A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WOMAN OF ELIZABETHAN HISTORY AND WOMAN OF ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF

ENGLISH AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE

TEACHERS COLLEGE OF EMPORIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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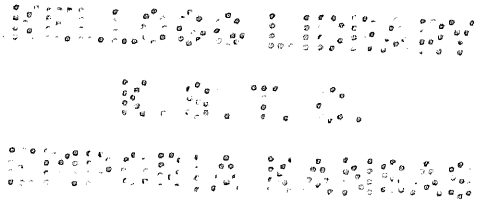
May 1935



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Harold M. Priest in the preparation of this thesis. His suggestions and criticisms have been very helpful.

I am also indebted to Dr. Edwin J. Brown and Miss Teresa M. Ryan for suggesting this subject for study and for their kindly cooperation from time to time.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The women in Renaissance drama present various interesting problems to the student of literature. Among these is that of the male predominance in outstanding characters. In many cases the women in contrast to the dramatic heroes appear to the modern reader as lifeless and colorless. One naturally wonders whether these female characters actually represent the women of that period or whether they are merely the product of some artificial pattern.

Although Georgiana Hill in her Women In English Life, Bartlett Burleigh James in his Women in England, and John Langdon-Davies in his A Short History of Women, all treat the history of women in this period, apparently no one has made a study of the comparative relationship existing between the women of history and the women of the drama. This study was begun for the purpose of determining whether or not the general assumption that drama is a portrayal of life is true in the presentation of the women characters of Renaissance drama.

As a general background for this study, a short historical account of the English women previous to the time of the Renaissance has been included, in order that the status of women at the beginning of the sixteenth century might be understood more clearly. The second phase of this study has been the development of as complete and as accurate a picture of the life of the Elizabethan women as was possible from the material at hand. Forty-two books dealing with the history of England of this period, especially treating the social phase of history which reveals the manners and

customs of the time, have been consulted. The next step in this investigation involved a detailed examination of some seventy-five plays representative of this period. Not all the extant or available plays were consulted but an effort was made to select as nearly as possible those plays dealing with contemporary life with special attention given to the comedies of manners. While some of the plays read have foreign settings, they clearly reflect the contemporary life in Elizabethan England and have, therefore, been included in the study.

Chapter I, as has been stated, is a historical background which explains the status of women in England at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In Chapter II an effort has been made to present the life of Elizabethan women in its physical, social, moral, religious, and intellectual aspects, as it is recorded in history. Chapter III presents the life of the women of Elizabethan England as it is revealed in the drama and, further analyses the relation between women as they were in real life and as they were seen on the stage.

The result of this investigation, it is believed, will be a demonstration of the close relation between reality and dramatic fiction in the portrayal of women.

CHAPTER I

ENGLISH WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The position of women in England cannot be regarded as an orderly evolution or of unvarying progress. While improvement may be detected in one line, deterioration is evident in another.[1]

At the beginning of the middle ages, when war was frequent, certain civil duties naturally fell to women, which in more peaceful times had been performed by men. Women became the spinners, the brewsters, and the bakers. Quite frequently, they controlled the affairs of the estate, and occasionally, held public offices of trust and importance. There were, at that time, no laws to prevent women from doing these things; and the fittest emerged from the hum-drum of household duties, unhindered by conventionality or restrictions.[2]

However, this freedom of activity was gradually lost because of the rise of that powerful medieval institution, the church.[3] Although introduced into England in 597, the church did not become a dominating influence until after the time of William the Conqueror.[4] It was the policy of the church to keep women in a subordinate position for as long as they were conscious of their position of inferiority and their duty of subservience, they were valuable aids in building and maintaining ecclesiastical power.

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[1] Georgiana Hill, Women in English Life (Vol. 2, London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1898), 2 vol. p. xiii.

[2] Ibid., p. vii.

[3] Ibid., p. ix.

[4] Allen C. Thomas, A History of England (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company Publishers, 1913). p. 18.

In order to enforce and strengthen this doctrine of inferiority, the church held that there was in woman not only the sin common to all humanity, but an additional wickedness which was termed the "eternal feminine." This wickedness was held before men's eyes as a temptation to be constantly warred against. To shun the presence of woman was to resist evil. Family life was something to be tolerated rather than approved. The celibate life was considered the virtuous life. Even as late as the fifteenth century, the church upheld the opinion of Chrysostum in which he maintained that woman was a "natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination and a painted ill." Those interested in the salvation of souls must avoid women.[5]

Much the same idea was expressed by Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, in the twelfth century:

> Of the numberless snares that the crafty enemy spreads for us over all the hills and fields of the world, the worst, and the one which scarcely anyone can avoid is woman, sad stem, evil root, vicious fount, which in all the world propagates many scandals. Woman, sweet evil, honey and poison alike, anointing with the balm the sword with which thou piercest even wise men's hearts. Who persuaded our first parent to taste the forbidden thing? A woman. Who forced the father to defile his daughter? A woman. Who tamed the strong by robbing him of his hair? A woman. Who cut off the sacred head of a just man with a sword? A woman.[6]

Women were not esteemed fit to receive the Eucharist with uncovered hands and, because of their wickedness, were forbidden to approach the

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[5] Georgiana Hill, op. cit., p. ix.

[6] John Langdon Davis, A Short History of Women (New York: The Viking Press, 1927), p. 278.

altar. Virginity was regarded as a state of especial sanctity. In an age when the masses believed in supernatural appearances and interferences, the emotional sensibilities of women were easily appealed to by the priests and they unhesitantly yielded their freedom of action and thought to the church. When marriage of the priesthood was forbidden in 1215, concubinage was substituted for the interdicted marriage.* Debauchery spread throughout the country until it is said that as many as one hundred thousand women were seduced for houses of ill-fame which were kept for the pleasure of the priests.[7]

Although the church kept women in subjection, it unfolded a new life for them. For Christianity brought with it a respect for womanhood which had not been known in the ancient world. The worship of the virgin placed women in a new light. Such reverence did much to elevate and purify the ideals of women and to soften the manners of men.[8] The church taught men to respect their wives and exerted its influence against the tyranny of their subjection to male relatives. It attempted to set twelve as the minimum age at which a girl could marry. Moreover it established the dogma of the indissolubility of marriage.[9] Thus, the church befriended women in a way that hastened the acquisition of real equality, which they now enjoy with the other sex.[10]

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[7] Bartlett Burleigh James, Women of England (Philadelphia: The Rittenhouse Press, 1907), p. 111.

[8] Philip van Ness Meyers, History as Past Ethics (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1913), p. 311.

[9] Langdon Davies, op. cit., p. 257.

[10] James, op. cit., p. 109.

* In the document entitled Instructions for a Parish Priest, those who were too weak to live uprightly in a celibate state were counselled to take wives. James, op. cit., p. 110.

Furthermore, the church stood for law and order in the turmoil and dangers of war. It was the one refuge to which women could go for security, even though its protection was bought at the price of authority over their lives. Moreover, during the middle ages, the convents retained great importance in the education of women, for they offered the only training for girls outside the home. The universities ignored the existence of women as beings desirous of or capable of acquiring knowledge. In all convents, down to the time of the Reformation, Latin continued to be studied to some extent, if only so far as to enable the nun to repeat her prayers, to follow mass, and to transcribe to the book of devotion. Then, too, the lives of women were spent in a round of narrow experience and duty which, at best, must have been terribly monotonous. To them, the various feasts of the church with their processions and ceremonials, furnished agreeable breaks in their existence. This was especially true of the lower classes. Thus, we find that though the church placed women in a position of inferiority, it, more than any other social force, gave women the dignity and the worth which she later achieved.[11]

Other great factors in the position of women in medieval times were those of feudalism and chivalry. Although existent in England before the rule of William the Conqueror, feudalism was reintroduced by him in a developed form. The over-lord under feudalism had the right to demand and enforce marriage or remarriage as he saw fit.[12] Marriage was not an affair of personal affection but of public avarice, military tactics, and territorial

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[11] Lina Eckenstein, Woman Under Monasticism (Cambridge: At University Press, 1896), p. 356.

[12] Langdon-Davies, Op. cit., p. 247.

alliance.[13] It was, therefore, not infrequent for a girl of five years to become a bride.[14] "For very need," complained a member of the noble family of Scope, "I was fain to sell a little daughter I have, for much less than I should have done by possibility."[15] Betrothal often took place when one or both parties were in the cradle and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurse's charge.

Wife beating was a recognized right of man and was practised without shame by high and low. One of the English translations of the fifteenth century of the fashionable manual of the Knight of La Tour Landry, thus describes the proper treatment of a scolding wife.

> He smote her with his fist down to earth and then with his foot he struck her in the visage and broke her nose, and all her life after it was so foul blemished. . . .Therefore, the wife ought to suffer and let the husband have the word and to be master.[16]

A woman who dared counsel her husband was greeted with a closed fist on her cheek.[17]

Chivalry exalted the position of womanhood. Under chivalry, the lady had some rudiments of education. Such as it was, her knowledge exceeded the man's. She could recite stories and romances, play accompaniments on the harp or viol, weave, sew, embroider, and repeat some Latin. She could play chess, knew a little falconry and astronomy,and enough medicine to set a broken arm and to dress wounds.[18]

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13 Ibid., p. 257 and George Macaulay Trevelyan, History of England (New York: Longman's, Green and Company, 1926), p. 260.

14 Langdon-Davies, op. cit., p. 258.

15 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 260.

16 Langdon-Davies, op. cit., p. 254.

17 Treveylan, op. cit., p. 260.

18 Langdon-Davies, op. cit., pp. 251 ff.

Women of the upper classes, under chivalry, were placed in a position of command. It was the duty of the knights to grant their wishes and carry out their requests. There never was a time when women were more frequently the subject of verse or worshipped with greater devotion.[19] Under chivalry an ideal womanhood was created that stirred the imagination and poetic fancy. Chivalry was a protest against tyranny and vice. It inspired men to noble deeds; it gave them a more elevated conception of duty. It dawned like a new gospel on a world in which the vices of paganism had triumphed over its virtues.[20] Through chivalry, splendid ideals of womanhood were introduced into England.[21]

The extravagant reverence and regard paid women of the higher ranks of society were not firmly based in inherent moral principles. It was an easy passage from idealized women to materialized women. Not womanhood, but personal graces came to evoke the passionate devotion of the knight. In its later expression, the nature of chivalry was a fantastic and romantic admiration, which found expression in all kinds of extravagances. Instead of an idol, woman became a mere toy.[22]

This sentimentality is well illustrated in the nature of the knightly devotion of that age. When he was not in camp, the knight led an idle life, which was spent for the most part in sentimental attendance upon the ladies

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[19] F. Warre Cornish, Chivalry (New York: The Macmillan Company Limited, 1901), p. 283.

[20] Hill, op. cit., p. x.

[21] James, op. cit., p. 107.

[22] Hill, op. cit., p. x.

of court or castle. It was then that his deeds of prowess were rewarded by the lady to whom he had pledged devotion. With all the circumstances of outward respect for woman surpassing in ostentation that shown by any other time, no age had greater license in the association of the sexes. Gallantry came to signify bravery and illicit love. It became customary for every lady to have a lover as well as a husband. Chastity was not a virtue of chivalry.[23]

The story of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the unhappy queen of Henry II, who in her later life frequently signed herself "Queen by the wrath of God," illustrates a phase of domestic infidelity on the part of Henry II, which had many parallels in England. Moreover, it shows how easily the demands of faithfulness were forgotten in the relations of life because of the perfervid sentiment of chivalrous devotion.[24]

Thus, we find that the church put women on a social standing below men but guided them toward the virtuous life and glorified pure womanhood, especially through worship of the Virgin. Chivalry worshiped women as ideal creatures, as the rulers of men, and yet it taught them to be corrupt in their social relationships. Both the church and feudalism reached their height during the twelfth century. By the end of the fifteenth century both were rapidly decaying in power and authority.[25]

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[23] James, op. cit., p. 107 f.

[24] Ibid., p. 137.

[25] Hill, op. cit., p. x f.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH WOMEN IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Although the Renaissance did not emancipate women, it did elevate their general position.[1] Because of its influence women became true companions of men instead of chivalric queens. During the Renaissance because of the spread of education, social life underwent great changes. The church was no longer the dominating force in England and the old feudal system had all but disappeared. Thought, hitherto stagnant, now became a moving stream.[2] Women began to emerge from the narrow home life into national life.

Great changes took place in the style of living of both the rich and the poor.[3] During Elizabeth's reign little was attempted in the way of public building. For the most part, Tudor architecture concerned itself with the erection of dwellings.[4] As a result of Italian influence, there was a curious mixture of the old and the new in architecture. Comfort and statliness became the aims of the builders.

More and better furniture appeared. Highly ornamental and massive tables, and Windsor and Farthingale chairs belong to this period. The latter were made without arms in order to accomodate the women with their

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[1] John Langdon-Davies, A Short History of Women (New York: The Viking Press, 1927) p. 303.

[2] Edith Sichel, The Renaissance (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1914), p. 124.

[3] George Guest, A Social History of England (London: G. Bell and Sons, Limited, 1913), p. 127.

[4] Philip Boas and Barbara M. Hahn, Social Backgrounds of English Literature (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1930), p. 90.

enormous skirts. Buffets which showed the new interest in turning and carving in woodwork appeared about 1580. The tops of these buffets afforded a place for displaying rare treasures of majolica, china, bronze, and other curios.[5] Day-beds were probably introduced towards the end of the sixteenth century. Bedsteads were made of oak or walnut and were curtained with exquisite tapestry.[6] Small truckle or trundle beds were placed at the foot of the standing beds to accommodate personal servants. These were so built that during the day they were truckled or trundled under the larger bed.[7] Exquisite glass work made its appearance at this time both for use and decoration. Carpets appeared, at least in the homes of the upper classes although rushes and herbs were still used in those of the lower classes.

A Dutch traveller who visited England in 1560 writes,

> The neat cleanliness, the exquisite fineness, the pleasant and delightful furniture in every point for household, wonderfully rejoiced me; their chambers and parlors strawed over with sweet herbs refreshed me; their nose-gays, finely intermingled, with sundry sorts of fragrant flowers in their bed chambers and privy rooms, with comfortable smell cheered me up.[8]

Grace was regularly said before meals. The usual breakfast hour was six-thirty. Dinner was served between eleven and twelve; supper was eaten

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[5] Sidney Lee, Shakespeare's England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916) Vol. II, p. 124 f.

[6] The most famous bed of this period is the Great Bed of Ware which measured eleven feet square. Ibid., p. 126.

[7] Loc. cit.

[8] Bartlett Burleigh James, Women of England (Philadelphia: Rittenhouse Press, 1907), p. 224.

about five. Fruit was highly appreciated and greatly cultivated. Kitchen-gardening, which had been neglected in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was revived under Henry VIII, and gardens furnished the Elizabethans with a good variety of vegetables. Tobacco was introduced in 1565 and some thirty years later was used by all, rich or poor, men or women. Knives were brought into use in 1563 but forks were not commonly used till 1611.

Complaints were often made that men flocked to London from the country and there wasted their money in revelry,

> When husband hath at play set up his rest,
> Then wife and babes at home a hungry goeth.

and again,

> The master may keep revell all the yeere
> And leave the wife at home like silly foule.[9]

Country dames did not often share in the jaunts to the capital. Bad roads and lack of public conveyances kept town and country apart. It was not till 1589, that coaches were used to any extent, even among the upper-classes. The squire's lady knew nothing of the bustling life led in the houses of London burgesses, where the wives were busy managing the servants and apprentises, superintending the eating and drinking, and planning the family wardrobe.[10] The duties of the country women were good housewifery and hospitality. In London, the latter was neglected. Men of all ranks dined out frequently and supped at the tavern. The married women were fond of taking life easy and often left the cares of the household to their servants.[11]

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[9] Georgiana Hill, Women In English Life (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1896) Vol. I, p. 119.

[10] Loc. cit.

[11] H. D. Traille, Social England (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1895) Vol. III, p. 577.

It was marvellous to continental observers that women should have the large degree of liberty which they enjoyed; and Europeans, not understanding the English point of view, construed such liberty as boldness. England was known as a "Paradise for married women" by her continental friends.[12]

At court, the ladies studied Latin, Greek, Italian and French. The elderly ones amused themselves with needlework, with the spinning wheel, with books, either the Scriptures or histories, and with writing or translating. The younger ones played lutes, citharnes, pricksong, and all kinds of musical instruments. Many were skillful in beautifying the body. All knew how to devise a number of delicate dishes.[13]

The title "Merrie England" was not a meaningless term in Elizabethan times but was especially characteristic of the age. The old festivities of Christmas, New Year's, Twelfth Night, Plough Monday, Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, Easter, May Day, and many others were still jubilantly celebrated with curious pageants and traditional customs of merry making.[14] Outdoor games were numerous and included football, tennis, quarter staff, and single-stick. Shooting, fishing, hunting, and archery were freely indulged in. Card playing, which had become popular about the middle of the fifteenth century, was still the vogue. The commercial spirit of the age entered into

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[12] Loc. cit.

[13] Lucy Aikin, Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, Orme and Brown, 1818) Vol. II, p. 503.

[14] Mandell Creighton, The Age of Elizabeth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), p. 204 f.

card games and men of all classes played dice and cards for money and gamboling became a common vice.[15] Dancing, which had long been a favorite amusement, was freely engaged in by all classes. Many new dances such as the solemn pavane, galliard, coranto, lavolta, jigs, and hey, were introduced at this time. At court, dancing found an enthusiastic patroness in Queen Elizabeth, who sanctioned dancing on Sundays. She prided herself on her grace as a dancer and engaged in lively paces a short time before her death.[16]

Stow, in his Survey of London, says that on summer holidays youths exercised in leaping, dancing, shooting, wrestling, casting the stone and practising their shields. The maidens "tripped in their timbrels" and danced as long as they could see.[17] Girls delighted in playing in the open air and gave little regard to decorum or grace. The milk women had dances which they greatly enjoyed.

In the capital, fiddlers were found both in street and tavern. Ballad singers sang and sold their copies in the street. On summer evenings, the people brought their tables to the sidewalks and had their supper in public. The theatre sprang into popularity at this time. At first the performances were held in the afternoons, but after the beginning of the seventeenth century were held at night. This stirring, bustling era evoked an interest in the display of the activities and powers of human life. Their spirit

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[15] A. Abram, Social England in the Fifteenth Century (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1909), p. 243.

[16] Lee, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 437.

[17] John Stow, Survey of London (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. Everyman's Library, n.d.), p. 85.

of adventure craved satisfaction in the contemplation of the struggles of men against destiny and the soul against its surroundings. Public theatres increased in number. Citizens and citizenesses flocked readily to a masque, a play, a procession, a bear baiting, or a cock fight. Women, then as now, used the theatre as a place to display their new costumes. Towards the end of Elizabeth's rule, they often wore masks which shielded their faces from the scrutiny of coarse jesters in the audience.[18]

It was fashionable for women to take sweating baths in "hot houses." These became the rendez-vous of women who resorted to them for company and gossip and social recreation. These "hot houses" were to the women what the tavern was to the men. However, the rude manners of the age were not conducive to keeping such places free from illicit intrigues, and they later became synonymous with brothels.[19]

Taverns were to the sixteenth century what coffee houses were to the eighteenth.[20] They greatly increased in number and popularity. It has been said that every man frequented a tavern. It was there they met for evening conversation, both business and social. There were musicians in the principal ordinaries and inns; and even the cheaper ones provided a viol de gamba for those who could play. The ordinaries were much cheaper for dining purposes than were the taverns. Although inns were sometimes kept by women it was not customary for ladies to frequent taverns.[21]

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[18] Boas and Hahn, op. cit., p. 106.

[19] James, op. cit., p. 240.

[20] A Bullen, Works of Middleton (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1926), F.N. Vol. I, p. 236.

[21] Sir Walter Besant, London In Time of The Tudors (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1904). Vol. IV, p. 338.

About the middle of the sixteenth century a great wave of change swept over England which developed what is known as the "Elizabethan age." It affected every form of design and completely altered fashions.[22] All restraint with regard to dress disappeared. The costumes of both men and women became so extravagant that the English were a laughing stock to foreigners.[23]

Harrison, in his Description of England, says:

> Our fanciful interest in dress is astonishing. . . .first Spanish; then French; then German; then Turkish; then Barbaryan; they look as absurd as a dog in a doublet--how men and women worry the tailor and abuse him; then the trying on; we sweat till we drop to make our clothes fit--our hair we poll or curl, wear long or cropt--some courtiers wear rings in their ears, to improve God's work. Women are worse than men--God's good gifts are turned into wantoness.[24]

The dress of the period served as a means of self expression and was therefore quite varied. The plaited ruff, one of the outstanding features, was worn by both men and women. Mistress Dinghen, who in 1564 introduced the practise of starching into England, had no trouble securing pupils to learn the art at five pounds apiece. Women's wardrobes were characterized by the use of beautiful materials, such as brocade, metal embroidered velvets, silks, satins, and furs, and also by the large number of different costumes. The universal desire for gawdy dress helped to do away with the old caste lines. A rich bounder could easily be mistaken for

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[22] Lee, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 91.

[23] Guest, op. cit., p. 29.

[24] Boynton, op. cit., p. 60 f.

a gentleman. The old aristocracy of blood and gentle birth was displaced, in part at least, by a new aristocracy of wealth and shrewdness.[25]

The Duke of Wutenberg, who was in England about 1592, writes:

> The women have much more liberty than perhaps in any other place; they also know how to make use of it for they go dressed out in exceedingly fine clothes and give all their attention to their ruffs and stuffs to such a degree, indeed, that as I am informed many a one does not hesitate to wear velvet in the streets, which is common with them whilst at home perhaps they have not a piece of dry bread.[26]

The farthingale was another peculiar characteristic of female dress during Shakespeare's lifetime. It was a round petticoat of Spanish origin, made of canvas distended with whalebone, cane-hoops, or steel strips. It was covered with taffeta or other material. Velvet or brocade skirts were worn over this. Stubbes thus bitterly condemns women's apparel:

> When they have all these bodily robes upon them, women seem to be the smallest part of themselves, not naturall women but artificial women, not women of flesh and blood, but rather puppits or mawmets consisting of rags and clowtes compact together.[27]

From 1560, ladies wore their hair curled or crimped, drawn back from the forehead, dressed over a pad and interwoven with jewelled ornaments. Since the queen's hair was golden, that was the most fashionable color. As her tresses faded, she supplemented them with wigs and false hair. Face-painting was common at court. As Elizabeth's complexion was pale and fair, fashionable women desired to be a pale, bleak color; and to obtain it they swallowed gravel, ashes, and tallow.[28]

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[25] Boas and Hahn, op.cit., p. 94 f.

[26] James, op. cit., p. 226.

[27] Lee, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 95.

[28] H. D. Traille, op. cit., p. 386.

Stow states that:

> Women's Maskes, Buskes, Muffs, Fannes, Perewigs, and Bodkins were first devised and used in Italy by Curtezans, and from thence brought into France, and from thence they came into England about the time of the Massacre in Parris.[29]

The fan was worn hanging from the point of the stomacher. It contained quite often a small mirror and had elaborate handles. Masks for faces and noses were of various colors; some had eyeholes of glass. The bodkin was a small knife which was much in vogue. False hair was introduced to England in 1572.

With the use of starch and the poking stick, ruffs grew to such enormous sizes that, in 1597, the Queen attempted to limit their size. In 1575, Van Meteren wrote that the English women habitually wore their hats in the house.[30] Women's shoes were pointed and made of leather, cloth, or silk to match their dresses. In 1560, the Queen wore the first pair of black silk stockings. Worsted and fine yarn stockings were then in general use.[31] In 1554, common people were forbidden to wear silk.[32] How closely they adhered to the command is not known. Night gowns were worn by both men and women. Embroidered and gauntleted gloves were an important item of women's dress.[33]

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[29] Lee, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 97.

[30] Lee. cit.

[31] Ibid., p. 98.

[32] Sidney Lanier, Shakespeare and His Forerunners (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1902) Vol. II, p. 69.

[33] Lee, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 100.

The jewelry of this age, like the costume, bore great marks of foreign influence. Miniatures were frequently inserted in the pendants then so fashionable. Watches which had been introduced during Henry VIII's reign were worn only by the rich. About 1580 the watches were made smaller and became more ornamental. Bracelets and rings were worn by all classes. Ear-rings were worn during the later years of the period.[34]

Elizabethan manners were very free, especially, among those of high social rank. A sixteenth-century writer says:

> In all the world there is no regyon nor countrie that doth use more swearynge than is used in Englande, for a chylde that scarse can speake, a boy or gyrle, a wenche, now-a-dayes wyl swere as great othes as an olde knave and an olde drabbe. . . .As for swearers a man nede not to seek for theym for in the kynges courte and lordes courtes in cities, borowes and in townes and in every house, in maner there is abbominable swerynge.[35]

Roger Ascham in his Memoirs tells of visiting in a house where a child of four years, although he could not say a short grace could rap out such ugly oaths, even those of the newest fashion, the like of which a man of eighty had never heard. What disgusted Ascham most was that the parents only laughed at their child. He also tells us:

> But I marvel the less that these misorders be among some in the courts for commonly in the country and elsewhere innocency is gone; bashfulness is banished; much presumption in youth, small authority in age; reverence is neglected; duties be confounded; and to be short disobedience doth overflow the banks of good order, almost in every place, almost in every degree of man.[36]

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[34] Ibid., p. 114 ff.

[35] Hill, op. cit., p. 116.

[36] James H. Carlisle, Memoirs of Ascham and Arnold (Syracuse, N. Y: C. W. Baber Publisher, 1890), p. 46.

Neither Elizabeth nor her subjects thought it fit to check the expression of their emotions; and consequently, their manners were frequently rude and unbecoming. These coarse manners were often but the expression of still coarser morals. "Men of purest and keenest intellects shrank from no allusion however coarse and felt no impulse to check their words in speech or writing." Is it then surprising that men of weaker intellect felt no need to check their actions? In this respect the women likewise disregarded the proprieties of expression.[37]

Harrington, Elizabeth's favorite god-son, thus explained the weaknesses of his time:

> We go brave in apparel that we may be taken for better men than we be, we use much bombastings and quiltings to seem better shouldered, smaller wasted and fuller thighed than we are; we barb and shave oft to seem sweeter, wear corked shoes to seem taller, use courteous salutations to seem kinder, lowly obeisance to seem humbler, and grave and godly communication to seem wiser and devouter than we be.[38]

Barnabe Rich, in his Farewell to the Military Profession, in 1581, said that no man was thought to be wise unless he was wealthy; no man was thought to speak truth unless he lied, dissembled, and flattered. He exclaimed at the fawning on the person advanced by fortune; the frowning of him unfavored by fortune. He lamented the little care shown to the poor and needy; he disapproved of the feasting and sumptuous houses of the rich. He regretted the lack of hospitality both of high and of low.[39]

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[37] James, op. cit., p. 238.

[38] H. D. Traille, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 578.

[39] G. B. Harrison, England In Shakespeare's Day (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. 230.

Much immorality resulted from the child marriages, then so common in fashionable life. The moral tone of the upper class was not improved by the women wearing masks in public places.[40] This custom became quite general at the close of the reign. The moralists complained that people were becoming soft through the introduction of new luxuries. Table manners improved with the use of forks. Courtliness was prevalent, although coarseness of speech persisted.

However, even in Elizabethan England, the majority of men were reasonably honest and charitable. They paid their debts, they were fond of their children and faithful to their wives. Of these men, there is no record either in history or in literature.[41]

Old institutions, the medieval church and the feudal state, had crumbled; and new ones had not yet been firmly established. Consequently, the people were subjected to the influence of new ideas and were confronted by new temptations. The moral and social weaknesses of the time were, nevertheless, not the sins of a decadent nation but of a nation emerging from immaturity.[42]

This was a worldly age: an age that was practical and worldly even in religious views. After the religious turmoils of the preceding reigns, it was one of religious peace. For Queen Elizabeth and her statesmen succeeded in establishing a temporary equilibrium in church and state. The

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[40] H. D. Traille, op. cit., p. 358.

[41] Boas and Hahn, op. cit., p. 91.

[42] Abrams, op. cit., p. 213.

[43] H. D. Traille, op. cit., Vol. III, 578.

government, as far as religion was concerned, was a compromise between the old and the new. This was a period of free humanity; an age when the laymen were not dominated by priest or presbyter. It was an age which produced the English church and the English drama.[44] Nevertheless, during this period of comparative peace and order, it is estimated that some one hundred eighty Romanists suffered death under penal laws between the years 1570 and 1603.

An Englishman, just returned from Italy, expressed his religious views in this way, "I care not what you talk to me of God, so as I may have the prince and the laws of the realm on my side."[45] This seemed to express the general attitude of the upper classes.

In towns, the most outstanding feature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean religion was the sermon which is described by the contemporaries as lengthy. This was a period of zealous preaching. Among the list of great preachers is to be included such men as Latimer, Jewel, Smith, Hooker, Montague, Abbot, Perry and King.[46] Crowds went to hear sermons because to do so was fashionable. There were those, though, who lamented that godliness was not likewise fashionable.

The religious life of an Elizabethan gentlewoman described in a diary pictures her commencing the day with Bible reading and meditation on the Scriptures. She retired more than once each day for private prayer. Psalm singing was freely indulged in by her household. Though somewhat narrow, her piety was beautifully sincere.[47]

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[44] Lee, op. cit., p. 48.

[45] Ibid., p. 68.

[46] Lee, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 68.

[47] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 69.

Nicholas Udall, the master of Eton, speaks enthusiastically of the number of women

> Not only given to the study of human sciences and strange tongues but also so thoroughly expert in the Holy Scriptures that they were able to compare with the best writers as well in enditeing and penning of Godly and fruitful treatises to the instruction and edifying of realmes in the knowledge of God, ...It was now no news in England to see young damsels in noble houses and in the courts of princes instead of cards and other instruments of idle trifling to have continually in their hands either Psalms, homilies and other devout meditations, or else Paul's Epistles or some book of Holy Scriptures. . . .It was no news to see Queens and ladies of high state and progeny instead of courtly dallianse to apply themselves to acquiring of knowledge. . . .as also most especially of God and his holy word.[48]

William Harrison, in his Description of England in 1877, gives us some interesting information on religious affairs

> As for our churches themselves, bells and times of morning and evening prayer remain as in times past, saving that all images, shrines, tabernacles, rood-lofts and monuments of idolatry are removed, taken down and defaced, only the stories in glass windows excepted, which, for want of sufficient store of new stuff. . . .are not altogether abolished in most places at once but by little and little suffered to decay. . . .Our holy and festival days are very well reduced. . . .for whereas. . . . we had under the Pope four score and fifteen called festival and thirty profesti, besides the Sundays, they are all brought unto seven and twenty. . .[49]

During the fifteenth century, the fear of the supernatural began to spread slowly over western Europe, and by the end of the century it rested upon the people like a nightmare. However, this wave of terror did not reach England in any force till near the middle of the sixteenth century. In 1541, the first act was passed against witchcraft. During Mary's reign (1553-58) the hunt for heretics was so keen that no burning of witches is

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[48] Hill, op. cit., p. 141.

[49] Harrison, England In Shakespeare's Day, op. cit., p. 170 f.

recorded. But Jewell, in one of his first sermons before Elizabeth in 1558, remarked on the prevalence of sorcery. In 1575, a witch persecution was begun which ceased for a time, probably discouraged by the publication of Reginald Scot's Discoveries of Witchcraft.[50] Aiken says that the common law of England by a truly "barbaric anomaly" denounced against females, found guilty of treason, the punishment by burning.[51] In 1559, parliament passed an act subjecting the use of enchantment and witchcraft to pains of felony.[52] Elizabeth stubbornly refused to strengthen the laws and the penalties against witchcraft in spite of the clamor raised and the numerous pamphlets written favoring more stringent laws.[53]

Almost everyone believed in witchcraft, although naturally, its practice and vogue were greatest among the ignorant. More women than men were supposed to be witches. The suspected character was usually old, friendless, shrunken with age, or misshapen through accident or disease. She was supposed to have renounced God and to have formed an alliance with the devil. Each witch was attended by a familiar spirit who carried out her wishes. This spirit usually took the form of an animal. The most popular was that of the black cat although the toad or snake was not uncommon. The distinguishing feature of a witch in animal disguise and a real animal was that in the former, some essential part of the animal was missing. Other powers ascribed to witches were control of the wind and

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[50] H. D. Traille, op. cit., p. 325 ff.

[51] Aiken, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 232.

[52] Ibid., p. 283.

[53] Langdon-Davies, op. cit., p. 312.

weather, transportation through the air upon broomsticks, and the ability to cause a wasting fever to take possession of enemies. One of the most common tests for witchcraft was that in which the suspect was thrown into a pond. If she sank, she was innocent; if she floated, she was a witch.[54]

The Elizabethans recognized three types of ghosts, which included the subjective or visionary ghost, the authentic ghost, and the false or wicked ghost. The authentic ghosts were the spirits of people who had died without leisure to repent of sin, or without means of conveying important news to loved ones, or who could not rest because they had been murdered by one who was yet unpunished.[55]

Magic white as well as black played its part in the superstitions of the day. The black was chiefly the property of the witches; while white belonged to the saints and angels.[56]

Great cruelty prevailed in the matter of punishments, for men prided themselves on the ferocity of their emotions. Men were boiled; women were burned. Ears were nailed to the pillory and sliced off as punishment for defamation and seditious words. Long and cruel whippings were inflicted. As punishment for selling fish illegally, one woman was made to ride triumphantly through town with garlands of fish decorating her head and the head and shoulders of her horse. In front of her, marched a person beating a brass basin. Another woman was carried around, a blue hood on her head and a distaff in her hand, as punishment for being a common scold.[57]

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[54] Boas and Hahn, op. cit., p. 98 f.

[55] Ibid., p. 98 f.

[56] Ibid., p. 99.

[57] Besant, op. cit., p. 318 f.

Mistress Anne Turner, the inventor of yellow starch, was afterwards found to be one of the minor agents in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. In condemning her to death, Lord Chief Justice Coke, ordered that, as she was the person who had brought yellow starched ruffs into fashion, she should be hanged in that dress. Even the hangman wore yellow ruffs in honor of the event.[58]

Women were by no means squeamish about unpleasant sights. There were too many hangings, quarterings, drawings, and burnings of human beings in London to make the people sensitive to pain. The gallows were constantly working. Ladies frequented these executions and became accustomed to many revolting sights. Some pretty offenses were punished by maiming or branding.[59] The theft of goods worth five shillings was punishable by death as were many other petty crimes.[60]

In Harrison's journal under the date of April 16, 1591, an account is found of Elizabeth Arnold, an unmarried woman, who was found guilty of stealing jewelry, silver, and divers articles of wearing apparel from a John Smythe. Elizabeth Hawtrey, married, was found guilty of feloniously receiving and comforting Miss Arnold. Elizabeth Johnson, spinster, was found guilty of the same offense after a second stealing. She pleaded guilty and was sentenced to be hanged. The other two acknowledged the indictment but pleaded pregnancy. A jury of matrons was empanelled, both

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[58] Lee, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 27.

[59] G. W. Tickner, A Social and Industrial History of England (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915), p. 288.

[60] Boas and Hahn, op. cit., p. 101.

were found not pregnant and sentenced to be hanged. On June 28, 1592, Anne Bremen and John Parker were executed for the murder of John Bremen. The crime was the result of illicit love.[61]

The doctrine of personal revenge was popular. Instead of waiting for the state to punish, the family or friends of an injured person took justice into their hands and punished the wrongdoer. Such action was imperative in murder. A man who would not avenge his father's death was considered a loathsome coward. The sweetness of revenge was lost if the opportunity for repentance was given. These primitive modes of revenge were reflected in the punishments of the time.[62]

Although Elizabeth herself was an enthusiast for learning, she did little or nothing during her long reign for the education of her sex. However, Parmentier is quoted as crediting her reign with the establishment of about one hundred fifty new grammar schools.[63] Richard Mulcaster, master of the school founded by the Merchant Taylor's Company in 1561, expressed a liberal view on the education of girls in the following manner:

> I dare be bould, therefore, to admit yong maidens to learne, seeing my countrie gives me leave and her custome standes for me. Their natural towardness should make us see them well brought up. And is not, think you, a young gentle woman thoroughly furnished which can reade plainly and distinctly, write fair and swiftly, sing cleare and sweetly, play well and finely, understand and speake the learned languages, and the tongues also which the time most embraseth with some logicall helpe to chop and some rhetoricke to brave. . . . Or is it likely that her children shalbe eare and whit the worse brot up if she be a Loelia an Hortensia, or a Cornelia. . . .The places wherin they learne be either publike if they go forth to the elementarie schole or private if they be taught at home, the teacher either of their own sex or of ours.[64]

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[61] G. B. Harrison, An Elizabethan Journal (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1929), p. 22 f.

[62] Boas and Hahn, op. cit., p. 100.

[63] A. Monroe Stowe, English Grammar Schools In the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (New York: Teachers College University, 1908), p. 90.

[64] Hill, op. cit., p. 142 f.

That the people of the continent were amazed at the intellectual freedom which women enjoyed in England is shown from the following statement of Petruscio Ubaldini in 1551:

> The rich cause their sons and daughters to learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, for since the storm of heresy has invaded the land they hold it useful to read the scriptures in the original.[65]

Dr. Wotton, in his Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning, stated that "no age had been so productive of learned women as the sixteenth century; that learning was so very modish that the fair sex seemed to believe that Greek and Latin added to their fair charms, and that Plato and Aristotle untranslated were frequent ornaments of their closet."[66]

However, we have no reason to believe that there was anything approaching a general education for girls at this time. Practically all schooling for women was obtained by private tutoring. The setting-up of the printing press in London by Caxton in 1471, made copies of books available, at least to the wealthier class and, thus, made learning possible to a larger number. Nevertheless, the difficulties of learning must be considered. There were no primers, exercise books or dictionaries of the classical languages in English. Grammars were scarce. The scholar had to go straight to the original source, and this was not easy.[67] However, the curriculum for a lady did not include many things which have now become general knowledge to children of the laboring classes. In this age Lyly designed a new literature which was to be read first by women. There must have been a demand for such literature by the fairer sex or Lyly would never have dedicated his Eupheus

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[65] Hill, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 129.

[66] Loc. cit.

[67] Ibid., p. 138.

to them. But, if their education was narrow, it was, nevertheless, thorough.[68]

Certainly the number of outstanding women of this era presents a striking contrast to that of the previous or following centuries. In respect to sound scholarship and solid acquirement, the women of the sixteenth century challenge comparison with those of any period since that time.[69]

The most dominant character of this period was "Good Queen Bess." In her we find the extremes and paradoxes so characteristic of these years. The age which knew her is fittingly called "Elizabethan," for no other adjective is so appropriate. In many ways her personality was typical of that of the nation, for the nation and she were one. There was no half concealed attempt at combining instruction with amusement. The Elizabethans did not seek out what they should enjoy and try to be interested in it, but they sought out what amused them. With this spirit of hearty, unrestrained enjoyment there was, consequently, a lack of discrimination and refinement; and, it is evident that just as the queen's gay, pleasure-seeking temperament was coarse, so also was that of Elizabethan society. Elizabeth's insatiable love of pleasure, her unflagging good spirits and zest in the enjoyment of life made gaiety and lightheartedness prevail, for her court was everywhere. She delighted in making frequent journeys through her dominion and was entertained on her way at the houses of the nobles and men of wealth who were proud to receive their queen under their roofs.[70] Since

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[68] Ibid., p. 140.

[69] Ibid., p. 129 f.

[70] F. W. Tickner, A Social and Industrial History of England (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1915), p. 284.

she loved her subjects before everything save herself and was ready to do anything for them, it was not long before a perfect understanding developed between them, and they remained loyal to each other.[71]

Roger Ascham describes Elizabeth, when she was sixteen, thus:

> She has the most ardent love of true religion and of the best kind of literature; the constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness and endued with a masculine power of appreciation. No apprehension is quicker than hers, no memory more retentive. French and Italian she speaks like English; Latin with fluency, propriety and moderately well. Nothing can be more elegant than her handwriting whether in the Greek or Roman character. In music she is skillful but does not greatly delight. With respect to personal decoration, she greatly prefers a simple elegance to show and splendor, so despising the outward adorning of plaiting the hair and wearing gold, that in the whole manner of her life she rather resembles Hippolyta than Phaedra.[72]

Elizabeth's regard for Ascham is admirably expressed by these words at his death, "I would rather have thrown ten thousand pounds into the sea, than lose by Ascham."[73]

The extravagances of her reign were committed not by Elizabeth but for Elizabeth.[74] In private she was frugal and preferred a moderate habit and conversation with her servants; but when she appeared in public, she was richly adorned with the most valuable clothes, set off with gold and jewels of great value. She could control herself well enough on occasion; yet she nor her subjects thought fit to check expression of their emotions; consequently, their manners were not always charming. Elizabeth spat at a courtier whose coat offended her taste; she boxed the ears of another; she tickled the back of Leicester's neck when he knelt to receive his earldom.

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[71] A. T. Story, The Building of the British Empire (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), p. 15.

[72] Aikin, op. cit., p. 92.

[73] Loc. cit.

[74] Lee, op. cit., p. 83.

She rapped out tremendous oaths and uttered every sharp and amusing word that rose to her lips.[75] When amused, she roared with laughter. The rough hectoring dame with her practical jokes, her out-of-doors manners, and her passion for hunting would suddenly become a stern-faced woman of business, closeted for long hours with secretaries, reading and dictating dispatches, and examining minute accounts exactingly. Then suddenly, the cultivated lady of the Renaissance would shine forth, for her accomplishments were many and dazzling. However, Strachey says, "her crowning virtuosity was her command over the resources of her words."[76] "When she wished," he continued, "she could drive in her meaning up to the hilt with hammer blows of speech and she has never been surpassed in her elaborate confection of studied ambiguities."[77]

Another interesting insight into the life of the times is to be found in Lady Jane Grey's account of her own life, as reported by Ascham.

> Before I went into Germany I came to Broadgate in Leicestershire to take my leave of that noble lady, Jane Grey. . . Her parents. . . with all the household. . .were hunting in the park. I found her in her chamber reading Rhaedon Platonius in Greek and that with as much delight as some gentleman would read a merry tale in Boccace. . . .I asked her why she would leese such pastime in the park. Smiling she answered me, "I wiss all the sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasurement. One of the greatest benefits that God every gave me is that he sent me so sharp andsevere parents and so gentle a school master. For when I am in presence of either father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, playing dancing or doing anything else I must do it as it were, in full weight, measure and number even so

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[75] G. M. Trailles, op. cit., p. 384.

[76] Lytton Strachey, Elizabeth and Essex (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. 18.

[77] Loc. cit.

> perfectly as God made the world, or else I am so sharply taunted so cruelly threatened, yea, presently sometimes with pinches, nippes and bobbes and other ways which I will not name for the honor I bear them, so without measure, misordered that I think myself in hell till come that I must go to M. Elmer who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly with such fair allurement to learning that I think all the time nothing while I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping because whatsoever I do else but learning, is full of grief, trouble, fear and wholly misliking unto me. And thus my book hath been so much my pleasure and bringeth to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it, all other pleasure, in very deed be but trifles and troubles unto me.[78]

Lady Ann Bacon was the second daughter of Sir Anthony Coke, tutor of Edward VI. She won repute early for learning and could speak Latin, Greek, Italian, and French as though they were her native tongues. In 1556, she married Sir Nicholas Bacon and became the mother of the celebrated Francis Bacon. Before her marriage she translated some sermons of Bernardine and Ochine into English. In 1564,she published a translation from Latin of Bishop Jewel's Apologie of the Church of England. It was, however, as a letter-writer that Lady Bacon appeared in her most attractive light. Most of her letters to her sons, Francis and Anthony, reveal her solicitude for their spiritual welfare and the jealousy with which she regarded her authority over them. She fiercely rebuked them for disregarding her wishes and sought to keep herself informed of all the details of their daily life.[79]

Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and sister of Sir Philip Sidney, was another outstanding personage of her time. In 1575, Queen Elizabeth suggested to Mary's father that since Mary was a girl of promise, she should be removed from the unhealthy climate of Wales and reside in the royal house-

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[78] Carlisle, op. cit., p. 47 f.

[79] Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, Dictionary of National Biography I, 795.

hold. Her beauty and her graceful manner soon established her position there, and she was later married to the Count of Pembroke. In the summer of 1580, she and her brother retired to a small house near Wilton, where Sidney, at his sister's suggestion, began his Arcadia, which he dedicated to her entitling it The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia. He wrote of her thus, "it is done for you, only to you. . .being, done on loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence, the rest sent unto you as fast as they were done." Together they labored at a metrical translation of the Psalms. On the death of her brother, the countess wrote the poem, The Doleful Lay of Clorinda. The Countess appeared more advantageously as the generous patron of poets and men of letters who acknowledged her kind services in glowing eulogies. Her earliest proteges were her brother's friend, Spenser, Daniel, Breton,Fraunce,and Moffat. No monument was raised to her memory but her fame is permanently assured by this epitaph,

> Underneath this marble hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse;
> Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother
> Death! ere thou hast slain another
> Wise and fair and good as she,
> Time shall throw a dart at thee.*

Other women of intellect of this period were the daughters of Sir Thomas More; Jane, Countess of West Moreland, the daughter of Fox the martyrologist; the three daughters of Edward Seymour; and Lady Bacon's two sisters.[80]

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[80] Stephen and Lee, op. cit., IX, 655.

* Commonly attributed to Ben Jonson.

Gervase Markham, a contemporary writer, sets forth the requirements of a housewife thus:

> . . . .our English Housewife must be of chaste thoughts, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbourhood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful in the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation.[81]

Stubbes, in his Anatomie of Abuses, tells how a lady spent her day:

> Daily till ten a clocke a bed she lyes
> And then againe hor Lady-ship doth rise,
> Her Maid must make a fire, and attend
> To make her ready; then for wine sheele send,
> (A morning pinte), she sayes her stomach's weake
> And counterfeits as if shee could not speake,
> Untill eleven or a little past,
> About which time ever she breakes her fast;
> Then (very sullen) she will pout and loure,
> And sit down by the fire some halfe an houre,
> At twelve a clocke her dinner time she keepes,
> Then gets into her chaire, and there she sleepes
> Perhaps til foure, or somewhat thereabout;
> And when that lazie humor is worne out,
> She calls her dog, and takes him on her lap,
> Or fals a beating of her maid (perhap)
> Or hath a gossip come to tell a tale,
> Or else at me sheele curse and sweare, and rale,
> Or walk a turne or two about the Hall,
> And so to supper and to bed; heeres all
> This paines she takes; and yet I do abuse her:
> But no wise man, I think, so kind would use her.[82]

How different was the life of English women at the close of the sixteenth century than it was at the beginning. Great strides had been

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[81] Besant, London Under the Tudors, op. cit., 271.

[82] Loc. cit.

made in their advancement toward a natural place in life. Innovations and improvement in furniture and furnishings made their home life more comfortable and pleasant. Socially, they were no longer considered as either saints or sinners, but as human beings. Because the church was no longer a dominating power and the clergy were allowed to marry, their religious life became freer and less conventional. Although no uniforme provision had been made for their education, it was recognized that they had certain capacities for learning and their achievements in this line were readily admitted. The Elizabethan age was outstanding in its number of educated women.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IN ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

In the preceeding chapter the life of the Elizabethan women as recorded by the historians was given. In this chapter the life of Elizabethan women, as revealed by the dramatists, is to be considered and a comparative study made of the similarities and differences between the two portrayals. In general it may be said that the dramatists drew a large part of their inspiration from their age and country and reflected faithfully and admirably the spirit of the time. It is true that classical models greatly influenced the general style of the plays, especially during the early years of this period, and many of the plots were taken from foreign sources and were given foreign settings, such as ancient Rome, modern France, Italy, or Bohemia. Nevertheless, the manners portrayed, the dominant ideas, and the mainsprings of action were definitely those of the people for whom the plays were produced. Greene, Lyly, and Peele, the "University wits"; Marlowe and Kyd, the chroniclers; Jonson, the realist; Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher and the others who possessed strong romantic tendencies, all expressed the general spirit of the age. They wrote of people in all classes and conditions in life.

Inasmuch as the Elizabethan drama reflects the life of the time in a general way, it should naturally be expected that there would be a close relation between the portrayal of the life of women in history and the life of women in the drama. The life of the women as revealed by the dramatists is now to be treated.

Since the greatest part of the lives of most women is spent in the home, it is important, if women are to be seen as they really are that their homelife and physical surroundings be understood. In that homelife, furniture and furnishings play a dominant part. Consequently, these physical aspects are now to be considered.

In the portrayal of the furnishings of the homes, the piece of furniture most frequently mentioned by the dramatist is the stool. In the lowly home the three foot stool was found.[1] In homes of the better classes there were joint or joined-stools.[2] Belaruis says, "when on my three foot stool I sit," and one of the Capulet's servants orders, "away with the joint-stools, remove the court cupboard and look to the plate."[3] Although this was the period in history in which the Windsor and Farthingale chairs were being introduced, chairs are not often referred to in the dramas and seem to have been used only in the home of the wealthy. Except for the chairs used by the nobility, Shakespeare alludes to chairs only three times. Pompey describes Froth as sitting in a "lower chair," Dame Quickly orders the "several chairs" to be scoured,[4] and in All's Well That Ends Well, the barber's chair[5] is referred to. Elizabethan dramatists make frequent mention of the table. There was a distinction between the "upper table,"

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[1] Shakespeare, Cymbeline, III, iii, l. 89.

[2] Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, I, v, l. 5.

[3] Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, II, i, l. 132.

[4] Shakespeare, Merry Wives of Windsor, V, v, l. 65.

[5] Shakespeare, All's Well That Ends Well, II, ii, l. 17.

where the family and their guests dined, and the "lower table" where the servants ate. The "salt" was sometimes placed as a dividing line. This distinction is made in Coriolanus,[6] "As if he were son and heir to Mars; set at upper end o'the table"; and in The Honest Whore, "Plague him, set him beneath the salt, and let him not touch a bit, till every one has had his full."[7]

In the dramas of this period, there are three kinds of beds alluded to, the standing-bed or four post bed which was curtained, the truckle-bed, and the day-bed. Shakespeare writes, "There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed and truckle-bed; 'tis painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new."[8] Day-beds are mentioned twice in Shakespeare: "He is not lolling on a lewd day-bed,"[9] and "Having come from a day-bed where I have left Olivia sleeping."[10] Sir Toby refers to the Great Bed of Ware; "Although the sheet were big enough for the bed of ware in England."[11]

Other pieces of furniture mentioned by the dramatists are enumerated by Mrs. Ford thus, "Neither press, coffer, chest, trunk, well, vault."[12]

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[6] Shakespeare, Coriolanus, IV, v, l. 65.

[7] Dekker, I The Honest Whore, II, i, p. 681.

[8] Merry Wives of Windsor, IV, v, l. 6-10.

[9] Shakespeare, Richard III, III, vii, l. 71.

[10] Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, II, v, l. 55-6.

[11] Ibid., III, ii, l. 52-4.

[12] The Merry Wives of Windsor, IV, ii, l. 62.

A desk "covered with Turkish tapestry" is referred to in The Comedy of Errors,[13] a "mere cupboard of glasses" alluded to in A Fair Quarrel,[14] and a court cupboard is mentioned in The Honest Whore Part I.[15]

Tapestry, which was very common in the better classes of homes, served for bed-curtains and wall-hangings. To Dame Quickly's remark that she would be fain to pawn both her plate and the tapestry of her dining-chambers, Falstaff replies:

> Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking: and for thy walls a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German-hunting in water-work is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings, and these fly bitten tapestries.[16]

Shakespeare gives us a vivid picture of tapestry and other types of decoration in his description of Cymbeline's bed chamber.

> it was hanged
> With tapestry of silk and silver; the story
> Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman
> And Cyndus swell'd above the banks, or for
> The press of boats or pride; a piece of work
> So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
> In workmanship and value; which I wonder'd
> Could be so rarely and exactly wrought,
> Since the true life on't was
>
> . . . .
>
> The chimney
> Is south the chamber, and the chimney piece
> Chaste Dian bathing, never saw I figures
> So likely to report themselves. The cutter
> Was as another nature, dumb, outwent her,
> Motion and breath left out.

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[13] Shakespeare, The Comedy of Errors, IV, i, l. 104-5.

[14] Rowley and Middleton, A Fair Quarrel, I, i, l. 32.

[15] Dekker, The Honest Whore, II, i, p. 680.

[16] The Merry Wives of Windsor, IV, ii, l. 62.

* * * *

The roof o' the chamber
With golden cherubims fretted. His andirons--
I had forgot them--were two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing; nicely
Depending on their brands.[17]

Gremio gives a vivid account of the rich treasures of his city home:

My house within the city
Is richly furnished with plate and gold
Basins and ewers to lave her dainty hands
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry
In ivory coffers I have stuffed my crowns
In cypress chests my arras counterpoints,
Costly apparel, tents and canopies
Fine linen, Turkey cushions boss'd with pearl,
Valance of Venice gold in needle-work
Pewter and brass and all things that belong
To house and housekeepings.[18]

Painted or "stayned" cloths were according to the dramatists, sometimes used for wall hangings as a substitute for the costly tapestry. Such hangings were popular for bed rooms; and on these, Biblical or mythological subjects were carried out in water staining. Falstaff describes his men "ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth,"[19] and Hodge asks,

Saw ye never Fryer Rushe
Painted on a cloth, with a side long cowes tayle,
And crooked clouen feete and many a hoked nayle?
For al the world, if I shuld judg, chould reckon him as brother.
Loke, cuen what face Frier Rush had, the dewil had such another.[20]

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[17] Cymbeline, II, iv, l. 68-91.

[18] Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew, II, ii, l. 345-353.

[19] Shakespeare, I Henry IV, IV, ii, l. 27-28.

[20] Stevenson, Gammer Gurton's Needle, III, ii, l. 18-23.

Rushes are frequently mentioned in the dramas as strewn on the floor for a covering. In The Arden of Feversham, Mosbie advises that they be strewn on the floor to cover up Feversham's blood.[21] Shakespeare has Romeo say,

> let wantons light of heart
> Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels,[22]

and rushes are used as a carpet for Cymbeline's beautiful bed room.[23] Carpets must not have been in general use for they are rarely mentioned. In The Taming of the Shrew,[24] Shakespeare states that "the carpet is laid and everything in order," and Dekker alludes to carpets in The Honest Whore.[25]

Sheets, featherbeds, blankets, and pillows which history tells us were in general use by the last part of the sixteenth century, are frequently mentioned by the dramatists. Forks which came into use at this time are also referred to often by the lesser dramatists but are not mentioned by Shakespeare since most of his plays were written before forks were in general use.

As revealed in the dramas, there was great variety in the Elizabethan diet. Falstaff wonders what he is to buy for the sheep shearing feast.

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[21] Anonymous, Arden of Feversham, V, i, p. 338.

[22] Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, l. 36.

[23] Cymbeline, II, ii, l. 12.

[24] The Taming of the Shrew, IV, i, l. 52.

[25] I The Honest Whore, III, 1. p. 690.

> Three pounds of sugar, five pounds of currants; rice,--what will this sister of mine do with rice?. . . .I must have saffron to colour the warden pies; mace; dates--none; that out of my note; nutmegs, seven; a race or two of ginger, but that I may buy; four pounds of prunes, and as many of raising o' the sun.[26]

His bill of fare as found in his pocket contained a capon, sauce (sherry wine) two gallons, anoovies, sack after supper, and bread.[27]

Firk, in A Shoemaker's Holiday, exclaims upon hearing the ringing of the bell on Shrove Tuesday

> O musical bell, still: O Hodge, O my brethern: There's cheer for the heavens; venison-pasties walk up and down piping hot like serjeants; beef and brewis comes marching in dry-vats, fritters and pancakes comes trolling in in wheelbarrows; hens and oranges hopping in porter's baskets, collops and eggs in scuttles, and tarts, custards comes quavering in in malt shovels.[38]

An interesting account of city-wives diet is given by Carlo Buffone:

> Your city-wives, but observe 'hem, you ha' not more perfect true fools i' the world bred, than they are generally; and yet you see, by the fineness and delicacy of their diet, diving into the fat capons, drinking your rich wines, feeding on larks, sparrows, potato-pies, and such good unctuous meats, how their wits are refined and rarefied; and sometimes a very quintessence of conceit flows from 'hem, able to drown a weak apprehension.[29]

In Romeo and Juliet, Lady Capulet orders her servant to look to the bak'd meats and spare not for cost.[30] In The Comedy of Errors, Dromio of

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[26] Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, IV, iii, l. 39-52.

[27] Shakespeare, I Henry IV, II, iv, l. 586.

[28] Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday, V, ii, p. 661.

[29] Jonson, Every Man Out Of His Humour, II, i, p. 153.

[30] Romeo and Juliet, IV, v, l. 102.

Ephesus says,

> The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit,
> The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell.[31]

Shakespeare mentions, plums, cherries, gooseberries, apricots, dewberries, grapes, figs, mulberries, salads, cabbage, beans, carrots, radishes, olives and sweet potatoes. The other dramatists refer to rhubarb, garlic, comfortable bread, mandrakes, muskmelons, dates, eggs, fried frogs, and currants. Pancakes are commonly alluded to and in Pericles, "flapjacks,"fish and pudding are mentioned.

It is interesting to note that tobacco, which had been introduced from America during this period, is not mentioned at all by Shakespeare although with the other dramatists it is a common term.

That the Elizabethans were merry at their meals is shown by Hamlet when he asks the clowns "Where be your jibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were want to set the table on roar?"[32] Macbeth wishes his companions to "be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure the table round."[33] Cleon's description of the people of Tarsus might well fit Elizabethan England.

> Their tables were stor'd full to glad the sight
> And not so much to feed on as delight.[34]

Interesting glimpses into the lives of the women of the different classes are obtained from the contemporary dramas. Dame Quickly sums up

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[31] The Comedy of Errors, I, ii, l. 44-5.

[32] Hamlet, V, i, l. 211.

[33] Macbeth, III, iv, l. 12.

[34] Pericles, I, iv, l. 28-29.

the varied duties of a housewife thus: "for I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds and do all myself."[35] In The Shoemaker's Holiday, Margery, the wife of a shoemaker, marvels

> how many wives in Tower Street
> Are up so soon. God's me; 'tis not noon.[36]

In Richard III, Queen Elizabeth says:

> I had rather be a country servant-maid
> Than a great queen with this condition,
> To be thus baited, scorn'd and stormed at
> Small joy have I in being England's queen.[37]

Katharine tells us of the duty of the English housewife,

> Such duty, as the subject owes the prince
> Even such, a woman oweth to her husband;
> And when she's forward, peevish, sullen, sour
> And not obedient to his honest will,
> What is she but a foul contending rebel
> And graceless traitor to her loving lord.[38]

Dromio of Syracuse vividly describes the kitchen wench:

> she's the kitchen wench and all grease; and I know not what use to put her to but to make a lamp of her and run from her by her own light. I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter. If she lives till doomsday, she'll burn a week longer than the whole world.[39]

And in Coriolanus, Brutus relates how the nurse converses in rapture while the baby cries.[40]

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[35] The Merry Wives of Windsor, I, iv, l. 102-104.

[36] Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday, I, iv, p. 639.

[37] Richard III, I, iii, l. 107-111.

[38] The Taming of the Shrew, V, ii, l. 155-161.

[39] The Comedy of Errors, III, ii, l. 96-101.

[40] Coriolanus, II, i, l. 222-225.

Peaceful country life in general, in which women naturally shared is pictured as

> exempt from public haunt
> Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything![41]

That some of the women were envious, restless, and discontented with their life is shown by the following statements of Fallace and Chloe:

> . . . .how blessed is that woman that hath a courtier to her husband! and how miserable is that woman that hath neither husband, nor friend i' the court! O, sweet Fastidius! Oh, fine courtier! How comely he bows him in his curtsy! how full he hits a woman between the lips when he kisses! how upright he sits at the table! how daintly he carves! how sweetly he talks and tells news of this lord, and that lady! how cleanly he wipes his spoon at every spoonful of any white-meat he eats, and what a neat case of pick tooths he carries about him, still![42]

and Chloe regretfully expresses herself thus:

> In sincerity if you be thus fulsome to me in everything I'll be divorced. . . .You know what you were before I married you; I was a gentlewoman born, I lost all my friends to be a citizen's wife; because I heard, indeed they kept their wives as ladies; and that we might rule our husbands, like ladies; and do what we listed; do you think I would have married you else?[43]

That Elizabethan England was a "Merrie England" is shown by the dramatist as well as the historian. Dancing was enjoyed by all. Heywood vividly describes a rustic dance in a Woman Killed with Kindness, in which he enumerates some of the most popular rural dances such as: "Rogero," "The Beginning of the World," "John, Come Kiss Me Now," "Cushion Dance,"

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[41] Shakespeare, As You Like It, II, i, l. 15-18.

[42] Every Man Out of His Humour, IV, i, p. 200.

[43] The Poetaster, I, i, p. 280.

"Tom Tyler," "The Hey," and "Sellinger's Round."[44] In several plays, such as The Broken Heart, dancing is introduced on the stage. It is while dancing that Calantha learns of the deaths of Ithocles, Penthea, and her father.[45] Other dances of the period are the lavolta, morris, jig and galliard. The Duke of Bourbon in Henry V remarks:

> They bid us to the English dancing schools
> And teach lavoltas, high and swift corantos.[46]

Sir Toby asks Sir Andrew why he does not "go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto."[47]

Card playing was another popular amusement and is very frequently recorded in the Elizabethan dramas in its various forms such as, primero, mumchance, laugh and lay down, trump, gleek, gresco, new cut, knave out of doors, ruff, noddy, and pace. Gambling was also common and caused much misery and suffering among the women and children. Orlando tells us that Matheo rioted abroad while he (Matheo) was in want at home and that "he dices, whores, swaggers, swears, cheats, borrows, pawns."[48] The Yorkshire Tragedy is the story of a father ruined in mind and fortune by his passion for gambling. He murders his two children and stabs his wife. However, through his wife's strong devotion he repents and dies a man even though he had failed to live as one.

Chess was not as popular as card playing but is frequently mentioned. In Bussy D'Ambois the second scene of the first act opens with Henry and

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[44] Heywood, A Woman Killed With Kindness, I, 2, p. 603 f.

[45] Ford, The Broken Heart, V, ii.

[46] Shakespeare, Henry V, III, v, l. 33-34.

[47] Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, I, iii, l. 137.

[48] I The Honest Whore, III, iii, p. 733.

Guise playing chess. Livia and the "Mother" sit down to the chess board on the stage in Women Beware Women.[49]

At court, there was a variety of entertainment, Biron says,

> First from the pack let us conduct them thither;
> Then homeward, every man attach the hand
> Of his fair mistress. In the afternoon
> We will with some strange pastime solace them,
> Such as the shortness of the time can shape;
> For revels, dances, masks, and merry hours
> Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers.[50]

That plays were given at court is illustrated in The Spanish Tragedy, The Maid's Tragedy, and Love's Labour's Lost. In all probability A Midsummer Night's Dream was written for a court production with Philostrate assuming the duties of the Master of revels.

The practice of bear baiting is referred to by York who says,

> Call hither to the stake my two brave bears
> That with the very shaking of their chains
> They may astonish these full-looking curs.[51]

Bear baiting is also mentioned in The Merry Wives of Windsor[52] and Women Beware Women,[53] and Fabian says, "You know he brought me out of favour with my lady about a bear-baiting here."[54]

Coaches are alluded to frequently by the dramatists in the latter part of the sixteenth century and earlier years of the seventeenth, and seem to have been in common usage by the middle class.

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[49] Middleton, Women Beware Women, II, ii, p. 1307.

[50] Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost, IV, iii, l. 379 f.

[51] Shakespeare, II Henry VI, V, i, l. 144-154.

[52] Winter's Tale, IV, iii, l. 109.

[53] Women Beware Women, I, ii, p. 1292.

[54] Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, II, v, l. 9.

The Elizabethans were promiscuous in their imitation of foreign fashions, and their continental neighbors were greatly amused at the incongruous mixtures which resulted. The Elizabethan drama is rich in its allusions and references to the foreign fashion of the period. York asserts:

> Reports of fashion in proud Italy,
> Whose manners still our tardy, apish nation
> Limps after in base imitation.[55]

That other countries also were imitated is asserted by Face in The Alchemist.

> Ask from your courtier to your inns of court man,
> To your mere milliner, they will tell you all,
> Your Spanish jennet is the best horse; your Spanish
> Stoop is the best garb; your Spanish beard
> Is the best cut; your Spanish ruffs are the best
> Wear; your Spanish pavin the best dance;
> Your Spanish titillation in a glove
> The best perfume.[56]

Portia remarks of the young Falconbridge of England: "I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behavior everywhere."[57]

For a while after Elizabeth came to the throne the dramatists wrote little of fashions. Then they tell us that costumes became enriched,

> With silken coats and caps and golden rings,
> With ruffs and cuffs and farthingales and things,
> With scarfs and fans and double change of bravery.[58]

Petruchio's description of a sleeve is indeed interesting.

> Thy gown? Why ay, Come, tailor let us see't.
> O Mercy God: what masquing stuff is here?
> What's this? A sleeve? 'Tis like a demi-cannon
> What, up and down, carved like an apple-tart?
> Here's snip and nip and cut and slish and slash
> Like to a censor in a barber shop.[59]

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[55] Shakespeare, Richard II, II, i, l. 21-23.

[56] Jonson, The Alchemist, IV, iv, p. 392 f.

[57] Merchant of Venice, I, ii, l. 78-81.

[58] Taming of the Shrew, IV, iii, l. 55-58.

[59] Ibid., l. 85-91.

The various articles of dress are enumerated in Autolycus' song:

Lawn as white as driven snow;
Cypress black ad e'er was crow;
Gloves as sweet as damask roses;
Masks for faces and for noses;
Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
Perfume for a lady's chamber;
Golden quoifs and stomachers
For my lads to give their dears;
Pins and poking sticks of steel
What maids lack from head to heel.[60]

Sir Thomas Bornwell pictures the gaiety of Artemia's wardrobe,

And prodigal embroideries, under which
Rich satins, plushes, cloth of silver, dare,
Not show their own complexions; your jewels,
Able to burn out the spectator's eyes,
And show like bonfires on you by the tapers.[61]

In Eastward Ho, Gertrude is to be married to Sir Petronal Flash and wishes to model her costume and her behavior accordingly.

I tell you I cannot endure it; I must be a lady. Do you wear your quoif with a London licket, your stammel petticoat with two guards; the buffin gown with the tuft-taffety cape and velvet lace. I must be a lady and I will be a lady. I like some humors of the city dames well: to eat cherries only at an angel a pound, good; to dye rich, scarlet black, pretty; to line a grogram gown through with velvet, tolerable; their pine linen, their smocks of three pounds a smack are to be born withal. But your mincing niceries, taffeta, pipkins, durances, petticoats and silver bodkins--God's my life, I shall be a lady, I cannot endure it.[62]

Shakespeare alludes to the prevailing fashion of wearing false hair as do also the other dramatists.

Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow
If that be the difference in his love
I'll get me a colour'd periwig.[63]

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[60] Winter's Tale, IV, iv, l. 220-229.

[61] The Lady of Pleasure, I, i, p. 1136.

[62] Chapman, Jonson and Marston, Eastward Ho, I, ii, p. 480.

[63] Two Gentlemen of Verona, IV, iv, l. 196-198.

Bassonio further elaborates on the vogue:

> Look on beauty
> And you shall see't is purchased by the weight;
> Which therein works a miracle in nature
> Making them lightest that wear most of it.
> So are these crisped snaky golden locks,
> Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
> Upon supposed fairness, often known
> To be the dowry of a second head
> The skill that bred them in the sepulchre.
> Thus ornament is but the guilded shore
> To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
> Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
> The seeming truth which cunning time put on
> To entrap the wisest.[64]

Middleton in A Mad World My Masters pictures a lady's make-up.

> What is she took assunder from her clothes?
> Being ready she consists of an hundred pieces
> Much like your German clock and near ally'd
> Both are so nice they cannot go for pride.[65]

Jonson in Epicoene expresses the same thought: "She takes herself asunder still when she goes to bed into twenty boxes; and about next day noon is put to-gether again, like a great German clock."[66] Maquerelle advises Bianca: "For your beauty,let it be your saint; bequeath two hours to it every morning in your closet."[67]

That women soon tired of their clothes is illustrated by Artemia who says:

> This gown I have worn
> Six days already; it looks dull, I'll give it
> My waiting woman, and have one of cloth

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[64] The Merchant of Venice, III, ii, l. 87-100.

[65] Middleton, Mad World, My Masters, II, iii, l. 54-58.

[66] Jonson, Epicoene, IV, i, p. 220.

[67] Marston, The Malcontent, II, v, p. 575.

Of gold embroidered; shoes and pantables*
Will show well of the same.[68]

Other styles in footwear are revealed by Hamlet who says, "Your ladyship is nearer heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine";[69] and by Mall Barnes who states that "Maids that wear cork shoes may step awry."[70] Dekker refers to the "cork heeled sex" and other dramatists mention dancing pumps and pantables.[71]

Jonson refers to starch as being "yellow, yellow, yellow, yellow,[72] the devil's idol of that color" again as being blue,[73] and again as goose green.[74]

It was quite fashionable for women to have monkeys, dogs and parakeets for pets.[75]

The importance placed on dress and fashions by the Elizabethans is admirably expressed by Jonson:

For he that's out of clothes is out of fashion
And out of fashion is out of countenance,
And out of countenance is out of wit.[76]

And it may well be concluded that

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[68] Shirley, The Lady of Pleasure, V, i, p. 1167.

[69] Hamlet, II, ii, l. 445-447.

[70] Porter, Two Angry Women of Abington, II, i, p. 253.

[71] II The Honest Whore, III, i, p. 731.

[72] Jonson, The Devil Is An Ass, V, v, p. 141.

[73] Jonson, Bartholomew Fair, I, iv, p. 420.

[74] Ibid., II, iv, p. 430.

[75] Eastward Ho, II, directions, p. 480, and New Way to Pay Old Debts, IV, iii, p. 1084.

[76] Jonson, The Staple of News, I, i, p. 168.

* Slippers.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin
That all with one consent praise new born gawds.[77]

That superstition and folklore, ghosts and fairies, witchcraft and devils all played an important role in the life of the Elizabethans is evident from the frequency with which they are mentioned in the drama. Through Delio, Webster confesses,

How superstitions we mind our evils
The throwing down of salt or crossing of a hare,
Bleeding at the nose, the stumbling of a horse
Or singing of a cricket, are of power
To daunt whole men in us.[78]

And Lady Macbeth asserts:

O, these flaws and starts,
Imposters to true fear, would well become
A woman's story at a winter's fire
Authorized by her grandam.[79]

There were also prevalent beliefs in charm and fascination for Mistress Quickly tells Sir John, "I never knew a woman so dote upon a man; surely I think you have charms."[80] And Amelia exclaims:

What
Bewitched election made me dote on thee?
What sorcery made me love thee?[81]

Desdemona's handkerchief, which Othello had given her, contained witchery and had been given his mother by an Egyptian who "was a charmer and could almost read the thoughts of people."[82] Similarly, Maudlin, the witch in The Sad Shepherd had an enchanted girdle, "a browder'd belt with characters which a

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[77] Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, III, iii, l. 174-175.
[78] Webster, The Duchess of Malfi, II, ii, p. 1032.
[79] Macbeth, III, iv, l. 65-66.
[80] The Merry Wives of Windsor, II, ii, l. 107-108.
[81] Shakespeare, Othello, III, iv, l. 57-59.
[82] Jonson, The Sad Shepherd, II, i, p. 258.

Gypsum lady had wrought for her by moonlight."[83]

Ghosts frequently appear in dramas. Of these the most outstanding are: Banquo,[84] the ghost of Andrea,[85] the ghost of Hamlet, the ghost of Julius Caesar, and the ghosts of those murdered by Richard III. These are all types of the "authentic" ghosts which were described in the preceding chapter. They revisit earth and "walk" here until they are avenged. To the person for whom they have a message they bring confusion and conflict. To Hamlet the appearance of his father's spirit has merely a personal significance of vengeance for his father's death. He failed to understand that the ghost was the anointed king demanding justice, thereby providing for the peace of the kingdom.

From Hamlet several interesting facts about ghosts may be gathered. Coming after midnight, they must depart before cockcrow. It was considered perilous to cross, confront, or question these ghosts, who could move swiftly through solid obstacles, such as walls and doors as well as through the air, since their shapes were without substance.

There are fairies also in Elizabethan drama, which add a delicate beauty to the plays and the belief in them reveals a different side of Elizabethan character.

Shakespeare gives beautiful descriptions of his two fairy queens, Mab and Titania. He describes the former as,

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[83] Marston, Malcontent, I, vi, p. 570.

[84] Macbeth, III, iv.

[85] Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy, I Chorus; I, iii; II, iv; IV, vii; V, iii.

the fairies' midwife
In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the forefinger of an alderman
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Over men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her wagon-spokes made long spinners legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
Her traces of the smallest spiderweb
Her collars of the moonshines watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat.[86]

He also tells of Oberon and his train, Robin Good-fellow,[87] Pinch,[88] and Puck.[89] Fairies are likewise found in Lyly's Endymion.

Middleton, in The Witch, tells of "white spirits, black spirits, grey spirits, red spirits, devil-toad, devil-ram, devil cat, and devil dam." He pictures Hecate as commanding a brazen dish that she may squeeze serpents in it, and ordering Stadlin to

take this unbaptized brat;
Boil it well; preserve the fat:
You know 'tis precious to transfer
Our 'nointed flesh into the air,
In moonlight nights, on steeple-tops
Mountains, and pine-trees, that like pricks or stops
Seem to our height; high towers and roofs of princes
Like wrinkles in the earth.[90]

Shakespeare gives us a vivid picture of these witches:

What are these
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,

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[86] Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, l. 54-64.

[87] A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, i; IV, i; V, i.

[88] The Tempest, I, ii, l. 375-380.

[89] The Merry Wives of Windsor, V, v, l. 105-108, and A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, ii, l. 19-20.

[90] Middleton, The Witch, I, ii, p. 125-127.

That look not like th' inhabitants o' the earth
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.[91]

And again,

But in a sieve I'll thither sail
And like a rat without a tale
I'll do, I'll do, and, I'll do.[92]

How fascinating is Jonson's portrait of the witches dell:

Within a gloomy dimble she doth dwell,
Down in a pit, o'er grown with brakes and briars,
Close by the ruins of a shaken abbey
Torn with an earth-quake down unto the ground,
'Mongst graves and grots near an old charnel-house,
Where you shall find her sitting in her forum,
As fearful and melancholic as that
She is about; with catterpillar's kells,
And knotty cob-webs, rounded in with spells
Thence she steals forth to relief in the fogs,
And rotten mists, upon the fens and bogs,
Down to the drowned lands of Lincolnshire
To make ewes cast their lambs, swine eat their farrow
The housewives turn not work, nor the mild churn
Writhe children's wrists and suck their breath in sleep,
Get vials of their blood and where the sea
Casts up his slimy ooze, search for a weed
To open locks with and to rivet charms
Planted about her in the wicked feat
Of all her mischiefs, which are manifold.[93]

The spirit of revenge, which history states was a dominant force of the age, serves as the central theme in Hamlet, The Revenger's Tragedy, The Jew of Malta, The Merchant of Venice, The Spanish Tragedy and The Duchess of Malfi. It is expressed by Chapman in Bussy D'Ambois thus:

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[91] Macbeth, I, iii, l. 39-47.

[92] Ibid., I, iii, l. 8-10.

[93] Jonson, The Sad Shepherd, II, ii, p. 277.

> Manly slaughter
> Should never bear the account of willful murder
> It being a spice of justice where with life
> Offending past law, equal life is laid
> In equal balance, to scourge that offense
> By law of reputation, which to men
> Exceeds all positive law and what that leaves
> To true men's valors (not prefixing rights
> Of satisfaction, suited to the wrongs
> A free man's eminence may supply and take.[94]

In The Malcontent, Mendoza says that women are most thoughtful in revenge.[95] That the spirit of revenge played an important part in the lives of the Elizabethan women is revealed by the dramatists. Bel-imperia urges Hieronimo to avenge Horatio's death and moved by the spirit of revenge she slays Balthazar.[96] Because the Duchess of Malfi dares to act against the wishes of her brothers, she is forced to submit to a number of horrible punishments. Because this spirit becomes the controlling power in Hamlet's life, Ophelia's life ends in tragedy.

The spirit of revenge is also evident in the general attitude of the age toward the punishment of offenders in dramatic literature. In The Arden of Feversham, Mosbie and his sister are executed in Smithfield, and Alice is burned at Canterbury as punishment for murder. This incident is similar to the murder of John Brewen which was related in the preceding chapter. Lucio gives pressing to death, whipping, and hanging as suitable punishments for slandering.[97] In The Winter's Tale, Paulina asks:

> What studied torments, tyrant hast for me?
> What wheels? racks? fires? What flaying? boiling
> In leads or oils?[98]

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94 Chapman, Bussy D'Ambois, II, i, p. 528.
95 Marston, The Malcontent, I, vii, p. 571.
96 Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy, V, i and iii.
97 Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, V, i, l. 527.
98 The Winter's Tale, III, 2, l. 176-179.

History records that the Elizabethan age was worldly even in its religion. Walsingham wrote of Queen Elizabeth, "Her majesty counts much on Fortune, I wish she would trust more in Almighty God."[99] Drama as well as history supports the belief that this was not an age of deep spirituality. Marlowe, in the prologue to The Jew of Malta, expresses the Machiavelian sentiment which was at this time quite popular in England and throughout Europe.

> I count religion but a childish toy
> And hold there is no sin but ignorance.[100]

Cob complains that the fast days "keep a man devoutly hungry all day and then send him supperless to bed."[101] Although flesh was prohibited during Lent, Mistress Quickly was an erring hostess. When Falstaff tells her that there is another indictment against her for allowing flesh to be eaten in her house contrary to law she justifies herself, "All victuallers do so. What's a joint of mutton or two in a whole Lent?"[102] However, Falstaff was not guiltless, for Poins asks him, "Jack! how agrees the devil and thee about thy soul that thou soldest him on Good Friday last for a cup of Madera and a cold capon leg?"[103]

Malvole, in The Malcontent, exclaims against the various religious sects: "Sects, sects, I have seen Piety change her robe so oft that sure none but some arch-devil can shape her a new petticoat." In Eastward Ho

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99 J. R. Green, "Elizabeth" The Golden Book, XX (August 1934), 209.

100 Marlowe, Jew of Malta, Prologue, p. 67.

101 Jonson, Every Man In His Humour, III, iv, p. 276.

102 II Henry IV, II, iv, l. 376.

103 I Henry IV, I, ii, l. 129.

these different sects are enumerated: "And almost of all religions in the land as Papist, Protestant, Puritan, Brownist, Anabaptist, Millenary, Family O' Love, Jew, Turk, Infidel, Atheist, Good Fellow, etcetera."[104] Of these the Puritans are most frequently referred to by the dramatists. Of them Asper speaks:

> O, but to such, whose faces are all zeal,
> And with the words of Hercules invade
> Such crimes as these! that will not smell of sin,
> But seem as they were made of sanctity:
> Religion in their garments, and their hair
> Cut shorter than their eyebrows! when the conscience
> Is vaster than the ocean and devours
> More wretches than the Counters.[105]

The saying of grace is more frequently spoken of in the Elizabethan drama than any other religious custom. The usual form concludes thus, "God save our Queen and send us peace in Christ, Amen." This form is objected to by the "first gentleman" in A Measure for Measure when he asserts, "There's not a soldier of us all, that, in the thanksgiving before meat do relish the petition well that prays for peace."[106] Timon of Athens gives us two elaborate examples of grace, neither of which is conventional and both of which express worldliness in the speaker:

> Immortal gods I crave no pelf;
> I pray for no one but myself.
> Grant I may never prove so fond,
> To trust man on his oath or bond,
> Or a harlot for her weeping
> Or a dog that seems a-sleeping
> Or a keeper with my freedom;
> Or my friends, if I should need 'em.

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[104] Eastward Ho, V, i, p. 510.

[105] Every Man Out of His Humour, Introduction, p. 118.

[106] Measure for Measure, I, i, l. 11-17.

Amen. So fall to 't
Rich men sin, and I eat root.[107]

And again he prays:

> You great benefactors, sprinkle our society with thankfulness. For your own gifts make yourselves prais'd; but reserve still to give lest your duties be despised. Land to each man enough, that one need not lend to another; for, were your god-heads to borrow of men, men would forsake the gods. Make the meat be beloved more than the man that gives it. Let no assembly of twenty be without a score of villians; if there sit twelve women at the table let a dozen of them be as they are. The rest of your foes, O gods--the senators of Athens, together with the common lag of people--what is amiss in them, you gods, make suitable for destruction. For these my present friends, as they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them and to nothing are they welcome. Uncover dogs and lap.[108]

While there is comparatively little in the dramas concerning the religious life of the women there are a few interesting allusions. Artemia states:

It does conclude
A lady's morning work, we rise, make fine,
Sit for our picture, and 't is time to dine.[109]

To this the gallants, Littleworth and Kickshaw reply that praying is forgot and is out of fashion.[110]

Malvole says, "I' faith as bawds go to church for fashions sake,"[111] and again he mentions the church as a place of "much dissimulation."[112] Dame Quickly, in recommending Mistress Page to Falstaff, asserts that she

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[107] Shakespeare, Timon of Athens, I, ii, l. 64-73.

[108] Ibid., III, vi, l. 79-95.

[109] The Lady of Pleasure, I, i, p. 1140.

[110] Ibid., I, ii, p. 1140.

[111] The Malcontent, IV, v, p. 588.

[112] Ibid., I, iii, p. 565.

will not miss morning or evening prayer.[113]

In the preceding chapter, it was asserted that the Elizabethan age was one of loose manners and still looser morals. The dramas of this period support that assertion. Probably in no other of the Elizabethan dramas do we find the evils of London life more minutely related than in Robert Greene's A Looking Glass for London. He describes London as a place where "usury is counted husbandry"[114] where "merciless men rob the poor,"[115] where "poverty is despised and pity banished,"[116] where men think more of money than of God,[117] where "whoredom reigns and murder follows fast,"[118] where children are disobedient,[119] where flattery beguiles princes,[120] where there is falsehood in old and young,[121] where servants rebel against masters,[122] and where "the common weal" is accounted hell.[123]

In Michaelmas Term, a father expresses his regrets that his daughter has come to the city:

> O, if she knew
> The dangers that attend on women's lives,
> She'd rather lodge under a thatch'd roof
> Than under carved ceilings
> . . . .
> This man devouring city where I spent
> My unshapen youth, to be my age's curse

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113 The Merry Wives of Windsor, II, ii, l. 100-101.

114 Greene, A Looking Glass for London, I, iii, p. 95.

115 Ibid., p. 95.

116 Ibid., p. 95.

117 Ibid., p. 95.

118 Ibid., II, iii, p. 114.

119 Ibid., III, ii, p. 125.

120 Loc. Cit.

121 Ibid., III, ii, p. 12.

122 Ibid., III, iii, p. 128.

123 Loc. cit.

And surfeited away my name and state
In swinish riots, that now being sober
I do awake a beggar.[124]

London at night is thus pictured by Shakespeare:

When the searching eye of heaven is hid
Behind the globe, and lights the lower world,
Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen
In murders and in outrage bloody here.[125]

What Reynaldo and Polonius say of gaming, drinking, fencing, swearing, quarreling, and drabbing being common among the youth might well apply to England.[126]

In the prologue to Rule A Wife and Have A Wife, Fletcher thus jestingly praises the morals of the Elizabethans:

Pleasure attend ye and about ye sit
The springs of mirth, fancy, delight and wit,
To stir you up! Do not your looks let fall,
Nor to remembrance our late errors call,
Because this day we are Spaniards all again,
The story of our play and our scene Spain.
The errors too do not for this cause hate,
Now we present their wit, and not their state.
Nor, ladies be not angry, if you see
A young fresh beauty, wanton and too free,
Seek to abuse her husband; still 'tis Spain,
No such gross errors in your kingdom reign:
We're vestals all and though we blow the fire
We seldom make it flame up to desire;
Take no example neither to begin
For some by precedent delight to sin,
Nor blame the poet if he slipt aside
Sometimes lassiviously, if not too wide.
But hold your fans close, and then smile at ease
A cruel scene did never lady please.[127]

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[124] Middleton, Michaelmas Term, I, ii, p. 244.

[125] Richard II, III, ii, l. 37-40.

[126] Hamlet, II, i, l. 26.

[127] Fletcher, Rule A Wife and Have A Wife, Prologue, l. 1-20.

The manners and morals of court life are admirably revealed by Shirley in The Traitor.

> What do great ladies do at court, I pray?
> Enjoy the pleasures of the world, dance, kiss
> The amorous lords and change court breath; sing; lose
> Belief of other Heaven; tell wanton dreams;
> Rehearse their sprightly bed scenes and boast which
> Hath most idolators; accuse all faces,
> That trust to the simplicity of nature;
> Talk witty blasphemy
> Discourse their gaudy wardrobes; plot new pride;
> Jest upon courtiers legs; laugh at the wagging
> Of their own feathers; and a thousand more
> Delights which private ladies never think of.[128]

Vittoria earnestly remarks,

> O, happy they that never saw the court
> Nor ever knew men but by report.[129]

And Guise in Bussy D'Ambois expresses his opinion thus:

> I like not their court fashion; it is too crest fall'n
> In all observance making demigods
> Of their great nobles, and of their old queen
> An ever young and most immortal goddess.[130]

In Eastward Ho it is stated that "boldness is a good fashion and courtlike."[131]

Livia reveals the low morals of some of the middle class, when in order to indulge her brother in the illicit love for their niece, lies to her about her birth.[132] Lady Celestina,who has mourned for a year as a widow and yet is only sixteen,is an example of the custom of early marriages.[133] That this was an age of illicit love and loose morals is shown by the dramatists. Orlando states that there are not more than fifteen chaste women in

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128 Shirley, The Traitor, II, i, p. 1385.
129 Webster, The White Devil, V, vi, p. 979.
130 Chapman, Bussy D'Ambois, I, ii, p. 523.
131 Eastward Ho, I, ii, p. 508.
132 Women, Beware Women, II, i, p. 1301.
133 The Lady of Pleasure, I, i, p. 1139.

five hundred.[134]

Doctor Rat reveals the moral state of the poorer classes when he says,

> And when
> I come not at their call, I only thereby loose
> For I am sure to lack therefore a tythe pyg or a goose.[135]

That women were no longer looked upon as delicate and sickly is shown when Middleton writes in Michaelmas Term, "When did I ever hear of a woman sicken, swoon, die, it was before my time."[136]

There seems to have been a general opinion among the dramatists that hospitality was not as common as in former times. Shakespeare expresses this belief well when he has a shepherd say at a shearing feast:

> Fie, daughter! when my old wife liv'd upon
> This day she was both pantler, butler, cook,
> Both dame and servant; welcom'd all, serv'd all;
> Would sing her song and dance her turn; now here,
> At upper end o' the table, now i' the middle;
> On his shoulder and his; her face o' fire
> With labour; and the thing she took to quench it,
> She would to each one sip. You are retired,
> As if you were a feasted one and not
> The hostess of the meeting. Pray you, bid
> These unknown friends to 's welcome for it is
> A way to make us better friends, more known.
> Come, quench your blushes, and present yourself
> That which you are, mistress o' the feast. Come on
> And bid us welcome.[137]

In comparison to the abundance of material found in the dramas concerning dress and superstition, there is a great scarcity of material

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[134] II The Honest Whore, V, ii, p. 750.

[135] Stevenson, Gammer Gurton's Needle, IV, i, p. 93.

[136] Middleton, Michaelmas Term, V, iv, p. 307.

[137] The Winter's Tale, IV, iv, l. 54-68.

regarding a woman's education; what little there is is vague and indefinite. There must have been some kind of schooling for Helena says that Hermia was a vixen when she went to "school"[138] and there are references to a "school maid"[139] and to a "school mistress."[140] But as to the nature of that schooling the dramatists are apparently silent.

Bianca, the daughter of a rich Paduan gentleman, remarks:

> I am no breeding scholar in the schools.
> I'll not be tied to hours nor ' appointed times,
> But learn my lessons as I please myself.[141]

Helena tells us of her girlhood:

> We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
> Have with our needles created one flower
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key
> As if our sides voices and minds
> Had been incorporate.[142]

Othello describes Desdemona as being delicate with her needle and an excellent musician.[143]

Girls were also taught by tutors for in speaking to Holofernes Nathan remarks, "I praise the Lord for you and so may parishioners; for their sons are well tutor'd by you and their daughters profit very greatly under you."[144] Orlando speaking of Rosalind who was in disguise says, "This boy is forest born and hath been tutor'd in the rudiments of many separate studies."[145]

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138 A Midsummer Night's Dream, III, ii, l. 324.

139 Measure for Measure, I, iv, l. 47.

140 Bussy D'Ambois, I, i, p. 521.

141 The Taming of the Shrew, III, i, l. 18-20.

142 A Midsummer Night's Dream, III, ii, l. 203-208.

143 Othello, IV, i, 199.

144 Love's Labour's Lost, IV, ii, l. 77.

145 As You Like It, V, iv, l. 31.

In Cymbeline, Imogene speaks thus to her servant:

I have read three hours. Mine eyes are weak.
Fold down the leaf where I have left. To bed.
Take not away the taper, leave it burning,
And if thou cans't awake by four o' clock,
I prithee call me.[146]

Through Iachimo it is learned that she had been reading a tale of Tereus.[147]

Of her many personal achievements Mariana says,

I can sing, weave, sew and dance
With other virtues which I'll keep from boast
And I'll understand all these to teach
I doubt not but what this populace city will
Yield many scholars.[148]

Perhaps Portia is the most outstanding intellectual female character of Elizabethan drama. She says she cannot understand Falconbridge because "he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian."[149] That she was familiar with law is shown in the court scene.[150] She was also versed in classical lore as is revealed by the following:

but with much more love
Than young Alcides when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster. I stand for sacrifices
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives.[151]

Kickshaw remarks that his lady is spirited and courtly; that she

speaks the languages
Sings, dances, plays o' th' lute to admiration!

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146 Cymbeline, II, ii, l. 3-7.

147 Ibid., II, ii, l. 45.

148 Pericles, IV, vi, l. 194-198.

149 Merchant of Venice, I, ii, l. 74 f.

150 Ibid., IV, i.

151 Ibid., III, ii, l. 55-60.

Is fair, and paints not; games, too, keeps a table,
And talks most witty satire; has a wit
Of a clean Mercury--[152]

That Bianca is familiar with Latin is shown in her conversation with Lucentio,[153] and Artemia and Celestina in The Lady of Pleasure converse in French.[154]

Of the education of women in the middle and lower classes there is still less information. Mantolet remarks that his daughter

is no often speaker
But when she does, she speaks well; nor no reveller,
Yet she can dance, and has studied the court-elements
And sings, as some say handsomely; if a woman,
With the decency of her sex may be a scholar
I can assure ye, sir she understands too.[155]

Hoard remarks that his niece is in London with her uncle, to learn fashions and practise music;[156] and Mrs. Goursey asserts that she has read Aesop's fables.[157]

Some men still had a derogatory attitude towards women as is shown from the following passages.

Unvalued worth? ha, ha, ha, why she's but
A woman; and they are windy turning vanes;
Love light as chaff, which when our nourishing grains
Are winnow'd from them, unconstantly they fly.
At the least wind of passion; a woman's eye
Can turn itself with quick dexterity.[158]

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[152] Shirley, The Lady of Pleasure, I, i, p. 1139.

[153] Ibid., III, ii, p. 1154 f.

[154] Fletcher, The Wild Goose Chase, I, iii, p. 888.

[155] Middleton, A Tuck To Catch The Old One, I, ii, p. 985.

[156] Porter, Two Angry Women of Abington, I, i, p. 253.

[157] The Taming of the Shrew, III, i, l. 25-45.

[158] Middleton, The Family of Love, I, i, p. 4.

In The Malcontent Mendoza, Maquerelle, and Pietro express their views on women thus:

> Oh that I could rail against these monsters in nature, models of hell, curse of the earth, women! that dare attempt anything, and what they attempt they care not how they accomplish; without all premeditation and prevention; rash in asking, desperate in working, impatient in suffering, extreme in desiring, slaves unto appetite, mistresses in dissembling, only constant in inconstancy, only perfect in counterfeiting; their words are feigned, their eyes forged, their sights dissembled, their looks counterfeit, their hair false, their given hopes deceitful, their very breath artificial; their blood is their only god; bad clothes and old age are only the devils they tremble at.[159]

Maquerelle gives us the different periods in a woman's life: "At four, women were fools; at fourteen, drabs; at forty, bawds; at fourscore, witches; and a hundred, cats."[160] And Pietro when asked what he would have sung for him replies:

> Sing of the nature of women and then the song shall be surely full of variety, old crotchets, and most sweet closes; it shall be humorous, grave, fantastic, amorous, melancholy, sprightly, one in all, and all in one.[161]

Shakespeare, as most of the Elizabethan dramatists, was careful to pay tribute to "Good Queen Bess." He has Cranio say,

> Let me speak, sir,
> For Heaven now bids me; and the words I utter
> Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth,
> This royal infant--Heaven still move about her!--
> Though in her cradle, yet now promises
> Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,
> Which time shall bring to ripeness. She shall be--
> But few now living can behold that goodness--
> A pattern to all princes and all that shall succeed. Saba was never

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[159] Marston, The Malcontent, I, vi, p. 570.

[160] Ibid., I, vi, p. 569.

[161] Ibid., II, iv, p. 582.

More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue
Than this pure soul shall be. All princely graces,
That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
With all the virtues that attend the good,
Shall still be doubled on her. Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her.
She shall be lov'd and fear'd: Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her.
She shall be lov'd and fear'd: her own shall bless her;
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
And hang their heads with sorrow. God grows with her.
In her eyes every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace to all her neighbors.
God shall be truly known; and those about her
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour
And by these claim their greatness, not by blood.[162]

Thorndike has stated that the Elizabethan drama embodies the daily habit and custom, the external activities, the emotional stress, the faith, dreams, and aspirations of the audience for whom it was created.[163] While this is well known to be true of the Elizabethan drama in general, it has been the work of this study to demonstrate clearly that drama portrays faithfully the life of the women of that period. For as Elizabeth's court was filled with suitors so, also, was Portia's court at Belmont.[164] As Elizabeth rejected her suitors so Camiola[165] rejected hers. As Elizabeth spat on her courtier so Jane spat at her physician.[166] As Elizabeth struck at her servants so Katharine and Celestina struck at theirs.[167] As the

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[162] Henry VIII, V, v, 18-39.

[163] Ashley K. Thorndike, Shakespeare's Theatre (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), p. 43.

[164] The Merchant of Venice, II, i; II, vii.

[165] The Maid of Honor.

[166] The Fair Quarrel, III, ii, p. 1166.

[167] The Taming of the Shrew, and The Lady of Pleasure, II, ii, p. 1141.

ladies spent their time in court so the ladies in drama spent their time. As women in life attended the various amusements, followed the fashions and lived their own lives, so did the women in drama.

CONCLUSION

As previously stated, this study was made for the purpose of determining whether or not the prevalent assumption that drama pictures the life of the time in which it is written, is true in regard to the portrayal of women of the Elizabethan period.

Since only a limited amount of both primary and secondary source material was available, this does not purport to be an exhaustive study which offers complete conclusions. Nevertheless, from the investigation of more than seventy-five plays and forty books of history, there has been such a complete correlation between the women of history and the women of drama of this period that there can be no doubt that the Renaissance dramas did portray the life of the women of that time.

From history it was found that certain changes in women's physical, social, religious and intellectual environment made for their advancement toward a natural position in life. In drama these changes are affirmed by a contrast of the characters of Videna and Cordelia. The former, representing women in the early part of the period, is merely a figure fashioned after a set pattern. The latter is distinctly English and possesses a well defined personality. Of all the dramatists of this era, Shakespeare excelled in the portrayal of his female characters, and they seem more natural and real than do those of the lesser dramatists. However, there are among the creations of Shakespeare's contemporaries such characters as the Duchess of Malfi, Bellafront, Calantha, Vittoria, and Camiola that are far from being mere figure heads.

It is interesting to note that while Shakespeare's plays present more vividly than the others, the life of his time, there are certain factors in that life that he either never mentions or mentions only infrequently. Starch, forks and tobacco, all introduced into England during his time and all frequently referred to by historians and the other dramatists, are not mentioned by Shakespeare in any of his plays. Card playing, which had become so popular in the preceding century, is alluded to in the thirty-five dramas of Shakespeare only eight times. Coaches, likewise, are mentioned only six times and the game of chess, a popular form of amusement in his day, is not mentioned at all.

Of Shakespeare's plays, The Merry Wives of Windsor contains the most material on the contemporary life. This is not surprising since it is the most thoroughly English of all his plays, having both English characters and English setting. The dramas of Middleton, Dekker and Jonson are also rich mines of material on daily life. Jonson's women are those of the middle or lower class and are as a whole coarse, and unrefined. In fact he has no heroines worthy the name.

As has been previously stated there are some phases of a woman's life, her education and religion that are not vividly and definitely portrayed by the dramatists. However, these phases are also treated in the same vague manner by the historians. Therefore, the conclusion may be drawn that Renaissance dramatists were faithful in their portrayal of the life of the women of their time.

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