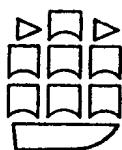


**LONGMAN COMPANION
TO
ENGLISH LITERATURE**

C Gillie

Longman Companion to English Literature

Christopher Gillie



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To Cecilia and in memory of Darsie

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Symbols

References :

* The asterisk is used in two ways:

- 1 Following an item, it means that further information is available in the *Reference Section*, eg
T. S. Eliot* – refers to the entry 'Eliot, Thomas Stearns'
*Bleak House** – refers to the entry '*Bleak House*' (under B)
- 2 a Before a word or words, it means 'See (also) the entry in the *Reference Section*. . .', eg
*Morality Plays – See the *Reference Section* entry 'Morality Plays' (under M)
- b Before figures, it means 'See (also) the *Essay Section*. . .', eg
*1.2.4 – See Essay 1, section 2.4

Dates :

'Forster, E. M. (1879–1970)' – dates of birth and death

'Elizabeth I (1558–1603)' – dates of the beginning and end of a sovereign's reign

Symbols used to indicate the usual British-English pronunciation of the names :

CONSONANT SOUNDS	f as in <i>ship</i>	ʒ as in <i>measure</i>
	tʃ – <i>chin</i>	dʒ – <i>judge</i>
	θ – <i>thin</i>	ð – <i>this</i>
	j – <i>yes</i>	ŋ – <i>long</i>

VOWEL SOUNDS	a as in <i>cat</i>	ɑ: as in <i>far</i>
	i – <i>win</i>	i: – <i>see</i>
	u – <i>put</i>	u: – <i>too</i>
	ɒ – <i>lot</i>	o: – <i>saw</i>
	ə – <i>comma</i>	ɜ: – <i>girl</i>
	e – <i>beg</i>	ʌ – <i>fan</i>

DIPHTHONGS	ai as in <i>buy</i>	au as in <i>how</i>
	ei – <i>day</i>	əu – <i>ago</i>
	oi – <i>boy</i>	
		iə as in <i>here</i>
		eə – <i>fair</i>
		ʊə – <i>sure</i>

STRESS

(^ˈ) is placed before a stressed syllable,
e.g. /^ˈsi:zə/ (*Caesar*), /ə^ˈθeləʊ/ (*Othello*)

Preface to the New Edition

The function of a Companion is to provide information needed in study. The purpose of this Preface is to make clear, first, the kinds of reader to whom this information is particularly addressed; secondly, the kinds of information that the book seeks to provide; and thirdly, the plan of the book – that is to say, the ways in which the information is provided.

Readers. The book is intended for two categories: on the one hand for readers who are studying English Literature in other countries, whether or not their first language is English. It is meant for general readers as well as students, but the kind of reader kept specially in mind is the student whose knowledge of the language is good, and who is approaching or actually engaged in university studies. At the same time, it is felt that readers in Britain will also find a use for the book. Such readers may well feel that some of the information offered is already known to them, but the majority of it is of the sort that every serious reader above a superficial level will require.

Information. Because the book is addressed also to foreign readers, it contains more information about the background to literature than is usual in such works of reference. This is the obvious reason for the three essays on English history, society and thought, and for articles in the alphabetical reference section on such subjects as politics, education and places.

In regard to the reference section, it has been assumed that readers will need at least the bare biographical facts about writers, in so far as these are relevant to the character of their works, and an outline of the contents of their main works. However, no Companion can include all writers, still less articles on, or even mention of, all their works. Consequently some principle of selection is required. The principle adopted has been to choose for more extended account those subjects, writers and works which have attracted most interest during the last fifty years of scholastic and critical study. A partial exception has been made in the choice of contemporary writers: many readers have a natural preference for writers of their own day, and consequently the names of living writers have been included more liberally than those of past periods. A very brief bibliography is usually offered at the end of an article on a writer. These bibliographies are not, of course, comprehensive, but give some guidance to the reader who needs extended information.

Dates after the names of people indicate their life spans, except when they follow the names of kings, when they show the length of the reign. Dates after the titles of works indicate the time of writing, and also of publication when these nearly coincide.

Information about American and Commonwealth literature has not been included except when writers such as Henry James and T. S. Eliot have adopted Britain as their place of work, or, as in the instance of Ezra Pound, where a writer has made a strong impact on English literature. The literatures of Commonwealth countries and of the United States proceed from cultures of distinct growth; to include them in English literature merely because they happen to be in the same

language would be misleading. However, brief accounts are included of those foreign writers and literatures which have had a marked influence on English writing.

Plan. The disadvantage of a work of reference in which all the information is arranged alphabetically is that the reader is not able to see this information in proper perspective; each subject has the appearance of existing independently of its context in contemporary society, and of being isolated from its context in history. To counteract this disadvantage, the following expedients have been used.

1. One quarter of the book consists of essays, divided into sections so that the reader need not feel obliged to read an entire essay to find the information he needs. The essays are intended to present English literature as a unity, and to enable the reader to feel it as constantly related to other aspects of English life and thought.

2. A liberal use of cross-reference has been made. In the essays, names, titles, and topics are frequently marked with an asterisk (*) to guide the reader to the appropriate article in the reference section for clearer or more detailed explanation. Similarly, many of the articles in the reference section have references to those sections of the essays which deal with the topic, as well as to articles on related topics elsewhere in the reference section.

For this second edition twenty-six entries have been added to the Reference Section and twenty-eight others have been amended or expanded. There are two additional maps, and titles of works by living authors have been updated. Entries referring fictional characters to the works in which they occur have been omitted, unless they contain additional information.

Acknowledgments. No work of reference on so large and complex a subject as English Literature can be altogether adequate in the information it provides, particularly when it is the work of a single writer. The present Companion would be much more inadequate than it is without the generous and helpful assistance of the following advisers: Professor J. C. Maxwell, who made many suggestions and corrections; L. G. Alexander, S. H. Burton, A. G. Eyre, Dr Bernard Lott, and D. K. Swan, who gave general advice throughout; and, in their own special fields, J. C. Alldridge, B. A. Richards, D. G. Richards, A. E. Rodway and Dr. A. Ross.

Christopher Gillie

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I Political history and institutions of England: 1066 – *present day*

1.1 1066–1485

Introduction

1.1.1 Judicial and political institutions

1.1.2 Relationship with France

1.1.3 Relationships with Scotland, Ireland, Wales

1.2 1485–1603

Introduction

1.2.1 Tudor government

1.2.2 The English Reformation

1.2.3 Political aspects of the English Renaissance

1.3 1603–1714

Introduction

1.3.1 Puritanism, the Civil War, and the Protectorate

1.3.2 Republican interlude: the Protectorate

1.3.3 The Restoration and the beginning of party politics

1.3.4 The Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Settlement (1701)

1.3.5 England into Great Britain: the relationship with
Ireland and Scotland

1.4 1714–1815

Introduction

1.4.1. The Whig oligarchy

1.4.2. The revival of Toryism

1.4.3 The French Revolution: the Industrial Revolution: the
Napoleonic War

1.5 1815–present day

Introduction

1.5.1 Political change

1.5.2 The British Empire

1.5.3 Relationship with Ireland

1.5.4 Britain today: the Welfare State

I . I

1066—1485

Introduction

English people think of their history as having an unusually distinct beginning: the Battle of Hastings, 1066. This was the victory of William*, Duke of Normandy, Norse by descent and French by culture, over the Anglo-Saxon king, Harold; William went on to conquer the whole of England, though not the rest of Britain (i.e. Scotland*, Wales* and Ireland*). Such a view of the beginning of English history is of course a simplified one; it is not true that all Anglo-Saxon political habits of thought and institutions were extinguished by the Conquest, nor is it true that Anglo-Saxon art and literature, which had been notable, simply expired.

Nonetheless, the Norman Conquest made a profound break in English political and cultural history. Politically, William I and his successors were able, because of the completeness of the Conquest, to reorganize governing institutions, giving them a pattern which is still visible as the basis of those of the present day. Socially, he removed most of the Anglo-Saxon ruling class, replacing it by his own Norman-French followers, bound together by a Norman-French system of relationships. Culturally, this immense social change meant that England became a three-language nation for at least two centuries: the upper class spoke French, and English was the tongue of the lower classes, while the educated class (the churchmen or 'clerks') used Latin – as elsewhere in Europe – for official business and scholarship.

Another important consequence of the Conquest was that, since the royal families and the nobility were Norman-French or French, England was closely involved in French politics and wars against the kings of France until the middle of the 15th century. In the second half of the period this conflict with France led the Norman-French nobility of England to think of themselves as English rather than French, and in the 14th century they took to English instead of French as their normal speech. Henry IV* (1399–1413) is reputed to have been the first of the kings since the Conquest to use English as his native tongue; Chaucer* (1340?–1400) was the first poet of a royal court to write in English.

The period 1066–1485 is what we think of as 'the English Middle Ages' linguistically, as the 'Middle English' period between the Old English of the pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxons and the Modern English speech and writing of the 16th century. It shaped many of the most important political institutions of our own day, and an English culture which is almost as different from the culture of the

*Indicates mention in the reference section

4 Political history and institutions of England: 1066-present day

Anglo-Saxons as it is from the Norman-French culture that succeeded it. Above all, it shaped a sense of nationhood and civilization among the English, a sense of identity which intensified their awareness of the identity of the larger civilization of Europe in which they participated.

I.I.I. *Judicial and political institutions*

BECKET: *You forget the barons. Who will not forget
Constant curbing of petty privilege.*

TEMPER: *Against the barons
Is King's cause, churl's cause, Chancellor's cause.*

T. S. Eliot* – *Murder in the Cathedral*

I.I.I.I *Feudalism*

The social organization which William the Conqueror established in England was the one known to most of western Europe in the 11th century; historians call it 'the feudal system'. This kind of society had grown up under the later Roman Empire of the West, when organization was breaking down and social order had to be maintained by an appeal to self-interest. By this 'system', a landholder held his land as a 'feudum' or 'fee' from a superior lord; in return for protection by this superior, the landholder rendered him some service, such as work on the superior's land or military service. Feudal relationship had grown up spontaneously as a method by which the relatively weak could find defence against forces of disorder, but in few regions besides England after the Conquest was it in any sense systematic. Even in England, the king's government needed its own centralizing institutions for efficient rule; the barons (i.e. the nobility) recognized no interests except their own, evaded service of the king when they could, and regarded themselves as independent rulers within their own territories.

I.I.I.I.2 *The King's Council and the Chancellor*

Thus the King's Council (Curia Regis) became a central body of professional officials, who, under efficient kings such as Henry I (1100-35) and Henry II (1154-89), worked equally as administrators and as judges ensuring that 'the King's Peace' was kept uniformly throughout the country. The king needed educated men for such tasks, and until the 14th century he found them only among men bred to the Church, such as Thomas à Becket*, Henry II's Chancellor, and later Archbishop and the king's enemy. The king's Chancellor was his secretary, and the office was at first overshadowed by that of Justiciar, i.e. chief judge. After 1231, however, the office of Justiciar died out, and the Chancellorship became the most important office of state. The Chancellor came to control not only the administrative machine but also the judicial system, since it was he who handled petitions to the king. The modern Lord Chancellor* is the historical descendant of the medieval chancellors; he is the head of the judicial system (equivalent to a Minister of

Justice) and, though his political importance diminished greatly after the reign of Henry VIII* (1509–47), he still has high political status as president of the upper house of Parliament, the House of Lords.

1.1.1.3 *The Great Council and Parliament*

When he needed the support of his nobles, the king expanded his Curia Regis into the Magnum Concilium (Great Council), of which the modern House of Lords* is the historical descendant. Now, as then, the reigning king or queen composes it by summoning to it the lords, lay and spiritual, – i.e. the hereditary nobility and the bishops – though the House of Lords also contains other components.

In 1295 Edward I*, following the example of Simon de Montfort, who had ruled England during part of the previous reign of Henry III*, expanded the Great Council by adding to it the Commons*, i.e. elected representatives of the towns and Knights of the Shire* from the provincial districts now known as counties. The king was not making a very early experiment in liberal democracy when he formed this Model Parliament; he was merely continuing the policy of previous Norman* and Plantagenet* kings of extending the effectiveness of their central administration. The great administrative problem for governments in the 12th and 13th centuries, when communications were bad, administrators few, and the nobility had not learned public spirit, was to establish effective relationships with the people. When the king needed to raise money by taxation, he could not rely on his officials to collect it against the wishes of local interests, until he found means to deal directly with these interests through their elected representatives. Thus the system of government through elected representatives, which by the end of the 19th century was the main instrument of democracy, was in the 14th century an instrument of monarchy, exercised by kings who never imagined that one day the people would take possession of it and use it against monarchical rule. The process by which this came about was gradual: already in the 14th century the Commons presented ‘petitions’ to the king, which he often found it expedient to grant in order to secure their agreement to taxation more readily; in the 15th century this petition became a ‘bill’ which, when accepted by the king, was called an ‘act’ or ‘statute’ and became a law of the land; in the 17th century Parliament secured that laws were made in no other way, and in the 18th century the king’s assent was becoming what it is today – a mere formality concluding a procedure initiated by Parliament*.

1.1.1.4 *Trial by jury*

The use of elected representatives to assist government did not originate with the transformation of the Great Council into Parliament by the addition of the Commons. It was already a habit of the Curia Regis to send for representative Knights of the Shire to give evidence in difficult cases that came before it, and the annual shire courts, presided over by sheriffs (‘shire reeves’), were attended by repre-

sentatives from the subdivisions ('hundreds') of the shires. More important, because it was as central to the development of justice as representatives of the Commons were to the development of government, was the election of 'sworn men' or 'juries'* (from French *juré*) to meet judges (Justices of Assize) sent out from the Curia Regis to the shires. These judges tried cases which were too serious for the powers of the local shire courts. In criminal cases, it was at first the main function of the juries to present to the royal judges such men as were accused of serious crimes; the actual trial of criminal cases in the 11th and 12th centuries was often conducted by some sort of 'ordeal' undergone by the accused man, who was judged guilty or otherwise in accordance with his ability to survive it. 'Trial by ordeal' was supposed to reveal the judgement of Heaven which would not allow an innocent man to perish; not until the 13th century did public opinion come to accept the judgement of a jury, selected from among neighbours, as a superior means of arriving at the truth. In 'civil cases' of disputes between neighbours, the jury was at first a panel of witnesses who declared the facts (e.g. about the ownership of land) as they knew them. But like the elected representatives of the Commons summoned by the kings to Parliament, the jury began as an instrument to secure efficient government, and by the 17th century it was being used by opponents of the king's government as a safeguard to private liberty.

1.1.1.5 *Local government: Sheriffs and Justices of the Peace*

The office of Sheriff, who stood for the king's interests in every shire, was important in the Middle Ages and still survives, but it began to lose most of its importance in the 16th century. He was the principal local authority for law and order; however, he was not a professional official like the members of the king's court, but a local landholder of importance, who occasionally succeeded in making the office hereditary in his family. Justices of the Peace (first known as Guardians of the Peace and nowadays called Magistrates*) began obscurely in the 12th and 13th centuries and only became supremely important in the 16th century. Like the sheriff, they have never been professional, but were until the 19th century members of the middle range of landowner. Nowadays they are commonly drawn from all classes, trades and professions, and their authority is restricted to trial (without jury, but with a professional lawyer called the Clerk to advise them) of petty offences and the examination of more serious charges. At the height of their power (16th–19th centuries) they were the principal local authorities. Sometimes, like Justice Shallow in Shakespeare's *Henry IV**, they held office more because of their status in their localities than because of their competence for the work; equally often, they were responsible men who constituted a very important link between the government and society. The 18th-century novelist, Henry Fielding*, himself an admirable representative of the class of magistrates, depicts a worthy and an unworthy example in Squire Allworthy and Squire Western, characters in his novel, *Tom Jones**.

1.1.1.6 *Common Law ; Magna Carta*

The history of England in the Middle Ages is partly the political and legal shaping of a society; the chief shaping force was the monarchy, which enforced through its officials a Common Law* (i.e. a law which was the same for all members of society) based on custom and precedent. The Common Law was a great force for social liberation, because it freed common men from tyranny by the self-interested nobility. However, the kings sometimes attempted to advance their personal interests against those of society, and it is often difficult to decide when they were in fact doing this and when they were really resisting the self-interest of the nobles. An outstanding example of this difficulty is the reign of King John* (1199–1216), who is traditionally regarded as a bad, self-interested king, on whom the barons, in alliance with the Church, were able to impose a charter of rights – the famous Magna Carta* (Great Charter) of 1215. This charter was first given importance as an assertion of human rights against arbitrary government in the 17th century, when Parliament came into open conflict with the king, and used it to provide its members with legal support and protection; clauses in it can be interpreted as a basis for the right of trial by jury and for protection against imprisonment without trial. In other respects, modern historians are inclined to interpret Magna Carta as principally a defence of the interests of the barons and of the Church. The truth is, perhaps, that in defending their class the barons created a precedent for the defence of more general liberties later.

1.1.2. *Relationship with France*

KING HENRY: *For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother ; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition :
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurst they were not here ;
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

Shakespeare – *Henry V** (before the Battle of Agincourt)

The Norman* and Plantagenet* kings of England were also French nobles; Henry II* (1154–89) indeed controlled more land in France than did the King of France himself; all of it was acquired by inheritance and by marriage. Such preponderance of power in France naturally led to rivalry with the French king, and to intermittent war throughout the 12th and 13th centuries; at the end of this period, the French possessions of the kings of England were greatly reduced.

The second and more important phase of medieval Anglo-French hostility began in 1337 and ended in 1453; it is known as the Hundred Years' War*, and ostensibly it was caused by the claim of Edward III (1327–77) to be the rightful King of France. The real causes were deeper and more complex; amongst them

was the fact that the English national identity had taken shape faster than that of France, and the mood of this new national consciousness was consequently self-reliant and aggressive, particularly among the rich and ambitious nobility. 'The English', wrote the 14th-century French chronicler Froissart*, 'will never love or honour their king, unless he be victorious and a lover of arms and war against their neighbours. . . . The king of England must needs obey his people and do their will.' Between 1307 and 1460, the kings who did not engage in successful war in France all had serious trouble with their nobility at home: Edward II* (1307–27), Richard II* (1377–99), Henry IV* (1399–1413) and especially Henry VI* (1422–61). The prosperous reigns were those of successful warriors: Edward III* (1327–77, especially until 1360) and Henry V* (1413–22). Shakespeare makes the dying Henry IV give this advice to his son:

*Therefore, my Harry,
Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out,
May waste the memory of the former days.*

2 Henry IV IV.v

According to modern ideas, the Hundred Years' War was an inexcusable war of aggression, but it had the effect of further strengthening the English sense of national unity, as well as creating – by the end – such a feeling among the French. The few great battles (Crécy* 1346, Poitiers 1356, and Agincourt* 1415) were victories of English common soldiers (archers, using the long bow) over French aristocratic cavalry; the fact indicates radical historical change, since it means that this was the first major European war to be fought (at first only on the English side, but in the end on both sides) by national armies, and not by feudal ones loosely kept together by ties with the feudal lords.

The final defeat of the English was in the long run a blessing not only for the French. The English royalty and nobility awoke from the distraction of their French dreams. If they had been realized, England, as the smaller and poorer country, would have become a mere appendage to France; instead she became free to shape her own very individual course in the newly arising comity of self-conscious European nations. But the immediate effect on England was disastrous; failure in the foreign war led to extensive civil war amongst the English nobility.

The Wars of the Roses*, which opened in 1455 and were only finally closed by the victory of Henry Tudor over Richard III* at the battle of Bosworth in 1485, were remembered as a warning of the hell of national disunity. Shakespeare's first four history plays (1, 2, & 3 Henry VI* and Richard III*) are a tragic epic on the culmination of this disunity, just as his second historical tetralogy (Richard II*, 1 & 2 Henry IV*, Henry V*) celebrates the rescue of a nation from civil wars into brotherhood.

1.1.3. *Relationships with Scotland, Ireland, Wales*

We are discussing English history, since we are concerned with the political background to English literature. It is still important to remember that England is not Britain, though in modern times the names are so often used interchangeably. In 1485 there was, as yet, no Britain. Politically, Ireland* was overrun by Anglo-Norman barons in the 12th century, and Henry II took the title of Lord of Ireland, but English rule was not effective beyond a strip on the eastern coastline known as the Pale*; Wales* was conquered by Edward I in the 13th century, but it was not properly assimilated into the English political system until the 16th; Scotland* defeated English attempts to conquer it early in the 14th century, and during the Hundred Years' War it allied itself to France. Both Ireland and Wales had Celtic spoken languages with literatures in those languages, and Scotland was divided between Celtic and a variety of English. Only Scotland made a contribution to literature in English during the Middle Ages – see the item in the reference section, Scottish Literature.

I.2

1485-1603

Introduction

England was one of the first countries in Europe to feel its nationhood. It had behaved in the 14th and 15th centuries like Europe's turbulent boy. In the 16th century England was like a boy flanked by giant men; France and Spain had also achieved unity and nationhood. They towered above England almost as the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. do today, and constituted a potential – at times an actual – threat to its very existence. Fortunately, they were not often friendly to each other.

Yet this was not a period of decline for England; its relative inferiority was due to the increase in stature of its neighbours, not to its own diminution. On the contrary, the 16th century was that in which the nation grew up, consolidated its energies, and found its true use for them overseas in seafaring adventure. The century was indeed more fortunate for England than for France and Spain, for at the end of it England, unlike Spain, was still advancing economically, and unlike France it had lost none of the representative political institutions which France had sacrificed.

All this was thanks partly to the reigning family of the Tudors*, the most gifted of the dynasties which have reigned over England. National solidarity elsewhere in Europe had been gained by the consolidation of monarchic power, and in this England was no exception; the period is in fact sometimes described