The Prose and the Passion

The First Invasions, p. 32

The Iberians

The Iberians were the first settlers in Britain, during the Neolithic period.

They came from Southern Europe.

Their graves contained cups called *beakers*.

Their most famous monument is Stonehenge.

The Celts

The Celts arrived in 700 BC from north-west Germany.

Their language was *Gaelic*, which is still spoken in Wales and Scotland.

They were farmers, fishermen and blacksmiths.

They built defensive earthworks.

They traded iron, tin, silver goods, pottery and cloth.

The Druids

The Druids were the priests, the doctors, and the judges of the Celts.

They did not build temples, but held their religious ceremonies in the forests.

The religion of the Celts

The Celts worshipped the sun, the moon, trees, forests, and rivers.

They believed in the transmigration of the soul (metempsychosis).

Human soul could move from one person to another and nature was filled with the mysterious presence of the dead.

The Romans

The Romans invaded Britain in 55 BC and in 43-47 AD, under emperor Claudius.

The Romans brought their culture and their alphabet with them.

They built roads, towns, and baths.

There were three different kinds of towns:

The *coloniae*, peopled by Roman settlers.

The *municipia*, whose inhabitants were given Roman citizenship.

The *civitates*, which were the old tribal capitals.

The Latin term *castra* has remained in the modern town names that end with *caster*, *chester*, or *cester*.

Hadrian’s Wall

In 122 emperor Hadrian built a wall to defend the border between the Britons and the Scots and Picts, who lived in Scotland.

The Roman invasion ended in 409, when the soldiers were withdrawn to fight against the Barbarians who were menacing the empire.

Stonehenge, p. 33

The Enigma of Stonehenge

Stonehenge had a strong symbolic value for prehistoric men.

It is composed of huge blue stones.

Blue was a very important colour because the Bronze Age people worshipped the sky.

Blue was the colour used by the Celts to paint and tattoo their bodies.

The functions of Stonehenge were probably various: a temple, an observatory, a trial court, a truce-ground, and a market place.

Their mystery of the monoliths is given by the fact that they were brought there from Wales and that it must have been extremely difficult to drag them.

They seem to defy gravity.

The Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, p. 35

Anglo-Saxon England

The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded Britain in the 5th Century.

They gave Britain a new name: *England*, the land of the Angles.

The modern place names can show their Angle-Saxon origin.

-*ing* meant *folk*, or *family*, thus *Reading* means “the place of the *Rada* family”.

*Ham* meant farm, thus *Birmingham* means “the farm of the *Birm* family”.

Anglo-Saxon society

The Anglo-Saxons were organized in family groups called *clans*.

They exalted physical courage and personal freedom.

They had a refined sense of beauty.

They did not make laws, but law was custom (the judgments of the past trials).

The Anglo-Saxons were farmers looking for richer lands.

They were also fishermen.

They hunted seals and whales.

Christianity in England

During the Anglo-Saxon period, pope Gregory I (the first) the Great sent Augustine to bring Christianity to England.

The Vikings

The Vikings came from Scandinavia. They attacked the monasteries and villages near the water.

They conquered almost all England.

The place names of Viking origin end with the suffix –*by*, or –*thorpe*.

King Alfred the Great

King Alfred of Wessex fought against the Vikings and made a major contribution to Saxon culture.

He encouraged education and scholarship.

He ordered the translation of various Latin works into Anglo-Saxon.

He promoted the writing of a history of England: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The Norman Invasion

The last Anglo-Saxon king was Harold.

He was defeated and killed by William of Normandy, during the battle of Hastings, in 1066.

The Normans came from France. They spoke French. They had become Christian. They were famous because of their fighting skills.

The Plantagenet dynasty p. 37

1. Henry II was the first Plantagenet king.

His reign (1154-89) brought order and stability.

He reduced the power of the barons. He hired mercenaries to do this.

Many knights paid a tax called 'scutage' instead of giving military service themselves.

Henry sent judges round the land to hold courts in the largest towns.

The law became known as Common Law.

In other parts of Europe legal practice was based on the Civil Law of the Roman Empire. Modern English law is based on custom, comparisons of previous cases and previous decisions.

2. The king also wanted to reduce the power of the Church. Henry made his best friend, Thomas Becket (1118-1170), archbishop of Canterbury.

Unfortunately Becket became an opponent of the king.

The conflict lasted for a long time until Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by four knights on 29 December 1170.

He became a martyr and a saint, and pilgrims from all over England and Europe visited his shrine in Canterbury Cathedral.

3. When Henry died in 1189, his elder son Richard I (1189-99), 'Richard the Lionheart spent very little time in his own kingdom, since he set out on the Third Crusade (1189-92).

The Crusades brought Europe into contact with the cultures of the East, increasing both intellectual and commercial exchanges between Europe and Asia.

4. Richard was succeeded by his younger brother John (1199-1216), who had two nicknames: 'Lackland' (Has-no-Land) and 'Softsword (Unsuccessful-in-war).

King John collected higher taxes. His wars were unsuccessful thus the barons complained. In 1215 he had to submit to the barons, the Church leaders and the merchants. John was forced to sign and put his great seal on a document, the Magna Carta. The King

agreed that taxes could be demanded only after the consent of the great council, and that no free man could be arrested before being judged by his equals.

5. At John's death, his son Henry III (1216-72) became king at the age of nine.

In 1265 the leader of the barons, Simon de Montfort (ca. 1208-65), Earl of Leicester, summoned the 'Great Council', composed of barons, knights and merchants. These meetings became known as 'parliaments'.

6. Edward I (1272-1307) called the 'Model Parliament of 1295 in order to get taxes for his wars. This 'Parliament' included representatives of the barons, the clergy, two knights from each shire and two citizens from each city. The germ of the two future Houses of Parliament - the House of Lords and the House of Commons - was all there.

The Historical and Social Context p. 38

1. The 'Black Death', the bubonic plague which spread all over England in 1348 was caused by fleas living on black rats, which infested the ships. The mortality was very high; some villages were completely depopulated. Food prices doubled; the rise in prices caused a demand for higher wages by the labourers.

2. The use of money destroyed feudalism.

The old relationships and ties of loyalty began to change. The peasants could move to the towns more easily. Lords began to use more of their land for sheep farming, which used less labour and made the wool trade even more important.

3. A religious reformist movement attacked the power and worldliness of the Church. The leader of this movement, called 'Lollardy', was John Wycliffe (ca. 1320-84). The movement included non-academics, merchants, lesser clergy, and a few members of Richard lI's court.

4. When Richard II (1377-99) came to the throne, the first Parliament decided to levy a new tax on every person, the 'poll-tax'. This lax led to the 'Peasants' Revolt'. The rebels were punished severely.

5. By the 14th century a new middle class existed. War involved the merchants who loaned money to the king for mercenaries.

The freemen who owned land, called 'yeomen', profited from higher food prices, and those who farmed sheep made money from wool.

6. The artisans and tradesmen organised themselves into 'guilds' - from the Old English

'geld' meaning 'payment'. They controlled the quality of goods, they regulated prices and wages. They organised fairs and prepared a series of biblical plays to be performed in the town.

The abstract made concrete p. 39

Medieval civilisation was based on the belief that the life of the soul after death is the real one, while earthly life is just a period of preparation for it.

The medieval world was full of meaning, according to a providential plan in which man had to play his role together with the other beings.

Medieval people acted in accordance with the position of the planets, following the theory of the Egyptian astronomer and geographer Ptolemy (ca. 100-170 A.D.).

According to Ptolemy, the planetary system was earth-centred, with the planets moving in circular orbits

The concentric spheres widened out from that of the earth to the Primum Mobile, or 'Prime Mover'.

God was at the top, with the angels surrounding him.

Medieval art, in all its forms, does not try to reproduce exactly reality.

If a king is as tall as the walls of his castle, that is because he is more important than the castle.

A cathedral reflects the construction of the universe: to walk around a cathedral is like moving within a model of the universe.

The medieval ballad p. 41

Much of Medieval literature is poetry. Metrical romances consisted of tales in verse about chivalry, love, fairies, giants, dragons and wizards.

These tales came from three main sources:

* France (the court of Charlemagne}
* Rome (classical stories, such as the conquest of Troy)
* Britain (the story of King Arthur and his knights).

Popular ballads were produced anonymously and transmitted orally.

The ballad tells a dramatic story not as a continuous sequence of events, but as a series of rapid flashes. They are a mixture of dialogue and narration.

They are impersonal and they do not comment on the emotional content of the story.

They repeat textual structures.

The traditional ballad stanza consists of four lines, usually rhyming ABCB or in couplets with an alternating refrain. A refrain is a repeated section that divides segments of the story.

Their language was simple.

The ballad universe is peopled with speaking animals and birds, fairies, witches and ghosts who return from the grave.

There is no clear difference between such creatures and ordinary mortals.

Ballads can be classified according to the following themes:

* ballads of magic, about fairies, ghosts, witchcraft and transformation
* border ballads, about the rivalry between the English and the Scottish people;
* ballads of love and domestic tragedy;
* ballads of outlaws, with the cycle of Robin Hood.

The Medieval Narrative Poem p. 44

A narrative poem tells a story in verse and contains a rich variety of narrative elements, such as the setting in time and place, the description of characters, the use of a narrator.

It is often in the first person.

Collections of stories were very popular in the Middle Ages and they had the purpose to entertain and instruct.

Medieval narrative included the so-called exempla, usually in the form of parables and fables.

Other narrative genres were

the *romance* - a tale of love and war in a court setting,

the *fabliau*, whose subjects were often anti-clerical and full of humorous comments about sex.

The medieval narrative poem provided an insight into individual characters.

In so doing, it marked a shift from a religious to a lay outlook.

The greatest example of a narrative poem in medieval literature is Geoffrey

Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, which is not merely a collection of verse tales, but a long poem, framed by a General Prologue.

Geoffrey Chaucer p. 46

Biography

Chaucer was born about 1343, the son of a London wine merchant. From the age of seventeen he served three kings - Edward III, Richard II and Henry IV - and took part in important diplomatic missions. Between 1368 and 1378, he travelled to Italy where he became interested in Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio and enlarged his readings in Latin to include Virgil.

He was also well-informed on the religious views of John Wycliffe and Lollardy.

His masterpiece is *The Canterbury Tales*.

He died in 1400 and was the first poet to be buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster

Abbey.

The father of English literature

Chaucer is regarded as the father of English literature. His language, the dialect of his native London, gradually became standard English, thus becoming the basis of Modern English.

Chaucer's poems are usually divided into three periods: the French, the

Italian, and the English.

1. The French period includes poems modelled on French romance styles and subjects such as:

* courtly love.
* the universal grief of all men for death.

2. The Italian period shows a greater maturity

To this period belong:

* *The Parlement of Foules* (ca. 1380), which introduces the reader into one of the most popular genres of medieval literature, the bird and Beast Fable.
* Troylus and Criseyde (ca. 1380-5), a long poem adapted lrom Boccaccio which reveals a subtle psychological insight into the development of the characters.

3. The English period is marked by greater realism and includes Chaucer's masterpiece:

* *The Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1387).

The Tudors pp. 57-59

Timeline

1485 Henry VII marries Elizabeth of York and ends the Wars of the Roses

1509 Henry VIII becomes King of England and marries Catherine of Aragon

1534 Act of Supremacy: Henry VIII divorces from Catherine of Aragon and marries Anne Boleyn

1553 Mary I, the daughter of Henry VIII and his first wife Catherine of Aragon, becomes queen

1558 Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, becomes queen

1559 Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity give Elizabeth I the title of 'Supreme Governor' instead of' Supreme Head' of the Church of England'

1584 Queen Elizabeth gives Sir Walter Raleigh permission to set up the American colony of Virginia

1588 The Spanish Armada is defeated

Henry Tudor became King Henry VII in 1485. He restored the reputation of the monarchy. He encouraged both trade, and the cloth industry. He also laid the foundations of English naval power by building ships so that England could have its own merchant fleet and its military strength.

Henry VIII became king in 1509. He was a typical Renaissance prince. His court was splendid. Henry was a musician and linguist. The second half of his reign was dominated by the Reformation. Henry VIII had six wives.

On Henrys death in 1547, his son, Edward, a scholarly, devout but sickly 9-year-old, became king as Edward VI before his older sisters. His uncle, Edward Seymour, became Lord Protector.

At Edward's death, (Mary Tudor) Mary I became queen in 1553. She was very unpopular. Mary I earned the nickname 'Bloody Mary' because she persecuted and burned Protestants for heresy.

Elizabeth I succeeded her sister Mary I (Mary Tudor) in 1558 and became England's most popular ruler. Her main achievement was the settlement of the religious question with the creation of the Church of England.

Catholics considered Elizabeth I illegitimate and preferred Mary Queen of Scots (Mary Stuart), who became a focus of rebellions; she plotted against Elizabeth and was finally executed. Elizabeth was well educated and cultured. There was a war against Spain. The Spanish Armada was defeated by the superior design of the English ships. Trade expanded enriching the merchants and towns. Explorations and overseas trade expanded, making England a commercial and seafaring power.

Humanism encouraged confidence in the power of human reason, subverting medieval dogma.

The Protestant Reformation in Germany had begun with the doctrines of Martin Luther (1483-

1546), and the French theologian John Calvin (1509-64) in Switzerland.

Henry VIII was a Catholic king; he was honoured by the Pope with the title Fidei Defensor (Defender of the Faith) for the pamphlet he wrote against Luther.

Henry had been married by special dispensation to Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow, who some years later had given him a daughter, Mary (Mary Tudor, Mary I), but was now unlikely to bear him a son. He had asked the Pope for a divorce in order to marry Anne Boleyn. When the Pope refused, Henry broke with Rome and declared himself 'Supreme Head of the Church' in England. The king dissolved the monasteries and seized their wealth. Ann Boleyn gave Henry another daughter, Elizabeth, and was executed. Finally, his third wife gave birth to a son, Edward VI, who succeeded his father.

In Edward's short reign, the Anglican Church became truly Protestant. The Act of Uniformity enforced the use of the English Book of Prayer instead of the Latin missal.

Mary I tried to force people to attend mass again to accept the authority of the Pope over the Church of England.

Elizabeth I's Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity (1559) avoided the extremes. Her moderate Book of Common Prayer was written. Extreme Protestants, called Puritans, were not satisfied by Elizabeth's religious compromise.

The Elizabethan Theatre, pp. 73-75

The permanent playhouse

The Theatre and the Curtain Theatre were the oldest and belonged to a carpenter called James Burbage. The Globe in 1598 was owned by the owner of the land, the two Burbage brothers, and the five players of the company. William Shakespeare became the owner of a share of the property.

The architecture of theatres

Permanent theatres were circular or octagonal. There were three tiers of roofed galleries, and the yard where the poorer spectators, or 'groundlings', stood.

The internal layout

The stage itself, (apron stage), jutted out into the yard or 'pit'.

The players were surrounded on three sides.

Over the stage the thatched roof, protected the players from the rain.

In the front of the stage there was a 'trap door' used for devilish apparitions and disappearances, and also for burials.

The 'tiring house', the place where the actors changed their costumes, was at the rear of the stage.

There were two doors for entrances and exits.

Behind the stage there was an 'inner stage', which was used for discoveries, or concealments.

One major problem was the staging of the final scene of those tragedies, which ended with several corpses on the stage. Either the body was carried off or else it was concealed.

There was also an 'upper stage' hidden by a curtain and an upmost area normally used by musicians.

Elizabethan and modern theatres

The structure of the stage affected the form of Elizabethan plays.

On the apron stage actors and audience were fused into a common experience. The soliloquy was not artificial, as on the modern stage, but quite a natural form of communication as a character explained his thoughts and intentions to those immediately before him.

Actors did not need to shout, thus the greatest subtlety of voice, gesture, and expression was possible.

The scenery

There was no 'scenery' and plays were acted in daylight. The stage used a limited number of 'props'; tables, chairs, swords, canvases of the sun and moon.

For night scenes a simple candle or torch transported the audience into the night world.

The 'action' was continuous.

Chairs or stools showed indoor scenes;

a king wearing his armour was on the field of battle;

a watchman carrying a lantern indicated the streets of a city at night.

The actors

The Elizabethan actor belonged to a team.

In Shakespeare's time there were no actresses - the parts of young women were acted by boys.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford on Avon in April 1564, possibly on 23rd April, St George's Day, which is also said to be the date of his death in 1616.

His father was a successful tradesman. William was the eldest son and attended the local grammar school.

He married Anne Hathaway when he was only eighteen and she was twenty-six and pregnant with their daughter.

In 1584 he went to London.

In 1593 the London theatres were closed because of the plague, and Shakespeare needed the support of the Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his poems. When the theatres reopened, Shakespeare became a shareholder and the main playwright in London.

In 1599 his company built the Globe Theatre, where most of his plays were performed.

Between 1590 and 1596 he mainly wrote historical dramas, history plays, between 1593 and 1600, he put onto the stage ten comedies, ranging from farce to romance. The great tragedies were written between 1595 and1605.

The latter part of his life was spent in retirement at Stratford. He died when he was 52 years old and was buried in the local church.