duchess of Malfy. The strength of the latter in torment, the biting wit and reckless boldness of the former, are matters transcending all types. As flash after flash shows up Vittoria clear against the darkness of her surroundings, we catch more and more of her magnificence. Webster has taken a story of Italian decadence, and made us forget the horrors which beset it by the sheer strength of his chief woman character. Yet she is not only strong; she is a woman of "infinite variety," witty, fascinating, and above all mysterious. We are not quite sure whether she instigated the murder of Brachiano's Duchess, or how far she was involved in the death of her husband. Wisely Webster leaves these points in obscurity. Her adultery we forgive, for Brachiano is a fine figure of pomp and circumstance and she herself a woman to match him in pride, beauty and "vaulting ambition." Yet it would be an artistic error to attach a definite stigma of murder to such a glorious creature as Vittoria. Her fascination should be potent enough to drive men to murder for her sake, but she should

not appear openly as the murderess. We like to wonder whether she shares responsibility for planning the affair, though the uncertainty in which Webster has wisely left the question prevents us from plucking the heart out of Vittoria's mystery.

It is hard to find signs of the structure upon which this magnificent figure is built. It is so effectively disguised that we wonder whether it exists, or whether Webster's genius created her independent of previous example. She has had her earlier prototypes, however; Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Goneril and Regan, Margaret of Anjou, and, to descend, ~~Tamora~~ Tamora. Webster's and Shakespeare's characters are poetic. In the case of Webster, the likeness is disguised by his individual style as a poet, his reticence torn by flashes of sombre magnificence. The ultimate type from which Vittoria is derived was Medea, with whom some of Clytaemnestra's characteristics were confused. The rule of her life is "Pecca fortiter," a creed which she holds in common with her classical sisters. Webster probably changed the character of the real Vittoria, with the earlier English models such as Cleopatra in mind. The story of Vittoria Accoramboni, a woman who in her lifetime seems to have been almost as infamous in Italy as her contemporary Bianca Capello, is explicit as to her religious feeling and the superstition that often went with it. She made a good end in spite of her violent death, and is represented in the various accounts of her life as dying in the odour of sanctity. Her last words were "Gesù, perdono," and Visconti, her murderer, cried after her death, "Ohimè! What have we done? We have killed a saint!" Webster's treatment of Vittoria's death is, artistically, more satisfying. As she is dying she ex-

claims:

"My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,
Is driven, I know not whither." [1.]

As for Lodovico the assassin, never for a second does he feel any revulsion from his crime. He is led away to torture and death with his resolution unshaken, calm in mind now that he has avenged Isabella upon the "glorious strumpet:"

"I do glory yet
That I can call this act mine own. For my part,
The rack, the gallows, and the torturing wheel,
Shall be but sound sleeps to me: here's my rest:
I limned this night-piece, and it was my best." [2.]

We find no woman in the earlier revenge tragedies who can be compared with Vittoria, except perhaps Belimperia, and she is as remote as a primitive Madonna from the subtle mystery of a Leonardo portrait. The only point of likeness between them is the heroic mould in which both were cast. When Webster came to the revenge tragedy, he made much more of the part of the woman than any of his predecessors. Previous tragedies centred in the man. Apart from "The Spanish Tragedy" in which the woman had played a part less fully developed than, but on the same footing as, that of the man, the women had existed only for what they meant to the male characters, either as objects of love or hatred. No woman, not even Belimperia, attains such a stature as to overshadow all the men except the villain, with whom she is able to hold her own. That is the position held by Vittoria, and it is due to Webster's instinctive response to her temperament. In the story of

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1. "The White Devil," Act V, Sc.1.

2. Act V, Sc.6.

her life, she lacks the strength and courage of the Vittoria of the play.[1] She was under the domination of an ambitious mother, who flung her at Brachiano. She played her mother's game well, but she was not the complete ambitious adventuress which Webster makes her. The real Vittoria was a tool at first, though, once she was on the road to fortune, she pushed tenaciously onward. Webster does all he can to glorify her in his play. He makes her husband, originally a likeable, generous young man, into a foolish pedant - "when he wears white satin, one would take him by his black muzzle to be no other creature than a maggot."[2] Therefore we are sympathetic when she turns from him to the great Duke. She defends herself with spirit against the tribunal of her enemies, which includes Francisco de Medicis and the Cardinal Monticelso. She is faithful to Brachiano, We are not set against her by any definite knowledge of her complicity in the murder of her husband or her lover's wife. She dies as gallantly as she has lived, with her spirit unbroken.[3]

Webster does not show the courageous side of her character alone. He avoids the monotony of tone too often found in those women of the revenge tragedies who are created to fill one part only. Our first sight of her shows two sides of her mind. There is her account of a dream which Flamineo cynically interprets:

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1. It is not known exactly what source was used by Webster. Professor Stoll has searched all the big libraries of Italy except that of the Vatican, and has found nothing to make a definite decision possible. He suggests that the historical Vittoria, a gentler character than Webster's, may have been confused with Bianca Capello her contemporary, whose story is bolder in feature.

2. Act I, Sc.2.

3. Her very last speech is an unfortunate sop to the Cerberus of morality, but such is the potency of her previous utterances that we are carried beyond it, and it does not jar as much as it easily might.

"Excellent devil! she hath taught him in a dream
To make away his duchess and her husband." [1.]

Brachiano does not take Flamineo's extreme interpretation, but he falls in with her meaning and vows to protect and advance her state. Then there is an abrupt change, and she cowers before her mother's blasting words:

"What make you here, my lord, this dead of night?
Never dropped mildew on a flower here
Till now." [2.]

She excuses herself to her mother, a thing she does to no other person:

"I do protest, if any chaste denial,
If anything but blood could have allayed
His long suit to me ----------" [3.]

Her mother's curse drives her away in terror:

"Be thy act, Judas-like, - betray in kissing:
Mayst thou be envied during his short breath
And pitied like a wretch after his death." [4]

When her lover turns upon her in the house of convertites, her anger is not bitter. It is the anger of a woman engaged in a lover's quarrel. We are shown in her both the weakness and strength of woman, nor did even "the serpent of old Nile" receive a greater tribute to her fascination than that paid to Vittoria in the angry words of her lover:

"Thou hast led me, like an heathen sacrifice,
With music and with fatal yokes of flowers,
To my eternal ruin." [5.]

The subordinate women characters in "The White Devil" are conceived along conventional lines, though the part of

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1., 2., and 3. Act I, Sc.2.

4. Ibid.

5. Act IV, Sc.1.

Cornelia shows Webster's peculiar genius. Isabella, Brachiano's duchess, is the conventional pathetic figure of the deserted wife. In situation she is akin to Ophelia, but the device of madness is attached to another character. Isabella is given greater strength than those pathetic figures which came before her. The manner in which she willingly takes the blame for the division between herself and Brachiano reveals a nobility lacking in most earlier characters.[1] There is no exact parallel to Isabella among the earlier plays. It is her position which is conventional. The treatment of her part is touched slightly with Webster's own admiration for courage.

Cornelia is one of the long procession of sorrow-stricken mothers in Elizabethan drama. She is afflicted, however, with a deeper grief than the loss of her children through an untimely death. Vittoria is lost to her by her deliberate choice of the broad and easy way to perdition. Her son Flamineo is one of the chief agents of his sister's undoing, and in reply to his mother's reproaches he blames her for his evil courses because she has brought him up to a station beyond his means. This same son murders Marcello, his honest brother. It is no wonder that under this crushing weight she "is grown a very old woman in two hours."

She is represented on the stage in the usual manner as lamenting her woes, but these lamentations Webster has lifted above convention. They are fore-

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1. cf. Belimperia's desperate attempt to take the blame for the love-affair between herself and Horatio:
"O, saue his life, and let me dye for him.
O, saue him, brother, saue him Balthazar:
I loved Horatio, but he loved not me."

bodings of the catastrophe that will surely overtake the lovers who have forsaken virtue. As Brachiano concludes his vows to Vittoria thus:

"You shall to me at once
Be dukedom, health, wife, children, friends and all;" [1.]

Cornelia steps forward with the prophecy:

Woe to light hearts, they still fore-run our fall." [2.]

As Rupert Brooke says;[3.] "It brings the fresh and terrible air of a larger moral world into the tiny passionate heat of that interview." Once more we see in Cornelia's part the "choric" use of the woman. Like the aged Margaret of Anjou in "Richard III" she stands back brooding over the sins of those struggling in the foreground. Just as it is Cornelia alone who makes Vittoria hesitate and pause in mortal fear, so it is Cornelia who alone reaches what remains of Flamineo's heart. When he sees her mad he says:

"I would I were from hence. ----------
I have a strange thing in me, to the which
I cannot give a name, without it be
Compassion."

Her madness is not the pretty prattling of Ophelia or Lucibella, but a sinister echo of that Webster who, much occupied with death;

"saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures underground
Leaned backwards with a lipless grin." [4.]

Very occasionally we hear echoes of an earlier treatment

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1. Act I, Sc.2.

2. Act I, Sc.2.

3. "John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama," Ch.V, p.128.

4. T.S. Eliot: "Whispers of Immortality."

of the theme of madness, as when Cornelia distributes flowers.[1] But the dirge she sings sounds like the passing bell:

> "Call for the robin-red-breast and the wren,
> Since o'er shady groves they hover,
> And with leaves and flowers do cover
> The friendless bodies of unburied men.
> Call unto his funeral dole
> The ant, the field-mouse, and the mole,
> To rear him hillocks that shall keep him warm
> And (when gay tombs are robbed) sustain no harm.
> But keep the wolf far hence, that's foe to men,
> For with his nails he'll dig them up again." [2]

It is, then, in the secondary figures that Webster keeps in touch with conventional practice. Even these speak with an individual accent, and loom larger through the spectral mist of Webster's imagination. Vittoria is above convention, except that she is a woman who sins greatly in the tradition of some of the most magnificent women of Elizabethan drama, and of Medea and Clytaemnestra before them.

"The Duchess of Malfy" is the last of the revenge tragedies, and the one in which the greatest departure is made from the conventional lines hitherto followed. It does not contain the variety in type and grouping of women characters which has appeared in earlier plays of the kind, and in Webster's "White Devil." "The Duchess of Malfy" is a simpler play to follow. The moral issue in it is at once obvious, whereas in "The White Devil" Vittoria dominates the action and receives her glorification at the expense of generally accepted canons of good and ill. The Duchess herself is a simple character, free

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1. cf. Ophelia and Lucibella.

2. Act V, Sc.4.

from the complexities which governed Webster's conception of Vittoria. Therefore she is a less fascinating woman, less brilliant and less imperious, but always akin to the other in her indomitable courage in adversity.

Webster's chief women, the Duchess and Cariola her attendant, are regarded as "good." Though they draw vengeance on themselves by recklessly flouting danger, they are guiltless of any moral taint. This treatment of the women results from the change of attitude towards the motive of revenge. Webster makes the avengers villains. He represents them as such in their behaviour,[1] and ranges the sympathy of the audience upon the side of the victims. The result is loss of vitality in the part of the chief woman. The Duchess has no need of the superb insolence of Vittoria who was fighting for power and a princely lover. The Duchess of Malfy stoops, though unconsciously, to one her inferior in all respects. Antonio is a cold recipient of the "fearful madness" of his mistress.[2] Her association with one so little a man in action, her resignation in prison, her struggle for peace and contentment, not for place and power, all these, in conjunction with the simplicity of her character, would make her, without her fortitude, a slightly commonplace

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1. And by making disinterested parties speak against them: e.g., "The Duchess of Malfy," Act I, Sc.1., Antonio's assessment of the Duke:

> "What appears in him mirth is merely outside:
> If he laugh heartily, it is to laugh
> All honesty out of fashion."

Antonio at this stage has no personal reason to hate or fear the Duke.

2. Contrast the 'coup de foudre' with which Brachiano loses his heart to Vittoria:

> Brach. "Flamineo, -
> Flam. "My Lord?
> Brach. "Quite lost, Flamineo."
> "The White Devil," Act I, Sc.2.

figure beside Vittoria. On the other hand, Webster allows her a little moment of happiness impossible to the fevered life of Vittoria. She can forget the dangers which beset her in jesting with her husband[1]; and after her triumphant wooing of Antonio she has a short space of joy.[2] The Duchess is a gracious woman, though very seldom shown as one for whom death would be an easy service.

Mr. F.L. Lucas points out[3] that the Duchess is "the sister of Isabella rather than Vittoria." The scenes of her imprisonment recall very clearly the part played by Isabella, a part of resignation and silent suffering. Like Isabella, the Duchess suggests a 'homely' woman. Her similes from time to time suggest homely things. For instance, one of her speeches to Antonio contains a simile straight from bourgeois life:

> "This darkening of your worth is not like that
> Which tradesmen use i' the city; their false lights
> Are to rid bad wares off." [4]

Of her executioners she says:

> "I forgive them:
> The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' the lungs,
> Would do as much as they do." [5]

Just before her death her thoughts fly to so domestic a thing as the health of her children:

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1. Act III, Sc.2.
2. Act I, Sc.1.
3. In his introduction to "The Duchess of Malfy: Complete Works of John Webster," Vol.2.
4. Act I, Sc.1.
5. Act IV, Sc;2.

"I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep." [1.]

Her manner of meeting death marks most clearly the difference between herself and Vittoria. She has endured like a martyr, and dies with the peace of a calm conscience. She dies kneeling, with words of relief:

"Come, violent death,
Serve for mandragora to make me sleep!" [2.]

Vittoria meets death on her feet, and dies in the same defiant spirit as Brachiano, to whom death was "a word infinitely terrible," to be met in the same spirit as an enemy in the field. It is through the eyes of the Duchess' tormentors rather than from her own melancholy words that we gain an ineffaceable impression of her greatness. Her brother's unforgettable exclamation at the sight of her body is a tribute to the greatness of her soul:

"Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young."[3.]

Bosola describes her noble bearing in imprisonment, her fortitude and disdain, but only once do we find the Duchess herself breaking out in anger. This is just before her death, after Bosola has shown her the cord which is to strangle her:

"I know death hath ten thousand several doors
For men to take their exits; and 'tis found

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1. Act IV, Sc.2. Recognition of life on the mundane level is exceptional among Elizabethan tragic women.

2. Act IV, Sc.2.

3. Act IV, Sc.2.

They go on such strange geometrical hinges
You may open them both ways; any way, for Heaven sake,
So I were out of your whispering." 1.

The Duchess has charm and graciousness and momentary flashes of greatness of soul. Her part suffers, however, from the irresolution of Antonio her husband, and the melancholy tone of the whole play. Her resignation and gentleness in adversity make her a pathetic figure, but pathos and greatness are not compatible. She is somewhat vaguely portrayed. She does not stand out sharp and distinct like Vittoria, or even Belimperia. She pleads for the privilege of loving:

"Why should only I
Of all the other princes of the world,
Be cased up, like a holy relic? I have youth
And a little beauty." 2.

But this suggests a woman more passionate than the Duchess shows herself, nor is Antonio an eager lover. Perhaps, also, the looseness of the plot detracts from the force of the Duchess' part. Suddenly we wonder why she is thus tormented by her brothers.[3] She herself is not sufficiently vital or vehement to carry us entirely beyond discrepancies of plot. The Duchess is the pathetic woman, treated with more skill and variety than her predecessors, but of the same family, raised to fill the chief rôle in the play. The genius of her creator prevents her from appearing inadequate for the part, but she is never quite great enough for us to feel that she trans-

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1. Act IV, Sc.2.

2. Act III, Sc.2.

3. The motives of Ferdinand and the Cardinal are obscure, indeed, contradictory.

cends all classification of women. We can say that she is like Isabella, or, in some ways, like Maria of "Antonio's Revenge" or Martha of "Hoffman," the difference lying in the genius of the dramatist. She is the sufferer, not a woman who takes a lead in any enterprise, good or evil. She is in many respects an exquisitely-imagined character, gracious and womanly, but she falls short of the tiny group of magnificent Elizabethan heroines, in which Vittoria Corombona so easily fills a place.

There is no evil woman in the play. We forget Julia, the Cardinal's mistress, very easily. She suffers from the general vagueness of the plot, indeed, she contributes to it. There are only two scenes[1] in which she takes any prominent part, and in both of these she brings to mind Tourneur's type of depraved womanhood, Levidulcia. She looks upon all mankind as legitimate prey. To the one, Delio, she has no great inclination. For Bosola, the other, she conceives a violent passion, which leads to her death at the hands of the Cardinal, her old lover. But she is chiefly memorable, not for anything she herself says, but for Bosola's words to her when he discovers that the Cardinal has poisoned her:

> "O foolish woman,
> Couldst not thou have poisoned him?" [2]

Yet even Julia, though of small importance, has her one little flash of spirit as she dies, as if Webster found it impossible to imagine a character totally devoid of it:

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1. Act II, Sc.4.: Act V, Sc.2.

2. Act V, Sc.2.

" 'Tis weakness,
Too much to think what should have been done.
I go
I know not whither." [1].

With Webster's two great plays, the tragedies of revenge ended.[2] They had spread over a long period, from about 1588 nearly to 1620. The type had altered during these thirty years, but as we have seen, the women remained on the whole constant. The two types of woman emerge in play after play as far as "The Revenger's Tragedy." How interesting the types were in the separate plays depended upon the individual genius of the dramatist. Each having the same amount of material,[3] the extent of his interest in, and understanding of, feminine character and personality, decided how the material was to be used. Cut from the same cloth we have two women as far apart in ultimate effect as Mellida and Ophelia. Of a slightly different texture are Castiza and Castabella. The tradition that found a beginning in Belimperia came to a glorious conclusion in ~~the character of~~ Vittoria Corombona, the white devil. Difference in handling of the same type of character explains the distinction so readily apprehended between Isabella, the plaintive, pathetic, at times ludicrous figure of an old woman who has lost her chief joy in life, and Cornelia, Greek in the effect of solemnity, who has lost not only one of her sons by death but a son and daughter who have deliberately chosen the path to

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1. Act V, Sc.2.

2. i.e., plays in which at least one character exists chiefly for the purpose of revenge, ~~but see supra, p.~~

3. That is, given, two women. not clear

eternal perdition. Differences between the women in the two classes already noted in the revenge tragedies are those of degree, which is decided by the demands of the plot, and the individual taste and ability of the dramatist.

IV The Domestic Tragedy.

So far the women of Elizabethan tragedy have been shown against a background of intrigue and state plotting in the historical plays, or involved in violence in the revenge tragedies. We have seen types of women weighed against each other - pathos contrasted with passion, innocence with guilt[1]: but the characterisation has seldom departed from type. They have moved in courts, or, with equal ease, upon a battlefield. Margaret of Anjou moves naturally between the two, while Eleanor and Constance appear at home in either. The tragedies of revenge carry us to a shadowy Italy, the "Italianate" Italy of Elizabethan imagination, where the ducal courts were peopled with devils incarnate to whom the most outrageous crimes were a part of family life. Women have only appeared in such royal or noble surroundings, nor have the principal characters been lower in rank than befits such a 'milieu.' In both chronicle and revenge plays, the action has affected a large group of people, even an entire nation.[2] The royal mothers, wives and daughters have seldom been seen without their attendant lords and ladies. Even if for a short time we leave these formal surroundings, we follow the women to scenes ordered with the regularity of a tapestry or a mediaeval illumination. The garden in which Edward

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1. In the revenge tragedies in the parts of Isabella and Belimperia, Cornelia and Vittoria Corombona. Tourneur contrasts guilty and innocent women in both his plays.

2. Only in Tourneur's "Revenger's Tragedy" do we receive the impression of a small circle of characters, and this is largely due to the method of presentation. From surrounding blackness one or two characters at a time come into the lurid light around Vendice, and are swallowed up again in darkness. We are only made aware of a very few characters at a time.

III declares his passion for Lady Salisbury has the exquisite formality of the garden in the "Roman de la Rose." Richard II's Queen walks in the "orchard" while the gardener "binds up the dangling apricocks." But with the lives of the king's faithful subjects of both sexes in town and country this has little to do, while the tragedies of revenge are still further removed from the narrow, circumscribed existence of the spectators who applauded them.

It is, therefore, natural to find no allusions to the distinctive life of women. The chronicle plays only touch upon that part of the queen's or princess's life which was lived in public. Only the most superficial treatment is accorded to the love between Suffolk and Margaret of Anjou. The women of the historical plays have no intimate life. In the tragedies of revenge the women only appear in their relationships with men, nearly always in subordinate parts. The loss of husband or lover is always the woman's motive for revenge. In the very few plays in which hero and heroine are allowed to survive and marry,[1] this, the beginning of a new and vital phase of life for the woman, is the end of the play. From one small group of plays, however, we might expect a different tragic perspective. In them we might hope to find intense personal tragedy, coming directly home to men's business and bosoms, and arousing the involuntary thought, "There, but for the grace of God -." The actions dramatically represented are those in which women could easily take a leading rôle, and the order of life such as to offer greater opportunities than before for

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1. e.g. "The Atheist's Tragedy."

showing women "in the round." The "domestic tragedies" compose this group.

There are seven plays in this section, the five most important of which appeared between 1592 and 1621.[1] These are: "Arden of Feversham," (1592); "A Warning for Fair Women," (1599); "A Yorkshire Tragedy," (1608); Heywood's "Woman Killed with Kindness," (1607), and "The Witch of Edmonton," (1621), by Dekker, Ford and others.[2] The first three of these deal with crimes, contemporary or recent, which had aroused an interest which spread beyond the district where they had been committed and had been recorded by the chroniclers Stowe and Holinshed. "Arden of Feversham" provided Kyd - if he was the author - with a heroine ready-made in the stage tradition. Anne Sanders, the murder of whose husband is the theme of the "Warning for Fair Women," though she offered scope for interesting and individual treatment, was a pawn in the moral game of the dramatist. The wife in "A Yorkshire Tragedy" is negligible. Anne Frankford, chief woman character in "A Woman Killed with Kindness," appears to be a new type imagined by Heywood independently of the influence of any previous well-worn tradition or convention. That she was not convincingly worked up is due to the demands of the plot. She had to lend herself to good, effective scenes; therefore she could not be developed along the lines she merited. Finally, "The Witch of

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1. The other two are of no merit at all:- Yarington's "Two Tragedies in One" (1601), and Wilkins's "Miseries of Inforst Marriage" (1607). There were also numerous other non-extant plays of which we have the titles.

2. These are the dates of publication.

Edmonton" shows no new development except in so far as the romantic tradition firmly established between 1610 and 1621 has crept in. Winnifred, though in point of time and situation nearer to Beaumont and Fletcher's heroines, is, through Dekker's robust handling, more closely akin to Greene's women. The other woman, Susan, is also in Greene's tradition, rather than in that of the decadent Jacobean stage.

From the domestic drama we might expect to gain some insight into the home-life of the Elizabethan period, or to find the dramatist studying domestic relations. The Elizabethan tragic formula, however, forbade any development of character or conditions at the expense of plot. Vigorous, rapidly-moving action, unimpeded by any characterisation for its own sake, was the dramatic necessity of the day. For this reason types were easier to manage than blended characters. Only the greatest among the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights succeeded in transcending the limitations imposed upon their art by the demand for exciting action concentrated in 'situations.' Therefore we find in "Arden of Feversham," the best of the criminal plays, that motive is of no importance, whereas the methods of planning and executing the murder are all. Crime and sensation were the order of Elizabethan tragedy, so that should a dramatist turn to domestic subjects, he would naturally look for those adaptable to his formula, and if he could exploit the popular interest roused by some notorious crime, so much the better. This brings the domestic drama into line with the plays of blood and lust, such as the revenge tragedies and pieces like "Lust's Dominion."[1] In the treatment of the subject of crime the

1. Heywood here is an exception. Personal taste evidently made him choose a gentler theme, but he himself comments in the Prologue to the play upon his departure:

"Look for no glorious state; our Muse is best
Upon a barren subject, a bare theme."

penny press of to-day and Elizabethan drama are closely parallel. Both go direct to the exciting parts of the story, disregarding motive save in so far as it is sensational, and entirely ignoring the psychology of those concerned. This, to judge by modern results, is exactly the method calculated to absorb the interest and attention of the men and women who demand such fare. Neither in Elizabethan nor modern sensational writing do we find any underlying feeling for the pity of it. Appeals to surface sentiment are readily made, and meet with as ready and superficial a response, but we do not feel that dramatist or reporter has been moved by the tears of things.[1.]

We might think that even through the blood and horror of an atrocious crime, something of the individuality of mind of a woman driven by violent passions or human frailty to sin would find its way. On the other hand, the instinct of the Elizabethan populace[2.] was to make a very deep cleavage between right and wrong. The result was that social, hereditary and psychological forces which to modern educated tastes might make the murderess an interesting study, and would probably go far to explain and extenuate her crime, never appear above the Elizabethan dramatist's horizon. Nor are we even able to deduce them, for they are obscured in the unrelieved villainy ascribed to the murderess. The dramatist was obliged to paint her the deepest black. This is even truer of the female villains than of the men. We see attempts by

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1. "A Woman Killed with Kindness" is perhaps an Elizabethan exception, but it is not the human tragedy that the dramatist feels, as much as the peril in which the soul is involved.

2. Present-day popular instinct works in exactly the same way.

dramatists to explain the villainy of men. Webster gives us a scene between Flamineo and his mother Cornelia[1]. in which the former sets out his case for an evil career with a force and logic that are hard to refute. Women are not given this opportunity, and, when they fall, they are past human redemption and excuse. This difference follows from the prevailing view of feminine "virtue." Alice Arden is in peril of losing her soul before she helps to commit a murder. She has already lost all claim to any good quality by adultery, the offence which, when committed by a woman, in Elizabethan eyes bore "the primal eldest curse upon it." It seems to follow naturally that she should be a murderess also. We need not expect sympathetic treatment of an adulteress at the hands of the majority of Elizabethan dramatists.[2].

Extant accounts of the murders which form the plots of "Arden of Feversham" and "A Warning for Fair Women" are, especially the former, very fully related. Holinshed, who gives an account of the murder of Arden, evidently feels it necessary to apologise for including a private matter in a history, but excuses it on the grounds of the strangeness of the story.[3]. His account spreads over six pages, with marginal comments which record his horror at the tale. Arden's wife, "a gentlewoman, young, tall and well-fauoured of shape and count-

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1. "The White Devil," Act I Sc. 2

2. Always excepting Heywood. It is worthy of note that Shakespeare adds adulterous desires as the last touch of infamy to the characters of Goneril and Regan. On the other hand, no taint of infidelity is attached to Lady Macbeth.

3. Raphael Holinshed, "Chronicles:" edition of 1807, Vol. III, year 1551, pp. 1024 ff.

enance" had as her lover for two years one Mosbie, "a tailor by occupation, a black swart man." This intrigue was known to the husband,[1] "Yet bicause he would not offend hir, and so loose the benefit which he hoped to gaine at some of hir freendes handes, in bearing with hir lewdnesse, which he might haue lost if he should haue fallen out with hir, he was contented to winke at hir filthie disorder, and also inuited Mosbie verie often to lodge in his house." Alice attempted to rid herself of her detested husband by poison, but this failed because she omitted to follow the explicit instructions she had received with the drug. She promised a certain Greene, who hated Arden, £10 if he would murder him, and he, in league with a ruffian, Black Will, who made "no conscience of bloodshed or murther" made four attempts, all frustrated by mere chance. Then, "Saint Valentine's day being fair at hand," the successful attempt was made.[2] At first Mosbie refused to consent to the murder and left in a fury, but Alice sent him a message "desiring him of all loves to come back againe," and at length prevailed upon him to help. "O importunate and bloudie-minded strumpet," exclaims Holinshed in wrath and horror. Arden, returning from a visit to a neighbour (called Dumpkin), was murdered in his own house. Company was invited to supper, and after supper "Mistress Arden caused hir daughter to play on the virginals, and they dansed, and she with them, and so seemed to protract time till maister Arden should come."

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1. He is also represented as an avaricious man, who sticks at no mean trick to gain wealth.

2. Holinshed gives a fine glimpse of the true criminal psychology in his account of the vow taken by Alice and Mosbie: "She had made a solemne promise to him, and he againe to hir, to be in all points as man and wife together, and thereupon they both receiued the sacrament on a sundaie in London, openlie in a church there."

When the guests had gone, Alice, Mosbie, Michael, Arden's servant, Mosbie's sister and a maid, and also one of Alice Arden's daughters, carried the body outside the house, where it was later found. A few rushes, which remained unnoticed by the murderess between the feet, gave them away and they were arrested.

The dramatist follows Holinshed's account closely as regards the actual sequence of events. The chronicler's story makes dramatic reading, and provides the playwright with material ready cut according to the received tragic pattern. Nothing is altered in the most important parts of the history.[1] Alice Arden is a "gift" to any dramatist. He has no need to pile up her villainy. What he has done is, by a few minor adjustments, to turn her more consistently into the conventional stage murderess. The real Arden was evidently a very objectionable man. He was avaricious, and, to satisfy his greed, oppressed the poor, taking from them their small substance.[2] He was willing to condone his wife's adultery, even to act as pander to her, if by so doing he could retain hopes of personal advancement. As we read Holinshed's account, we can find it possible to sympathise with Alice Arden's desire to get rid of him. The dramatist has contrived to eliminate the complication of any "extenuating circumstance" by white-washing Arden. The knave of the chron-

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1. No mention is made of the complicity of Mistress Arden's daughter in the murder. We must suppose that the dramatist's sensibilities revolted against the episode, for, as far as we know, the Elizabethan audience regarded with perfect equanimity Thyestean banquets such as that in "Titus Andronicus." We could hardly expect therefore that they would be especially disgusted.

2. His dead body was laid in a field which he had taken from a woman, who had cursed him bitterly for his injustice. As a result, says Holinshed, "the grasse did not growe where his bodie had touched but betweene his legs, betweene his armes, and about the hollownesse of his necke; and round about his bodie, and where his legs, armes, head, or any part of his bodie had touched no grasse growed at all of that time."

icle becomes a fool, but a likeable fool. On the stage Arden is represented as from time to time jealous, weak, and uxorious, but never as allowing of his own free will intimacy between Mosbie and his wife. Again and again he accuses her of infidelity, or complains to his friend:

> "Loue letters past twixt Mosbie and my wyfe,
> And they have preiue meetings in the Towne:
> Nay, on his finger did I spy the Ring
> Which at our Marriage day the Preest put on.
> And any greefe be halfe so great as this?"[1].

To have noticed this evidence, and yet to be capable of accepting the lamest excuses proferred by his wife, would argue (in life) an almost imbecile credulity. The dramatist, however, is at some pains to make us regard Arden as not assured of his wife's guilt, for a few speeches later he outlines to Francklin his friend the treatment he proposes to accord to anyone he may find in the future dishonouring his name:

> "That iniurious riball, that attempts
> To vyolate my deare wyues chastitie -----
> Shall on the bed which he thinkes to defile
> See his disseuered ioints and sinewes torne,
> Whylst on the planchers pants his weary body."[2].

His grasping nature is passed lightly over by the dramatist. When Reed accuses him of stealing his land, Arden defends himself, and we are left feeling that perhaps the sailor is in the wrong. In any case, practically nothing is said of his avarice, whereas Holinshed makes much of it.

By making Arden's character more agreeable, the dramatist has removed all danger of even seeming to condone Alice's behaviour. We can see from Holinshed that the chronicler did not find Arden's odious nature any excuse

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1. Act I, ll. 15-19.

2. Act I, ll.36-41.

for his wife's misconduct, but probably the author of the play would see that a man of Arden's stamp transferred bodily to the stage could not but be a repellent figure. It might be possible to pass over some of his objectionable characteristics in reading, but on the stage they would be unavoidably emphasised.

The dramatist has not departed from the chronicle in his treatment of Alice Arden's character. From Holinshed's narrative we create for ourselves the clear-cut figure of a woman driving relentlessly on to gain her own ends. She desires no more than to murder Arden and to live with Mosbie. We see only one aspect of Alice Arden's character. The dramatist adds nothing new to it. He is, naturally, obliged by his medium of expression to show her more fully than is possible in a brief historical narrative. But the dramatist as showman pipes the tune to which his puppets dance, and the tune is identical with Holinshed's. All apparent differences are variations on the same theme. The audience probably found Alice's impassioned declarations of love only further signs of the depths to which she had fallen, for they would hear an adulteress making use of the words of love which should by rights only be heard by her husband. The speech she makes to Mosbie in Act III, Sc.5., an impressive central scene in the play, shows that her love is intended to be another manifestation of her tigress-like disposition. She drags the wretched man along after her to a reconciliation and further attempt on Arden's life. She has been reading in a book of prayer and this has moved her to a transient repentance of her criminal love. When the mood has passed, she says:

> "I will do pennance for offending thee,
> And burne this prayer-booke where I here use

> The holy word that had conuerted me.
> See, Mosbie, I will teare away the leaues,
> And al the leaues, and in this golden couer
> Shall thy sweete phrases and thy letters dwell;
> And hereon will I chiefly meditate,
> And hold no other sect but such deuotion!"[1].

We can imagine the horror of the audience at such blasphemy and desecration. The dramatist did not intend the words as the plea of a woman passionately in love, but as the reckless speech of a lost soul. He is using a favourite device for driving home iniquity. The sinner deliberately cuts herself off from divine grace. A variation of the same idea can be found in "A Woman Killed with Kindness," when Frankford with difficulty restrains himself from killing his wife and her lover:

> "But that I would not damn two precious souls,
> Bought with my Saviour's blood, and send them, laden
> With all their scarlet sins upon their backs
> Unto a fearful judgment, their two lives
> Had met upon my rapier." [2].

We have already seen that Alice is an unscrupulous woman, to say the least. In the play, this quality is skilfully brought out in definite actions. The quickness with which she seizes upon the chance of turning Greene's negative hatred to something active and violent is a clever touch of feminine subtlety. Greene has just complained to Mistress Arden of her husband's harsh dealing, concluding with a vague threat at which Alice jumps:

> "But, seeing he hath taken my lands, Ile value lyfe
> As careless as he is careful for to get:
> And tell him this from me, Ile be reuenged,

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1. Act III, Sc.5., ll. 115-121.

2. Act IV Sc. 6 cf. also "Hamlet," in which the prince refrains from killing his uncle at prayer, lest he should escape damnation in the next world. Frankford, as "hero" of "A Woman Killed with Kindness," is as punctilious in these matters of religion as the villain in these plays is determined to flout them.

And so as he shall wish the Abbey lands
Had rested still within their former state." [1]

Alice's cunning hint is admirably conveyed:

"Wo is me that my man should want.
God knowes 'tis not my fault: but wonder not
Though he be hard to others, when to me -
Ah, maister Greene, God knowes how I am used." [2]

Naturally Greene's sympathy and indignation are aroused by this additional proof of his enemy's evil nature, and Alice sets him on fire by an audaciously impudent accusation:

"I neuer liue good day with him alone.
When hee's at home, then haue I froward lookes,
Hard wordes and blowes, to mend the match withall:
And though I might content as good a man,
Yet doth he keepe in euery corner trulles.
Then rydes he straight to London: there, forsooth
He reuelles it among such filthie ones
As counsels him to make away his wife." [3]

Thus she wins Greene to promise to kill him, and at the same time makes it appear that she is ill-used and long-suffering.

The dramatist makes even more of Alice Arden's feminine attacks upon her husband. Holinshed mentions the instance of the poisoned broth, which she pushes over with the excuse that nothing she does can please him. We are given several scenes in which her quick wit puts her husband in the wrong. There is the scene over the breakfast. She cries in fine indignation:

"Give me a spoone. Ile eat of it my selfe:
Would it were full of poyson to the brim,
Then should my cares and troubles have an end.
Was euer silly woman so tormented." [4]

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1. Act I, ll. 480-484.
2. Ibid., ll. 486-489.
3. Act I, ll.495-503.
4. Act I, ll. 388-391.

She plays not only upon Arden's jealousy but also upon his shame at entertaining so base a passion in order to vindicate herself as the ill-used, maligned wife. Even after she has deliberately infuriated him by meeting him arm-in-arm with Mosbie, she can convince him that he has misjudged her, and lull his suspicions till another opportunity comes:

> "Ah, Arden, what folly blinded thee?
> Ah, Jelious harebrane man, what hast thou done?
> When we, to welcome thy intended sport,
> Came lovingly to mete thee on thy way,
> Thou drewst thy sword, inraged with Jelousy,
> And hurt thy freende whose thoughts were free
> from harme;
> All for a worthlesse kisse and ioyning armes,
> Both don but mirrely to try thy patience." [1]

These very feminine methods of arguing and wreaking her spite upon Arden show that the dramatist understood the small intimacies of a woman's mind. They are not, however, meant to add to Alice's interest as a woman. They are intended solely to show up the blackness of her character. She is an adulteress and potential murderess, so that she may be naturally expected to be a brazenly impudent liar. Undoubtedly the readiness with which Arden allows himself to be persuaded by his wife diminishes Alice's stature as a sinner. He is prepared to go as a lamb to the slaughter in each plot upon his life. It is only the intervention of providence which saves him up for the last act, and at the end he is treacherously attacked from behind. The dramatist saw nothing pathetic in Alice's infatuation with Mosbie. Most probably he presented Mosbie as a despicable figure to make Alice appear in an even worse light.

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1. Act IV, Sc.4, ll. 88-95.

Arden puts into words the general feeling on the matter:

> "To doat on such as he
> Is monstrous, Francklin, and intollerable.
> A Botcher, and no better at the first:
> Who, by base brocage getting some small stock,
> Crept into seruice of a noble man,
> And by his seruile flattery and fawning
> Is now become the steward of his house,
> And brauely iets it in his silken gowne." 1.

Arden and his friend do not refrain from jeering at Mosbie's low birth and mean occupation, even when he himself is with them in person. Mosbie himself seems to be troubled with an 'inferiority complex'. In the course of a quarrel with Alice he gives vent to the feelings he has cherished:

> "O no, I am a base artificer:
> My winges are feathered for a lowly flight.
> Mosby? fy! no, not for a thousand pound.
> Make love to you? Why, tis unpardonable.
> We beggers must not breathe where gentiles are." 2.

The author of "Arden of Feversham" followed conventional practice in making his villain repent. Holinshed has recorded words that may be of repentance, but may equally well be a kind of philosophical summing-up of the situation. Mistress Arden exclaims as she is confronted with the body of her murdered husband: "Now the bloud of God helpe, for this bloud haue I shed." More than this she does not say, and certainly she does not falter immediately after the crime she has committed. She acts with coolness and presence of mind in concealing traces of the deed. This is the natural way for her to behave in the circumstances.[3] The dramatist,

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1. Act I, ll. 22-30.

2. Act III, Sc.5, ll. 135-139.

3. It seems to be largely in fiction that murderers are overcome with fear and remorse immediately after the crime. Professor Stoll, in "Shakespeare Studies, Chap. VII, The Criminals," has made an interesting analysis of the Elizabethan conception of the criminal mind, comparing it with facts disclosed by present-day psychological investigation.

on the other hand, involves her in a repentance which is not only thorough but dramatically effective:[1.]

Mos. "How now? whats the matter? is all well?
Ales "I, wel, if Arden were aliue againe.
In vaine we striue, for here his blood remains."[2.]

These qualms of conscience alternate with fits of courage, and bare-faced audacious lying. When she is confronted with the body she breaks down in the orthodox repentance:

"Arden, sweet husband, what shall I say?
The more I sound his name, the more he bleedes:
This bloude condemnes me, and in gushing foorth
Speakes as it falles, and askes me why I did it.
Forgiue me, Arden: I repent me nowe,
And, would my death saue thine, thou shouldst not die.
Ryse up, sweet Arden, and enjoy thy loue,
And frowne not on me when we mete in heauen:
In heauen I loue thee, though on earth I did not." [3.]

Her stage repentance is indeed complete; she not only loathes her deed, but now regards her lover with abhorrence:

"Ah, but for thee I had neuer been a strumpet.
What can not oathes and protestations doe,
When men haue opportunity to woe?
I was too young to sound thy villainies,
But now I finde it and repent too late." [4.]

In making her repent of her love for Mosbie, the author is running counter to the spirit of the Alice Arden of the earlier part of the play. The speech quoted above sorts ill with her impassioned defence of the project of Arden's murder:

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1. In some respects he anticipates Macbeth's hallucinations and remorse.

2. Act V, Sc.1, ll.272-274.

3. Act V, Sc.3, ll. 3-11.

4. Act V, Sc.5, ll. 14-18. N.B. the use of the "weak woman" device to gain sympathy for Alice, who has been the prime mover throughout. cf. the part of Evadne in "The Maid's Tragedy."

"Nay, he must leaue to liue that we may loue,
May liue, may loue; for what is lyfe but loue?
And loue shall last so long as lyfe remaines,
And lyfe shall ende before my loue depart." [1].

Yet, in spite of the incongruity of the two speeches, we may be sure that the repentant sinner was an edifying sight to the audience. They could feel sure that Alice Arden's desire to meet her husband in heaven would be satisfied. The most appalling sight would be a sinner like Dr. Faustus who could not repent and be saved, even though he knew the means of redemption:

"See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament:
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ."

Although additions were made in the play to the bare structure of Alice Arden's character offered by Holinshed, additions which brought the part into line with the conventional idea of a villain, we can still feel that she is based on reality. The side we see of her character is true to life. She is torn by violent passions, but they are those natural to a woman of strong emotions. The account of her story related by Holinshed is ample proof of this. Only a woman with remarkable courage and some very strong desire which would render her determination unshakeable would embark upon so reckless and desperate an enterprise. The matter-of-fact way in which Alice pursued attempt after attempt upon Arden's life is not lost in the play. The dramatist never obscures this quality of grim determination by a

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1. Act IV, Sc.1, ll. 96-99.

flood of rhetoric. The language of the play is bare and little adorned. Figures of speech are drawn from the kind of life in which the tragedy is worked out. Alice, sarcastically commenting upon her husband's departure to dine with Lord Chenies, says:

"Such kinde husbands seldome want excuses:
Home is a wild cat to a wandring wit."

Later, when Francklin has suggested that Alice should accompany them - the last thing she desires - she declines, with a hit at Arden:

"No, begde fauour merits little thankes;
If I should go, our house would run away,
Or else be stolen, therefore Ile stay behind." [1.]

This is her natural idiom. On the few occasions upon which she slips into more strained expression, it instantly rings false:

"Were he as mad as rauing Hercules,
Ile see him ----------" [2.]

Even in her most impassioned speeches to Mosbie, Alice never breaks into the high-flown conventional rhetoric of, for example, "The Spanish Tragedy:"

"Nay, heare me speake, Mosbie, a word or two;
Ile byte my tongue if it speake bitterly.
Looke on me, Mosbye, or Ile kill myselfe;
Nothing shall hyde me from thy stormy looke." [3.]

This speech is a little more polished than her normal conversational tone. Her sharp rebukes show best of all the ordinary, middle-class turn of speech:

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1. Act IV, Sc.1, ll. 24-26.
2. Act I, ll. 116-117.
3. Act III, Sc.5, ll. 110-114, etc.

"Ile lay my life, this is for susans loue.
Stayd you behinde your Maister to this end?
Haue you no other time to brable in
But now when serious matters are in hand?" [1].

Although there are occasional lapses into speech unsuited to a middle-class household in Faversham, they do not last long enough to mar the effect of the homely, vigorous language in which the characters speak. The first thing to strike the reader in Holinshed's account is the business-like method in which the crime was worked out. So in the play there are no heroics to disguise the grimness of the plot.

"A Warning for Fair Women," the second in chronological order among the plays on actual murders, introduces two different types of women. The story of the murder of George Sanders by his wife's lover George Browne is not given the ~~some~~ vigour in Stowe's narrative, which Holinshed imparts to his account of Arden's tragedy.[2] The plot itself lacks the tension that Arden's remarkable escapes afforded to his story.[3] Sanders and John Beane, a neighbour's servant, were murdered near Shooter's Hill, Browne having received intelligence from Anne Drury, his accomplice in the seduction of Sander's wife and the plot against him, that they would be passing that way. The murder was, however, exposed by John Beane who, "Being left for dead, by God's providence did reuiue again, and creeping awaie on all foure, was found by an old man and his maiden, and conueied to Woolwich, where he gaue evident marks of the murderer." Mistress Drury pawned some

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1. Act IV, Sc. 1, ll. 83-86.

2. Stowe's continuation of Holinshed: edition of 1808, Vol.IV, p.322. (15th year of Elizabeth's reign.)

3. There were two attempts to murder Sanders, but they have none of the dramatic circumstance of those made upon Arden.

of her own and Mistress Sanders' plate and sent Browne money, bidding him save himself by flight, "which thing he foreslowed not to do." A short time later he was arrested, and confessed "that he had oftentimes before pretended and sought to doo the same, by the instigation of the said mistress Drurie, who had promised to make a marriage betweene him and mistress Sanders, (whom he seemed to loue excessively) neuertheless he protested (though untrulie) that mistress Sanders was not priuie or consenting thereunto." In spite of Browne's denial of her complicity, Anne Sanders, upon the confession of trusty Roger, Mistress Drury's servant, was arraigned at the Guildhall, tried, condemned, and executed at Smithfield on May 8th, "the Wednesday of Whitsunweek." In addition to Stowe's bald narrative, there is a pamphlet extant, "A Briefe Discourse of the late murther of master George Sanders a worshipfull Citizen of London," (1573). This is written in a moralising strain for the edification of the pious, and deals less with the circumstances of the murder than with the efforts of sundry godly ministers to bring the accessories to the plot to a state of grace. It is doubtless to this book as much as to the chronicle that the author of the play looked for material. He has certainly reproduced the moral tone of the tract. The very title of the play suggests an edifying aim.

There is a different tone in this play from that of "Arden of Feversham." The murder which forms the theme is less atrocious. There is no sign of a savagery like that displayed in Alice Arden. Browne is overwhelmed with fear of the consequences, for he takes to flight at once.[1] Mistress Sanders has nothing to do with the

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1. cf. the scene in which Alice jests with her friends while Arden's body is lying in the house.

actual execution of the crime. Only the man sheds blood, and he dies with the words of a psalm upon his lips. The dramatist does not stand aside from the action, as an unconcerned narrator of events. He does not represent Anne Sanders mercilessly as a wicked woman. He does not excuse her adultery, but on the other hand, he does not picture her as entirely cut off from grace. She repents whole-heartedly, and we see her go to her death lamented by children and friends. The conspirators do not revile each other as in "Arden of Feversham," nor are they left comfortless at the end of the play. Not a voice is raised in sympathy with Alice Arden and her confederate. The author of "A Warning" appears to feel as his own the fate of Mistress Sanders and Mistress Drury. The latter, the more culpable of the two, is also allowed to repent and die

> "like a Christian and the childe of grace,
> Pleasing to God, to angels, and to men." 1.

In the Induction the author has clearly shown his disapproval of the violent methods of the revenge tragedies and tragedies of blood, which can only tell:

> "How some damn'd tyrant to obtain a crown
> Stabs, hangs, impoisons, smothers, cutteth throats,
> And then a Chorus, too, comes howling in
> And tells us of the worrying of a cat:
> Then, too, a filthy whining ghost,
> Lapt in some foul sheet, or a leathern pilch,
> Comes screaming like a pig half stick'd
> And cries Vindicta! - Revenge, revenge.
> With that a little rosin flasheth forth,
> Like smoke out of a tobacco pipe, or a boy's squib." 2.

It is probable, therefore, that the gentler tone he ad-

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1. Act II, ll. 1608-1609.

2. Induction, ll. 43-53.

opted in his treatment of a tragic theme was a protest against the strained horrors of tragedy as generally written. Whatever the reason, Anne Sanders and Anne Drury are certainly treated with more kindness than usually falls to the lot of the Elizabethan adulteress. They are at the same time more drab, less impressive than Alice Arden, but the friendliness of the jailors and the ministers brings them within the pale of human sympathy and tenderness. We have not the same feeling of isolation as is unavoidable in "Arden of Feversham." Apart from the gentler handling of the women, their very nature brings them down to a more ordinary level than Alice Arden. They are incapable of the fierce passions that spurred the other on. Anne Sanders is left vague and ill-defined, and neither the chronicle nor the play commits itself on the subject of her guilt.

At first we see Anne Sanders in a not unpromising light. She appears as a housewife, talking to her little boy at the door of the shop:

> "Go, prattling boy, go bid your sister see
> My closet lockt when she takes out the fruit.
>
> Boy "I will, forsooth, and take some for my pains.
>
> Anne "Well, sir sauce, does your master teach you that?
> I pray God bless thee, th'art a very wag." [1]

Her replies to Browne are shrewd, nor does she give any sign that she could be worked upon to accept his love. Like Alice Arden, she rarely departs from her native idiom. Her reply to Browne's exaggerated courtesy gives the tone of her speech:

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1. Act I,,ll. 303-307. N.B. this is one of the few occasions upon which a woman is shown in natural conversation with her children.

"Such unexpected kindness
Is like herb John in broth.

Br. "I pray ye how is that?

Anne "'T may e'en as well be laid aside as used.
If ye have business with my husband, sir,
Y' are very welcome; otherwise, I'll take my leave." [1.]

When the discomfited Browne has taken his departure, her shrewd homely wit, once again, hits the mark:

"These errand-making gallants are good men,
That cannot pass, and see a woman sit
Of any sort, alone at any door,
But they will find a 'scuse to stand and prate,
Fools that they are to bite at every bait." [2.]

These are the words of a woman of commonsense and a certain native dignity, who has not yet felt the temptation to exploit her beauty.

This promising opening is marred by the dramatist's inability to render her change credible. The same woman shows herself weak and credulous, unable to hold out against the insidious attacks of Anne Drury. We are obliged to forget the idea already formed of her character, nor are we enabled to form a conclusive judgment of her after she has succumbed to Drury's influence. Although she is the motive for Browne's villainy, she fades from the foreground. During the cross-examination to which she is submitted, the lack of courage which is at the root of Anne Sander's character clearly displays itself. Had the dramatist had any skill in character-drawing, this cowardice could have been studied, and her actions throughout given a comprehensible motive. She lies to her

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1. Act I, ll. 331-335.

2. Act I, ll. 355-359.

judges, and begs Anne Drury not to give her away. We do not suppose that by thus representing her, desperately trying to struggle out of the net in which she has been caught, the dramatist intended us to recognise a sort of courage. He showed her thus in order to make her repentance the more spectacular. She enters the court of justice wearing a white rose in her bosom. In reply to a question she explains with composure that it is

> "In token of my spotless innocence:
> As free from guilt as is this flower from staine." [1.]

To the dramatist and the audience such a flat denial of truth must have brought a whiff of sulphur and brimstone from the devils congregating around the prey. She sees Anne Drury in prison, and begs her to shield her:

> "Oh! mistris Drury, now the hour is come
> To put your love unto the touch, to try
> If it be current, or but counterfait.
> --------- are you stil purposed
> To take the murder upon your selfe?
> Or wil you now recant your former words?" [2.]

Anne Drury piously rebukes her, reminding her that they are both near death, and that both have been "notorious vile transgressors." Such behaviour only sorts

> "with reprobates
> And such as have no taste of any grace." [3.]

She reminds her of the solemnity of the occasion, of the means of grace:

> "------ if we wilfully shut up our hearts
> Against the holy spirit that knocks for entrance,

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1. Act II, ll. 1310-1311.
2. Act II, ll. 1555-1559.
3. Ibid., ll. 1565-1566.

It is not this world's punishment shal serve
Nor death of body, but our soules shal live
In endlesse torment of unquenched fire." [1].

Now we see the point of Anne Sander's previous stubbornness. She is touched by her fellow sinner, Drury, whose words, together with the Doctor by whom she has been "seriously instructed," cause her to repent:

"Although Ile vow
I never had intention to confesse
My hainous sinne, that as I might escape
The worlds reproach, yet God, I give him thanks!
Even at this instant I am strangely changed,
And wil no longer drive repentance off;
Nor cloake my guiltiness before the world." [2].

The author's didactic purpose forbade his giving either of the women the stoic resignation of Alice Arden.[3]. We are not interested in Anne Drury and Anne Sanders during their trial, and in the scenes before their execution, except in so far as our curiosity is aroused by the author's didactic aims. At the beginning of the play, Anne Sanders promised well as a study of the middle-class housewife, but we speedily lose sight of this aspect when the plot between Browne and Anne Drury thickens.

The latter has an interest especially her own as typical of a certain class, the professional pander. A full-length study of this kind of woman is Celestina; a mediaeval prototype is Dame Siriþ of the fabliau. Anne Drury may not be a very well drawn example, but she re-

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1. Act II, ll. 1579-1583.

2. Ibid., ll. 1585-1589.

3. This appears to have been characteristic of the age. Barbarous tortures and punishments such as that incurred by high treason were borne - and witnessed - with incredible fortitude.

counts her activities racily. She drove a thriving trade as a go-between in illicit love-affairs. She is an expert in winning reluctant wives, for, as her servant says, she has "such a sweet tongue as will supple a stone."[1]

> "Of remedyes of love she knew per-chaunce,
> For she coude of that art the olde daunce."

In her scene with Browne we have passing glimpses of her various occupations. Surgery of a sort, and quack medicines are staples of her trade:

> "Aqua celestis, or the water of balm,
> Or rosa solis, or that of Doctor Steevens
> Will help a surfeit." [2]

George Sanders pays tribute to her as good company:

> "Send one for Nan Drury,
> She'll play the wag, tell tales and make us merry." [3]

She herself expresses her motive in thus interesting herself in Browne's affairs:

> "The money I will finger twixt them twain
> Shall make my daughter such a dowry
> As I will match her better than with Browne
> To some rich Attorney, or Gentleman,
> Let me alone. If they enjoy their pleasure,
> My sweet shall be to feed upon their treasure." [4]

Though herself engaged in very questionable pursuits, she is determined that her daughter shall do better for herself.

Both women dwindle into lay-figures to serve as illustrations for the playwright's moral purposes.

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1. Act I
2. Act I, ll. 177-179.
3. Ibid., ll. 368-369.
4. Ibid., ll. 417-422.

In the first part[1] they are differentiated as types. The author does not concern himself with the emotions of the women concerned in this plot. He mentions very casually the avarice of Anne Drury, and shows nothing of the love passages between Browne and Anne Sanders. While he is probably pursuing his own moral purposes in thus keeping the lovers apart, he reverts to the more primitive technique of "Tancred and Gismunda," where the lovers are only allowed to appear together upon the stage in the dumb shows. In "A Warning for Fair Women," although Browne and Anne meet and speak in one scene, they do not exchange words of love. Only in the dumb shows are they represented as lovers. This helps to increase the archaic effect of the play. The Induction and its allegorical personages and the dumb shows are all appurtenances of an earlier period of English tragedy.[2] This prudish separation of the lovers, therefore, may well represent the survival of an older convention which suited well with the moral scruples and didactic purpose of the author. The play also shows in a modified form the two types of women character already clearly distinguished in the revenge tragedies, that is, the strong and the weak type. Mistress Drury, however, is not an imposing enough character to make a convincing and impressive villain. She is rather a type which has traditionally been identified with broad comedy.[3] Anne Sanders is so care-

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1. The play falls into two parts - Acts I and II - the first part dealing with events as far as the initiation of a plot against Sanders, the second with the murder and its consequences.

2. cf. "Gorboduc," "Promos and Cassandra," and "Tancred and Gismunda."

3. cf. mediaeval fabliaux.

lessly drawn as to render it practically impossible to place her as any particular type of character. The chief interest of both lies in the insight they afford into Elizabethan middle-class life.

"A Yorkshire Tragedy," the last in chronological sequence of the group of murder plays, is a short play of intense strength and vigour. It is a horrible account of the despair of a gentleman of good birth and position, who, by riotous living, has wasted his wealth and that of his unfortunate wife, and finally, maddened by excess and the ruin he sees around him, murders two of his children, and attempts the life of his wife and third child.[1] The story of the murder is told by Stowe in two sentences: "Walter Callverly of Calverley in Yorkshire Esquier, murdred 2 of his young children, stabbed his wife into the bodie with full purpose to have murdred her, and instantly went from his house to have slaine his youngest child at nurse, but was prevented. For which fact at his triall in York he stood mute and was judged to be prest to death, according to which judgment he was executed at the castell of York the 5th of August (1605)." From this bare announcement the dramatist has drawn a ghastly but undeniably powerful picture of the Husband.

The Wife plays an almost negligible part. The absence even of a name makes her more completely and obviously a type than any character in plays previously considered.[2] She is another patient Griselda - a wife, not a woman. Her gentle, harmless questions provoke out-

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1. Wilkins' "Miseries of Inforst Marriage" is based on the same subject, with a happy ending. More space is devoted to the relations between the Husband and the "young mistress" alluded to in Sc.1. of the "Yorkshire Tragedy."

2. Except perhaps Tourneur's Levidulcia, Castiza, etc., and the Lady of "The Second Maiden's Tragedy."

bursts of abuse:

Wife "I doe intreate you as you loue your soule,
Tell me the cause of this your discontent.

Husb. "A vengeance strip thee naked! thou art cause,
Effect, property, quality, thou, thou, thou!" [1].

It is impossible to say any more of her than that she is content to reply: "Be it so" to her husband's maniacal abuse and invective. We must suppose that she was accepted in all seriousness by dramatist and audience alike. She is intended solely to show up the dissipation and the outrageous behaviour of the Husband. How far we are meant to sympathise with her as a character it is impossible to say. Since Griselda, in spite of Chaucer's gentle derision, was accepted as a feminine ideal by dramatist after dramatist, we must suppose that we are invited to shed a tear over her fate, and to regard the Husband with an extra shudder. She has her day when, very suitably, she provokes the inevitable repentance as her husband is led to execution:

"Oh my sweete Husband, my deere distressed husband,
Now in the hands of unrelenting lawes.
My greatest sorrow, my extremest bleeding,
Now my soule bleeds. ---------
You haue been stille unkinde to me.

Husb."Faith, and so I think I haue.
I did my murthers roughly, out of hand,
Desperate and suddaine, but thou hast devised
A fine way now to kill me, thou hast giuen mine eyes
Seauen wounds apiece ----------"

Wife."Oh my repentant husband.

Husb."My deere soule, whom I too much haue wronged,
For death I die, and for this haue I longd." [2].

She exists only to draw the fire of her husband's outbursts, first of rage, then of repentance. However will-

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1. Scene II, ll. 31-35.

2. Sc. IX, ll. 6-31.

ing we may be to suspend our disbelief in studying certain aspects of Elizabethan characterisation, such a wife is an insuperable obstacle.

With Heywood we enter a different tragic world. "A Woman Killed with Kindness" is more truly domestic than the murder plays already discussed, though less startlingly dramatic. Heywood's atmosphere is nearer that of the modern domestic drama than that of any of his contemporaries. The 'genre' was shunned by Heywood's fellow-writers. Shakespeare has made no study in serious mood of an upper middle-class household, and, on the whole, any pictures we have of such life from the majority of plays of tragic intensity are incidental. This Heywood understood. In his Prologue he says that he has deliberately chosen a middle flight, exchanging the "tissue" of courts for the "russet" of a homely scene.

Heywood points no commonplace moral through his study of ordinary family life. It is not the mere sin of adultery that he condemns. That has been done countless times. It is the punishment which it should receive that occupies Heywood. The absence of personal violence from the play, together with the bare simplicity of the language, make it unique among the domestic dramas.

Heywood's historical play, "Edward IV," had, in the development of the story of Jane Shore and her husband, foreshadowed his peculiar handling of the subject of marital infidelity. It was evidently the outcome of Heywood's own disposition, for such gentleness and forbearance were characteristic neither of the life of the period nor of the drama. The play itself offers evidence of the punishment Mistress Frankford herself expected:

"Yet, once my husband,
For womanhood, to which I am a shame,
Though once an ornament - even for His sake
That hath redeemed our souls, mark not my face
Nor hack me with your sword, but let me go
Perfect and undeformed to my tomb." [1.]

Frankford's "kindness" punishes her with the death that even Heywood seemed to regard as the fit reward of adultery. But there is no strained violence. On the contrary, Anne's death-bed scene is only saved from becoming intolerably sentimental by the fine frankness and sincerity of Frankford's generous disposition.

Anne Frankford is a new type of woman-character which the Elizabethan tragic formula forbade Heywood to develop to its most satisfying limits. She is a type of the weak woman consciously led astray against her better judgment, because she has not sufficient strength of will to resist.[2.] The germ of the idea can be seen in the part of Jane Shore. As we look through the long array of Elizabethan stage heroines we see great sinners like Vittoria Corombona and Cleopatra, and outrageous sinners such as Tourneur's wicked women, but only Heywood seems to have taken serious account of the common-place women who in the flesh must have crossed the paths of his fellow-dramatists. He alone appears to have understood that such women, though they sin not bravely but pitifully, can have tragic significance and intensity as well as the splendid spectacular figures of the Italian Renaissance. The weak

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1. Act IV, Sc.4.

2. It is interesting to compare Anne Sanders ("A Warning for Fair Women.") She is a type from life of the sort of woman whom Heywood imagined for himself. The dramatist makes very little of Anne Sanders, whose character we deduce from the story as recorded, and repeated in the play. Yet she is own sister to Anne Frankford and Jane Shore.

woman, who does something evil and regrets it as weakly as she has done it, is a common figure in life. Yet on a stage dominated by the roll and reverberation of Marlowe's blank verse, and the pomp and circumstance of courtly settings, this poor pathetic stray from reality is sadly out of place. She has wandered into a "milieu" in which even the bare minimum of explanation necessary to make her credible is begrudged her. Without some preparation a woman such as Anne Frankford is inevitably unconvincing.

The reasons for Anne's adultery are never stated, nor even hinted. It is true that in the acting of the part, some light could be shed on her feelings for Wendoll before he declares himself. Even then, all that the actors could do to cover up the ill-joined parts of the plot could not explain away the suddenness of the change when it comes, and the ease with which Wendoll's almost casual words of wooing win her from her husband. She has not long been married to Frankford,[1] with whom she is supposed to be deeply in love:

> "The love I bear my husband is as precious
> As my soul's health." [2]

Yet in her next speech but one she has yielded to Wendoll's importunities:

> "I never offended yet;
> My fault, I fear, will in my brow be writ.
> Women that fall, not quite bereft of grace,
> Have their offences noted in their face.
> I blush and am ashamed. Oh, Master Wendoll,
> Pray God I be not born to curse your tongue,
> That hath enchanted me! This maze I am in
> I fear will prove the labyrinth of sin." [3]

It is another example of the inadequate motives so easily

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1. This is the impression we receive in spite of the two children who are unexpectedly brought in purely for stage purposes as useful properties for the two great scenes of Anne's banishment and death.

2. Act IV, Sc.4.

3. Act II, Sc.3.

attributed to women by the Elizabethan dramatist intent upon his situation. We have already seen examples in the parts of Belimperia, Queen Isabella and the Lady Anne in "Richard III." Such a turn is necessary if there is to be a play, but if any degree of realism is to be preserved, Anne Frankford cannot be allowed to turn from her husband in two speeches.[1] The drama of the period, however, cumbered with sub-plots and intent upon effective single scenes, equally did not, and could not, allow her to do anything else. Had the Mountford-Acton sub-plot not taken up so much of the action,[2] Anne's part - a part that is in place in a drama of characterisation only - could have been shown to much greater advantage. Not only does the dramatist expect us to accept without demur the unmotived change from Frankford to Wendoll, but, as the end of the drama shows, he also expects us to believe that Anne has never really ceased to love her husband. This in itself is not incredible, but it presumes some kind of conflict in the woman's mind, of which, however, nothing appears in the play. We are not shown a single scene before or after the climax of the play in which we can catch a glimpse of the workings of Anne Frankford's mind and emotions. This deficiency in characterisation is not peculiar to "A Woman Killed with Kindness." In the parallel situation of Jane Shore in "Edward IV," she is reluctant to yield, and yet incapable of effective resistance. Both women are at bottom realistic types who would be at home in a drama of characterisation. This is precluded not only

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1. Wendoll is allowed a soliloquy and some shorter remarks in which to woo, while Anne is a woman, "therefore to be won."

2. It takes up fully one third of the play.

by the sentimental and romantic vein which accompanies Heywood's kindliness and tolerance, but even more by the conditions of his stage, which did not encourage or even allow him to put forth all his homely and sympathetic power.

In "The Witch of Edmonton" (1621), the work of Dekker, Ford, and, perhaps, other dramatists, we find the domestic drama distinctly touched with the conventions of that type of romantic drama which Beaumont and Fletcher had established firmly upon the stage.[1] This fine play affords an excellent glimpse into country life of the Jacobean period. Not only can we see the lighter side of that life, the sports and games that still formed part of it before cakes and ale disappeared for a time under Puritan domination, but we are shown the cruelty with which the simple, kind-hearted rustics could act when once their superstitious terrors were aroused. The story of Mother Sawyer, the Witch, is linked by the slightest of threads to the domestic drama of the lives of Frank Thorney, Winnifred, and Susan. Where it comes into contact with the latter theme, the witch-motive somewhat detracts from the power and convincing reality of Frank Thorney's character. It is very difficult to understand how powerful a hold the belief in witches wielded over the lives of rich and poor, educated and ignorant. Holy writ had commanded men to destroy them, root and branch - "Ye shall not suffer a witch to live." To a contemporary audience, the supernatural force of evil which, in the shape of a black dog

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1. We also find prefaced to the play a distich which links it with the revenge tragedies:
"Forced marraige, murder: murder blood requires.
Reproach, revenge; revenge hell's help desires."

touching Frank, brings about the murder of Susan, the wife he has unlawfully married, would add greatly to the impressive horror of the plot. To us, this obscuring, by the introduction of a supernatural agency, of the motives which drove him to seek immediate release from the pressure of secret troubles, is a flaw.

The plot of this domestic tragedy is simpler than those of the other plays of the species. Frank Thorney, son of a yeoman near Edmonton, while in the service of Sir Arthur Clarington, has seduced and then married a fellow-servant, Winnifred. The marriage has been furthered by Clarington, who has previously been Winnifred's lover, and hopes by this arrangement to have easier access to her, a hope which she summarily dashes. Young Thorney has to keep his marriage a secret from his father, who would otherwise cast him off for ever. He goes home, to find a match already arranged for him with Susan Carter,[1] daughter of a wealthy neighbour. Frank is forced to marry Susan, and keep his union with Winnifred a secret. After they are married, Frank, who has been joined by Winnifred in the disguise of a boy, plans to leave Susan, to whom he gives the impression that he is going on a journey. She accompanies him a little way, and, in a fit of murderous passion instigated by the devil in the shape of a dog, he murders her, wounds himself, and pretends that all has been the work of a former suitor of Susan's. Katherine, the murdered woman's sister, nurses Frank, and accidentally comes upon the knife with which he did the deed. Frank is tried and condemned. Winni-

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1. Winnifred and Susan show different hands at work. Winnifred has been created by Ford and Dekker, the latter having had a larger share in the part. Susan is Dekker's work.

fred, who has had no knowledge of Frank's part in the murder till he has confessed to her, is adopted into the family of the murdered girl. Alongside of this plot runs that of old Mother Sawyer, who, persecuted by the country folk, sells her soul to the devil, who gives her power to afflict her enemies by means of a familiar spirit which takes the form of a black dog. It is this dog which provokes Frank to murder, and appears before Katherine's discovery of the incriminating knife. These two episodes form the only link between the separate plots.

Susan, Thorney's supposed wife, is very probably Dekker's own work. There is an aura about her of simplicity and goodness which recalls Greene's country heroines, Margaret of Fressingfield and Bess, George a Greene's sweetheart. After a superabundance of the Fletcher-Massinger type of good woman, she is a welcome return to sincerity. She is not a woman of many parts, but a pleasant picture of honesty and kindliness. She speaks with the plain directness of a simple-minded woman. To her unsuccessful suitor, Warbeck, she says:

> "Good sir, no swearing; yea and nay with us
> Prevail above all oaths you can invent." [1]

As the loyal, loving wife she grows, perhaps, a trifle tiresome. Her importunity to Frank when he is distrait is overdone; so also is her leave-taking prior to the murder. Both scenes are intended to show up her wifely love and solicitude, but each is worked up beyond her character to serve the dramatist's purpose. Her dying words are very much in the Griselda tradition:

> "Now Heaven reward you ne'er the worse for me!
> I did not think that Death had been so sweet,

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1. Act I, Sc.2.

Nor I so apt to love him. I could ne'er die better,
Had I stayed forty years for preparation,
For I'm in charity with all the world.
Let me for once be thine example, Heaven:
Do to this man as I him free forgive,
And may he better die and better live." [1].

In 1621, therefore, towards the close of the period of great drama, the patient forgiving wife is still dear to the dramatist.[2] In Susan's part there is a small distinction to be noticed. We see her in conversation with men other than her husband. Hitherto the large majority of Elizabethan Griseldas have appeared only with their husbands or legitimate lovers.[3] Dekker, however, makes Susan show independence and spirit at what she regards as unwarranted impertinence from her rejected suitor:

"Neither
Am I a property for you to use
As stale to your fond, wanton, loose discourse:
Pray, sir, be civil!" [4].

To her husband, on the other hand, she is nothing but gentle and obedient. She is a delightfully imagined woman, fresh and charming at a period when the greater number of women upon the stage were set fast in a few well-worn traditions. Her protestations of affection and virtue are not fulsome, for behind them are sincerity and spontaneity. She is not a new type, but a revival of the old, for, as has already been said, she recalls the type so well drawn by Greene in the spring of Elizabethan drama.

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1. Act III, Sc.3.

2. Nor is she extinct to-day, as the recent Rouse murder case has shown.

3. e.g. Greene's Dorothea who, though a dignified lady of high rank, is still of the type; and the Wife in "The Yorkshire Tragedy."

4. Act I, Sc.2.

Dekker and Ford most probably shared in the representation of Winnifred. The first act, in which she appears with Frank Thorney, her newly-wedded husband, then with Sir Arthur Clarington, is most likely Ford's work. We can certainly detect a difference between the Winnifred of Act I and the Winnifred who reappears in disguise as Frank's servant, and finally as his wife. In the first act, she harps upon her seduction by Clarington in a way that, were it protracted, would be morbid. There is a sternness in her speech amounting almost to gloom, foreign to the sweetness of the later Winnifred. In subsequent scenes, she appears in disguise, with something of the romantic note in her speech. Two speeches, the first to Clarington, the second to Thorney as he goes to execution, show this difference in treatment:

> "My resolution
> Is built upon a rock. ----------
> ---------- Sir Arthur, do not study
> To add to your lascivious lusts the sin
> Of sacrilege; for if you but endeavour
> By any unchaste word to tempt my constancy
> You strive as much as in you lies to ruin
> A temple hallowed to the purity
> Of holy marriage. I have said enough:
> You may believe me." [1].

There is no suggestion in this resolute speech of a gentle temper. She is stern and unbending, the sinner reformed who is always most reluctant to condone the sin to which he has once inclined. Even her words to her husband have something of the same sternness. She has set her feet in the strait and narrow path, and is trying to walk along the exact centre of it. The speech she makes to her husband as he goes to his death shows a softer temper, which is the result of Dekker's different handling of the

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1. Act I, Sc.1.

women's parts:

"Now this repentance makes thee
As white as innocence ----------
----------Might our souls together
Climb to the height of their eternity,
And there enjoy what earth denied us, happiness!
But since I must survive, and be the monument
Of thy loved memory, I will preserve it
With a religious care, and pay thy ashes
A widow's duty, calling that end best
Which, though it stain the name, makes the soul blest." [1]

Although Winnifred, even in Dekker's hands, is a stronger character, she is not unlike Susan. By adopting a disguise she shows herself possessed of initiative. Yet she does not entirely escape from the Griselda tradition.

The stage device of disguise, though part of the stock-in-trade of comedy, did not play so large a part in tragedy. Greene made use of it in the part of Dorothea in "James IV," a play which could be called a tragi-comedy. Beaumont and Fletcher used it more, e.g. in the tragi-comedy "Philaster," where it serves to dispose of Euphrasia, the maiden languishing in unrequited love. As it is introduced into "The Witch of Edmonton," it results in an impression of unreality. Even more than the motive of witch-craft it lifts what should be domestic drama a little above the realm of ordinary happenings. Disguise has always been one of the conventions of the romantic world. The crucial scenes between Winnifred, Susan and Frank, therefore, lack the grim realism of the earlier criminal domestic tragedies. Our attention is distracted from the broad issues of the scene by the touches of dramatic irony in the dialogue between Susan and the disguised Winnifred (Act III, Sc.2.). The lack of localisation in the scenes contributes towards lessening the effect of

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1. Act V, Sc.2.

realism. "Arden of Feversham" is laid as much in Arden's house as in "open country." The great scenes of "A Woman Killed with Kindness" take place in Frankford's house, of which we receive a distinct impression. In "The Witch of Edmonton," however, the scene is left vague. The locality is no more definite than "the neighbourhood of Edmonton." Susan's murder takes place in "a Field with a clump of trees." Even when the scene is laid in a house, we do not see the family about its domestic occupations.[1] This may partly be due to the "romantic" tradition of Beaumont and Fletcher, whose plays have a Puritanian setting. It is probably due also to the more important sub-plot of the Witch. This takes up an equal amount of the dramatist's attention, so that there is not space available for presenting details of domestic life.[2] It is likely, however, that the tendency which had grown strong towards the end of the great period of drama, a tendency to generalise both in character and setting, was largely responsible for this failure to give "The Witch of Edmonton" a genuine "local habitation and a name."

The domestic tragedies show that types and traditions were imposed even upon characters who had lived and suffered by no formula. The Elizabethan dramatists, even when they used 'police-court' material, did not feel obliged to put upon the stage faithful reproductions of life. Nor did they feel restricted or in any sense tied by knowing that the women they dealt with had thought or spoken thus and thus. As it happens, the sources of the three

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1. cf. the meals taken on the stage in "Arden of Feversham:" the card game in "A Woman Killed with Kindness": the visit of the cloth-merchants in "A Warning for Fair Women."

2. What realism there is is all to be found in the witch-plot.

crime plays present the stories in much the same naturally dramatic fashion. We are shown Alice Arden planning attempt after attempt upon her husband's life. We never see her thinking. It is impossible to believe that she was not at times troubled with a sense of the appalling solemnity of her crime, so that she could cry with Flamineo:

> "There's nothing of so infinite vexation
> As man's own thoughts."

It is even more likely that she must have thought often of the eternal consequences of her act, that she must have felt in anticipation the heat of the fires of hell, and remembered that she would be one of the millions who at the last day "like mandrakes shall rise shrieking." Nothing at all of the inevitable conflict of emotions is reflected in the chronicle. Still less could we expect it to be shown upon the stage. The five acts are all needed for the exposition of the plot.

The domestic tragedies show nothing of the balancing of two types of women, so clearly seen in the tragedies of revenge. In the plots chosen for dramatic representation there were no opposing types of womanhood, and the dramatists followed the records exactly in the number of characters. "The Witch of Edmonton" affords two women who could be successfully contrasted. Their situations bring them into opposition, but rather than differentiate between the women Dekker makes them more alike. At the end of the play, Winnifred is, as it were, completely absorbed into the other woman's life by adoption into her family. In the tragedies of revenge a larger group of people was affected by the events of the

play. A greater number and greater variety of women could be introduced, and the interplay of their personalities shown. But in domestic tragedy only a family group, small in number, was involved, so that the scope of the dramatist was necessarily limited. This, however, might, to the modern mind, have led almost inevitably to new and interesting developments, since "a woman's place is the home," and in so far as the turning to domestic subjects led to "Arden" and "A Woman Killed" it justified itself. But even Alice Arden, and far more Anne Frankford, remain creatures of promise rather than fulfilment.

V Jacobean Tragedy.

A. Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger.

With Beaumont and Fletcher we leave the glories of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean age behind.[1] It is true that some of the greatest of the plays of the entire period appeared in the early years of King James's reign, but the inspiration which gave them birth was Elizabethan. Shakespeare's four supreme tragedies were the mature productions of a genius that had been trained and ripened in the spacious days. It is true also that we find plays which go to make an Indian summer of Elizabethan drama - Webster's two great tragedies, and Middleton's "Changeling" (1623). Yet these plays, magnificent as they are, serve to show in what respects the Elizabethan spirit had been lost. Webster is "Elizabethan" in his tragic intensity and in the power of his imagination, but that imagination lingered like Donne's among the emblems of mortality. Earlier dramatists like Kyd, Greene and Peele, far his inferiors as poets and craftsmen, suggest the freedom of the open air. Webster's metaphors from the outer world take us little further than the graveyard where the spider "makes a thin curtain for the epitaphs." Marlowe, filled with the zest and "joie de vivre" of the young Elizabethans, burst out exultantly in a passage where he is clearly in danger of forgetting to speak dramatically:

> "Nature that framed us of four elements
> Warring within our breasts for regiment
> Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.
> Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous architecture of the world ----
> Will us to wear ourselves and never rest." [2]

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1. 'Jacobean' will be used to denote those dramatists whose plays first appeared in the reign of King James. Writers a considerable part of whose works had been staged in the reign of Elizabeth are 'Elizabethan,' e.g., Shakespeare.

2. "Tamburlaine," Act I, Sc.7.

Webster never so far forgets his dramatist's rôle, yet the consistency of tone in his tragedies forces one to the conclusion that character after character utters, though always appropriately to themselves and their situation, their author's "taedium vitae:"

> "I am in the way to study a long silence,
> To prate were idle, I remember nothing.
> There's nothing of so infinite vexation
> As man's own thoughts."

And again:

> "Pleasure of life, what is it? only the good hours
> Of an ague."

Dekker, more than any other writer of the twilight of Jacobean drama, retains something of the fresh breezy atmosphere of Greene and Peele, but even he cannot entirely resist the insidious attractions of the false romanticism associated with Beaumont and Fletcher, in whose plays can first be seen in its true significance the degeneration which later pervaded the whole stage, not even excepting that of Middleton and Ford, the greatest of the Jacobeans.

Of the mass of work represented by the Beaumont and Fletcher folio of 1647, the tragedies and tragi-comedies written by the two authors in collaboration before 1616 naturally come up first for consideration. Of the 'serious' work of Fletcher by himself or in collaboration with other dramatists only a selection can be dealt with in detail. Beaumont and Fletcher's two tragedies, "The Maid's Tragedy," (1609-10), and "Thierry and Theodoret" (1617), will be taken together, and also the two tragi-comedies, "Philaster" (1609) and "A King and No King" (circa 1611). "Valentinian" (1617) will be

taken as representative of Fletcher's unaided tragic work,[1] and "The Bloody Brother" (1616?) and "The Two Noble Kinsmen" (1612) as examples of his collaboration with other dramatists.

In the first group, the joint work of Beaumont and Fletcher, "Philaster" and "A King and No King" are representatives of a species of drama which did not reach any great degree of popularity until the Jacobean period. This "tragi-comedy," as it is styled for convenience, has its examples on the Elizabethan stage. Greene's "James IV" (1590) is a play of this sort. The course of the action seems to tend towards an inevitable tragic conclusion, until a turn arbitrarily imparted by the dramatist brings about a happy ending. Marston's "Malcontent" (1600) might easily have had a tragic dénouement. The infusion of comedy into tragedy is a practice in English drama dating back to the very beginnings of the art in this country.[2] There was, therefore, nothing in the hybrid tragi-comedy which would outrage any popular notion of dramatic fitness. We have no reason to suppose that the mass of the audience cared in the least for anything but good situations.

Fletcher's Introduction to "The Faithful Shepherdess" shows that he found tragi-comedy a very convenient means of making the best of both possible worlds: "A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough

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1. "Bonduca," also Fletcher's unaided work, has been dealt with in the section upon historical plays, pp. 96-98

2. The inevitable example is the "Second Shepherd's Play" in the Towneley Cycle, but cf. the opinion of the later age expressed by Dryden of the species: "in two hours and a half we run through all the fits of Bedlam."

to make it no tragedy,[1] yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy, which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life be questioned; so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy, and mean people as in a comedy." Reflection shows that it is possible to get three kinds of tragi-comedy. There is the type in which the balance inclines more to the realistic side, with the result that we have a play like "Volpone" or "Troilus and Cressida." When feeling is not intense in either direction, but the two elements are fairly evenly distributed, we have "All's Well" as a typical product. Fletcher's own tragi-comedy "The Faithful Shepherdess," or "Philaster," written with Beaumont, represents the inclination to the romantic side.

Romantic tragi-comedy was undoubtedly Beaumont and Fletcher's forte, but unfortunately their work shows clearly the faults into which such a type of play can too easily slip. The entire action is conducted at several removes from reality. This is true, not only of the actual place of the events, but also of the emotions and sentiments of the characters. There is no shred of genuine vitality in "Philaster." His heroics foreshadow the Almanzor type of character of the Restoration, though he himself is nearer Sheridan's burlesque, Don Ferolo Whiskerandos. Not only do the characters suffer seriously, but the ethical judgments of the dramatists are too often perverted by an attempt to distort to reconciliation a situation which calls for the stern Nemesis of Greek tragedy. This lapse is clearly to be seen in "A King

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1. This is an interesting side-light on the conception of tragedy. Along with it we can put Tourneur's definition: "The Revenger's Tragedy," Act III, Sc.5.
"When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good."
They are amusing comments upon the modern philosophical-psychological studies of Elizabethan tragedy.

and no King." The all-but tragic situation is created by the supposed kinship of Arbaces and Panthea. When Arbaces has been proved a changeling, the love between himself and his supposed sister is no longer a matter of shame, but of general rejoicing. Arbaces heaped upon it all the degrading epithets possible when he thought it against the law. As soon as the facts of his birth came to light the same emotion which had before been "lust" now becomes "love;" and with no decent interval for the adjustment of the lovers' emotional life, or for the expiation of Arbaces' violent excesses, the ex-brother and sister rush headlong into matrimony. Fletcher seems to have had no instinctive sense of propriety. This is an extreme example of the way in which a "happy ending" can flout all the canons of decorum and good taste. Another example, not offensive to the same degree to one's sense of delicacy, appears in "Philaster," where Megra and Pharamond, the two sinners, are allowed to escape from their well-deserved retribution. Tragi-comedy, achieved by these romantic shifts, loses itself between the Scylla of impossible characterisation and the Charybdis of dubious morality.

Beaumont and Fletcher's method of characterisation in tragedy and tragi-comedy is the use of very clearly-defined types of women. It is true that certain definite types were employed in the revenge tragedies, but these were diversified by varieties of detail. They show shading and some subtlety. Types were employed with a certain discrimination. Those of Beaumont and Fletcher, on the other hand, were rigid. Some were treated with more vigour than others, or had a more important share in the action, so that they make a deeper impression upon the mind. Evadne in "The Maid's Tragedy" is a more impressive figure of a wicked woman than Megra in

"Philaster." The former has the lime-light upon her throughout; the latter has a small and insignificant part in comparison. But Megra, given greater scope, could be another Evadne, for they are of the same stuff. The nature of the plots demanded for Beaumont and Fletcher's romantic tragedies and tragi-comedies a simplified method of character-drawing. A highly-developed plot would only be obscured and needlessly complicated by the addition of characters who demanded deep thought and attention from the audience. The dramatic personae, male and female, belong to that far-fetched and incredible world of romance in which an arbitrary turn can retrieve an apparently hopeless situation.[1] The characters in their tragedies even are never "life-like" like those of Shakespeare, Webster, or Middleton, in whose creations we can see, in varying degrees of clearness and intensity, that magnified tragic life which includes more of the human passions and emotions than the average limited personality is capable of enduring.

In all Beaumont and Fletcher's plays we find two main themes, both of which depend as much upon the women as the men. All the various subjects of the Elizabethan stage have by now given way in tragedy to the single theme of love. The united patriotism and national self-consciousness of Elizabethan England had kept the historical play alive as a flourishing species.

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1. The same "turns" of course appear in Shakespeare - e.g. the end of "Much Ado About Nothing" and "Measure for Measure" - but the characters do not really belong to that world; hence the frequent dissatisfaction with the ends of Shakespeare's plays.

Now that the vivid personality of Elizabeth was lost and replaced by the pedantic solemnity of James, the sense of England as a flourishing nation was growing clouded and anxious. The historical play as a crude, but always living species, had died. Love dominated, and was responsible for the crimes in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. We are only shown the women as they are controlled by three aspects of love - happy and "pure" love (Arethusa in "Philaster"), chaste but unfortunate (Aspatia in "The Maid's Tragedy,") or brazen and lustful (Brunhalt in "Thierry and Theodoret"). The four plays turn on these pivots, and the types of woman are created to suit them. We can also see that, whereas in plays of revenge, or historical plays, women might naturally fill a secondary rôle, in those based exclusively on love they are certain to take a part equal, or nearly equal, to that of the men. Fletcher's lack of absolute standards of conduct gave a turn to the subject which concentrated attention upon the women rather than the men. With him it was not a question of the happy or unhappy fulfilment of the destiny of two lovers. The play depended for its excitement upon the actions of a woman involved in an illicit love-intrigue. A certain brand of "situation" recurs, which makes use of the atmosphere surrounding sexual taboo. It is the repetition of incidents of this kind which builds up the impression of moral as well as aesthetic decadence.

We find criticism of these dramatists at variance upon the moral question.[1] Contemporary, or

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1. The question of changes in the critical attitude towards Beaumont and Fletcher will be treated in some detail, for the adulation of one period has led to much misconception of the women.

nearly contemporary criticism does not concern itself with this aspect. We may assume that to the large majority of the audience the dramatists' ethical standards were a matter of no importance at all. Drama with a purpose was entirely foreign to the age. So far as literary criticism was directed upon the stage, it dealt with the question of dramatic form. Dryden's various dramatic essays are representative of the kind of points which critics considered to be of importance. Although in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods criticism was in a more rudimentary stage, similar points came up for consideration. We find Ben Jonson turning his powers towards a drama which should be more strictly classical in form. Fletcher himself felt the necessity of justifying the tragi-comedy which in his age he employed to such good effect. The Puritans attacked the stage on moral grounds, it is true, but not primarily upon the immorality of the plays themselves. The Protestant preacher had found the stage a serious rival to the pulpit. Obscure theological objections were cited, such as the Scripture veto on one sex assuming the garments of another, a point upon which even Ben Jonson asked advice from Selden. Various disasters were quoted as the direct result of London's continued attendance at the theatre. "The cause of plague is sinne, if you look to it well: and the cause of sinne are playes: therefore the cause of plagues are playes."[1]. The play-houses were, with a great measure of truth, regarded as sinks of iniquity. Yet it seems that the actual immorality of the plays themselves was of less im-

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1. Thomas White, Sermon, 1576.

port to the Puritan divines than the more academic points of theological approach.

We find an "Address to the Reader" prefaced by Shirley to the 1647 folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's works which shows the method of approach to the plays adopted by those not jaundiced by religious objections. From it we can see that the easy flow and grace which undeniably give a certain distinction to their verse was a revelation to the polite audience. Shakespeare's strong verse, compressed in thought to the point of obscurity, must have demanded more undivided attention than the majority of play-goers would give. Apart from that, the blank verse of Shakespeare and his greater contemporaries was obviously poetry. It moved majestically. Fletcher, in particular, showed an opposite genius. His verse, whether we find it eventually irritating or not, glides on easily. The language of every day has been moulded into easy and striking verse, and the difference in surface polish is noticeable. Beaumont and Fletcher are urbane in their verse, where Shakespeare and his fellow-writers were often violent, and always unmistakably poetical. Shirley holds up Beaumont and Fletcher as models for all who aspire to be wits:

"Not one indiscretion hath branded this paper in all the lines, this being the authentic wit that made Blackfriars an academy --------- and it cannot be denied but that the young spirits of the time, whose birth and quality made them impatient of the sourer ways of education, have, from the attentive hearing of these pieces, got ground in point of wit and carriage of the most severely-employed students, while these recreations were digested into rules and the very pleasure did edify."

Later in the same preface Shirley catches in a few happy

words the effect of Beaumont and Fletcher's verse: "Thou shall meet almost in every leaf a soft purling passion or spring of sorrow, so powerfully wrought high by the tears of innocence and wronged lovers, it shall persuade thy eyes to weep into the stream, and yet smile when they contribute to their own ruins."

Dryden, in his "Essay of Dramatick Poesy," commends Fletcher in particular for his refinement of language. It was clearly the gentlemanly polish of the two dramatists that drew forth the praise of their contemporaries. Once again, we find that the lack of moral standards did not appear to strike home very deeply to their imaginations. Even Jeremy Collier, bent on attacking the immorality of the stage in Restoration times, quotes Fletcher as a model of virtue.[1] Rymer, in his "Letter on the Tragedies of the Last Age," is a dissentient voice, but his objections to Beaumont and Fletcher are not based upon their intrinsically shallow judgments but upon his own ideals of a purely dramatic decorum. He condemns their plays because they are not adorned with the same devices as those of his own age. A few ghosts and portents would add materially to the value of the tragedies. Of the character of Panthea in "A King and No King," he has some amusing and forcible words to say: "One might swear she had a knock in the Cradle; so soft is she at all points and so silly."[2] Her brother Arbaces "tells her he would commit incest with her. She returns a drawling, yawning, yielding

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1. He admits the existence of some offensive passages in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, but attributes them to Beaumont, or possibly to an earlier unreformed Fletcher. Collier: "Short View of the Immorality," etc.,"3rd Edition, 1698, pp. 51-53.

2. Thomas Rymer: "The Tragedies of the Last Age," 2nd Edition, 1692, p.68.

answer; and proceeds to tell him, that she wishes he were not her Brother, that she loves him so well, she can love no man else." [1]. Even though Rymer condemns the character of Panthea on grounds of decorum rather than those of moral bluntness, his criticism is interesting in view of the contrast it presents to that of Collier, already quoted.

The literary revival in the XIXth century of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists led to an indiscriminating praise of all and sundry. We find Lamb enthusiastic about Beaumont and Fletcher: "Beaumont and Fletcher were but an inferior sort of Shakespeares and Sidneys."[2]. He is too much inclined to accept the "good" women characters at their own estimation, without relating them to any fixed standards of tragic values. Of the Bellario type of character, however, he does not approve;[3]. The part of Ordella called forth, for the most part, praise: "I have always considered ---- Ordella to be the most perfect notion of the female heroic character, next to Calantha in the 'Broken Heart.' She is a piece of sainted nature." [4]. On the other hand, Lamb's feeling for poetical effect and dramatic value compelled him to confess that the scene (Act IV Sc.1) between Thierry and Ordella in its manner "compared with Shakespeare's finest scenes, is faint and languid." [5]. Nevertheless, we find no objections at

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1. op. cit., p.69.

2. Charles Lamb: "Dramatic Essays," ed. Brander Matthews, p.226.

3. ibid., pp. 226-227.

4. ibid., p.227.

5. ibid., p.227.

all to the tone of the plays. Coleridge, on the other hand, condemns whole-heartedly. He penetrates beneath the fine glittering surface into the hollowness beneath: "The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are mere aggregations without unity; in the Shakesperian drama there is a vitality which grows and evolves itself from within." [1]. In his comments upon "Valentinian" he is the first to raise the question whether their chaste ladies express any genuine or consistent notion of female virtue: "Beaumont and Fletcher always write as if virtue or goodness were a sort of talisman or strange something that might be lost without the least fault on the part of the owner. In short, their chaste ladies value their chastity as a material thing. --- It is all talk, and nothing is real in it but the dread of losing a reputation." [2]. This is true, but Coleridge does not read as a perfectly unbiassed critic. He seems to be angry with Beaumont and Fletcher because of the praise they have received at Shakespeare's expense. Although at that time his was a voice crying in the wilderness, the present century is coming to share his opinion of the value and soundness of Beaumont and Fletcher's works. The drama of 1579 to 1625 is now an accepted and much studied part of our literary heritage. Criticism of the various dramatic works is, on the whole, more guarded. Everything Elizabethan is no longer of inestimable literary and moral value. The excitement of the century which "re-discovered" the golden age of English drama reached its climax in Swinburne, who expresses nothing but ~~surprised~~ astonish-

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1. Coleridge: "Lectures on Shakespere, etc.," Bohn's Library, p.400.

2. ibid., p.441.

ment at Coleridge's judgments.

A short paragraph may with advantage be devoted to Swinburne's rhapsodies over the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, since they represent the climax of nineteenth century appreciation, and are even now occasionally echoed. Moreover, Swinburne finds qualities in Fletcher's writings in particular which are denied to him by the majority of the present-day critics. Commenting upon Fletcher's genius, less robust and powerful than that of Beaumont, he says that:"never sombre, subtle, or profound (it) bears him always towards fresh air and sunshine." [1]. The general impression gained not only from Fletcher's unaided work but also from that done in collaboration appears to be the very reverse. The action of "Valentinian" and "The Bloody Brother" takes place indoors, the former in scented, stuffy, secret chambers. It is true that Swinburne admits the greater profundity of Beaumont's art, and even passes very mild strictures upon Fletcher's liability "to confuse the shades of right and wrong, to deface or efface the boundary lines of good and evil, to stain the ermine of virtue and palliate the nakedness of vice, and to allow his heroines to utter sentiments worthy of Diana in language unworthy of Doll Tearsheet." [2]. When we consider the violence with which Swinburne expressed himself when he was genuinely angry we see that this censure is very gentle, a half-indulgent condemnation, not to be taken too much to heart. In a later context he comes nearer to a recognition of the true position:[3].

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1. Swinburne: "Studies in Prose and Poetry," p.71.
2. ibid., pp. 68-69.
3. ibid., p.69.

"The buoyant and facile grace of Fletcher's style carries him lightly across quagmires in which a heavier-footed poet, or one of slower tread, would have stuck fast, and come forth bemired to the knees." The point at issue is Fletcher's choice of a quagmire to walk upon when other paths lie before him.

It is the complete absence of tragic inevitability that has roused so much criticism to-day on lines different from and opposite to those of Swinburne. The plots do not move relentlessly to a conclusion which cannot be avoided by those who have set in motion the machinery of their own destruction. We see in "A King and No King" how Beaumont and Fletcher twisted out of all semblance of tragedy a course of action which could only lead to ruin.[1] This irresponsibility may be contrasted with the strength and dignity with which Ford, through a capacity for deeper feeling, contrived to handle the incest theme in "'Tis Pity She's a Whore." Even in a tragedy proper such as "The Maid's Tragedy," we find the same lack of the necessary inevitability. Evadne is not driven to murder by an unavoidable chain of circumstance. It is difficult to believe that even to the most credulous of audiences Evadne's promptitude in repentance when her brother threatened to kill her must not have ~~seemed~~ been a little difficult to swallow. It appears too blatant to pass over, even in the hurry of acting. The explanation is to be found in the dramatists' endeavours to provide excitement. To this end the passion of their characters

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1. cf. the Greek treatment of the subject of incest in the OEdipus plays.

was heaped up. The great Elizabethans and Jacobeans also aimed at excitement, but they happened to be men of insight and intellect who, in the midst of sensation, kept hold of the truths of life and sincerity of emotion.[1] Beaumont is perhaps a little less guilty in this respect than Fletcher, of whom Mr. E.H.C.Oliphant says there was "nothing of the earnestness of the artist, nothing of the truth of the teacher, nothing of the wisdom of the philsopher."[2].

Swinburne commends Fletcher's ability to skate on very thin ice without falling through, a judgment open to question. In the speeches put so unconcernedly into the mouths of their waiting-maids he sinks to a very muddy depth. The women in "Valentinian" speak very freely of their trade. The conversation of Dula, Evadne's waiting-maid, is a series of sniggering innuendoes. No purpose, dramatic or artistic, is served by this coarseness of speech.[3] Fletcher must have put it in either as a sop to Cerberus or to gratify his own tastes. Darley, in his preface to the edition of 1840, says of the women of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy: "Woman throughout Fletcher's comedies is treated too much as a fair animal, or little more. The homage paid to her is almost heartless, certainly soulless; she is a mere object of voluptuous pursuit - a hare to be coursed, or a trout to be tickled for supper." This applies to the women of tragedy also,though in a less obvious manner, as it is partially disguised by

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1. "Hamlet," while a study of character, is also a thrilling melodrama.

2. E.H.C. Oliphant: "The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher.

3. Contrast Iago's deliberate foulness to Desdemona, or Ophelia's mad prattle.

the undoubted fluency and even elevation of language. Even if we could grant that Beaumont and Fletcher avoided indelicacy in dealing with delicate subjects, we must still question the necessity for such types of subject. We see in the Elizabethan tragedies that, except for "Romeo and Juliet," "Anthony and Cleopatra," [1] and "Tancred and Gismunda," love by itself did not constitute the whole subject of a play. When Beaumont and Fletcher exalted it to the chief place among tragic and tragi-comic themes, then they found that the excesses of sexual emotion in both directions, licit and illicit, were indispensable if the necessary excitement were to be maintained. Therefore we find Brunhalts and Ordellas together, Evadnes and Aspatias. They had not the perception and sensitive feeling which could enable them to represent the many tragic aspects of normal love, nor, as we have repeatedly seen, was their audience such as to ask for that fare.

Finally, one of the chief causes for quarrel to-day with Beaumont and Fletcher is the excessive sentimentality of certain types of their women characters. To a generation which accepted the false romanticism of the Lord of Burleigh, no doubt Aspatia and Bellario would have appeared exquisitely pathetic creations. Present-day feeling is less ready to commend the woman who pines and dies in an unrelieved minor key. These drooping creatures drive us back to the matter-of-fact philosophy: "men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love." [2] The sentimentality which

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1. Though this may be questioned because of the wide background provided by the imperial struggle.

2. "As You Like it," Act IV, Sc.1.

inspired Beaumont in the creation of the love-lorn maiden, we see as part and parcel of the insincerity underlying the chaste woman as a class. She is the work of dramatists who have neither felt, nor recognised the existence of, deep emotions, nor considered any permanent values or standards by which to regulate dramatic life. The Elizabethans treated adultery, among other themes, but they rarely lost sight of a very definite religious standard which they applied with a certain crude honesty. Beaumont and Fletcher represented a time and a class unmoved even by the superstitions which buttress up a moral code, nor was it any concern of theirs to establish a code of their own. Behaviour is regulated entirely by the demands of plot, or passing sensation, the only proviso being that there shall be at least one "good" character in the play to dot the i's and cross the t's of virtue and to discharge the moral duty of the dramatist.

The history of Beaumont and Fletcher criticism shows that to-day their work is admired for much the same reasons as in their life-time, and the remainder of their century. Their ease and grace in handling their native tongue, the skill with which they wove their plots, the charm and mellifluous sweetness of many of their descriptions, these constitute their claims to fame and recognition. We may accept the corruptness of the society to which they held up their mirror, but it must be admitted, and not slurred over in a burst of enthusiasm. Their women characters must be judged according to the standards of high tragedy maintained through the Elizabethan period and overlapping with their own.

We have seen that of all the manifold activities of man's thoughts and emotions the single one of love has been selected for dramatic treatment by Beaumont

and Fletcher and the succeeding Jacobean dramatists.[1] This one theme was resolved into two constituents, "pure" love and illicet lust. On these two elements are based the four plays which are Beaumont and Fletcher's joint work. The dramatic opposition between these twin themes requires two clearly-contrasted types of women - the one impossibly perfect, the other outrageously evil. In the two tragic works of Beaumont and Fletcher, "The Maid's Tragedy" and "Thierry and Theodoret," we find perfect examples of characterisation according to type. Both plays contain women good and self-denying to the point of exasperation, and women who are incredibly evil and rejoice in it. In the part of Evadne, however, we find what may be a relic of Elizabethan stage convention; this is, perhaps, the reason for her distinction as the most striking and, as far as possible, individual of Beaumont and Fletcher's women.

Evadne, sister to Melantius, ~~is~~ a valiant warrior in the service of the King of Rhodes, is married to her brother's friend Amintor, who has broken the troth he plighted to a young girl, Aspatia, in order to marry Evadne. On the wedding-night she confesses to Amintor that she has been, and intends to continue to be, the King's mistress, and that her marriage to Amintor has been solely one of convenience. Melantius her brother, when after a little time he hears the story from Amintor, "converts" Evadne, who murders the King, only to find that her deed has irrevocably turned Amintor from her. She kills herself in despair. Meanwhile Aspatia has

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1. Even in historical plays such as Fletcher's "Bonduca" and Ford's "Perkin Warbeck" we find a love-theme of some kind; contrast the early historical plays, e.g. "King John," the Henry VI trilogy.

disguised herself as a man and provoked Amintor to fight with her, pretending that she is the wronged Aspatia's brother. In the duel, as she had intended, she receives her death-wound, and in dying reveals herself to her faithless lover, pardons him, and breathes her last in his arms. This is the substance of the play as far as it concerns the women.

The figure of Evadne is brilliantly executed. We see her in conversation with her ladies-in-waiting before she retires to bed on the marriage-night. She makes a half-laughing protest against Dula's lewd conversation, but we can easily understand that she is not genuinely shocked. The scene between her and Amintor, therefore, is less of a surprise than would have been the case had we come to it totally unprepared. We have already seen that Evadne is no shrinking virgin, so that her cool admission of her relations with the king is perfectly in keeping with her character. The only thing in this scene which rings false is Amintor's submission to his fate, which, because it has been ordained by the king, is beyond question and must be endured. A comparison of the handling of the woman's part in this scene with that of the man is of great interest. Throughout, Evadne is mistress of herself and her feelings - if, indeed, she has any. Amintor is helpless, beating frantically at the immoveable barrier set before him. Evadne says calmly after her oath:

> "When I call back this oath
> The pains of hell environ me!" 1.

Compared with this compression of feeling, Amintor's outbursts are windy and pathetic:

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1. "The Maid's Tragedy," Act II, Sc.1., ll. 275-276.

"You powers above, if you did ever mean
Man should be used thus, you have thought a way
How he may bear himself, and save his honour:
Instruct me in it. ----------
---------- Why is this night so calm,
Why does not Heaven speak in thunder to us,
And drown her voice?" [1].

The marked difference in the idiom is noticeable; it is the woman who shows the greater self-command, and the greater bareness of expression. As far as can be possible with so outrageously evil a woman, she is treated easily and naturally by Beaumont and Fletcher. They could handle these types in such a way as to get the maximum of stage effect from them.

The part of Evadne, as has been said, in one respect reverts to the Elizabethan type. She is only the thoroughly evil type of woman for half the play. In the second half she repents and expiates her fault. This is an exception to Beaumont and Fletcher's general rule for handling this type. We find Megra in "Philaster" and Brunhalt in "Thierry and Theodoret" going unrepentant and defiant to punishment. The only wish Brunhalt expresses to her victim is

"But a sufficient anger
To torture thee." [2].

Her "apologia pro vita sua" is a startling revelation of the philosophy of the grossly sensual woman as she appears to Beaumont and Fletcher:

"Holy fool,
Whose patience to prevent my wrongs hath killed thee,
Preach not to me of punishments or fears,
Or what I ought to be; but what I am,
A woman in her liberal will defeated,
In all her greatness crossed, in pleasure blasted!
My angers have been laughed at, my ends slighted,
And all these glories that had crowned my fortunes

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1. "The Maid's Tragedy," Act II, Sc.1., ll. 247-254.

2. "Thierry and Theodoret," Act V, Sc.2.

Suffered by blasted virtue to be scattered:
I am the fruitful mother of these angers,
And what such have done, read, and know thy ruin." [1]

Melantius charms the devil from Evadne by the same means as Vendice had employed upon his mother.[2] Both women have to choose between repentance and summary execution, and both, naturally, choose the former. Evadne's ~~lack~~ change of heart is accompanied by an identification of herself with those women who have been "more sinned against than sinning" - an attempt on the part of the dramatists to gain some sympathy for a character hitherto beyond the pale. Evadne, up till now mistress of every situation, is to our astonishment suddenly enrolled in the teeming class of victims of masculine wiles.

Beaumont and Fletcher are actuated by none of the religious motives of the Elizabethans in thus reforming Evadne. To the simple but intellectually honest Elizabethans, crimes like adultery, conventionally accepted as "enormous" in the tragic world, called for death. Repentance, while saving a sinner's soul in the next world, could not cleanse her body from the stain of sin. Therefore death was inevitable to purge the body, while a moral regeneration cleansed the soul.[3] Evadne and her fellow-women in Beaumont and Fletcher's plays neither sinned nor repented under the eye of God. To her creators, Evadne's repentance meant nothing more than an opportunity in the last act for bigger and better sensations.

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1. "Thierry and Theodoret," Act V, Sc.2.

2. "The Revenger's Tragedy," Act IV, Sc.4.

3. cf. the repentance both of Alice Arden and Levidulcia ("The Atheist's Tragedy.")

When Evadne has accomplished her deed of revenge, and killed the king in circumstances made the more revolting by the prologue, accompaniment and epilogue of suggestive remarks, she assumes that her previous misconduct has been effaced from Amintor's memory, and that he is prepared to take her as his wife. Such a situation, of the adulteress and murderess assuming that the past can be blotted out by the celerity of her own repentance, does not occur upon the Elizabethan stage, which, though rigid and obvious, was consistent in its ideas of right and wrong. It is thus that she greets Amintor after the murder:

> "Noble Amintor, put off thine amaze,
> Let thine eyes loose, and speak. Am I not fair?
> Looks not Evadne beauteous with these rites now?
> Were those hours half as lovely in thine eyes
> When our hands met before the holy man?" [1].

Evadne's words show the difference between the Elizabethan and the Jacobean spirit. We find Maria, in "Antonio's Revenge," retiring to a cloister when her share in the revenge of her husband's death is achieved. Belimperia kills herself. Alice Arden, Anne Sanders, and Anne Frankford all die to expiate their crimes. Only Evadne tries to regain the opportunity which she once threw away:

> "Since I could not find a way
> To meet thy love so clear as through his life,
> I cannot now repent it." [2].

When she finds that, far from achieving her aim, she has put an even greater barrier between Amintor and herself,

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1. Act V, Sc.4.

2. Act V, Sc.4.

she commits suicide.

Evadne is a powerful character, developed without any regard of moral consistency. Her good impulses are dictated by the same violent passions as those which are evil. It is not possible to decide how far Beaumont and Fletcher intended her to be as revolting in her repentance as in her misdeeds. Most probably they intended her repentance, her murder of the king and her attempt to win back Amintor to be taken at their surface significance, and to be regarded as natural impulses towards good. The repentance, whether it adds to the unpleasantness of the picture or mitigates it, is at least a very definite dramatic turn in the part of the wicked woman, and unique. No such alteration diversified the character and deeds of Brunhalt in "Thierry and Theodoret."

There is nothing striking about Brunhalt. She is wicked through and through, and that is the beginning and end of her character. She, far more than Evadne, is the perfect type of Beaumont and Fletcher's wicked woman. Her vices are those characteristic of the Jacobean female villain. She is a loose liver and a poisoner. Her warped spirit vents its malice upon anyone who attempts to hinder her dissolute courses. The method she adopts to revenge upon her son Thierry the "wrongs" of Protaldy, her favourite, is peculiarly abominable,[1] an example of the reckless jettison of decorum in the effort to supply spicy situations. The speech in which Brunhalt sums up her reasons for so wreaking her hatred upon her children has already been quoted (supra, p.223). It is typical of the Jacobean wicked woman. The repentance which im-

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1. Act II, Sc.1.

parts a certain individuality to Evadne is not to be found in the part of Brunhalt. The female monster of the Tamyra type, who made only a fitful appearance in early Elizabethan tragedy, is now the only kind of evil woman in Jacobean drama as represented in Beaumont and Fletcher. Brunhalt is a full-dress villain, taking the most important woman's part. Megra in "Philaster," on the other hand, has only a secondary part, but is identical in type. Only the smallness of her part prevents her displaying all the refinements of vice. The dramatists have to be content with an unlawful intrigue, for although her type is capable of it, the part allows her no scope for poisoning or any other of Brunhalt's more interesting vices. Like Brunhalt she is unrepentant to the very end. In a line she makes the age-old excuse, that Nature's needs must be satisfied:

> "I am not the first
> That nature taught to seek a fellow forth." [1]

As the play is a tragi-comedy, Megra does not come to the bad end that should be her lot. Philaster, with his customary magnanimity, begs her off:

> "Wrong not the freedom of our souls so much
> To think to take revenge on that base woman;
> Her malice cannot hurt us. Set her free
> As she was born, saving from shame and sin." [2]

But Megra remains unchanged in character, and we can be fairly certain that "shame and sin" would not cause her any moments of uneasiness.

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1. "Philaster," Act V, Sc.5.

2. Act V, Sc.5.

Arane in "A King and No King" is an indeterminate type of character. She is not the complete villain like Brunhalt. She attempts Arbaces' life, but not in the spirit of motiveless malignity which inspires Brunhalt. Beaumont and Fletcher add to the unnatural vices of their female villains by turning mother against child. Brunhalt loathes both her sons and plots to encompass them in the snares of destruction. On the other hand, sons give vent to heroic expressions of reverence for their mothers.[1] Arbaces and Thierry both pay the utmost reverence to their mothers. Yet it is lip-service, for scenes of genuine family life, involving the natural treatment of filial relationship, such as we find occasionally among the Elizabethan tragedies, never appear. We have nothing like the Capulet household, or a parting between brother and sister like that of Laertes and Ophelia. The excessive reverence for the sacred name of mother is part of the "romantic" exaggeration of Beaumont and Fletcher. Arane's hatred of Arbaces can to some extent be justified,[2] and she is free from the gross passions of the large majority of Beaumont and Fletcher's wicked women. It is with intense relief that we hear her declaration:

> "Let fire consume me,
> If ever I was whore." [3]

In the details of her attempts upon Arbaces she may claim

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1. cf. the modern formula in sentimental novels of the strong silent Englishman and the "little mother," and the glorification of motherhood during the war.

2. She had passed him off as her son when it seemed impossible that she should have a legal heir. Then, when her husband died, she gave birth to a daughter, Panthea, whom thus she had unwittingly deprived of her birthright. Hence her attempts upon Arbaces' life.

3. "A King and No King," Act V, Sc.4.

to be one of the female villains, and it is, perhaps, to this category that she may be assigned. She never expresses any compunction for her efforts to murder Arbaces, nor does she even hint at feeling any. When she has fulfilled the part of "dea ex machina" she is forgotten in the general confusion of the happy ending.

The good characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's joint work are extremely monotonous. It is true that wicked people in books invariably seem to arouse greater interest and attention, because, for one thing, they are a challenge to the accepted order. Nevertheless, the dramatists themselves did not give very great scope to their virtuous women. They would not, or could not, enter into the soul of a genuinely pure woman. They allowed their good women any amount of virtuous protestation, but their words rarely ring absolutely true. There is nothing of the simplicity of sincerity. Perhaps Prof. A.H. Thorndike's comment upon Beaumont and Fletcher best sums up their defect: "They were not so much guilty of intentional immorality, as impotent to produce moral effect." [1].

The "good" characters are represented as consistently according to type as the evil. There are two kinds of virtuous women who appear in both tragi-comedies and tragedies. Which type she is depends upon the success or otherwise of her love-affairs. If these have a happy issue, then we find the Arethusa type, everything that is good and kind. If their love

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1. A.H. Thorndike: "Tragedy."

is unrequited, or misunderstandings arise, then we get the Aspatia-Ordella type of heroine. Whereas only one wicked woman at a time is permitted on Beaumont and Fletcher's stage - more would be "embarras de richesse" - we find the two types of good woman put together, though they do not thus appear as an inevitable rule. An elementary contrast in types is, however, permissible with the virtuous woman, chiefly because of the difference in situation which is impossible in the wicked women. In a tragi-comedy the two types, pathetic and fortunate, are found side by side, for they provide greater diversity in plot, and one of them introduces the tragic touch into the romantic plot.

"The Maid's Tragedy" only affords a small part to the virtuous woman, for Evadne's passions, since they are the causes of the whole action, must be allowed full measure of space. Aspatia is allowed one or two pathetic scenes in which she displays all the characteristics of the love-lorn maiden as imagined by Beaumont and Fletcher. She is melancholy in and out of season. Like the majority of women she is described before ever we see her. She is not allowed to make her own impression and unfold her own character. Lysippus' speech tells us exactly what we may expect of her:

> "The unfrequented woods
> Are her delight: where, when she sees a bank
> Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell
> Her servants what a pretty place it were
> To bury lovers in; and make her maids
> Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.
> ---------- and when the rest
> Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,
> Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room
> With laughter, she will, with so sad a look,
> Bring forth a story of the silent death
> Of some forsaken virgin." 1.

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1. Act I, Sc.1, ll. 91-105.

Her song (Act II, Sc.1) is a pathetic strain of the same kind as Desdemona's song or that sung by Feste in "Twelfth Night." Every glimpse shows her in some one of the conventional poses of the maiden dying for love. When the romantic tradition invades the tragedy, and Aspatia disguises herself, these woes come to the orthodox climax. She is killed by Amintor, and dies in his arms knowing that he loves her. There is no "character," in the proper sense of the word, in the part of Aspatia. She is a highly conventionalised example of the pathetic young girl who has already appeared in Ophelia and Lucibella. The background of flowers and country-side built up for her by Lysippus' speech vividly recalls Ophelia by the brook in which she died.[1] The dramatists exploited this type of character again in Bellario - Euphrasia, the unhappy maiden in "Philaster." They are alike in all respects save that Euphrasia, as she takes part in a tragi-comedy, unfortunately cannot be allowed to die. The "flower-motif" is repeated:

> "A garland lay by him, made by himself
> Of many several flowers bred in the vale,
> Stuck in that mystic order that the rareness
> Delighted me ----------
> Then took he up his garland, and did show
> What every flower, as country-people hold,
> Did signify, and how all ordered thus
> Expressed his grief." [2]

Garlands and streams are as infallible a clue to the appearance of the languishing maiden as his "turning out

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1. The convention of madness, however, is not employed. The more sophisticated Jacobean stage does not seem to have found this device so effective. "The Two Noble Kinsmen" shows the degradation in tragedy of pathetic madness.

2. "Philaster," Act I, Sc.2.

his toes" to Mr. Puff's Sir Christopher Hatton. Bellario-Euphrasia is compelled by the busy plot to some activity so that, unlike Aspatia, she has no time for dolorous songs and pathetic set speeches. At the close, as far as it is possible for the imagination to follow so lifeless a creature, we can picture her singing "Willow" in Philaster's palace for the rest of her life. Fortunately, the demands of the plot prevent her doing so in the play.

"Thierry and Theodoret" does not contain an example of the Aspatia-like heroine. Ordella is the virtuous woman whose life, though potentially happy, is brought to a tragic end by the machinations of the villain. Ordella is perfect and that is precisely her chief fault. Absolute perfection is neither credible nor interesting. When she is involved in a true "romantic" plot, which demands the willing suspension of commonsense, she grows exasperating. She calls for little comment. She is chaste, faithful to her husband, and dies of grief at the right moment. She is the passive victim of Brunhalt's plots. Her qualities are all negative; an unlimited capacity for suffering, and little else besides. All the driving force of which Beaumont and Fletcher are capable is put into the part of the wicked woman. If good emerged triumphant, spiritually if not temporally, it might serve to give some direction or dynamic force to virtue, but when the good allow the bad to involve them in general destruction without putting up an effective fight, then they can interest no one. Ordella even lacks the justification of Aspatia or Bellario as an occasion for fine verse.

Something a little more definite emerges from the parts of Arethusa in "Philaster" and Spaconia in "A King and No King." Of Panthea in this last play it is difficult to speak. Evidently Beaumont and Fletcher

intended her to be classed with Arethusa and Ordella as a virtuous woman, but their lack of feeling defeats this aim. When the theme of incestuous love is set on foot, she is at first genuinely innocent. It is Arbaces, whose rant and self-insult betray lack of tragic depth. Panthea herself is a gracious, kindly figure, willing to serve Spaconia as best she can. She is flung down from this height when Beaumont and Fletcher abandon dramatic decorum in search of situation.[1] In the interview with her brother when she declares her love to him and he to her, we can feel the dramatists working up their audience's anticipation as first of all the brother and sister walk hand in hand, then kiss, and then finally have to tear themselves apart lest worse follow. The speeches given to Panthea in this scene are entirely out of keeping with the previous representation of her character. To say the least of it, they are lacking in tact. The scene as a whole is singularly unpleasant, dallying as it does with the baser emotions, to which is added an exciting fear of deadly sin.

Arethusa and Spaconia are not involved in plots which bring in question the value of their virtue. Arethusa, indeed, is perhaps the most successful effort at a virtuous woman. We may find her impossibly affectionate to Euphrasia at the end of the play, but we can accept that as a manifestation of generosity raised to the nth power as befits a romantic play. There is nothing inherently unpleasant in the character. Her qualities are all attractive. Even the scene in which she confesses her love to Philaster is not handled with the clumsiness that we might anticipate. The love between Philaster and Arethusa is kept almost entirely above the physical plane, in order to

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1. "A King and No King," Act IV, Sc.4.

contrast it the more forcibly with the gross passion of Megra and Pharamond, and it certainly has the effect of making Arethusa the pleasantest of all Beaumont and Fletcher's "good" women. Arethusa has more "go" and life than the others of her type. She opposes her father's will and declares her love for Philaster, thus showing an initiative as refreshing as it is rare among the virtuous women. Unfortunately her lover is an unhappy attempt at a perfect "hero." Arethusa's devotion to one who insults her as Philaster does makes us think less of her. His jealousiy and cowardice are all forgiven, as well as the wounds inflicted upon her in the forest. Like Ordella, she is perfect, and therein lies her weakness. One or two words of reproach to Philaster, or an expression of inward grief over wrongs beyond the ordinary lot of women, would have brought her a little nearer to reality.

Spaconia is a livelier figure than either Aspatia or Euphrasia, who correspond roughly to her in situation. She displays a wiliness and resource in surmounting her difficulties which seem to indicate Fletcher's hand.[1.] She never descends to the mere sentimentality of Aspatia, because she moves about more actively on the stage. She assumes a disguise, not to seek death, but to follow her lover into captivity.[2.] She is not above making an appeal to the generosity of Panthea, her potential rival, in order to keep her lover Tigranes to herself. She schemes successfully to join Tigrames in prison, so

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1. Miss O.L. Hatcher, in her study of Fletcher, has pointed out that the resourceful maiden in love is always to be found in his plays.

2. "A King and No King" is, of course, a tragi-comedy, so that extreme measures were not called for from the women.

that, although she bewails her hard lot in good set terms, she does not dwindle into a figure of unrelieved Patience, lamenting upon her monument. When she meets Tigranes in prison she even abuses him, though almost immediately she takes back her hard words, and in two lines utters the creed of the "good" woman who has been wronged:

> "I do, and can, forgive the greatest sins
> To me you can repent of." [1].

We see then that Beaumont and Fletcher had a kind of working model of the virtuous woman in two situations. The tragedies demanded a passive sufferer, for it is essential to their tragedy that the good, if they are women, not only perish in the general holocaust, but meekly suffer the most outrageous wrongs throughout the play. Here we find the passive woman of Elizabethan tragedy, who had generally appeared in contrast with an energetic woman or with one totally different in type, now exalted to the chief part, if not actually in the plot, certainly in would-be moral effect. Goodness and helplessness appear to have been synonymous with Beaumont and Fletcher. We notice particularly in the pathetic parts the limited powers of the dramatists in character-drawing. We are given a full preparatory study of the character, so that when she appears there is no need for her to do anything except sustain her rôle. The romantic plot had played havoc with characterisation. Description rather than reasoned action was the easiest solution for a dramatist who found most of his attention concentrated upon an intricate plot. Therefore we find the women - for it is the women rather than the men whose parts suffer most conspicuously - re-

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1. Act IV, Sc.2.

moved deliberately from reality by the impossible plots and the choice of the dramatists. Of their obvious lack of feeling for the deeper issues of life, enough has been said earlier. Their super-good and super-bad women are never permitted to deviate into the speech or actions of a world even approximating to that of tragic reality.

Those plays which are Fletcher's own work or produced in collaboration with dramatists other than Beaumont show with painful clearness the lack of a sense of values. It is possible to disapprove of Beaumont's sentimental attitude towards the woman disappointed in love. His virtuous women may be merely negative characters. Yet, apart from "A King and No King," in which Panthea's supposed modesty is called in question by her behaviour in a very delicate situation, we cannot say that the good women in whose parts Beaumont had any share are definitely disagreeable, though we may find them irritating or boring. Fletcher's conception of virtue is entirely legal. He does not think of it as an attitude of mind, rather than a state of being, a coarseness even more apparent with the removal of Beaumont's more serious influence.

Fletcher's "Valentinian" aroused Coleridge's severe criticism of such "clumsy fictions" as Lucina. This woman is intended as a moving representation of a chaste lady ravished by an unscrupulous debauchee. There is nothing pitiful in her story. She appears to have a perfect understanding of the emperor Valentinian. His women sent to seduce her are rebuffed with words of the same quality as those used to tempt her. Again, for one who is so well aware of the emperor's intentions upon her to go to the palace, and, once there, to appear to guess that she is in danger, and yet to go on, is to label her

a fool, or else not as careful of her honour as she would have us believe. Fletcher's desire for sensation caused him to spin out the thrill of anticipation as Lucina draws nearer and nearer her ruin. He has involved her in a situation which he cannot raise to the heights of tragedy because he has not succeeded in picturing Lucina as a woman whose innate purity forbids her to imagine evil. Hardy's "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" is a woman in the same position who, innocent at heart,[1] is betrayed by the very quality that makes her most loveable. She goes to her fate without any doubts or fears because hers is the virginity of heart and mind that does not understand fear.[2] Fletcher pays his tribute to the purity of woman by allowing Lucina to round upon Valentinian's procuresses in words drawn from their own vocabulary.

Fletcher's own technique of character-drawing caused him to be particularly unhappy in his attempts at "good" women. Lucina's declarations of her goodness and purity make her appear self-conscious. This is especially so after her rape by Valentinian:

"Where shall poor Virtue live, now I am fall'n?"

She appears to put a price upon her chastity:

> "Oh, my sad fortunes!
> Is this the end of goodness? this the price
> Of all my early prayers to protect me?" [4]

Lucina is placed in surroundings so incredibly degraded that Fletcher's task to keep her innocent not only in word

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1. Not merely ignorant. It is impossible that she should be ignorant, living in that unavoidable proximity to birth, life and death which is the lot of the poor.

2. Compare also D.H. Lawrence's picture of the pure-minded girl Yvette in "The Virgin and the Gipsy," who never fears or doubts because "to the pure all things are pure."

3. Variorium Edition: "Valentinian," Act I, Sc.2., l.94.

4. "Valentinian," Act III, Sc.1., ll. 143-145.

but in general bearing is well-nigh impossible. He has excelled himself in devising horrible situations and in portraying men and women who have no care for the most elementary decencies of life. He allows Maximus to outrage all decorum, and lowers him beneath the level even of Valentinian. A greater skill and greater interest in characterisation, and, above all, a deeper understanding of life and emotions than Fletcher possessed would all be required to make Lucina's innocence credible, in the first place, and secondly, to sustain it naturally in the midst of such surroundings.

"The Bloody Brother" suffers in exactly the same way from Fletcher's limitations either natural or self-imposed. Edith, who undertakes to revenge her injuries upon Rollo, the wicked Duke of Normandy, is a reversion to the Martha-Maria type of Chettle's and Marston's revenge tragedies. She dissimulates for the sake of revenge. This in itself does not make her an unpleasant character, for her Elizabethan prototypes behaved in exactly the same way and yet retained a certain measure of sympathy from the audience. But the Elizabethan women, once they undertake a share in the plot of vengeance, remain unmoved till their revenge is consummated. Maria in "Antonio's Revenge" and Edith are in very similar situations. Both are pursued with offers of love from the very man who has injured them and who is intended to suffer in his turn at their hands. Maria remains true to her purpose. Edith, at the first hypocritical sign of repentance from Rollo, weakly lays aside her dagger. Once again consistency is light-heartedly sacrificed to effect. At the beginning of the scene she had prayed for help in the devout style of the true revenge tradition:

"Give me a woman's anger bent to blood,
The wildness of the winds to drown his prayers!
---------- Give me flattery,
(For yet my constant soul ne'er knew dissembling)
Flattery the food of fools, that I may rock him
And lull him in the down of his desires;
That in the height of all his hopes and wishes
His Heaven forgot, and all his lusts upon him,
My hand, like thunder from a cloud, may seize him." 1.

Immediately we think of Hamlet and Claudius, and his desire to take the king "about some act That hath no relish of salvation in it." It is of the same temper as that of the Elizabethan avengers not yet "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Yet at the first hint of love from Rollo, down falls her dagger, her determination oozes away, and she is nothing more than a woman only too ready to be wooed and won. The Elizabethan dramatists never thus cynically flouted the unwritten laws of artistic decorum and consistency, little heed as they consciously paid to such matters.

We find little consistency in the dramatists' methods of disposing of their women, or in determining the attitude of the surviving characters towards them. Edith is sent to a cloister by Aubrey, Rollo's successor, a gratuitous piece of righteousness from one who, had Rollo been allowed to live, would have borne the full force of his tyranny. Eudoxia's murder of Maximus in "Valentinian," on the other hand, is received with general applause:

"Romans, she's righteous:
And such a piece of justice Heaven must smile on!
Up with your arms, you strike a saint else, Romans." 2.

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1. "The Bloody Brother," Act V, Sc.2.

2. "Valentinian," Act V, Sc.8.

Arane, in "A King and No King," vanishes completely from the scene after she has smoothed the paths of Arbaces and Panthea. Amintor is horror-stricken at Evadne's deed, whereas Melantius has urged her to do it. No standard of judgment based on some principle beyond the demands of plot and excitement appears to control the dramatists' imaginations. This is not to suggest that the Elizabethan dramatists - with the possible exception of Shakespeare - were consciously actuated by a philosophy of tragedy in the manner of the Greeks or the Russians, or thought out ethical problems for themselves. Nevertheless, in their crude fashion, they remained loyal to some standard unaffected by the immediate turn of plot. We have seen that women such as Maria and Martha did not swerve from the path of vengeance. They did not show themselves ready to give themselves to the first man who troubled to woo them. Once set upon a path, no matter how sinful and contrary to the rules of God and man, they followed it to the bitter end. Relentlessly the punishment that fitted their crime fell upon them. Alice Arden expiates her sins without a murmur. She has taken a chance, and lost, and must pay the penalty. Lady Macbeth is hag-ridden by the devils that she herself has let loose. Vittoria Corombona has her day, though to gain it she defies the most rigid commandments, and when the reckoning comes, even Flamineo is moved to admiration at the way she accepts it:

> "Thou'rt a noble sister!
> I love thee now: if woman do breed man,
> She ought to teach him manhood." 1.

Beaumont and Fletcher flouted the decrees not only of

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1. "The White Devil," Act V, Sc.6.

dramatic propriety, but of life itself. They portrayed violent actions, but never gave a thought to their necessarily devastating effects upon the men and women who performed or suffered them. Effect for them was not an inevitable corollary to cause. No man, especially no man of such a character as Arbaces was intended to possess, could imagine incest and not carry some kind of mental scar from it for ever.[1] Ford's Giovanni dies unrepentant:

> "Where'er I go, let me enjoy this grace,
> Freely to view my Annabella's face."

But the horror of his sin is always kept before us by its effect upon the onlookers in the play. Nobody in Beaumont and Fletcher's play is allowed to keep a grip upon something that transcends the rush of the action.

"The Two Noble Kinsmen," Fletcher's work in collaboration with another, shows more decided Elizabethan traits than most of the other works of the dramatist. This is due to the early date of the piece (c.1612), early, that is, in comparison with the majority of the plays already discussed. The problem of Fletcher's collaborator has always been a vexed question. Some claim Massinger, others Shakespeare. If the quality of the characterisation be any guide to authorship, it is difficult to credit Shakespeare with much share in the play. Even though the inferiority of his character-drawing in the later romances is fully recognised, it is impossible that he could sink to depicting a creature such as Emilia, who is no more, as Dr. Furnivall has said, than "a silly lady's-maid or shop

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1. Especially in Elizabethan times. It might be possible now to justify, or at least excuse it by reference to social conditions or Freudian psychology, etc.

girl, not knowing her own mind, up and down like a bucket in a well." As for the Jailor's daughter, it is almost entirely impossible for him to have had any share at all in the part. Shakesperean authorship may be admitted in Emilia's opening scene with the queens, and in the scene before the altar of Diana, but not elsewhere, and the general tone of the character is far below the general Shakesperian range.

Emilia is a curious mixture of Fletcherian vulgarity and simple dignity. In the first scene she speaks simply and naturally. Her prayer to Diana is strangely at variance with the Emilia who cannot make up her mind between Palamon and Arcite, and who, for a "maiden-hearted girl," enumerates their different physical attractions with unseemly pleasure. The Emilia who vows that she

> "shall never like the Maide Flavina
> Love any that's called Man" [1].

is a self-conscious creature who suggests Fletcher's coarse touch. This is even more apparent in the Emilia who so easily exchanges questionable remarks with her waiting-maid.[2] It must be admitted that Fletcher and his fellow-dramatist at the very beginning were at an enormous disadvantage, for the whole part played by Emilia in Chaucer's story is artificial to an extreme. Put upon the stage, the story becomes incredible. Even if Shakespeare had attempted the entire part of Emilia, it is hard to see how he could have made her convincing. He might have avoided the vulgarity of the scene with the portraits

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1. "The Two Noble Kinsmen:" Shakespeare Apocrypha: Act I, Sc.4., ll. 96-96.

2. Though cf. Ophelia's easy acceptance of Hamlet's jests, Act III, Sc.2. Both Elizabethans and Jacobeans were a free-spoken race of people, male and female alike.

of Palamon and Arcite, and the conversation in the garden, but how successfully to reconcile the dignity of the Emilia who prays to Diana with the impossible situation in which she is placed would have been an insoluble problem in characterisation.[1]

The part of the Jailer's daughter could easily be passed over were it not for the light it sheds upon the later history of the popular stage trick of madness. This part is a link between the pure pathos of Lucibella and Ophelia, and the love-lorn sentimentalities of Aspatia and Bellario. In spirit she is nearer the latter. In so far as the dramatist employs the old stock-in-trade of her Elizabethan counterparts, combined with the general coarseness of handling, she is transitional. She goes mad; prattles of childish sports, and sings snatches of old songs in the manner of Ophelia. The dialogue with her father and her wooer recalls the scenes between Ophelia and the king, the queen, and Laertes, but where Shakespeare introduced the madness of Ophelia as a kind of relief to the thickening plot, Fletcher makes that of the Jailer's daughter an end in itself. What Shakespeare touched upon, Fletcher attempts to adorn, with the result that the scenes of madness are nauseating. The bluntness of Jacobean feeling, the lack of reverence, brutalise these scenes. They are obviously intended as comic relief. She encounters country people in the forest, who regard her as a heaven-sent source of amusement:

> "Ther's a dainty mad woman Maister
> Comes i' the Nick, as mad as a march hare.

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1. Chaucer avoids it by concentrating all the interest upon the heroic figures of Palamon and Arcite. Emilie in "The Knightes Tale" is nothing more than a picturesque detail in the romantic background. She is forgotten, as the combatants forget the cause of a war, when the situation between the cousins develops in interest.

If we can get her daunce, wee are made againe:
I warrant her, shee'l doe the rarest gambols." [1].

Neither Shakespeare nor Chettle allows the pathetic madness of the women to be a subject for jesting upon the stage, no matter how it was taken by the audience. More is made of the indecent jests in the part in "The Two Noble Kinsmen." The Elizabethan tradition, in short, is entirely debased by Fletcher in the person of the Jailer's daughter, who, moreover, is made to lend herself to such treatment because she is of the class which generally provides the humour of the stage. Fletcher never hesitated to raise a laugh at the expense of the lower class.[2].

Beaumont and Fletcher drew together the varied women of Elizabethan tragedy into three types. As they wrote for a more sophisticated age, that had changed the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war" and the elemental thrill of murder and revenge long pre-meditated for the more subtle, but less healthy excitements of sexual aberrations, so their women have to conform to the demands of this subject. We find that an evil woman, though she may poison or commit other more unnatural crimes is, first of all, sexually immoral, and her more refined vices are the result of the first sin.[3]. A chaste and virtuous woman may be exposed to all kinds of dangers and accusations directed against her chastity. If the play is a tragedy, she is ruined and dies; if a tragi-comedy, she emerges triumphant. The woman unhappy in love never de-

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1. Act III, Sc.5., ll. 80-83.

2. vide "The Knight of the Burning Pestle."

3. e.g., Brunhalt.

parts from the burden of her sorrow. So we find women and love inseparable; love pure or impure takes up all their thoughts. Herein lies the essential difference between the Elizabethan and Jacobean ideal of love. Not even Cleopatra would give "all for love." If we find a play in which, like "Arden of Feversham," the plot hangs upon a crime committed for love, at the end we are made to understand that passion is nothing "sub specie aeternitatis." Beaumont and Fletcher never show themselves aware of a larger world beyond the confines of their "wooden O." We are never either introduced to a dramatic life in which values are rightly and lastingly estimated, or kept in touch with a wider world in which proportion is duly observed. They lose their grip of anything definite or permanent. Their women never, with the possible exception of Evadne, come to life in flash after flash, concentrating in themselves in a short sentence, or a single line, the quintessence of emotion, even of existence itself.

Massinger, far from being an original creative artist, was a member of a school, or rather of a dramatic workshop. Beaumont and Fletcher had set up one type of serious play in place of the true Elizabethan "infinite variety." Massinger's most important works[1] appeared when the Beaumont and Fletcher tradition of "romantic" tragedy had held the stage for almost a decade. He had learned Fletcher's methods through collaboration with him,[2]

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1. "The Fatal Dowry," 1619. "The Maid of Honour," 1662. "The Duke of Milan," 1620. "The Roman Actor," 1626. "The Virgin Martyr," c.1620.

2. "Sir John van Olden Barnavelt" (1620), "The Queen of Corinth" (1618), etc.

and since these were the methods in demand he saw no reason to strike out on fresh lines for himself. He was an excellent workman, a writer of useful blank-verse, but he had little truly creative gift. The influence of his "workshop" together with his limitations, renders it superfluous to look in Massinger for any original additions to the gallery of Elizabethan and Jacobean heroines.

We have seen that Beaumont and Fletcher made use of a tragic formula which cut them off from any kind of dramatic realism. The action of their plays was conducted in a Paphlagonia where romantic love, heroic sentiments, and beautiful and saintly women were commonplaces of dramatic existence. It is true that alongside of Beaumont and Fletcher is Middleton, but, to judge by the kind of drama which evolved from the Jacobean and Caroline,[1] the twin stars and their satellites were always in the ascendant. Standardised romantic situations had inevitably given rise to cut and dried types of character.[2] Beaumont and Fletcher had established three female types - good, bad and unhappy. Constant repetition had tried and proved the sufficiency of these for all such plays and situations as the taste of the time demanded. Massinger was content to take them over with the rest of the stock.[3]

Though Massinger is more careful to bridge the extremes, the now familiar types made, therefore, his natural approach to the characterisation of women. He had, however, the gift of humanising his women at times,

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1. i.e., the heroic plays, and earlier Shirley.

2. v. supra, pp. 207-209.

3. Once Massinger is original, in "The Virgin Martyr" (v. post, p.). This is rather a dramatic curiosity, however, than a work of intrinsic merit.

though too often this also resulted in a headlong fall from the remote heights of romantic tragedy to mundane levels. In "The Duke of Milan," Marcelia and Maria engage in a bout of "catty" personal remarks:

> Marc. "For you, puppet -
> Mari. "What of me, pine-tree?" 1.

Camiola, the Maid of Honour, allows herself to be provoked into a feminine "flyting" in defence of her "beauty unadorned:"

> "For beauty without art, though you storm at it,
> I may take the right-hand file." 2.

In the interminable waste of romantic drama, wearisome in its repetition of the same erotic situation and bombastic sentiments, such evidence of mortal vanities is doubly refreshing. From the artistic point of view, such lapses into the trivialities of every day are, however, regrettable, for no attempt has been made to work them in as natural traits of composite characters. Camiola and Marcelia have the outline simplicity of all merely romantic heroines.

Three types emerge fairly clearly from Massinger's chief works. They are not original, but are variants of Beaumont and Fletcher's three. Massinger makes use of the "good" woman - Marcelia, Camiola, and Dorothea; the "half-tone" type - Aurelia and Artemia; and the "bad" woman - Beaumelle and Domitia. These three sets of characters are not sharply divided one from another as is the case in Beaumont and Fletcher's work. The

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1. Act II, Sc.1.

2. "The Maid of Honour," Act V, Sc.2.

importance of the "half-tone" class, neither very good nor very bad, suggests that Massinger preferred to shade gradually rather than to put two violently opposed kinds together. We can find in each group one woman who is a connecting link from one to the other.

Dorothea and Camiola are nearest to the stock type of a good woman. Dorothea is a saint, and keeps consistently at the requisite level of conduct, for "The Virgin Martyr" is a piece of religious propaganda as well as a play. She may, therefore, be passed over in this group. Camiola, that "small but ravishing substance," may spring from the Ordella-Lucina type, but, though she displays some of the traits which rendered them so disagreeable, she shows others which mark her out as more of an individual than they. She is the centre of the action, concentrating in her single part an interest that is never roused by the two or three chief male characters. She sets in motion the action which culminates in Bertoldo's release, with the subsequent readjustment of the lives of the chief actors. This is a marked departure from the Ordella-Lucina type, which was there only to suffer with edifying meekness or righteous shame whatever wrongs were inflicted upon them. She has a sharp tongue which, allied with too precise a sense of honour, sometimes puts her in danger of shrewishness. The insufferable Fulgentio she puts at once in his place:

> "I am a queen in mine own house; nor must you
> Expect an empire here." [1]

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1. "The Maid of Honour," Act II, Sc.1.

But later, when Adorni, her unrequited lover,[1] reports Bertoldo's faithlessness and confesses that it raised his hopes, she turns on him:

> "In this you confess
> The devilish malice of your disposition.
> As you were a man, you stood bound to lament it;
> And not, in flattery of your false hopes,
> To glory in it." [2]

This sharpness of speech is commendable in so far as it strengthens an otherwise flabby type of character. Massinger, however, errs in two points in his presentation of the "good" woman. He does not remain consistent to his conception of Camiola. To Bertoldo she is humble out of all proportion to the pride and dignity she displays later to Fulgentio. Here Massinger reverts to his original type, and imitates Ordella's self-abnegation. Bertoldo, illegitimate son of the late king, has asked her hand in marriage. Camiola, although in love with him, refuses, on the grounds of his superiority in character and station - worthy, though unreasonable motives,[3] but expressed in unnecessarily servile terms. His birth is an "ample dowry," "his mind endowed with harmonious faculties moulded from heaven." "Give me leave" says Camiola,

> "With admiration to look upon them;
> But not presume, in my own flattering hopes,
> I may or can enjoy them." [4]

This over-scrupulous attitude at once ranks Camiola with the self-consciously virtuous heroines. The second de-

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1. Camiola treats Adorni with a mixture of confidence and snobbishness that shows one of the least pleasing sides of her character.
2. Act V, Sc.1. Can unreasonableness further go - yet Adorni's admiring comment is
   > "What a temper dwells
   > In this rare virgin!"

   We agree.
3. They are the material out of which romantic drama is fashioned.
4. Act I, Sc.2.

fect in Massinger's artistic treatment declares itself in Camiola's self-righteousness, which, though never as nauseating as Lucina's, yet must put her in the same class. Her behaviour to the faithful Adorni is the most objectionable aspect of her priggishness. He is rebuked for a meanness of thought[1] which is only apparent to Camiola's hyper-sensitive honour. When she confronts Bertoldo and Aurelia in the King's presence, she shows a commercial mind equal to Lucina's in assessing the value of her own goodness:

> "weigh duly
> What she deserved, whose merits now are doubted.
> That as his better angel, in her bounties
> Appear'd unto him, his great ransom paid,
> His wants, and with a prodigal hand, supplied." [2]

In Camiola Massinger hesitates between a smugly priggish "good" woman and a type enlivened by the touch of his robuster hand. Marcelia is another of the same group. Her virtue never rises to incredible heights, but, though sometimes as objectionably explicit as that of previous examples, is redeemed from time to time by a blunt honesty of treatment.[3]

The "half-tone" characters, Aurelia in "The Maid of Honour" and Artemia in "The Virgin Martyr," stand in different positions within their class. Aurelia is nearer to Camiola and Marcelia, and Artemia to Beaumelle and Domitia. Both are alike in the readiness with which they pounce upon an attractive and marriageable young man. Aurelia gives herself away to Bertoldo with the same rapidity as Anne Frankford to Wendoll, or Lady Anne

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1. v. supra, p. 249

2. Act V. Sc.2. The same spirit of self-righteousness and mercenary reckoning of her value appears throughout the scene.

3. Her patience is not pushed to super-Griselda-like lengths She is rightly angered by her husband's insane jealousy. (Act III½, Sc.3). In essentials Marcelia and Camiola are alike, the former only being less successfully treated. What has been said of Camiola may be applied to Marcelia

to Richard. As soon as he has saluted her, kissing her hand, she admits her love in an aside:

> "Sure his lips are poisoned,
> And through these veins force passage to my heart,
> Which is already seized on." [1].

Her attitude upon first learning of Camiola's claim to Bertoldo[2]. stamps her as not belonging to the unmistakeably "good" type. The normal reaction should be sentimental sympathy, such as Panthea's for Spaconia.[3]. Aurelia, however, is openly defiant, ready to fight for her love. Proofs of Camiola's claim on Bertoldo she at first dismisses. It was, she says,

> "done in heat of blood,
> Charm'd by her flatteries, as no doubt he was
> To be dispens'd with." [4].

Aurelia is not unattractive, though, as a dramatist Massinger understood that she could not be allowed to compete with Camiola. As a dramatist, also, he used Aurelia to repeat a third time[5]. on the Jacobean stage Tourneur's famous device, though some of the words may well represent his feelings as a man:

> Gonzaga "Pray you, fair lady,
> If you can, in courtesy direct me to
> The chaste Aurelia."
> Aur. "Are you blind? who are we?"
> Gonz. "Another kind of thing." [6].

Artemia, like Dorothea, suffers from the type of play in

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1. "The Maid of Honour," Act IV, Sc.4.
2. She gives him up when she hears of the ransom episode.
3. "A King and No King."
4. Act V. Sc.2.
5. Used previously in "The Revenger's Tragedy" and "The Second Maiden's Tragedy," v. supra, pp.
6. Act IV, Sc.4.

which she appears. She is gracious and kindly towards Theophilus and his daughters (Act I, Sc.1), and courteous to the conquered kings. She offers herself to Antoninus, Dorothea's suitor, with a graceful mixture of pride and humility, in which Massinger is successful in striking a mean. She is prepared to give him up to Dorothea if she will recant:

> "though yet I love him,
> I will not force affection. If the Christian
> Whose beauty hath outrivalled mine be won
> To be of our belief, let him enjoy her.
> That all may know, when the cause will, I can
> Command my own desires." [1]

Artemia, however, is a heathen on the same side as Harpax, the evil spirit, so that all her charms are only so many wiles of the devil. We are required to judge her not on her merit, but on her religion, and her association with the wrong side drags her towards the group of bad characters.

These again are of differing degrees of wickedness, for Beaumelle is less abandoned than Domitia. We find in their parts that the Beaumont and Fletcher tradition still holds good. Wickedness in a woman and incontinence are synonymous. Neither of the women sins with Brunhalt's gusto, nor on the same scale. Beaumelle is content with one lover. Domitia, a more hardened sinner, leaves her husband for the Emperor, and then tries to take Paris, the actor, as her lover. Massinger does not allow Beaumelle to die in the midst of her sins. Charalois the husband whom she has deceived, stabs her, and she dies content:

> "I approve his sentence,

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1. The Virgin Martyr," Act III, Sc.2.

> And kiss the executioner. My lust
> Is now run from me in that blood in which
> It was begot and nourished." [1]

Domitia's end is in Evadne's tradition. She joins in the plot against Caesar to avenge the death of Paris whom she failed to win. To this extent, though she suffers death for her crimes, she redeems her wanton life.

We have seen that Massinger's types of female character, though based on his masters', were modified by his own dramatic bent. The "half-tone" class is his own, a kind of compromise achieved by embodying the characteristics of the not too good and not too bad women. Massinger's obvious honesty of purpose prevented his perpetrating women as incredible as Lucina or Brunhalt. Beaumont and Fletcher subordinated all their dramatic genius to "strong" situations, sacrificing all pretence of thoughtful characterisation. Nor were they, especially Fletcher, guided and restrained by an instinctive sense of fitness or an understanding of modesty and uncalculating virtue in a woman. Massinger's efforts to portray a virtuous woman were at least sincere, if unattended by any outstanding success. When Massinger fails, his imagination has proved unequal to the task he has set himself. When he wrote the scene in which Camiola claims Bertoldo from Aurelia, Massinger could not have understood that his heroine would appear petty and self-seeking, that her vaunted goodness and generosity would appear to be nothing more to her than goods fetching a high price in the matrimonial market. His heroines are over-anxious to be married, and seem to value their chastity from that point of view only.

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1. "The Fatal Dowry," Act IV, Sc.4.

Eugenia, who has been betrayed by Sforza, pays the following tribute to her successful rival's better business sense:

> "She was more fair than I, and had discretion
> Not to deliver up her virgin fort,
> Though strait besieged with flatteries, vows and tears,
> Until the church had made it safe and lawful."[1].

Yet Massinger, though guilty of lapses into bad taste amounting to vulgarity, never showed such slight respect for his heroines as to involve them in situations like Panthea's or Ordella's. The greater sincerity with which he looked upon women forbade him to exploit the thrill of the forbidden.

Massinger's religion undoubtedly stood for more to him than mere formality. "The Virgin Martyr" is sufficient proof of its power over him. This, a remarkable return to the miracle play, is designed for purposes of propaganda, and as it would naturally mean most to those professing Roman Catholicism, it has been taken as evidence of a conversion to this faith. However that may be, the production of such a play when romantic drama held undisputed sway is a remarkable testimony to the dramatist's earnestness. This strong religious feeling explains the moderation with which the wicked women are treated. To any religious man, and especially to a Roman Catholic, to die unrepentant would mean eternal damnation. Though Beaumelle does not die with words of religion upon her lips, she at least repents of her sins and unhesitatingly gives up her body to death. ~~Massingers~~

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1. "Duke of Milan," Act V, Sc.1. This incidentally throws light upon the dramatist's conception of love and marriage. They were a battle of wits. If the man overcame the woman, the result was betrayal; if she him, he had to marry her to gain his desire.

Massinger's regard for religion would also explain the importance he attached to marriage. He has been accused[1] of lending support through his plays to the view of marriage as legalised sensuality. Massinger's views of "love," chastity and marriage are merely the predominating views of his school and his time. The calculating virtue of his (and others') heroines is not even a "view," it is rather a method, a survival of the Elizabethan explicit self-describing technique, hardened and forced, it is true, by a lack of sympathy, insight, and the rough delicacy of the Dekkers and Heywoods. It is consistent, however, with Massinger's more earnest convictions that he should lay a special emphasis on marriage as something more than an empty rite. To him it is clearly a sacrament.

We cannot feel that Massinger's mind took naturally to romantic tragedy with its inevitable laxness of manners and morals. He followed where he was led. He had considerable earnestness, but this entered his plays mainly at the cue of religion. It was not allied with perception and good taste, so that his feminine characterisation does not benefit as much as one might expect, though the women gain something from his rough honesty, and occasionally recall the touches of nature of an earlier and simpler age.

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1. by Mr. E.C.H. Oliphant, in "The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher." It is odd that a student of Beaumont and Fletcher should level this accusation distinctively against Massinger.

B. Middleton and Ford.

Middleton and Ford are the two great dramatists of the Jacobean period whose plays best represent the changed spirit which now prevailed in genuine tragedy.[1] Both these dramatists equalled their Elizabethan forerunners in the strength which they brought to their characterisation. With Middleton, the difference lies in the savagery which seems to have inspired his work. We carry away the impression that he felt a grim delight in adding touch after touch of villainy to Bianca in "Women beware Women" (1612). This atmosphere of latent hatred is not to be found in the true Elizabethans, Marlowe, Kyd, Greene and Shakespeare. Middleton, in common with Tourneur and Webster, plunged in his tragic work into depths of almost unrelieved gloom. It is this turning away from the daylight, even from open moonlight or starlight, which differentiates Jacobean from Elizabethan tragedy.

Middleton stands on a level only a little beneath that of the greatest dramatists in the period by reason of his two tragedies. The earlier, "Women beware Women," is his own unaided work. The later, "The Changeling," (1623), was written in collaboration with Rowley, but to Middleton are generally assigned the great scenes of the tragic plot, notably that between Beatrice and De Flores.[2] Both plays show one outstanding feature of Middleton's feminine characterisation - the low opinion he appears to have entertained of female virtue. He is

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1. As opposed to the work of Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger, which did not deal with problems of conduct but rather with situation.

2. Act III, Sc.4.

consistently brutal in his protraiture of women. He never allows them to put forward the common plea of the "weaker sex." His women are never weak.[1] Without the excuse of innate frailty, his women stand as targets for his attacks. Middleton makes sure that all their wickedness shall be their own fault. The first play generally associated with this dramatist, "The Mayor of Queenborough," (1596 or '97),[2] shows to the full in the crudely-conceived part of Roxena the zest with which he piles iniquity upon a woman. The result has been to produce in both the later works undeniably powerful pictures of unscrupulous women. Beatrice, in "The Changeling," because her part is sustained by an imaginative grasp of some of the perennially tragic facts, is unforgettable. Hers is

> "the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

"Women beware Women" is a somewhat incoherent play which suffers from the inconsistencies rife in all the earlier drama. It is not sufficiently compact. The horrible sub-plot[3] only adds to the general confusion, so that it is very difficult to carry away a few clear memories. The characters are never given the opportunity of making an ineffaceable impression. Bianca - she is the Venetian Bianca Cappello, famous throughout Italy and Europe as a successful adventuress - is represented with-

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1. In this he closely resembles Webster, whose Vittoria and Duchess of Malfy are, before everything, brave.

2. v. supra, pp. 91.

3. Of the incestuous love of Hippolito for his niece Isabella.

out any regard for consistency. At the end of the play we find that we have been shown two women,[1] for the tragedy falls into two parts as a result of her volte face. The Bianca of the second part, moreover, is represented with a mass of unnecessarily villainous detail.

Bianca, young and beautiful, is brought by Leantio, with whom she has eloped, to his Florentine home, humble in comparison with the Venetian luxury of her childhood's home. She is sweetness itself, perfectly content with her poor surroundings:

> "Heaven send a quiet peace with this man's love,
> And I'm as rich as virtue can be poor." [2]

She is innocent and artless, making no effort to hide her love for Leantio.[3] When Livia's treachery betrays her to the Duke, she protests in the way that would be natural to a young wife very much in love with her husband. Then an ambition of which we have had no previous hint responds to the Duke's offers to "'light on a tree that bears all women's wishes."[4] After she has been trapped, we find her wasting scanty time on regrets:

> "sin and I'm acquainted,
> No couple greater; and I'm like that great one,
> Who, making politic use of a base villain,
> He likes the treason well, but hates the traitor." [5]

In the scene immediately following (Act III,Sc.1),

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1. Unless they could be unified to some degree by the acting

2. Act I, Sc.1.

3. Act I, Sc.3.

4. Act II, Sc.2. Bianca's refusals and capitulation both take place in this same scene.

5. Act II, Sc.2. The traitor Guardiano who has played the pander.

we are introduced to a new Bianca, "so ~~witted~~ cutted, there's no speaking to her." This new woman is frivolous and empty-headed, grumbling at the poverty which a short time before she had not heeded:

> "Why is there not a cushion-cloth of drawn-work,
> Or some fair cut-work pinned up in my bed-chamber?" 1.

Now her behaviour is the very opposite of what it was before. Instead of finding all delightful, she complains ceaselessly. The sorrow she showed at her husband's departure is now displayed at his return. Finally she abandons him for the Duke.

In Middleton's characterisation of the changed Bianca the feature which is least satisfactory is the causeless cruelty which she exhibits.[2.] She makes a mock of Leantio, the husband whom she has so grossly abused:

> "A poor, base upstart! life, because has got
> Fair clothes by foul means, comes to rail and show 'em." 3.

When she learns that Livia, the authoress of her own good fortune, is in love with Leantio, she prevails upon the Duke to bring about his death. Middleton has made of her a revolting thing, whose crimes are the work of diabolical malice. To crown all, he has represented her as shamelessly impudent. She turns the Cardinal's own weapons upon himself:

> "'mongst all your virtues
> I see not charity written, which some call
> The first-born of religion, and I wonder
> I cannot see it in yours." 4.

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1. Act III, Sc.1.
2. This is especially unexpected, in view of her previous gentleness.
3. Act IV, Sc.1.
4. Act IV, Sc.3.

A satisfying act of poetic justice puts an end to her infamous life. Her lover the Duke by mistake drinks a cup of poisoned wine which Bianca has prepared for her enemy, the Cardinal. In dying, she utters a few words of remorse, chiefly, we feel, because her career has been cut short at its height:

> "Leantio, now I feel the breach of marriage
> At my heart-breaking. O, the deadly snares
> That women set for women, without pity
> Either to soul or honour!" [1].

We feel that to Middleton Bianca was of more significance as a puppet for intrigue than as a character to be detached from her conventional dramatic setting and brought to life. As plot and counter-plot are in this play of prior importance, Bianca is ruthlessly sacrificed to them. This seems to be the only explanation for Middleton's complete disregard of elementary psychology. We could pass it over without comment as one more example of the carelessness prevalent throughout the period in the presentation of women, were it not for his later creation, Beatrice, a woman of flesh, blood, and quivering nerves.

It may be that by the time Middleton came to write "The Changeling" in 1622 or '23, years of Fletcherian types had wrought their effect, and made it impossible for him to allow extremes to meet in one character. Whether this was so or not, in "The Changeling" Middleton has left far behind him the diffuse style of "Women beware Women." Few plays show a deeper perception of the dramatic value

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1. Act V, Sc.1.

of suspense, of vague hints of impending disaster, of subtle suggestions of a titanic catastrophe. From the beginning of the play we hear mutterings which hint at the approaching storm. It is almost impossible to believe that the same hand was responsible for "The Changeling" and "Women beware Women," poles apart as they are both in characterisation and dramatic technique.

Beatrice is not presented as depraved. She sins once, and finds that crime is a seed from which springs a poisonous entangling growth. She wishes to be rid of Piracquo her betrothed in order to marry Alsemero with whom she has fallen in love. To this end she employs De Flores, a follower of her father's, who has always inspired her with deadly loathing. She finds the one obstacle removed, only to encounter another, this time insuperable, De Flores himself. She has to accept him as her lover, and, as she is more and more deeply involved with him, she finds herself cherishing a kind of regard for him, inspired by his cunning in shielding her:

> "How heartily he serves me! his face loathes one;
> But look upon his care, who would not love him?
> The east is not more beauteous than his services." 1.

This subtle blunting of Beatrice's feelings is one of the most skilful touches in the play. Middleton never makes it quite clear whether Beatrice comes to love De Flores when necessity has conquered her first horror of him. He undoubtedly wishes the audience to see her as the bird for De Flores' snake. It is an interesting problem raised and left to tantalise the imagination.

Middleton's gradual approach to the climax, the

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1. "The Changeling," Act V, Sc.1.

scene between De Flores and Beatrice in which he claims his reward, is, as has been said, a fine example of dramatic craftsmanship. From the very first De Flores, "the ominous, ill-faced fellow," inspires her with fear as well as loathing:

> "I never see this fellow but I think
> Of some harm towards me, danger's in my mind still.
> I scarce leave trembling of an hour after." 1.

We watch the power fluctuating between the man and the woman.[2] First one seems in complete control of the situation, then the other. Beatrice at first has the power to hurt De Flores, but we feel that this is only for as long as he allows it. His passion compels him to linger near her, though he knows that his devotion will only be rewarded with abuse. When he sees that Beatrice must commit a crime before she can marry Alsemero, a new hope dawns:

> "I'm sure both
> Cannot be served unless she transgresses, haply
> Then I'll put in for one." 3.

Still, however, the power is Beatrice's. With fair words she can transport him to the seventh heaven.[4] Then immediately she has put herself into his power by charging him to murder Piracquo, we see him in complete control. He hints at what is to come in one sentence, full of ominous meaning:

> "That" (a reward) "I've thought on;
> I have assured myself of that beforehand,
> And know it will be precious; the thought ravishes." 5.

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1. Act II, Sc.1.
2. The drama centres in De Flores and Beatrice - the other characters only exist as they are affected by the actions of these two dominating figures.
3. Act III, Sc.2.
4. It is interesting to note the material level upon which De Flores is kept. When he is transported with joy at Beatrice's unforeseen kindness he exclaims, aside:
   "Her fingers touched me!
   She smells all amber."
5. Act II, Sc.2.

The power swings from one to the other like a pendulum till De Flores is master of the event. Something of the "musical" method which we saw in "Richard III" [1] reappears in this pitting of man against woman. There is a rhythmic regularity in the swing from one to the other.

When the climax is reached in Act III Sc.4. we are given a picture of a woman driven into a corner, the like of which has not appeared before in the drama. Beatrice fights every inch of the ground before she will yield, and then goes down fighting. She never resorts to the "weak woman" plea, a feature she shares in common with Cleopatra, Goneril and Vittoria Corombona. The scene is a dramatic "tour de force" in which as never before in the Elizabethan or Jacobean period[2] the words of the characters lay bare their nerves. We can almost hear Beatrice's heart quicken as she is forced to understand De Flores' meaning.

Middleton has retained a sounder sense of certain values than can be detected in the theatrical elaboration of virtue and vice in contemporary drama. Even in Shakespeare it would be hard to find a grimmer, fuller sense of the reverberations of a deed than that expressed with perfect economy in the great scene between De Flores and Beatrice:

> "Settle you
> In what the act hath made you: you're no more now.
> You are the deed's creature." [3]

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1. v. supra, pp. 55-57 : 62-63.

2. Except in certain of Shakespeare's characters, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Subsequently Ford is more successful still in probing like a surgeon into the nerves of his characters.

3. Act III, Sc.4.

Middleton has concentrated into a brief sentence one supreme tragic truth. This is Nemesis, which works itself out far beyond the first sinner. Beatrice cannot, if she would, limit within herself all the consequences of her crime. Her innocent maid has to suffer. Mental anguish, if not death, is the portion of her father and husband. For Beatrice herself the bitterest humiliation must have been De Flores' attitude changed from adoring respect to brusque command or a kind of sneering domination:

> "Look but into your conscience, read me there;
> 'Tis a true book, you'll find me there your equal." 1.

He puts her brutally in her true place:

> "Pish! you forget yourself;
> A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty." 2.

Beatrice is the instigator of a murder, but the pitiful and terrible spectacle of one creature, and that a woman, bearing the accumulated weight of misery and shame which she has loaded upon herself, drives away the memory of her guilt. It is at all events forgotten in the sympathy that goes out to any splendid trapped animal at bay.

Ford, the last great writer of the dramatic epoch, lies in point of date outside the chronological limits of this study.[3] Yet he rounds off the Jacobean drama so perfectly that it is impossible to exclude him. Ford possesses to a much greater degree Middleton's skill,

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1. Act III, Sc.4.

2. ibid.

3. "'Tis Pity she's a Whore," 1627.
"The Broken Heart," 1629.
"Love's Sacrifice," 1630.

already noted in "The Changeling," in displaying the nerves in a woman's heart and mind. He has completely transferred the action from the council-chamber to the boudoir. Men cannot exist in his drama apart from women.[1] Self-examination has replaced the crude psychology of the early Elizabethans and the convenient reduction of character to types practised by Beaumont and Fletcher. Furthermore, Ford has made one step of vast significance; he has not only made his women think, but he has kept their way of thought distinct from that of men. We find Ford's women subtler, more interesting creations than his men. It is on them that he turns his genius, and their parts benefit more than the men's from his power of concentrating in a few words a wealth of emotion and meaning. They speak quietly, therefore the more forcefully, and though they say less than the men in actual length of speech, their words are pregnant, charged with the thoughts of subtler, more versatile, minds.

Ford's three tragedies should be separated into two groups. "'Tis Pity" and "Love's Sacrifice" go naturally together, for both are concerned with problems of sex. "The Broken Heart" might be a deliberate counter-blast from Ford's pen to his earlier play, "'Tis Pity."[2] The women are rigidly pure. No question of sexual irregularity enters, except verbally, into the play - even the waiting-maids, generally a sure source of indecent humour

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1. We must except "The Broken Heart," which stands apart from the other two works.

2. See Ford's Prologue to "The Broken Heart."

in the absence of their employers, though speaking more bluntly than breeding allows to their betters, are ranked on the side of modesty. They dismiss their soldier-lovers with short shrift:

> "When you have practised
> More wit or more civility, we'll rank ye
> I' the list of men." 1.

Penthea, married to Bassanes while in love with Orgilus, though she considers this forced intimacy with a man she does not love a sort of adultery, does not therefore encourage the advances of her lover. When Orgilus attempts an embrace he is rebuffed in no measured terms:

> "Uncivil sir, forbear!
> Or I can turn affection into vengeance;
> If ever henceforth thou appear in language,
> Message, or letter, to betray my frailty,
> I'll call thy former protestations lust." 2.

The part of Penthea is the nearest in Ford's work to the Beaumont-Fletcher type of the woman unsuccessful in love. The scene between Penthea and Calantha (Act III, Sc.5) shows the former as a kind of Aspatia in her ceaseless complaining of the misery of life, but Penthea is not personified melancholy wandering aimlessly through the play. She serves a definite purpose in bringing Calantha and her brother Ithocles together. Her part, however, has a distinctly Fletcherian flavour not to be found in any others of the women.

Euphranea and Calantha both live up to the strict standard of feminine virtue set up by Penthea. Euphranea

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1. "The Broken Heart," Act I, Sc.3. Philema, one of the ladies-in-waiting, ends her life in Vesta's temple: Act V, Sc.3.

2. Act II, Sc.3.

is a negative figure, whereas Calantha may be ranked as a creation. Her aloof dignity marks her out from other Elizabethan and Jacobean women,[1] and makes her, also, unique among Ford's own. She exchanges some four words of love with Ithocles. Her behaviour during the ball, when she finishes the dance without interruption in spite of news of the deaths of her father, friend, and lover, though we may condemn it as theatrical, shows Ford's aim. He makes Calantha too icily self-controlled, but for a dramatist to trouble so to represent a woman is to break away from the long-prevailing rhetorical conventions of the Jacobean stage. Ford's economy of expression is nowhere more clearly to be seen than in the dying words of his women. The report of Penthea's death is almost startling in its brevity:

> "her last breath sealed-up these hollow sounds,
> 'O, cruel Ithocles and injured Orgilus.''
> So down she drew her veil, so died." [2]

Calantha dies during a song. In the other plays also we find that Ford refrains from using the death-scene as an occasion for rhetorical effects.

We cannot but feel that in "The Broken Heart" Ford has deliberately suppressed the best of his genius. It is a frigid work, the characters unnatural, the situation unimpressive.[3] "'Tis Pity" shows at its best Ford's power to penetrate a woman's mind. We see Annabella first recklessly in love with Giovanni, caring nothing for the

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1. The woman she resembles most closely in undemonstrativeness is Cordelia, far apart though they are in other respects.

2. Act IV, Sc.4.

3. Save, perhaps, for the dance scene, which is, however, a little too artificial.

social or moral condemnation which such a love is certain to incur. To Annabella as well as to Giovanni love justifies itself. She does not even echo her brother's sophistries, but accepts him without excusing herself. It is the fear of the unknown which wakes her to penitence - any mere mortal terrors we know she could defy to the end. But her penitence is not the complete turning from love that it is with Alice Arden. Here Ford's instinctive knowledge of psychology distinguishes him. Annabella still loves Giovanni, for her first signs of penitence are shown before Soranzo, her husband, discovers her sin, and to him she is defiant, triumphing in her love for Giovanni, though never betraying him. She is prepared to give him up rather for his sake than hers, her woman's wit realising that they have reached an "impasse" and that separation is inevitable. She is concerned for his soul's and body's safety. Her faith is always simpler than Giovanni's. Once she has repented she is aware of a future life, but cares nothing for theological questions. Her last scene with Giovanni[1]. is a study, the more remarkable considering the dramatic tradition in which Ford worked, of the difference between a man's and a woman's approach to a pressing problem:

Gio. "I could believe as well
There might be hell or Heaven.
Ann. "That's most certain.
Gio. "A dream, a dream! else in this other world
We should know one another.
Ann. "So we shall.
Gio. "Have you heard so?
Ann. "For certain.

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1. Act V, Sc.5.

Gio. "But d'ye think
That I shall see you there? - You look on me -
May we kiss one another, prate or laugh,
Or do as we do here?

Ann. "I know not that.
But, brother, for the present, what d'ye mean
To free yourself from danger?" 1.

We have the contrast between a certain type of man and woman. Giovanni, as always, is concerned with questions of life and death, Heaven and Hell. His blood is passionate, but his mind abstract. Annabella, on the other hand, once she is free from the immediate demands of her equally passionate nature, is instinctively sure of the essentials which so torment Giovanni. Her love, like a woman's, contains a practical element,[2] and she is better schooled to face difficulties.

Bianca in "Love's Sacrifice" is a less minutely-drawn woman. She shows, however, the essentials of womanhood that Ford had already portrayed in Annabella. Bianca is a study of a woman of strong character, strong enough to hold out against proffers of dishonourable love, until her lover, weaker than herself, resolves to leave her in peace. Then - the inevitable inconsistency - she visits him at night and declares her love. They keep it on a "platonic" level, but Bianca's more compelling emotions force her to betray it to the watchful Fiormonda. Then she is brazenly defiant of her husband, striving desperately to present herself as courting Fernando's love rather than he hers. She is a more obvious character than Annabella, more masterful, but Ford has not tried to squeeze

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1. "'Tis Pity," Act V, Sc.5

2. cf. Shakespeare's lovers. The woman always has this streak of the practical. In Cleopatra's case it shows itself at the end, but before this comes she has been detached from mere passion, regarding the technique of love with more interest. Juliet is the practical woman, prepared to undertake any risk - Romeo, the dreamer.

her into the bonds of a formula. All she does is natural for such a woman. She is consistent to herself.

Ford's "decadence" in the treatment of love lies not so much in the situations he chooses to study, but in the passions with which he sympathises. Although Annabella and Blanca are forgetful of self in fighting for their lovers, and although they are gentle and tender, they are not great in the widest sense. Their passions are selfish; they themselves egoists. The canker of love so shrivels up their hearts that they cannot bloom with the glory that should be theirs. Annabella and Giovanni not only sacrifice Soranzo, but the woman tortures him in his jealousy with shafts of bitter contempt. Ford was prepared to overlook much, the sacrifice of another's happiness, lies, and mental cruelty, provided a man or woman showed an unbreaking spirit. Therefore his women, always excepting those in "The Broken Heart," are limited in aspirations, bound to their own passions, oblivious of common humanity or common womanhood, Theirs is the love that

> "Seeketh only self to please,
> To bind another to its delight,
> Joys in another's loss of ease,
> And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."

General Review.

The universality of the women of Elizabethan drama in particular and of those of certain Jacobean writers between 1579 and 1625 has triumphed over lapse of time, readjustment of taste, and differences of aesthetic approach to tragedy. They have received the tribute of praise from critics of widely differing temperaments. On the other hand, few periods of literature have proved such a stimulus to a type of criticism which is unsound because it disregards the actual texts which are its nominal subject. For this reason, it has seemed the most satisfactory method to work from the plays themselves in their natural grouping, for the plays, thus viewed, afford a solid foundation upon which to build. They remain as inescapable facts which impose a salutary check upon the temptation, difficult to avoid, to take the women out of their stage settings into life, and there to judge them by present day instead of Elizabethan dramatic standards. This grouping is not only a fact of Elizabethan stage history, but it is rendered significant also by differences of tragic situation which on the Elizabethan stage are matters of the utmost importance. Modern serious drama pays little attention to situation for its own sake. Tchekov, for instance, presents to us a group of people of different temperaments, as in "The Sea-Gull," and works out the actions and reactions which at the end culminate in the "situation" - betrayal and suicide. The situation is the result of character, the inevitable effect which is of less interest than the causes, and it could not have happened had the various people not been impelled by their dispositions to behave in such and such a way. Where the modern dramatist ends, the Elizabethans began. His characters, and especially his women, depend

upon the situation which he chooses to handle. Given an historical subject, we find certain kinds of women; a revenge motive, again, involves different types of character. Each group of plays as classified here corresponds to a different set of opportunities and problems offered to the dramatist. From a study of these groups of plays - and every effort has been made to include as many as possible of the works of any value - certain types have emerged, not necessarily conforming each one to a very clear-cut pattern, unvaried by differences of detail, but fundamentally alike in treatment and grouping. By thus taking the plays in their natural context as the starting-point instead of certain established categories of female parts (such as the villainess, the 'ingénue,' etc.), it has been possible to give due weight to the concrete variety presented by the texts themselves and to the host of small but natural and effective details which make so many of the Elizabethan stage women of permanent value and interest.

At the same time an approach to the women of XVIth century drama by means of "types" is not so simple a matter as it is for the tragedy of the XVIIIth century, or even, without leaving the specified period, that of the decadent Jacobeans. The detail accumulated around them in Elizabethan drama is the very point in their representation which attracts attention and interest. They are not mere paste-board figures, but are animated by vigour and life, even if it be only a stage life in the hands of the less skilful dramatists. The sweep of imagination and diction which was the great heritage of the Elizabethan playwrights, their fertility of situation and device, all fill out the parts of the women in their degree. They are not thin and brittle like the Aspatias, Brunhalts and Lucinas of late Jacobean drama.

A review of the subjects considered suitable for dramatic treatment reveals that, with the exception of the historical plays, all involve situations fraught with possibilities for the women. Some kind of a love-theme appears in all the groups, even in the unpromising chronicle play, though, in that context, it cannot receive full development. The revenge tragedies show a love-interest as an inevitable, if subordinate, accompaniment to the main plot. The domestic tragedies may be concerned with crime, but that crime springs from some form of love. In what may be called the tragedy of intrigue, the form most popular upon the Jacobean stage, and reaching its greatest height in "Othello," the woman, though she may play a slenderer rôle than that of the man, is nevertheless at the heart of the tragedy. We find that the situations chosen for treatment by the dramatists are such as to give them the opportunity of raising women to heights of pity and terror which shall ensure their immortality, for these situations are the outcome of the oldest and most universal of emotions to which a woman can succumb, that of love.

This immediately raises the question - what of those women who are already married, or are too old for passionate love? These - if of decorous character[1] - show the other side of the medal. It is theirs to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. They balance the fair hope of youth with the disillusionment of age. Such contrasts are to be found throughout, and from them one salient feature emerges - that the middle-aged woman

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1. It is interesting to note that the Jacobean dramatists, especially Tourneur and Beaumont and Fletcher, give the impression that their abandoned women are old, or at least middle-aged; e.g. Levidulcia and Brunhalt. Sexual indulgence in one who should be thinking of the next world instead of the vanity of this, hoary vice, would be particularly revolting, and therefore good material.

was of no dramatic value.[1] Not even the domestic tragedies, which sought subjects from life, show us the woman between youth and age.[2] Here literature and life meet. The eclipse of mere youth by maturity or even middle age is typical of modern conditions. In serious drama now, interest largely centres in women between thirty and forty-five. The experience and sophistication proper to this stage make them more interesting to the modern dramatist than the "ingénue." The woman who is mature but versatile in mind, educated and gracious, is a product of the modern social and economic system. Elizabethan women can never have had a period of graceful and gradual transition from youth to age. Married in their teens,[3] mothers of large families in their early twenties, uneducated, with no social status beyond that conferred by marriage, they must have aged very quickly. We hear of exceptions, it is true; of Lady Penelope Rich, Sidney's Stella, and of "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother," who gathered round her a literary coterie. These were a privileged class, and their upbringing had marked in some degree the more generous humanistic attitude towards the education of women of which Elizabeth herself, Lady Jane Grey, and the daughters of Sir Thomas More were conspicuous products. Not many, however, had the luck, audacity, or ability to counteract the thwarting influences of unwilling and unsuitable

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1. unless she is a villainess and, in Jacobean phraseology, still burns with unnatural "heat." Only the less sound Jacobeans however, Tourneur and Beaumont and Fletcher, when driven in search of thrills, employ these women.

2. By "age" being understood a period when the quest for love is definitely over.

3. Between 13 and 18 according to G.M. Trevelyan's "England under the Stuarts."

marriage in girlhood. Lord Chief Justice Coke, the founder of modern English law, forced his daughter into a marriage repugnant both to her and her mother with the idiot weakling, Sir John Villiers, brother of James's reigning favourite Buckingham.[1]

This attitude towards woemn as family commodities[2] is reflected in comtemporary drama, naturally to a greater extent in comedy, but unmistakably in tragedy also. The young women are introduced only in their relations with men, either to be lawfully loved or illegally desired. The older women are shown in their family relationships. Their sufferings are the result of the loss of husband or son. The two orders of women represent two stages in the cyclic process of love. Thus they were suited to a species of tragedy which dealt with the elemental passions. Although they fall so easily into types they are never artificial, because they stand for two fundamental states of being, love and motherhood.

Since the dramatists, in play after play, pay their tribute to these two aspects of womanhood, we might expect to find the lives of women, so far at least as they reflect the wife, mistress or mother, studied with some care and expressed not only with energy but even with some richness and variety. Here again, however, we are confronted with the gulf separating the old from the new. Elizabethan tragedy was on the heroic scale - kings, princes, and nobles were the protagonists, with their wives, mothers, daughters and mistresses in suitably subordinate

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1. G.M. Trevelyan: "England under the Stuarts," Chapter I.

2. The young men were married in much the same way, but this side is ignored by the dramatist, save in "The Miseries of Inforst Marriage."

positions. Such people have no private lives. They live in apartments with a long vista of rooms opening from them, hung with arras behind which lurked spies. Theirs were not the small intimacies of middle-class life, of a Nora, Rebecca West, or Hedda Gabler. Neither were theirs the commercial sins of modern tragedy, like Nora's forgery. We find that, with very few exceptions, the Elizabethan playwrights never went to every-day life for tragic material. The exceptions, the domestic tragedies, only show more distinctly the cleavage between tragedy and life. They chose the same subjects from life as were sought for in romance; violence and murder. They did not anatomise the passions driving a woman to murder. The crime was the thing, whether in Italy or Faversham.

Something is made of motherhood for purposes of pathetic effect. As early as "The Troublesome Raigne" (1588) dramatic capital was made of a woman fighting for her child's rights. A little later, in "Richard III" (1593), we find the same situation - Elizabeth, Edward IV's widow, struggling without success to save her sons. In this play, indeed, the sufferings of the mother bereft of her children are exalted to a chorus of woe. The scene,[1] effective as it is upon the stage, bears little relation to the language and emotions of life, even of tragically exalted life. This holds good in all such scenes. Isabella and Hieronimo lament Horatio not with the natural economy of expression which is forced from grief, as David bewailed Absolon, or Lear Cordelia, but

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1. Act IV, Sc.4.

in language artificially wrought into a kind of lyric pattern. We find Webster using a mother's sorrow for her children not only to make a lyrical interlude in the accumulating horror of "The White Devil," but also to bring into sharp contrast with the passions of hot blood and ambition the bitter grief of an old woman who sees her children lost either by death or dishonour. He puts into Cornelia's mouth very simple but expressive language, such words as, by their bareness of rhetorical tricks, force their way home to the imagination. But Webster's Cornelia, sometimes nothing more than a woman crazed with grief, and sometimes a sibyl prophesying disaster, is an exception among the mothers of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy. No other dramatist of the period succeeded in so blending in the part of a woman poignant mortal sorrow and tragic remoteness.

If the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists thus loved to adorn the passions which served them for tragic material, we cannot expect them to make much of the relations of mothers and children, a theme which demands the utmost simplicity in order to be bearable upon the stage. We find, however, that apart from the plot-producing - or concluding - business of marriage, family life is very sketchily treated in Elizabethan drama. The few children who appear, although in general they are useful for adding to the already considerable accumulation of woes, are either unbearably precocious or mere figure-heads. Into the latter category come Anne Frankford's mysterious children, who suddenly materialise to put one more - and this the most effective - weapon into their father's hand. In "Macbeth," Lady Macduff and her horrid little boy are inserted not as a welcome relief from the

welter of blood, but to drive one more nail into Macbeth's coffin. There are few instances in which the dramatists have deliberately inserted a child into their material. When they make such an addition, and when they handle children already provided for them by their sources, they are notably unsuccessful in reproducing the natural speech of childhood.[1] Two scenes, however, bear the unmistakable stamp of reality, that between Juliet and her parents,[2] and that between Ann Sanders and her little boy in "A Warning for Fair Women."[3] Remembering Chief Justice Coke, we can readily picture Capulet's scene with Juliet as an authentic scene between a high-spirited daughter and a tyrannical father, though even Juliet, the nearest to a rebellious child that we find, dare not openly disobey. The relations between the Capulet parents and child give us no doubt a fairly accurate idea of the lot of a daughter in Elizabeth's reign.[4]

There are few plays which show much interest in marriage as a tragic theme. Even "Othello" interests us less by reason of the fatal complications in Desdemona's married life than by the methods by which Iago weaves them.[5] The domestic tragedies clearly show the paramount importance of good situations, for the problem of the hatred between husband, wife and lover and the reasons for it, except with Heywood, is only thought of in so far as it is

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1. Fletcher introduces Hengo into "Bonduca" but hardly differentiates between his speech and that of Caratach his uncle. There was little left in married life that young Macduff seemed not to know, while in "Richard III" we almost sympathise with Richard's murder of the two little princes after we have heard them talk. Yet no doubt the dramatists would severely reprimand their own children for speaking at all except when spoken to.
2. "Romeo and Juliet," Act III, Sc.5.
3. v. supra, "The Domestic Tragedy," p.183
4. Ophelia is the obedient daughter, who does not think of refusing to obey commands which we can only suppose to have been contrary to her dearest wishes.
5. In this respect "Othello" is a 'modern' play, in that the situation rounds off the play, and matters much less than the interplay of personalities which leads up to it.

responsible for the murder which is the central theme of the play. The daily life together of husband and wife, the petty irritations leading up to explosions of anger and hatred, the gradual obsession by suspicion or fear, the deadening monotony of married life,[1] none of these makes any appearance in domestic drama. Heywood's genius was much too kindly to venture near such a Slough of Despond as the genuinely unhappy marriage. His problem concerns itself with the infidelity of a woman who has no obvious reason for betraying her husband. He makes no attempt to solve this ancient riddle, but he is the only Elizabethan dramatist to pose it. Ford confronts marriage and its attendant problems in "The Broken Heart," and brings to it a unique understanding of the inner passions which move men and women. He concerns himself in this play with the question of the loveless union, and Penthea's attitude towards it is, for her time, remarkable.[2] To her it is adultery, but - and here current morality and expediency direct her judgment - that does not justify her in taking a lover. Penthea is a modern heroine in a Jacobean dress.

If Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy has no concern for the problems which beset women in everyday life, we could hardly expect it to pay much heed to such questions as caste and birth which decide the actions of many? women off the stage. We find, however, that certain elementary distinctions of rank are preserved, especially in Jacobean tragedy. Two types of women appear sporadically through-

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1. All of which have been set out in their extremest form by Strindberg in "The Father."

2. "The Miseries of Inforst Marriage" raises the question, but it only deals melodramatically with the excesses of a young man who goes to the dogs as a result of the tyranny of his legal guardian.

out the period who, in their relation to the heroine, roughly correspond to Seneca's Nurse. This rôle is occasionally filled by an aged attendant, such as Juliet's Nurse, or Putana, Annabella's attendant in "Tis Pity." As we read we wonder how Annabella, for instance, could be blamed for "going wrong" with such a woman as her daily companion. The talk of most of these women is indecent, and cannot be excused as a part of the purely verbal licence of the age, for their practical standards show an even more woeful lack of the elements of good feeling. They are useful to the dramatist, but it is difficult to imagine them satisfying the requirements of even the most casual of parents. Though they occupy positions of trust in wealthy and cultivated households, they have the minds of bawds.[1]

More often the classical figure of the heroine's "confidante" re-appears as a waiting-maid equally coarse in speech. These young women the men regard as fair game, simply, it would appear, because they are found in a lower social position. The Elizabethan dramatists are comparatively free from this bluntness and snobbery. Shakespeare guarded the honour of his Nerissas as well as that of his Portias. Sir Toby Belch knew better than to offer Maria anything but marriage; Emilia's views are prudential and superficial, but her heart is sound, and she knows purity and innocence when she sees them better than her noble master Othello. The Jacobean waiting-maid is not only more continually salacious than her Elizabethan sisters, free-tongued as they all were, but

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1. The only commandment by which they are ruled is the eleventh: "Thou shalt not be found out."

she is not considered as having any feelings - except the love of pleasure - any rights, or any principles. Freedom of speech we could to a certain extent palliate by remembering that no women spoke the parts, and, for some strange reason, indecent speech when it comes from a man does not jar upon our sensibilities as it always does from a woman. It is certain that the all male cast, and, probably, the preponderance of men in the audience, allowed the dramatists of the period a licence in speech impossible when men and women act together. The obvious difference in the dramatist's attitude towards the socially lower class of woman is, however, impossible to extenuate by such excuses. We can be sure that any woman who is accredited by Beaumont and Fletcher with unimpeachable morals has an equally unimpeachable pedigree. The waiting-lady, on the other hand, is a hussy to whom any man could make the most impudent advances and find them welcomed. Middleton and Massinger both sin in this respect also. Diaphanta, in Middleton's "Changeling," readily lends herself to Beatrice's plan to deceive Alsemero on their wedding-night. The type is to be seen in Dula ("The Maid's Tragedy"), Megra ("Philaster"), Claudia and Marcellina ("Valentinian"), and Marcelia's Gentlewoman ("The Duke of Milan"). It is impossible, indeed, not to wonder whether in the last-named play, Massinger is not criticising this fashion through parody, so ludicrously abandoned does he make the Gentlewoman.[1] Only Webster, with his macabre genius, puts the type to effective and unhackneyed dramatic use. Zanche, Vittoria Corombona's Moorish waiting-woman, is grotesquely horrible, and as such achieves her touch of originality,

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1. "The Duke of Milan;" Act III, Sc.2.

especially when Webster adorns her with his sardonic humour:

"She simpers like the suds
A collier hath been washed in." [1.]

She transcends the type and finds her right place in this fantastic and eerie world of poisoned pictures and funeral dirges. The madness of the Jailor's Daughter in "The Two Noble Kinsmen" shows how the device of madness, which won pity for a noble lady, could, in a girl of low degree, be used as an opportunity for clowning. In few other connections does the decadence of the Jacobean tragic writers show more clearly than in this yawning gulf between women of high and low rank. Not only is the speech of those who chance not to be born in the purple undisguisedly immoral, but the species as a whole is treated with deadly monotony. They have lost the gaiety, kindliness and loyalty of their Elizabethan prototypes, qualities for the sake of which all but the very prudish will gladly forgive them their love of innuendo and their broader sallies.

In spite of types, in spite of classification, the Elizabethan women, and certain of the Jacobeans, survive as the most cherished of dramatic heroines. They inhabit a world to which we now cannot wholly transport ourselves, the world, as Mrs. Virginia Woolf puts it, of "the jeweller and the unicorn," not of "Mr. Smith of Muswell Hill." [2.] Dramatists of the period, Shakespeare

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1. "The White Devil," Act V, Sc.3.

2. The Common Reader.

included, held a distorting mirror up to Nature, for poetic tragedy cannot reflect ordinary images. They would be too insignificant for the "buskined stage," as well as incongrous.[1] Elizabethan life may have been a degree nearer to their tragic formula than that of the present day, but the poetic drama which is the enduring gift of the age represents the summit of that Elizabethan imagination which left the narrow and filthy London streets to range among

> "antres vast and deserts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven;
> ----------the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders."

This imagination, while it often distorted life - the enduring steady stream flowing beneath the surface currents of fashion and custom - at the same time brought forth new images of surpassing beauty. It seized eagerly upon the loveliness of women

> "fairer than the evening air
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

It lost itself in willing bondage to Cleopatra's subtle fascination which even in death left her the power to

> "catch another Anthony
> In her strong toil of grace."

Even the small details which give some women their elusive charm awoke a responsive chord in the Elizabethan dramatist's imagination. He can turn aside to admire Virgilia,

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1. As Mr. A.P. Herbert's "Two Gentlemen of Soho" lightheartedly shows.

the "gracious silence," or to listen to Cordelia's voice

"ever soft
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

These glimpses - to quote only a few - are of more enduring significance than the ordinary life which, since Ibsen, has been the subject of serious drama.

When the Elizabethan dramatists have risen to their greatest heights in the presentation of women characters they have endowed them with the quintessence of emotion; they have put them at the heart of the sublime and pitiful imaginative life which is tragedy. We are content to read through endless plays with their succession of Gratianas and Mellidas if we are rewarded with a Vittoria or a Duchess of Malfy. Even the Gratianas and Marias are not without an energy which saves them from the "iniquity of oblivion." Mrs. Woolf, looking upon Elizabethan drama not with the limited view of the specialist, but as a reader and critic of taste and feeling, thus confesses herself bound by the Elizabethan spell: "Exquisite is the delight, sublime the relief of being set free to wander among dukes and grandees, Gonzaloes and Bellimperias, who spend their lives in murder and intrigue, dress up as men if they are women, as women if they are men, see ghosts, run mad, and die in the greatest profusion on the slightest provocation, uttering as they fall imprecations of superb vigour or elegies of the wildest despair."

SUMMARY.

By means of this study of the treatment of women's parts in Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy it has been possible to shed fresh light on the following aspects of dramatic history and the art of stage-characterisation during the period 1579-1625.

I. The Senecan tradition in characterisation as distinct from structure, stage-devices and style, which shows itself in the establishment in Elizabethan drama of certain types derived from Seneca.

(a) The "tragedy-queen," from Medea and Clytaemnestra.

(b) The bereaved mother and woman left destitute, from Hecuba and Andromache.

These appear consistently in tragedy to 1600, but except in the Revenge Tragedy, type (b) does not emerge as clearly as type (a) subsequent to that date.

II. The Chronicle-play as a record of experiment and adaptation.

(a) The introduction of rudimentary differences between the sexes in the shape of love-scenes thrust into the chronicle-fabric, elaborated from slight hints in the sources.

(b) Rude attempts at differentiating between women themselves, in flytings.

(c) The use of women as a choric commentary upon the action without involving them as participators in the plot.

(d) The introduction of extensive comic episodes with a corresponding decline of women in the serious parts.

(e) The addition of unconnected themes of Italian origin to chronicle material, or the disguise of such a theme by a pseudo-historical dress, the heroine in both cases being concerned in an episode of romantic love.

III. The strength of certain formulae and conventions in structure, subject-matter and characterisation, as illustrated by the treatment of material from recent and con-

temporary life in the Domestic Tragedy. The limitations imposed by plot and structure on characterisation. The "charmed life" of certain popular and traditional notions concerning women: Patient Griselda, "varium et mutabile," etc.

IV. Jacobean decadence in tragedy.

This is very clearly shown by the dramatists' handling of the parts of women:

(a) The simplification of the number of situations in which a woman may be concerned to the single one of love.

(b) The emergence of three clearly-defined types, in particular in the works of Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger.

(c) Lack of depth and true understanding of virtue in the parts of the "good" women and an increased depravity in the "bad" women - "virtue" in the former class standing for one aspect only out of many, and "vice" in the latter for its opposite.

(d) By an insistence upon class distinctions in deciding the behaviour of certain groups of women, such as the ladies-in-waiting.

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1. This list is by no means exhaustive.

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1. Neither this nor the following section is exhaustive.

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1. This book contains a chapter (Part II, Section 1) on "The Position of Women in Elizabethan Drama." The question, however, is only treated from the one point of view indicated in the title of the work.