

# DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

V O L U M E

19





# DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

Criticism of the Most Significant and Widely Studied  
Dramatic Works from All the World's Literatures

VOLUME 19

Janet Witalec  
Project Editor

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## Preface

**D***rama Criticism (DC)* is principally intended for beginning students of literature and theater as well as the average playgoer. The series is therefore designed to introduce readers to the most frequently studied playwrights of all time periods and nationalities and to present discerning commentary on dramatic works of enduring interest. Furthermore, *DC* seeks to acquaint the reader with the uses and functions of criticism itself. Selected from a diverse body of commentary, the essays in *DC* offer insights into the authors and their works but do not require that the reader possess a wide background in literary studies. Where appropriate, reviews of important productions of the plays discussed are also included to give students a heightened awareness of drama as a dynamic art form, one that many claim is fully realized only in performance.

*DC* was created in response to suggestions by the staffs of high school, college, and public libraries. These librarians observed a need for a series that assembles critical commentary on the world's most renowned dramatists in the same manner as Gale's *Short Story Criticism (SSC)* and *Poetry Criticism (PC)*, which present material on writers of short fiction and poetry. Although playwrights are covered in such Gale literary criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism (CLC)*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism (NCLC)*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800 (LC)*, and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism (CMLC)*, *DC* directs more concentrated attention on individual dramatists than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries in these Gale series. Commentary on the works of William Shakespeare may be found in *Shakespearean Criticism (SC)*.

## Scope of the Series

By collecting and organizing commentary on dramatists, *DC* assists students in their efforts to gain insight into literature, achieve better understanding of the texts, and formulate ideas for papers and assignments. A variety of interpretations and assessments is offered, allowing students to pursue their own interests and promoting awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Approximately five to ten authors are included in each volume, and each entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that playwright's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's literary criticism series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *DC* volume.

## Organization of the Book

A *DC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** consists of the playwright's most commonly used name, followed by birth and death dates. If an author consistently wrote under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction are any name variations under which the dramatist wrote, including transliterated forms of the names of authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.



- The list of **Principal Works** is divided into two sections. The first section contains the author's dramatic pieces and is organized chronologically by date of first performance. If this has not been conclusively determined, the composition or publication date is used. The second section provides information on the author's major works in other genres.
- Essays offering **overviews and general studies of the dramatist's entire literary career** give the student broad perspectives on the writer's artistic development, themes, and concerns that recur in several of his or her works, the author's place in literary history, and other wide-ranging topics.
- **Criticism** of individual plays offers the reader in-depth discussions of a select number of the author's most important works. In some cases, the criticism is divided into two sections, each arranged chronologically. When a significant performance of a play can be identified (typically, the premier of a twentieth-century work), the first section of criticism will feature **production reviews** of this staging. Most entries include sections devoted to **critical commentary** that assesses the literary merit of the selected plays. When necessary, essays are carefully excerpted to focus on the work under consideration; often, however, essays and reviews are reprinted in their entirety. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation**, designed to help the interested reader locate the original essay or book, precedes each piece of criticism.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Cumulative Indexes

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A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order the individual plays discussed in the criticism contained in *DC*. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

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Eugene M. Waith, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden* (Chatto & Windus, 1962); excerpted and reprinted in *Drama Criticism*, vol. 1, ed. Lawrence J. Trudeau (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), 237-47.



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# George Chapman

## 1559?-1634

English playwright, poet, and translator.

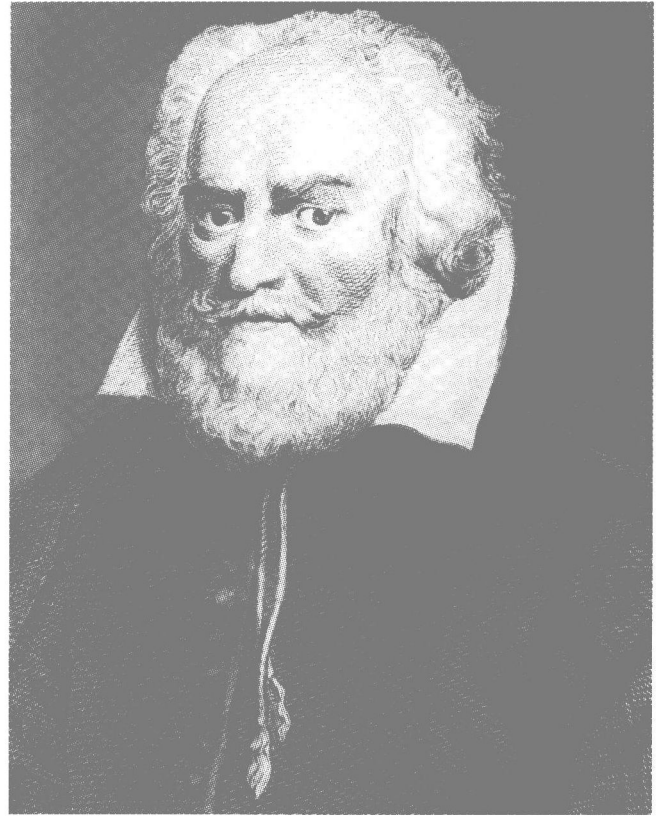
The following entry presents information on Chapman's plays through 1995.

### INTRODUCTION

Remembered as one of the most cerebral of the English Renaissance dramatists, Chapman maintained high artistic standards for himself and for his contemporaries based on a solid foundation of aesthetics found in works of classical antiquity. He is chiefly remembered for complex, philosophically and politically charged tragedies such as *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604), *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* (1607-08), and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1610-11). Commentators have noted that a central concern in Chapman's works is that of the role of the individual in society, in which the dramatist often imbues his tragic heroes with characteristics of classical Stoicism to accentuate their innate, natural virtuosity within a corrupt social order. Indeed, some critics have maintained that Chapman mastered the depiction of Stoic philosophy in his dramas, surpassing such illustrious contemporaries as Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. "Unlike any of them," Marvin J. LaHood has observed, Chapman "grew towards a complete acceptance of Senecan Stoicism and tried to incorporate his beliefs into his dramas. The result was the creation of an Elizabethan hero unique in his strict adherence to a classic creed."

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Chapman's life is not well documented. He was born in Hitchen, Hertfordshire, probably around the year 1559, the second son of a prosperous yeoman and copyholder. His mother was the daughter of a royal huntsman at the court of Henry VIII. Little is known about Chapman's formative years, though it is presumed that he attended the grammar school at Hitchen. Contemporary accounts also indicate that he attended Oxford beginning in 1574, where he is said to have excelled in Greek and Latin. After matriculating at Oxford, Chapman gained employment with a prominent nobleman, Sir Ralph Sadler, with whom he served from 1583 to 1585. Subsequently, he enlisted in Sir Francis Vere's military expedition into the United Provinces, which were engaged in the Eighty Years War. Upon returning to England in 1594, Chapman established residence in London and published his first work, *The*



*Shadow of Night: Containing Two Poeticall Hymnes*. During this time, he entered Sir Walter Raleigh's circle known as "The School of Night." This literary group was recognized for its devotion to scientific and philosophical speculation, though it occasionally dabbled in the occult. Toward the end of the 1590s, Chapman also debuted as a dramatist with a pair of comedies, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1596) and *A Humorous Day's Mirth* (1597). These plays were written for the Lord Admiral's Men, a major theatrical company in London. Other comedies followed, written for similar private theatrical companies. By the close of the Elizabethan period, Chapman was widely recognized as a leading dramatist and poet, yet the meager income from the production of his plays forced him to live in poverty. In 1599, his misfortunes led him to relinquish his claim to the family estate for a small cash settlement. The following year, Chapman was imprisoned for debt, the unwitting victim of a fraudulent money-lender.

With the accession of James I to the throne in 1603, Chapman's fortunes suddenly changed when he was given a position in the household of Prince Henry. He continued



composing plays, including his last major comedy, *Eastward Ho* (1605), written in collaboration with Ben Jonson and John Marston. The play's sarcastic political aspersions against policies favored by James I resulted in imprisonment for Chapman and Jonson, though both were soon released. During this period, Chapman also began writing his greatest tragedies, including *Bussy D'Ambois*, the two-part *Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron*, and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. He also undertook the project of translating into modern English the classical Greek works of Homer. Chapman's translation of the first twelve books of the *Iliad* appeared in 1611, prefaced by a dedication to Prince Henry, who had endorsed the work with the promise of three hundred pounds and a pension. However, when the young prince died suddenly in 1612, his father failed to fulfill Henry's promise to Chapman. A similar fate befell Chapman's hope in his last patron, Robert Carr, later Earl of Somerset, whose career at court was effectively terminated due to a series of marital scandals. In effect, Chapman remained without a patron for his entire literary career, the financial and professional consequences of which were disastrous. Around 1613, he wrote two more tragedies, *Caesar and Pompey* and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France*, though there is no indication that they were ever performed in his lifetime. He also completed another translation of Homer's poetry by 1624, but his last few decades were nevertheless spent in relative obscurity. He died on May 12, 1634.

## MAJOR WORKS

Although rarely performed today, Chapman's plays enjoyed considerable success on the London stage during his lifetime. While it is true that the playwright borrowed heavily from classical sources, he nevertheless succeeded in creating memorable, crowd-pleasing characters who resonated with contemporary theatergoers. Chapman was strongly influenced by the literary principles of Italian Renaissance writers such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, who believed that true artistic style should be modeled after works of classical antiquity. He was particularly interested in the philosophy of Stoicism, or the idea that a fully evolved human being should be free from passion, emotionally temperate, and submissive to natural law. While Chapman's reliance on classical sources was not in itself an artistic departure from his contemporaries, he did innovate English Renaissance tragedy by employing recent French history as the subject matter in several of his dramas. *Bussy D'Ambois* dramatizes the life and execution of a notorious duelist and agitator in the court of Henry IV, who still ruled in France at the time of the play's production. In his tragedy, Chapman imbues the reckless historical figure with the mythic qualities of Hercules and Prometheus, casting Bussy as a self-made, towering individual whose virtue poses a threat to the corrupt French court. However, Bussy's mythic grandeur is undercut by an Achillean short temper, which is used against him by the courtiers to bring about his tragic demise. Similarly, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles,*

*Duke of Byron* examines the intrigues and eventual execution of a popular French general and courtier who embodies some of the same classical attributes as Bussy. In *Byron*, Chapman expands on the nascent theme of the individual versus society begun in *Bussy D'Ambois*, emphasizing the conflict between the traditional feudal ethics of Byron and the Machiavellian political values of Henry IV and his court. In *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, Chapman invents a fictional brother, Clermont, for the historical Bussy, who is urged by Bussy's ghost to exact revenge for his death. In this play, Chapman contributes to the popular stage convention of the Elizabethan revenger made famous by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; however, Chapman introduces a new level of sophistication and refinement to the genre in that he makes Clermont a follower of Stoicism, who must choose between opposing philosophical beliefs and familial obligations. Chapman's later tragedies, *Caesar and Pompey* and *The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France*, further elaborate on his interest in exploring the paradox of reconciling the stoic hero with his corrupt society. Indeed, these plays underscore the dramatist's pessimistic conception that there is an irreconcilable correlation between classical ethical ideals and the corrupt political values of his own time.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Unlike his tragedies, Chapman's comedies have received scant critical approval despite their general appeal with Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences. While it is true that some commentators have demonstrated that Chapman innovated such genres as the "comedy of humors" (later perfected by Ben Jonson) in *A Humorous Day's Mirth* and English tragicomedy in *The Gentleman Usher* (1602-03), others have continued to malign the aesthetic scope of the plays as unoriginal, stylistically confusing, and dramatically incoherent. If critics were generally unsatisfied with the quality of Chapman's comedies, they nearly all recognized the playwright's sophisticated, intellectual, almost doctrinal transformation of classical ideals into compelling tragedies. Yet despite the significant amount of attention devoted to Chapman's major tragedies, there is surprisingly little consensus about what Chapman's artistic objectives were in writing them. Perhaps the most prominent object of critical discussion surrounds Chapman's conception of Stoicism as it is expressed in such dramas as *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron*, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, and *Caesar and Pompey*. The critical debate includes opinions on such issues as the ways in which Chapman manipulated the classical Stoic aesthetic to conform to his Jacobean sensibilities; Chapman's complicated attempt to reconcile the conflict between the contrasting classical ideals of Stoicism and Neoplatonism; and the extent to which Chapman relied on Stoicism in the creation of his tragic heroes. Indeed, one critic, Richard S. Ide (1984) downplayed the significance of Clermont, Chapman's most Stoic tragic hero in *The Revenge of Bussy*



*D'Ambois*, positing instead that the dramatist was more concerned with renovating the conventional depiction of the Elizabethan revenge play with his own "neoplatonic esthetic" about how the genre should be represented. Another critic, Ennis Rees (1954), proposed that Chapman prominently incorporates the ideals of Christian humanism into his tragedies with only a minor emphasis on Stoicism. Commentators have observed that Chapman's preoccupation with Stoicism belies a pessimistic interest in the individual and his place in society. These critics have pointed out that the playwright ingeniously developed complex conflicts between an individual (portrayed as a virtuous, plain-spoken—if not too proud—outsider) and society (depicted as the court degraded by intrigue, immorality, and corruption). Further, they have asserted that this paradox is evident in all of Chapman's major tragedies, where the individual eventually succumbs to the social corruption, dies trying to fight it, or both. Chapman's most enduring example of such an individual is the tragic figure of Bussy D'Ambois. As Roger Truscott Burbridge noted, "Bussy's failure can only be ascribed, I think, to the practical impossibility of any positive ideal action in a society riddled with intrigue and artifice; Bussy is heroic material in the wrong place."

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

### Plays

*The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* 1596  
*A Humorous Day's Mirth* 1597  
*All Fools* 1601  
*May-Day* 1601-02  
*Sir Giles Goosecap* 1602  
*The Gentleman Usher* 1602-03  
*Bussy D'Ambois* 1604  
*Monsieur D'Olive* 1604-05  
*The Widow's Tears* 1604-05  
*Eastward Ho* [with Ben Jonson and John Marston] 1605  
*The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* 1607-08  
*The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* 1610-11  
*Caesar and Pompey* c. 1613  
*The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France* c. 1613

### Other Major Works

*The Shadow of Night: Containing Two Poeticall Hymnes* (poetry) 1594  
*Ovid's Banquet of Sence. A Coronet for His Mistresse Philosophie, and His Amorous Zodiacke. With a Translation of a Latine Coppie, Written by a Fryer, Anno Dom. 1400* (poetry) 1595  
*Hero and Leander* [parts 1 and 2 by Christopher Marlowe, parts 3-6 by Chapman] (poetry) 1598

*The Illiads of Homer* [translator] (poetry) 1611  
*Homer's Odysseys* [translator] (poetry) 1614-1615  
*The Whole Works of Homer; In His Illiads, and Odysseys* [translator] (poetry) 1616  
*The Plays and Poems of George Chapman* 2 vols. (plays and poetry) 1910-13  
*The Poems of George Chapman* (poetry) 1941  
*Chapman's Homer* 2 vols. [translator] (poetry) 1967

## GENERAL COMMENTARY

### Millar MacLure (essay date 1966)

SOURCE: MacLure, Millar. "Tragedy." In *George Chapman: A Critical Study*, pp. 108-57. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966.

[In the following essay, MacLure provides a comprehensive survey of Chapman's tragedies, demonstrating that the playwright displays a marked conflict between pedantic knowledge and creative imagination in his works.]

Chapman's definition of tragedy is frequently quoted, with or without the reservation that it does not necessarily describe his own contributions to the genre:

Poor envious souls they are that cavil at truth's want in these natural fictions; material instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to virtue, and deflection from her contrary, being the soul, limbs and limits of an autentic tragedy.

A highly characteristic utterance, complete with physiological analogy, moral energy, and contempt for such poor creatures as might take any other view, though it echoes pretty closely some Jonsonian phrases in the preface to *Sejanus*: "truth of Argument," "gravity and height of Elocution," "fulnesse and frequency of Sentence," with the end of "imitating justice and instructing to life." As two recent books on Jacobean tragedy<sup>1</sup> remind us, the post-Senecan and post-morality tragedy of the Jacobean age was bound to try good and evil by the assay of rhetoric in search of the vision of a moral order; and as two recent critics of Chapman<sup>2</sup> for their different purposes emphasize, such a trial is characteristic of Chapman's efforts in other genres as well. We know that while he was writing his plays he was reading Stoic ethics as preparatory to "good life," translating Homer as the *ground* or determinant by which human action is to be judged, and, apparently, looking out from his study through his cousin Grimeston's window<sup>3</sup> at recent French history as a fruitful garden of *exempla*.

But all Chapman's critical dicta are occasional, and this is no exception. It comes from the prefatory apology for *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*. "Some maligners" at the



"scenical representation" (note the implication that the play exists independent of the theatre, the performance being only one manifestation of the "absolute" play) must have complained that the play was, to say the least, hardly true to historical fact: there was no such person as Clermont, brother to Bussy, and Montsurry (Montsoreau), killed in the play, was very much alive when it was performed. Chapman quite properly rejects such cavillings at the true apprehension of a poem, whose subject is not truth but things like truth, and, besides, he was engaged to support his portrait of the Stoic hero, so making of this immediate exercise a general case. We should hardly be surprised to find his definition of tragedy falling short of explaining *King Lear*, say, or *The Duchess of Malfi*. Perhaps it falls short of explaining his own tragedies too. Also it is easy to misinterpret what his dictum actually does say: "natural fictions" are not formulas, and "excitation to virtue" is not mere instruction. Chapman's tragedies are not just political moralities, though they are (with one exception, *The Tragedy of Bussy D'Ambois*) political in subject, moral in intention, and heroically sententious in language.

Compassed about by the cloud of witnesses who have discussed these plays in terms of Rees's sub-title, "Renaissance Ethics in Action," I shall attempt a beginning with some obvious considerations which have been frequently ignored or at best under-emphasized in the learned commentaries. In the first place, as Chapman experimented with different kinds of comedy, so he also tried different kinds of tragedy. No two of these plays (counting the *Conspiracy* and *Tragedy* of Byron as one) are alike in structure and effect. Bussy and Byron are Achillean heroes, exemplifying wrath and "outward fortitude," but we see them in different perspective glasses, "cozening pictures"; Clermont and Cato are exemplars of "the Mind's inward, constant and unconquered Empire,"<sup>4</sup> Ulysses' "Proposition" filling out the other face of Chapman's Janus-faced portrait of the *great* condition of man, but each of them has his own perspective image too, whereas *Chabot* [*The Tragedy of Chabot*] is a dramatic exercise which blurs these contrasting images by a meditation on the glory and fault of "innocent" greatness. *Bussy D'Ambois* is, roughly speaking, a Marlovian extravagance, in which an over-reacher displays a "spirit" and potential in excess of the actions through which his *virtù* is exhibited; the Byron plays are massive secular oratorios set from commonplace-book texts, centripetal compositions in which the central figure revolves slowly while we listen to his own and others' choric comments upon his state, the effect being, as Pagnini has noted, *emblematic*; *Chabot* has this quality too, but the action moves with a certain firm incisiveness—perhaps owing to Shirley's work on it; *The Revenge* [*The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*] is an eccentrically developed revenge play; *Caesar and Pompey* is ostensibly a Roman "history," a new chronicle of an old subject.

Secondly, Chapman, unlike the closet dramatists Greville and Daniel, who also thought heavily about the tragic possibilities in political situations, chose for his subjects

familiar history, familiar even to those who had not read Pasquier<sup>5</sup> or Grimeston. Even *Chabot* recalled the great figure of Francis I, sweet enemy of Henry VIII; Amyot and North had made Caesar and Pompey virtually contemporary; Bussy's fate was notorious, and the Duke of Guise appeared to the English imagination (helped by Marlowe) in the lurid colours of St. Bartholomew's night; as for Byron, he had visited England, and in any case some of the auditors must have seen him and even known him, while some had fought for Henry of Navarre and perhaps even had speech with him. It is well to be assured of Chapman's austere moral sensibility; it is well also to remember (and keeping in mind *The Old Joiner*) that he was perfectly capable of exploiting popular interest in his subjects, an interest evidenced by a number of other plays on recent French history.<sup>6</sup>

Rees has found in Chapman a Christian humanist, consistent in his "primary concern with doctrine," and reads the tragedies as deliberate essays promulgating the doctrines of order, *form* and inner peace. This will not work, but Chapman is consistent in another way. We have noticed (and will notice again in the *Homer*) how his course of self-dramatization in poems and prefaces and apologiae presents one recurring image: the lonely figure, assured by inward powers, drawing his inspiration from secret and noble essences, and surrounded by ignorants, backbiters, misunderstanders, savages, baying monsters. In the comedies, the lords of misrule especially endowed with "confidence," or the Hermes-figures filled with divinely directed virtue, succeed in transforming their societies into something they were not before; in the tragedies, the self-sufficient men of excessive *virtù* (or virtue) are destroyed by the world of "policy" about them. As Edwin Muir has put it,

Chapman is not interested in human nature, or in practical morality, or in evil, but in the man of excessive virtue or spirit or pride. His tragedies show us one great figure and a crowd of nobodies who succeed somehow in destroying him. . . . [We] seem to be watching the pursuit and destruction of "royal man" by an invisible hunter. . . . These heroes really exist in another dimension from the rest of the characters, and have a different reality from the action in which they are involved. They wander about, like Chapman himself, enclosed in a dream of greatness and breathing the air of that dream. . . . [They] really talk to themselves.<sup>7</sup>

This is very well said, though Muir was thinking primarily of Bussy and Byron, and there are other qualifications to be made. The excessive men, the great men, whether Achillean or Odyssean, are not simple and whole, any more than Chapman himself was. They are, finally, mysteries, not test cases exhibiting the problems of the individual versus society or the operation of certain laws of human behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Each of them is possessed (even Clermont) not by a theory but by a *daimon*, the author, so to speak, of a private play in which the protagonist, looking constantly in a mirror to see the world, sees all but himself out of focus. It is this image, the *persona* of heroic energy or



Stoic calm or holy innocence which we contemplate "perspectively," in the context of an action barely sufficient in its momentum to shift the view from time to time. The method, which underlies all the superficial variations in technique, reminds Professor Ure, happily, of Henry James.

The "outward" world, however, *judges*, defines, analyzes this greatness in the only terms its inhabitants can know, and the heroes themselves, dwelling in divided and distinguished worlds, choruses to their fates, use the same vocabulary. Virtue confronts Fortune or is bound to her wheel; Nature is good, or indifferent to man's fate; the violence of "humour" and excess of "spirit" oppose order and the righteousness of law, "Ceremony"; the composed mind opposes "Opinion"; "Learning" is preferred to "policy"; "innocence" is destroyed by power. The commentary—and these plays are heavy with commentary, as the *Homer* is heavy with the glosses translated into it—proceeds dialectically, but is finally transcended, for Chapman knows that all this bravery of thought is fastened to a dying animal. Perhaps he learned this from *Iliad* XXIV.

In these plays, then, the ethical argument, the political parable, and the autumnal, elegiac *mythos* of the hero are not always integrated, so that one can get a sense of discrete and separable layers of expression, something that it is tempting to call allegory. The hero is not all in the play, but has in the poet's imagination another life the shadow of which falls, often very undramatically, into the business of the action. In the first Bussy play, for example, the literal level offers the spectacle of a confident swaggerer and seducer, bound to rise, victorious in a duel and caught in an amorous intrigue, himself the unreliable instrument of the political Monsieur; in the moral realm, he is held up as an example of man's "native noblesse," a product of Nature "in her prime"; finally, anagogically if you will, he is the dying Hercules. And we shall see something like this pattern repeated in the Byron plays, in the *Revenge*, and even in *Chabot* and *Caesar and Pompey*. Chapman's tragedies cannot be adequately interpreted solely in terms of ethical and political discussion; in that light they are "problem plays" in more ways than one. Rees is thus forced to interpret some key speeches of Bussy and Byron as ironic; Madeleine Doran finds the moral comment inconsistent with the "imaginative direction of his plays"; K. M. Burton notes that Chapman, like Jonson, is "concerned with the tragic flaw within the social order, not within the individual"; Michael Higgins is led by the affirmation, so often repeated, that the just man is a law unto himself, to see in Chapman a "classical republican," a precursor of Milton and Locke, repudiating the "medieval and Catholic reverence for the sacred name of king"; Hardin Craig sees in these plays a "psychological determinism," so that Byron, for example, is not to be blamed for his excesses, but rather "the fervour of his blood"; R. H. Parkinson, observing correctly that there is a shift in the concept of Nature from *Bussy* to the *Revenge*, is forced finally by the logic of his argument to state that underlying both Bussy plays is a failure to grasp the traditional idea of Christian providence; and R. W. Battenhouse finds

Chapman exploring the paradox that in a fallen world a display of evil forwards good, that the endings of *Bussy* [*Bussy D'Ambois*] and *Byron* [*The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron*] should be taken as "an apology for violence in the name of piety."<sup>10</sup>

None of these observations, except perhaps Rees's and Higgins', is wholly inconsistent with the development of Chapman's speculation, such as it was; all of them create more problems than they solve. I certainly admit that the *Revenge* is a retraction of *Bussy*, indeed I shall prove it, that the "moral structure" (Ure's phrase) of the later plays is more consistent with the fable than it is in *Bussy*, that every one of the tragedies exemplifies the opposition between an inward world of "Confidence" or "Learning" and an outward world of "Ceremony" or "Opinion," that, finally, it would be absurd to minimize or try to ignore Chapman's intense moral seriousness; but I still think that it is possible to read these plays as something different from attempts to "dramatize through hackneyed theatrical devices the essential political and moral issues of the time" (e.g. in *Bussy*) and to dissent from the characterization of the later plays as "upright Moralities . . . but only incidentally or coincidentally dramatic in conception."<sup>11</sup>

Louis de Clermont d'Amboise, Seigneur de Bussy, was not, historically, a "great" man, but he was certainly colourful, a reckless duellist and gallant, a fiery, murderous and independent spirit, active in the bloody skirmishes of the wars of religion and in other men's beds. In *The Tragedy of Bussy d'Ambois*,<sup>12</sup> Chapman, as Jacquot observes,<sup>13</sup> suppresses (if indeed he knew about them) the more despicable episodes in his violent career, such as his reign of terror as governor of Anjou, in fact passes over his public life—if one can make such a distinction in the case of a sixteenth-century courtier—to concentrate upon two notorious episodes, the duel in triplicate from which D'Ambois emerges the sole survivor, and his intrigue with the wife of Montsoreau (Montsurry); the first announced with the Senecan dignity of a Nuntius, the second staged with all the trappings of popular tragedy, nocturnal as-signations, diabolic ministers, passionate mistress, corrupt friar, and ranting jealous husband. The political theme, introduced with considerable emphasis at the beginning, where Monsieur (Queen Elizabeth's monkey) seeks to make Bussy his creature for 1000 crowns, is for the most part (except for the flyting between Monsieur and Bussy in III, ii) lost in this lurid atmosphere, from which the hero finally emerges magnificently to his dying stance. Bussy's heroic energy, *spirit*—the play is full of references to his spirit—finds no worthy matter to work upon, and ends

like a falling star  
Silently glanc'd, that like a thunderbolt  
Look'd to have stuck and shook the firmament.

(V, iv, 144-6)

This is Bussy's tragic recognition of his fate. In tragedy, the full meaning of the hero's fate being revealed in his agony, he is transformed by that knowledge, becomes as it



were completed. Bussy, at the opening of the play, is as far from this apotheosis as possible. He enters in a "green retreat," in retired contemplation not heroic action, condemning an inverted world: the malcontent-type of the unemployed man-at-arms,<sup>14</sup> melancholy, "turn'd to earth," *procumbit*. (The audience would recognize the condition at once.) He dies *standing*, like an emperor—

Here like a Roman statue I will stand  
Till death hath made me marble—

and his fame will be "spread to a world of fire." But as Monsieur enters to him in his dejection another motif is introduced, as Brooke has brilliantly observed:<sup>15</sup> Bussy is a morality-figure of Poverty and Monsieur with his two pages of Wealth, "gold and grace"; just before his fall, in the premonitory thunder (V, iii), Bussy enters "with two pages"—he is in Monsieur's clothing now. Bussy stands at the critical fork which separates the way of heroic and virtuous achievement from the way of policy and the "greatness" of the "glorious ruffian" (as he is later called) in his choice of Hercules, when he decides to accept the *fortune* of Monsieur's crowns (I, i, 119-43). Upon this decision the whole play turns, and it is not a simple choice of Hercules either. But it is spoken in his own person, as I take it, whereas his opening speech is choric prologue as well as a displaced person's outcry upon a corrupt world.

The state of things described in this opening soliloquy is inverted, under Fortune, which stands "Honour on his head." This is at once a description of the outward world which Chapman continually despised and rejected, a short characterization of the "well-head" to which Monsieur is about to invite the hero—"Fortune's banquet [of sense]"; "brave barks and outward gloss"—and the complaint of the poor soldier. Bussy goes on through three remarkable similes.

As cedars beaten with continual storms,  
So great men flourish:

this sounds like a tribute to "great men," suggests strength and stability, or, suggests that one might prefer the calm, however stagnant, at the bottom of Fortune's wheel. But he continues: men "merely great" in Fortune's gifts, self-made, are like "unskilful statuary" who think their work is good if they make a strutting colossus; by transition they are themselves like statues,

Which, with heroic forms without o'erspread,  
Within are nought but mortar, flint, and lead.

(This, by the way, would not spoil the statues, but Chapman is busy with his outward-inward antithesis, as usual. Did he look back to this passage when he wrote "Till death hath made me marble," i.e. heroic and "complete" clear through, at the end?) Man is a very nothing, Pindar's σκιᾶς ὄντα ἄνθρωπος—an elegant aside. Then the great are compared to seamen in tall ships putting a girdle about the world in their pride—a magnificent figure—who when they come to harbour must be piloted in by "a poor staid fisherman": so

We must to virtue for her guide resort  
Or we shall shipwreck in our safest port.

The whole speech asserts the primacy of Virtue, not *virtù* (yet it is hard not to read Pagnini's *virtuoso* [p. 179] for Bussy in anything but its seventeenth-century sense) but moral goodness, simple, "mild" (the King's word), and essential like that fisherman, over Fortune and outward "bravery," what the actors' Prologue (in the 1641 edition), preserving for us the contemporary stage tradition, refers to as "the height and pride/Of D'AMBOIS' youth and bravery." It is thus a proper chorus to the action which follows; but the implied tribute (the cedars, the great ships) to magnificence must not be forgotten either, not only because it is appropriate to the demonic power so soon to be released in the hero, but because it indicates the ambivalence of Chapman's attitude toward him. As it is warning of what is to be, in his own words, Bussy's "worthless fall," so also its assertion that man is "a dream/But of a shadow" announces the hero's final recognition (V, iv, 87) that life is "a dream but of a shade."

The action is set in motion at once: no long exposition and discussion by onlookers as in *The Conspiracy* or *The Revenge*. Monsieur appears and contemplates his intended instrument, sees in him a "resolved spirit," young and haughty, "apt to take Fire at advancement." The tempter offers Bussy light out of darkness, adduces the Plutarchan examples of Themistocles, Camillus and Epaminondas. When Bussy replies scornfully with a savage attack on the hollow practices of courtiers, and remarks that one cannot play the "great man's part" in poverty, Monsieur offers "t'enchase in all show [his] long smother'd spirit"; Fortune's winged hands<sup>16</sup> give gifts suddenly. Bussy, left to argue with himself, first compares Monsieur to a "disparking husbandman" who will sow crowns upon his spirit, plow him up—but in "learning-hating policy" ("Learning" in Chapman's special sense), and concludes,

I am for honest actions, not for great.

The hero, it would appear, has made Hercules' choice of the hard road of Virtue. But without pause he continues:

If I may bring up a new fashion,  
And rise in Court for [Q1 *with*] virtue, speed his plow!  
(I, i, 129-30)

Then seeming to remember what Monsieur had said about Fortune's swift gifts which must be taken at once or lost for ever, he determines to seize the day—

So no man riseth by his real merit,  
But when it cries clink in his raiser's spirit—

and to venture to rise, though

Man's first hour's rise is first step to his fall.

Bussy has made his fatal mistake, but it is not simply a fall from virtue for which we are supposed to condemn him and regard all that he does thereafter as subject to its



evil. The decision has daring in it, and a kind of youthful innocence; it commits him, above all, to serving his own "spirit" alone. These qualities shine above his fortune, and the observers, the King, Monsieur and Guise, withdraw from time to time from the action to contemplate them.

After this high argument of Virtue and Fortune, the descent into the outward world of the French court is abrupt, though there are cautionary signs on the steep decline. The first is Monsieur's silly overbearing steward, who judges by outsides and is beaten by the angry Bussy so that the "crowns are set in blood." When the court assembles after this prologue, the King himself (as chorus) observes that his court is "a mere mirror of confusion" to the stately court of Queen Elizabeth. (So was the court of James I, to whose new knights a slighting allusion has already been made: I, i, 198.) The atmosphere is indeed "unformed," casual, domestic, one might almost say suburban. D'Ambois, "entered" upon this scene, savages it with his bluntness and bravado, and makes a challenge out of the scoffs of the courtiers. In the midst of the gallimaufry of insults, Monsieur interprets for the audience the true Bussy, of whom this "saucy companion" seems but a distorted "cozening" picture. The simile is one of Chapman's finest:

His great heart will not down, 'tis like the sea,  
That partly by his own internal heat,  
Partly the stars' daily and nightly motion,  
Their heat and light, and partly of the place  
The divers frames, but chiefly by the moon,  
Bristled with surges, never will be won,  
(No, not when th' hearts of all those powers are burst)  
To make retreat into his settled home,  
Till he be crown'd with his own quiet foam.

(I, ii, 157-65)

The duel, three to a side, with the envious courtiers, ends the first stage of Bussy's court adventure, and is raised from the blood of a courtiers' quarrel, sign of a disordered court, to a heroic level by the elevated narrative of the Nuntius (II, i). He begins with a kind of bombast invocation, wishing he might cry his "tale so worthy" from Atlas or Olympus; in his account the "perfumed musk-cats" of the previous scene appear as "the famous soldiers"—Bar-risor had "stood the shocks/Of ten set battles" against "the sole soldier of the world, Navarre," and in this encounter, brooded over by the angry spirits of Fury and Revenge, D'Ambois like an angry unicorn triumphs and stands alone untouched. Monsieur's plea for his pardon before the King is on the face of it a piece of sophistry in defence of wild justice, but he does invoke "a free man's eminence," and this theme is developed by Bussy himself in his justification:

When I am wrong'd, and that law fails to right me,  
Let me be king myself (as man was made),  
And do a justice that exceeds the law;  
If my wrong pass the power of single valour  
To right and expiate, then be you my king,  
And do a right, exceeding law and nature:

Who to himself is law, no law doth need,  
Offends no law, and is a king indeed.

(II, i, 197-204)

We have heard this before (*The Gentleman Usher*, V, iv, 56-60) and shall hear it again; it is a Chapman commonplace. In this context it speaks not for Bussy's fiery individualism but the theme of his primal "noblesse." Yet, left to himself at the end of the scene, confiding in the audience that he has long loved the Countess of Montsurry secretly, he proclaims:

And now through blood and vengeance, deeds of  
height,  
And hard to be achiev'd, 'tis fit I make  
Attempt of her perfections,

a curious technique of seduction. Again the striking disproportion between the "overreaching" claims of his spirit and that upon which it works.

Teased by this problem, we tend to overlook Chapman's expert dramaturgy in this tragedy. If the first scene is prologue (and contrast) to Bussy's entrance upon the court and his first deed of bravery (in both senses of that word), then all that's past is prologue to the love-intrigue with Tamyra and its fatal outcome. The hero, more and more enmeshed in the toils of passion, escapes only in death. But more subtle than this is the interplay of Bussy and his patron in the fatal plot. We have already noticed how Bussy in effect puts on Monsieur's suit, and with it policy (IV, ii, 175ff.) and subjugation to Fortune. He also takes the place of Monsieur as suitor to Tamyra (II, ii), and as he was entered by Monsieur he is betrayed by him. And as he is "enlarged and elevated" (Ure's phrase) by the choric speeches of his enemies, so Tamyra, creature of passion that she is, is endowed with a double glamour by involvement in "urgent destiny" and by proving a heroic heart, as contrasted with her brutal and cowardly husband. It may be that 11.1-49 of II, ii (cancelled in the revision) were omitted to this end, for there she first plumes herself as more discreet and chaste than the Duchess of Guise, and then confesses in soliloquy:

. . . of a sudden, my licentious fancy  
Riots within me: not my name and house,  
Nor my religion to this hour observ'd,  
Can stand above it; I must utter that  
That will in parting break more strings in me,  
Than death when life parts, and that holy man  
That, from my cradle, counsel'd for my soul,  
I now must make an agent for my blood.<sup>17</sup>

"I must" repeated. Chapman has no great opinion of female capacity to reason, to be calm or innocent, and his Tamyra, full of heat, sheds no light at all—a nocturnal creature. Her repudiation of Monsieur's politic overtures and her as-severations of wifely fidelity are outward only, since her "own dark love and light [is] bent to another," to Bussy. Expecting his arrival with the holy pander, flying her "sex, [her] virtue, [her] renown," she invokes darkness: