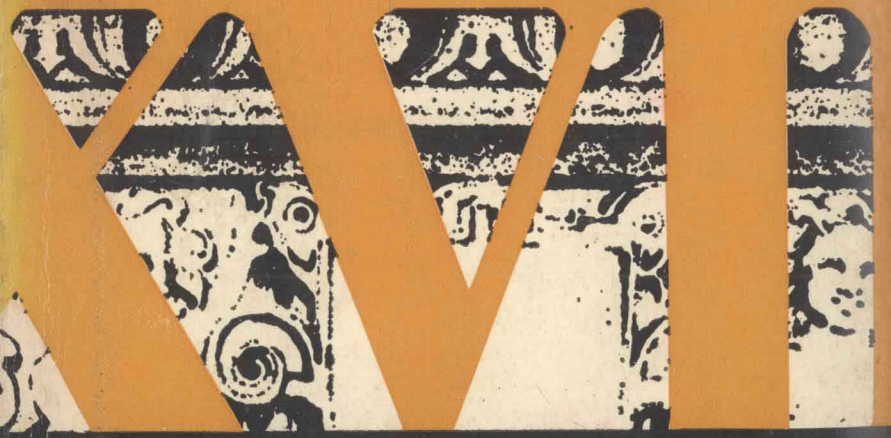
# DOUGLAS BUSH

# ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE EARLIER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY 1600-1660

SECOND EDITION



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PAPERBACKS

# ENGLISH LITERATURE
## IN THE
# EARLIER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
## 1600–1660

BY
DOUGLAS BUSH

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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The cloth-bound edition of this book forms vol. V of The Oxford History of English Literature, edited originally by F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée, and now by Kenneth Allott and Norman Davis. That edition contains detailed Chronological Tables and an extensive Bibliography (referred to in the Author's Prefaces) which, to make the main text more cheaply available, have been omitted from this paperback.

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

SINCE this history was published in 1945, books, articles, and essays have multiplied in such numbers that the bibliographies, those at least for general topics and all but minor writers, have increasingly lost their utility. The Clarendon Press graciously granted *carte blanche* for total revision. The bibliography has been overhauled and brought up to date—that is, through 1961 and often beyond—as well as the author's knowledge and judgement and the limits of space allowed. As for the text, while accounts of the greater writers could seldom be expanded, a good many sections have been rewritten, and many small changes have been made all along the way. Advancing knowledge has also corrected some matters of fact.

I am obliged to a number of persons who answered queries or volunteered information: officers of five University Presses, Harvard, Oxford (New York), Rutgers, Washington, and Yale; Mmes. C. S. S. Higham, Joan Rees, Joan Varley; Sir Geoffrey Keynes; Messrs. William Addison and J. M. Osborn; Dr. Ronald Berman and Dr. Louis B. Wright; Professors R. C. Bald, J. Frank, V. B. Heltzel, D. Novarr, F. S. Siebert, and especially Professors W. A. Jackson, S. Schoenbaum, and E. Weismiller and the general editors, Professors Bonamy Dobrée and F. P. Wilson. Professor Wilson above all has been, as before, indefatigably helpful.

I return thanks to the American Council of Learned Societies for an award which enabled me to take a term off duty and start on this work. I am grateful, as always, to the staff of the Harvard libraries and, for summer privileges, to the Dartmouth College Library; and to the staff of the Clarendon Press for their general care and their patient acceptance of late additions to the bibliography.

D. B.

# PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS volume is (or was supposed to be) limited to about 150,000 words of text, and many things, as Purchas said of Sir Anthony Sherley's travels, 'are left out not for want of worth, but of roome'. Particular problems of inclusion and proportion are complicated by the necessary effort to maintain a balance between the contemporary and the modern scale of values. In regard to authors who straddle 1600, my normal rule has been to mention but not discuss works written before that date, since these will be treated in the volume on the sixteenth century. Doubtless many readers would prefer to have chapters grouped around men rather than around types of writing and modes of thought, but it is hoped that the present arrangement, though it requires the slicing up of some authors, may contribute to a more philosophic unity; it is at least a continual reminder that most great prose of the period was didactic and utilitarian. It is hoped also, since there is continual occasion for doubt or debate, that the apparent assurance of brevity may not 'sound arrogantly unto present Ears in this strict enquiring Age, wherein, for the most part, Probably, and Perhaps, will hardly serve to mollify the Spirit of captious Contradictors'. As for more fundamental complaints, the author can only admit the general impeachment lodged by Hobbes against the Oxford mathematicians: 'There is within you some special cause of intenebration which you should do well to look to.'

Texts are normally quoted from first or authoritative early editions with no change except that italics are not retained, that contractions are expanded, and that *i*, *j*, *u*, *v*, and *w* are made to conform with modern usage. Titles are given in their original form in the bibliography and modernized in the text and chronological tables.

I must record my gratitude for assistance of various kinds: to the President and Fellows of Harvard College for grants from the Clark Bequest; to the Army Medical Library, the Boston Public Library, the Library of Congress, the Newberry Library, the libraries of the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, the University of Illinois, Yale University and Divinity School, and the Harvard Divinity School and

School of Business Administration, for the loan of books; to the Boston Public Library and the libraries of the Harvard Law School and the Union Theological Seminary, for the privilege of consulting books; and to the staff of the Widener and Houghton libraries for their untiring help over a long time. The University of Toronto Press and the Cornell University Press have willingly allowed me to use bits of two small volumes of mine, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (1939) and *Paradise Lost in Our Time* (1945).

President Wilbur K. Jordan of Radcliffe College, Professors J. Milton French of Rutgers University, William A. Jackson, George W. Sherburn, and A. P. Usher of Harvard, F. A. Patterson of Columbia, and John W. Spargo of Northwestern University, Dr. Louis B. Wright of the Huntington Library, and Dr. C. William Miller of the University of Virginia, have been good enough to answer queries. For amiable and valuable criticism of parts of the manuscript I am indebted to friends and colleagues of Harvard University, Professor Jackson again and Professors Charles H. McIlwain, James B. Munn, Kenneth B. Murdock, Hyder E. Rollins, and Theodore Spencer, and to my friends Professors Warner G. Rice of the University of Michigan and Arthur S. P. Woodhouse of the University of Toronto. This large sum of scholarly insurance does not of course exempt the insured from the common lot of man. Professor F. P. Wilson has been from beginning to end not only a patient and helpful adviser but an active co-worker to a degree quite beyond what might be expected of a general editor, and in matters of critical opinion both he and Professor Dobrée have shown a tolerant magnanimity. It would be superfluous if not impertinent to pay tribute to the Clarendon Press, but I must acknowledge its noble indulgence of my bibliographical excesses—though a large portion of my wild oats has had to be ploughed under. Finally, my wife has listened to many pages and many groans, and has done much to prevent the multiplication of both.

D. B.

*Harvard University*

# CONTENTS

# I

# THE BACKGROUND OF THE AGE

WHILE all ages are ages of transition, there are some in which disruptive and creative forces reach maturity and combine to speed up the normal process of change. In the history of England, as in that of Europe at large, the seventeenth century is probably the most conspicuous modern example, unless we except our own age, of such acceleration. In 1600 the educated Englishman's mind and world were more than half medieval; by 1660 they were more than half modern. The character and causes of such a transformation are far too complex to be summed up in a formula, but something of its breadth and scope may be suggested by such labels as democracy and imperialism, industrialism and capitalism, the advance of pure and applied science and the gospel of progress, the spread of the scientific, secular, and anti-authoritarian spirit through other domains of thought and action.

But this process of change did not begin or end in the years 1600–60, and it took place against a background of continuity and compromise. We encounter the clash and the fusion of old and new on every side, in science and religion, politics and economics, law and literature, music and architecture. It is the impact of modernism upon medievalism that gives the age its peculiar character. Yet the forces of 'modernism' were themselves generally as old as the forces of conservative tradition, and it was in the name of conservative tradition that the great rebellion in politics and religion was conducted. As the quarrel between 'ancients' and 'moderns' developed, champions of modern superiority could appeal to the telescope and the microscope, but otherwise there was hardly any new idea of the century, from the motion of the earth to the motion of the atom, from democracy to absolutism, from the theory of ethics to the theory of prose style, of which the germ at least was not to be found in ancient Greece and Rome. In other spheres, such as the religious, social, and economic, the elements of change had been operating since the Middle Ages. What distinguished the seventeenth century from the sixteenth was not so much the

arrival of new ideas and forces as the accumulated and irresistible pressure of old and new ones in potent combination and interaction. Even the belief in a rigorous order of nature, which lies behind 'classical' mechanistic thought, may be regarded as in some sense an unconscious heritage from theology. And the period which transformed scholastic and Calvinistic determinism into a scientific counterpart was also the period of mercantilism and mysticism. Surveying the age and its representative minds, in 1660 as well as in 1600, we may say that normality consists in incongruity.

There were, of course, whole-hearted conservatives and whole-hearted modernists, but even they were aware of a changing world, and a multitude who belonged to neither category were disturbed by violent contrasts and divided loyalties. From Donne to Dryden thoughtful men ask 'What do I know?' Sharing the critical spirit, yet conscious of its destructive results, they seek some valid authority, some standing-ground more firm than that which had served their fathers. Is the edifice of knowledge built by ancient genius the modern man's permanent home or is it his prison? In his view of the universe and God and man, shall he hold by the Bible, Aristotle, and Ptolemy, or by one of the confusing new theories? Or, since very few men were troubled by science, what is the final authority in religious doctrine and discipline, the Church of Rome, the Church of England, the Bible, individual reason, or the supra-rational inner light? In the tremendous matter of the salvation or damnation of souls, can those who possess the truth tolerate the propagation of error? Should Protestants worship God according to a prescribed ritual borrowed from the Scarlet Woman or with austere and spontaneous simplicity? What is the divinely appointed form of church government, episcopal, synodical, or congregational? Are Church and State united or separate, and which is superior? Where does supreme political and constitutional authority reside, in the king, the judges of the common law, or Parliament? Does the tyranny of the sovereign justify armed resistance? Does the tyranny of Parliament justify forcible purging and military rule? Is society an organism actuated by religious motives or an aggregate of individuals actuated by economic self-interest? Is morality founded on right reason and divine precept, or on the current law of the land?

Such a catalogue might be prolonged indefinitely, but these far from theoretical questions will serve to illustrate the permanently unsettled state of the seventeenth-century man's inner and outer world. It is not unnatural that melancholy has been taken as a conspicuous, even a dominant, characteristic of late Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. Its manifestations are infinitely various in kind and degree—Jaques, Hamlet, and Thersites are three out of many dramatic voices—and the causes assigned range from introspection to indigestion, from Puritanism to the plague. Certainly we find much disgust with men and society, much vague bitterness against a world that seems out of joint, against the apparent futility of life. Many young men might have uttered, with a difference, the later judgement of Margaret of Newcastle that there was no employment for heroic spirits under so wise a king as James. The young Sir William Cornwallis and the elder statesman Fulke Greville, to cite only two witnesses, see about them nothing but the corruptions of a sick time. Ancient heroes, Cornwallis declares in his essay on 'Fame', searched for substance, modern men chase shadows: 'we are walking Ghostes'. We of the present, who have had our generation of hollow men, our literature of defeatism, are perhaps especially qualified to understand one side of the early seventeenth century, yet we should be unwise in seeking too much affinity between it and the recent past, since selective and plausible parallels can be and have been drawn between our time and every notable period from Chaucer's to the Victorian.

Jacobean pessimism, like the modern, is commonly taken as a reaction against the optimism of the preceding age, although the writers who have held forth on that text seem to regard the name of Marlowe as sufficient evidence of Elizabethan optimism. In fact, Elizabethan literature, like Victorian literature, was pessimistic enough, and it is permissible to think that 'Jacobean melancholy' has been exaggerated. Against the 'Jacobean pessimism' of Shakespeare's partly Elizabethan tragedies and problem comedies may be set the 'Jacobean optimism' of his dramatic romances. 'There never was a merry World', said Selden, 'since the Faries left Dancing, and the Parson left Conjuring.' But in all ages 'Merry England' has been both a living reality and a nostalgic fiction. Much Jacobean melancholy, like that of our own day, was the fashionable exploitation

of what in some men was authentic, and while young intellectuals were nourishing one another's disillusionment, many happy extraverts were singing the madrigals and ballets of Thomas Morley and his fellows. The meditations on the brevity of life, so numerous and so rich throughout our sixty years, are not the rhetorical funguses of an age of decay; they are the seventeenth-century version of the Dance of Death, and they tell rather of immense vitality contemplating its inevitable extinction. If Calvinistic religion had its dark and terrifying side, it also raised the humblest of the elect above the lords of the earth. If astronomical discoveries and speculations bewildered and dismayed some philosophical minds, for others they enhanced the glory of God; and applied science promised the conquest of all nature for the use and benefit of man. If some writers were troubled by the belief that they were living near the end of the world, in a time of general deterioration, the mass of men, from politicians, merchants, and colonizers down to ploughmen, were far too busy to be melancholy. They would have shared the retrospective verdict not of the romantic duchess but of Fuller: 'Indeed all the Reigne of King James was better for one to live under, than to write of, consisting of a Champian of constant tranquility, without any tumours of trouble to entertain posterity with.' And if the latter half of our period was one of war and continued discord, the rebellion and the Commonwealth were the culmination of intense zeal for the establishment of a new era. Altogether, one could make out a strong argument for the Elizabethan age as one of pessimistic gloom and the earlier seventeenth century as one of optimistic recovery.

However, granting the whole period its fair share, and no more, of the melancholy that runs through all English literature, we may illustrate some of its special features and causes in a brief sketch of the changing background. The general political, religious, and economic causes, even the philosophic ones, were all alive in the time of Elizabeth. Political and religious strife was brought to a head by the clear-cut Stuart theory of State and Church, partly because the sovereign's conception of sovereignty had become more rigidly legalistic, and still more because the structure of society and the temper of the nation and Parliament had changed. The Tudors were skilful in avoiding both doctrinaire theory and open conflict, and were lucky in not having to face the ultimate consequences of active problems,

though even Elizabeth in 1601 bowed to a refractory Parliament. Anxiety about the succession and the various other troubles of her last years—among them the execution of Essex, the patron and the national hope of many young literary men—contributed to make the welcome given to James much more than empty adulation. The king, however, always remained a stranger in England, and he was quite incapable of inspiring patriotic devotion to himself and the Crown. His outlook, and that of his son, were dynastic rather than national. Men who recalled the days of the Armada did not feel proud over James's unwearied appeasement of Spain and his sacrifice of the Palatinate, Bohemia, and continental Protestantism—the theme of the bitter 'Tom Tell-Truth' (*c.* 1622) and of the potent *Vox Populi* (1620) by the prolific Rev. Thomas Scott. Yet others could justly rejoice because he had kept the country out of futile and unnecessary war. The domestic problems he inherited were far beyond the grasp of a dogmatic academic theorist, however erratically shrewd he might be, and through a long series of arbitrary acts he contrived to alarm or antagonize almost all the substantial groups in the nation except the orthodox clergy. All classes alike resented the king's extravagance, his attachment to unworthy favourites, and the moral and financial corruption of the court circle. In fairness we should remember that the increasing friction between James (and Charles) and Parliament was caused in part by quite inadequate governmental revenue. And James was wiser than Parliament in his desire for union with Scotland and for more liberal treatment of Catholics, perhaps also in his pacific foreign policy.

It is more difficult to find any evidence of Charles's wisdom. Yet, when Parliament was exasperated beyond endurance, invincible respect for the Lord's Anointed was still shown in the honest efforts to dissociate abuses from the king and fasten them upon his advisers. Even in 1640, when the Long Parliament began to take over royal powers, its aim was to curb the prerogative, not to assert the sovereignty of Parliament. Up to the last the parliamentarians were too instinctively monarchical to contemplate revolution; only step by step were they driven into it. For the most part they did not consider themselves pioneer democrats, they were patriotic—and propertied—Englishmen who appealed to Magna Carta and Bracton in defence of their traditional rights and the traditional supremacy of law. And

whatever the modern world owes to the creators of parliamentary government, from the passionate Eliot to the sober Pym and the rest, the conflict cannot be regarded in terms of black and white. We may perhaps set aside the personal appeal which the royal martyr and sainted cavalier has always made, but we should not forget that all along he had had a large share of legality, if not of equity, honesty, and intelligence, on his side. And the king lacked not only revenue but a national civil service, a solid framework of royal authority, apart from uncertain local gentry. On the other hand, we cannot, as even Milton discovered, idealize the Long Parliament as an assembly of political Galahads, and the behaviour of the victorious army, however strong the provocation, was scarcely in accord with the doctrine of the supremacy of law for which they had fought. When war came, it divided individual souls as well as families and districts. Many men on both sides were happy in seeing only one course before them, but many also had a hard decision to make. It was with broken hearts that the chivalrous Sir Edmund Verney and the philosophic Falkland followed their liege lord.

As events showed, the nation was not prepared for a republic, and it did not get one. If Cromwell had had a free hand, the protectorate would have been a happier era than it was, and in spite of the pressure of conflicting factions he succeeded to a remarkable degree, in a few years, in commanding a new respect abroad and creating order at home. But his foreign policy, based on a mixture of commercial, religious, and imperialistic motives, was expensive, if nothing worse, and domestic order was partly artificial. No amount of beneficent and liberal reform, and there was a good deal, could obscure the fact that the government was not a free republic but a military dictatorship. The greatest of republicans betrayed his anxiety even in eulogizing the Protector. What had been thinly disguised became very clear with the inquisitorial jurisdiction of the regional major-generals. Altogether, experience of the iron hand, the repressive severity of Puritan legislation on manners and morals, the political chaos that attended and followed the brief reign of Richard Cromwell, and the extremities of economic depression, were enough to inspire London itself, the former stronghold of Puritan resistance, with an ardent longing for the return of king, Parliament, prosperity, and the open use of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

During these sixty years religious and ecclesiastical questions were increasingly bound up with politics, and they directly touched larger numbers of people and kindled passions which constitutional issues might leave cool. The Elizabethan compromise from the first had failed to draw in the more resolute Catholics and Protestants. James's tolerant inclinations were frustrated by alarm over Catholic conspiracies and the multiplication of recusants, and the re-enforcement of the penal laws resulted in the Gunpowder Plot, which was to remain in the popular imagination an inflammatory warning of the political dangers of popery. The oath of allegiance (1606), James said in his *Apology*, was a test of civil obedience and, though the oath went beyond the merely civil, it might, but for papal *breves* and Parliament, have been a virtual instrument of toleration. Later years brought comparative relief to English Catholics, and under Charles's French queen Catholicism raised its head at court and won some notable converts. In the eyes of Puritans who dreaded the grim wolf with privy paw, Laud's High Church was Roman in all but name. And in 1641 Lord Falkland, who was no Puritan, declared in Parliament that some bishops were so absolutely, directly, and cordially papists that it was all that £1,500 a year could do to keep them from confessing it.

But Catholicism proved a much less formidable force than Puritanism, which grew from a drop of dissent to an angry flood. At the beginning of 1644 John Greene wrote in his diary that 'now 'tis made a warre almost merely for religion, which I feared'. To intensely serious people, learned and unlearned, who demanded apostolic simplicity, the Church of England with its Romish ritual and hierarchy appeared a very imperfect fulfilment of Reformation ideals. The word 'Puritan' came to mean many things, so that modern like early usage is often loose and misleading, but in the individual sphere it increasingly stressed conversion, rebirth in Christ; as a general movement towards the holy community, Puritanism carried on its initial principle of firm adherence to the Bible as the sole and sufficient authority in all matters of ecclesiastical government and ceremony as well as of belief and conduct. The Bible and the congregation were for the religious republican or democrat what the common law and Parliament were for his political counterpart, and both effected a revolution by appealing to a remote

and somewhat nebulous past against a corrupted present. Theologically, there was for generations little or no difference between Anglicans and Puritans, since the Church of England until the early seventeenth century was largely Calvinistic. The advance of Arminian theology and its association with High Church principles were registered in George Morley's famous answer to the question 'What the Arminians held?'—that they held all the best bishoprics and deaneries in England. Indeed, though Laud was liberal in his theological outlook, through his rigorous insistence on external uniformity and his far-reaching interference in all departments of life, Arminianism was identified with the doctrine of divine right, royal and episcopal, and with the whole Stuart régime. Mrs. Hutchinson was not unwarranted in saying, as the Grand Remonstrance had said, that if any gentleman maintained the good laws of the land, or stood up for any public interest, he was called a Puritan. The union of prelacy and monarchy brought about the union of religious and political nonconformity which finally overthrew both Church and State. But before condemning the motives and methods of Bancroft and Laud and their sovereigns in enforcing conformity, we should remember that our religious tolerance has been largely the by-product of religious apathy, and that the Church, in the conviction of many good men, could not afford to be tolerant when its very survival as a national institution was in danger. As Laud said, in dedicating the *Conference with Fisher* (1639) to the king, the Church of England—which we think of as a serene *via media*—was ground between two millstones, Romanist and Puritan. We must not forget, moreover, the Tudor legacy of disorder, ignorance, inefficiency, and poverty among the mass of the clergy.

During Elizabeth's reign the growing body of Puritans were mostly content to form the left wing of the Church, but in the seventeenth century that position became less and less tenable. At the Hampton Court Conference (1604) James enunciated Stuart policy with a mixture of short-sighted violence and prophetic penetration. His promise to harry Nonconformists out of the land bore immediate fruit in the ejection of perhaps ninety Puritan clergymen. The sectarian exodus from the Church had begun much earlier—Sir Andrew Aguecheek hated a Brownist—and some people moved to Holland, but the most impressive portents were the voyage of the *Mayflower* (1620)

and the 'great migration' of 1630 and subsequent years. The religious origins of Massachusetts illustrate the mingled loyalty and ingenuity of the emigrants and the invincible instinct for unity and uniformity which was a general heritage. Across the wide ocean, in 'the savage deserts of America', faithful Englishmen and Christians could maintain the paradox of non-separating Congregationalism with much less trouble than at home; they were only separating from the corruptions of the Church. In England Puritan antagonism to prelacy, which had long been seething, boiled over in 1640–1. In addition to some detached and more or less secular Erastians, there appeared among the warring Puritans three main parties or groups of parties. The Solemn League and Covenant (1643) signalized a Presbyterian predominance which was to last for four or five years. The English Presbyterians wanted a national Presbyterian Church, controlled by the State, with no toleration for dissent; what emerged, however, was only the shell of a Presbyterian system. Reactionary and *bourgeois* Presbyterianism gave way before the liberal and flexible Independents, who stood for toleration and feared parliamentary absolutism, and whose strength was centred in Cromwell's army. They were able in 1648–9 to purge the House of Presbyterians and execute the king. The third and much more miscellaneous group comprised the sects and parties which were being born every month, with varying religious, political, or economic creeds and often with lunatic fringes. In his *Gangraena* (1646) the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards listed sixteen recognizable groups and over two hundred 'errors, heresies, blasphemies' (including the innocent three of Sir Thomas Browne's 'greener studies') which had developed in recent years. This burgeoning of sects was of course the logical outcome of Protestant individualism, and the centrifugal impulse was stimulated by more immediate causes, the flourishing of old and new abuses in the Church, the royal and episcopal campaign for High Church uniformity, and some experience of what promised to be the equally tyrannous uniformity of Presbyterianism. There was, too, the positive desire, sometimes partly spurious and fanatical, sometimes deep and real, for a kind of illumination which the Establishment did not seem to give. An example of the one kind would be the Fifth Monarchy men, who were looking—as Milton could look—for the second coming of Christ. The finest example of the other