



CRITICISM

VOLUME

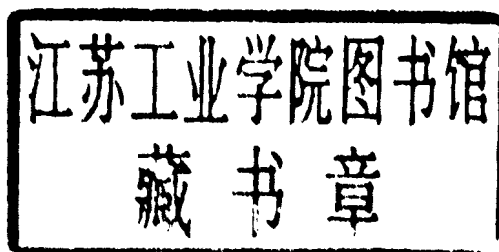
96

Poetry Criticism

*Excerpts from Criticism of the Works
of the Most Significant and Widely
Studied Poets of World Literature*

Volume 96

Michelle Lee
Project Editor



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George Chapman

1559?-1634

English poet, translator, and playwright.

INTRODUCTION

Chapman is best known for his translations of Homer's epics into English, which were praised by his contemporaries as well as by a number of nineteenth-century Romantic poets, especially John Keats. Chapman is also remembered for his original poetry and for his dramatic works, particularly the tragedy *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604).

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Little is known about Chapman's early life. The second son of a prosperous family, he was born in Hitchen, Hertfordshire, around 1559, to Thomas Chapman and Joan Nodes. Chapman attended Oxford in 1574, where he exhibited great talent in Latin and Greek; he did not, however, earn a degree. From 1583-1585, he was employed in the household of Sir Ralph Sadler and according to some accounts, he was in the military in 1591-1592, serving under Sir Francis Vere in his campaigns in the Low Countries. By 1594, Chapman was back in London and began publishing poetry. He made the acquaintance of Sir Walter Raleigh and soon became a part of "The School of Night," the literary circle surrounding Raleigh. In addition to his poetry, Chapman began writing plays for the Lord Admiral's Men and other companies, but was unable to earn a living from his writing. In 1599, he had to relinquish his claim to the Chapman family estate and in 1600, he was confined to debtor's prison. Although he later secured a patron—Henry, the young Prince of Wales—for his translations of Homer's *Iliad*, the prince died before fulfilling the terms of his commitment to the poet. Chapman remained in a state of poverty for the rest of his life and very little is known of his activities during his later years. He died on May 12, 1634, and was buried at St. Giles-in-the-Fields. The monument on his grave was designed by the celebrated architect and stage designer, Inigo Jones, with whom Chapman had collaborated on a number of theatrical productions.

MAJOR WORKS

In 1594, Chapman published *The Shadow of Night*, which consisted of "Hymnus in Noctem" and "Hymnus in Cynthiam" modeled after various Greek hymns but

incorporating many elements of contemporary literature. *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* was published the following year, which includes a number of sonnets and commendatory poems, as well as the long title poem. Best known among the poems of this volume is "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy." In 1598, Chapman published his continuation of Christopher Marlowe's highly successful fragment of *Hero and Leander*, which had been published earlier in the year, five years after Marlowe's death. The work expands on the Greek *Hero and Leander* by the fifth-century poet Musaeus. Chapman's best known works are his translations of Homer. They include *The Iliads of Homer* (1611); *Homer's Odysseys* (1614-1615); and *The Whole Works of Homer; In His Iliads, and Odysseys* (1616).

In addition to his original poetry and translations, Chapman produced a number of successful plays, most notably the tragedy *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604); the comedies *May Day* (1601) and *The Widow's Tears* (1605); and the satire *Eastward Ho!* (1605), written in collaboration with Ben Jonson and John Marston.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Chapman's translations of Homer are perhaps best remembered today for their influence on John Keats, who composed the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" after discovering the translation of the *Iliad* with his friend Charles Cowden Clarke in 1816. Bernice Slote notes that both men would have been familiar with Alexander Pope's translations, so it was certainly not their first encounter with Homer. In attempting to account for the profound reaction of the Chapman version on Keats, Slote contends that "Chapman's lines are virile and bold, and the stories themselves exciting; but in addition, the poetry was read aloud," which Slote feels added to their effect on the two men. Compared to the translations of Pope, Keats apparently preferred the "more irregular, more racy" open couplets of Chapman's version as well as his "more colorful, more imaginatively exciting" language, Slote suggests. Rodney Stenning Edgecombe believes that Chapman's influence on Keats may have extended to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," as the critic reports similarities between the poem and Chapman's *Hero and Leander*.

Chapman's *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* has been the object of critical debate for some time. Janet Levarie Smarr explains that scholars question whether the poem is "a

celebration of the senses as the means for a neoplatonic ascent towards beauty, or is Ovid's progress a descent which Chapman undermines and condemns by a combination of ironies and open moralizations?" Smarr maintains that both interpretations have merit and can be supported by elements within the text itself. Martin Wheeler, who considers the work Chapman's "most sophisticated and original attempt at the dramatic fusion of ideology and narrative verse," maintains that it "renders experientially coherent a philosophy which simultaneously praises and condemns sense." *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* has also been studied in relation to Renaissance emblem books. Rhoda M. Ribner notes that the book is essentially emblematic since it combines detailed, highly pictorial imagery which acts as an emblem, with narrative content that provides the moral or didactic commentary typical of the emblem books. Raymond B. Waddington also notes the influence of the emblem books on Chapman's poem. He acknowledges that "Chapman was not the first poet to employ a title-page emblem as an explanatory key to a volume of verse, but he may well have been the first to use the idea with such sophistication, integrating it into the entire design of the book."

Don McDermott has studied Chapman's "audacious completion" of Marlowe's unfinished poem *Hero and Leander*, noting that critics have always considered Chapman's portion inferior to Marlowe's and have been troubled by the differences in style, structure, and characterization of the two sections. McDermott notes the differences but concludes nonetheless that "at least in one important regard, Chapman understood what Marlowe had done and proceeded in a manner with his contribution that was logical and complementary to the original conception." Pamela Royston Macfie has also examined Chapman's continuation of *Hero and Leander*, focusing on his metamorphosis of the lovers into birds at the poem's conclusion, which has been read by many critics as Chapman's attempt to distance himself from Marlowe's particular Ovidianism. Macfie sees it differently, however, contending that "through Philomela, Chapman opens the close of his poem to that of Marlowe's, and signals, in the very gesture that might have rewritten *Hero and Leander* as uniquely his own, that he cannot—or will not—be dispossessed of Marlowe's influence."

Roy W. Battenhouse contends that Chapman's attempts to combine classical thought with sixteenth-century Christian doctrine, typically involved "assimilating the two in such a way as generally to blur over historical and theological distinctions." Waddington has examined the dedication, marginal notes, and glosses Chapman attached to *The Shadow of the Night*, contending that the intent of such extratextual material was to warn the reader that the volume's poems required serious attention and a high level of learning and commitment in

order to be appreciated. The Latin titles of the work's two poems "continue the process of reader intimidation," according to Battenhouse. Gerald Snare sums up Chapman's reputation as "neoplatonist, stoic, hermetic, orphic, profoundly moral and pedantic—a poet who always has an axe to grind despite the requirements of the poetic matter at hand." Despite being considered "Shakespeare's Rival Poet," by some scholars, Chapman is more often seen "to burst forth morals or doctrine in the most unseemly ways and unseemly places," according to Snare.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Poetry

- The Shadow of Night: Containing Two Poeticall Hymnes* 1594
Ovids Banquet of Sense. A Coronet for His Mistresse Philosophie, and His Amorous Zodiacke. With a Translation of a Latine Coppie, Written by a Fryer, Anno Dom. 1400 1595
Achilles Shield [translator; from Homer's *Iliad*] 1598
Hero and Leander [with Christopher Marlowe] 1598
Seaven Bookes of the Iliades [translator; from Homer's *Iliad*] 1598
Euthymicæ Raptus: Or The Teares of Peace 1609
Homer Prince of Poets [translator; from Homer's *Iliad*] c. 1609
The Iliads of Homer [translator; from Homer's *Iliad*] 1611
An Epicede or Funerall Song: On the Death, of Henry Prince of Wales 1612
Petrarchs Seven Penitentiall Psalms, Paraphrastically Translated: With Other Philosophicall Poems [translator; from Petrarch] 1612
Andromeda Liberata. Or the Nuptials of Perseus and Andromeda 1614
Eugenia: Or True Nobilities Trance; For the Death, of William Lord Russel 1614
A Free and Offenceles Justification, of a Lately Publisht and Most Maliciously Misinterpreted Poeme: Entitled Andromeda Liberata (poetry and essay) 1614
Homer's Odysseys [translator; from Homer's *Odyssey*] 1614; enlarged edition, 1615
The Divine Poem of Musæus [translator; from Musæus] 1616
The Whole Works of Homer; in His Iliads, and Odysseys [translator, from Homer's epics] 1616
The Georgicks of Hesiod [translator; from Hesiod's *Georgics*] 1618
Pro Vere, Autumni Lachrymæ. Inscribed to the Memoirie of Sir Horatio Vere 1622

- The Crowne of All Homers Worckes: Batrachomyomachia. His Hymn's and Epigrams* [translator, from Homer's minor works] c. 1624
- A Justification of a Strange Action of Nero; In Burying One of the Cast Hayres of His Mistresse Poppæa. Also the Fifth Satyre of Juvenall* (poetry, translation) 1629
- The Plays and Poems of George Chapman*. 2 vols. [edited by Thomas Marc Parrott] (plays and poetry) 1910-13
- The Poems of George Chapman* [edited by Phyllis Bartlett] 1941
- Chapman's Homer*. 2 vols. [edited by Allardyce Nicoll] 1956; revised edition, 1967

Other Major Works

- The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (play) 1596
- A Humorous Day's Mirth* (play) 1597
- The Found of New Fortunes (or The Ill of a Woman)* (play) 1598
- All Fools [The World Runs on Wheels]* (play) 1599
- The Four Kings* (play) 1599
- A Pastoral Tragedy* (play) 1599
- May Day* (play) 1601
- The Gentleman Usher* (play) 1602
- Sir Giles Goosecap* (play) 1602
- The Old Joiner of Aldgate* (play) 1603
- Bussy D'Ambois* (play) 1604
- Monsieur D'Olive* (play) 1604
- Eastward Ho!* [with Ben Jonson and John Marston] (play) 1605
- The Widow's Tears* (play) 1605
- The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron* (play) 1607
- The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (play) 1610
- Caesar and Pompey* (play) 1612
- Masque of the Middle* (masque) 1613
- The Tragedy of Chabot, Admiral of France* (play) 1622

CRITICISM

Roy W. Battenhouse (essay date June 1945)

SOURCE: Battenhouse, Roy W. "Chapman and the Nature of Man." *ELH* 12, no. 2 (June 1945): 87-107.

[In the following essay, Battenhouse finds that Chapman's views on man derive from the philosophy of Hellenism rather than the theology of Christianity.]

1

Study of Chapman's doctrine of man offers interesting illustration of one aspect of the sixteenth-century 'revival of the classics.' For Chapman's teachers were Plato, Plutarch, and Epictetus—along with such antiquarians as Comes and Ficinus; and steeping himself in these Hellenists, the poet acquired a nostalgia for the world of "old humanity." His models of virtue are Homer the mystic seer and Cato the serenely self-controlled. Christ upon the Cross is, indeed, also a hero—but a hero fitted to accord with Stoic and Platonic morality. Like the Florentine Platonists, Chapman is a syncretist of classical and Christian thought, assimilating the two in such a way as generally to blur over historical and theological distinctions. He makes his Cato argue, most un-Stoically, for the immortality of the soul, and even for a resurrection of the body; and, on the other hand, he has Christ propound the dubiously Christian doctrine that "As we are men, we death and hell controule."¹ Ranging Christian story side by side with pagan myth, Chapman interprets both in terms of Plotinian philosophy.² In this respect he represents a recrudescence of that "religion" of Classicism which Athanasius and Augustine had with difficulty conquered. The religious concepts of Hellenistic philosophy rather than the definitions of Christian orthodoxy furnish Chapman the premises of his view of man.

The distinction is an important one; and to see it clearly it will be profitable to recall quickly a few of the points particularly urged by the two Church Fathers just mentioned. Philosophic wisdom, Augustine had remarked in his 13th Book *On the Trinity*, enables men not to be blessed but to be "bravely miserable." Unable to be what they would wish, they counsel themselves to will only what they can—thus binding themselves under "nature" rather than freeing themselves under God. They desire immortality, for such is implied in the universal will to be blessed, but they fail to see that immortality is for "the whole man, who certainly consists of soul and body." This insistence on the integrity of the whole man, and on his genuine freedom within the realm of nature, is what distinguishes Augustine and Athanasius from their Classical opponents.

Equally important is Christianity's emphasis on the essential goodness of the created world. Against Arius, whose intellectual affiliations were Neoplatonic, Athanasius declares that the world has not been made, as Plato teaches, by some mere mechanic out of a pre-existent stuff, but by a genuine Creator, out of nothing;³ and hence evil does not reside in matter but in the perverted choice of the soul which has shut its eyes against God.⁴ Arius must be instructed on this point: that our Lord's putting on of human flesh in no way disqualified him for equal status with God the Father, for the Son "was not lessened by the envelopment of

the body, but rather deified it and rendered it immortal."⁵ Augustine, a century and a half later, is equally careful to establish the point that "in its own kind and degree the flesh is good." He censures the Manichees for detesting our present bodies, and the Platonists for holding the view that the diseases of desire which affect the soul arise from the soul's association with an earthly body. A Christian, he says, does "not desire to be deprived of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality."⁶ The Platonists, though we may call them the wisest among the philosophers of antiquity, were yet blinded by the absence of two fundamental doctrines: that of the Incarnation and that of the Resurrection of the Body.⁷

With this necessarily very brief account of the important points of cleavage between Christian and Classical thought as it bears on the problem of the nature and destiny of man, I turn now to an examination of Chapman's views.

2

Let us give attention, first, to the constitution of man as Chapman conceives him. The words of the "Senecal" Clermont as he stands on the threshold of deifying himself by suicide are generally supposed, I think, to represent the dramatist's own view. Clermont says:

The garment or the cover of the mind,
The human soul is; of the soul, the spirit
The proper robe is; of the spirit, the blood;
And of the blood, the body is the shroud.
With that must I begin then to unclothe,
And come at th' other.⁸

The picture here is of "layers" of being, increasingly material and crude in nature, encasing and imprisoning an intellectual being whose homeland is "beyond." Plainly, the body is not viewed as good, nor is the soul the "form of the body" as for Aristotle and St. Thomas; instead, man is a Neoplatonic spirit imbedded uncomfortably in nature. The interpretation is made the more vivid in certain of Chapman's non-dramatic verses, where man's soul is spoken of as a ray from heaven dwelling in a dunghill body; or again, man's flesh is said to be a Shirt of Nessus.⁹ In *Eugenia* man is defined as "all mind," the body being merely the mind's "instrument."¹⁰ The body's "passionate affects," we are told in *Andromeda*, never can display satisfactorily "what the soul respects"—just as the shadow of a man "never can Shew the distinct, the exact Forme of Man"

For how can mortall things, immortal shew?
Or that which false is, represent the trew?¹¹

In Chapman's tragedies the characters repeatedly elaborate this depreciatory view of the body. "Our bodies," says Tamyra, "are but thick clouds to our souls,

Through which they cannot shine when they desire."¹² The Guise, in a speech justifying suicide, calls his body "this imperfect blood and flesh," "this mass of slavery," "this same sink of sensuality," "this carrion"; and he determines to "set my true man clear" by springing up to the stars!¹³ Byron blames his ultimate misery on the "bond and bundle of corruption" to which his soul is linked. "I know this body but a sink of folly," he says. At the same time Epernon, an onlooker, exclaims over the "impossible mixtures" of "corruption and eternesse" of which man consists.¹⁴

The sources for Chapman's negative view of the body obviously go back as far as Pythagoras' suggestion that the body is a prison-house, Plato's theory that it is at best a 'principle of limitation,' and Plutarch's picture of it as a mere 'receptacle' susceptible of affection and mutation.¹⁵ But Chapman could have encountered the same views closer at hand. From Ficinus he might have learned that man's "immortal soul is always miserable in the body," and from Landinus that life on earth participates in gloom and perturbation because tied to matter.¹⁶ Abraham Fraunce stood ready to tell him that

The *Platonists* call the body a *Hell*, in respect of the minde . . . for, being bereaft of celestial ornaments, it sorroweth and greeueth, and therefore compast with Stygian waues, displeaseth itselfe, hateth and abhorreth his owne acts, howles, and makes pitiful lamentation; and that is *Cocytus*, of κοκέω, to howle and crie out, as Plato expoundeth it.¹⁷

Among Chapman's own English contemporaries Sir John Davies was speaking of man's body as a prison, and Davies of Hereford was calling it a "Clog."¹⁸

Chapman's view of the world parallels his view of man, for they are related as macrocosm to microcosm.¹⁹ As body is to soul, so earth is to heaven a shadow as compared with substance. Felicity is definitely not to be found on earth. "Hath any man been blessed, and yet liv'd?" Byron asks.²⁰ And Pompey wonders "did the state Of any best man here associate?"²¹ It is wisdom, he thinks, "to turn one's back to all the world, And only look at heaven."²² Athenodorus concurs: "for this giant world," he says

Let's not contend with it, when heaven itself
Fails to reform it: why should we affect
The least hand over it in that ambition?
A heap 'tis of digested villany;
Virtue in labour with eternal chaos
Press'd to a living death, and rack'd beneath it.²³

Cato, joining the chorus of scorn, prepares for suicide with the words: "The next world and my soul, then, let me serve."²⁴ As for this world, Chapman's wisemen agree in condemning it as a realm of infirmity and change, depravity and flux: not until man is "above All motion" can he be "fix'd and quiet."²⁵ Such a view, let

me point out, implies that time has significance only as a Platonic "moving image of eternity," and history no meaning but as a period of exile.

3

Having thus made clear the way in which Chapman construes the character of the world and of man, let us now explore its implications. What is the destiny of man, assuming a definition of his nature in Neoplatonic terms? Here Chapman enters on complex territory and paradoxical answers. The multiple aspects of his answer can perhaps best be disentangled in terms of several classical myths which have a key prominence in his thinking. Particularly worth examining are the myths of Ganymede, Prometheus, the 'Senecal man,' and Hercules. Each exhibits a part of Chapman's view as to the destiny of man.

The myth of Ganymede, as interpreted by Renaissance allegorists, teaches that man's most glorious destiny is to be found in the cultivation of his intellect. According to Comes and Landinus, Ganymede stands for the human mind, beloved by the Supreme Being, and abducted from the body by the "divine fury" of enraptured contemplation.²⁶ Abraham Fraunce explains that the ravishing of Ganymede by Jupiter stands for "the lifting up of mans minde from these earthly toys, to heauenly concepts."²⁷ The destiny here held out for man is that he may transcend the realm of misery associated with his body and earthly life and be caught up into the beatitude of heaven, if he will but concentrate his activity in the exercise of his intellect, disregarding the lure of the senses. Chapman employs the myth thus in his *Hymnus in Cynthia*. The sense-world, he there argues, is but a shadow of the real world: it is, to use his phrase, only a "Shadow of Night" obscuring the true Divine Dark in which man, if he be virtuous, can come to dwell like a bright star. Ganymede was snatched out of earth's noisome gloom and stellified as the great Aquarius in heaven's healthful dark, because he cultivated intellectual beauty. His story teaches that the mind "nearest comes to a Divinity" when it "furthest is from spot of Earth's delight." To be carried off by the Eagle of contemplation is to become a shining light of virtue. Chapman, believing this with all his heart, regarded scholarship as a "holy trance" and an avenue to saving truth; unless it was that, it was worthless. What he sought in Homer was a "flood of soul" and those "doctrinal illations of truth" which might conduct him, and other readers, to a peace passing all understanding.²⁸

But Platonic and Stoic thought has to face the fact also that man is earth-bound. He has a term to spend in the world of flux or nature. Even though his true and proper destiny be to rest in eternity as a Plotinian pure spirit, or to ascend to the fiery heavens as a spark of Stoic

logos, yet the economy of the universe has imposed on him a period of struggle in the world. His plight is symbolized by the wrestling Jacob²⁹ or, more commonly, by the figure of Prometheus. As Prometheus was bound to a pillar, says Abraham Fraunce, so "The minde is bound fast to the body, and there chained for awhile"; and the Eagle which devoured Prometheus' heart stands for the meditations which every day consume the wise-man's mind—which only the night (of contemplation?) can restore again.³⁰

Erwin Panofsky has pointed out that the agonizing Prometheus was a favorite symbol in Renaissance art, expressing the price mankind has to pay for its intellectual awakening—the price of being tortured by profound meditation, and recovering only to be tortured again.³¹ Chapman seems to express this mood in some verses addressed to his friend Harriot:

O that my strange muse
Without this bodies nourishment could vse,
Her zealous faculties, onely t' aspire,
Instructiue light from your whole Sphere of fire:
But woe is me, what zeale or power soeuer
My free soule hath, my body will be neuer
Able t' attend.

His soul's "genuine formes," he says, "struggle for birth, Vnder the clawes of this fowle Panther earth"; for his body is constantly betraying its "crown," the soul.³² Like Prometheus, Chapman is ill at ease in the terrestrial order; but he believes, as a passage in *The Shadow of Night* indicates, that a "Promethean" poet serves his fellowmen by making them likewise ill at ease. His task is to picture the subhuman character of their degenerate lives, thus illuminating their predicament and stirring them up to reform.³³ Further, Chapman says elsewhere, poetry has a "Promethean facultie" to "create men."³⁴ Here he would seem to be reflecting the notion, popularized in the Renaissance by Boccaccio, that man is not fully "created" until given spiritual Form by the culture-bringer Prometheus.³⁵ At any rate, such interpretation accords closely with Chapman's theory that man is incomplete unless ruled by "soul," and that the soul itself is "a blank" until "informed" by Learning or Art:

So when the Soule is to the body giuen;
(Being substance of Gods image, sent from heaven)
It is not his true Image, till it take
Into the Substance, those fit forms that make
His perfect Image; which are then imprest
By Learning and impulsio.³⁶

Poetry, in Chapman's view, is the mediator of this Learning, the conveyor of this Art. So also was Christ, who endured pains to bring about the "perfecting" of the form infused in man's creation.³⁷ Chapman's Christ is, in other words, a Promethean poet; and Chapman's self-dedication to Christ is an embracing of the rôle of suffering light-bringer.³⁸

In accord with his understanding of man's misery and of the poet's instructional function, Chapman composed tragedies in which the protagonists are moral types.³⁹ They represent in the main two forms of human nature: the degenerate and the ideal. That is, Chapman's heroes are either slaves-of-passion or exemplars of calm. In the first category come Byron, Bussy, and Tamyra—"headless" and headlong men and women; in the second we find Clermont the "complete" man and Cato his double. The one series illustrates what Chapman calls "the body's fervour"; the other, "the mind's constant and unconquered empire."

These two categories, supposed by Chapman to derive from Homer, actually reflect Neoplatonic theory as to the two divergent courses in life open to man.⁴⁰ A man's destiny, according to this theory, is determined by whether he rests in reason or gives rein to passion; by whether he trusts in things inward or covets things outward. He may, to use Chapman's language, "direct Reason in such an Art, as that it can Turne blood to soule, and make both, one calme man,"⁴¹ or he may let his thoughts take fire from his blood, become enamoured like Narcissus of his shadow-self, and progressively drown himself in his own lower nature. Either he will use the soul's "beams" to disperse the body's vapors, or the body will be allowed to choke the soul.⁴² In giving pattern to these antithetical careers Chapman invokes two myths of opposite purport: that of the "Senecal man" and that of Hercules.

Analysis of the Senecal man need not detain us long. He is a static figure, essentially undramatic. Cato is at his height in declaring

I'll pursue my reason,
And hold that as my light and fiery pillar⁴³

or when he is raising such queries as

is not our free soul infus'd
To every body in her absolute end
To rule that body? . . .
And being empress, may she not dispose
It, and the life in it, at her just pleasure?⁴⁴

But his acting in accord with such logic makes of tragic catharsis a mockery. To put a sword to one's own heart and cry "Now I am safe" is to deny the value of all history and make all heroism a pompous prelude to retreat. Cato is a tedious character parading an immobile virtue. His drama, being all character and no plot, is decidedly unAristotelian.

Clermont's principles are equally 'correct,' and his demise equally insipid. He is a protagonist "fix'd in himself," with a "most gentle and unwearied mind,

Rightly to virtue fram'd."⁴⁵ We are told also that he has the "crown of man," which is "learning," to supplement and rule his natural valor. This means that he wisely abhors all those things which a merely 'natural' man like Byron glories in—change, violence, perjury, self-seeking, and outward greatness. For he has learned from Homer's story of Achilles that men endowed with nature's best gifts can come to destruction unless they set down "Decrees within them, for disposing these."⁴⁶ Wisely he understands nature "with enough art" and therefore sees the Universe as a divine frame which it would be gross impiety to attempt to subject to his private will: instead, he will go "cheek by cheek" with Necessity in "glad obedience To any thing the high and general Cause . . . hath ordain'd."⁴⁷ So, when he is arrested unjustly he resigns himself philosophically; when a "Christian" ghost lets him know that God ordains the revenge of Bussy, he obeys; and when the laws of Platonic friendship urge him to join the slain Guise, he again complies. He is a curious mixture of Christian, Stoic, and Platonic morality. He commits suicide like a Stoic, but he fulfills an act of vengeance which, as several commentators have pointed out,⁴⁸ no Stoic would have considered worth performing.

But let us now examine the alternative explanation of human tragedy set forth in Bussy and Byron. A. S. Ferguson is the latest of several commentators to agree in the statement that Bussy is for the dramatist "the classical Hercules born anew, accomplishing similar feats, and lured to a similar tragic doom."⁴⁹ Bussy is a hero committed to the pursuit of virtue but betrayed by his "great heart [that] will not down." His passion, though ardently set on "honest actions," is presently serving the black-magic of the Friar⁵⁰ and the adulterous will of Tamyra. His valor declares itself in the Herculean pattern when he offers himself as a cleanser of the court and is given by the King the rôle of scourge. Bussy has, however, what one of his epithets announces, a "Passion of death!"; and we watch him trapped into death by the call of Tamyra's blood. He then meets his fate with the fortitude of a Hercules—chastened, however, by his Shirt-of-Nessus experience into an astonishing piety of quasi-Christian tone. The ending is quite un-Senecan when Bussy forgives his enemies, acknowledges his own "worthless fall," and proclaims his fate a warning to express the "frail condition of strength, valour, [and] virtue." If we ask what Bussy's tragic flaw was, there is the hint of an answer in the words of Monsieur, who tells us that Bussy is "like other naturals That have strange gifts in nature, but no soul Diffus'd quite through."⁵¹ Or we may explain it as the Guise does in *The Revenge of Bussy*, a play written six years later: Bussy's valor, he says, lacked "learning," so that he "was rapt with outrage oftentimes Beyond decorum."⁵²

The pattern is similar, but more elaborately moralized, in the Byron plays. Byron, like Marlowe's Tamburlaine, thinks it "immortality to die aspiring"; he wants to be "like the shaft Shot at the sun by angry Hercules."⁵³ Like Hercules and Bussy, he is a man of valor with great accomplishments: he has "Alcides-like gone under th' earth, And on these shoulders borne the weight of France."⁵⁴ But he is a man "broken loose From human limits," who is easily "taken in affection" by the black-magic of La Fin, as Bussy was by that of the Friar. Indeed, Byron attempts later to excuse his crime by blaming it on "this damn'd enchanter," but one of his judges replies that "worthy minds witchcraft can never force." The Prologue explains Byron's tragedy as a yielding to "policy," so that he thirsts no longer for his country's love but Narcissus-like for "the fair shades of himself." There is reference, at the beginning of the second play, to the "fatal thirst of his ambition" which is carrying Byron "quite against the stream of all religion, Honour, and reason." A Shirt-of-Nessus overtakes him in the form of an inward fire arising from "adust and melancholy choler" of the blood and issuing in hysteria.⁵⁵ His virtue has now degenerated into a kind of Machiavellian virtù; so that Soissons is right in remarking "O Virtue, thou art now far worse than Fortune." Another observer, the Vidame, sees the true meaning of "this angry conflagration": it is a purgatorial fire blasting Byron's earthly hopes so that "piety [may] enter with her willing cross." Presently piety begins to appear, phoenix-like, out of the ashes, as Byron asks

Why should I keep my soul in this dark light,
Whose black beams lighted me to lose myself?⁵⁶

The play's protagonist has become a chastened moralizer by the time he says

Farewell, world!

He is at no end of his actions blest
Whose ends will make him greatest, and not best;⁵⁷

and he ends the play like a preacher:

Fall on your knees then, statists, ere ye fall,
That you may rise again: knees bent too late,
Stick you in earth like statues: see in me
How you are pour'd down from your clearest heavens.

Significantly, Byron now regards death as an "eternal victory" by which his soul is freed to take her flight. Such an ending is quite in line with the Neoplatonic interpretation of Hercules' pyre as a burning of the dross of mortality by which he purged himself to become divine.⁵⁸ More importantly, the ending agrees with a long tradition of "homiletical tragedy," from W. Wager to John Ford, in which the "chain of vice" theme and the "scaffold speech" are standard features.⁵⁹

Chapman's way of ending the Bussy and Byron dramas depends on the paradoxical theory that a display of evil

forwards the good. The fire in Byron, says the King, "not another deluge can put out";⁶⁰ consequently we see it putting itself out by exhaustion so that Byron can be reborn—and so that others may be converted by the awful spectacle. The view accords closely with that set forth in *The Shadow of Night*. The world of the senses, the poet there says, is a great smoking altar of human passions which must either be drowned by the deluge of our tears or cleansed by the fury of a Hercules; "lust's fire" must either be quenched by intellectual love or expended in hot and noisy pursuits whose miseries may beget contrition. "Weepe, weepe your soules, into felicitie," says Chapman, for sorrow is the only way to beatitude. In other words, if we do not embrace religion through repentance we will be driven to it through grievous "justice" and fiery trial.

5

The view we have just discriminated implies an apology for violence in the name of piety, and is one of the most curious and significant aspects of the thought of the Jacobean age. I wish there were space here to develop adequately the close parallel of Chapman's theory with that of Fulke Greville, who deciphers his own name as "Greiv-III" because of his gloomy view of life.⁶¹ According to Greville, the flesh must die before grace can be born; "The earth must burne, ere we for Christ can looke."⁶²

For God comes not till man be ouerthrowne;
Peace is the seed of grace, in dead flesh sowne.⁶³

God meant not Man should here inherit,
A time-made World, which with time should not fade;
But as *Noes flood* once drown'd woods, hils, & plain,
So should the fire of *Christ* waste all againe.⁶⁴
First let the law plough vp thy wicked heart
That *Christ* may come, and all these types depart.⁶⁵

In other words, man is a rebel who must be broken by the law before he will look for grace—must feel the hot fires of justice in his own world and his own blood before he will welcome the cool of God's firmament and of Christ's red blood streaming. Our "falne nature," says Greville, follows "streames of vanity" until "Forc'd vp to call for grace":

Whence from the depth of fatall desolation
Springs vp the height of his [man's] Regeneration.⁶⁶

For

When Gods All-might doth in thy flesh appeare,
Then Seas with streames aboue thy skye doe meet.⁶⁷

Here is a hope indeed Promethean, creating (if I may quote Shelley) "From its own wreck the thing it contemplates." It makes capital out of despair, since it has lost contact with the Christian hope set forth in the Incarnation.

What is particularly worth noting, I think, is that in Greville's world view, as in Chapman's, we find parading under the same banner of piety both idealism and cynicism, a theoretical humanitarianism and "pacifism" side by side with a practical approval of violence⁶⁸—a combination such as characterized politics in the late Roman empire, and is not wholly absent among our contemporaries. There is in Greville, as Miss Ellis-Fermor has lately pointed out, a curious crossing of a "hard vein of Machiavellian pragmatism with the almost mystical rejection of the seen in favor of the unseen."⁶⁹ "Proceed in Furie," Achmat says in *Mustapha*, for "Furie hath Law and Reason, Where it doth plague the wickedness of Treason." And again: "Nothing [is] thy way vnto eternall being; Death, to saluation; and the Graue to Heauen."⁷⁰ This may be compared with Chapman's advice to the Furies in *The Shadow of Night* to

Thunder your wrongs, your miseries and hells,
And with the dismall accents of your knells,
Reuiue the dead, and make the liuing dye
In ruth, and terror of your torturie.

and with his invocation, in the name of justice:

Fall Hercules from heauen in tempestes hurld,
And cleanse this beastly stable of the world.⁷¹

Chapman's Bussy and Byron both think of themselves as "scourges" and seem to receive from Chapman a kind of justification in the rôle, as if their violence, for all its intemperance, were being accommodated by Necessity to a providential function.⁷² Byron, who has brought France peace and made his own name glorious as "Scourge of the Huguenots,"⁷³ gives this justification for extending his activities as scourge:

The world is quite inverted, Virtue thrown
At Vice's feet, and sensual Peace confounds
Valour and cowardice, fame and infamy;
The rude and terrible age is turn'd again,

.

We must reform and have a new creation
Of state and government, and on our Chaos
Will I sit brooding up another world.
I, who through all the dangers that can siege
The life of man, have forc'd my glorious way
To the repairing of my country's ruins,
Will ruin it again to re-advance it.⁷⁴

That these are indeed an aspect of Chapman's own sentiments is made clear if we compare passages in the non-dramatic *Shadow of Night*: for there we find the notion that man is in a degenerate Iron age of "sensual" peace, that he wallows in a moral chaos from which it would be blessed to return to the physical chaos of "the old essence and insensive prime," and that torture advances this cure of man's diseases. The conclusion we must draw, if I interpret aright, is that such Herculean figures as Bussy and Byron advance morality

even while illustrating depravity, for in their scourging of others and eventually of themselves they teach all men to despise our life in time and covet a "second life" in eternity.

Chapman and Greville can make room at the same time for transcendentalism and Machiavellianism because they have received from Platonic teachers a "two-story universe" and a two-story man. From Ficinus had come the doctrine that man is created "double" with two "lights," one innate and the other infused, and two "loves," one Profane and the other Sacred.⁷⁵ This means a bifurcation of man between his secular or "natural" life, which is under Fate, and his divine or rational life, which is under Providence. It means that man "in nature" only is "fallen" and miserable. For nature is of itself irrational⁷⁶ and needs constantly to be rationalized. "What nature gives at random," says Chapman, must be ordered by our "divine part."⁷⁷ Or again, Chapman regarded Nature as "at her heart corrupted . . . euen in her most ennobled birth," so that "she must neede incitements to her good";⁷⁸ left to herself, she is brutish for lack of Reason.⁷⁹ By this perspective Chapman could declare through Monsieur in *Bussy* that "Nature is stark blind herself." But at the same time he could say through the Guise that Nature does not actually work "at random," however it may seem so to the superficial eye.⁸⁰ Nature has, indeed, an end: her own dissolution. The man who serves her is like the sea, destined to bristle with surges until "crown'd with his own quiet foam." Nature, in other words, is continually wasting herself by an inner law of defection. Greville was to see in this very fact of nature's failure a pious purpose:

Nature herselfe, doth her own selfe defloure,
To hate those errors she her selfe doth giue.
For how should man thinke that, he may not doe
If Nature did not faile, and punish too?⁸¹

Nature, let us take note, teaches negatively, warning man to flee from her to God.

The logic of Chapman and Greville is thus the logic of despair, moving dialectically from nature to grace—nature being understood in more or less Machiavellian terms, and grace being equated with Platonic and Stoic idealism. Between these two opposites lies a chasm, and there is no reconciling principle. Nature and "fallen man" are considered so depraved, the world and the times so out of joint, that only violence can effect a cure. Chapman's Clermont, who is supposed to be the very opposite of "your Machiavellian villains,"⁸² nevertheless sanctions violence:

When truth is overthrown, his laws corrupted;
When souls are smother'd in the flatter'd flesh,
Slain bodies are no more than oxen slain;

and he excuses the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre: