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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DIFFERENCE IN POETIC FORM
BETWEEN CERTAIN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE POETS
WRITING IN LATIN, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MILTON

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

John Milton wrote his Latin poetry during the early years of his life. By studying these poems we can mark several milestones in his poetic development which pointed the way to the writing of his finest Latin poem, Epitaphium Damonis.¹ Although this was his last Latin poem he had already shown himself to be a poet of the first order in writing his famous monody, Lycidas, in memory of Edward King's death at sea. This monody is described by Miss Hope Nicholson as "the most perfect long short poem in the English language."²

The Epitaphium Damonis was written some time after Lycidas, at an important stage in his career, for he was contemplating the subject of his epic.³ This epitaph displays some of his most intensely personal poetry and is addressed to Charles Diodati, a close friend of Milton's, who had died at a young age. The poem is a turning point in Milton's development as it indicates a resolution of several thorny problems that had bedevilled secular Latin metrical verse for centuries.

In reviewing Milton's development we gain the impression that he regarded his Latin poetry as an apprenticeship.⁴ When he had proved his mastery of the craft in the epitaph on Diodati, he turned to writing an English epic with perfect confidence. In discussing the epitaph, therefore, it is necessary to examine Milton's technique in the light of an historical survey of secular metrical Latin verse before we can fully appreciate the importance of his achievement.

There were three serious problems facing anyone who attempted to write Latin poetry in the Seventeenth Century. In the first place there was the enormous difficulty of mastering Latin metre and the Latin language itself.⁵ In order to succeed in this a student had to devote the greatest part of his time to reading and imitating the classical authors. Few poets gained the facility in this art that Milton did. Samuel Johnson readily grants him this distinction:

"I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classical elegance."⁶

The second problem facing a prospective poet in Latin was the dead weight of trite phrases and tags that had been inherited directly from the Middle Ages and indirectly from the rhetorical schools that flourished in the Roman Empire.⁷ Ovid had been the supreme model of excellence during the Middle Ages. By the very nature of his work, however, he had been misunderstood and his technique had been abused. Where loguax Naso had possessed a spontaneous genius for elegant and faultless verse, his imitators debased it by reducing poetry to a collection of contrived, ostentatious phrases.

This process systematically excluded all originality and personal expression so that many poets of the Middle Ages abandoned the classical conventions as they proved too constricting. Such poets still wrote in Latin but employed the techniques of

rhythmical verse, rather as we use stress in English poetry today.⁸
The Renaissance, however, returned to classical principles and required poets writing in Latin to employ the classical, quantitative verse:

"In the Renaissance 'the troublesom and modern Bondage of Rimeing' - as Milton puts it - was rejected as 'the Invention of a barbarous Age to set off wretched Matter and lame Meeter', and the quantitative metres of antiquity were the only ones considered worthy for the composition of serious Latin poetry."⁹

Necessarily, therefore, Renaissance poets were forced to start from the debased tradition of Ovidian poetry which Italy had chiefly preserved in a mechanical and sterile manner through the centuries. The extent of this tradition is quickly observed in one of Milton's early poems.

"Elegia Prima depends heavily on Ovid; the tags of phrases from the Amores, the Metamorphoses, the Epistulae ex Ponto and the Tristia mark almost every line of the poem."¹⁰ Milton solved the problem of this inheritance by an ingenious adaptation of it.

"But Elegia Prima uses Ovid more cleverly than merely as a source for pat phrases: it poses a parallel, or more properly a cross-relation, between Milton's exile from Cambridge and Ovid's exile from Rome."¹¹

In this way Milton was following a classical procedure which was based on the stylistic precept enjoining authors to make traditional matter their own by personal treatment of it, and in so doing he produced a very individual poem. Throughout his better Latin poetry the principle of adapting classical¹² form to suit the poet's particular requirements is successfully applied. In solving the problem of having to use a body of medieval conventions, Milton's solution was superb.

The third major problem that poets writing in Latin had to contend with during the Renaissance, had been the bane of secular verse ever since the fourth century A.D. The poet had to face the dilemma of trying to reconcile a Christian conscience with writing verse in heathen genres. Inevitably the poet failed to reconcile these two elements and turned wholly to Christianity. Throughout the Middle Ages this pattern was repeated, century after century.

It began most obviously with Paulinus of Nola¹³ who turned away from the old, heathen studies of his tutor, Ausonius, to devote his life to Christ. In Venantius Fortunatus¹⁴ we perceive the same problem. He found poetical expression for his true emotions through the new rhythmical verse and could only employ the classical forms for the affected court verse which he was obliged to write. Serlon¹⁵ of Wilton was not yet able to solve this thorny problem in the twelfth century. His earlier poetry is committed to grammatical subjects or frivolous verse. After he had taken Holy Orders, his verse betrayed exactly the same uneasiness as that of Paulinus of Nola.

During the Renaissance, poets writing in Latin grappled with the same problem again when they attempted to write love poetry¹⁶ in the bucolic tradition of Theocritus. Sannazaro successfully concluded his piscatory eclogue by deifying his beloved Phyllis. But that is a concession to the classical form and no solution for a Christian conscience.¹⁷ Castiglione¹⁸ and Buchanan are still less successful, as their poems lack even a pagan resolution.

Milton's solution is, once again, ingenious and based on adaptation of classical form in a unique way which he later employed with great success in his epic poems. Rather than try to reconcile Christian and secular, Milton constructs a hierarchy. Within this he accepts the ancient premise of bucolic or pastoral poetry on the lowest rung and epic on the topmost. Vergil's own poetry is a precedent for this hierarchy: his first poems are the Eclogues,¹⁹ then he wrote the Georgics and finally the Aeneid. Milton did the same by beginning with his minor Latin poems and ending with his epic.

²⁰
As we have said, the Epitaphium Damonis was written at a crucial time in Milton's life, between the minor poems of his youth and the major poems of his maturity. At this time he had to reconcile his secular with his Christian material. His solution is contained within the Epitaphium Damonis and is essential to an understanding of Milton's hierarchical order and the whole tradition of classical form generally.²¹

Milton succeeded by placing Christian values above the epic. It was such a simple solution and yet it required a poet of genius to

envisage the cosmic order of it all. It had taken European literature over ten centuries to develop a scheme that could accommodate, not reconcile, both Christian and secular.

In the epitaph to Diodati the resolution of the poem lies in the promise of a Christian resurrection. So, from the outset, Milton places himself at the very centre of the dilemma of secular and Christian values. The issue is death and salvation. The poet masterfully takes us from the bucolic, through the epic, to the Christian. He identifies the bucolic with the flesh and the old world of sin in Adam. The earth represents the cold mortality of the grave. He then moves on to identify the epic with literary aspirations which are taken to be more elevated than those of the flesh. The immortality of letters is still not satisfactory and he finally resolves the poem in a vision of
22
Christian salvation.

The identity of the bucolic with pursuits of the flesh, the epic with literary pursuits and finally Christian faith with salvation creates an upward flight which depends for the miracle of its ascent on the depiction of earth first and of the spirit last. To depict these vividly, nothing is more suitable than the classical bucolic and the Christian hymn. The beauty of the spirit is infinitely enriched by the reality of the flesh. The mystery of flesh become spirit is all the more convincing.

In this way, then, Milton solved the problem of classical form and Christian conscience. He employed the one to enrich the other. As direct heirs of the Renaissance, we take for granted the order and unity of a Christian-humanist hierarchy, but we cannot do the same

when studying the evolution from medieval to Renaissance poetry. It is essential, therefore, to trace the tradition of classical metrical verse down to Milton, before we can understand why the various forms of Latin poetry changed the way they did.

Two protean figures stand at either end of the Middle Ages.

²³
Venantius Fortunatus is at the beginning and is neither of the
²⁴
ancient world nor of the medieval world, while Petrarch is at the
close and is neither medieval nor Renaissance. Between them the
three main lines in Latin verse tradition are those indicated above
with reference to Milton : technical proficiency, the Ovidian
line and the dilemma of Christian/secular values.

These same three lines dominate the Renaissance period, which is
marked off, for the purposes of this tradition, by Petrarch at
the beginning and Milton at the end. The two periods treated
poetical forms quite differently, and the reasons for that
difference can largely be explained in terms of those lines. Three
more elements which must be distinguished in this tradition are
²⁵ ²⁶ ²⁷
friendship, satire and philosophy.

By observing the view of poetry which Horace upholds in his Ars
²⁸
Poetica, it becomes clear that a far closer similarity exists be-
tween Milton and Horace than between Venantius Fortunatus and
Horace. This indicates to what extent we are bound to ultimately
recall our past traditions no matter how seriously they may have
been jeopardized and no matter how long they have been forgotten.
Literature, after all, is an organic function of mankind so that
it is subject to illness or good health in the same way as a human

being.

During the Dark Ages literature was sadly ailing, but by the end of the Renaissance it had not merely recovered the strength of the ancient world, but gained a great deal as well. One could hardly describe the wealth of inheritance better than Mr. C.S. Lewis:

"Humanity does not pass through phases as a train passes through stations : being alive, it has the privilege of always moving yet never leaving anything behind. Whatever we have been, in some sort we are still."
29

This is the case with the Latin poems of John Milton. They stand in an ancient tradition fixed as much in Horace as Ovid, in Fortunatus as Petrarch. In order to do them justice, we must understand the poet's early verse in the context of that tradition.

CHAPTER 2

VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS

"Two things in particular influence a
writer's style - the intellectual climate
of the age in which he lives, and his own
character."¹

The Rhetorical Tradition.

In order to consider the poetic forms employed by Venantius Fortunatus we would do well to trace, quite briefly, the tradition by which he received these forms; in this way we may the more easily untangle what is specifically his and what is not. Late Latin poetry was always closely bound to poetic laws and was not, as poetry generally seems today, a wide-ranging and quickly-changing art.

The earliest poetical work of a serious nature in Latin was a translation of Homer's Odyssey made by Livius Andronicus in the first part of the Third Century. He was followed by Naevius and then the greatest literary figure of the Second Century, Quintus Ennius, a man of genius, who revelled in daring experiments. Although "eminent advocates have protested Ennius' innocence of this particular offence '(false use of tmesis)',² this grave error of taste, saxo cere-comminuit-brum,³ provides a suitable departure point for referring to the influence of Greek literature upon Roman poets. Ennius used this poetic device (tmesis) on the model of Greek poetry, particularly the devices of Homeric epic. "When we turn to the study of literary Latin this influence (of the Greeks) becomes overwhelming."

Rome rather easily conquered Greece by force of arms because the Roman soldiers at the time were vigorous and disciplined patriots unacquainted with the leisure and ease of a reflective life spent amidst the shelves of a library or the civilized charms of walled gardens; which does not mean that the Greeks were less fond of fighting than they had been in the past. What is interesting to us is that in conquering them Rome was forced to recognize the poverty of her own literature. Upon this realization, great energy and enthusiasm were immediately expended by several Latin writers in making up for lost time. In the beginning there were indiscretions,⁵ as shown above, and Horace is the first to point them out:

..... hic et in Acci
nobilibus trimetris apparet rarus, et Enni
in scaenam missos cum magna pondere versus
aut operae celeris nimium curaue carentis
aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi.⁶

Greece was, at the time, past her zenith in terms of literary achievement and it could be said that the Romans saw the lady as a gracious dowager. Rather soon their own youthful exuberance was checked, as we see in Horace, perhaps the more sharply for the slightly wistful cynicism of the Alexandrian movement than it might have been by the influence of the great Attic age:

"the literature and poetry of the Romans,
despite the Comedians, was still far from
maturity when it received the impact of the
Alexandrians in the first century BC
(and) it was one of the aims of the Alexandrian

movement to revolt against current
imperfections, and to promote ideals of
technical achievement which were still
unsatisfied by Latin literature."

Roman poets did satisfy those ideals and "the central fire of
essential Roman genius burned steadily beneath this mass of
imposed alien material."⁸ Virgil exemplified this inheritance
of Greek art in his Aeneid which, perhaps more than any other
Latin work, showed the final perfection attained after a process
of refining native resources under strict the disciplines of
Alexandrian poetics:

"Facundia Mantuani multiplex et multiformis
est et dicendi genus omne complectitur."⁹

Likewise, the carefree lass of Roman poetry now became a
fine lady who began to age in her turn. Horace espoused the
cause of the Alexandrian finishing school for this Roman muse
of poetry but never imagined that Roman poetry would be hoist
with its own petard. For such attention was paid by Roman
poets to fine mannerisms that natural charm became lost: the
Romans learned from their Greek masters to make their prose
poetical and their poetry rhetorical. On the one hand the
rhetoricians claimed poetry, on the other Lucan was "magis
oratoribus quam poetis imitandus;" Loguax Naso was destined
to become the poetic ideal of the Middle Ages. Ovid's ready
talent for writing irresistably spontaneous and delightful

poetry which marks so much of his work was mistaken by his imitators who became incurably obsessed with verbosity and rhetorical excesses. Ovid's distinctively rhetorical style was even more easily abased by the witty and dexterous versifier¹¹ that emerged in the person of the medieval court poet.

In Roman Republican times court cases were decisive factors in the politics of a democratic state. Later, under the Empire, important cases were no longer tried in public. Oratory, losing its public role, was mainly practised in the senate and the lecture room. So it came about that audiences listened more closely for the well-sounding phrase and neatly-turned period, without much regard for the matter. In poetry the parting of the ways came with Statius. Juvenal speaks of the feminine sensuousness of his recitations and the enormous crowds that flocked to hear him reading. Statius' Silvae, however, are much more easily recognized as true poetry. They are unpretentious little poems of clear and delightful description.

This genre alone seems to have remained fresh and attractive.¹² Much later, when the rhetorical tradition reaches a humiliating low, Ausonius' most considerable work is his description of the Moselle.¹³ Paulinus of Nola¹⁴ was unable to reconcile the conventions of the degraded rhetorical tradition with his own conscience. In his preference for Christian asceticism and the dilemma of Paulinus' communication with his tutor, Ausonius, we can perceive the greater cleft between the values of an old and a new world.

The two great, original genres that sprang to life in the Middle Ages were the Christian (usually rhythmical)¹⁵ poems and the Latin love lyric. These two formed the mainstream of dynamic poetic expression. In Paulinus of Nola we can see the great dilemma which was to face many poets after him. He had to choose between secular metrical verse in the tradition of ancient Rome and religious poetry in the tradition of what Rome was to become - the Holy City of the Vatican. Paulinus himself chose the new Rome but that choice was by no means the rule.¹⁶ The Latin love lyric only appears later, and after that Renaissance writers followed the ancient tradition with meticulous care.

¹⁷
The direct heir to Ausonius is Claudian. In his affected, ostentatious style no exaggeration is too great, few are effective. As with Statius and Ausonius it is only his small descriptions that win favour. Even the success of these descriptions is too incidental to gain lasting admiration. By chance, themes of natural beauty in these descriptions are particularly suited to what, in other subjects, appears contrived and forced. The elaborate rhetoric attains the quality of still-life drawings: the filigree detail does not pall but enriches the texture.¹⁸

Yet it must be stressed that these descriptions remain pleasant exceptions. The political and social conditions of the time were so adverse to literature and culture that little could be written in the fifth century which was not intended for practical service or theological controversy. "Typical of the complete

corruption of taste is Sidonius Apollinaris, a man schooled in traditional grammar and rhetoric, who, in the fifth century Gaul of Goth and Burgundian, paid a pathetic tribute of laboured imitation to the splendour of dying Rome. "Apropos of the style of his letters W.B.Anderson has remarked on a reductio ad absurdum of all the resources of rhetoric and a travesty of the Latin language." ¹⁹ There was, however, a precursor of better things ahead.

The bright genius of the Latin love lyric can be glimpsed, quite suddenly and long before its real appearance, in the Pervigilium Veneris. ²⁰ It is the picture of a rose-garden on a Spring morning: the last lovely flower of ancient verse and the first romantic poem of a new world. Unfortunately it is only a glimpse and, together with the few outstanding descriptions, it forms the minor key in what is largely a sombre composition.

In the sixth century, Ennodius followed in the footsteps of ²¹ Claudian. His style is laboured and contrived as a result of his obsession with meaningless literary elaboration merely for the sake of striking effects. Essentially his work seems to be nothing more than rhetorical pyrotechnics. Maximian, on the other hand, followed the example of Paulinus of Nola.

Maximian employed the elegiac couplet for a good deal of his poetry. His choice of this metre is significant because it dominated medieval metrical verse and was a direct inheritance from Ovid. We might almost call Maximian the last Roman poet in the long line from Ovid to Claudian. Public recitations were still held and he himself was so successful that "propter

repetitiones assiduas" he was elected prefect of Rome. The most interesting point about his biography is that immediately after his father's death he dismissed all his previous accomplishments and became a monk. This volte face is symptomatic of the general issues of the day. Maximian bid farewell to the Rome of prefects and consuls just as Europe was welcoming the monasteries which were to prove a haven in the midst of barbarian raids.

The pattern of Venantius Fortunatus' life follows that of Paulinus of Nola and Maximian.

Venantius Fortunatus is neither Roman nor medieval. As stated above, he is a protean figure between the two worlds and in his writings we can trace three main streams of medieval literature: the Latin love lyric, Christian rhythmical poetry and secular metrical verse. In his travels alone, we may observe how he changes. He started out from Italy as a court poet and settled down at Poitiers where he became abbot.

"(Fortunatus) had his name out of a fairytale: a good name for²³ a man who was to be a sort of Mercury between two worlds." He began his life as an Italian rhetorician but ended it as a Christian saint. The nature of his work reflects this change - most notably in the forms which he chose to suit his needs. At the outset his poems are the stiff set-pieces of a court poet but in the end they are some of the finest examples of Christian rhythmical poetry.

A typical example of Fortunatus' early rhetorical pieces is the elegy celebrating Bishop Nicetius' castle above the Moselle. Its most obvious precedent is Ausonius' long description of the same river.²⁴ Fortunatus lived two hundred and thirty years after Ausonius but the precepts for the composition of these set-pieces had remained fairly constant. Latin was very much the literary language and poets were trained professionally to write witty epigrams, flattering epithalamia, epitaphs and other occasional poems. The following extract is taken from Fortunatus' description of Bishop Nicetius' castle. It is written in elegiac couplets.

- A Mons in praecipiti suspensa mole tumescit
B et levat excelsum saxea ripa caput:
C rupibus expositis intonsa cacumina tollit
D tutus et elato vertice regnat apex.
E proficiunt colli quae vallibus arva recedunt:
F undique terra minor vergit et iste subit,
G quem Mosella tumens, Rodanus quoque parvulus ambit,
H certanturque suo pascere pisce locum.
I diripiunt dulces alibi vaga flumina fruges:
J haec tibi parturiunt, Mediolane, dapes.
K quantum crescit aquis, pisces vicinius offert:
L exhibet hinc epulas, unde rapina venit.
M cernit frugiferos congaudens incola sulcos,
N vota ferens segeti fertilitate gravi.
O agricolae pascunt oculos de messe futura,

P ante metit visu quam ferat annus opem.
Q ridet amoenus ager, tectus viridantibus herbis,
R oblectant animos mollia prata vagos.
S hoc vir apostolicus Nicetius ergo peragrans
T condidit optatum pastor ovile gregi;
U turribus incinxit ter denis undique collem,
V praebuit hic fabricam, quo nemus ante fuit.
W vertice de summo demittunt brachia murum,
X dum Mosella suis terminus extet aquis.
Y aula tamen nituit constructa cacumine rupis,
Z et monti inposito mons erit ipsa domus. 25

The passage above is characteristic of an occasional piece and the elegiac couplet is particularly suited to it as a result of the fixed pattern of hexameter and pentameter lines. The couplet forms a self-contained unit of singular independence and detachment. These two qualities are particularly suitable for the formal pieces which Fortunatus was commissioned to write. After all, he earned his bread and butter by writing these verses, and in seeking favour with powerful bishops, a degree of formality was essential to create the deferential tone required.

In writing these descriptions the poet traditionally employs a "topical" structure. He deals with various aspects of the whole picture one at a time. There is a careful order and development in the placing of these "topics." Ultimately they should move towards the figure of the patron himself to form a portrait in verse, as it were. To shift the focus from one "topic" to another, the poet often links two couplets into

a quatrain which allows just enough space for a single topic. The elegiac couplet tends to degenerate very easily into unsustained boredom if perspective is not altered at regular intervals by means of alternation of topics. When well used, the effect is of a theme developing with discipline, order and clarity. The poem then can attain the serenity of a still-life.²⁶

In the first quatrain we have a picture of the vast mountain on which Nicetius built his fortress. By virtue of their being²⁷ wealthy land-owners, bishops at the time were responsible for the protection of numerous peasants working the land. Fortunatus eventually moves towards the castle itself as a symbol of the bishop's protective power but begins by describing the mountain.

The internal structure is almost as regular as the external. In the first quatrain for example, each line has its pattern of two adjectives and two nouns. In the hexameter lines the nouns frame the two adjectives (placed next to each other), and the verb is placed at the end of the line. In the pentameter lines the verb (which is, as in the hexameter, third person singular) is placed within the line and a noun ends each couplet. Both couplets, A;B and C;D, use et to link the hexameter to the pentameter.

As far as external structure is concerned the topical development can be clearly seen. After a picture of the mountain's craggy reaches in A, there follows, in B, the surrounding land and river. In C, D and E the fertility of the area is described. The waters abound with fish and the farmer is delighted and happy. Finally the author and genius of all this plenty is introduced in the person of Nicetius himself. Fortunatus employs the image of shepherd and protector to impart this idea. This image is the cue for completing the circle and returning to that seat of the patron bishop built upon the summit.

The development of the external structure is clear and well-executed. The dominant position of the mountain is carefully identified with that of the bishop and more specifically his fortress on top of it. This identity underlines the role of overseer or shepherd which Nicetius had to fulfil. The internal structure is equally neat and well-balanced. The precise order does indeed create a sense of formality which supports the deferential tone required for what is, in fact, a sort of panegyric. There is a perceptible tension in the order chosen by Fortunatus. This tension is created by the sense of expectancy suggested by dealing so closely, at the outset, with the mountain which forms the centre-piece of the composition, then abandoning that same mountain just short of its summit. The expectancy is sustained over the subsequent quatrains which are, however, all germane in subject matter to the bishop. Finally the poet clinches the matter by ascribing the rural harmony and abundance to the bishop and resolving this tension by a prompt return to Nicetius' seat, this time the very summit. As a set-piece it is

remarkably fresh and it is hardly surprising that Fortunatus was generally so well received at the courts of European nobles.

In Fortunatus' time there was still a remnant of the old Gallo-Roman aristocracy who had been educated in the Roman schools. But as soon as this remnant generation disappeared, learning became extremely rare and literacy rather uncommon. Fortunatus was an intimate of several Merovingian kings and a decoration to their states and courts. Venantius depended upon the generosity of the great and here he asks for his daily bread.

Currit ovis repetens a te sua pascua, pastor:
qui cibus esse soles, da mihi panis opem. 28

"Fortunatus wanders through the terrifying courts of the giants,²⁹ a little like Gulliver, timid, gay and ready to admire." He became a good friend of the king Sigebert's adviser, Cogo.

At this point we may quote an example of another conventional form which was part of every court-poet's repertoire. This time it is not a panegyric in matter alone but quite blatantly in the great tradition of the panegyric genre.

He is able to "proprie communia dicere"³⁰ when he praises a man for whom he had a deep regard; Duke Lupus, in the following words:

antiqui proceres et nomina celsa priorum
cedant cuncta, Lupi munere victa ducis.
Scipio quod sapiens, Cato quod maturus agebat,
Pompeius felix, omnia solus habes.
illis consulibus Romana potentia fulsit,
te duce sed nobis hic modo Roma redit ... 31

The couplets in this poem have a tone noticeably different from that in the description of the Moselle. Here the strongest unifying element is the expression of deep admiration for Duke³² Lupus. The poem is a definite attempt to state the poet's sincere respect. Where the poetic force in the description addressed to Nicetius lay in the formal structure of a court portrait, in the poem to Lupus that force lies in the communication of esteem which coalesces within the lines themselves.

As we have observed, Fortunatus attained unity in the Moselle description by carefully sustaining and resolving a tension in its outer structure. The purpose of that unity was to extoll the virtues of the late bishop Nicetius. The poem to Lupus has a more spontaneous and obvious unity as a result of the poet sustaining his own feelings within the poem. This provides the whole with a common element throughout.

In this panegyric, line one displays a pattern of adjectives and nouns. The adjectives "antiqui" and celsa frame the nouns proceres and nomina. These two pairs are linked by et while priorum qualifies them both and is, therefore, well placed at the end of the line. This neat and simple pattern is not distinguishable from the lines analysed in the Moselle description.

In lines three and four the simple, balanced pattern is more tightly subordinated to meaning within the line. In line three a straightforward pattern is observed. There are two groups of three words with a verb at the end. The subject of either group is a proper noun placed first. The object of either group is a neuter pronoun placed second. Finally the adjectives qualifying the nouns are placed third. The verb is again strongly placed at the end and serves both subjects, Scipio and Cato. In line four a third group is also served by the same agebat. This time the pronoun is understood on the strength of the former two groupings. The last three-word group of the four draws the preceding groups into close subordination: the omnia refers to the previous pronouns and solus, by its exclusive meaning, equals all three former subjects. The impetus of this construction carries the reader on into lines five and six where the unity is readily equated with the meaning.

The meaning of three and four is continued in the ablative absolute illis consulibus. This is answered by the subject of solus (Lupus) in an ablative absolute in the sixth line. The contrast is strengthened by the figura etymologica in Romana (L.5) answered by Roma (L.6).

The more spontaneous esteem Fortunatus felt for Lupus has dictated a closely dependent and continuous construction within the line.

To conclude then, we may say that Venantius achieved unity in the Moselle description chiefly by a carefully planned external structure with the internal structure merely supporting it. On the

other hand, the unity of the Lupus panegyric is achieved mainly by the internal structure with the external dictated by the internal. This points the way to a more personal direction in the poet's work generally.

His biography also confirms a development towards a more personal and intimate lifestyle: he finally settled down at Poitiers with Radegunde, "a widowed queen, austere, but beautiful in all she thought and did."³³ His circumstances were greatly changed. While he had travelled as a court poet from one patron to another, he had lived by his wit and charm. Now he had found a quiet niche where he was revered and loved.

Agnes was a nun who had grown up under Radegunde's care and later became abbess at the age of twenty. These two women led a peaceful life and were glad to include Fortunatus in their gentle haven. He was "himself a gentle Epicurean court poet.... An indifferent poet, but an artist and aware of every fault he had. And in the grim, if humorous, world of Gregory of Tours, brutal and debauched, his aperçus of lovely things, a green parrot on a tapestry, violets and primroses on the altar at Easter, moonlight on a church floor, are proof that the sense of beauty lingered."³⁴

Fortunatus was learned and courteous; he doubtless placed his talents at the disposal of the monastery for the conduct of business with the outside world. In return he was sent choice dishes, delicious fruits and the best wines.

Here are some of the preparations:-

Respice delicias, felix conviva, beatas,
quas prius ornat odor quam probet ipse sapor.
molliter adridet rutilantum copia florum;
vix tot campus habet quot modo mensa rosas,
albent purpureis ubi lactea lilia blattis
certatimque novo fragrat odore locus.
insultant epulae stillanti germine fultae;
quod mantile solet, cur rosa pulchra tegit?
conplacuit melius sine textile tegmine mensa,
munere quam vario suavis obumbrat odor;
enituit paries viridi pendente corymbo:
quae loca calcis habet, huc rosa pressa rubet. 35

Fortunatus' verse is freer and more spontaneous here: the metre only goes to beguile, and so enhance the humorous undertone of this poem. We notice the question mark which suggests a more relaxed and tête-à-tête atmosphere. His urbanity is still that of the court poet but there is a warmth and benevolence very close to the surface. In line one, for example, we observe the framing of one adjective and noun group (felix conviva) by another (delicias.....beatas). This balanced formality has appeared in the previous poems discussed. What distinguishes those poems (i.e. the Moselle description and the Lupus panegyric) from this one is that here the internal unity is even more strongly founded on the poet's personal commitment.

This unity is sustained by the vivid and convincing detail. This is no set-piece with ordered topics. He clearly remembers how fresh and sweet-smelling the roses were. The striking contrast of purple and white reminds one of a finer but comparable couplet from Propertius i. 20.

et circum inrigo surgebant lilia prato
candida purpureis mixta papaveribus. 36

The contrast between poppies and lilies is very fine and the juxtaposition of candida and purpureis is technically excellent. Fortunatus is more prosaic by contrasting purple beetles with milk white lilies. He is technically inferior by weakening the juxtaposition of purpureis and lactea through the insertion of ubi. Nevertheless the occasion is very different. Venantius is prosaic but homely, whereas Propertius is writing of an heroic expedition in the Argo and he is describing the tragic loss of Hylas at the spring, all of which is well suited to a pathetically elevated style.

Venantius treats an everyday theme in a straightforward and pleasing manner. His style is careful but fresh and vivid, so that the event is recreated with faithfulness and ease.

Humour plays a large part in the friendship that existed between Radegunde, Agnes and Fortunatus. Much of the humour in his verses arises out of "friendship's familiarity. He can laugh at himself mournful under doctor's orders (not to overeat...) or because the weather is poor, excusing himself from a visit and

covering up by an elaborate flourish of Jeromian courtesy." ³⁷

In the famous lines composed when Agnes left a finger-mark ³⁸
in the cream, there is "a teasing quality in the conceit,"

Fortunatus was separated from his friends at Lent, so that Easter brought a double joy to him: Spring returned, along with Radegunde and Agnes. The following poem describes his annual separation from them and the glad prospect of a reunion in Spring.

Unde mihi rediit radianti lumine vultus?
quae nimis absentem te tenere morae?
abstuleras tecum, revocas mea gaudia tecum,
paschalemque facis bis celebrare diem.
quamvis incipiant modo surgere semina sulcis,
hic egomet hodie te revidendo meto.
colligo iam fruges, placidos compono maniplos:
quod solus Augustus mensis, Aprilis agit;
et licet in primis modo gemma et pampinus exit,
iam meus autumnus venit et uva simul.
malus et alta pirus gratos modo fundit odores,
sed cum flore novo iam mihi poma ferunt.
quamvis nudus ager nullis ornetur aristis,
omnia plena tamen te redeunte nitent. ³⁹

The poem can be divided into three quatrains and a final couplet. The first quatrain is a complaint upon separation. The second is a resolution not to pine and bewail his fate. In the contemplation of this resolution during the third quatrain we

see how he forgets about his original complaint. In the final couplet we see the resolution at last. He accepts their separation as part of a larger cycle.

The contrast in tone between this final resolution and the double question in the first couplet expresses a very real emotional tension. In the questions there is a staccato effect which acts as a short cry. The gentle tecum placed at the end of the third line alters it to a reflective sob. There is a tone of resignation in the second couplet. The repetition of tecum in the hexameter line (3) frames the mea gaudia. This emphasizes the personal element and underlines the strain of being separated from the people he loves. The conciliatory "bis" in the pentameter line only goes to balance the feelings of line three but does not resolve them. Thus the initial quatrain clearly sets out the poet's first reaction of slightly sulky ill-humour.

In the second quatrain the separation is identified with the seasonal change and perhaps Fortunatus might have been thinking of Demeter and Persephone. Certainly he could have used the parallel. The identification of nature and separation, winter and sadness, spring and reunion forms the bridge to the actual loss of his self-pity and self-concern.

In the third quatrain he is so taken with the contemplation of Spring that all the dreariness of winter is forgotten. This is the right mood for his resolution. There has been a subtle change in his feelings which I think similar to the focussing of a camera. At first he only dimly registered the separation

as it affected himself. As the poem unfolds, he controls the reaction and processes it until he finally has the situation in reasonable perspective.

Dr. Raby calls this one of the occasional poems which were "the last expression of that refinement of manner, that cult of friendship and literature which was one of the civilizing gifts of the ancient world."⁴⁰ We would be mistaken to dispute this view: "Fortunatus came from Italy, where no violent changes had availed to sweep away the public schools, and no barbarian settlement had been able to obscure the Roman civilization of the great cities."⁴¹

Professor Bezzola, however, does dispute this view. He sees these poems as "de véritables vers d'amour."⁴² In answer to this Dronke points to the scene of the pious and humorous nun in her kitchen.⁴³ The brief, intimate poems are not sublime or passionate but witty and urbane. Fortunatus, after all, was the professional courtier. It is what Fortunatus shares with Claudian, and with the ancient panegyric tradition, a language which scarcely changed over a thousand years.⁴⁴ Had Venantius been writing sublime or passionate poems, he might have been more moved to describe his lilies as "candida" and not realistically milky-white; but he was not. He wrote occasional poetry in excellent taste and did not hesitate to describe purple beetles next to white lilies.

Poets such as Paulinus of Nola or Maximian realized that the new world, and that to which they ultimately belonged, demanded a different form. So they broke with the old world of the schools

of rhetoric and with the declamations, and devoted their lives to Christ. Fortunatus moved towards the same realization of his ultimate identity as a Christian and also broke with the old forms to express his sense of that identity.

The discussion of Christian rhythmical poetry does not fall within the compass of this work, but it is convenient to conclude with Fortunatus' final poetic achievement. His expression of Christian faith was truly sublime and passionate, as his love of Radegunde and Agnes never had been, so that here, for the first time, the ancient Latin rhetoric suffered a transformation into something rich and strange. Fortunatus' immortal hymn was universally taken up by the Crusaders as their blissful chant of faith.

It is important for our study of Fortunatus' development as a poet that we see how clearly he became increasingly personal in his verse. Finally the old forms could not match his true poetic demands. Where the elegiac couplets had served for the polite intercourse of very dear friends, the bold rhythmical verse form was the only one suitable for Fortunatus' greatest compositions. "The strains of a new music were heard in lines like these:

... arbor decora et fulgida

ornata regis purpura

electa digno stipite

tam sancta membra tangere....."

(Vexilla Regis) 45

By a wonderful transformation the man who started out as a professional versifier ended his life a saint. His transformation is a touchstone of the age he lived in and his sublime vision of the Christian faith was only the dawn of a new world:

crux fidelis, inter omnes arbor una nobilis,
nulla tamen silva profert flore fronde germine,
dulce lignum, dulce clavo, dulce pondus sustinens...." 46

(Pange lingua)

CHAPTER 3

THE AGE OF TRANSITION

Low-tide on the Continent.

After the death of Fortunatus we know of very few men who were¹ comprehensively instructed in literature. It is possible to exaggerate this dearth of scholars; but as far as the Dark Ages can be defined, it is precisely that period between Fortunatus' death and the reign of Charlemagne. The classical tradition seemed to be in danger of petering out altogether. What little poetry of value there was, took on the appearance of embers fading in the grate. It seemed impossible that any amount of coaxing could revive the fire and bring the warmth and light that Western Europe so badly needed.

The only value of the poetry that did appear is that it forms a link with the past. The rough warriors of the time could not possibly have recognized the value of the ancient tradition of classical learning which they were destroying. Their vandalism is largely to be ascribed to ignorance which made the preservation of that tradition so much more precarious. Barbarians had erected their huts in the halls of the great and were ignorant of the absurdity.

Virgilius Maro typifies this period. It is possible that he lived at Toulouse around the latter half of the sixth century. His name is the irony of his situation. He was only aware that Virgilius Maro was connected in some way with literary fame. The Virgilius of the Dark Ages concocted a story in which he was the heir to

this fame:

"There was also at Troy one Virgil ... I am the third Virgil...
Now Virgil of Asia was the pupil of the first Virgil!"²

The man is indulging in fantasies merely because ignorance had temporarily proved the greater force and, as a result, distinctions between fact and fancy had been obscured.

"It was low tide on the continent of Europe, except for one deep pool at Toulouse, where the grammarian Virgilius Maro agitated strangely on the secret tongues of Latin."³

(ii) The Irish Golden Age.

Revival came by proxy from a people to whom Latin and Greek were a foster culture. Secure and remote, the Irish monks garnered up scraps of learning while Europe was floundering. By some rare but happy coincidence of fate the Irish monks escaped the Norsemen at their heels just long enough to pass on their learning to the other literary schools of Europe, which were beginning to make their appearance.

An important factor in the flourishing of Irish learning was the fact that a considerable number of scholars abandoned the continent for the "terra ridentium," the island kingdom alongside Wales. In 550 A.D., we are informed, a shipload of fifty wandering scholars arrived at Cork after a three day crossing.

from the Loire. By the Sixth Century already the Irish schools were the most famous in Europe. However, in spite of their pre-eminence these schools only incidentally maintained a link with past learning.

The Irish scholars were generally free of the traditions which had suffused Europe previously. It may have been possible to gain some knowledge of antique prosody at the great Irish monastery of Bangor, but we cannot be blind to the fact that any study of Irish poetry at that time amounts in fact merely to a study of Christian hymnal poetry. It was written in rhythmic, very seldom in quantitative, verse. For the Irish, although they formed a bastion of learning, only took from the classical tradition what was relevant to the artistic expression of their own Christian faith. In this way secular studies of literature were kept up only as an incidental part of monastic learning.

From the Irish, primarily represented by Columbanus, this meagre knowledge of ancient writings was handed on to the British under the cloak of religious studies. Afterwards Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian of Africa gave Canterbury the impetus it needed and soon the English were rivalling the Irish. The two scholars who came from overseas had received the rigorous training in grammar and rhetoric which was still normal in parts of the Mediterranean world. The standards they set were considerably higher than anything the British had known before, and the Britons were anxious to learn.

Benedict Biscop (69)) founded Wearmouth and Jarrow in the North. At such places metrical and rhythmical verse were both practised henceforth. In both types, however, only religious subjects were dealt with.

Aldhelm is typical of this time. He had begun his studies under an Irishman named Maeldubh and later, under the tutelage of Hadrian of Africa, read widely in the Latin literature handed down. He even acquired some Greek, but the Irish mould had set; and we read:

Primitus pantorum procerum praetorumque pio potissimum paternoque
praesertim privilegio panagericum poemataque passim prosatori
sub polo promulgantes stridula vocum simphonia et melodiae
cantilenaque carmine modulaturi ymnizemus.....⁴

Such unbearable alliteration is reminiscent of the early stages of Latin. Ennius had written in his Annales I:

O Tite, tute, Tai, tibi tanta, tyranne, tulisti.⁵

⁶
Bede, the massif of English scholarship, was at the Northumbrian school. Here the European conventions were even more closely imitated than at other schools as a result of Abbot Biscop's trips to Gaul and Rome. Bede preferred rhythmic verse which attempted to imitate the values of antiquity. It is the difference between;

Rex aeterne domine
rerum creator omnium
qui eras ante saecula
semper cum patre filius

and

Apparebit repentina dies magna domini
fur obscura velut nocte improvisos occupans. 7

Gradually, as the amount of verse increased and the standards for writing it rose, preferences for classical standards were shown to an increasing extent. Just as Ennius' heavily alliterative line won little admiration from posterity, so Aldhelm's alliteration was short-lived. By Bede's time enough poetry was written to establish the importance of knowing the art of poetry in the classical line. These preferences were not made on the basis of blind prejudice in favour of classical verse. It was simply found that the ancient conventions were universally applicable to the writing of poetry. The proof of their applicability was given by the fact that Bede preferred them quite spontaneously for the greater subtlety and variety that they allowed. Rhythmical verse tended to be painfully repetitive and slipped into jingles too easily.

This spontaneous recognition of the classical superiority of form manifested itself much more strikingly in the attempts for its revival by that great patron of the arts - Charles the Great.

(ii) The Carolingian Renaissance

Charles the Great or Carolus Magnus inherited the kingdom of the Franks in 768 A.D. and reigned until 814 A.D. To the later Middle Ages he soon became a great, even a legendary figure. In the Chansons de Geste, the epic tales recited by minstrels in the eleventh and twelfth century, his visage is described as follows:

White are his locks and silver is his beard,
His body noble, his countenance severe.⁸

There was good reason for his fame. "He was the first figure of international stature since the end of the Roman empire.... the concept of a political unit bigger than a single people became again a reality in Western Europe."⁹ In three important respects he was reminiscent of Caesar Augustus. "He was a soldier, statesman and patron of scholars."¹⁰ Both men had achieved the impossible. When it seemed certain that the entire Roman republic should collapse in the endless embroilments of civil war, Augustus stepped forward and restructured the whole machinery of government whilst trying to restore the ancient moral values. In a similar way Charlemagne created a sound and unified kingdom out of what seemed a hopeless confusion of warring states.

In each case the political harmony which resulted brought about a new era in literature.¹¹ Horace himself lived in the generous world of letters that Augustus promoted. Horace also enjoyed a close circle of fellow poets. What is interesting in comparing

the Augustan with the Carolingian age, is the part played by the literary circle.

It must be conceded that the Carolingian poets are of lesser stature than the Augustans, but if we observe how each circle of poets benefited its particular age, it may be stated that they bear comparison.

Alcuin, "the doyen of the Caroline renaissance,"¹² describes the curriculum of the school in detail. It is true that it fell short of the standards set for the liberal arts by antiquity, but it was a great achievement for such a bleak period of learning. We can only wonder at the brightness of the whole conflagration after the seemingly unmitigated gloom of a half century before. The flames appear all the brighter for the surrounding darkness.

Three traditions met at the court of Charles the Great: Peter of Pisa and Paul the Deacon from the old rhetorical school of Italy, Clement and Dungal from Ireland, and Alcuin from England. The great Spaniard Theodulfus could possibly be regarded as a fourth.

It was due to the Italian poets that many manuscripts and codices were imported from Italy. It was by virtue of this action that many scribes were employed in copying them at the Carolingian court. As far as textual tradition is concerned, this marked the turning point for the survival of a great deal of what we possess today.

Charlemagne attended Peter's classes and we still possess the traditional picture of the king sleeping with a slate under his pillow so that, if he awoke at night, he could practise his lettering. He never mastered the art of writing but he read widely. His enthusiasm for a revival of letters sprang partly from a realization of how important learning was in the administration of a state.

Charlemagne realized that the only guarantee of a lasting peace and stable order was a class of well-educated men who were reliable and incorruptably true to the values of the establishment. Augustus had realized that poetry was an important factor in the public sense of well-being. He had remarkable insight into the common man's mind and turned it to great advantage in establishing a just dispensation. At every turn he attempted to place people fairly within a new framework and to co-ordinate them within his new system. His court poets were not simply good propagandists. They were men of integrity trying to preserve the essential qualities of the Roman people for present and future.

Alcuin had a similar task to perform for Charlemagne. He was appointed as head of the emperor's school and the full responsibility for catching up on several generations of ignorance was his. It was rather like the sword of Damocles suspended above his head. The energetic emperor never lost sight of the urgency of the situation. He was constantly plagued by the threat of ignorance and the importance of learning. Charlemagne was, as a result, forever impatiently pressing Alcuin to speed up his programme. Augustus was similarly anxious to obtain moral and political stability

in Rome and its Empire and encouraged his poets to co-ordinate their efforts towards this end.

Alcuin himself is a venerable scholar who impresses us most by the humble and gentle nature of his verse. His verse reflects the profound wisdom that springs from a dedicated life. He writes the lines quoted below on the nightingale that stayed so briefly. Where Charlemagne might have berated the fates for begrudging man so little time to complete his myriad duties, Alcuin regards the brevity of the birds' visit in an elegy of poise and discretion.

X	<u>Quae te dextra mihi rapuit, luscinia, ruscis</u>	1
	<u>illa meae fuerat invida laetitiae</u>	2
A	<u>tu mea dulcisonis implesti pectora musis,</u>	3
	<u>atque animum moestum carmine mellifluo</u>	4
Y	<u>quapropter venient volucrum simul undique coetus,</u>	5
	<u>carmine te mecum plangere Pierio,</u>	6
B	<u>spreta colore tamen fueras non spreta canendo;</u>	7
	<u>lata sub angusto gutture vox sonuit,</u>	8
Z	<u>dulce melos iterans vario modulamine Musae,</u>	9
	<u>atque creatorem semper in ore canens.</u>	10
C	<u>noctibus in furvis nusquam cessavit ab odis</u>	11
	<u>vox veneranda sacris, o decus atque decor.</u> ¹⁴	12

In Alcuin there are reminders of the essential bliss in a quiet well-ordered world. He lived during turbulent times of war and unpredictable threats, but in his outlook there is great clarity

of perception bound to an unshakable Christian faith. The quiet, unpretentious elegiac couplets above reveal this strength.

He remained very faithful to the couplet structure and alternates them to good advantage. A, B and C have a definitely stronger tone than X, Y and Z.

This has the effect of light and shade which allows him to vary his tone from the regretful sob of luscinia in line one to the bold praise of o decus atque decor in the last line.

In the first couplet he seems to turn aside to recall the sadness of the nightingale's departure. This meditative mood adds pathos and depth to the event. Not only are the loss of the cuckoo and the poet's immediate feelings represented, but the picture of a world that has lost yet another beautiful creature is drawn.

Alcuin is a sufficiently good poet to know that the variation of tone only increases the impact of the emotional passages. So it is that the strident call of implesti seems to have been made while the poet was searching the sky for his nightingale. The reflective, thoughtful mood of the first couplet makes this call all the more affecting.

This alternating of soft and loud couplets is repeated in Y and B. The very first word of Y is qua propter which takes us back to the tone of X where the poet is mulling over his feelings. He seems to be doubting whether the sudden cry of line three was really genuine. In B he again turns to the outside world and addresses

the nightingale with fueras. The repetition of spreta in line 7 confirms the personal appeal of the second person singular and raises the tone of line 8. In this line lata... vox and angusto gutture form a strong contrast.

The tension created by the paradox in the carefree connotations of lata and the constraint of angusto underlines the brevity of the nightingale's song.

By Z the tone is gently relaxed to fuller praise of the nightingale. The two present participles are strategically placed (iterans behind melos and canens behind rore form strong images). Alcuin masterfully employs the continuous quality of the participles to sustain our emotions in a type of intermezzo.

In the last line Alcuin acclaims his nightingale in a fine climax. The most romantic feature of the bird's song is beautifully described. He has left it till last and placed it just at the beginning of the line and for just long enough. The dusky Italian evening with a nightingale on the bough is described. He captures the rarity of that strange phenomenon; the finest bird of song, as it were by universal consent, being allowed to interrupt the quiet of the night with its sweet tones.

Alcuin knows better than to dwell on this and concludes this part of the poem on a high note. The alliteration of "V" in the last line and the climactic "O" provide the correct sense of finality.

Taken as a whole the initial part of this poem is very carefully developed. Each change in tone seems natural. It typifies his meticulous mind and extreme care in treating what could easily have become a trite jumble of meaningless tags. The strength of his composition lies in the humility of his attitude and the candour of his treatment. There are no affected techniques, but everywhere the calm certainty of an excellent craftsman. It does not bear the stamp of standard, hackneyed verse in the rhetorical tradition of contemporary Italy.

Alcuin drew other outstanding scholars to his school and his circle of literary friends reminds us of the Augustan circle.

"The cult of friendship which Fortunatus and his circle had endeavoured to set up was in the court of Charles a reality based on a common good humour, a common piety, and a common love of learning and of poetry."¹⁵

This is very similar to the precepts of Horace.

vir bonus et prudens versus reprehendet inertis,
culpabit duros, incomptis allinet atrum
transverso calamo signum, ambitiosa recidet
ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,
arguet ambigue dictum, mutanda notabit,
fiet Aristarchus; ¹⁶

Brink comments: "The vir bonus et prudens is shown at work, and the influence of a friend like Quintilius on such as Horace.

Poetry so judged involves the whole of a person - his character as well as his mind and imagination." ¹⁷

These lines are quoted in full because they go a long way to giving us some useful insight into the psychology of the literary circle. A large amount of the rapport between imaginative and active minds occurs through mutual criticism. This can only be generous and helpful when there is mutual respect. By openly pooling their individual talents and by candidly discussing each other's work a group of poets produces something greater than the sum total of their individual efforts. For, as a result of constructive criticism, each member understands his own capabilities and limitations more clearly than by "agitating" ¹⁸ morbidly by himself.

It is no coincidence that the Augustan and Carolingian literary periods died with their patrons. It was no whim of Fortune that these literary groups were in existence at the same time as Augustus and Charles respectively. Both men provided the impetus and genius of patrons.

In this matter of friendship and the arts Alcuin represents the spirit of Charlemagne's court. "Amor is friendship to Alcuin, as to all the earlier Middle Ages, and again to the sixteenth-century Renaissance." ¹⁹ Alcuin was the recognized leader of the school but not the finest poet. This distinction belonged to Theodulf.

This poet was educated in schools which were not much changed since the days of Isidore of Seville. By virtue of that education he was one of a very small number of men thoroughly versed in letters. What is remarkable in Theodulf's case is that, had there intervened no Dark Ages he might simply have been another professional versifier, much in the tradition of Claudian. At best he could have been another Fortunatus. As it was, Theodulf was highly esteemed for the very knowledge that would have excited no particular admiration in Fortunatus' time. At Charlemagne's court he played a leading role and achieved far more in a position where his talents and learning were earnestly sought than in a position where his abilities would have been taken for granted. This represents a fairly general tendency at the time. Learning was quite close to disappearing but, as soon as Canterbury and Jarrow revived a serious interest in letters, the ancient standards of poetry were chosen with greater alacrity than at the time when they had been more widely known two centuries before.

This situation then, seems almost ironical. The old order of letters had been enervated by unimaginative conventions and swept away by barbarian hordes. But when interest in learning revived, it was representatives of that same, old order who led the revival. Yet there is a difference.

The new order saw the trite, worn-out rules and regulations of Claudian's day in a fresh and enthusiastic way. It is in fact a pattern as natural as winter and spring. L.R. Palmer quite aptly uses an agricultural metaphor to describe it:

"This poisonous crop (of bad rhetoric in the old order) had to be cleared and the stubble burnt in barbarian fire before the field could again be made fruitful." ²¹

Therefore Theodulf's role cannot be seen in Charlemagne's court as representing merely a continuation of the ancient tradition in the face of barbarian invasions.

In the time of Sidonius Apollinaris rhetoric was only slightly valued. The importance of learning had waned and the greater number of people were apathetic about it. The court of Charlemagne knew what it meant to be without a sound body of scholars. For this reason the precepts that had been unenthusiastically maintained before were now taken up with fervour. This enthusiasm sprang from a great need and Theodulf answered that need. Unexpectedly the barbarian hordes at last brought new life and vigour to the culture they had so seriously threatened.

Theodulf is not to be seen as an émigré noble re-instated in his ancestral chateau. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Latin secular verse was not the driving force in letters. Scholars only drew on ancient sources as they required them. Paradoxically the more they developed the vernacular languages, the more they required classical learning. For the ancient world had, in many cases, been through similar processes of development and the works of its writers contained useful parallels. It would be a grave error to mistake this growing interest in classical literature as an enthusiasm for it, per se. This thesis would have no motivation. If, on the other hand, we see Bede's preference for poetry

that approached classical forms, and Theodulf's leading role at Charles' court, in terms of the new order and its desire to learn from the old, I think this growing interest is much more easily accounted for.

The most significant evidence in support of this explanation is the aftermath of Charlemagne's death. The emperor had partly encouraged learning because he quite correctly saw it as an essential element in any stable state. To implement this need for learning he appointed Alcuin. As we have seen, the poetry of Alcuin is far short of Horace's or Milton's but reached the standard that Charlemagne needed. As soon as the emperor died, the recognition of that lacking fell away, and his circle of literary men floundered, as we noticed above. Charles' great energy and unremitting sense of urgency had been the mainspring of this imaginative group.

"The centre of gravity in learning is moving eastward: it has left the valley of the Loire for the Meuse and the Rhine." ²² "In the ninth century the homes of learning were the great Benedictine ²³ houses of Germany and Lorraine." The close of the Carolingian age did not produce any prominent figures such as Alcuin or Theodulf. But Charles' impetus was nevertheless the turning point and after him people began to look forward.

III THE NINTH CENTURY.

Ireland was now in a very different situation to the one she had previously occupied. Earlier, scholars had been drawn there, as

it had been a place of refuge. Now the barbarians were driving them out. In 795 Northmen sacked Rechra, and Bangor in 822.

Amongst the poets fleeing before the barbarians was Raban Maur. He passed on his knowledge of rhythmical verse to Gottschalk, who was a poet of some importance.

Gottschalk was a lone wolf. He held unorthodox religious views and, as a result, was refused the final sacraments. His verse was intensely lyrical and fell easily into the rhythmical forms. He achieved an admirable lucidity and strength. His verse is part of the mainstream of European writing at the time. Lyrical and religious verse constituted the strongest literary forces. Eventually, in the Renaissance, these forces would be perfected by classical analogy; but that time was still a long way off.

A more typical poet of the age was Walafrid Strabo. Several of his pieces are merely catalogues and descriptions presented to the powerful of the day. They are, however, full of a mellow sunlight and fullness which greatly distinguishes them from Gottschalk, whose lyrics are taut with anxiety and passion. Walafrid Strabo succeeded in leaving us one of the finest poems of his times, "De Cultura Hortorum." It is a work of honesty and simplicity with the freshness of Vergil's eclogues.

"History has been very tender to the stooping figure with the watering-pot, and in one poem, (De Cultura Hortorum) that figure straightens itself with an undreamt-of dignity.

When the moon's splendour shines in naked heaven,
Stand there and gaze beneath the open sky."²⁴

With poets of this order the way was clearly open, and after the first exciting flashes of Alcuin's circle, the sparks carried widely. Little flickerings were lighting up whole areas that had previously been cloaked in darkness.

CHAPTER 4

THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

Almost as inevitably as the standard of poetry fell after the culmination of the Augustan poets, so the standard rose towards the Renaissance. We ought, therefore, to take stock of what has passed in order to discern more clearly the pattern of what lies ahead.

The Carolingian Renaissance is at the heart of the Middle Ages. As much as Charles the Great was the champion of Christendom and learning, so his poets represent the central core of the West's refusal to remain satisfied with barbarism. By tracing the part played by secular metrical verse in the tradition from Horace to Milton we are able to equate quite closely the development of the standard of classical learning with that of the standard of vernacular poetry.

Horace and Milton both stand centuries apart from Charles' Renaissance. Immediately on either side of this Renaissance the state of learning is in twilight: evening before and morning after. Alcuin and his circle cast an alloy of the old and the new. It is the case of a primitive culture re-shaping and preparing itself to accommodate a much larger whole. We may compare the situation of Tenth Century Europe with that of First Century (B.C.) Rome. Just as the Romans had imitated Greek models, so the European vernaculars imitated Roman models. The Roman acquisition of Greek learning was much more peaceful than Europe's painstaking recovery of classical learning. The elements of that recovery, however, were much greater than Rome's had been. Where Ennius had

only to try and match Homer, all Europe was now in the process of a long, arduous assimilation of Greek and Roman authors.

Horace appears, in his Ars Poetica, to be a poet celebrating the acme his national literature had attained by following Greek precedents.

In the Renaissance, Milton stands in a similar relation to the past and to the vernaculars. In both cases there was a core of civilization confronted by a much larger and stronger, comparatively barbaric, force. As the Romans had plundered Greece, so the Goths, Moslems and Vikings plundered the vital parts of the Roman empire. In both cases the knowledge about matters of poetry was so superior and well-founded that the newer force could only recognize it and form its own, at first meagre, literature on this model.

What most strikes us about the tenth century is its similarity to the seventh, for now the graph tends to duplicate itself. The various peoples of Europe were now settling into distinctive nations and were asserting their particular characteristics. As they did so, they drew increasingly on classical sources, almost as much as the later Latin authors had drawn less and less on classical sources.

We may compare this commentary on that essentially medieval poem, "The Romance of the Rose."

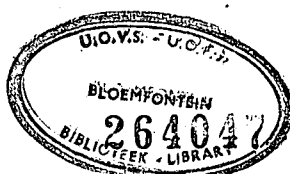
"As a whole it is almost formless, in the sense that its parts bear no reasonable or harmonious proportion to one another... We shall see later how, as the moderns became better acquainted with the great books of Greece and Rome, they learned to give better

form to their own by learning the simple rules of proportion,
relief, balance and climax."¹

The ark of classical values was constituted by the monastic orders. In the monasteries of St. Gall and Cluny many scribes were occupied in copying out ancient texts. A succession of famous abbots succeeded one another at the head of St. Gall: Grimald, Hartmut and Salamo. It was the leading monastery of the tenth century: the seven liberal arts were taught in its school. Notker Balbulus was perhaps the most famous teacher there. He wrote occasional poems in a light and witty vein. Such is the epigram written by Balbulus, in a bantering tone, to remind some fellow monks of a bet that he had taken with them and won. The other monks would not believe that one could obtain mushrooms in winter. Balbulus, however, grew them in a damp cellar and having provided the evidence, now demands his prize: two fish!

Si mihi non vultis, oculis vel credite vestris;
vos saltem binas piscis mihi mittite spinas²

The repetition of mihi and the imperatives credite and mittite playfully express a mock anger in the form of a somewhat peremptory command. Notker has won a bet and pretends to be defiant about his original statement. This pretence is the basis for his humorous tone. The hyperbata between oculis and vestris; binas and spinis also indicate a humorous formality, as if he were making an important point and demanding a great prize.



Balbulus was most loved and revered for the sincerity of his scholarship. He tutored two successive abbots of St. Gall: Salamo and Hartmut.

"The Carolingians had rehabilitated the Muses ... and the monks of St. Gall who loved to imitate them, gave them a place by the side of the Psalmist."³

Epic and historical writings were keenly practised, both in the wake of Charles the Great and as a result of increasing nationalism. The Poeta Saxo adapted the works of Einhard in a different form; Abbo described the Siege of Paris; Ekkehart I rewrote an old Germanic tale in Latin. This is perhaps the most acceptable of the three but no credit to fine scholarship in the classical tradition. At heart it is a heathen lay. It is, however, superior to the "Beast-epic" or Ecbasis Captivi which was surely as obscure then as it is now.

The Italians provided the most acceptable compositions at the time. "We realize that the Italian scholar felt himself to be in the direct line of descent from the classical past."⁴ It is particularly interesting to see this in the light of Horace's A.P., for here the best traditions of Greek poetics were presented by the Roman poet with regularity. As a whole the A.P. is a classicist's work. In the strength of his commitment we are struck by the irony that Horace succeeded in being one of the most distinctively Roman poets. Meanwhile the standards of scholarship in Italy had, however, sunk far below those of Horace. In addition Italy had to contend with political upheavals. During the tenth

century Rome and the papal states were continually threatened⁵ and frequently actually invaded by bands of Moslems. Nevertheless political factors and the lowering of standards did not combine to break the Italian sense of continuity.

Until the time of the Renaissance, secular metrical Latin survived in an almost mechanical way. A typical example is Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona. Compared to equivalent writers elsewhere in Europe he is an acceptable poet. Nevertheless he is guilty of didacticism and quotes excessively from Virgil and Juvenal. Italy had been so infused with literature that the ancient conventions still survived, in a progressively weaker form as time passed, until the vernaculars started to draw on ancient sources. As Horace had done with Greek literature, so Italian writers would praise the standards of ancient Rome but ultimately become the first⁶ really modern writers.

In the tenth century, however, secular studies were viewed with a measure of distrust. Poetry of greater force and conviction than that of secular poets is contained in the so-called Cambridge songs: a collection of Christian poetry consisting of verse by Aldhelm, Boniface, Milo and Smaragdus.

What is important to note is that these poems, which rate as poetry of the first order, are a continuation of the Carolingian tradition. Had we stated that the old secular tradition represented by Theodulf had been given a new lease of life, this fact would have disproved it. The Cambridge songs, although in Latin, were

written in a rhythmical verse form. The mainstream of literature which emanated from Charlemagne's Renaissance was stimulated by the force of the moderns. Notker established the vers libre of the Middle Ages in order to help monks "to carry in their minds the endless modulations of the Alleluia."⁷ Notker forms a direct link between Charles' court and the Cambridge songs.

France and England were now to take the lead in the development of literary studies. Italy, for the moment, was treading the same well-known paths of ancient rhetoric while the force of her vernacular tongue increased, quite gently below the surface. Until Italian suddenly broke the surface, other modern languages led the way.

Cluny reformed the religious orders and secular studies fell to the cathedral schools which gladly promoted the surge of humanism. Structure and architecture in poetry, the demanding disciplines of classical verse, were kept alive more and more incidentally in comparison with the mainstream that Charles' court had channelled.

THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

"Damian is the greatest name in the century: the next are, like him, Italian though they made their name in France."⁸

Damian succeeded in firing the old Latin traditions by his own peculiar genius. His example is very much the exception. Generally speaking, the preponderance of literary activity during the eleventh century was, in fact, in France. Damian superseded the

old trite rules of the rhetorical schools in Italy, by revealing his brilliant imagination in such a remarkable way that those same old rules almost seemed natural to his writing. The result in his style was the heady air of the fantastic. His personal expression was so forceful that it outdid the old tradition.

"If Peter(i.e.) Damian was a rhetorician, it was the rich and fantastic spirit of the man himself that coloured his writings and his speech. His inspiration and invention never failed; with him the conventional exaggerations of rhetoric became the towering fantasies of the visionary, and the lifeless forms of the school are transmuted into poetry of the inner life."⁹

Damian's achievement was not readily matched. After him poets tend to return to more fundamental subjects and work up towards rhetoric. Damian, however, took hold of that long tradition and created his own means of expression from it. As much as his work represents the last dynamic employment of the old world within the framework of the oratorical school, his life also shows a final change in European thought.

He was a dominant figure among European thinkers and writers, as Miss Waddell shows:

"They likened him (Damian) to a spring from which rivers went out all over France, and history confirms them."¹⁰

Although Damian had successfully mastered the rhetorical conventions, he later denounced them and upheld fasting and privation. This

change was symptomatic of a new way of thinking that had begun to move through the whole of Europe. Damian was shown the folly of his extreme asceticism by the Abott of Cluny who argued a tolerant and understanding approach to mankind fused with Christian faith. In effect it was a type of humanism that proved to be what Europe needed.

Damian's influence was particularly strong in France. The poets there were being awakened to the goodness of the earth. The notion of fanaticism and extremism was rejected and a hankering after peace and harmony was urging men's hearts. Gerbert of Aurillac and his pupil Fulbert of Chartres are two representatives of this intellectual vitality in France.

Gerbert was a great admirer of Cicero and paid a lot of attention to his work. Philosophy also gained prominence and this type of discipline, more rigorous than copying the bare adornments of language, marks a poetical appreciation and activity of greater depth.

Fulbert was a good successor. He strove for a comprehensive view of life, read widely from the classical poets and studied both rhythmical and metrical verse. Adalbaro of Laon revived satire, which is evidence, at least, of the activity of men's critical faculties. This satire was doubtless founded on the basis of the Carolingian dialogues. Men had the time to study and differentiate between the desirable and undesirable elements in society.

Godfrey of Reims was chancellor and scholasticus at the cathedral school of Reims. He writes in the elegiac metre and uses many of the devices so typical of rhetorical training. When Fortunatus had died in 609 AD he had left a world virtually at the nadir of scholarship. Yet his own century, the sixth, corresponds nicely with the eleventh. What Godfrey's age found useful and interesting in their gradual rediscovery of classical stylistics, the age of Fortunatus had been losing for want of understanding and enthusiasm. In Fortunatus' time the light was waning and in Godfrey's it was waxing. According to this pattern the standards of scholarship at the end of the eleventh century were similar to those at the beginning of the sixth. The first difference is that the sixth century was on the decline but the eleventh was on the incline. In Godfrey's time there was all the excitement of a new order, new powers and languages arising which made the old seem exciting in its own way. The sixth century had been plodding along the well-trodden paths and churning out a good deal of bad verse, which Horace would certainly have put a red line through. The eleventh needed discipline and instruction in much the same way as the Latin of Plautus' day.

The second difference is that in the sixth century there had been a strong sense of continuity with the Roman authors. The same sense still pervaded Italy during the eleventh century but in an even more debased form than in the sixth century. The world of Fortunatus could, as it were, look downhill, aware of the great achievements behind.

The world of Godfrey of Reims had a steep hill to climb. Every

so often they would look back to gain encouragement from the challenge of emulating the achievements of the ancients.

This second difference is clearly illustrated in Godfrey's description of a lady.

Parce, precor, virgo, tociens michi culta videri,
meque tuum forma perdere parce tua.
parce supervacua cultu componere membra:
gugeri studio tam bona forma nequit,
ne tibi sit tanto caput et coma pexa labore,
nam caput hoc placuit, cum coma mixta fuit.
ne stringant rutilos tibi serica vincla capillos,
cum vincant rutila serica vincla come.
ne tibi multiplicem crines revocentur in orbem,
nam cum forte iacent, absque labore placent.
aurea non video cur vertice flammea portes,
aurea nam nudo vertice tota nites.
utraq; fert auris aurum, fert utraq; gemmas,
utraq; nuda novis anteferenda rosis.¹¹

As we have previously observed, Naso loquax was the model for
¹²
many medieval poets. On the one hand, his incorrigible
loquacity knew few bounds as long as yet one more clever, racy
line could be fitted in. On the other hand, Ovid had a wonder-
fully ready genius for metre, so that the overall effect is bright
and lively verse. When lesser poets imitated Ovid, the effect was
usually one of endlessly precocious boredom. Nevertheless, although
even lesser poets exaggerated the indiscretions of Lucan, the verse

itself was always unmistakably Latin, simply by virtue of rhetorical conventions.

Even as late as the eleventh century Damian could restore what was by that time a tattered collection of stagey effects. He succeeded in firing them with a new energy. After him the same worn collection was gradually but surely corrupted.

The French poets had followed the tradition of Charlemagne's court and their compositions bear few of these rhetorical stage pieces. They are a strange amalgam of vernacular spirit and Latin form. This was a simple expedient to the fact that the vernacular had not yet acquired the suppleness of Latin.

Criticizing Godfrey's verse by the standards and conventions of Damian, the lines seem to be sagging slightly, as if they were barely able to limp through the pentameter. But Damian's world was sinking, and if we scrutinize the lines of Godfrey's poem more closely, a new spirit may be discerned.

The most obvious feature is the repetition. It is rather overdone by standard Latin criteria but actually belongs to the spirit of the vernacular; the repetitions are part of the machinery of a type of ballad. It follows, therefore, that we should evaluate the poem with this in mind. Parce appears in each of the first three lines. In lines five and six both caput and coma are repeated. Tibi appears in lines 7 and 8. Aurea and vertice are repeated in 10 and 11. Utraque appears in line 12 and 13. Pert appears twice in line 12. The combination of these repetitions and the nature of the metre provide a new tone.

A typical line is 6; although we recognize the caesura it can be divided too easily at the comma and placuit rhyming with fuit only exaggerates the division. The effect of the repetitions and the slow, drawn-out lines is typical of the informality and artless simplicity of the ballad. The strange feature of the poem is that it is in Latin. The old tradition which was reaching senility in Italy has little to do with this anomaly of form in European poetry.

The second half of the poem reflects the mood of the pioneer in this new undertaking who stops to glance back at the classical past. In Italy the sense of continuity made this impossible until the Renaissance. In France and England more and more poets were to look back at intervals and classical allusion added interesting vistas to European poetry. The second half is quoted below:

de pretio forme cum tres certamen inissent,
electusque Paris arbiter esset eis,
prefecit Venerem Paridis censura deabus,
deque tribus victe succubere due. 13

The proper nouns in the above verses act as punctuation marks. Their tone is allusive and recalls to the reader's imagination lost figures of the ancient world. This usage is most significant because of the part that classical mythology and literature were to play later on. This early usage is distinct in poetic quality, and the closest parallels are the allusions to Greek mythology and literature which we find in Latin verse. When poets use allusion in this way, we have indeed passed the point of no return.

The nostalgia of a backward glance is clearly identified in some of the eleventh century's most successful elegies which were written by Hildebert of Lavardin. They are addressed to Rome.

"For the first time since the passing of the Empire a man's eyes turn to Rome, not as the inheritance of Peter, but the grave of a buried beauty." ¹⁴

hic superum formas superi mirantur et ipsi,
et cupiunt fictis vultibus esse pares.
non potuit natura deos hoc ore creare
quo miranda deum signa creavit homo.
vultus adest his numinibus, potiusque coluntur
artificum studio quam deitate sua. ¹⁵

The barbarians were once bemused by its splendour but are now enraptured by the grandeur that was Rome.

quis gladio Caesar, quis sollicitudine consul,
quis rhetor lingua, quae mea castra manu
tanta dedere mihi, studiis et legibus horum
obtinui terras; crux dedit una polum. ¹⁶

These are sonorous and noble lines. There is a grave and sombre dignity about the procession that moves along at slow march from quis to quis. It has the deathly ring of the knell, as if the shades were being summoned from Hades. The finality of crux una takes the poem towards a greater truth. We realize the transience

of even the finest works of mankind. We realize the inevitability of our classical inheritance as well.

The Middle Ages could not recover the remnants of their predecessors and the relics of their ordered, gentile life without expressing the sense of that recovery in poetry.¹⁷ This tradition is enriched by the addition of another dimension to the field of poetic reference.

The last poet representing the Revival of Learning in France is Baudry of Bourgueil. He belonged to a wide intellectual circle and his poems are marked by the warmth of his sincere friendship. In his poems 'Florus to Ovid' and 'Ovid to Florus' we can easily see the cleft growing between cathedral school and monastery. Poets were writing with the assurance of a secular background and the undisputed values of the ancient world. Baudry's work shows that men could once again devote themselves in a simple and rewarding way to the life of letters.

CHAPTER 5

THE TWELFTH CENTURY

In the A.P., Horace describes the frenzied poet in a strongly satirical passage. ¹ By that time this concept had already become a literary commonplace. ² However, the vesanus poeta is no awkward set-piece in the A.P. As a satire it is extremely realistic and impressive, bringing the figure of a demented poet right on to centre stage. To successfully conclude as heterogeneous a poem as the A.P. ³ with a satire does indeed require a good deal of the very quality (ingenium) that is, after all, being caricatured: the difference between the manifestations of ingenium is that Horace condemns the mad poet for relying solely on ingenium, whereas the true poet should have the latent curse of ingenium relieved by ars and at the base of his ars ⁴ have Socraticae chartae.

This is, it must be conceded, dialectical poetry of a kind, but it links up some very important elements which proved to have a central place in literary developments of the twelfth century. Satire and philosophy were two areas of literary accomplishment that flourished then with a new-found vigour. Inevitably attention was also paid to ars, and apart from grammatical studies ⁵ more handbooks on poetry were written.

The same elements occur in the poetry of Milton. As in the case

of Horace, the satire does not intrude upon the poetry but forms a natural part of it. In Lycidas the bad priest is satirised in some of Milton's most famous lines. "Blind mouths"⁶ is a perfect example of the poetic genius for distillation of imagery to the point that it is unintelligible out of context. The force of the invective is so much greater as a result of this apparent brachylogy.

⁷
The influence of Neoplatonism is noticeable in Milton's fifth elegy. Here we can appreciate the facility he had gained in dealing with complex mythography and we must consider the fact that at the same time the poet is concerned with philosophical conception as well as the technical (ars)⁸ difficulty of adapting classical form.

In the poetry of both Horace and Milton satire, ars and philosophy appear without the reader gaining the impression that any one of these elements has not become an integrated part of the whole. The ars is not crude display, nor do the satire and philosophy overpower the whole. As a result we do not start with surprise upon recognition of them.

In the twelfth century these same elements had not yet been so finely assimilated and we cannot but notice them in particular poems as identifiable parts.

Philosophy was the siren who took up lodgings in Paris in the twelfth century: men flocked from far and wide to study the ancient pursuit. There arose, however, as was to be expected, many thorny issues between Christianity and what later came to

be identified as humanism. A number of men still had to devote their lives to letters before Pan would be allowed to run freely through the woods and before Christian metaphor could be employed as happily as secular.

The first differences between Christianity and humanism arose from a lacking in mutual respect. An initial manifestation of this attempt to harmonize can be noticed in the work of Abélard. Humanism "had really been, in Jerome's metaphor, the captive maid of the theologians."⁹ Abélard himself was the first representative of the new way of thinking, he was a scholar for scholarship's sake. This does not imply a permanent departure from or even an indifference to Christianity. His endeavour should rather be viewed as a necessary step in the process which led to the harmonious and balanced assimilation of these elements in the Renaissance. In order to gain recognition, humanism first had to assert itself.

The following poem clearly intends to make such an assertion:

qui pereunt in se vivunt per scripta poetae;
quam natura negat vita per ista manet.
per famam vivit defuncto corpore doctus,
et plus natura philosophia potest;¹⁰

This small piece is characterized by a calm assurance which may perhaps be ascribed to the gentle spirit of humanist scholarship. In a way it shows a similarity of spirit with Pliny's in his quiet conviction of the writer's immortality in letters. It is important (and Horatian) that pereunt is juxtaposed with the contrasting

vivunt in line one; that vivit is juxtaposed with the clashing defuncto corpore in line three. Natura is identified with corporeal and transitory existence. In line two the pentameter is neatly divided by the strong contrast between negat before the main caesura and manet at the end.

As the writer looked to immortality per scripta in the first hexameter, he now looks to it per famam, as synonymous, in the second hexameter. This creates a firm bond between the couplets. In the first place there is the actual repetition of per and secondly the real meaning is obviously per famam scriptorum.¹¹ The closed insularity of the elegiac couplet perfectly allows this meaning to come through, simply by the repetition of words and the similarity of expression. Technically this is very sound and shows an excellent understanding of the particular metrical form.

The last line ends on a positive note with a third person singular verb as in line two. This is a good ending for a pentameter line, as it has a particularly conclusive force both in its form and meaning. Manet and potest both clinch the argument in a most unambiguous and assertive manner. The actual resolution of the poem is derived from the natura/philosophia contrast. This reveals the devoted scholar expounding his unshakeable faith in the superiority of learning over nature.

It is in the very assertiveness of this poem that we can ascertain the novelty of philosophy as a separate and independent study. We have to recognize some truth in Du Méril's view that Abélard only propounded 'les préceptes usés d'une morale vulgaire'.¹² We

have to admit that Abelard's learning was occasionally very wide of the mark. He even thought that Socrates had left written works. In his own times, however, he was a leading figure in the literary world. His assertion of humanist values was a great contribution to learning in the Twelfth Century.

"It is easy to belittle Abelard's achievement.... it remains that he is one of the makers of life, and perhaps the most powerful, in Twelfth Century Europe."¹³

The next two scholars that demand our attention are Matthew of Vendôme and John of Salisbury.¹⁴ The former was an unimaginative pedagogue and the latter a famous man of letters. To obtain a correct picture of attitudes towards poetry during the Twelfth Century it is important to take account of them both.

Matthew was very much a representative of the old type of medieval school. He was mainly concerned with extracting moral precepts from the ancient writings by means of allegorical explanation, and in so doing he circumscribed the real value of the classical tradition within a very narrow and misleading compass. He seems to have been more taken with the picture of himself as a successful and respected scholar than with the love of learning. The following excerpt indicates this quite well.

Parisius maturo gradus; mihi dulcis alumna

tempore Primatis, Aurelianis, ave.

Instruit ad versus pueros haec summula; nomen

ex re sortitur; summa docere potest.

Vive, precor, nec formida livoris hiatum,

summula, per menses emodulata duos.

haec memini, meminisse iuvat: sat prata biberunt.

Explicit emeritum Vindocinensis opus.¹⁵

We are immediately struck by the staccato effect. In every line but the last the poet has a stop of some sort. This gives us the impression that the poet has a penchant for ceremony and bombast. The lines proceed in short, dignified phrases but the overall effect is one of contrived gravity. For example, the ave at the end of line two is, to my mind, very unhappily placed. What should have had the effect of a strong, generous word of praise, trails at the end as a result of the preceding commas which interrupt the flow of the words. This was doubtless done to gain greater solemnity but in fact destroys the impact of ave, reducing it to a patronizing afterthought.

Similarly, the memini, meminisse should have been part of a strong development. Such rhetorical pieces merit an important climax which is not reached because of the poet's love of superfluous effects. This concern palls very quickly and merely provides a good example of the pedant's slightly comical pleasure in displaying his abilities.

Besides his own verse he wrote technical handbooks. Miss Waddell remarks that "Matthew is responsible for perhaps the ¹⁶dullest Art of Poetry that has ever been written." It is based on the A.P. of Horace and Cicero's Ad Herennium. The specific art of Statius' Silvae had become more important in the Middle Ages than ever and the first part of Matthew's book accordingly deals with descriptions. Matthew's "Art" also contained rules for describing famous characters.

In the first place the treatment of these rules is very different in Horace's A.P. The following is Horace's advice for a character sketch of Achilles.

..... si forte reponis Achillem
impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
perfidus Ixion, Io vaga, tristis Orestes.

17

Let us compare Matthew's prescription for a representation of Helen:

Pauperat artificis Naturae dona venustas
Tindaridis, formae flosculus, oris honor;

18

Horace is concerned with the principle of consistency in literary character. He makes his point by starting off with a rapid-fire line of four adjectives for Achilles, then he relieves the tension by two carefully balanced four-word groups in line 122. Straight-away he rushes on to hammer in the principle of identifying one character with one emotion by alternating three names with three adjectives in line 124.

Matthew, by contrast, is making no attempt to illustrate any underlying principle. He is merely giving a description of Helen as an example to his readers, and no more. This shows how the preceding centuries of the Middle Ages had impoverished the content of the classical tradition in this respect.

In the second place we can see how completely foreign this modus operandi is to our own. The difference can easily be understood by looking at Greek tragedy, which took themes from mythology. The characters were accordingly legendary or divine. The scope of literature was restricted by this fact but tragedians knew how to turn it to advantage. In the A.P. it is also clear that Horace regards most literary undertakings as based on some precedent although he does make allowance for new material. Through the passage of time literary characters from ancient literature sometimes acquired a soft, romantic light in the Middle Ages. A few classical characters benefited from this, but it may be said that Matthew's treatment left Helen's garments very threadbare.

To a large extent the reason for such poor representations of the classics was simply a lack of knowledge. ¹⁹ By the time of the Renaissance, enthusiasts had patiently recovered details of classical figures as they had been known to the ancients, so that poets such as Milton were not only in a position to recreate them with greater conviction but used them in an original way. Matthew's shortcoming was due to his inability to distinguish between the ancient ars poetica and the medieval ars dictaminis. This was the result of ignorance and confusion.

In respect of ars, therefore, Matthew is not an exemplary exponent. His satire is also wanting and he took little interest in philosophy. Horace's formula of satire/ars/philosophy does seem to hold water:

"These pieces are caricatures, satires set in the framework of ars poetica. Their sharpness is mitigated, not blunted, by humour. The curse of ingenium is relieved by ars and at the base of ars there lie Socraticae chartae." ²⁰

The difference is that where Horace possessed enough ingenium to satirize ingenium, Matthew did not. The object of his satire is Arnulfus the Red-headed, "the off-scouring of the human race," ²¹ says Matthew kindly." Essentially it is unimaginative invective that amounts to little more than a stream of insults. We have to conclude then that Matthew lacked ingenium and philosophy but practised ars and satire in predictably unsuccessful poems.

The opposite to Matthew in many ways is John of Salisbury.

"The ablest and finest scholar of all was undoubtedly John of Salisbury, a man of 'even-balanced soul', who was not led astray by the passion for short cuts to knowledge, or the conceit that the new knowledge was an end in itself his... poem (Entheticus de dogmate philosophorum).... is no mere tour de force or school exercise. It has preserved... the impress of his keen and judicial intelligence, of his grave irony and his deep seriousness." ²²

John believed in the truth of word and reason and the ultimate goal of theology. "John of Salisbury, who held the religio grammatici, feared it, very much as Milton did: a sterile science, ²³ except it conceive from without." As Milton himself described it, "An infamous tract of rocks, not here the sounding of Apollo's ²⁴ lyre: not here the dance of goddesses."

In the poem mentioned above John first of all deals with the Christian doctrine of God, then with the philosophical sects of antiquity, Plato being afforded pride of place. He then deals with the Romans and particularly Cicero: lastly with Seneca and what Quintilian says of him. John was, however, a Christian before anything else and he saw the study of philosophy as serving the greater ends of his own faith.

Christicolae soli sapiunt, et philosophantur
vere, quos tibi dat pagina sacra duces.²⁵

A large part of John's poem is satirical, but it does not possess the subjective intensity of Matthew. We notice in this respect a difference between the patient and careful scholar and the dull pedagogue. John's satire is tinged with an impatience on the one hand for the need to correct folly, and sadness on the other hand for the necessity of discrediting his fellow man: The following excerpt is an example of John's verse.

vetus hic quo tendit asellus?

cur veterum nobis dicta vel acta refert?

a nobis sapimus, docuit se nostra iuventus,

non recipit veterum dogmata nostra cohors.

non onus accipimus ut eorum verba sequamur

quos habet auctores Graecia, Roma colit.

incola sum modici pontis, novus auctor in arte,

dum prius inventum gloriator esse meum;

quod docuere senes, nec novit amica iuventus,

pectoris inventum iuro fuisse mei;

sedula me iuvenum circumturbat turba, putatque

grandia iactantem non nisi vera loqui. 26

John's phrasing is very sound and, at times, quite beautiful in a sonorous type of chant. His feeling for a well-turned couplet is excellent, as we may observe by considering lines five and six. It is simple and reads easily with no jerkiness. The hexameter forms a clear and balanced pattern with accipimus echoing sequamur, and onus and verba complementing their respective verbs in a straightforward object/verb construction. The simplicity and clarity of this line give a pleasing sense of ordered architecture. The objects are placed neatly with the first person plural verbs so allowing units to develop and thus weighting the line by providing a frame and formality very suitable to the larger aspect of the hexameter.

Eorum is carried through very smoothly to quos auctores, and the more trenchant quality required of the pentameter line is finely displayed in the juxtaposition of Graecia, Roma. This time the line is framed by the third person singular present verbs. The

similarity between the hexameter and pentameter, which is marked by both lines having two verbs which stand in similar positions, in either case is saved from boredom by the change from the object-verb construction of the hexameter to the subject-verb construction in the pentameter.

The overall effect is that of a good Ciceronian period. It is grave, flowing, but above all masterful. Where it differs most clearly from Horace and Milton is in its lack of imaginative projection. It has an impetus and dignity which Matthew's satire could never approach and yet it falls short of the complete portrait presented, say, in Horace's passage on the false²⁷ critic or Milton's on the false priest.²⁸

John was a reflective and philosophical man of great erudition who enjoyed the scholarly atmosphere of Canterbury, where men were keen to learn and books were revered. Once again we observe the circle of friends.²⁹ John enjoyed the warmth and free exchange of ideas fostered by studies shared with fellow scholars. There was Brito, the sub-prior and Odo, the prior - both good friends of John's. Thomas Becket was yet another of his friends.

John of Salisbury was a man of such stature that "he would be a scholar in every age, and was head and shoulders above his own."³⁰ Regrettably he is not the typical representative of his age. Through his poetry we are made aware of the broadening of twelfth century scholarship and especially of the growing interest in the Socraticae chartae. Philosophy had long been neglected but was now being revived in earnest. This revival was rooted in

humanism, which was the condition necessary for Petrarch and his companions, somewhat later, to relive the world of the ancients. "He hath made everything beautiful in his time, continues the voice of Ecclesiastes which John found so strangely poignant,"³¹ It was, however, only a prescience of the beauty and truth that was to be recovered from the classical world. He was as much the greatest scholar of his age as he was ahead of his times.

A far more typical representative of the twelfth century is Serlon of Wilton. He lacks both the faults of Matthew and the virtues of John. He was educated in a rhetorical school and taught in Paris. In his youth he was humanist, secular and intellectual, but eventually began to feel that life was passing him by. He then joined the order of Cluny and appears to us as yet another scholar who followed the example of Paulinus of Nola.

His early poetry is committed to grammatical subjects or consists of frivolous verse which shows some of the characteristics of Catullus. There still existed insufficient harmony between scholarship and Christianity as compared with the type of unity that Milton was to create. "Serlon's career... might almost be said (to have been) the ordinary progression of the clever scholar who was not from the first called to saintship,"³² His verse represents the problems of his age, for it is either the dry grammar of Matthew:

Dissero grammaticae structurae quae sit origo,
nomina cum verbis arte liganda ligo
vita brevis; brevitatis amans compendia quaerit;
quisque sui similis semper amator erit.
sum quod quisque cupit, sum qui compendia quaero,
sum brevis atque brevi pondere multa fero...

33

or the licentious on the model of Catullus:

Dum fero languorem fero relligionis amorem;
expers languoris non sum memor huius amoris.

34

or the purely religious:

Custos mentis ego fas dicto nefasque relego:
me duce si graderis post carnem non gradieris.
insta ne cesses, aderunt post semina messes....

35

"It is easy to see that all the advantage lay henceforth with the new rhythmical measures. For here was freedom instead of bondage to the rules of the text-book or the supposed authority of the classics."

36

The greater part of spontaneous poetry during this century is to be found in the great flowering of the Latin lyric. This kind of lyric is not, however, part of the tradition from Horace to Milton nor does it use classical forms in the sense of the A.P. or the Epitaphium Damonis.

37

The most remarkable feature of these Latin lyrics is the theme of Spring. With the exception of the Pervigilium Veneris the spring song hardly exists in Latin literature. These lyrics have a wonderful freshness and vitality that is fed by the vernaculars, whereas old secular verse was displaced. "The truth is that Latin secular poetry had no longer any real excuse for existing. The lyrical part of it was fed, on the whole, from vernacular sources, and, both in execution and in range of expression, the vernacular had now an unchallenged superiority." ³⁸

To make matters worse for secular letters, after an initial assertion in the first half of the twelfth century, humanism started to gain a poor reputation. Latin metrical poetry was once again being driven into the schools. One of the last important poets in this tradition is Master Henry of Arranches who wrote for kings and ecclesiastics. There is little German secular poetry of the Thirteenth Century and "the tale of Italian poetry in (that) century is no more inspiring." ³⁹ It almost seems ironical that one last poem of the Statian/rhetorical school line of medieval Latin is an 'Art of Poetry'. This is the *Laborintus* written by Evrard the German sometime before 1280 at Cologne. Far from the vigour of Horace's A.P. the school exercises which this work contains are so full of pedagogic dryness that the poet stresses at every turn "the wretched lot of the master who was forced by necessity to teach such subjects." ⁴⁰

But Italy would prove to be the harbinger of the new age, ahead of England, France and Germany: Dante was writing his great epic in the Tuscan dialect.

"The emergence of the vernacular is really a medieval achievement, and does not belong to the so-called Renaissance. Indeed, it might be said that the Renaissance in one of its aspects was a reaction against the vernacular in the interests of an artificial revival⁴¹ of Latin."

The Renaissance could not have taken place with all the fervour of an heir seeking his patrimony, had the Middle Ages not successfully defended Europe from barbarism; but as for true empathy with and close synthesis of ancient values it is Petrarch, Politan, Bembo, Joannes Secundus, Cowley and Milton who realize and assimilate the precepts of Greece and Rome. Through the most exacting imitation of classical authors the learning of these scholars became a part of vernacular poetry; and through their illustration of the beautiful architecture and structure of ancient poetry, our own inheritance was infinitely enriched.

CHAPTER 6

According to a traditional view the knowledge of Greek and the invention of printing were the two decisive factors which distinguished the Middle Ages from the Renaissance. Criticism of this view points out the superficiality of these two developments. In a way this criticism is justified, since the danger exists of mistaking the result for the cause. Greek and printing only came to be so prized because the West had reached the point where such knowledge was needed. These accomplishments cannot, therefore, be necessarily regarded as a cause of the Renaissance; they should rather be seen as the manifestation of it.

We should note straightaway that Greek literature had not been stored and forgotten in unsuspected hiding-places throughout the Middle Ages: the state of learning had simply not developed a need for the original texts of Greek writers. Greek had actually been the language of diplomatic intercourse "between the Church and the Empire in the West and the Church and Empire in the East" for a long time.

Apart from this modern Greek there was also the simple, elementary form which was known at St. Gall in 614.

John the Scot produced, for Charles the Bald, a "literal rendering of the Neo-Platonic works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite."² Although Plato was unknown in the West except for parts of the Timaeus, and Aristotle was unknown except for parts

of the Organon translated into Latin by Boethius, Latin versions of Aristotle, at least, reached Europe through the agency of the Arabs by 1150. Gradually pieces in the original Greek replaced these.

Several important Twelfth Century translations by William of Moerbeke came under the scrutiny of Roger Bacon, a leading scholar, who drew on Byzantine sources. Prior to this, such recourse had been denied the West. During most of the Twelfth Century Byzantine emperors had built up a new nationalism which discouraged contact with the West. A monk, Guillame de Gap, had indeed ventured to Constantinople and returned with some Hermetic literature. Southern Italy had harboured a number of Greek monks driven out by iconoclastic decrees in 727 and again in 816. Some monks still lived in the extreme south at the time of the Renaissance, so that "certain Calabrian villages" ³ still speak Greek today. The twelfth century translators of Aristotle had learnt their Greek in the south of Italy and undertook no bold journeys to Byzantium where ⁴ a more complete knowledge was guarded.

Byzantium started flagging after 1190 and contact with the Eastern Empire became easier. "The Byzantines spoke Greek, as Roger Bacon points out, but did not understand the grammar nor knew how to teach it, being for the most part semi-educated and inarticulate folk." ⁵ By the middle of the Thirteenth Century there was, in the West, a number of men equal to the task of approaching the treasures of Byzantium.

Barlaam, a Calabrian monk, visited Avignon as an envoy from Constantinople in 1339. Petrarch received a manuscript of

Homer and six years later he wrote a letter of thanks to the blind poet. "Florence (at that time) could not claim more than four to five who knew and loved Homer, Verona only two, Bologna, Mantua and Solmona one and Rome none." ⁶ Petrarch persuaded Boccaccio to learn Greek. He did so and his mentor, Pilatus, a pupil of Barlaam, worked hard on a translation of Homer into Latin. When it was complete, Pilatus returned to Constantinople in order to recover more scripts. Unfortunately the man was struck dead by lightning and, we are told, Petrarch hurried to the quay in the hope of gaining a manuscript of Euripides or Sophocles! Boccaccio, with his smattering of Greek, claimed to be the first to publicize the works of Homer in Tuscany and to be the first of all Italians to resume the reading of Homer." ⁷

After this, however, the typically medieval contemporaneity of conception in life altered perceptibly and men came to the fore "whose worlds of thought and expression stood recognizably nearer to Cicero's than to the traditionally educated average of their (Boccaccio's and Petrarch's) day." ⁸ The change was primarily the result of the pedagogic progress fostered by Manuel Chrysoloras, a Byzantine of noble birth, an accomplished and eloquent Greek scholar who came to Venice.

Salutati, who stood in the tradition of Petrarch, persuaded the city of Florence to appoint him as a reader in Greek for the benefit of the community. By 1441 a literal rendering of Plato's Republic into Latin was dedicated by Pier Candido Decembrio to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. By this means the future of

Greek was ensured in the West. Only twelve years later Constantinople fell to the Turks. It seems a rare piece of irony that the Roman Empire, forever remarkable for its expediency, by splitting its power between Rome and Constantinople at an early date, survived the invasions by Western barbarians after a retreat to the Eastern capital, as well as by Eastern conquerors after a recovery operation to the Western side. Ironically too, Chrysoloras originally travelled to Italy in a bid for aid against the Turks but remained to aid the West in a bid for the revival of Greek letters.

"The circumstances of his arrival in a non-scholastic capacity and his final scholastic appointment show clearly what importance we must ascribe to the Humanistic enthusiasm which had its origins in Petrarch's teaching. It was the demand that created the supply."⁹ When the Eastern capital fell, an exodus of scholars fled for Italy and the West. If we only accepted Greek in a causal function and did not presuppose a tradition ready to accept it, we should also expect that a good deal of the knowledge brought by these immigrants very probably would have fallen on deaf ears. As it was, most of it was snatched up with alacrity.

So we see that in the political weakening of Byzantium lay the rescue of its literature and the doom of its empire.

Learning itself had been revolutionized by Chrysoloras' new system of philology which stressed the closest attention to detail. This ushered in an age of precision and craftsmanship as the only means

towards a right appreciation of letters. "Here, for the first time in the West, we have the love of detail which characterized the Byzantine imitators and a reasoned statement of the belief that eloquence in its various forms depends on the attention paid¹⁰ to linguistic minutiae." It was the age of memorization and of the note-book.

As the anatomical studies of the human body were an indispensable preparation for Leonardo da Vinci's art, so the philologists of his day sought to reconstruct the patterns of language by a ruthless dissection of its parts; more than anything else, until the scholastic age of the twelfth century Europe had lacked the discipline of professional, precise tuition. The spirit of the Middle Ages died as soon as this deficiency was recognized, for medieval attitudes of mind were based on the utilitarianism of the specialists and on the moral and religious fears of the orthodox. Petrarch represented the changing world of his time; two-faced like the Roman god Janus, he belonged to both old and new. "Petrarch, like Byron after him, owed his popularity to the fact¹¹ that he showed his time its future self."

His attitude towards the classics was precisely the expression of the new Renaissance sentiment, so that many scholars could identify their personal ambitions with Petrarch.

He specifically selected his material with an emphasis on the joint pursuit of artistic form and the good life. A necessariis artificibus ad elegantiora. In some ways he was, in spirit, the first modern scholar.

Through his letters and his epic, Africa, Petrarch re-established two great genres. His imitation of Cicero is not altogether convincing and has the unmistakable ring of the theoretical imitator to it. It must be realized that Cicero, more than any other ancient thinker, inspired the most powerful and characteristic spiritual concept of the Renaissance, which "can be summed up by Cicero's own word humanitas -- the quality of mind and character of a man who is civilized."¹² The major Roman treatises which attracted the interest of intellectuals were De Officiis and the Tusculan Disputations. As soon as the Renaissance had learnt to love these works, scholars were spurred on to study the original Greek texts of the four great philosophical schools: Epicureans, Stoics, Peripatetics and the Academy.¹³ From this resulted a new appreciation of the appeal of free thought and individualism.

This revival of ancient thought was in opposition to the spirit pervading the literature of the vernacular languages. Yet one cannot deny that these languages might never have attained the heights they have, had it not been that they "served apprenticeship in reproducing Cicero and composing tragedies after a Senecan model."¹⁴

Stylistics became a real matter of controversy and competition. Reading was analytical, as exemplified by the method of a famous teacher, Guarino. Beginners read the easier works to find inspiration and guidance for the writing of short stories. Lists of phrases were made under the headings of form and content. Florilegia were compiled in order to make these devices readily available to all men. Commentaries classified all the most famous sayings into categories. Valla produced his Elegantiae Linguae Latinae

15
which became the handbook of the humanists. The appropriate constructions of individual words and lists of uses of particular nouns were compiled.

The stile e mosaico was an accepted norm. It assumed that the overall effect of any piece is gained by the ordering of many smaller "pebbles": arrangement of subject-matter, varieties of argument, ideas, illustrations, metaphors, and other figures of speech, choice single words, speech rhythms and euphony.

Guarino recognized the importance of Greek as a sine qua non for Latin composition. Throughout Europe, facility in Latin was taken to be the mark of an educated man. Necessarily, therefore, the attainment of this facility required an arduous apprenticeship which took much time. One is reminded of the Elder Pliny's awareness of time when reading the following piece of advice to the teacher of those seeking education.

"In every library let a clock be so placed that it may catch the eye of the reader, and by recording the flight of time, warn him of the need of diligence."¹⁶
17

The aftermath of Petrarch's signal achievements was a long and heated scholarly dispute that was only resolved completely by Erasmus. The outcome is significant for our evaluation of the assimilation of classical learning by the vernacular literatures.

Before Petrarch the standard of Latin composition had been low. By reason of his strong personality and a spiritual and intellectual

identity with Cicero, Petrarch became engrossed by the great orator's style. Humanitas was to be understood and assimilated through a detailed analysis and imitation of the original ancient texts. Petrarch's disciples, however, became firebrands.

Initially imitation was rewarding. Boccaccio, Salutati, Bruni, Barizza and Bracciolini greatly promoted studies in the classics. Eventually though, the means became the end so that imitation was held up to be the whole issue. Reaction against this misunderstanding was not slow in coming during an age when "the humanists even out-rival Aeschines and Demosthenes in their criticism of one another's style."¹⁸

Valla quarrelled with Poggio. "Why! The very first sentence (Valla declares) begins with the beginning and ends with the end of a hexameter."¹⁹ Politan, an eclectic, found himself in opposition to Scala and Cortesi. The former held that one style could not express everything, while the latter two put their complete trust in Cicero.

Bembo, the "Ciceronian", and the eclectic Pico della Mirandola continued what developed into a general polemic. The final, balanced view came after the most trenchant satire by Erasmus: the Ciceronianus.²⁰ In it, he drew a picture of the Ciceronian extremist. His study had double doors and windows, so that neither sunlight nor noise could penetrate: his diet, ten currants and three coriander seeds daily. He wrote a sentence per night and compiled dictionaries of rhythms and lists of Ciceronian phrases. The severest controversy broke out when this satire was published. Finally the eclectic

side won. "The exclusive reign of form had ended, but there was still room for form in its proper place."²¹, ²²

Poets gained far greater versatility in their Latin verse, as the following example shows. It is an extract from Petrarch's epic poem Africa.

THE VICTORIOUS MASINISSA MEETS THE BEAUTIFUL SOPHONISBA

Moenia magnanimumus victor trepidantia Cirthae

Ingreditur, patriosque lares et avita tuetur

Tecta libens generis cara incunabula primi.

Milite confestim ad portam custode relicto,

Ipsa altam cupidus raptim tendebat ad arcem.

Sic stimulante fame lupo amplum nactus ovile,

Intima dum penetrat, socium praedae atque laboris

Linquit in ingressu, quo tutior abdita fidis

Corpora diducat latebris mergenda palato.

Ventum erat ad miseri felicia tecta tyranni

Quae verso malefido viro regina tenebat

Haec subitis turbata malis in limine visa est

Obvia victori, si quam fortuna pararet

Tentatura viam duraeque levamina sortis.

Undique sidereum gemmis auroque nitebant

Atria; non illo fuerat rex ditior alter

Dum fortuna fidem tenuit, nunc fidite laetis

Pauperior non alter erat: tamen omnia longe

Regia praeradians vincebat limina coniunx.²³

This epic as a whole is not well thought of by literary critics generally, but this passage from it is agreed to stand above the larger whole.

Particularly when we compare it with the verse of Venantius Fortunatus we are aware of Petrarch's empathy with the classics. Fortunatus' poems to Radegunde were, after all, unmistakably court poetry and accordingly restricted in scope. Petrarch uses the heroic hexameter with confidence in this passage, and that is in itself a major change, when we consider how the elegiac couplet had dominated medieval poetry.

The passage may be divided into four parts. Lines 1 - 5 describe Masinissa's arrival at Cirta and his trepidation at being so close to his enemy Syphax who was in the company of his beloved Sophonisba. She had earlier been betrothed to Masinissa but Syphax had actually married her. Something of the tension that runs through Keats's Eve of St Agnes can be felt. The romantic appeal is founded on the situation of a lover separated from his damsel by an evil force. The magnanimus victor is effectively framed by the trepidantia moenia since it is a representation of the physical situation. In the same way line two is suitably framed by ingreditur and tuetur as we feel the time lapse, exaggerated by fear, between entering and surveying the building in search of his beloved. The discreet posting of armed guards at the gate is visibly real in line 4 as a result of the milite and relicto placed to watch each end of the line.

To heighten the furtive tone of Masinissa's entrance, Petrarch employs a cross-fire pattern in the fifth line. The separation of ipse from cupidus and then from tendebat as well as the hyperbaton of Altam ... Arcem gives the effect of deep feelings, distraction and vacillation. This leads on easily to the elevated tone of a four line simile of a fox. By this means we are

given a fine analogy to the emotions which are uppermost in Masinissa's mind. On the one hand there is the burning desire to regain Sophonisba but on the other hand the dreadful anxiety to escape safely.

The third part of the description (lines 10 to 14) deals with the actual meeting. Petrarch employs the oxymoron of miseri felicia tecta tyranni to stress the dilemma of Masinissa's situation. Again the poet uses the separation of words in strategic positions to underline Sophonisba's confusion and distress in line 12. This is possibly the best line in the piece as the visa est really does seem to glide into place, quite unexpectedly and in a flash at some doorway as an image of his romantic ideal. The position of this verb at the end of the line is quite masterful, particularly at the moment when the next line brings the impact of that brief appearance vividly before us by juxtaposing obvia with victori.

The last part may be taken from line 15 to 19. The contrast between non fuerat alter and non alter erat is carefully sustained over lines 16 to 19. This forms a perfect heroic formula for chivalric honour. Even though Petrarch had created a thoroughly classical piece, the inner strength is derived, here at least, from as standard a medieval picture as the knight looking up to the noble maiden locked in her tower. The result is that the narrative flow has the versatility of a classical piece, but the form derives a particular colour from the medieval romance, so that the overall effect is decidedly modern; whereas Fortunatus lacked this modern tone completely in his metrical pieces.

This is in line with our observations on Petrarch's nature, which was half medieval and half Renaissance. For a much closer representation of the classical world still, we look at a short poem written by Pietro Bembo. It shows an admirable use of the elegiac couplet. In the long structured sentences (1 - 8, 9 - 14) there could easily have been an element of precocity. Instead the poet cleverly turns them to his advantage.

GALATEA

Pana deum Siculi per iniquas littoris undas

Eludit tarda dum Galatea fuga,

Seque adeo spe profectus, studioque sequendi

Plus medium infido tingeret ille mari,

"Quo fugis o Galatea? mane, mane O Galatea,

Non ego sum," dixit, "non ego, Nympha, Cyclops,

Qui flavum avulsis iaculatus rupibus Acin

Saevitiae liquit tristia signa suae.

Pastorum pecorisque deus, cui garrula cera

Prima dedit varios fistula iuncta modos,

Quem gelidi frondosa colunt pineta Lycaeï,

Laetaque Maenaliò Parrhasis ora iugo,

Unam de cunctis te diligo Neptuninis;

O Galatea mane, O iam Galatea mane."²⁴

A very real danger in writing elegiac couplets is that the self-sufficiency of the two-line units tends to drag the rhythm so that the poem often begins to pall very quickly.²⁵ Sometimes this

very danger can directly be turned to advantage if a shorter poem with trenchant, polished lines is suitable, but this can seldom be done in longer works. Here Bembo overcomes this problem by his use of the extended, complex sentence. Lines one and two are held by dum; in three and four (se)que picks up dum; the main verb dixit appears in five and six while seven and eight are linked by qui.

By this means the elegiac metre is able to contain a more continuous flow of emotions. To succeed in this, while remaining within the standard bounds of a couplet, is a difficult feat of metrication. The first long sentence is a good example of his virtuosity. The poet wants to create the impression of the lover's emotions changing: then he stops, catches his breath and still in all good humour but a little chagrined, asks why Galatea is fleeing. This emotion changes into a playful rebuke in defence of his acceptability. The poet also wishes to contain these changes within a single sentence in order to indicate the rapidity of the change. Moreover he uses the elegiac couplets to provide a cross-current of mournful regret. This underlines the lover's inevitable realization that he has been rejected. The turning points in these changes are the repetitions of mane and non ego. His vanity has been hurt, as he is forced to realize that Galatea does have a will of her own and that not everyone finds him attractive.

The second sentence is equally well handled. Bembo allows the lover's desperation and wretchedness to slowly come to the fore. He again allows the sadness of the couplets to act as a refrain within the

larger sentence structure from nine to fourteen. The lover is finally driven to a humble declaration of his love. Placed as it is directly above a second appeal to Galatea this line carries great pathos for the memory of the first surprised cry, which clearly proved to be completely ineffective. The change of the form between lines five and fifteen is an excellent testimony of Bembo's mastery of the elegy.

Line five is broken by the question halfway in the line. Clearly the lover is put out by the foolish girl's evasiveness. The juxtaposition of the imperative mane has a peremptory, authoritative tone as if she were being called to heel. By line fifteen the vocabulary is not very different but the form and effect have altered totally. It has settled into a lifeless formula of despair with the line divided into two groups that seem to echo the lover's loss. The finest touch is the insertion of iam into the second group which takes upon it all the exasperation and humiliation of a lover's rejection. The utter foolishness of his vain belief, even assumption, that his affections would be reciprocated is contained in the painfully slow sob of iam.

This type of craftsmanship has little in common with the Middle Ages. It bears the stamp of a perfectionist intent on precision and accuracy. The following poem by Dante lacks this classical discipline and the poet is quite content to fudge what he cannot master.

Ridebam, Mopse; magis et magis ille premebat.
Victus amore sui; posito vix denique risu,
"Stulte, quid insanis? "inquam," tua cura capellae
Te potius poscunt, quamquam mala cenula turbet.
Pascua sunt ignota tibi, quae Maenalus alta
Vertice declivi celator solis inumbrat,
Herbarum vario florumque impicta colore.

26

Even making allowances for the pastoral mood magis et magis is slow and lacks all sense of urgency, let alone persuasion. The et hampers the whole effect. A ready knowledge of asyndeton might have avoided this problem. Ignota tibi, quae is rather clumsy reading, as the words seem to have been lumped together willy-nilly.

By contrast we would do well to regard the majesty of a really fine passage written by Baldassare Castiglione.

CLEOPATRA

Marmore quisquis in hoc saevis admorsa colubris
Brachia, et aeterna torpentia lumina nocte
Aspicis, invitam ne crede occumbere letho.
Victores vetuere diu me abrumpere vitam,
Regina ut veherer celebri captiva triumpho,
Scilicet et nuribus parerem serva Latinis,
Illa ego progenies tot ducta ab origine regum,
Quam Pharii coluit gens fortunata Canopi,
Deliciis fovitque suis Aegyptia tellus,
Atque oriens omnis divum dignatus honore est.
Sedulitas, pulchraeque necis generosa cupido
Vicit vitae ignominiam insidiasque tyranni.

27

/.....94

It moves with the gentle dignity of a splendid procession down the Nile. This is well suited to the solemn contemplation of Cleopatra's suicide. There is a ritual quality to the poem and a certain timelessness in the picture of a woman reflecting upon the value of her own life. To achieve the effect of a mind cast into this strange limbo of personal inquiry the poet writes with a distinctive simplicity that beguiles the consummate mastery of his craft. The construction of lines five to seven shows a carefully planned crescendo. At first (5) Pharii is separated quite far from Canopi. In line six Aegyptia and tellus are placed together. Finally oriens omnis is the general term embracing her vast dominions. This crescendo adds pathos to the queen's fate by convincingly representing the majesty of her state and, by implication, the greater tragedy of her fall from such heights.

These examples indicate to what extent the Renaissance poet regained the spirit of the ancient world. Gradually the medieval world slipped further into the distance as the classics exercised the influence of more rigorous discipline upon the vernaculars.

CHAPTER 7

ERASMUS

In one way the Renaissance has been regarded as a reaction, in another broader and positive way, it must seem both an assimilation and a necessary step in the development of the literature of the vernacular languages, which could not gain their majority until they had thoroughly equalled the ancients, or at least attempted to do so. The mainstream of European literature continued to follow the course that had been taken throughout the Middle Ages, but after the Renaissance that literature was the more forceful for being controlled by the assimilation of the classics.¹

In terms of the reaction mentioned above, the following quotation from Dr. Reedijk is applicable:

"Of course the humanists were to a large extent, if not entirely, justified in their claim to have regained classical purity of form; and if the manner in which they used to assert themselves strikes us as being needlessly obstreperous, we should not forget that no cultural movement can preserve its impetus without vilifying its predecessors. Yet the question remains whether, as far as poetry is concerned, it would not be more accurate to say that the humanists brought about an important technical improvement rather than a rebirth."²

Dr Reedijk's first sentence refers to the reaction against the Middle Ages, while his second sentence describes the overall effect after the assimilation of ancient form. What seems at first to be something of a contradiction is in fact a paradox. The Romans, after all, both vilified and exalted their predecessors. Horace looks down on Plautus' amateurish lines and is somewhat scornful of Ennius too. At the same time the cultural predecessors of the Roman poets of the golden and silver ages are often taken to be the Hellenists, to whom later Latin poets now and then paid the high compliment of imitation. It seems to me then, that vilification is in the nature of the young Turk.

The danger of this phenomenon for an historical appreciation lies in mistaking this rejection of the immediate past in favour of some more noble and ancient forefather, as an attempt to set the clock back. The Renaissance was not an attempt to revive the use of the Latin language so that it might again maintain the commerce, both intellectual and material, of future ages. Men sought far more to recover the exact detail of the great body of thought and knowledge expressed in Latin. An example of this attitude is Erasmus.

Like many humanists he believed in attaining an eloquence that could reflect every shade of meaning in the mind of man. Erasmus recognized this quality in ancient writers and sought to match it. His method was "transmogrifying Greek and Latin literature into a series of notes to produce a body of material which would be easily retained and repeated."⁴ For this reason he wrote the De Copia Verborum which covered variation and appreciation of

words themselves as well as the De Copia Rerum which dealt with matters such as simile, metaphor, fable and allegory.

Erasmus suggests that chosen passages should be noted down and then studied for different ways in which they could be used as topics. The matter in the note-book should be organized under headings, sub-headings and themes. Prospective writers are advised to work in this way through classical literature at least once.

Headings are to be chosen according to virtues and vices, so that opposites are grouped together. Stock themes, such as "each to his own taste", "love and hate" or "old age and youth" also provide useful material. Erasmus himself had read through the classical writings and could the more convincingly inspire others to do so as well. Much literature was popularly categorized in accordance with the methods of the De Copia. Memory was the watch-word. Leporeus suggested his readers should imagine a wall divided up according to the facts they needed to remember by associating each brick in the wall with a fact. Facts were thus catalogued in long, complicated lists, and it is this fact that most clearly indicates the determination and tenacity of Renaissance scholars in their commitment to classical learning.

"We can trace the effects (of the absorption of those portions into the European tradition) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, throughout the plays of Racine and the pages of Johnson "

We feel at once a closer bond with a completely Renaissance figure such as Machiavelli who drew on a culture "where a demagogue can be

described by comparing him with Cleon the Tanner", than we do with a man like Petrarch who was forced, by necessity, to draw on the medieval background of "sermon-books, facts inextricably mixed with fancy." ⁷ As a result, students of the eighteenth century were enabled, through the efforts of men such as Erasmus, to enter the classical world of thought far more readily than that of Charlemagne's court. Historical, spiritual and linguistic details firmly fixed the patterns of Western thinking along ancient rather than medieval lines. This was the sense in which the humanists reshaped the Western world.

The workings of this process are well illustrated in Erasmus' own development. "His work shows us the process in all its stages: the De Copia outlines his method. The Adages present us with the fruits of that method at the moment when the preliminaries of analysis and classification are complete, but before the imitator has sat down to write. And finally the Colloquies and the Praise of Folly show us the finished product." ⁸

In the approved method of the De Copia, the Adages were chosen for their brevity; above all anecdotes, metaphors and sentences. It was a work particularly aimed ad philosophiam, ad decus orationis, ad persuadendum et ad intelligendos auctores. ⁹ Adages must also be popular sayings put in a pithy and attractive way. Erasmus warns that adages are not to be used indiscriminately but are best appreciated when rarely employed. He reminds us of his resourceful belief in adapting a single adage to various occasions by a discreet and clever setting. Most of his adages have a rhetorical cast, although some have a moral bearing.

Erasmus was a great admirer of Euripides and Lucian. He loved their natural metaphor, sensitivity to kindness and beauty and hatred of anything threatening the pursuit of happiness. He adopted Greek values and attempted to establish Greek culture in Renaissance circles. He initially translated Greek authors, and then excerpted from them to create the Adages which became a monumental testimony to the Greek way of life. This Greek way of life was put across by means of quotations and masses of seemingly disjointed detail. This was exactly what had so long been required in Europe: an easily accessible source-book of representative and carefully selected detail capable of re-creating the salient characteristics of what was regarded as an exemplary age.

The result of this on Neo-Latin poetry was the introduction of a large quantity of imitative verse. Quite often it is not so much verse written in an attempt to equal the work of some ancient poet (although this is also occasionally the case) as verse written to gain an understanding, in a more intimate way, of the classical world. The primary aim is often not the creation of real poetry, but is a mere attempt to master verse technique. The importance of this sheer craftsmanship in Latin verse for men of the Renaissance can easily be underestimated. Scholars stood in awe of the classics and the ultimate measure of facility in Greek and Latin was flawless verse and prose composition.

Dr. Reedijk underrates the force of this desire and discusses at some length the problem of why there was such a quantity of very correct Latin verse and such a low standard of poetry.

Fortunately we know of an analogous situation in the ancient world. Palmer describes the impact made by Greek culture upon the Romans in the following words:

"The revelation of the cultural treasures amassed by the world's most gifted people over a long and eventful history had an overwhelming effect Typical of the philhellenic zeal among the Roman aristocracy is Aemilius Paullus:... as the spoils of victory¹⁰ (3rd Macedonian War) he demanded nothing but the king's library."

The main difference between the Roman and the Renaissance situation is that the Romans were living at the same time as the Greeks, whereas Renaissance scholars had first to overcome a huge gap of about eight centuries. To do this, they had to synthesize their own picture of the ancient world from the surviving texts before the work of incorporation could be begun. Latin had been able to employ Greek models at first hand but the Renaissance required one more step which had to be taken first.

"Once (a student) had embarked upon the recommended course, once he had started analysing and memorizing, the techniques he employed, acquired, like some powerful engine, an impetus of their own and took in everything irrespective of its interest, so that the whole or nearly the whole of the classical heritage passed into the common¹¹ stock of European thought."

To the Renaissance, Greek and Latin literature possessed very much the same value that Greek literature had possessed for the Romans.

We certainly do not judge Cicero by his Greek writings nor Virgil by his, if any had been sufficiently prized to survive. For this reason we do not even know whether they wrote Greek verse at all. The Renaissance scholars certainly did write Latin, and it is no doubt to their credit that some of that verse is fine poetry.

In his inability to account for Renaissance Latin verse of this kind, Dr. Reedijk attempts three explanations which are all equally irrelevant.

He first suggests that today we tend to appreciate poetry with criteria different from those of antiquity.

"We are prepared to regard poetry as a legitimate art only if it has as its source Inspiration with a capital I towering above all
12
suspicion."

If we refer to the modern audience, it must be strongly doubted whether the success of T. S. Elliot's highly allusive poetry could be used as proof of Dr. Reedijk's assertion. Secondly it must be pointed out that the danger of Inspiration is not even modern.
13
Horace's picture of the vesanus poeta proved there were ancient thinkers who were convinced that an excessive stress on inspiration alone easily leads to a kind of bad poetry which has, like the poor, always been with us and is, even today, unlikely to depart in favour of good poetry.

Dr. Reedijk's second explanation is that at the time of the Renaissance men were not very pressed for time. "Accumulation of knowledge had not compelled them to economize; they

could afford to dispense what ideas or knowledge they possessed¹⁴
at leisure and in neat and unoriginal hexameters." This impression
of leisurely Renaissance scholars is hardly to be reconciled with the
rigorous scholarship undertaken by men such as Erasmus who recommend
analysing and categorizing the whole range of the classical works
as a sound beginning.¹⁵

Dr. Reedijk's third explanation is that the Renaissance must have
appreciated poetry in a different way. It simply regarded it as a
technique: "the art of poetry held no secret which a man of learning
and good taste, and blessed with ample leisure could not master,"¹⁶
This solution is incorrect on three counts. In the first place
Dr. Reedijk fails to recognize the reason behind the emphasis on
technicality and in this respect misinforms his reader. Secondly
the man of leisure turning out poor poetry is as universal and as
objectionable as the vegans poeta. Horace provides the correction
necessary for this fault as well.

".....he knows nothing about poetry, yet has the audacity to write
it. 'And why not?' he says. He is his own master, a man of good
family and above all rated as a knight in wealth."¹⁷

The third count disqualifying Dr. Reedijk's view of Renaissance
poetry is from his own mouth. He himself shows that Erasmus only
wrote short poems whenever he found the time and that the role of
a poet was more of a convention than anything else. Dr. Reedijk
then tells us, ironically enough, that Erasmus's one fine Latin
poem was written at his leisure, while his poorer poetry was
written under pressure. This is a blatant contradiction in his
criticism:

"In one great poem, however, Erasmus confronts us with all the qualities and with all the force that we expect to find in the true poet ... The Carmen Alpestre was conceived in August 1506, during a few days of forced mental inactivity." ¹⁸

Dr. Reedijk raises the question of why it was that the Renaissance scholars persisted with Latin verse imitations "for so many generations and to so little avail." ¹⁹ To answer this, the whole tradition of secular metrical Latin verse from Venantius Fortunatus to Petrarch and then to Milton has to be kept in mind. It would be most misleading to study a single Renaissance poet in isolation from his cultural milieu and on the basis of modern criteria. Inevitably this results in the kind of desperate explanations mooted by Dr. Reedijk.

Nevertheless, whether we choose to regard the Carmen Alpestre as the single redeeming feature of Erasmus's Latin poetry or as a sample of fine poetry that would have been far more numerous had the poet found more time to devote to poetry we certainly ought to be acquainted with this poem.

AD GULIELMUM COPUM MEDICORUM ERUDITISSIMUM DE SENECTUTE

CARMEN

Vnica nobilium medicorum gloria Cope,

Seu quis requirat artem,

Siue fidem spectet, seu curam: in quolibet horum

Vel iniquus ipse nostro

Praecipuus tribuit Gulielmo liuor honores.

Cedit fugitque morbi

Ingenio genus omne tue, Teterima porro

Senecta, morbus ingens,

Nullis arceriue potest pelliue medelis

Quin derepente oborta

Corporis epotet succos adnimeque vigorem

Hebetet, simul trecentis

Hinc atque hinc stipata malis; quibus omnia carptim

Vellitque deteritque

Commoda quae secum subolescens vexerit aetas:

Formam, statum, colorem,

Partem animi memorem cum pectore, lumina, somnos,

Vires, alacritatem,

Autorem vitae igniculum decerpit, et huius

Nutricium liquorem.

Vitaleis adimit flatus, cum sanguine corpus,

Risus, iocos, lepores. ²⁰

The poem is written in couplets consisting of hexameters which alternate with catalectic iambic dimeters. This creates the effect of a simple, living force in the hexameter line sharply disrupted by the contrasting staccato dimeter. The excerpt is concerned with physical deterioration in old age. The metre is well suited to the subject, as it underlines the contrast between the once strong, firm body of youth and its poor remains when senility sets in.

Erasmus portrays the harsh truth that life is decay, and not only of the body but of the mind. By implication he touches on the harsher notion that the mind is ultimately subject to the body.

Probably the most convincing lines describe the pathetic collapse of the human frame by means of a type of catalogue. In lines ten, twelve, fourteen and sixteen the dimeter by its sound and rhythm contrives perfectly to toll a kind of knell for all the joys of youth; one after another. The contrast between the groups of single words (which almost audibly reproduce the sensation of the irrevocable loss of the faculties) and the swift hexameter lines 11, 13, 15 and 17 is quite dramatic in this passage. The retrogression towards the helplessness of senility becomes a horrible reality.

By contrast we may look at one of Erasmus's poorer poems. It was written on the occasion of Archduke Philip's homecoming. This poem, c.LXXVIII, describes the crowd's enthusiasm.

"The poet's good taste is not always infallible," says Reedijk.

Nec fallax ista est iteratae vocis imago:

Saxa etiam reducem sentiscunt muta Philippum

Et recinunt reducem minime iam muta Philippum. 21

"The poet tries to make too much of the effect, and the jubilant chanting of the prince's name peters out in what becomes rather boring repetition." 22

Other examples of poor taste are in C XIV 69/70:

Nusquam grandisonam Virgilii tubam,

Nusquam blandisonam Maeonii lyram ...

23
and in C VIII 133:

Tu quoque quicumque es cui pax et gaudia curae.... ²⁴

and in C XX 9:

Quis tam turbo ferox, tantus et omnia

Repente concutit tremor?

Nostra et non modico mens trepidat metu... ²⁵

Erasmus' early poems form the bulk of his verse; in this regard he is similar to Milton. The difference between the two poets is that Erasmus continued writing in Latin verse long after the time of his carmina iuvenalia. It would be unfair, however, to judge him by these productions, for he did not consent to their publication. It was only after his early poems had been printed without his knowledge that he granted permission for these Progymnasmata to appear.

His Carmen Bucolicum was the earliest attempt and displays the closest imitation of classical verse, particularly of Vergil. He wrote this poem at the age of fourteen. It is not to be excused or regarded as something better than a curiosity when compared with the Carmen Alpestre. Nevertheless, we can recognise the precision of his metre and the accuracy of its execution.

As Dr. Reedijk points out, Erasmus was a specialist in metre:
"The 156 poems printed in the main body of this edition (Erasmus's Latin poetry) represent twenty different kinds." ²⁶

On the whole, the earlier poems are not as firm and subtle as the later ones partly because he was initially preoccupied with me-

trical perfection and only later gained the ability to concern himself with the creation of genuine poetry. In the works he wrote until 1489 we cannot rapidly and safely determine whether Erasmus is referring to actual events in his life or merely fictions. Often he is simply employing classical forms as an exercise in itself as mentioned above. After that date, however, his poetry turns to weighty subjects with which he deals at considerable length.

Poems 23 - 25 are not very convincing, and it is not until the 1496 works in De Casa Natalitia that we see the poet writing really commendable pieces. "Especially the complimentary poems addressed to Gaguin and Andrelani are rather charming samples of Erasmus' craft."²⁷

In the Expostulatio Iesu and the Institutum hominis Christiani there is an apparent simplicity which is in contradiction with a conviction of Erasmus, i.e. that simple things should be said in a simple way. In fact both these poems while using rather everyday language, are skilfully and painstakingly contrived. The following is an extract from the Expostulatio Iesu C.LXXXV 52/5: Cur efferationis feris

Me, me non redamas homo, cui semel omnia feci,

Quem condidi, quem sanguine

28

Asserui proprio.....

"the rallentando in Quem condidi seems to convey very aptly²⁹ the melancholy of the Lord in the face of the obduracy of mankind."

In his epigrams and epitaphs Erasmus shows himself capable of graceful

and well-balanced poetry. Emotional tension is not the determining force in much of Erasmus' poetry.³⁰ Unfortunately Dr. Reedijk once again misunderstands him and ascribes rather harsh sentiments to one of the great humanists; as we may observe in the following extract:

"Erasmus' passions were his work, his belief in the basic truths of Christianity ... his need of prestige and recognition, his suspiciousness, his tenacity, his preference for devious methods and his overwhelming desire to be more clever than anybody else."³¹

Above all else Erasmus was a popularizer of the classics, and it is incredible that his interest in antiquity was as shallow as Dr. Reedijk would have us believe. "Erasmus was not only a scholar and popularizer of the classics, he was also the author of some of the most original works of his century."³² Miss Philips points out the delicate nature of Erasmus' relationship with the classics and stresses that he always saw Greek and Roman literature in terms of the contemporary world: moreover that he was a profound Ciceronian, not in the blind, unthinking way of many scholars satirized in his *Ciceronianus*, but in a deep empathy with the warm humanism which we notice in his short treatises.

"I can't read Cicero's De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Officiis, De Tusculanis Quaestionibus without sometimes kissing the book and blessing that pure heart, divinely inspired as it was."³³

As much as Petrarch's personality was the reflection of his own age, so it was with Erasmus. "The distinction of Erasmus lay in his clear vision of the object in view.... (What was needed was) a practical idealist who could appreciate the necessity for exactitude but could see beyond it to the knitting together of the best in human experience. Erasmus was in this way the man for the hour." ³⁴ Dr. Reedijk views Erasmus from our own situation today and misses a good deal of significant achievements in Erasmus' work which we take for granted as heirs of the Renaissance. One of the most important, perhaps, is the attitude towards time which the new learning quickly developed.

"Erasmus and his contemporaries were building up a new view of the past, differentiating between the centuries and obtaining a perspective which had been unknown to the medieval world." ³⁵

Miss Philips is in line with Bolgar by drawing attention to the nature of Erasmus' efforts in terms of the shortcomings and gaps of his times. Imitation explains a good deal of his peculiarities as an interpreter of the classics. The Adages were used to transmit the essence of a vast body of classical thought in a readily comprehensible form. The following quotation clearly illustrates his attitude towards imitation:

"It should not be a matter of attaching to your speech whatever pretty thing turns up but of assimilating it in your soul ... so that it may seem born of you rather than begged from another, and may carry with it the force and character of your own mind." ³⁶

CHAPTER 8

MILTON

"Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classick elegance." ¹

This commentary clearly indicates how important it is not to underestimate the difficulty of sheer technical mastery of classical Latin verse composition. Milton only appears at the end of the Renaissance and is then the first to write 'with classick elegance'. This is true to the pattern which had been sketched previously in Erasmus' poetry. A great effort on the author's part was required merely to regain a truthful picture of the ancient world before any real empathy with the classics could be ensured. Dr. Johnson goes on to emphasize the difficulty of Milton's task:

"Of these exercises which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can perform." ²

Dr. Johnson chooses the correct verb in "applauded" and carries us straight back to the schools of rhetoric in Gaul during the fourth century. Ingenious display pieces had won praise right down to the time of Venantius Fortunatus, but the accomplishment was so much more remarkable nine centuries later, when Latin had become an

ancient tongue. The most serious problem in attempting such verse composition was this very attention, which served to hamper a spontaneity of expression. In order to attain poetic conviction, Milton had to overcome the unavoidable publicity of producing a rarity, however natural the ancient language was to him.

Milton solved the problem in a most original, but at the same time traditional, way.³ Quite often the most original efforts are the result of a close study of a particularly traditional theme.

Horace's A.P. is a case in point. By drawing on Greek sources but imparting his own "force and character,"⁴ Horace wrote one of the most personal poems that have come down to us from antiquity.

Milton's treatment of the Elegia Quinta demonstrates a similar technique.

"The (Milton's) treatment of such a theme (threefold renewal; of cosmic amorousness, of just order, both cosmic and social, and of prophetic vision) in such a poem embodies an interesting and quite Miltonic solution to the Renaissance problem of adapting classical genres."⁵ The fifth elegy is a celebration of spring and the renewal of the poet's powers. As R.W. Condee points out, it is essentially a static poem in the same way that the Nativity Ode is. There is little progression, simply the wish for an eternal and everlasting spring:

Sic Tellus lasciva suos suspirat amores
Matris in exemplum caetera turba ruunt

"Elegia Quinta is one of Milton's greatest short poems in either English or Latin and certainly the best poem he had written up to this time."⁷

Condee believes it to have been so particularly successful because Milton did not stop to draw a moral, but was content to paint a picture. The Greco-Roman elements are controlled and never allowed to take over in their own right. The ancient figures are used symbolically.

The plunge of Phoebus the sun into Tethys the sea.⁸

Appollo, the sun-god, lifts the poet towards the Heavens after it has been announced that spring is returning along with the poet's power. Spring gives song to the poet (Milton) and he in turn gives this particular song (the poem in question) to spring. With spring comes the nightingale and together the poet and nightingale sing. Their song is a poem which not only turns out to be a prayer but a celebration of fertility:

Et sua quisque diu sibi numina lucus habeto

Nec vos arborea dii precor ite domo

Te referant miseris te Iupiter aurea terris

Saecla, quid ad nimbos aspera tela redis?

9

Furthermore the duet of nightingale and poet may be taken as a doctrine of cosmic vision to kindred minds. This is a Neoplatonist view in which "art and nature transcend the material world and in their material works copy the same transcendent models."¹⁰

Skulsky takes the elegy to be a hymn according to the ancient scheme of Comes and Scaliger, institutum componendorum hymnorum. The forms of harmony in the visible world, eros, justice and poetic vision, are affirmed and by that means Tempus revolubile and formissima dearum Natura similarly affirm the maker. The elegiac topics of commemoratio diei, gratulatio and exultatio are amplified, and moral topics are combined with meteorological. They do not, however, damage the fabric of love elegy, and H. Skulsky does well to quote "the motto of Propertian love elegy - maxima de nilo nascitur historia - to which Milton retorts: paulo maiora canamus." ¹¹

Milton's adaptation of classical forms is a clear indication of his complete mastery of them. He does not distort or abuse them but rather enriches the whole genre of Latin love elegy. Gilbert Highet aptly compares Milton to Shelley for their knowledge of cosmology and wide universal thought in both poets. Shelley had "a thorough grasp of the principles of classical form, which served ¹² not to repress but to guide his luxuriant imagination." In both poets the writings and thought of the ancients were assimilated so completely that, from the point of view of their poetical achievements, they could spontaneously and readily recall the atmosphere and character of the Greek and Roman world.

According to Skulsky, the central cosmic eros of the elegy is the union of sun and earth which is paralleled by Aether's claim to earth in the Georgics and the Pervigilium Veneris. In the Homeric hymns and Macrobius, Sol Imbricator's bride figures variously as

Cybele, Venus or Proserpina. All of them are linked with the passion of Tellus in Milton's Elegia Quinta. Pan is also used by Milton, as well as Natalis Comes as a solar figure. From the union of Pan and Tellus comes Aurora who announces the annual wooing of mother earth and the sun.

Furthermore there is a principle of animation and regularity in the metaphysical sense, enstated by Milton's chthonic dynasty of Tellus, Cybele or Ops (62, 126), Vesta (112), Ceres (126) and Proserpina. This constant value is suggested by Comes' image of elementorum natura which is close to that guarantee of perpetuity in Milton's fourth prolusion. What Skulsky is proposing is part of a dominant Stoic and Neoplatonic allegory: "the moment of animation of a terrene spirit or soul." ¹³ He raises the question of whether or not this elegy is a revelation of that standard principle of animation and harmony.

Venus is shown as being annually rejuvenated, identified with Tellus or Cybele and at a more cosmic level as the Lucretian aspect of a foedus naturae, or the Stoic world soul of the Pervigilium Veneris. This goddess in Neoplatonic mythography gives birth to "an omnipresent generative elan or Love that, like Milton's Cupid, runs wandering throughout the world - the divine intelligence, in ¹⁴ Comes' terms, that pervades all things."

The second part of the mythological construction which lends unity to the elegy is concerned with "just order, cosmic and social." This is substantiated by Venus as the link between eros and just order: wooing and marriage. Lucretius and Ovid have this in common;

Venus is identified with Juno Pronuba, the latter sometimes being an aspect of Ceres or Earth. Juno and Venus are applied to the same planet, as Plotinus sees cosmic Love as being the offspring of Nature (Venus) and Mind (Jupiter). Marriage and tranquillity are part of a larger order from which Guile, Slaughter and Force are banished. The spring gods have functions of order. Apollo is the Orphic eye of justice. Ceres is attended by Eirene and Eunomia, Cybele wears a turreted crown as a symbol of the cities she provides for, and Ceres gave the cities laws, while Proserpina is lawgiver.

Part of Milton's poetic gift is his close identification of the abstract with the concrete. By equating abstract thoughts with actual mythological figures, he gains an admirable facility and articulation in dealing with what could have been very abstruse problems. It would be difficult for those uninitiated in the mythology of Greece and Rome to correlate Milton's closely reasoned argument of divinities with the underlying, personal images. The material is inherited but the appropriation is quite personal. Milton succeeds in using this method to bring to the surface a good deal that is normally considered latent.

Jupiter was, to the Neoplatonists, the personification of eternal law and virtue. He had conferred on created man the civic art of shame and justice. At the end of the elegy he is invoked to return and usher in a new Golden Age. He is the god of spring, as Venus is the patron goddess of Spring. Sol is called the patron of summer, as Iao is of autumn and Pluto of winter. In any restoration it would

be suitable for Jupiter, who had originally shrunk the yearlong reign of spring to a season, to reappear and re-establish that complete Golden Age.

The last part of Skulsky's thesis is the final rite of spring: the rebirth of the vates. Spring gives the poet his inspiration and he uses that gift to repay her by exercising it in song (Carmen, hymn, poem). In spring all nature is song: Apollo is cosmic mind and weaves universal order by granting understanding to men. Apollo is the source of cosmic vision to kindred minds. Art and nature both copy the models provided ideally by this vision: so nightingale (nature) and poet (art) sing together symbolizing the union provided by the vision.

Milton's approach (in the role of the poet) to this ideal is due to a cosmic flight; corpore liber just as Lucretius' animi iactus liber. The poet has successfully adapted the love elegy to cosmic nature by a careful balancing of mythological figures. Love is used, through Venus and the whole integrated band accompanying her, to bring eros, justice and poetry together as an affirmation of the maker, of creation and universal unity.

This elegy provides a very effective introduction to Milton's modus operandi in dealing with classical forms. A similar method is used for Elegia Prima, although not with the same measure of success. There is a large amount of autobiography in it, for which I turn to Dr. Johnson as a most astute observer.

Milton was unpopular at university and was one of the last students at either Oxford or Cambridge to suffer corporal punishment. He was rusticated and sent down to London, possibly losing a term.

Me tenet urbs reflua quam Thamesis alluit unda

Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet,

Iam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum

Nec dudum vetiti me laris angit amor

.....

Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri

Caeteraque ingenio non subeunda meo. 15

Clearly vetiti laris indicates his banishment, albeit temporary, from Cambridge. Lines five and six show that "he is weary of enduring the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo." ¹⁶ As Johnson sagely remarks, "what was more than a threat was probably punishment." ¹⁷ All the same, he returned and graduated a Master in 1632, but with no love of Cambridge. Of the two explanations for his rustication which Johnson proposes (harshness of the authorities or ¹⁸ Milton's "captious perverseness,") I favour the latter. There is an uncanny similarity in that perverseness to the nature of Shelley, who, like Milton, had a ruthlessly cerebral intellect.

"Rand says that Milton's elegiacs breathe a spirit of Horace and ¹⁹ Ovid." This is rather an unusual combination of elements and not an easily reconcilable one. The key might be that undeniable elements of both poets certainly do appear in the elegies but that the

traditional form alone. is Ovidian while the structuring genius behind it which is detectable in the tone, is Horatian. C.O. Brink quotes a description of Wordsworth given by Shelley: "wakening a sort of thought in sense."²⁰ Brink reverses this expression to apply it to Horace: "Wakening a sort of sense in thought."²¹ This applies to both Shelley himself and the Horatian element in Milton's Latin verse. The danger is that the outward sense of the Ovidian form may be confused with the inner sense that comes through the structure and tone. Milton employs the Ovidian forms in a disarmingly direct way, and it is easy to underrate Milton's familiarity with classical thought so far as to imagine his merely dealing with Ovidian conventions per se.

R.W. Condee points this out: "Elegia Prima depends heavily on Ovid; the tags of phrases from the Amores, the Metamorphoses, the Epistulae ex Ponto and the Tristia mark almost every line of the poem... But Elegia Prima uses Ovid more cleverly than merely as a source for pat phrases: it poses a parallel, or more properly a cross-relation, between Milton's exile from Cambridge and Ovid's exile from Rome."²² It is in this rational adaptation, which can only occur when the poet is completely at one with his tradition, that we can identify a similarity to Horace's treatment of inherited material.

Ovid was exiled from Rome to Tomis: Milton from Cambridge to London. Milton has a sinewy grasp of his analagous situation. We notice how cleverly Milton inverts the most obvious echo of Ovid. At Tomis the Latin poets remembered the theatres of Rome and the applauding crowds; in London Milton enjoyed the plays more than anything else.

At Tomis Ovid was without books, in London Milton could devote endless hours to study. Ovid was without his ladies, while Milton's most successful part of the poem concerns the beautiful girls in London:

Gloria virginibus debetur prima Britannis

23

Extera sat tibi sit foemina posse sequi

At the end Milton suddenly cuts short this clever exercise and abruptly tells us of his approaching return to Cambridge. This note gives a clue to a similarity in Shelley. Both poets display a certain arrogance and disdain of petty matters. Johnson exposes this in Milton's objection to academical education, which arose from the fact that men planning to be ministers took part in "writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos." ²⁴ Yet this is the same man who took such pleasure in London theatre. Clearly this elegy is merely the construction of a very deft mind. To a shrewd critic like Johnson the contradiction is obvious. But to a poet like Shelley or Milton, who is able to write poetry in a strongly cerebral manner, the one is divorced from the other.

Milton's second and third elegies are mediocre. They are clearly nothing more than exercises and bear the stamp of artifice in every line. The second is cold and mechanical, with hardly a suspicion of real sorrow at the demise of the Praeconis Academici Cantabrigiensis. R.W. Condee points out that the third elegy is interesting in its adumbration of the poems which have been rated as Milton's finest, Manso and Epitaphium Damonis. In elegy number three, written on the death of Bishop Andrews, the progression in theme is from "initial grief to ultimate consolation in the

knowledge that Andrews rests happily in Heaven." ²⁵ The execution of the theme is wanting in momentum and proceeds by that very ²⁶ difficult device - the dream. Lucan handled this superbly in a portrayal of Pompey's prophetic vision of Pharsalia, but it is rarely treated well and easily falls into a deus ex machina type of escape mechanism.

The same criticism may be levelled at the poem In Quintum Novembris, which Milton wrote at the age of sixteen. The preamble is long and fraught with plots, counterplots, flights and popes, in quite a miniature epic. Such intricate preparations take up 193 of the 226 lines: leaving Fama a tight schedule in which to flaw Guy Fawkes' plot. The reader is left with the suspicion that Milton grew weary of the exercise and cut it short as quickly as expediency permitted.

The fourth elegy is commendable but has none of the startling power that distinguishes its later sequel, Manso, which is also a panegyric but of a much higher quality. The fourth elegy is addressed to his former teacher, Thomas Young. It is superior to the second and third elegies for its warmth and sincerity, despite the standard host of Greco-Roman deities and lower divinities.

The seventh elegy has often been underestimated. The poet tells of a romance in which he turns up his nose at love, only to experience Cupid vindicating the amatory cause by having another beautiful girl bewitch and promptly snub him. Milton realizes his error and with penitent heart prays that in future he may pursue love with greater success.

R.W. Condee points out what sets this work above the second and third elegies. It is Milton's treatment of his own poetic persona: "he makes fun of himself not only by setting forth his foolhardy scorn for Cupid early in the poem, but also by the quasi-heroic quality of his mock serious invocation to the god at the end."²⁷

J.R.C. Martyn reaches the same conclusion from his analysis of the poem. He points out the deceptive factor in the poem is the subtlety of tone which arises from the irony of the Ovidian wit.²⁸ This is scarcely more than one would expect from as self-confident and gifted a poet as John Milton at the age of eighteen. The conclusion enhances our appreciation of his clever treatment of the persona of a love-sick poet on his knees before Cupid - his prayer is for connubial bliss. "The tone must surely be ironical."²⁹

What strikes Martyn is Milton's artistic mastery. As we have observed in connection with the Adventum Veris, the poet may use a wholly Ovidian technique, but the force underlying it is that of an uncompromisingly rational mind. Martyn appreciates this duality between the Ovidian form and the subtle irony underneath.

Condee shows to what extent Milton falls short of this method in the Ad Patrem.³⁰ He isolates three main faults. Milton writes the poem in reply to his father's rebuke about his preoccupation with verse. The reply admits that in future poetry might gain immortality for himself and his father.

According to Condee, Milton's first fault in the Ad Patrem, is his concern with disassociating himself from frivolous works by belittling

them rather than turning his head upward in order to prove his ability to tackle larger subjects. By negating the petty subjects, he only affirms their hold over him all the more: he feels behoved to account for them.

The second fault is poor arrangement:

Ordinis haec virtus erit et venus, aut ego fallor

ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici

31

Pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat.

Brink remarks, "(Horace) demonstrates the strength and charm of the procedure by postponing, according to his precept, all that is not needful in this place..... This amounts to illustrating ordo both as the art of concentration and as the art of the highly concentrative and undiffuse poet, Horace."³²

The Ad Patrem rises to a climax at L.37 with a vision of heavenly bliss - at a place where three-quarters of the poem is still to follow. Ll 41 - 55 seem to present an anti-climax and to be randomly placed after the false climax at L.37. The reasons for the positioning of Ll.67 - 76 is equally elusive. "The reference to Phaethon ... takes the poem in quite the wrong direction."³³ The use of ergo seems unprecedented and hangs in mid-air. This hazy and random order produces a purposeless, hit-and-miss type of logic.

The third fault is to be found in the conclusion. Instead of giving a confirmatory tone, it is again drawn back into the mire of trivialities that dogged the beginning. It leaves the poem with limp ends and a rather sorry aspect generally as a result of the feeble

logic.

The value, however, of the Ad Patrem lies in the way Milton treats his persona. He tactfully stresses his father's generosity and personal interest in the arts, particularly music. So he avoids portraying his father as an oppressive ogre and himself as a fawning suppliant. By including him in the number of admirers of the arts he presents a generous image of him. Milton changed to hexameters in this poem and shows great skill and facility in using them. This is to prove of value in his later works.

So we notice three serious faults in the Ad Patrem, but two advances. In subsequent poems he avoids precisely these faults while developing his persona and his treatment of the hexameter even further. The next poem we are to discuss picks up nicely from here.

It is a panegyric addressed to Milton's host in Naples, Giovanni Battista Manso. E.M.W. Tillyard considers Manso to be Milton's
34
finest Latin poem. Milton was thirty when he wrote it. The conventional topoi of the long tradition of this genre are carefully observed.

As we have seen in several of his other poems, Milton's close obedience to form beguiles a deeper poetic principle. It is as well, I think, to distinguish between principle and craft in Milton's work. His craft in the Elegia Septima may well have been Ovidian, but his principle was ironic. In the Elegia Prima he inverted his situation with that of Ovid's while remaining within the imitative convention. What may appear in In Adventum Veris

as the craft of complicated trappings characteristic of classical composition, is, in fact, the principle of a larger whole: the poet's profound cosmological sense.

The better Milton masters his craft, overcoming the blemishes observed in the Ad Patrem, the closer the co-incidence between the craft and his actual poetic principle comes, until it becomes eventually impossible to distinguish between the two, without an analysis of the poem on the basis of the particular conventions of its genre. Miltonic poetry then, is Horatian merely in its observations of traditional form but is much more so in the co-incidence of craft and principle; a requirement which is so outspoken in the A.P. In Horace's work co-incidence is so close that C.O. Brink is obliged to take the greatest pains in substantiating its dependence on Alexandrian critical tradition at all.

35

As Condee points out, Manso begins straightaway with a traditional topos - that of the subject's fame, more particularly in war and peace:

Haec quoque, Manse tuae meditantur carmina laudi 36

Manso is a kind and generous patron of poetry. Milton compares him to Chiron in a long metaphor, ll. 54 - 69. Milton reverses the synkrisis central to much panegyric in Renaissance times: from poet (giver) - host: patron (receiver)-guest to poet; guest; patron - host. In line with this our poet establishes the hierarchy of Virgil, Horace, Tasso, Marino and Milton, then, on the second rung of the hierarchy, their patrons: Gallus, Maecenas, and Manso.

Milton then writes some of his most celebrated lines in Latin:

Aut dicam invictae sociali foedere mensae

Magnanimos hercos, et (O modo spiritus adsit)

Frangam Saxonicas Britorum sub Marte phalanges.

37

"There is great power in the crash of frangam after the hushed parenthesis of O modo spiritus adsit.³⁸ It is fine poetry and the reversal of synkrisis is in keeping with his adaptation of the other genres we have already noticed. Much of the new-found humanism so highly prized by Erasmus can be seen in this poem. We find it first expressed by Terence: Homo sum, nihil humani alienum a me puto esse.³⁹ Milton's panegyric similarly captures the spirit of harmony between poet and society which we read of in the Orpheus passage of the A.P.

"In the large view, Milton's poem finds its integrity not merely in the theme of praise for Manso, but more importantly in its embodiment of a universe united by mutual trust, respect and affection transcending human mortality."⁴⁰ This is reminiscent in some ways of impressions we gain from classical authors of the Rome of Maecenas.

Milton's adaptation of the panegyric was an enrichment of the genre, as the cosmology of his elegia quinta proved to be an enrichment of the love elegy. The same accomplishment is repeated in his last Latin poem: the Epitaphium Damonis. As F. J. Nichols points out, pastoral elegy in the Renaissance proved to be a difficult genre. Contemporaries of Milton's found that it was virtually impossible to resolve the lament in poetic terms. In classical eclogues the deceased had been deified, as in Virgil's fifth eclogue. Nichols quotes

the examples of the Renaissance poets Sannazaro, Castiglione and

41

Buchanan.

The first poet wrote a love poem in the form of a piscatory eclogue: Phyllis is deified and the pagan is, therefore, successfully concluded in the ancient way. On the other hand, Castiglione's and Buchanan's poems both end rather lamely. In the former poet's work, Alcon, the efficacy of the song is dubious. The poet may build an altar but the harmony resulting from a real consolation still seems to be lacking. In the Desiderium of Buchanan the poet seems to fall between two stools. Admittedly the work contains a song within a song, but in spite of this greater subtlety the resolution hardly seems any closer.

To the pagan world of Rome, a deification was, of course, a satisfactory conclusion to an epitaph. When the Christian world desired to employ the pastoral elegy, this conclusion was obviously contradictory to Christian teaching and therefore failed. The Renaissance did desire to write pastoral elegies, for the beauty of their form and because they so perfectly answered the universal human need to honour the dead. Miss M.H. Nicholson touches on the compulsion resting on everyone in the Greek and Roman world to bury a kinsman decently and mark his passing in some way. She refers us to the example of Antigone who was refused permission to perform the rites, however scant, which it was her duty as a daughter to perform.

42

Milton needed to pledge his affection to the memory of a close friend. In that pledge, a poem, he resolved the tragic iniquity of fate by bringing Diodati (literally: gift of Heaven) to a Christian salvation. On the surface, this resolution is an unsatisfactory intrusion upon

the pastoral elegiac form. It would seem that Milton realized that ascribing some pagan apotheosis to his lamented friend would have been wholly imitative and bound to fail if addressed to a Christian. It would also seem that Milton adopted the poor expedient of simply tacking on a Christian after-life.

Furthermore Nichols clearly proves that the actual song as a form was identified with the love that prompted it. Pastoral verse necessarily had to be questioned when the lost companion was himself a poet. It seemed a hopeless task to offer a song to the departed poet when that very verse had been of such little aid to him while he was living. Renaissance poets grappled with this problem, largely without success.

Orpheus was, to the Renaissance, a popular prototype of the poet, but a strict observation of classical conventions was not satisfactory in a Christian world. Orpheus had been unable to save his own life. Christ Himself had been taunted with, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."⁴³ But He was resurrected and promised resurrection to others. To reconcile this with the classical pastoral elegy seemed impossible.

In the Epitaphium Damonis, Milton speaks of the future caught in the present:

Et quae tum facili sperabam mente futura

Arripui voto levis et praesentia finxi⁴⁴

This seems to be yet another problem attached to the genre.

Castiglione warmly dreams of his lost companion and so vividly remembers him that the projection of it all suddenly, but only momentarily, comes to life. The poet is alone once more and
45
unconsoled in his misery. Nichols calls this the empty dream which the unadulterated pastoral elegy conjured up. Its resolution was imaginary and fleeting: as a genre its very nature was its defeat. If the poet employed it to mourn in the hope of finding consolation, it would only underline the futility of trying to recapture Euridice.

One resolution is proposed in Lycidas. Apollo shows the poet the immortality of letters. Hardly has he done this, however, than Milton describes how merit is rewarded by God. The earthly fame of letters is superseded by Christian immortality. Even the prospect of a great epic is ultimately replaced by the intrusion of a Christian salvation in Lycidas, so that the pastoral mode fails yet again.

The conclusions that Nichols draws from this failure of song, or the empty dream as he puts it, are firstly that in order to console the grief-stricken poet confronted by the loss of a dear one, the status of the deceased must change, and secondly that this change became increasingly difficult for Renaissance writers. He goes on to indicate "that the poem must reject the very tradition of which it is a
46
part," which shows the extent to which Milton's disenchantment with the Latin language as a means of poetic expression is a part of his more general difficulty in integrating classical, and therefore pagan, literary traditions with his own Christian conscience.

This is clearly a correct appraisal of the problem if we assess it by means of the observable facts alone, but an incorrect interpretation of them due to an ignorance of the importance of the tradition in which Milton wrote.

When appraised solely by means of our own modern poetic criteria, Epitaphium Damonis is not a success. By the same token the larger part of Erasmus' poetry is equally unsuccessful. By virtue, however, of the long secular tradition of metrical Latin verse, such poetry has to be judged in the context of its history. When this criterion is applied the Epitaphium Damonis is a triumph gained by poetic conception; for the precepts of classical tradition, for the undertaking of a major epic and for the integration of secular and Christian elements in European literature.

This can be proved both by the external evidence of Neo-Latin poetry before Milton and his own treatment of the vernacular: as well as by the internal evidence of Milton's treatment of craft and principle in his work.

The Epitaphium Damonis moves from paganism through to Christianity. As it does so, along the course of this development, the pastoral conventions fall away. The effect is that of a rising bird. The vivid portrayal of a bucolic background allows the poet to represent this ascent with a greater sense of reality. Had it not been for this essentially earthy background, Milton would have had no choice but to compare air to air. As it is, he uses the pastoral conventions to represent the earthly existence of man as well as the pagan world before its redemption through Christ. One can only compare

this poetic correlation to I. Corinthians, 15,20, in which spiritual and earthly are contrasted:

"There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial; the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."⁴⁷

Milton might well have been saying that the delights of the bucolic or earthy world of the pagan are one, the delights of the spiritual are another.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven."⁴⁸

The rising movement of the poem is identified with the risen Christ, and the bucolic represents the earthly world of the grave, as the final hymn represents the resurrection. The Christian element is not, as Nichols would have it, an intrusion upon the pastoral, but as much an enrichment of it as Milton's adaptation of form in his earlier Latin works. The role of classical imitation is not to be blindly interpreted as poetical expression which happened to be voiced in an ancient language. Such indiscriminate criticism does not account for the facts. Imitation formed an essential apprenticeship for Milton both for a technical mastery of his craft and for the assimilation of classical sources into a larger, loftier Christian body.

One of the most distinctive devices in the Epitaphium Damonis is the pastoral refrain. At line 18, as Condee points out, "it is wholly within its pastoral genus:" By l. 180 "it is no longer pastoral

and no longer sorrowful," but by l. 203 "a significantly modified
49
vestige of the refrain." This is the change in status Nichols re-
quires, but in this poem of Milton's it is part of a poetic whole,
quite proof against any external, circumstantial criticism, which
could have been levelled at the expedients Milton might have re-
sorted to on the analogy of the general dilemma which faced his
contemporaries.

As with Lycidas 37 - 75, the beginning of Damon is dark from the
outset:

Tum vero amissum tum, denique, sentit amicum⁵¹

Interwoven with the pastoral devices, the sorrow is deep and con-
vincing.

Ite domum impasti, domino iam non vacat, agni

Pectora cui credam? Quis me lenire docebit

Mordaces curas, quis longam fallere noctem

Dulcibus alloquiis, grato cum sibilat igni

Molle pyrum, et nucibus strepitat focus, at malus Auster

Miscet cuncta foris, et desuper intonat ulmo?⁵²

The ambiguity of domine and Domine, as well as the analogy between
the sheep of pastoral convention and the Lord's flock, are not
coincidental. They can only be ascribed to the poet's allusive
imagination. Line 49 emphasizes this duality in what is one of
Milton's best verses. The wind, or the Spirit, which "bloweth
53
where it listeth" is, in Christian terms, an inspiring and uplifting
force. In the early, bucolic part of the poem the wind is a driving,

lashing force. The poet is cowed and seeks shelter in the loneliness of exile. This refers to the heathen world of exile after Eden. The elements are hostile and Milton purposely chooses the verb intonat as the traditional allusion to the supreme pagan god, Jupiter. This world is cold and pitiless so that the flock is unfed: the old, classical world is harsh and lacks the loving figure of our Lord with bread and wine for his disciples. The image of the tall elms beating in the storm strongly evokes a feeling of desolation and wintry despair.

This is the spiritual desert of ancient values, of Christ's cold body in the grave guarded by Roman soldiers. The poet is lost and disturbed at the meaninglessness of his friend's death. In it he sees only the pointlessness of his own existence and searches his soul for some deeper truth. It is some of Milton's most intensely personal poetry written at what was a crucial point in his poetic development. The cruel world has snatched away Damon quite unjustly and left Milton alone and shaken by the sudden realization of inevitable death and corruption in this world.

At iam solus agros, iam pascua solus oberro,

Sicubi ramosae densantur vallibus umbrae

54

Again the wind in the heavens (or Heavens) seems more than part of the pastoral convention alone. It is dialectically loaded and all about him the real, minutely defined world of tangible nature is broken and disturbed. It is pathetic fallacy as the poet identifies, in the untimely death of his companion, his own rejection from the

world of nature which we see transferred figuratively to the woods. The poet is disillusioned with the physical, bucolic world. Milton has already fitted the seemingly inevitable rejection of pastoral elegy as craft, to his personal principle of Christian faith.

55

Thyrsis, Milton's persona, rejects Tityrus, who represents the old world (of Adam or of classical antiquity). Milton rejects pastoralism and moves towards a rejection of the sombre realities of decay and death in the world of flesh. His method of transition is to recall Damon by remembering what he had meant to tell him of his literary plans. This takes us out of the Theocritus tradition towards the heroic epic that Milton had planned from the outset. It is a natural ascent in the hierarchy of ancient genres: bucolic at the lowest rung and epic at the topmost. Clearly Milton is displaying the intense concentration and co-incidence of imagery observed in Horace. In thinking of Homer's "winged" words, this upward generic movement foreshadows at the same time the loftier motif of Jesus' resurrection.

56

The silvae or woods are dismissed and this refers as well to the departure from pastoral, sylvan scenes as to the dismissal of silvae or minor works. Once again Milton's economy of imagery in the use of craft and principle may be pointed out. Not only is there an identity between the actual silvae of the poem and the silvae of the genre but also an identity between Milton and Virgil. The English poet modelled his career closely on that of the famous Nautuan. Just as Virgil bid farewell to minor themes in the Georgics in order to undertake the larger work of his epic, so Milton does in the Epitaphium Damonis, without disturbing the poetic whole in any respect.

57

After the gloom enshrouding those who believed in pagan nature has been portrayed in the pastoral mode, an intermediate section dispels this darkness and we look upwards to brighter literary prospects. Apollo offers immortality to Milton by inspiring him to write an Authurian epic. The progression is the same in part one of Lycidas 1.35 f: despair, literary hope, then a Christian resolution.

What makes Epitaphium Damonis one degree more complex is the appearance next of the famous twin cups given him by Manso. Reading that his deceased friend was a poet who also looked to patrons such as Manso, one may see the inclusion of these cups as a further development of the theme of immortality in writing. Where Apollo symbolized literary ambition for the sake of worldly recognition, Manso represents literary ambition for the sake of a love for fellow men. This is a humanist note and important for the amalgamation of classical and Christian material. Amor is prominent amongst the engravings on it and recalls the bond of friendship between patron and poet. Again, in terms of Christ's commandments it is the gift of universal brother-⁵⁸hood, "He (Manso) is the Neoplatonic figure of Love by whose 'divine splendour,' Ficino tells us, 'the soul is inflamed ... glowing in the beautiful person as in a mirror, secretly lifted up, as by a hook, in⁵⁹ order to become God.'" The cup becomes the chalice of wine that symbolizes communion with one's fellow Christians in the body of Christ. The patron sponsors the poet, who in turn shares the gift of writing for posterity with his fellow men. The gift of patronage is, therefore, a gift of love to benefit all men. It allows Damon (a poet) to enter into the Heavenly union. As the lasts vestiges of pastoral drop away, it raises his eyes "to the metaphysical beauty of the final⁶⁰ vision." By writing a Christian epic, Milton finds the resolution

to the dilemma of classical genre. By justifying the ways of God⁶¹ to man in his epics, Milton uses the gift of patronage to share his love of God with all men.

Damon takes on a new name: his old, pastoral one is forgotten and he is now Diodati, Gift of God. The poem is transformed into a hymn and the harsh sickle of death has been overcome by Amor. The cruel winds that fixed him upon the earth have been sublimated into the Spirit moving through eucharist and the vision of life after death in Christ.

Ite procul, lacrymae, purum colit aethera Damon 62

In both cases "the dear might of Him that walked the waves has overcome death,"⁶³ As Miss Nicholson remarks of Lycidas, "A shepherd has died,... at sea, but both body and soul have risen to immortality."⁶⁴ Furthermore the Damian line (205, quoted above) is also the refrain to their Master, whereas they had been rejected in the pagan world. In the uplifting of the Christian spirit, Milton has clearly turned the very crux of that problem described by Nichols (the inappropriateness of Christian resolution in classical form), into the driving force behind the epitaph's superb generic ascent: from earthly to spiritual and pagan to Christian by means of, not in spite of, pastoral elegy. Milton's solution marks the climax of his apprenticeship⁶⁵ in classical imitation and lays the cornerstone for his elaborate hierarchy of Christian and secular elements in the vernacular epics, Paradise Lost and Paradise Regain'd.

At another level the epitaph is a turning point in the complex function of the classics as a whole in relation to the Christian world. The Middle Ages had lacked the perspective to delineate the borders of an ordered intellectual world large enough to accommodate ancient and new. This was a result of contemporaneity of conception as well as the generally amorphous nature of their psychology which had been continually torn between old Rome and the Vatican.⁶⁶ Milton's solution of this dilemma was the final establishment of a larger intellectual world in the late Renaissance.

A.H.T. Levi shows clearly what view the Renaissance held. Prior to Erasmus, Seneca had been variously shown as essentially Christian or even as a Nicodemite. Erasmus rejected both views, without rejecting Seneca. He believed Seneca was to be seen very much as a pagan, but should be read for his moral elevation. "The classics became a tool in the task of procuring the moral renovation of Christendom."⁶⁸ Erasmus envisaged a progression through the classics to the ultimate truth of Christ. Although Ignatius, the Jesuit counter-reformer, is traditionally contrasted to Erasmus, his attitude to the classics is remarkably similar. "Ignatius regarded a classical formation as a stepping-stone to another intellectual level."⁶⁹ This does not differ from Milton's amalgamation of bucolic (Classical) with the Christian in Epitaphium Damonis.

His technique is similar to Horace's in the A.P. Poetry proceeds towards knowledge (its didactic function) not by rhetoric but by mimesis or fiction.⁷⁰

W.S. Howell identifies mimesis in the A.P. in the principle of teaching people about poetry by means of delighting them with attractive poetic images. Similarly, Milton's mimesis in the Epitaphium Damonis consists in the principle of climbing a ladder from the intellectual level of the bucolic up to that of Christianity, within the craft of an ascent in literary genres. This use of form was common in classical antiquity but was largely lost to the Middle Ages. It remained for the Renaissance to recover the principle of mimesis and enrich it by incorporating classical and Christian elements within a greater hierarchy.

—oOo—

CONCLUSION

This investigation brought to light a clear difference in poetic form between the medieval and Renaissance poets chosen for discussion. Medieval metrical verse generally tended to be mechanical and monotonous; displaying little original or dynamic treatment of ancient models. Renaissance poetry, by contrast, was often indistinguishable from classical models and employed the conventional forms with spontaneity and subtlety. The reason for this difference was shown to be that the Renaissance was inspired by the challenge of developing the vernaculars to the same standard as the classics. In order to do this Renaissance scholars were led to analyse ancient works in the greatest detail. It was only after the labours of rigorous scholarship that they began to appreciate the workings of Greek and Roman poetics. It was found that this knowledge of literary theory was the essential difference distinguishing medieval form from Renaissance form.

A careful analysis of important specimens of Venantius Fortunatus' poetry demonstrated the inevitability of his gradually abandoning the dead weight of the conventional rhetorical tradition in preference for rhythmical poetry. This illustrated the incompatibility of Christian and secular elements within contemporary poetic genres: not because the elements themselves were necessarily incompatible but because the ancient poetic genres were simply preserved and not understood. This set the pattern for much of medieval Latin poetry and represented the constant struggle between Christian rhythmical and secular metrical verse. Venantius Fortunatus was shown to be the archetype of many medieval poets.

A brief review of the Dark Ages showed that the first complete break with tradition entailed a grave loss of the actual techniques of writing in metrical verse. This break with literary tradition accounted for the vernacular languages experiencing so much more difficulty in gaining a complete sense of the past than it had been for the Romans to learn from the Greeks. Without the elements of classical verse medieval writers often failed to appreciate and re-interpret much of the ancient literature to which they still had access. The overly alliterative verse of Ennius which was scorned by Horace resembled pieces by Aldhelm written at the time of Bede.

It was shown that the Carolingian revival was most remarkable for its political motivation and that the harmony of an established state greatly contributed to the advance of letters. The analogy between Augustus and Charlemagne showed how important a patron was in the functioning of a literary circle. Amor was shown to form the basis of a common bond between poets and meant friendship to those of Alcuin's circle as well as Milton's patron Manso. It was clear through the example of Theodulf and his part in the court of Charlemagne that the interest in the classics had already altered radically from Venantius Fortunatus' day. The intermission of the Dark Ages meant the classics were no longer perpetuated per se but only in terms of contemporary requirements.

It was shown that the pattern of assimilation which had been set in Greco-Roman literary history was being repeated with the vernaculars. The important centres of learning, however, were the monasteries. Since letters had not yet developed sufficiently to accomodate both Christian and classical elements progress was retarded by the fact that the monks still regarded secular studies with suspicion. The result was that the transmission of ancient texts grew stale for lack of any fresh interpretation

and adaptation. Scholars such as Luitbrand simply practised the ancient conventions in a dull and lifeless way. The Eleventh Century saw Damian succeed in reviving the old tags of Ovidian tradition. It was shown that philosophy and satire were more widely studied largely as a result of the rise of humanism. The Latin of Plautus' day as criticized by Horace was shown to bear similarities to the state of letters in the Eleventh Century. It was also shown that the Middle Ages was slowly recognizing the ancient world objectively as part of a rich field of reference for their own understanding of contemporary life.

The remarkable parallels between Horace's close identity of ars, philosophy and ingenium on the one hand and the same elements in the Twelfth Century were pointed out. This was closely linked to the increasing independence of humanism. It was shown, however, that despite its relative progress this century could unmistakably be recognized as medieval by the difference between Matthew of Vendôme and John of Salisbury. Matthew represented the old type of medieval pedagogue who continually extracted moral precepts from texts in the course of his dry and tedious studies. By a comparison of his Art of Poetry with that of Horace's it was clearly seen that the Middle Ages still lacked a real grasp of classical poetics. Although John of Salisbury was shown to be an outstanding scholar he was more the exception than the rule. Serlon of Wilton was the last medieval poet discussed and he fell into the same pattern as Venantius Fortunatus. Serlon finally turned to rhythmical poetry and this was the precursor to the flowering of the Latin lyric in the subsequent century. Poets lacked the motivation to employ ancient metrical forms.

The Renaissance was shown to owe its impetus to the fervour of classical inquiry rooted in the sudden maturity of the vernaculars. Petrarch was

seen as the genius of this movement and he played the same role as Theodulf had done at Charlemagne's court. The enormous interest at the time in Greek and Latin was completely identified in the person of Petrarch. Like Fortunatus he was a Janus at the turning-point of two ages. Petrarch represented the ruthless precision and analysis that was suddenly being practised in the arts and sciences alike. Owing to this analytical approach, the classical models were far better understood and copied. The devices of rhetoric were viewed with new interest, compiled and adapted. The form of Latin poetry altered completely from medieval standards. Rhythmical verse was discarded as a jingle and metrical verse was reinstated. The analysis of poems by Petrarch, Bembo, Dante and Castiglione demonstrated some of the various forms employed by Renaissance poets.

In the last two chapters it was shown how seriously the poetry of Erasmus and Milton had been misinterpreted as a result of not appreciating their work in the tradition observed above. Erasmus was seen as an interpreter of the classics who strove to transmogrify the learning of the ancient world into a form which was easily accessible to his contemporaries. He wrote several works to this end but his poetry was nevertheless mistaken by modern commentary as if Erasmus had seriously been attempting to express his personal feelings in Latin. By a careful analysis of the arguments behind this mistaken view it was shown that Erasmus' poetry was, in fact, to be understood in terms of his other literary undertakings. His poems were above all exercises in the use of Latin metrical conventions of which Erasmus himself was a master. It was proven that these exercises were eminently suited to the understanding of classical poetry.

Erasmus was specifically chosen to illustrate that, although certain poets such as Castiglione actually did succeed in employing Latin as their own means of poetic expression, such poets could not account for the main impetus behind the practice of Greek and Latin verse composition. Such exercises were simply an excellent way of learning the techniques of classical languages. By placing Erasmus directly in the tradition of medieval and Renaissance letters it was more convincingly demonstrated that Milton's final Latin work signalled the point at which the operation of classical principles was sufficiently advanced for the vernaculars to completely assimilate ancient literary lore.

Critics generally accepted that by comparison with his earlier poem, *Lycidas*, the Epitaphium Damonis was sadly wanting and displayed those very qualities of laborious convention observable in the majority of medieval and Renaissance poets writing in metrical verse. It was also accepted that, as a result of the comparative failure of this epitaph, Milton turned to the vernacular and a Christian topic, in the same pattern as Venantius Fortunatus. Milton however, was seen in this investigation as standing in the same relation to the classics as Erasmus. Although his one Latin poem, Manso might have succeeded as a convincing panygyric and a real expression of the poet's own feelings, the majority of his work in Latin was purely an attempt to master the techniques of classical verse.

Milton was a classicist for whom it was inconceivable to approach his greatest works, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*, without drawing on the classics. It was therefore essential for him to synthesize a system that would include classical and Christian elements. This study showed that in assessing the Epitaphium Damonis it was more important to disregard its peculiar failure as a piece of original poetry on the

grounds that it had never been intended as such a piece. It was clear that the epitaph should be regarded as a peculiar success for the sake of its generic integration of secular and Christian elements. This latter success was ascribed to Milton's superior understanding of the treatment of poesy in ancient literature. Furthermore this understanding was in fact gained by means of those very exercises in literary imitation which were previously so mistakenly criticized. Milton's grasp of essential principles in ancient poetics simultaneously explained the centuries of unsuccessful attempts to reconcile Christian and secular elements within the inherited tradition as it also marked the beginning of a complete assimilation of the principles of classical poetics by the vernacular languages.

APPENDIX

"The interrelations of poetics, rhetoric and logic in Renaissance criticism are so imperfectly understood by present-day British and American literary scholars as to suggest that we need either to cease expressing opinions altogether about this aspect of history or to re-examine it with a view to discovering what its true contours really are."¹

W.S. Howell goes on to single out the concept of teaching by delighting which is contained in the A. P. of Horace. This was a popular convention in Renaissance times, recognized by Sydney, Harington, Nashe and Ben Jonson. "Aristotle plainly indicates that the aesthetic and didactic functions of art operate simultaneously upon us."² Howell further points out that in the very pity and fear which were an emotional response from the audience there was the wisdom of values and insights previously half-guessed and half-understood.

This interpretation of Aristotle's view should not be confused with the working of psuchagogia³ of the Poetics. This is an attractive⁴ force exemplified by peripety and discovery which are essentially techniques that may be successfully employed in a tragedy. Howell is not concerned with how to write a successful play but how to analyse the relations between poetry, imitation or fiction, pleasure and learning. Psuchagogia would be the sugar around a pill or the delightful fiction used to attract us towards a revelation of some truth. In chapter 4, however, Aristotle more specifically analyses the process as "the reason of the delight in seeing pictures (imitations) is that one is at the same time learning."⁵ It is a question of

gaining knowledge through the delight of identifying reality in fiction and not gaining knowledge through delightful fiction.

"And as imagination bodies forth,
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name."⁶

This is clearly the modus operandi with form in the A.P. Some modern scholars, however, show the "dominantly rhetorical cast" of the A.P. and the Renaissance slavishly imitating it. Such scholars are mistaken: rhetoric to Aristotle was proof by clear statement, which is not the action of poetry. Poetry proceeds towards knowledge (its didactic function) not by rhetoric but by mimesis or fiction,

"Modern scholars must recognize poetics in classical and Renaissance poetical theory."⁷ If they do not, it is likely that Matthew of Vendôme's mistake will be repeated: "Where Matthew failed was in his inability to distinguish between the ars poetica and the ars dictaminis."

Howell warns that the practice of tracing rhetoric behind every figure of speech and thought should end. In poetry employing mimesis or fiction, these figures have a complex function, unlike the simpler part they play in oratory.⁸ If there is an essential difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in their respective attitudes towards form, it is that the Middle Ages confused oratory and poesy, as Matthew did,⁹ whereas the Renaissance firmly grasped the principle of mimesis or fiction in poetry and could distinguish between the two.

The peculiar object of poetic imitation is said in the Poetics to be "men in action," their characters, passions and deeds or experiences (ethe, pathe, praxeis).¹⁰ Aristotle, in short, means that poetic imitation (as opposed to the elements of rhetoric consisting of ethe, pathe and apodeixis or pistis¹¹) is an imitation of human action. In the generic mimesis employed by Milton in his Epitaphium Damonis ethe, pathe and praxeis may clearly be distinguished within the conventions of pastoral elegy, epic aspiration and Christian salvation.

From the start Milton identifies the character of Thyrsis with himself. This is an allusion to the shepherd who mourns for Daphnis in Theocritus' first Idyll. The name Milton uses for Diodati is common in pastoral literature: he may also have thought of the famous friendship of Damon and Pythias. Thyrsis' character is further identified as being devoted to letters.

Dulcis amor Musae Thusca retinebat in urbe. 13

Ast ubi mens expleta

Damon is seen to be a noble character and greatly admired by Milton.

....., dignumque tui te ducat in agmen, 24

Ignavumque procul pecus arceat omne silentum.

Damon is also an excellent poet as may be observed in the following quotation:

Constabit tuus tibi honos, longumque vigebit, 29

Inter pastores. 30

The following lines indicate the lofty ideals held by both poets in Milton's eyes:

Si quid est, priscamque fidem coluisse, piumque,
Palladiusque artes, sociumque habuisse canorum.

33

Damon also appears to have had a charming and delightful side to his character.

Quis mihi blanditiasque tuas, quis tum mihi risus
Cecropiasque sales referet, cultosque lepores?

55

It appears that Thyrsis' scholarly nature was itself the reason for his absence at the time of Damon's death.

Ecquid erat tanti Romam vidisse sepultam

114

The next four lines show Damon's relation to Italy.

Quamquam etiam vestri nunquam meminisse pigebit
Pastores Thusci, Musis operata iuventus,
Hic Charis, atque Lepos, et Thuscus tu quoque Damon
Antiqua genus unde petis Lucumonis ab urbe

125

Damon and Thyrsis had common friends who were also poet-scholars.

Et Datis et Franchinus; erant et vocibus ambo
Et studiis noti, Lydorum sanguinis ambo

137

The final tribute that Thyrsis pays to the noble character of his scholarly companion is contained in lines 198 - 219. I quote the section in which he asks Damon to intercede for him, whatever name he may be known by.

..... Quin tu, coeli post iura recepta,
Dexter ades, placidusque fave quicunque vocaris

207

As may be expected from the characters of Thyrsis and Damon, their activities (or praxeis) are based on their friendship and a common love

of poetry. Milton describes some of the daily activities which the two shepherds had shared.

At mihi quid tandem fiet modo? quis mihi fidus 37

Haerebit lateri comes, ut tu saepe solebas

Frigoribus duris, et per loca feta pruinis,

Aut rapido sub sole, siti morientibus herbis? 40

Quis fando sopire diem cantuque solebit? 43

Lines 45 - 49 and 51 - 56 are in a similar vein and recall the ways in which these two friends passed many long hours together. The passage from lines 93 to 111 deals with the topic of man's continual search for companionship. Milton contrasts man's habits to those of birds and animals.

Hei mihi quam similes ludunt per prata iuveni 94

Omnes unanimi secum sibi lege sodales.

Nos durum genus, et diris exercita fatis 106

Gens, homines, aliena animis, et pectore discors

Vix sibi quisque parem de millibus invenit unum;

Milton describes a rustic scene in line 129 - 136 in which Thyrsis and Damon joined in friendly competition to sing songs. In a sad passage of remembrance (140-152) Milton portrays Thyrsis in happier days solaced by the thought of what Damon might be doing.

Finally Thyrsis is shown contemplating his great epic after abandoning the bucolic lays. Milton uses praxeis to denote the bond of literary friendship inherent in the term amor.

Pathos is modulated throughout almost the whole of the Epitaphium
Damonis.

<u>Quas miser effudit voces, quae murmura Thyrsis</u>	4
<u>Et quibus assiduis exercuit antra querelis</u>	
<u>Dum sibi praereptum queritur Damona, neque altam</u>	7
<u>Luctibus exemit noctem, loca sola pererrans</u>	
<u>Coepit et immensum sic exonerare dolorem:</u>	17
Milton stresses that the pastoral poet Thyrsis is alone and finds no consolation.	
<u>At iam solus agros, iam pascua solus oberro</u>	58
<u>Ista canunt surdo, frutices ego nactus abibam</u>	72
<u>.....; bis ille miser qui serus amavit</u>	86
<u>.....Vale! nostri memor ibis ad astra</u>	123

The tone of Thyrsis' complaint alters completely at the prospect of
Christian immortality for his companion Damon. Milton describes Cupid
kindling sanctified minds and the souls of the gods.

<u>Hinc mentes ardere sacrae, formaeque deorum</u>	197
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Since Aristotle's threefold requirement for poetic mimesis only
applies to epic, tragic, narrative and nomic poetry in the Poetics,
it seems that, from the extracts above taken from the Epitaphium
Damonis, it might equally be asserted that this poetic mimesis holds
true for Milton's use of elegiac poetry in the epitaph.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION : CHAPTER I

1. Cf. Chapter VIII : in the latter half of which the Epitaphium Damonis is discussed.
2. M.H. Nicholson, A Reader's Guide to John Milton, p. 87.
3. Milton's great epics : Paradise Lost and Paradise Regain'd.
4. Cf. the greater apprenticeship of the vernaculars. Chapter V, p. 78. infra.
5. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 102, infra. The importance of technical proficiency should not be underestimated.
6. S. Johnson, Lives of the Poets, Volume I, p. 65 : cf. Chapter VIII, p. 110, infra.
7. Cf. Chapter II, p. 11, infra.
8. Cf. Chapter V, p. 76, infra.
9. A.M. Clark, Milton and the Renaissance Revolt against Rhyme, Studies in Literary Modes, p. 105.
10. R.W. Condee, The Latin Poetry of John Milton, The Latin Poetry of English Poets, p. 62.
11. Ibid.
12. Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 123, infra, for the distinction between poetic craft and principle within the context of Milton's work and later within the context of mimesis or fiction, cf. Chapter VIII, p. 136, infra.
13. Cf. Chapter II, p. 13, infra.

14. Cf. Chapter II, p. 15, infra.
15. Cf. Chapter V, p. 75, infra.
16. Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 126, infra.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 114, supra.
20. Cf. Chapter I, Introduction, p. 1 supra.
21. Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 137; infra: the place of the classics in the Renaissance as determined by Erasmus and Ignatius of Loyola.
22. Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 135, infra.
23. Cf. Chapter II, p. 15, infra.
24. Cf. Chapter VI, p. 83, infra.
25. Cf. Cicero, De Amicitia, Chapter XXIV.
Cicero exhorts constructive criticism amongst friends. Horace describes the good critic as a friend and essential in the process of writing poetry. As Europe found a high intellectual status after the Dark Ages, we may observe literary circles playing an important role in the revival of letters. Milton's finest short poem, and one of the most profound in the English language, "Lycidas", was prompted by friendship. His last Latin poem was also an epitaph lamenting the death of a friend.
26. Cf. Chapter V, p. 63, infra.
27. Ibid.
28. Cf. Appendix, infra.
29. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p. 1.

CHAPTER II

1. N. P. Miller, Tacitus: Annals Book I, p. 10.
2. M. Pope, Saecula Latina, p. 23.
3. L.R. Palmer, The Latin Language, p. 101.
4. Ibid., p. 95.
5. Cf. the indiscretions of Erasmus, V, 105 infra.
6. Horace, Ars Poetica (henceforward referred to as A.P.), 258-262.
7. M. Grant, Roman Literature, p. 142.
8. L.R. Palmer, op. cit., p. 96.
9. Ibid., p. 140.
10. Cf. Appendix, infra. As can be seen the Middle Ages tended to write metrical secular Latin verse with a strong rhetorical admixture.
11. Cf. Introduction, p. 2 supra.
12. Cf. Chapter II, p. 20 infra and Chapter VIII, p. 111, infra: for the different treatment of these "set-pieces" in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.
13. Cf. Chapter II, p. 16, infra.
14. Cf. Introduction, p. 4, supra.
15. Cf. Introduction, p. 3, supra.
16. Cf. Matthew of Vendôme who preferred secular traditions, Chapter V, p. 70, infra.
17. He too, preferred Rome as it once had been.
18. Cf. Chapter II, p. 20, infra.
19. L.R. Palmer, op. cit., p. 147.

20. Cf. Chapter V, p. 77, infra and Chapter VIII, p. 111, infra.
21. Cf. Chapter II, p. 13, supra.
22. F.J.E. Raby, Secular Latin Poetry, Volume I, p. 126.
23. H. Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, p.51.
24. Cf. Chapter II, p. 12, supra.
25. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 129.
26. Cf. Chapter II, p. 12, supra. Silvae could also attain this quality.
27. Bishops at the time had vast secular powers. Cf. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 130.
28. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 132.
29. H. Waddell, op. cit.; p. 52.
30. A.P. 128. Cf. Epitaphium Damonis in Chapter VIII infra and Milton's superior use of what I have labelled craft and principle. (See Note 6 to Appendix.)
31. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 133. Cf. Mansus, Chapter VIII, p.124, infra.
32. Cf. the use of this genre in Milton's Ad Patrem, Chapter VIII, p. 124, infra.
33. P. Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric, p.204.
34. Ibid., p.56.
35. F.J.E. Raby, op.cit., Volume I, p.136.
36. Propertius, i. 20. 13, 14.
37. P. Dronke, op. cit., p.206.

38. Ibid.

39. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 138.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. P. Dronke, op. cit., p. 209.

43. Ibid.

44. Cf. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 140.

"We are still in the circle of ancient rhetoric,
and the poet cannot escape the prison of the past."

45. Ibid., p. 140.

46. Ibid., p. 141.

Fortunatus' departure from the rhetorical tradition is not an indication that rhetorical devices are ipso facto an undersirable aspect of literature. Furthermore it may appear that there is something of a contradiction in the value attached to rhetorical devices if a comparison is made between the treatment of rhetoric during Claudian's or Maximian's time and during the time of Milton. The solution to this apparent contradiction is that rhetoric is in itself neither good nor bad. Its value depends upon how well or badly it is employed. During Maximian's time rhetoric was not generally employed with much sensitivity or understanding but during Milton's time poets prized rhetorical devices for the range of expression that these devices afforded them.

CHAPTER III

1. It is to be remembered that Latin poets normally referred to themselves as docti from the time of the poetae novi (cf. L.R. Palmer, The Latin Language, p. 9) for the simple reason that the latter and their Hellenistic models in fact made a real study of the work of their predecessors. We may refer to Horace, Satire I.9.7 for support of this. As a result the exercise of literary pursuits may also be called "learning" in the Middle Ages.
2. F.J.E. Raby, Secular Latin Poetry, Volume I, p. 154.
3. H. Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, p. 55.
We see how shallow this "deep" pool actually was.
4. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., p. 171.
5. M. Pope, Saecula Latina, p. 38. Cf. the indiscretions of Erasmus: Chapter V, p. 105, infra.
6. Cf. Bede's domination of the literary activities of his times as indicated in an account by W.F. Bolton, Anglo-Latin Poetry, Volume I, pp. 105-106.
7. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 174.
8. D.T. Rice (ed.), The Dawn of European Civilization, p. 270.
9. Ibid.
10. S. Painter, A History of the Middle Ages, p. 76.
11. Cf. Chapter III, p. 42, infra.
12. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 67.
13. Cf. Chapter V, p. 71, infra. The ignorance Charlemagne was fighting against was far worse than Matthew's.

14. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 184.
15. Ibid., p. 187.
16. A.P. 445-449.
17. C.O. Brink, Horace on Poetry, p. 515.
18. Cf. Chapter II, p. 32 supra for a description of how the "other" Virgil brooded in loneliness.
19. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 69.
20. Cf. Chapter VI, p. 82 infra. The position of Chrysoloras is similar.
21. L.R. Palmer, op. cit., p. 147.
22. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 78.
23. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 224.
24. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 80.

CHAPTER IV

1. G. Highet, The Classical Tradition, p. 67.
2. F.J.E. Raby, Secular Latin Poetry, Volume I, p. 257.
3. Ibid., p. 259.
4. Ibid., p. 280.
5. S. Painter, A History of the Middle Ages, p. 124.
6. Cf. Chapter V, p. 78, infra.
7. H. Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, p. 96.
8. Ibid., p. 111.
9. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 371.
10. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 111.
11. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 315.
12. Cf. Introduction, p. 3 supra.
13. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., p. 316.
14. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 123.
15. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume I, p. 324.
16. Ibid.
17. Introduction, p. 8, supra.

CHAPTER V

1. A.P. 11, 453-76.
2. E.R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p. 474.
3. C.O. Brink, Horace on Poetry, p.450.
"Thought and wording, suggestion and tone are all inextricably involved, and cannot be caught in the net of analysis and description."
4. Ibid., p. 517. A.P. 310.
5. Cf. those of Matthew of Vendôme and Evrard the German.
6. John Milton's famous phrase "blind mouths" is beautifully analysed by Ruskin; as pointed out by M.H. Nicholson in A Reader's Guide to John Milton, p. 98.
7. Cf. Chapter VIII p. 112 infra and the Introduction p.7 supra.
8. Cf. Introduction, p. 5 supra.
9. H. Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, p. 127.
10. F.J.E. Raby, Secular Latin Poetry, Volume II, p. 7.
11. Cf. Chapter II, p. 17. for the metre.
12. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 7.
13. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 129.
14. For John of Salisbury as a Christian humanist see E.R. Curtius, op. cit., p. 111.
15. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 32.
16. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 148.
17. A.P. 11. 120-24.

18. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 31.
19. Cf. Chapter III, p. 31, supra.
20. C.O. Brink, op. cit., p. 517.
21. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 148.
22. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 91.
23. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 135.
24. Ibid., p. 144.
25. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 93.
26. Ibid., p. 92.
27. A.P. 419-437 Cf. Introduction, p. 7, supra.
28. J. Milton, Lycidas, 11. 114-131.
29. Cf. Chapter III, p. 42, supra.
30. H. Waddell, op. cit., p. 20.
31. Ibid., p. 144.
32. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 115.
(Cf. Introduction, p. 4, supra.)
33. Ibid., p. 112.
34. Ibid., p. 114.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 35.
37. Cf. Chapter II, p. 14, supra. for Pervigilium Veneris.
38. F.J.E. Raby, op. cit., Volume II, p. 341.
39. Ibid., p. 346.
40. Ibid., p. 346.
41. Ibid., p. 347.

CHAPTER VI

1. J.E. Sandys, Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning, p. 174.
2. Ibid., p. 175.
3. Ibid.
4. R.R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries, p. 228.
5. Ibid.
6. J.E. Sandys, op. cit., p. 177.
7. Ibid., p. 179.
8. R.R. Bolgar, op. cit., p. 228.
9. Ibid., p. 268. Cf. Chapter III, p. 44, supra.
In the case of Theodulf and Chrysoloras the evidence leads us to presuppose an existing demand for the knowledge they offered.
10. R.R. Bolgar, op. cit., p. 269.
11. Ibid., p. 252.
12. M. Grant, Roman Literature, p. 65.
13. Cf. Chapter V, p. 63, supra. Any study of philosophy at the time was inseparable from a knowledge of Greek.
14. R.R. Bolgar, op. cit., p. 253.
15. Where similar methods were often used quite blindly by medieval scholars, the Renaissance used them as the natural method for extracting, not perpetuating, the knowledge of the ancient world.
16. Pliny, Letters, III, 5.
17. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 101, infra. Dr. Reedijk does not account for such diligence.

18. J.E. Sandys, op. cit., p. 156.
19. Ibid., p. 156.
20. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 109. Erasmus loved Cicero deeply and yet he wrote a trenchant satire upon Ciceronian imitators; his love drove him to decry those who abused the Ciceronian texts. This is an important element in satire, and we may compare Horace's love for poetry as well as his satire of false poets; Milton's love for God as well as his satire of false priests: Chapter V, p. 64: we may contrast Matthew of Vendôme, Chapter V, p. 71, supra.
21. J.E. Sandys, op. cit., p. 156.
22. Cf. A.P., 41-43.
23. K.P. Harrington, Medieval Latin, p. 569.
24. Ibid., p. 584.
25. Cf. Chapter II, p. 17, supra.
26. K.P. Harrington, op. cit., p. 555.
27. Ibid., p. 584.

CHAPTER VII

1. Cf. Chapter VI, p. 84 supra.
2. C. Reedijk, The Poems of Desiderius Erasmus, p. 275.
3. A.P. 1. 270.
4. R.R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries, p. 274.
5. Ibid., p. 275.
6. Ibid., p. 297.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 298.
9. Cf. Chapter V, p. 63, supra.
10. L.R. Palmer, The Latin Language, p. 96.
11. R.R. Bolgar, op. cit., p. 301.
12. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 36.
13. Cf. Chapter V, p. 63 supra.
14. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 38.
15. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 97ff., supra.
16. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 37.
17. A.P. 382-5.
18. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 121.
19. Ibid., p. 36. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 100, supra.
20. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 116.
21. Ibid., p. 117.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 118.

24. C. Reedijk, op. cit., p. 118.
25. Ibid. , p. 10.
26. Ibid. , p. 15.
27. Ibid. , p. 121.
28. Ibid. , p. 119.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid. , p. 126.
32. M.M. Phillips, Erasmus and the Classics, p. 25.
33. Ibid. , p. 28.
34. Ibid. , p. 5.
35. Ibid. , p. 20.
36. Ibid. , p. 25.

CHAPTER VIII

1. S. Johnson, Lives of the Poets, Volume I, pp. 64f.
2. Ibid., p. 65.
3. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 109, supra.
4. Ibid.
5. H. Skulsky, Milton's Enrichment of Latin Love Elegy, Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis, p. 603.
6. R.W. Condee, The Latin Poetry of John Milton, The Latin Poetry of English Poets, p. 67.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 68.
9. Ibid., p. 69.
10. H. Skulsky, op. cit., p. 606.
11. Ibid., p. 609.
12. G. Highet, op. cit., p. 418.
13. H. Skulsky, op. cit., p. 606.
14. Ibid., p. 604.
15. J. Milton, Elegia Prima, ll. 9-12, 15-16.
16. S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 66.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 62, 3.
20. C.O. Brink, Horace on Poetry, p. 447.
21. Ibid., p. 448.
22. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 60.

23. Ibid., p. 62.
24. S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 66.
25. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 64.
26. Cf. E.R. Curtius, op. cit., pp. 102-4.
27. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 66.
28. J.R.C. Martyn, Milton's Elegia Septima, Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis, p. 381.
29. Ibid.
30. R.W. Condee, op. cit., pp. 71-73.
31. A.P. 42-45.
32. C.O. Brink, op. cit., p. 477.
33. R.W. Condee, op. cit., pp. 73.
34. Ibid., p. 79.
35. C.O. Brink, op. cit., p. xii ff.
36. Manso, l. 1.
37. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 79.
38. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
39. P. Terenti, Hauton Timorumenos I. L. 25 (L. 75).
40. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 81.
41. F.J. Nichols, Lycidas, Epitaphium Damonis, The Empty Dream and the Failed Song, Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Lovaniensis, p. 445.
42. M.H. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 90.
43. Luke, 23.39. Authorized King James Version.
44. Epitaphium Damonis, ll. 145-6.

45. F.J. Nichols, op. cit., p. 445.
46. Ibid., p. 450.
47. I Corinthians 15.40, Authorized King James Version.
48. I Corinthians 15.47, ibid.
49. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 83.
50. F.J. Nichols, op. cit., p. 451.
51. Epitaphium Damonis, l. 16.
52. Ibid., ll. 44-49.
53. St John, 3.8. Authorized King James Version.
54. Epitaphium Damonis, ll. 58, 9.
55. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 85.
56. Ibid., p. 86.
57. A.P. ll. 1-40.
58. Cf. Chapter V, p. 1, supra: for the element of philosophy in the twelfth century Renaissance.
59. R.W. Condee, op. cit., p. 88.
60. Ibid.
61. Milton's purpose in writing Paradise Lost and Paradise Regain'd.
62. Epitaphium Damonis, l. 203.
63. Cf. Lycidas, ll. 108, 9.
64. M.H. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 90f.
65. Cf. the apprenticeship of the vernaculars generally: Chapter VII, p. 100.
66. Cf. Chapter VII, p. 109, supra: for the perspective gained by Renaissance scholars.

67. Cf. Introduction, p.5.

68. A.H.T. Levi, Erasmus, The Early Jesuits and the Classics: Classical influences on European Culture AD 1500-1700, p. 232.

69. Ibid., p. 234.

70. W.S. Howell, Poetics, Rhetoric and Logic in Renaissance Criticism: Classical Influences on European Culture AD 1500-1700, pp. 155-162.

APPENDIX

1. W.S. Howell, Poetics, Rhetoric and Logic in Renaissance Criticism, p. 155.
2. Ibid., p. 160, with note 1, Aristotle, Chs. 4 and 23.
3. Aristotle, Poetics, 1450^a, 33
4. Aristotle, Poetics, tr. John Warrington, p. 14.
5. Aristotle, The Art of Poetry, tr. W. Hamilton Fyfe, p. 9.
6. Theseus, V.1, in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, quoted by Robert Graves, Poetic Craft and Principle, p. 133. Cf Chapter VIII, p. 115, supra: "Milton succeeds in using this method to bring to the surface a good deal that is normally considered latent."
7. W.S. Howell, op. cit., p. 160.
8. Ibid., p. 161.
9. Cf. Chapter V, pp. 70 and 71, supra.
10. Aristotle, Poetics, I, II.
11. Aristotle, Rhet. III.13 passim, 1414^a, 23ff.

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SUMMARY

By tracing the tradition of secular metrical Latin verse from the Fifth to the Seventeenth Century the final assimilation of classical sources into the mainstream of vernacular European literature can be much more meaningfully understood.

Venantius Fortunatus began his poetical career in the Sixth Century as a professional court versifier, who earned his living by writing poems for wealthy patrons. His work initially fell strictly within the bounds of the rhetorical tradition of Latin poetry but later he started to write more spontaneously upon personal subjects when he was settled at Poitiers. Eventually he abandoned the confines of metrical verse altogether and wrote his finest poems in rhythmical verse upon Christian subjects.

The Dark Ages closed in rapidly upon Venantius' death and little Latin poetry of any worth was produced. The Irish scholars formed an isolated body of learned men whose work was rivalled after some time by schools in England. Bede's work at Jarrow marked a significant advance in learning while Charlemagne prompted a renaissance of the arts on the continent. Alcuin was appointed to head this revival of letters and gathered together a circle of highly talented men.

The monasteries subsequently took upon themselves the weight of learning and the abbots of St. Gall maintained a particularly good standard during the Tenth Century. Secular studies were not encouraged by the monks, however, and towards the Eleventh Century classical studies were more readily promoted in separate cathedral schools.

In the Twelfth Century philosophy and satire were reinstated in scholarly writings. The differences between humanism and Christianity grew clearer so that men such as Abelard openly wrote as scholars for scholarship's sake. The immortality of letters was recognized once more. The career of Serlo of Wilton is typical of the times. Initially he wrote about grammar, then licentious subjects but finally preferred religious topics in rhythmical verse.

The beginning of the Renaissance was marked by Petrarch and Italy's recovery of Greek manuscripts from Byzantium. Classical studies were pursued with fervour and the original Greek texts of the great philosophical schools were read. Metrical verse attained the grace of ancient models through a process of painstaking imitation. Erasmus was a popularizer of the classics and re-asserted the value of ancient works to his contemporaries.

Milton's first task as a poet was to attain a mastery of classical metrical technique and his first exercises display a remarkable proficiency. He later developed an original way of transforming the mass of inherited conventions which had stymied so many of his predecessors. His Epitaphium Damonis was a highly individual solution to the problems of writing upon Christian topics in a secular tradition and signified the final assimilation of a classical inheritance.

