ELIZABETHAN REBIRTH IN CHRISTOPHER FRY

by Lewis 'esley Barnes

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The Curriculum Studiorum

Lewis Wesley Barnes, born January the third, 1916, served in the Canadian armed forces from 1940-1946, granted the degree of Bachelor of Physical and Health Education, University of Toronto, 1949, and the degree of Bachelor of Arts, University of Toronto, 1951.
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INTRODUCTION

The nature of the subject of this thesis and the recent appearance of the playwright are such as to make requisite: a careful statement of purpose, a strict definitive section, a proof of the importance of the subject and author, and an analysis of what has been done thus far on the subject and author by others.

I. - The Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to discover and to interpret the elements of Elizabethan content and style that Christopher Fry has given rebirth to in his dramatic works- his plays. The content will refer to the tragic and comic elements which resulted from both Fry's and the Elizabethan's outlook toward life and death. Let it be carefully noted that the Elizabethans did not confine their concern with the problems of life to dramatic efforts; however, it is considered that the drama of their period more adequately revealed what was in their minds and hearts than did the prose. Furthermore, Fry, whose efforts thus far are in the dramatic medium, will be, for the purposes of this thesis on common ground with his Elizabethan predecessors, the playwrights.
It is also a purpose of this thesis to show that Fry has not only seized and held the basic elements of Elizabethan thought but that he has interpreted it in Elizabethan style. Much of his metaphor and forms of verse are in the tradition of that period.

While the thesis will concern itself with a comparison of tragedy, comedy, death, decay, humor and vitality, which this work will contend are harmoniously blended by both Fry and the Elizabethans, it is firmly stated that no political, educational, philosophical and theological systems are the specific subject and object. At the same time, it is not contended that Fry reproduces, either accidentally or by intent, an artificial copy of Elizabethan language, meter, rhythm or imagery. It is maintained that the style he uses is that which is the best vehicle for his thought; that best vehicle has strong Elizabethan style forms.

II.- The Plan of the Thesis

The plan of the thesis is, for the interests of unity, to break the thesis down into two main divisions. The first will concern itself with that element of Elizabethan rebirth in Fry that deals with the thought of the period. Under this will come chapters on tragedy, comedy, death, humor and the marching spirit. The second main division will deal with
the elements which are common to both in the expression of that thought. The second part of this work, therefore, deals with Elizabethan style found in Fry. It must be urged that it is realized that this separation of form and content involves some artificiality and implies a limitation on each. It is also realized that to do full justice to the author's thought, the expression of that thought with its overtones, suggestions, ironic and sincere moods, light and serious touches should be necessarily combined.

III Definitive Considerations

It is considered necessary to define certain terms which may connote more than one meaning. The first is that of "Elizabethan Thought". It may well be urged that the thought of that period was characterized by a puzzling diversity, that there are conflicting elements in politics, dramatics, poetry prose and religion, that there is no single clear stream that points the way to what can be called "Elizabethan Thought". The crucial point is that very vigorous diversity of opinion and thought, together with the action that sought to implement these, is the heart of the definition. Considerable study and research have brought about certain objective evaluations of the
INTRODUCTION

essential thought of the period. This thesis will rest upon the common distillate of such authorities as Woods¹, Legouis and Cazamian², and Sampson³ who consider the Elizabethan period to range from the last quarter of the sixteenth century through the first fifth of the seventeenth century. They characterize the thought of the period as one of richness, variety, experiment, love of life, concern with death, patriotism, courage and vigor. It is considered to be an age whose thought and action reveal a hitherto unparalleled concern with all aspects of all walks and ranks of life.

The term "Elizabethan Rebirth is to mean the rebirth, in the dramatic thought and style of Christopher Fry, for the first time since the seventeenth century, of the qualities of thought and style that characterized the Elizabethan period. The Puritan interlude from 1640-1660 squelched the flame entirely. Following the Puritan interlude came the licentious Restoration which marked man's concern with flesh alone.

The Neo-Classic period of the eighteenth century enthroned the rational and denied the eclecticism of the Renaissance; the revolt of romanticism against the anthropocentrism of this literature resulted in the pantheism of the first part of the nineteenth century. The Victorian period with its concern with prose and poetic treatment of matters industrial, educational and political led a trend to the ultra-realism of the twentieth century. This realism has advanced from individual discontent to the "isms" of social and group thought in literature. Fry, then, with his all around concern with man in his self-development through attitudes toward life, has brought back refreshing matter and form of the Elizabethan era particularly in drama.

The definition of the term "tragedy" will rest primarily on the concept implied in the morality play, later developed and refined by Marlowe and Shakespeare. The authorities relied on, Bradley⁴, Chambers⁵ and Cazamian,⁶ consider tragedy to be a conflict of abstractions

⁶Emile Legousis and Louis Cazamian, op. citere.
in which the good contend with the evil for possession of man's immortal soul. The individual has within himself the free will to choose the one or the other and to abide the consequences. The conflict arises between the universal and the particular. The universal represents the law of God, the law of nature, something immutable, unchangeable and basic. The particular represents the will of the individual. The conflict arises and is resolved through man's attempt to intrude his will on and over the universal. In tragedy this must fail. This is precisely the sense in which tragedy is discussed in this thesis.

Christopher Fry has formulated, without explanation, his own definition of tragedy. IN London's Adelphi Magazine, he writes...." In tragedy every moment is eternity; in comedy eternity is a moment..."7 This thesis will hold this statement to be no contradiction to the definition given before but will consider the tragedy mentioned by Fry to mean that the dividing line between good and evil has been irrevocably crossed and that the tragedy he mentions is actually completed.

In defining comedy as used in this thesis, the

7Christopher Fry, quoted from an interview contained in the Adelphi Magazine of London, Vol. 18, No. 7, issue of October, 1960, p. 15 et seq.
same yardstick of the conflict between the universal and the particular is in use. The universal in comedy will refer to the law of man, society, mores and customs, while the particular is again the will of the individual. As the supernatural elements are not at stake, sometimes the universal triumphs; sometimes the individual. It is true that the range of comedy in the Elizabethan era is wide, even under the above limitation.

The qualities of comedy best characterizing Fry and the Elizabethans are: qualities of tenderness and grace in feminine portrayals, romantic comedy, sparkling wit and dialogue which raises the comedy into the realm of imagination while keeping the feet firmly planted in reality, but which, while treading the very heights of fancy, deals with reality. These elements plus the more difficult elements of tragi-comedy constitute the core of their comedy.

In the article before cited, Fry dwelt on his definition of comedy along with that of tragedy:

*Comedy is an escape, not from truth but from despair; a narrow escape into faith. It believes in a universal cause for delight, even though knowledge of the cause is always twitched away from under us... In tragedy every moment is eternity; in comedy eternity is a moment...*  

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8Christopher Fry, in the *Adelphi Magazine of London*, op. citera.
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Here Fry is speaking of the dividing line between comedy and tragedy. Some Elizabethan comedy steers far away from this line; some remains at it. Both of these elements are present in Fry but it will be shown that that of tragi-comedy predominates. Here again, there is no contradiction of definitions; Fry is pointing out the extremely thin ice that involves man in his attempt to enjoy the temporal life without imperilling his ultimate end.

In defining the term humor as applicable to Fry and the Elizabethans, the thesis rests its comparison on the following humor extant in the earlier period: first, the robust brawling earthy humor that resulted from a willingness to come to grips with and to be amused by the commonplace; second, the humor that resulted from situations involving incongruities; third, that sparkling humor that came from play of wit on wit; fourth, and most profound of all, the humor that the Elizabethan and Fry can both feel in situations where the tragic and comic elements are barely in balance. It is that humor, states Cazamian that has "the positive virtue, the shrewdness that perceives the actual paradoxes of experience, and the agility that allows one to think
on two different planes."

IV.- Previous Work in this Field

At this date but one book has been written on Fry; it is an appreciation of Fry with emphasis on Fry's person and on his plays as stage-worthy. No comparative analysis is made in the superficial treatment with a purpose to ascertaining his literary place. The over a hundred periodical reviews which have appeared to date have confined the bulk of their comments to three phases; first, they are, for the most part critically appreciative of Fry's rich work imagery. It is fair to state that the majority liken it to the Shakespearian imagery; second, there is considerable column space devoted to the refreshing optimism which is contrasted with T.S. Eliot's frustration-motif; third, there are a few periodicals, notably English quarterlies, that have endeavored to give him a place in some dramatic group. It is with the latter group of primary sources that this thesis will buttress or refute as the case may be.

It is crucial to this work that Fry is


evaluate with the Elizabethans for thought and form as a result of reflective study; there is no attempt herein to evaluate the two with respect to their suitability for audience consumption. It will be readily granted that plays are primarily produced to be seen. However, "while men worship and respond emotionally en masse, they philosophize and reflect alone." This philosophizing and reflection on the dramatics of Fry and his predecessors of the sixteen century is the key-note of this thesis.

It is true that the popular American periodicals, especially, *Time*, *New York Times Book Review Section*, *Commonweal*, the *Nation* and some others of a weekly nature, ascribe such adjectives as "Chapman-like", "Elizabethan metaphor", "reinstatement of the comic spirit", "loveliness framed in laughter", "Twentieth century idiom", "verbal excitement", "medieval richness" and the "be-dazzled audience". There has not, as yet, been any serious American attempt to evaluate Fry's form and content in a systematic and significant manner.

The earlier English reviews ran much along the same but more restrained lines—they have exhibited a "wait and let's see more attitude." In the last year a

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few serious articles have been written, articles which must be noted here. The two recent publications of the English World Review\textsuperscript{12} have excellently considered articles, The first classifies Fry as an "abortive Georgian". This is in contrast to this thesis' view. The next edition of the World Review\textsuperscript{13} refutes this "Georgian Claim". In his latest book, Eric Partridge\textsuperscript{14} has a chapter on Fry's language. Such consideration is given to word imagery which is related to Shakespeare for wit, and to none in a spiritual or metaphysical sense.

Resting upon the authoritative definitions to Elizabethan thought, style, comedy, tragedy and humor this thesis will by textual analysis establish the kinship of Fry and the Elizabethans.

V.-The Importance and Timeliness of this Thesis.

The increasing importance of Fry as a playwright

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\textsuperscript{12}P.M. Fitzgerald. "The Verse Plays of Christopher Fry", in the \textit{World Review}, (no volume), issue of April, 1957, p. 4 et seq.

\textsuperscript{13}Robert Gittings, "Christopher Fry", in the \textit{World Review of England}, (no volume) issue of July, 1957, p. 5 et seq.

is attested to by the sale of his works as well as the increased demand for theatrical presentation. Sufficient time has elapsed for reflection and study of his thought and form. To date, no other thesis on his place among the schools of dramatists has been presented, although a work on his dramatic stage presentation has been prepared at Vanderbilt University in June, 195—. With the future appearance of a play that Fry is now engaged on, Henry II, the frontier of knowledge of Fry must be extended to inquire deeply and to report upon the question of the validity of suggestion that he is "Elizabethan". If so, then the coming chronicle play may well be of tremendous significance to the academic literary world. It is as important to attack the evaluation of Fry as a refreshing antidote to the cynical materialism and frustration of the modern stage plays, and to scmeich superficial periodical reports as to his "novelty value" on the stage as to classify him as a dramatist. The one precedes the other.

VI. - Biographical Sketch of Christopher Fry.

In order to adduce Fry's background and his ideas on dramatic theory, a brief account of the man and his efforts is noted. Christopher Fry was born in Bristol, England in 1907. He is the son of a lay missionary who
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labored many years in trying to alleviate the misery of humanity found wallowing their existence in the slums of Bristol.

He attended the Bedford Modern Grammar school where he wrote creditable poetry and a verse drama at the age of eleven. He left school at eighteen to commence the teaching to it. Tiring of this, he joined the Bath Repertory company where he made a stubborn living. After trying to edit a magazine, he turned his hand toward writing popular songs. In 1935, he accepted the position of Director of the Wells Repertory theatre at Tunbridge Wells. He found considerable difficulty in writing drama until he happened to see John Gielgud play Shakespeare's Richard II. As a result of this inspiring and inspiring experience he wrote a play for Dr. Barnado's homes.

He toured England for two years with this play. After marrying Phyllis Hart in 1937, he wrote, in 1938, the Boy with a Cart. This was a pageant of a fifty-year old village church. His next play was The Tower, a humorous and lyrical play about Tewksbury Abbey. His next play, Thursday's Child went on at Albert Hall. In 1938, he became Director of the Oxford Playhouse. With the advent of World War II, his writing ceased for five years. During
the war, which he entered in 1941, he asserted his
Quaker objection to bearing arms by classifying himself
as a conscientious objector. For this, he was assigned
to the Pioneer Corps in which corps he distinguished
himself in loyal and dangerous service.

At the end of the war, he started to write in
earnest; for his work, he chose verse as his medium.
After his discharge in 1944, he wrote, in 1946, A
Phoenix Too Frequent. It was successful at the Mercury
and Arts theatres. The short play is the adaptation of
a story from Petronius of a Roman widow who falls in
love with a sentry guarding her husband's tomb.

The tragedy, The First Born was written and
produced in 1946; this play treats of the theme of Moses,
Pharaoh and the plagues of Egypt. In 1948 came his
second tragedy, Thor, with Angels; this treats of the
impact of Christianity on the Jutes. In 1948 came the
play which made him famous: The Shaw prize for the best
play of the year went to Fry's The Lady's Not For Burning.
The theme of witch-hunting in a rural English town of the
fifteenth century is the background of both a romantic
and tragi-comedy. His next play, Venus Observed has an
autumnal air as compared with the spring air in the
Lady's Not For Burning. It is a magic vehicle in the
Elizabethan tradition of life, death, autumn but life eternal. It is, in many respects, comparable to The Tempest.

His latest play, 1961, *Sleep of Prisoners* is as near to tragedy as it is possible to get without surrender to the forces of evil; the best appellation could be the coined phrase of "tragedy in abeyance."

At the present time, he is engaged in writing a drama, *Henry II*.

The interpretation of his works receives little or no help from him. His statements have been terse and few. Other than his definition of comedy and tragedy before cited, the only pointed direction is from two direct quotations: first,

> what I am trying to say is that life itself is real and the most miraculous of miracles. In my plays I want to look at life— at the commonplace of existence as if we had just turned a corner and run into it for the first time....

the second:

> I lay the acceptance of poetry in the theatre nowadays to two things. One is the reaction to the long hold of "surface realism" with its sparse, cut and dried language. The other is that

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15 "The Lady's Not For Burning", in *Time*, of the United States, Vol. 56, No. 58, issue of November 20, 1960, p. 46 et seq. (Fry requoted on page 49)
world itself seems rather cut down a bit—we have all felt that since the war—and poetry provides something people lack and wish for; a richness and a reaffirmation.

Again and again, through the medium of his plays, Fry will affirm that living life to its utmost with its solemn promise of death and its dependence on the free will of man are the only real values. In this, he is Elizabethan in matter and form.

VII.—Summary

By use of such primary sources as Pry's and the Elizabethan's drama texts, and through examination of the more thoughtful periodical articles, the thesis will attempt to prove that Christopher Fry has come up with Elizabethan Rebirth in his plays— in matter and form. The definitions of Elizabethan Rebirth and thought rest on established authorities before noted.

The plan is to deal first with the matter: tragedy, comedy, death, decay, humor and vigor; then next with the style and form: metaphor, imagery, versification and tone quality. The importance and timeliness is

attested to by lack of academic consideration of his place in literature and by his popularity as the harbinger of a refreshing note in the theatre of today.
CHAPTER ONE

R.BIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY IN FRY

While Greek tragedy had been raised to a high standard of perfection some two thousand years before the Elizabethans, it is vital to realize that Elizabethan and Greek tragedy are not comparable. While the basic technical tenets are the same, the philosophy and theology of Greek and Elizabethan were so divergent as to give tragedy a different conception. The summum bonum of life for the Greeks was a physical well-being. Evil-doing to another was reprehensible and punished by retribution; but that it was so punishable was due to the fact that the physical well-being of the victim was threatened. In the Greek world the universal law was the sanctity of the individual's temporal existence.

This was not true of the Christian conception of tragedy. This conception, brought to a high art by the Elizabethans, focused on the struggle for men's souls by the forces of good and evil. The willing
surrender to an individual will of evil against the universal force of right was the essence of Elizabethan tragedy.

It is in this sense of tragedy that Fry will be considered to have brought back the elements of Elizabethan tragedy. He, as the Elizabethans, was concerned with the innate ability and duty of the individual to confront and contend with life without usurping universal values. Before proceeding to concrete examples of the two, it is necessary to consider the elements of tragedy that occur in drama since the Elizabethans and which vary so greatly.

Commencing with the Neo-Classicists whose anthropocentric ideals left little room for supernatural values, passing through the "escape-minded" romanticists and ending with the compromising hypocrisy of the Victorians, one finds no dramatic tragedy. George Eliot's admitted tragic bent reveals an all too-apparent utilitarianism.

Commencing with Ibsen and persisting through the mid-twentieth century, there have been tragic dramatic vehicles that purport to reveal an impersonal sort of tragedy. This takes several forms: first, there is the blind evolutionary force or the Shaw-clan which sweep the individual on to his doom; second, there is the social tragedy that results from man's heredity; third, there
is the tragedy that results from man's struggle against his physical environment; fourth, there is the psychological tragedy that makes man a victim of his sub-conscious elements; and, fifth, there is the tragedy that makes man a victim of the "isms"—nationalism, communism, socialism, and so forth. The tragedy that is labored in the twentieth century is that the world is so ordered that man's efforts are puerile, futile and hopeless; struggle can avail nothing; man is enslaved by his own institutions.

Commencing with the society of the old miracle and morality plays, and intensified by the Elizabethan society, man was little less than the angels. Having a sinful nature, but also having the powers of self-redemption, he faced rigorous life with the knowledge that his worth depended on the zest for the struggle with the physical world, and a realization of his ultimate end in the supernatural world. In view of this high estate of the individual, he carried his destiny in his own hands. In order to stress the height of the action the Elizabethans and Fry raised their characters to men of high position. In Gerboduc,\(^1\)

\(^1\)Sackville and Norton, *Gerboduc*, 1562
The Spanish Tragedy\textsuperscript{2}, Tamburlaine the Great\textsuperscript{3}, The First Born\textsuperscript{4} and Thor, with Angels\textsuperscript{5}, the main characters are of high birth and position. Tamburlaine, at first, a shepherd\textsuperscript{6}, later becomes a great power.

In both Fry and the Elizabethan dramatists, the men (and women) are highly intelligent, physically powerful and action-minded. They are not the pawns and slaves of heredity and environment. Each, in his or her contention in love, hate, jealousy and ambition knows the difference between right and wrong. After a struggle, the forces of evil are chosen over universal values of good. At no time is the question of what "ought" and "should" be hidden from the character. Good and evil, right and wrong, reward and punishment, and heaven and hell are before each.

In the Elizabethan Gorboduc, a play similar in many respects to Shakespeare's \textit{King Lear}, tragedy results from different causes to the several characters. Gorboduc, the elderly king, chooses to present adulation of his sons

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{2}Thomas Kyd, \textit{The Spanish Tragedy}, 1586
\textsuperscript{3}Christopher Marlowe, \textit{Tamburlaine the Great}, 1588
\textsuperscript{4}Christopher Fry, \textit{The First Born}, 1946
\textsuperscript{5}--- Thor, with Angels, 1948
\end{quote}
over his sacred duties to his subjects; the jealousy of
the elder son, Ferrex, is stronger than his filial duties;
the passionate, power-driven nature of Porrex leads him to
murder his brother, Ferrex; and the Queen, Videna, gives way
to hate and passionate revenge in the murder of Ferrex. At
no time are any of these persons in doubt as to the ultimate
values; in each case they surrender to misdoings. Fry's,
The First Born has many tragic elements in common with
Gorboduc, King Lear and Tamburlaine. Fry's play, which
at first glance, seems to be a noble rendition of the
flight of the sons of Israel from the Egyptians, is, in
effect, the tragedy of a number of the characters, Anath,
Pharaoh's sister, suffers the tragedy that results from a
selfish fierce and possessive love; Seti, the most
powerful figure in the play, has put his will to power
over humanity; Miriam, cynical and callous, has put her
faith in God aside; Shendi, Miriam's son, has preferred
position to loyalty; and Moses, ironically enough, in
choosing to free the Israelites started them on the road
to centuries of wandering and slavery. For Moses, in his
obdurate and wilful nature insisted on substituting
revenge for charity.

Each of these characters - as with Eliot's
Bulstrode knew the right and universal values to be followed, but willed to follow his individual desires. The point to grasp is that they were not swept along their course by a blind and unfeeling destiny.

Teusret, Pharaoh's daughter, has much in common with Cordelia; both have patience, faith and compassion. Ramesses, Pharaoh's son, may be well likened to the noble Edgar. Seti and Moses represent the forces of evil as clearly as Edmund and Cornwall. Both plays are as much the representation of good and evil as they are of particular persons.

The storm, severe and powerful note of the passion of the individual will to power, that is no small part, of the stirring Tamburlaine is equally strongly marked in Fry's The First Born. The sheer determination of the Pharaoh, Seti, and the Israelite, Moses, to over-ride all opposition, natural and supernatural is the dominant chord in both these dramas. It was not that Tamburlaine

6 Bulstrode is the classic character in George Eliot's Middlemarch; having tremendous capacity for good, he elected to wreck several lives by doing evil.

7 Cordelia, heroine in Shakespeare's King Lear

8 Edgar, noble personage in King Lear

9 Edmund, evil force in King Lear

10 Cornwall, evil Duke in King Lear
was ignorant of God and his laws; rather, knowing that they were in force, he chose to substitute his own. His abducted wife, Zenocrate, knowing full well the evil of her passion for Tamburlaine, and equally well aware of her duty and honor, insisted on her own damnation, Seti, warned again and again of the Will of God, refused to bow his will to the greater good. Even under the great afflictions of locusts that have been visited on his kingdom for his obstinacy, he wills to power:

"we can look forward to that, and the change of fortune which I shall force presently. I haven't by any means put my policy aside." Then, but little later, he cried: "I made life in your mother to hand me strength when I should need it... I made you exactly for this time and I find you screeching to escape it".\(^\text{12}\)

If Seti was bent on securing the power of Egypt through any means, Moses was no less bent on delivering the Israelites. In themselves, the integrity of one was as important as the other; however, in tragedy, it is the means expressed by individual will that determines the conflict with the universal. The truth may well rest in

\(^{11}\text{Christopher Fry, *The First Born*, II, ii, 11. 117-21} \\
^{12}\text{Ibidium, II, ii, 11. 252-55}
the fact that this play is more than historical account of the authoritarian behavior of the majority toward a minority, of the Egyptian to the Israelite. It is an examination of the ethics of several personages involved in the historical account. The danger inheres in the fact that the reader, from theological consideration may find himself pre-judged in favor of the Israelite; or that he may adopt a protective role for the "under-dog".

Thus, in his obduracy and self-righteousness, Moses is much to blame and is a tragic figure in the entire episode. If, on the one hand, he may be regarded as a courageous hero who challenges the power of an empire; on the other hand, he is a disloyal traitor who, fostered on Egyptian kindness, refuses aid in her hour of need. His murder of the Egyptian over-seer for the beating of a hebrew brick-layer is a criminal cold-blooded homicide. The death of the blameless Ramses is as much a part of Moses evil-doing as that of Seti, the Pharaoh. In no instance is there an attempt to solve the problems of the Israelites by reason. From the beginning, Moses is hostile. To the idolizing Ramseses, Moses cruelly crushes a friendship.
We're not enemies so much as creatures of division. You and I, Rameses, like money in a purse, ring together only to be spent for different reasons.13

Certainly, there is the super-egoism of Tamburlaine and Macbeth14 in the rolling pronouncement of Moses to Seti:

I am here by fury and the heart. Is that not a law? I am here to appease the unconsummated Resourceless dead, to join life to the living. Is that not underwritten by nature? Is that not a law? Do not ask me why I do it: I live. I do this thing. I was born this action. Who can say for whom, for what ultimate region Of life? A deed is what it becomes. And yet What are the laws? Despite you, through you, upon you, I am compelled.15

Here is individualism, deliberate and responsible. At the end, when Moses, realizes, with striking horror, that Rameses life is forfeited by the struggle between himself and Seti for power, he admits the greater power of God:

God, now good has turned on itself and becomes its own enemy. Have we to say that truth is only punishment? What must we say to be free of the bewildering mesh of God?16

13 Christopher Fry, The First Born, I, ii, ll. 400-4.
14 Macbeth, tragic figure of Shakespeare's Macbeth
15 Christopher Fry, The First Born, I,iii, ll. 408-18.
This is in startling contradistinction to his determination early in the play to spare Rameses. This passage shows two things: first, his knowledge that his course of action would deliberately cause pain and death, second, that he knew of the innocence of Rameses:

"...Good has a singular strength
Not known to evil; and I, an ambitious heart
Needing interpretation. But not through this boy,
Never through this boy. I will not use him!"

But he did!

It cannot be soundly argued, it is suggested here, that Moses would sacrifice the individual life to the group, for he speaks in the spirit of the Elizabethans when he states:

It is the individual man
It is his individual freedom who can mature
With his warm spirit the unripe world.
That would you make of man? If you diminish him
To a count of labouring limbs, you will also dwindle
And be an unmeaning body, decomposing
Imperceptibly under heavy ornaments.

Thus, when he realized that his will was gained at the expense of innocence and righteousness, he realized, as in the case of Shakespeare's repentant Edmund:

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17Ibid., I, ii, ll.570-6.
18Ibid., I, i, ll.686-693.
Although Fry did not gain wide recognition until the production of his play, The Lady's Not for Burning, this tragedy, The First Born is one of his finest plays. There have been but two significant articles written on this play, which is steadily gaining in favor. In his book on Fry, Stanford Derek states that Fry is "...showing the evil resulting from centralisation" in his tragedy, The First Born. In this statement, it is felt that Stanford is falling into the error of granting such a thing as a "group mind", a "state mind" as causing tragedy. Fry, himself, repeats the thought expressed on page ten of this thesis that it is the individual man who stands or falls in his dealing with temporal and spiritual matters. Man does not act and speak through a group mind or will. He has an individual soul, responsible to the universal law for its self-redemption from evil.

The second significant statement is from L. & P. M. Fitzgerald who states that:

18 Shakespeare, King Lear, V, iii, 11, 172-3


It would have been better to wait, for this tragedy of the Plagues of Egypt in which, incredible as it seems Moses never confronts Pharaoh squarely, is a wishy-washy piece...... the authority is made so weak and unsure of itself that the clash dissolves away into endless words.
Fitzgerald has fallen into the same error as Stanford, for the play is not a tragedy of the Plagues of Egypt but the tragedy of individuals who, in their individual wills, place the particular over the universal. In this sense it is impossible for Moses to confront Pharaoh squarely for both have only the individual will in common. A true understanding of the play hinges back to the elements, heretofore described of Elizabethan tragedy. The next consideration is Fry's second tragedy, Thor, with Angels.

In the true Elizabethan tradition, Fry leaps across time and space—from the Holy Land to the England of the sixth century. While classed by Stanford as a religious festival play, it is, in effect, a tragedy. To Cymen, a Jutish leader, comes a revelation of the specific Christian virtues of mercy and sacrifice. As in the Shakespearean and Marlowian tragedy, the elements of tragedy focus on one or two characters. Cymen's hesitation and speculation reveal an agonizing doubt between cruelty and murder on the one hand, and mercy and love on the other. His ultimate surrender to evil is the more horrible in view of the simultaneous recognition of Christianity by the Jutes, and by the Angles. Tedfrid, the second tragic character wittingly surrenders his need for obedience to his desire for blood.
In true Elizabethan fashion, there are foils to the tragic figures. Hoel, the British prisoner, and Martina, the daughter to Cymen represent two forces of good which Cymen and Tadfrid resist. While the other characters assent and aid in the murder of Hoel, during Cymen's absence, it is Tadfrid who knows the difference between the right and the wrong. It is a condition of Christian tragedy that the figure must know the difference and then deliberately choose the value beneath the universal law.

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, it is Hamlet's hesitation between the good and the evil that makes his act the more horrible. It is the same hesitation of Cymen that ensures Hoel's murder, although the blow is not struck by Cymen himself. Cymen, like Hamlet, could not accept Christian mercy and defeat of revenge; in the last analysis both assert the will to individual strength and triumph. Fry, through no kindness, permits Cymen to live on and suffer the more subtle and horrible death in life. This may be due to a greater refinement in thought of both the modern playwright and audience. If so, the refinement is none the less more horrible. The Elizabethan dramatists were not prone to allow much time for repentance. Shakespeare, great dramatist that he was, sometimes was
too stark and severe. There were times in which he did not say enough. However, this charge could not be levelled against the Elizabethans, Greene, Webster and Marlowe.\textsuperscript{21}

The intense concern with man's soul is nowhere better revealed in:

\begin{verbatim}
Now thou hast but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually!

Or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{Fry leaves a life}

time of agony for repentance to Cymen:

\begin{verbatim}
For while I leave one muscle of my strength
Undisturbed, or hug one coin of ease
Or private peace while the huge debt of pain
Mounts over all the earth,
Or fearing for myself, take half a stride
Where I could leap; while any hour remains
Indifferent, I have no right or reason
To raise a cry against this blundering cruelty
Of man.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{Tadfrid, lost, does not repent, and like Macbeth, fears but the ills of the temporal world.}

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{21}Marlowe, \textit{History of Dr. Faustus}, Scene XIV, lines 65 et seq.
\textsuperscript{22}Marlowe, \textit{History of Dr. Faustus}, Scene XIV, lines 65 et seq.
\textsuperscript{23}Fry, Thor, \textit{With Angels}, p. 53, lines 18ff.
\end{verbatim}
Bring him to the tree; we'll off him
In 'Oden's way, the 'Oden death. Come on;
We'll be well out of our fear.  

Yet, Tadfrid is
more to be pitied than Cymen, who, standing in the clear
light of God's injunction to mercy and love, hesitated
while preferring his earthly loyalties. It is Cymen,
who like all the tragic Elizabethan characters, also
failed in deeds of time. Like the Elizabethan characters,
he was a noble, a man born to lead, a figure with great
responsibilities, an individual will. Having revealed
unto him the powers of mercy and love, he still
preferred to deny them, for at heart he willed to be
"the master of my own voice."  

In summary, then, Fry's tragedies, The First Born
and Thor, with Angels should be apprehended in the spirit
of the Christian and Elizabethan tragedy. That is, the
main concern is the contention of evil and good for man's
soul. Supernatural considerations are the all-important.
Man has within himself the powers of self-redemption from
his fallen state.

24 Ibid., p. 50, lines 6-9.
There is no group mind, no social mind, no blind force of destiny that determines man's ultimate end. His salvation depends on his individual will to prefer the universal good to the individual desire. His salvation can only be assured when the individual will is in harmony with universal good.

Moses and Seti are not the forces of nationalism, socialism, authoritarianism, but two rational individuals, who, faced with responsibility to do the right elect to do what each prefers - all to the exclusion of the greater good. In the same way, Tadfrid and Cymen fail, at the critical moment, to do right for righteousness sake. Fry uses the Elizabethan yardstick.
Because Fry has written more comedy than tragedy, because of the treatment his comedies have received on the stage and in reviews, and because of the large element of tragi-comedy in his plays, this section must be quite extensive.

Basically, the difference between comedy and tragedy is that the values that inhere in the salvation of man's soul are not at stake. The universal in comedy refers to modes, customs, fashions, and so forth. The conflict is intense; sometimes the fashion wins, sometimes the individual will triumph. In either case, it doesn't matter, vitally.

Death seldom occurs; if so, it is off stage and handled in an innocuous manner. The play ends on a happy note; the reader feels that all comes out well. The play generally deals with the three temporal "K's"—money, marriage, and manners; by manners, one refers to social position. If the hero achieves a successful
marriage, if he has sufficient money and if he acquires a suitable social position, he has his reward. These are the "good" of comedy. If he loses the heroine; if he lands in bankruptcy and if he fails to achieve social standing, these are considered to be the results of temporal evils resulting from his own nature. This, of course, is an oversimplification; there are many twists and turns to comedy. One of the M's is often achieved happily at the expense of the others. Money is usually considered of less value than marriage. In short, all action and conflict stops short of the imperilling of the soul.

There are various degrees of comedy; there are special types. Elizabethan comedy is Christian comedy! In such comedy, there is always revealed, by approaching supernatural values, the difference between temporal and eternal happiness; between man's worldly and his ultimate end. For this reason, there is the rather intense moral note in this comedy. That then, is not Christian and Elizabethan comedy. The comedy of manners of the Restoration Period is not for it was immoral. It permitted adultery and licentiousness to flourish and to be successful. The modern social comedies of Coward, Shaw, Kauffman and others of that ilk are not. The humor depends on a stabbing satire that ridicules the moral
institutions of men. Even when marriage is successful, it often appears as the result of necessity and as something to gratify physical passion alone. The dynamic materialism of the twentieth century has given rise to a type of comedy that has the trappings of true comedy but a decadent content. For example, in Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, the representation of a satiated middle-aged business man and an immoral and puerile child, Cleopatra, borders on the obscene. The brilliant satirical sallies mask the Shavian theory of the "urge to becomingness". A becomingness in which man is a blind instrument of acquisitiveness, passion and decadence.

The frank, brutal realism found in Noel Coward's Hands Across the Sea represents frivolity, tastelessness, affectativeness and arrogance. The Gilpins, who have been extended every courtesy in a trip to Malaya, reveal the realism beneath an apparently cordial exterior when their benefactors visit England:

Peter: You know perfectly well I haven't time to take mothers and fathers and daughters with bad legs round the dockyard-

Piggle: It wouldn't take a minute, they took us all over their rubber plantation.

1Noel Coward. From Tonight at 8:30, New York, Doubleday and Doran, 1936.
2Ibid.
This comedy is to represent a satire on the customs of the typical Englishman. In refutation of all this, Elizabethan comedy is as individualistic as its tragedy. As the individual has within himself the potential for his self-development in tragedy, so does he have within himself the power to achieve happiness on a temporal sphere.

In Elizabethan comedy, he, an individual strives for the elements desired in comedy so that his temporal experience may be that of happiness. He believes in the holiness and sanctity of marriage. He believe in love, although he may as often be in love with love as the object of his love. To him, (and to her) there was certainly enough realism. The world was different, decay and death were inevitable; but the individual in romance, marriage, position and gain had the opportunity within himself to strive to obtain these from life in a joyous and zestful combat. This is the romantic and moral element of Elizabethan comedy whose aspects, it will be shown, as grasped by Christopher Fry.

In the zeal of conflict; in the intensity of desire and in the coming to grasp with these worldly matters, man often treads perilously close to the forbidden borderline of the eternal. As the dramatists
matured, they brought their dramatic vehicles closer to this line. It is in this sense that the word "tragic-comedy" is employed. Shakespeare and Fry, both, hover at the precise point where the characters in their striving for the worldly endanger their souls by the means they employ. It is in this sense that Fry's remark that "comedy is eternity in a moment"\textsuperscript{3} is employed. It is not an especial kind of comedy; it is a perilous degree of comedy. That which keeps it comedy is the fact that at the precise fraction of time that the individual would surrender his ultimate happiness for his temporal, he withdraws. In both the cases of the Elizabethans and Fry, there is an intermingling in most of his plays of both the romantic and the tragi-comic; in particular plays the tragi-comic predominates. The first consideration will be the romantic elements of Elizabethan comedy that Fry has revived in his own plays. What are some of the romantic elements in the Elizabethan plays--of the comedy type?

John Lyly\textsuperscript{4} refined the coarse humor that was well on its way to dominating the morality plays. He gave the sentiments a delicacy, a refinement and a

\textsuperscript{3}Christopher Fry, op citere (in introduction)

\textsuperscript{4}John Lyly, (1554-1606) an Elizabethan author, and dramatist, noted for refinement and wit in comedy.
grace. To this, Robert Greene added definite romantic dialogue. Both of these were combined in varying degree by Shakespeare. Fry has combined these two elements, more noticeably in Venus Observed and in The Lady's Not for Burning. To these two varieties the earthiness of Udall was seasoning. Permeating all these elements that gave rise to romantic Elizabethan comedy is the concentration on the individual—the individual dominates the play.

Despite the euphisms, and the Monologues, there is still a refreshing strength born of the individual in Lyly. In his Campaspe, Alexander reveals, apart from pretty sentimentalism, a lively quality. Loving Campaspe, he loves his duty more and marries her to another. Beneath the daintiness of the dialogue, Alexander has the Elizabethan staunchness in comedy.

And since you have been always partaker of my triumph, thou shalt be partaker of my torments. I love! Hephæstion, I love! I love Campaspe. An eclipse in the sun is more than the falling of a star; none can conceive the torments of a king unless he be a king, whose desires are not inferior to their dignity...If the agonies of love be dangerous in a subject, whether they be not more deadly unto Alexander...

---

5 Robert Greene, (1560-1592) whose writings and plays introduced a personal and romantic note of charm.

6 Nicholas Udall, (1506-56) whose Ralph Roiger Doister, although writing in the laws of classical drama has gaiety and vigor.

Much of Fry's dialogue is also dainty, graceful and addressed to the intellectual. Nevertheless it still has a ringing soundness; in Fry's *A Phoenix too Frequent*, the guard, Tegeus Chromis, is torn between love for Dynamene and his duty:

If only I did. If only you knew the effort it costs me To mount those steps again into an untrustworthy, Unpredictable, unenlightened night, And turn my back on on a state of affairs, I can only call it a vision, a hope, a promise, A By that I mean loyalty, enduring passion, Unrecking bravery and beauty all in one.

Certainly the language and thought of Lyly and Fry is far removed from the terse biting realism of today's plays. Nevertheless there is a dignity and worth in the former that are missing in the latter.

Not only did Greene introduce a personal and intimate note of charm to Elizabethan comedy, but he had the quality of tenderness requisite to the delineation of feminine purity. In *Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay*, Greene gave the first effective portrayal of a pure woman in love—Margaret. The charm of utterance, later more fully

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developed by Shakespeare is revealed in:

Margaret: As it please Lord Lacy; but love's foolish looks
Think footsteps miles and minutes to be hours

Margaret: Then, gentles, note that love hath little stay,
Nor can the flames that Venus sets on fire
Be kindled but by fancy's motion.

Consider well the moving charm and beauty of Margaret's following avowel of purity:

Is not heaven's joy before earth's fading bliss,
And life above sweeter than life in love.

Fry's Alizon, smitten with love for Richard cries out: "I've an April blindness. You're hidden in a cloud of crimson catherine wheels." Later she echoes her honest love for the same Richard:

But whenever my thoughts are cold and I lay them against Richard's name, they seem to rest
On the warm ground where the summer sits
As golden as a bumblee.

Fry is in the best tradition of Greene and

9 Robert Greene, _Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay_, III, ii, 11. 154-5
10 Ibidium, III, iii, 11.51-54
11 Ibid., V, i, 11.75-76
12 Christopher Fry, _The Lady's Not For Burning_, I, line 141-2
13 Ibid., III, 11.578-32.
Shakespeare when the lovely individual, Alizon, gives expression to the depth, the vigor as well as the moral quality of her love:

I have become
A woman, Richard, because I love you, I know
I was a child three hours ago. And yet
I love you as deeply as many year could make me,
But less deeply than many years will make me.

................................
Everything I loved
Before has come to one meeting place in you
And you have gone out into everything I love

.........................................................
We must never leave each other now, or else
We should perplex the kindness of God.\^\[14\]

The Elizabethan Dekker\^\[15\] refined and polished the roughness of the pre-Elizabethan Udall. His cheerfulness, his freshness, his rollicking humor are in the best Elizabethan and Shakespearian tradition. The vigorous -, yet decent, expressions of Elizabethan comedy are best revealed in Dekker's, The Shoemakers' Holiday. The lively journeyman Firk in his intelligent foolishness echoes the characteristic note:

\[\text{Master, I am as dry as dust to hear my fellow Roger talk of fair weather; let us pray for good weather, and let clowns and ploughboys and those}\]

\[\text{Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning,}\]
\[\text{Act III, ll. 550 and passim.}\]

\[\text{Thomas Dekker, writer of the gayest Comedy in the Elizabethan era. The Shoemakers' Holiday was his best.}\]
The humorous
imagination of Fry is rooted in a practical sense of what is real-reality. The same quality is reflected in
the sprightly Nicholas of Fry's *The Lady's Not for
Burning*. Underneath the rough, uncouth exterior there is a sparkling imaginative character which never loses sight of reality.

Come in, come in, lizon dear, this Richard Is all very well, but I was conceived as a hammer And born in rising wind. I apologize For boasting, but once you know my qualities I can drop back into a quite brilliant Humility. God have mercy upon me, You have such little hands. I knew I should love you. 17

The feminine counterpart of Nicholas can be found in the lively, exhilarating Doto of Fry's *A Phoenix too Frequent*. Another term that can describe such people in the Elizabethan comedy, as well as that of Fry, is the irrepressible individualism that keeps bubbling up: Doto, forced to accompany her mistress to the tomb of the latter's late departed husband, revolts sharply

16 Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, II, iii, 11.25-29

against death while there is still the urge to live:

Honesty, I would rather have to sleep
with a bald bee-keeper who was wearing his boots
Than to spend more days fasting and thirsting and crying.
In a tomb, I shouldn't have said that. Pretend
I didn't hear myself. But life and death
Is cat and dog in this double-bed of a world.
My master, my poor master, was a man
Whose nose was as straight as a little buttress,
And now he has taken it into Elysium
Where it won't be noticed among all the other straightness.18

While Dekker, Lyly, and Greene were masters in their
own particular style in comedy, it was Shakespeare whose
greatness was such as to blend the ingredients into each
single play. Fry has done the same thing. It is true
that Shakespeare developed his art—not all of his plays are
equal; this is no less true of Fry. The latter, at the
beginning of his career, has still much more to develop.

However, Fry has moved rather quickly to tragico
comedy as the dominant note in his plays; while Shakespeare
took some fifteen years to reach the stage. Nevertheless,
there is much of the romantic in Fry. Gordon19 considers
that all Shakespeare's comedies have the double world:

18 Ibid., A Phoenix too Frequent. London, Hollis &
Carter, 1946, 70 p., (p. 8, 11, 11 et seq.)
19 George Gordon, Shakespearean Comedy, and Other
Gordon is paraphrased as to his chapter on "The World of the
Comedies" commencing on page 41.
first, the world of youth, dreams and laughter; second, the workaday world which brings the scene back to reality. The love story is the plot-serious, warm and poetical; the comic story is the under-plot. These plays are rich and sweet with music. While all these qualities may be found in, to some degree, all the comedies he wrote, they are particularly prevalent in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. There is much to parallel the qualities found in these Shakespearian comedies on examining Fry's efforts.

In *Twelfth Night*, the love sentiments of Olivia bear happy resemblance to those of Alizon.20 The sheer romantic beauty and poetry of her confession to Viola is seldom surpassed:

Caesarico, by roses of spring,
By maidhood, honour, truth and everything,
I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride,
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide.21

The sentiments of Alizon

before noted are revealed in:

20 Alizon, romantic and pure woman in Fry's *The Lady's Not for Burning*, op. citere.

21 Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, III, i, ll.152-5
I have become
A woman, Richard, because I love you, I know
I was a child three hours ago, 'nd yet
I love you as deeply as many years could make me,
But less deeply than many years will make me. "

Viola, the lovely,
witty heroine of Twelfth Night reflects many of the
qualities of Jannet, Fry's heroine and empirica; in
The Lady's Not for Burning. Viola, that earthly realist
utters:

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm I' th'bud,
Feed on her damask cheek; she pined in thought;
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience in a monument,
Smiling at grief. "as not this love indeed:
We men may say more, swear more; but, indeed,
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love. 23

Jennet, as wordly as Viola, but who like her,
prefers, in the final summation, the fine things in
life, echoes desire for love:

......................................................... By a quirk
Of unastonished nature, your obscene
Decaying figure of vegetable fun
Can drag upon a woman's heart, as though


23Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, II, iv, 11.30-39
Heaven were dragging up the roots of hell.
What is to be done? Something compels each of us into
The terrible fallacy that man is desirable
And there's no escaping into truth. The crimes
And cruelties leave us longing, and campaigning
Love still pitches his tent of light among
The suns and moons...........

I have suddenly come
Upon my heart and where it is I see no help for.24

In Venus Observed, a development over the prize-winning The Lady's Not For Burning, there is the atmosphere of fall as compared with the latter's spring air. Nevertheless, the same romantic enchantment prevails. The name of the heroine, Perpetua, indicates a romantic permanence. In the play, A Phoenix Too Frequent, Dynamene—note the vigor and life of the name—represents the romantic force that turns from death until life itself has been assayed. Dynamene asserts her right to romance:

Who are they who think they can discipline souls
right off the earth? What discipline is that?
Chorēs, love is the only discipline
And we're the disciples of love. I hold you to that;
 Hold you, hold you!25

The romantic nature of

24 Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not for Burning, op. cit., page 59, ll. 4 et seq.
25 Christopher Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, op. cit., page 68, ll. 9 et seq.
a combination of Beatrice\textsuperscript{26} and Roselinde\textsuperscript{27} reveals
the romantic elements of Elizabethan comedy:

\begin{quote}
I've come home to be home
A pigeon's return—just so simple, Poppadillo.
I wanted to stand where I first grew, and to have
My roots and my branches all in one place together.
And that's no curious thing. Here, swinging
On my swing, with the Atlantic foam still racing
Under my eyelids, I seem at rest already.
And so I sent no word to say that I was coming,
Because, in the sense that means the most,
I was here all the time.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

There, as in the core
of Elizabethan comedy, is the breath-taking ability to
raise the fact to the fancy and to make both credible.

The clowns, the tradesmen and the melancholy
wits of Shakespeare, in particular, reduced, on
occasion the imaginative to the grimly real. While
Fry has no clowns as such, the characters he uses for
this purpose differ in language and raiment, but not
in thought. The worldliness of Doto\textsuperscript{29}, the

\textsuperscript{26} The witty, volatile heroine of Shakespeare's
\textit{Much Ado About Nothing}.

\textsuperscript{27} Rosalind, romantic idealist of Shakespeare's
\textit{As You Like It}.

\textsuperscript{28} Fry, \textit{Venus Observed}, London, Oxford Press,
1949, p. 27-28

\textsuperscript{29} Doto, op. cit, p. 23
unimaginative Jessie Dill, the "this-worldly" Tapperoom, and the rock and soil of Nicholas are equal counterparts of the Elizabethan appreciation of man's lesser motives and his down-to-earthness. Together, they blend into the picture of zestful life. The pictures are made by individuals, not forces.

In the introduction to this thesis, it has been shown that Fry's definition of comedy relates specifically to tragi-comedy. In this, to be precise, the individual often confuses the universal values in comedy for those in tragedy. Another way of putting the same thing would be to say that in tragi-comedy, the individual often prefers the universal values (M's) of comedy to eternal values. This perilous close skirting in which the individual draws back at the last moment is the essence of this particular degree. Of course, all comedy, with its conflict,

30 Practical woman in Venus Observed.
31 Tapperoom, bored Justice in The Lady's Not for Burning.
32 Nicholas, op citere, p. 23.
33 Refer to xi in the Introduction to this thesis.
bears the incipient and potential elements of tragedy; however, the stronger the individuals in comedy, the more likely it is that sharp and bitter notes will intrude.

The strong emphasis on the individual that is entertained by Fry and that was characteristic of Elizabethan drama renders the elements of tragedy in comedy more noticeable than in any other era of drama which may be said to be Christian. It may be well remarked that the twentieth century drama with its emphasis on social satire is more marked with tragic-comedy than the entire dramatic output in English literature up to that time. As Lewisohn states, the dramas ... parallels the novel in its preoccupation with social protest and with sex. Typical plays which bear the external trappings of comic-tragedy are: Mark Reed's, Yes, My Darling Daughter, Claire Soothe's, The Women, Robert Sherwood's Idiot's Delight, Clifford Odet's, Awake and Sing. There are many, many, others. The individual finds himself in an unfortunate position as a result of family, community or political problems.

and protests. The world of reality is an ugly place operated by futile humanity. When the individual comes out "all right" in the modern comedy, it is usually the result of accident. In Claire Boothe's, The Women, the feminine is presented as being a force of scandal, perjuries, lust and viciousness. Although the heroine, through no will power and virtue of her own, is restored to her position as a wife, there is the impression left that this happy ending is not the usual. In other words, in comedy, the hero or heroine of the twentieth century cannot hope, as an individual, to gain, through his own efforts, either temporal or eternal happiness.

This is not the case in Elizabethan comedy, nor in that of Fry. The individual, a free entity insofar as having the powers for choosing good or evil, is responsible for, despite cleverly arranged accidents, his own happiness. Adultery, fornication and love based on a utilitarian basis do not prosper with these. In Restoration drama, and commencing with Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession, through twentieth century comedy, these unpleasant elements do prosper.

It is a fair statement that modern tragi-comedy is characterized by a turning aside, more by accident, from material disaster and physical death.
It is also a fair statement, and a necessary one, that Elizabethan comedy differs from other comedy on the basis of the responsibility placed on the individual for the achievement of temporal and ultimate happiness. What, then, of Elizabethan tragi-comedy?

In Lyly's Campaspe, before cited, the elements of tragedy loom significantly. While Alexander puts aside his love for his duty, there are occasions when his will, like Tamburlaine toward Zenocrate, is on the point of being enforced. At the last moment, when the balances swing perilously toward evil, Alexander chooses rightly: "I perceive Alexander cannot subdue the affections of men, though I conquer their countries...... it were a shame Alexander should desire to command the world, if he could not command himself."

In Venus Observed, Fry's The Duke of Altair, an elderly noble is designing to marry Perpetua, daughter of his agent, Reedbeck. Perpetua is going to yield her love to the Duke in order to atone for her father's dishonesty to his employer. Meanwhile, the Duke is aware that Reedbeck has been dishonest. He is also aware that Perpetua is sacrificing her love for his

35 John Lyly, Campaspe, V, iv, 11,141 ff.
son, the youthful Edgar. In the many dark moments in which, he wills to accept evil means for securing his desire, the mantle of tragi-comedy threatens to cover the action. At the precise moment he avoids the abyss of evil by acknowledging and renunciating:

I seem to have come to the end of myself Sooner than I expected. So there's to be No climax and adorable close With ego agonistes crowned and smiling? The strange charm of being alive breaks off Abruptly, with nothing determined, nothing solved, No absolute anything. I thought this time The ends of the ring would join. But, no, I'm back among the fragments.

In addition to the already-noted History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, Robert Greene wrote another startling tragi-comedy, James the Fourth. In his passionate desire for a virtuous duchess, James of Scotland would destroy his wife, Dorothea. The courage and virtue of both turn him aside when he would finally commit himself entirely to the forces of evil. Inspired by her lofty sentiments on his behalf as when she pleads: "One soule, one essence doth our weale containe! that then can conquer him that kills not me", James bows in humility as he cries:

36 Christopher Fry, Venus Observed, op. cit., p. 69, ll. 18ff.

37 Robert Greene, James the Fourth, III, iii, lines 85-86.
And pardon, courteous queen, my great misdeed:
And for assurance of mine after-life,
I take religious vows before my God
To honour...... her for wife. 38

In Fry's The Lady's Not for Burning, Jennet, the heroine, is the object of a witch-hunt. When the flames from the stake threaten, she has the opportunity of saving her life by proffering her body. Jennet, the empiricist loves life deeply and the pull on her is difficult.

You mean to give me a choice:
To sleep with you, or tomorrow to sleep with my fathers,
And if I value the gift of life,
Which, dear heaven, I do, I can scarcely refuse. 39

Then, from within herself she finds the strength to reconcile herself to the good:

What is deep, as love is deep, I'll have deeply, What is good, as love is good I'll have well.................

the least
I can do is to fill the curled shell of the world With human deep sea sound, and hold it to The ear of God, until he has appetite To taste our salt sorrow on his lips. 40

This passage also indicates the essential philosophy of life of Fry as well as that of the Elizabethans.

While the elements of tragi-comedy marked the

38 Ibidium, V, vi, lines 185-189.
39 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 53.
40 Ibidium, page 85-passim.
majority of Shakespeare's plays, it is most heavy in

*All's Well that Ends Well*, the narrow escape from disaster in *Measure for Measure* and the cynical and satiric *Troilus and Cressida*. As an example of his tragi-comedy elements, perhaps the *Merchant of Venice* is most replete with the potential of tragedy. An excellent short summary indeed is that of Edith Sitwell:

> This seems to the reader like two plays, loosely bound together. What is the connecting link? A golden wall of beautiful, healthful, laughing beings against which an image of disaster creeps?41

The great conflicting forces are: first, the sheer hate in the character of Shylock and the charity of Portia. The force of hate that threatened to destroy Antonio and Shylock himself was expressed in: "The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."42 Through the power of Portia's love, the damning revenge meditated by Shylock is turned aside—at the last moment.

The supreme vehicle for tragi-comedy has been left to Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*.43 The four characters, Private David King, Private Peter Able, Private Tim

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42 William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Ill.i.

Meadows and Corporal Joe Adams are victims of the enemies of mankind—the vices that assail the sinful nature of man. The church, in which the play unfolds, represents the virtues that man has at his command for his own salvation. David, the man of violence is enraged by his friend Peter's cheerfulness and easy-going nature. In his dream, David considers that he has done to Peter what Cain did to Abel.

As the curse of fratricide falls on him, as David, he finds that he has broken his own heart when the revolting Absalom is slain. In his dream he then becomes Abraham and offers up Isaac in sacrifice. The harmless and innocent son is saved by God. In this dream Isaac is Peter. These dreams are merely the technique of showing how David has within himself forces of good which finally defeat his violence.

The Corporal, Peter, and David find themselves as Abednego, Meshach, and Shadrach who going through the classical trial of fire find that they are not destroyed. Tim Meadows, the fourth soldier, acts as the prophet who reveals the powers man can rely on to live the good life. Not only does Fry, as the Elizabethans, tread the thin line between comedy and tragedy; not only does he use the same qualities, love and mercy, to keep man from the chasm of evil, but he develops a doctrine, a doctrine which may well
be called the doctrine of the precise moment—the line of restraint. At the time when it seems as though they must be consumed by their vices; at the instant that the bodies are passing over the divide into the land of the unrepentant, the fire reels back. The following dialogue presents Fry's point of view:

Adams: ....... Who are you?
Meadows: Man!
Adams: Under what command?
Meadows: God's
Adams: May we come through?
Meadows: If you have the patience and the love.
David: Under this fire?
Meadows: Well, then, the honesty
Adams: That honesty?
Meadows: Not to say we do a thing
For all men's sake when we do it only for our own.
'nd quick eyes to see where evil is. While any is our own
We sound fine words unsoundly. 45

Not only does salvation rest on the patience and love necessary to keep earthly

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44 Not only Fry's point of view, but the view that he feels is the one that each individual must have to live a meaningful life.

45 Christopher Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, op. citere, page 46 passim.
desire from conflicting with higher values, but the
secret lies in the precise moment, when man, a rational
being, draws back:

David: So help me, in
The stress of this furnace I can see
To be strong beyond all action is the strength
To have.46

Macbeth lacked the forbearance; his time of greatest strength should have been
that anti-act which would have stayed his hand in the
murder of Duncan. The greatest strength was the love of
Portia, the force within her that held back a tragic event.

But little has been written concerning the content
of Fry's plays; as stated before, the majority of articles
concern themselves with: first, the audience reception of
his plays; second, his writing techniques. There are a
few worthy of note, however, on his matter. Insofar as
Fry is concerned, sufficient treatment has been given to
his idea of comedy as "eternity in a moment" which
treatment has been considered to refer to this thesis'
doctrine of the "precise moment."

W. A. Darlington writes that:

46Tbidium, page 47.
One important quality he seems so far to lack—narrative power. He is content with little plot, and is not even greatly concerned to move the best of what he has. In "Venus Observed", for instance, the action concerns itself with a duke, who, intending to marry one of his three ex-mistresses, and not caring which, finds himself of his son's rival for the hand of the fourth lady, whereupon one of the ex-mistresses burns down his castle, so he marries her.47

This is an entirely erroneous conception of Fry and betokens a lack of appreciation of his Elizabethan bent. Venus Observed concerns itself with the same strength beyond all action that characterized A Sleep of Prisoners. By this saving choice in the hour of peril, the Duke brought his soul safely through and enabled Perpetua to achieve her real love.

D & P.M. Fitzgerald states that "Poetry of the amplification kind, which spins the thought out rather thin..., afflicted the Elizabethans, so that it is in this way and no other that Fry resembles them.48

Fry resembles them in many ways, but particularly in this section it has been shown that he resembles them in their blend of comedy.

The following statement goes closer to the truth:

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48° & P.M. Fitzgerald, op. citere, p.7., col. 1.
Fry carries echoes of many poets—moderns like Eliot, 19th century romantics like Keats; but his deepest echoes go further: to the poetic dramatists of the Elizabethan age. Some of the words he puts in Thomas Kendall’s mouth sound like Hamlet in the Forest of Arden, or a most un-melancholy Jacques. 49

R.A. Scott-James considers that in Fry, “there is a rising dramatist who has a real understanding of man’s varied state, a creature for the joys of earth and the reward of heaven: a creature of temporal time and one for eternity.” 50 As yet, there has been no effort to trace the elements of comedy in Fry on an academic basis. The final test, at the present stage of development in this playwright must be on the textual comparison of his works with the Elizabethans. Mason Brown claims that Fry’s art lacks the sweet simplicity of the old morality play; 51 the answer is

49 The Lady’s Not for Burning”, in Time, op. citere xviii “Introduction”.


that the Elizabethans, commencing with Fry and ending with Dekker, developed what was comedy in these plays to the high art of the time. This high art is recaptured in this twentieth century by Christopher Fry. In summing up this second section, which of necessity was longer than the first and longer than those to follow, the question as to the rebirth of Elizabethan comedy in Fry rests upon textual comparisons for the most part.

Comedy is defined as the conflict for temporal happiness, involving money, marriage and manners. It has its universal laws, which, however, need not always triumph. The common ground for Fry and the Elizabethans rests on the zest of this conflict and the essential moral standards by which the conflict was waged. Eternal values are always present; in fact, they loom so important that the element of tragi-comedy is crucial.

It is asserted that Fry has developed the doctrine of the "precise moment" in tragi-comedy to a high degree. It is that moment at which the struggle for earthly matters must yield to the possible damnation of the human soul. It is averred that it is important to note that in both Elizabethan Comedy and in that of Fry that it is Christian in concept as is their tragedy.

Audience appreciation is not the criteria for
the correct evaluation of this comedy insofar as content is concerned. A careful academic comparison is necessary and vital. As this time no critic has published such an academic comparison.
Among the diverse elements of the Elizabethan era were such distractions as war with the Irish, the Spanish Armada, religious controversy between Catholic and Protestant, Protestant and Protestant, Christian against pagan, lovely sonnets from Shakespeare, and Sidney, word music and painting by Spenser, political clashes within England, the execution of Mary, Queen of the Scots, explorations to all parts of the new world—in fact a resurgence of action in all field of human endeavor. Together with the spirit that made them glad to live commingled disease and death from poor sanitation, illness, war and maritime hazards. The average age for the period was some thirty-two years. While the life of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman period was melancholic and short; that of the Elizabethan was more joyous and adventurous—but equally short.
Elizabethan drama refined and developed the
morality and mystery play—these dealt primarily with
the inevitability of physical death and the threat of
spiritual annihilation. Even with the comic gestures,
life was primarily a short span of trial on this earth
in preparation for the next. The Elizabethans improved
on these ideas in two ways; they made life on this earth
worth living in itself; and they also acquired the ability
to concern themselves with the temporal world as well as
expressing vital concern with their ultimate end. The
way in which they were able to do this was to introduce
a tragic note into temporal affairs, and a light note
along with their acceptance of eternal affairs. Thus,
they could discuss life and death in the same sentence
without any incongruity.

Furthermore, with the lessening influence of
the Catholic Church in England, man found his own
support a weak and uncertain one. With the power of
Rome to encourage him in his peril-laden life, the
pre-Elizabethans gave life what they had, and what
they gave was tremendous; it was more often not
enough. But it was always enough to make life, in
the final analysis, something worthwhile clinging to.
Jaques, despite his melancholy complaints is content
to stay and act the "thing through to its end". In his weaker moments, he sees that:

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances...

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.¹

Protestant or Catholic, the Elizabethans, as a whole, had a very great fear of hell and the final judgment. How much they had is well stated in Shakespeare's Hamlet. The Earl of Warwick in Henry the Sixth, Part II, spoke the true philosophy of the Elizabethan. He lived his life to the utmost; he tasted the joy of power, the thrill and horror of battle; he experienced true and illicit love; he savoured of the joys of walks, parks and manors—he left life reluctantly, but in full knowledge of the inevitable dissolution of the corporeal body:

Lo, now my glory smeared in dust and blood!
My parks, my walks, my manors that I had,
Even now forsake me; and of all my lands
Is nothing left me but my body's length!
Why! what is pomp, rule, reign but earth and dust?
And, live we how we can, yet die we must.

Yet, the part "live how we can" is as vital a part of the speech as "yet

¹William Shakespeare, As You Like It, II, vii, 11. 13 ff.
²Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part Three, V, 11, ff.
For sheer intensity of the death, rot and horror of men's short and turbulent span, Webster is the most striking of the Elizabethan life and death theme. His three great plays; The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi and Apolius and Virginia reek with murder, desire for life, intensity of passion, revenge, kindness, and overall, the never absent smell of dungeon, jail, blood and rotting corpses. Webster has, however, a more sombre outlook toward temporal life than his contemporaries.

3 These were written by John Webster (1575-1624) in the early decade of the 17th century.
In the comedies of that era, there is the heavy sprinkling of geriatric thought along with love and romance:

Endymion? What do I here? What, a gray beard, hollow eyes, withered body, decayed limbs and all in one night.

Thy name I do remember by sound, but thy favor I do not yet call to mind; only divine Cynthia, to whom time, fortune, destiny, and death are subject, I see and remember and in all humility I regard and reverence.

While death had a sobering effect on them, the Elizabethans lost little time in coming back to their world of reality; the thought is excellently expressed in:

O man, this was the ghost of the poor man that they kept such a coil to bury; and that makes him to help the wandering knight so much. But come, let us in. We will have a cup of ale and a toast this morning, and so depart.

The same deep feeling for death but the necessity for carrying out to its full the temporal life is noted in:

Lambert: Content, keeper, send her unto us.

"Thy, Serlsby, is the wife so lately dead, Are all thy loves so lightly passed over, As thou canst wed before the year be out?"

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4 John Lyly, Endymion, The Man in the Moon, V.i, 47ff
5 George Peele, The Old Wives Tale, line 910-914.
The sudden bursting into bloom of life and its taking away, its death were expressed by Elizabethans generally, but it remained for Shakespeare to show the different aspects of the thought. He turned it toward love:

O, how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And bye and bye a cloud takes all away.

In Measure for Measure.

Shakespeare, through the Duke, delivers the trials of life and the ever-present fear of the inevitable death:

Be absolute for death; either death or life
Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with Life:
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep; a breath thou art,
Thou art by no means valiant
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork of a poor worm.

Thou hast nor youth
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb nor Beauty,
To make thy riches present. 'tis yet in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
There 's hid more thousand deaths: yet death we fear,
That makes these odds all even

7William Shakespeare, Two Gentlemen from Verone, I,iii, 6sff.
8Ibid, Measure for Measure, III, 1, 7-28 passim.
to which Claudio replies:

"to sue to live, I find I seek to die, and seeking death, 
find life; let it come on".9

Even in life's brightest
moments, the knowledge of the decay of this world is at hand:

How sweet the moonlight sits upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our e;rs; soft stillness and the night
Becomes the touches of sweet harmony,
Sit Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with bright paintines of gold
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot he it.

Fry writes in this tradition.

Fry's most persistent and most moving theme is the perpetual dialogue between death and hope, the death wish, and the life urge.11 The Lady's Not For Burning, in particular is replete with the theme developed in this chapter.

Just see me

As I am, me like a perambulating
Vegetable, patched with inconsequent Hair, looking out of two small jellies for the means

9 Ibid, lines 33-36.

10 "The Lady's Not For Burning", op. citers, xviii of Introduction, Page 48, col. 2, of that issue of Time.

11 Ibidium.
Of life, and balanced on folding bones.

I defend myself against pain and death by pain
And death, and make the world go round
They tell me by one of my less lethal appetites-
Half of this grotesque life I spend in a state
Of slow decomposition using
The name of unconsidered God as a pedestal
On which I stand and bray that I am best
Of beasts, until, under some patient
Moon or other, I fall to pieces, like
A cake of dung.

Jennet, representing the love, appreciation and
desire for temporal life, although realizing its draw-
backs, replies to Thomas:

By a quirk
Of unastonished nature, your obscene
Decaying figure of vegetable fun
Can drag upon a woman's heart, as though
Heaven were dragging up the roots of hell,

You may be decay
And a platitude of flesh,
But I have no other such memory of life. 13

Within each

individual, then, there comes the answer to the
determinism of life—that life must cease—that life, as it is, is vitally worth considering. Even Thomas,
recognizes the paradox of life and death as real,
"Body! You calculating piece of clay" 14  "Clay" and

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12 Fry's The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 58, passim,
This section of the dialogue is by Thomas to Jennet and
represents two aspects of an individual in his thoughts of
life as they intermingle at the one time

13 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, op. cit., p. 58.

14 Ibid. p. 1.
"calculating" represent at once real coexisting opposites!

That same "would-be-sceptic" finds himself unable to escape the vitalizing fact of living, for, while likening himself to the blackened, blasted and chilled preserved flower-death and life—he, disgustingly enough must admit: "I breathe, I spit, I am."15 While saying on the one hand: "take no notice", in the next minute, he states, wonderously, "I'll just nod in at the window like a rose."16 Despite the ultra-gloomy view of death and decay, Thomas cannot avoid the words of joyous life; "laugh," "spring sunlight", "hope" and "always".17

It remained for Margaret in the Lady's Hot For Burning to speak the integrated view of life. She has a belief that God runs the universe well; that things come at the proper time and place. It is for humanity to accept the spring and autumn—youth and age in the proper perspective:

Margaret: Oh no. I have always been sure that when it comes it will come in the autumn! the Day of Judgment) Heaven, I am quite sure, wouldn't disappoint the bulbs.18

15 Ibid, p. 4
16 Ibid, p. 4
17 Ibid
18 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 32.
In the storm, unyielding. The First Born, Try takes on the note of Webster, Marlowe and a Wadersmore in his darker mood. It is not the death of futility and frustration but the death from violence. Note out the checker-board landscape:

My blood hear! my blood weeping
For off like the swarming of feet under the sea,
The sobbing at night below the garden. 19
My blood weeping.

For Moses, as shown before, the tragedy is the will to live and struggle to fulfill a destiny in life; but that fulfillment will require that to "be strong beyond all action in the strength to have" 20. Because neither Moses, nor Jeti have that strength, death and decay result.

Yet, Moses, in his sanest moment speaks the true worth of man and life. Had he held to the idea of living to the utmost in appreciation of the things of this world, while valuing those of the next, the need for death by violence would have been obviated:

It is the individual man
In his Individual freedom who can mature
With his warm spirit the unripe world.

20- Try, Sleep of Reason, op. cit., p. 47.
21- Try, The First Born, op. citere, p. 17.
Another way of making this point is to consider that Hebraic influence which makes all this world sin and magnifies out of proportion "strictness of conscience" as opposed to the Hellenic conception of life adopted by both the Elizabethans and Fry. In this letter, the appeal is to both mind and heart- "spontaneity of consciousness".22

Rameses, the victim of Seti, who had no concern for the next world and of Moses who had little concern for this, represents, in his individuality, the sanity and proportion that can see the need for action and also that of restraint from action:

"Afraid, why should I be? The sweet part of the world's over, but that's nothing, it had to go. My mind had lutes and harps and nodding musicians who drowned my days with casual tunes. They have been my voice raised in deathly quiet."

Then, facing death, but having enjoyed life, he showed a willingness to make an adventure of dissolution:

2The terms "strictness of conscience" and "spontaneity of consciousness" are from Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. The chapter especially applicable to this theme is "Hebraism and Hellenism". In The First Born, Moses represents "Hebraism" and Rameses, "Hellenism". The latter took a more harmonious view of life in its total aspects.

23Fry, The First Born, op. cit., page 96.
And we have to enact a daylight
For this unsuspecting beauty. How easy is that?
Well, for the stairs, then. We'll meet her. 24

In A Phoenix Too Frequent, Doto is another of
Fry's individuals who can appreciate death, enjoy life and
feel that it is all worth while:

Yes, I'm sure. But never mind, madam,
It seemed quite lively then. And now I know
It's what you say: life is more than a bed
And full of miracles and mysteries like
One man made for a woman, etc., etc., etc., etc.
Lovely. I feel sung, madam, by a baritone
In mixed company with everybody pleased,
and so I had to come with you here, madam,
For the last sad chorus of me. It's all
Fresh to me. Death's a new interest in life,
If it doesn't disturb you, madam, to have me
crying. It's because of us not having
breakfast again. And the master, of course,
And the beautiful world. 25

Doto is careful to
separate the liveliness proper to worldly matters from
the seriousness at the point of death: "Be careful of
the crumbs. We don't want a lot of squeaking mice just
when we're dying." 26

In Fry's Venus Observed, with its autumnal
note of a man's life, the Duke refuted the idea that in

24 Ibid., p. 37.
25 Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 13
26 Ibid., p. 19.
(because of age) the not-too-far-future a man must put aside the spirit of zest, love and adventure; he winces at the thought that he should:

'So, Rosabel believes when the cold spell comes and we're compelled to enter this draughty time. And we know we're in for the drifting of the fall, we should just merely shiver and be silent; never speak of the climate of Eden, or the really magnificent foliage of the tree of knowledge, of the unforgettable hushed emerald of the coiling and fettering serpent."

With the engrossing concern for the physical in the temporal world there is intertwined the life beyond and above as shown by the symbolism of his hours at astral observation. With his romanticism there is a melancholic reflective chord:

"'s long as we live perpetua,
We shall be able to tell how at midnight,
We skated over death's high-lit ebony
And heard the dark ring a change of light,
While everywhere else the clocks were sounding the depths of a dark unhappy end.
And then we shall be able to say
How an autumn duke---"

Tell me, Reedbeck, before we leave each other in sleep, where would you say
The lonely moment is coaxing us to go
(Reedbeck gives a gentle near-whistling snore.
Well, yes, yes, quite so, my little one,
It comes to that in the end.

\[27\text{Fry, } Venus Observed, p. 22\]
\[28\text{Ibidium, } 98,99\text{ passim.}\]
\[29\text{Ibidium, p. 99.}\]
Death, decay, awakening and spring—with life itself—fill the *A Sleep of Prisoners*. As Meadows states:

The human heart can go to the lengths of God,
Dark and cold we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;
The thunder is the thunder of the floes;
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.30

In summing-up the elements of death and decay in Fry that come from the Elizabethan era, in the main, examples of the thought have been shown in the writing of Lyly, Greene, Marlowe, Shakespeare and others. The thought of death and its seriousness were never from their minds removed. However, they were not content to spend this life in dread and fear for the next. By their lively concern with temporal matters, they developed and prepared themselves for both physical and intellectual experiences.

Such lively interest in the worlds; natural and supernatural, involved an intense speculation of the melancholy thought of physical decay and death. This element is seldom missing from their works. However, despite their reluctance to have done with this world; they approached, at the final hour, death as an adventure. Fry has recaptured this idea in each of his plays. Fry, like the Elizabethans, refutes

the idea of an escape, through denial and indifference, from life, decay and death.
In the Introduction to the thesis, the term "humor", with respect to the Elizabethans and to Fry, rests on robust earthy humor, humor resulting from situations involving incongruities, the sparkling, scintillating wit that appealed to the intellect, and the humor felt in situations where the tragic and comic elements are struggling for mastery.

It is humor with an individuality. Considering the diverse elements of events and men that went to make up the Elizabethan era, there were many individualities. The commoners who rushed to the theatre to see the dramas of the day were no less avid in their love for drama than the aristocrats. In addition, there were the clergy and the middle-class. There was humor for all; and all relished the humor according to their capacity for it. The lighter humor laced and spiced with its wit, as well as the philosophy echoed in the wit of the fool and clown appealed to the more intellectual. The pun, the
ribaldry and the burlesque appealed to the artisan and to the commoner.

The most wonderful part of Elizabethan humor was that while some appealed to special classes, much had the ingredients that would and do appeal to all walks of life. Thus the classic figure, Falstaff, appeals to the student, to the laborer, to the executive and to the leisurely confirmed seeker-after-amusement. Some of the humor lies in the blatant puns; some in trenchant observations on human nature, some in surprising and shocking incongruities, some in unrestrained mirth and much that lies side by side with human trials and pain.

While, then, there are many types of humor depicted in the Elizabethan dramas, there is a quality that is characteristic of them, in humor. This quality is an irresistible insistence of presenting to the world a sense of laughter when it would appear, from the circumstances, that no laughter would ensue.

To explain the humor, it is possible to show how this era stands in regards to the other main eras of English literature. Certainly there is little humor in the Anglo-Saxon era. There are death, violence, sadness but no humor. In the Anglo-Norman period there was too much concern with preparation from birth to death with
a single concentration on the hereafter to lend itself to humor. The deadly seriousness of the Church; the dignity of the estate of "chivalry" left humor open to the lower rung of the feudal order. This humor exhibited itself in a brawling-soil-like humor—so much so that the Church soon divorced itself from the miracle and morality plays. It is true that the gentle urbane humor of Chaucer had its play and influence. However, he seems a special and unique personage, not in keeping within the narrowed confined of his age's literary efforts.

The Puritan interlude that followed the Elizabethans was a reactionary period—a period that showed revolt against the earthy philosophy of the Elizabethan and a serious concern with man's unholy state. The Restoration (1660-1685) had its brand of humor, brought to full flower in its drama. This humor, laughing at moral decadence and licentiousness, was an unhealthy form of laughter—a laughter that tried, unsuccessfully to brush aside the deeper conscience.

The Neo-Classical period that endured until the latter part of the eighteenth century was too correct, too precise, too restrained and too artificial and too rational to produce other than a
Rebirth of Elizabethan Humor in Fry

satiric derision. True humor must spring from man's feelings and from his heart. The laughter evoked by Pope, Dryden and Swift is such as to divide men from a feeling of community with his fellow men. True humor finds itself in an expression that tends to unify man in his feeling toward society and the supernatural.

The Romantic period that endured until Victorian materialism tended to en throne nature as the center of the world with man a small part. There is little in Wordsworth, Shelly and Keats that furnishes humor. There are, broadly stating, no dramatists in that period. Humor results from the response of a human being towards other individuals and abstractions in diverse experiences of feeling and conflict. The following Victorian era found two main streams of thought; first, the thought of man too intent and serious in solving the problems of a rising technical economy to laugh and enjoy life; the other side of the Victorians was one that showed so much smugness, satisfaction and complacency at material progress that they ignored the problems of life. In both cases little humor resulted.

There is certainly humor in George Bernard Shaw's plays; its probes; it bites; and it sparkles. Like the
Restoration humor, it is an unhealthy humor. While the Restoration humor stemmed from the individual's efforts to perpetrate moral indignities on his fellow man and its institutions—such as marriage, chastity and religion, the Shawian humor is more subtle in its operation. Man, driven by urges and forces such as materialistic evolution, is made to laugh and ridicule his own and his fellow being's efforts to escape from a mesh. Man's entanglement in the mesh and his efforts to escape are beyond his control. The humor of Shaw and the modern playwrights stems from this philosophy. It is a bitter, sardonic and satirical humor which appeals to an unhealthy mental state.

With the same spirit in which Elizabeth's seamen ventured into the inhospitable expanses of the new world, Lyly's characters sought for adventures into love that are impossible. The spirit of bright humor invades the whole play as the characters, tongues in cheek, proceed to do what can't be done—in reality. As Lyly himself states:

"It was forbidden in old time to dispute of chimera because it was a fiction, we hope in our times none will apply pastimes, because they are fancies; for there liveth none under the sun, that knows what to make of the Man in the Moon. We
present neither comedy, nor tragedy, nor story nor anything, but that whosoever heareth may say this, "Why, here is a tale of the Man in the Moon."  

The burlesque humor of Sir Tophas, the bragging soldier in Endymion, and his page Epiton, suited the earthy taste of the commoner, but it also served another picture. It held the wild flights of Endymion and Hemenides in proper perspective; through the former two, the latter are made to be viewed with the idea that it is all "in fun". As Tophas stated, bringing the entire play to the plane of the sensible: "Epi, Love hath jostled my reason, hath jostled my liberty from the wall, and taken the upper hand of my reason."  

In A Phoenix Too Frequent, the thought of a widow seeking to die in attendance at her husband's tomb, while there is a young guardsman outside looking after the bodies of six hanging men seems an impossibility. But it would not appear bizarre to the Elizabethan, who, for the sake of fun, at least, would be willing to envisage such a thing. Doto's sparkling humor is shown by her willingness to take a part in the drama if her feet can come back on solid ground. She reaches back to reality and how real it is:

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1John Lyly, Endymion, The Man in the Moon, "The Prologue", 11.5 et seq.  
2Ibidium, V,11, 11. 1-3.
Madam had difficulty with the Town Council. They said they couldn't have a tomb used as a private residence. But madam told them she wouldn't be eating here, only suffering, and they thought that would be all right.

The humor works in three directions; first, it is the fun of make believe; second, it is loaded with banter at the triviality of the institutions man has loaded himself with for his protections; third, it is the humor that results from incongruities.

In the Old Wives Tale, the play opens with Antic, Frolic and Fantastic—these three names indicate the tenor of the play. Again the dramatists are off on a willing excursion into improbability, but underneath, and in addition to the burlesque, roaring humor, there is a gentle irony and parody on the customs of love. Huanebango, certainly a name not likely to conjure an air of the romantic, pokes fun at the Englishman's idea that he must fight in order to love; that he must display physical brutality in order to show a tender passion:

3 Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 19.
4 George Peele, The Old Wives Tale, (1595)
Here is the Englishman—
Conquer him that can—
Come for his lady bright,
To prove himself a knight,
And win her love in fight.

At the times when the
excursions into idyllic love are the most intense, Peale
introduces the deflation element. In the wild, glittering
make-believe of The Lady's Not for Burning, Jennet
combining imagination and a most practical nature,
laughs at fanciful flights while introducing a note
of sadness at impinging reality:

They also say that I bring back the
past;
For instance, Helen comes,
Brushing the maggots from her eyes,
And, clearing her throat of several thousand years,
She says 'I loved...,' but cannot any longer,
Remember names. Sad Helen, or Alexander, wearing
His imperial cobwebs and breastplate of shining
worms
Wakens and looks for his glasses, to find the empire
which he knows he put aside his bed.6

There is also, pure,
rollicking, untainted fun:

We fought for possession
of Alizon. What could be more natural?
that he loves, I love. And if existence will
Molest a man with beauty, how can he help
Trying to impose on her the boundary

5 Peale, op. citere, ll. 540 et. seq.
6 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 25.
Of his two bare arms? O Pandemonium,
What a fight, what a fight! It couldn't be more strenuous
Getting into heaven or out again. 'nd Humphrey
went twinkling like Lucifer into the daffodils.
When Babylon fell there wasn't a better thump.7

These are the sentiments of
Jack Falstaff8 put into more refined language. The
vulgar, but colorful language of Falstaff is paralleled
by Fry in Thomas' denunciation of the dessicated Hebble
Tyson:9

You bubble-mouthing, fog-blothing
Chin-chuntering, chin-flapping, liturgical,
Turgidical, base old man.10

These are not only rolling
oaths to build up a metaphorical oral attack, but also
they serve another purpose. They reveal, through humor,
the incongruity presented by a person on one plane to
the speaker on another. From the point of view of both
the Elizabethans and of Fry, such language represents
the limitations of the speaker in his attempt to talk
on the plane of the more intellectual. Thus Falstaff

7 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 11.
8 Falstaff, a comic pseudo-philosopher and a
braggart appears in several of Shakespeare's works.
9 Fry, op. citere. The Mayor, Tyson, is the
practical official.
10 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 27.
in his language to the Prince paralleled the language of
the soldier, Thomas, to the mayor, Tyson.

There is the sympathetic smile, the gentle humor,
that accompanies a thought one wishes and hopes to be
ture, but that one knows isn't real at all. "Then the
idealistic and lovely Alizon bears her heart to Richard
and states:

I love you quite as much as I love St. Anthony
And rather more than I love St. John Chrysostom. 11

he, in love, but more
worldly, replies:

But putting haloes 1gn one side, as a man
could you love me, Alizon? 12

In much the same manner,
Shakespeare's Miranda 13, much akin to Alizon, speaks her
love for Ferdinand. 14 When Ferdinand offers his heart
with his hand as a token, Miranda offers hers with her
heart in it; in other words, Ferdinand is expressing
his love in worldly terms and Miranda expresses hers

11 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 77
12 Ibid, p. 77.
13 Shakespeare, The Tempest-Miranda, the heroine
14 Ibid. Ferdinand, the hero.
to the natural and supernatural worlds. Thus at the same time, both dramatists have expressed their humor at the grandness of human aspirations and their sadness, in a smiling manner, that these cannot always be attained.

There are sad and restless minds and hearts that result from contention with the problems of the world and the result is often a satiric humor. Cazamian stated:

The fruitless warnings and intimation of destiny to the spirit of man, helplessly carried forward by the tide of his ambitions, as with Caesar, or blinded by the pride of stoic virtue, as with Brutus, create a sense of tragic futility, sharpened at times to supreme irony... It is fit that in such a setting that only humor that can live should be grim, bitter or saturnine. 15

There is in Fry much grim and ironic humor. Thomas, in The Lady's Not for Burning, faces life, expecting the worst and laughing grimly in the face of the beliefs! In the opening scene of Act I, Thomas has felt such keen disillusion in his quest for happiness in life that he finds that hilarious mental intoxication cannot keep him from realizing

what a terrible world it really is. It would be a mistake for the reader to take his "rings of beer" speech as indicating that Thomas uses drinking as an escape for life. The drinking referred is figurative speech for a flight of genuine laughing zest at and with life:

Thomas: Don't mention it. I've never seen a world so festering with damnation. I have left rings of beer on every alehouse table from the salt sea-coast across half a dozen counties, but each time I thought I was on the way to a faintly festive hiccup, the sight of the damned world sobered me up again. 16

A humor with a more grim note is echoed by Thomas when he compares the fuss about trivialities—such as trials and evidence with his experiences as a soldier in which men are compelled to go to face their maker with a minimum of formality:

It's habit.

I've been unidentifiably floundering in Flanders for the past seven years, prising open ribs to let men go on the indefinite leave which needs no pass. And now all roads are uncommonly flat, and all hair stands on end. 17

It has been observed earlier in this section that modern humor claims, and successfully so, irony and sarcasm. It has also been observed that this irony and

17 Ibidium, p. 20.
sarcasm results from the clashing of irresistible and fore-ordained material evolutionary conflicts in which the individual in the drama has no will of his own. In *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, and in the works of Marlowe and Jonson, irony and sarcasm are in abundance. However, these are intermingled with "misanthropy, eccentricity and moroseness" all reflected from the point of view of an individual with a free will. Thus Hamlet in the play of that name, *Macbeth*, Jaques in *As You Like It*, Tamburlaine, the heroic figure in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, and the many figures in Jonson's "Humours" each and all reflect misanthropy, eccentricity and moroseness. The middle-aged Duke in Fry's *Venus Observed* has such qualities along with his more gentle humorous interludes. His experience is the not unusual human experience of a man who does not appreciate innocent love until the age has passed when he merits it. While half-heartedly pursuing the possibility of marrying the lovely and young Perpetua, he suffers, intensely from two causes: first, he at once yearns and laughs for and at the idea of an elderly lover succeeding in his quest for a beauty and romance that belongs to the youth; secondly, and more truly ironic, he is far too honest and honorable a Duke to take the advantage of being dishonest. There is no doubt but that Perpetua, really
believing that the Duke would punish her dishonest father, was willing to wed the Duke. In his ironic laughter at surrendering to the greater good, he ennobles himself.

Cazamian, in his book on The Development of English Humor avows that "The main roots of English humor are in the instincts of the people." The danger of such a statement lies in the fact that there may be an undue conclusion drawn that English people, as a whole, are endowed with some quality that is their unique possession. It is more true to state that the English have placed a great faith in the importance of the individual. This individual, as has been shown, reflects certain attitudes giving rise to what is called a humorous response to the problems of life. The Englishman, in his individuality is primarily rational in philosophy; the assertion here is that to the Englishman "rationality precedes feeling." The humor is first addressed to his intellectual capacity and thence to his heart. Portia, in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, Viola in Twelfth Night, Rosalind in As You Like It, Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, Simon Eyre, in Dekker's, The Shoemaker's Holiday, and Volpone, in Jonson's Volpone or the Fox

18Cazamian, op. citere., p. 321.
address much of their humor with ready tongues and quick minds. This is a field of humor in which Fry excels. In fact, it requires a quick, alert and appreciative mind to grasp his intellectual humor. Like the Elizabethan intellectual humor there is a tremendous depth to it. The Chaplain in Fry's *The Lady's Not for Burning* has produced a classic gem of this brand:

"I imagine
He finds the world not entirely salubrious,
If he cannot be stayed with flagons, or comforted
With apples— I quote of course— or the light, the ocean,
............... perhaps the addition
Of your thumbscrew will not succeed either. The point I'm attempting to make is thus: he might be
woosed from his aptitude for death by being
her ier."\(^\text{19}\)

In the last two lines, the impact of the intellectual humor must, when felt by the heart, be terribly poignant.

The sardonic humor in *Thor, with Angels*, and *The First Born*— both by Fry— are comparable to the bitter humor in *Hamlet* and the Shakespearean tragi-comedies. This humor requires a brilliant imaginative mind that knows the difference between right and wrong, but which is, on the other hand pursuing dark and devious measures. Thus

\(^{19}\text{Fry, The Lady's Not for Burning, p. 42.}\)
Hamlet is at his worst in the scene where he bedevils Polonius, who has, himself decided to ascertain the heart of Hamlet's mysterious actions. Hamlet's murderous nature comes out in his malicious humor expressed in his stalking of the king. However, the essence of Shakespearian and Websterian sardonic humor is compressed in Hamlet's statement: "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."21

In Fry's *First Born*, Moses, and Seti take over the grim and sardonic humor roles. Moses, seeking instruments to lead his flock from Seti's "good heart", is willing to use evil means while proclaiming the "good heart", it is truly a macabre jest when he proclaims:

> Where shall I look for triumph? Somewhere, not beyond our scope, is a power Participating, but unharnessed, waiting To be led toward us. Good has a singular strength Not known to evil; and I, an ambitious heart Needing interpretation.22

The grim jest repeats itself, when Seti, to give life to Egypt in the reign of his son Rameses, ensures the latter's death. Seti, himself, insists of his course of evil while quoting the good of Egypt:

21Ibidium, II, 11, ll. 256-7
22Fry, *The First Born*, I, 11, p. 34.
Seti: Myself. It seems that I have grown too tall
And keep out the sun. I overbranch the light.
I am giving you the throne, Rameses.
It gives itself. The wind has hurled it under you,
A biting wind, the hatred that has turned me
Into storm, decay and grub in my own garden.
You have luckier hands. You have at least
Hands less calloused with enemies. You will be able
To hold the sceptre perhaps without such pain.23

Seti failed to appreciate the

fact that Moses would not permit the slightest twinge of
humanity to deviate him from his course— even though Moses'
friend, Rameses, was destroyed.

In summary, Elizabethan comedy and tragedy manifested-
selves in a variety of forms. The common stream was the out-
look that a free will manifested itself in laughter toward
life and its experiences. The response was burlesque, light
banter, rollicking humor, intellectual humor and grim
sardonic humor. Fry has caught some of the humor of Peele,
Greene, Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare and Webster.

The nearest to Elizabethan humor was Chaucerian
laughter and twentieth century humor. The first lacked the
complexity and the latter the eccentricity and individuality.
The humor of the Elizabethans and of Fry is striking; in its
moral considerations. The escape from decency is never
presented in a favorable light. In the most tragic instances,

23Fry, The First Born, p. 90.
the central figure, doomed by his wickedness and jesting at his doom is never the object of commiseration. Their humor reflects the many facets of an active and adventurous nature.
The faith of the individual in his ability to cope with the problems of life, and his eager zest to come to grips with them, characterise the thought of the dramatists—The Elizabethans and Fry. Whether it was in trips across the unchartered seas, whether it was the worship of the feet of the English bowmen at Crecy, whether it was the individual priest or minister advancing his creed, whether it was the experimentalist in science—the Elizabethan did and dared.

With all the trials, the errors, the pungacity, the imagination, the daring and the adventurous went the idea that man must fulfill, actively, two functions: first, he must cope with the temporal life; secondly, he must consider and ready himself for ultimate fate. It is important to remember, that whether Catholic or Protestant, each believed in the fallen nature of man, and in the necessity for considering what must perforce result to him for evil conduct and what might be his reward for goodness. However, in both cases, the Elizabethan's response was not one of
passive waiting. He strode into the arena of battle and waged the full and weighty conflict. Whether speaking ironically or not, Hamlet speaks the Elizabethan idea of man:

"... What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty... in action how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God! the beauty of the world..."¹ This, of course, is what man, by his powers of self-redemption can be and obviously, as Hamlet mocks somewhat, man falls far short. However the truth of his statement lies very deep. Fry has caught the vital spirit in which man marches toward both destinies.

In The Spanish Tragedy² the old marshal, Hieronimo had an exciting appeal to the Elizabethan. Not willing to abide the promise of divine retribution, he, aided by woman alone, usurped the future judgement to hand out his own. Even in his crash, he was magnificent. Confronted by every decent power on earth, the puissant Macbeth contends against his enemies to the end of his physical ability. Walked by all the forces available to an anti-

¹Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, ii, 11.294-7
²Kyd, Thomas, The Spanish Tragedy, (1587)
Shylock\textsuperscript{3} urges his horrible revenge until checked by forces beyond his control.

While approving of the fate of Anthony and Cleopatra,\textsuperscript{4} the Elizabethan appreciated the driving power and will of the two great lovers whose passion was so great and enduring that two empires could fall by the wayside. Their fall was horrible and just; but there was still a magnificent moving grandeur in their all-consuming love.

It is doubtful whether Shakespeare, at his best, could equal the irresistible urge to completion and action of Marlowe in his \textit{Tamburlaine, the Great}. Consider Tamburlaine's words:

\begin{quote}
Thus am I right the scourge of highest Jove;  
And see the figure of my dignity  
By which I hold my name and majesty.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

The intense will to action is also expressed by Tamburlaine:

\begin{quote}
So will I ride through Samarcanda streets,  
Until my soul, dissever'd from this flesh,  
Shall mount the milk-white way, up' meet him there,  
To Babylon, my lords; to Babylon!\textsuperscript{6}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3} Shylock, one of the central figures in Shakespeare's \textit{Merchant of Venice}, attempts to avenge the diligent ill-treatment handed out to him by the Christians by securing a pound of flesh from Antonio, the generous merchants. Antonio has failed to meet a monetary obligation to Shylock.

\textsuperscript{4} Shakespeare, \textit{Anthony and Cleopatra}.

\textsuperscript{5} Marlowe, \textit{Tamburlaine the Great}, (II.), IV, iv, ll. 20-3.

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibidium}, IV, iv, ll. 129-133.
Marlowe’s will to war and conquest was also enunciated by his portrayal of a love scene as intense as any in Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra.* The scene wherein Faustus meets Helen is surcharged with avowals of love which dare both the natural and the supernatural elements. It is not enough to say that the Elizabethans were adventurous—they were all of that, but in addition there was the resurgent intent to abide the consequences of the adventure, whether they were good or bad.

In Shakespeare’s historical plays the marching spirit is at a high and intense level. Thus far, Fry has not written on as wide a historical scope, nevertheless his two plays, *Thor. with Angels* and *The First Born,* on a limited scale, have much of the high level of the dynamic spirit evinced by the lords and kings of Shakespeare’s works. In *King Henry the Fourth,* Part I,* the young Prince of Wales,* forsaking his evil ways and his evil companions was thrown into a strange and fearsome

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7Shakespeare’s tragedy of the adulterous and searing passion of nature lovers who desert their responsibilities.

8Marlowe, *History of Doctor Faustus,* Scene ΑΤΤΙ, lines 90—et sequentia.

9Shakespeare, *King Henry the Fourth,* Part I, (1597)
atmosphere when forced to defend his father's realm against his many foes. Paralleling this situation, as far as courage, adventure and determination are concerned, Cymen, confronted with the strange virtues of Christianity, accepts the challenge, waveringly, at first, it is true, and abides the issue. If anything, the challenge to Cymen was far greater than that to the Prince of Wales, for the latter, after all, was only fulfilling the responsibilities that the majority expected him to fulfill; Cymen was accepting a responsibility that few of his friends, and none of his family, wanted him to accept. Cymen contended with the conflicting elements of his own nature and those of his friends until the end. At first, he cried out in protest:

"Name to me what mocked me with a mood of mercy and therefore defeat. Who desired that?"

Later, he still protests:

"Your Christian land was weak, it shook
Down, it burnt, its ash was blown
Into our food and drink. What I'm afflicted with
Is strong, destroying me with a cry of love,
A violence of humility arrogantly
Demanding all I am or possess or have ambitions for

\ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots Why did my strength startle from
Your futility."

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10 Central Figure in Fry's *Thor, with Angels*. Cymen is converted, not willingly, at first, to the milder virtues of Christianity—mercy and love.

11 The *Prince of Wales* ("Hal") forsakes the evil influence of Falstaff and accepts the duty to the throne of England.


13 *Ibidium*, p. 28.
While Cymen is guilty of a
criminal hesitation insofar as saving the life of his
prisoner is concerned, his hesitation does not result
from physical cowardice. Judging the man by the standards
of his times, it is likely that he possessed a high degree
moral courage. Facing the unknown, called to a conference
to discuss a new religion, Cymen, in tortured anguish
marches to his destiny:

I go to know
I go to dare my arm into the thicket,
To know what lifts its head there, whether rose
Or tiger, or tiger and rose together.
Be undisturbed, my dear disturbed wife.
If I rock, it's with the rocking of the world;
it will get me to sleep in time.
As for the rest of you
Wait, with a certain degree of trust,
Yes, you can build up the altar if you must.
Meanwhile, the silence keep you, the silence
Be gracious unto you and give you peace.

It is significant to note the curious mixture of pagan
and Christian terms in the last quotation; the first part
is entirely in the spirit of 'yrd; the second section
confuses both Christian and pagan; the third section,
ending with "be gracious unto you and give you peace" is
entirely in the Christian tradition.

14
Ibidium, p. 41.
In Fry's *The First Born*, the tragic marching spirit of the sixteenth century is reflected in Moses and Seti, the tragic antagonists. Seti not only lives for Egypt and will crush any opposition but he enjoys the conflicts of life. Despite the opposition of Moses, despite the defeat of his cavalry, despite the multi-plagues visited upon him, he pursues his destiny in life which he considers the integrity of the sovereign state of Egypt. The opposition he faces, like that of Cyman, comes from his son, his sister, from his immediate and influential advisors—as well as from his enemy, Moses.

Moses has determined, at all costs, to lead the Israelites to freedom. In the name of goodness, he casts honesty, loyalty and kindness to the winds. He steers his unvarying course to the deliverance of his people—whom earlier he had left. In the name of a compelling force, he masks the strength that comes from his own nature. The Hebraic spirit erupts when he casts defiance to his old friend, Seti, the Pharaoh:

I am here to appease the uncontrolled
Resourceless dead, to join life to the living.
Is that not underwritten by nature? Is that
Not a law? Do not ask me why I do it!
I live. I do this thing. I was born this action.
Is there any whom, for what ultimate region
Of life? A deed is what it becomes. And yet
That are the laws? Despite you, through you,
upon you,
I am compelled. 15

Even at the end, where he realizes that he is gaining the values he desires at the expense of their destruction, he will persevere to the end. When he learned that the life of his friend, the innocent Rameses is forfeit, he complained:

"why had I not thought of him?"

I had such a tremendous heart. It seemed at last as though we had reached the breaking of the seals, when we no longer should be set down blindfolded to build upon light. I saw the passion of bewilderment drawing off from the earth. But can we go forward only by the ravage of what we value? Surely I who have been the go-between for God can say that this is not a part of my intention and be heard? 16

Moses, like Brutus 17 is a tragic character who, desiring good above all things, permits himself to choose evil means to achieve his end; both play the game to the end—neither satisfied that that it was what he wanted. "Why should it have been that I had to be the disaster to you? Now, always unknown to each other, we must force the arduous,

15 Fry, The First Born, p. 45
16 Ibidium, p. 82-3 passim.
17 Tragic figure in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar
damnable pass of time."

It remains for Fry to state specifically the true worth of man in the temporal as well as the spiritual world. In A Sleep For Prisoners, and in The Lady's Not for Burning, he makes the point well. Davis, appeals:

O God, are we
To be shut up here in what other men do
And watch ourselves be gound and battered
Into their sins? Let me, dear God, be active
And seem to do right, whatever damned result.
Let me have some part in what goes on
Or I shall go mad.

Meadows gives David the answer in that the marching spirit must be that of goodness:

Imperishably, Good has no fear:
Good is itself, whatever comes.
It grows and makes and bravely
Persuades, beyond all tilt of wrong:
Stronger than anger, wiser than strategy,
Enough to subdue cities and man
If we believe it with a long courage of truth.

In the spirit of Sir Thomas Moore, of Sidney, of Raleigh, of the virtuous Elizabethan characters, Meadows touches heart strings in

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18 Fry, op. cit, p. 100.
19 David King, the aggressive character in Fry's A Sleep of Prisoners.
20 A Sleep For Prisoners, p. 41
21 Private Tim Meadows is the interpreter of Fry's thought in A Sleep For Prisoners
22 Fry, A Sleep For Prisoners, p. 48
his humble call

Meadows: The human heart can go to the lengths of God

Think God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul men ever took.
Affairs are now soul size,
The enterprise is exploration into God. 23

Jennet 24 echoes the
desire expressed by David to have some part in life. At
the same time she states Fry's philosophy of a dynamic life:

I am interested
In my feeling, I seem to wish to have some importance
In the play of time.................
That is deep as love is deep, I'll have
Deeply. What is good, as love is good, I'll have
Well..............the least I can do
Is to fill the curled shell of the world
With human deep sea sound, and hold it to
The ear of God, until he has appetite.
To taste our salt sorrow on his lips. 25

There are other figures, none of them particularly heroic, who fill the pages of those who found zest and spirit two important requisites for life. In Peele's lively

23 Fry. *A Sleep of Prisoners*, p. 49

24 Jennet, throughout *The Lady's Not for Burning*, by Fry represents the happy combination of a desire for life harmonized with the desire to ensuring the happiness that comes in the ultimate end.

tale, concocted from old folk tales and legends, the entire cast from the blacksmith to the sexton revel in an interesting combination of reality and romance—each of the characters evinces an intense concern with living life to the fullest.

While there are melancholy philosophers among the Elizabethans and in the works of Fry to prove that life is more or less of a futile struggle, the over-all spirit is one which acknowledges that, in verity, it may be so, but nevertheless each individual is going to try, on his own account, to refute this law of averages. Jacques, Hamlet, and Macbeth each consider life on this earth a decided predetermined series of stages in which man ends "up" a decayed piece of protoplasm; nevertheless each manages, on his own account, to advance into the conflict rather than retreat from it.

Then Audrey and Touchstone, clownish characters in

26 George Peele, *The Old Wives Tale* (1596)—The striking note in the loosely knit play is the keen enjoyment reflected for life.

27 Realistic philosopher in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Jacques is unable to throw off of romantic trappings in his view of life.

28 Hamlet, the central character in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, reveals the inner spirit. His very knowledge of the intellectual elements of his crime renders his murders more tragic.

As You Like It have their romanticooting, decency, for all his melancholy philosophy cannot forget his basic concern and his admission with and for the unvarnished, the unexpected and the non-realistic aspects of life. For he cannot avoid saying, "I would it were not so;" 29

The gusto and zest with which Hamlet arranges the slaughter of his enemies is far from congruous with the philosophy that he utters in his soliloquies. For one who resented his call to action, he exhibited a spirit toward his work that could be called little less than a romantic spirit. Macbeth, except for the one introspective stroke 30 marches along the turbulent road he has selected in life. The fact is, even those who conjure up, with some degree of truth, the disquieting aspects of life, and their courses in a contradictory manner. Shakespeare, master of scepticism, exclaims: in and about the fraud of life, much in the tenor of:

\[ \text{A darkening land sunken into prayer} \]
\[ \text{Lucidly in dewdrops of one syllable, } 31 \]
\[ \text{Nunc dimittis. } \text{Ves' twilight, mad man.} \]

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29Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III, III, 1.46.

30See note 29 on page 75.

31Ivy, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, p. 45.
A decision on life has to be made; Shrews realizes that life, and he with it, must go marching on:

...as inevitably as original sin.
...and I shall be loath to forego one day of you, 32
...even for the sake of my ultimate friend, death.

Then one considers the human and vital qualities of Antonio, 33 Shylock, 34 Portia, 35 Beatrice, 36 and Benedick, 37 Viola, Olivia, Maria, 38 Celia, 39 Falstaff, 40 Rosalind, 41 and many others. In his sparkling comedies, the reader must be struck with the quality of surprise that they

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32 Ibid., page 97.
33 Merchant in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice
34 Shylock, vengeful Jew in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice
35 Portia, heroine of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice
36 Benedick, hero of Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing
37 Beatrice, heroine in Much Ado About Nothing
38 Three witty and lovable women in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night
39 Vivacious sprite in Shakespeare's The Tempest
40 Shakespeare's robust, noble, soldier buffoon
41 Heroine of As You Like It.
They give the impression of being alive and of proving inexhaustible in the emotions they reflect in their actions. Even the non-human creatures, Ariel and Caliban give the reader the impression that they are living. The quality of life so noticeable in the Elizabethan interpretation of it, is the characters portrayed act; they do something with life—they have an inner spirit. The absence of the marching spirit in life must have as its opposite an "aridity of the inner spirit." It is difficult to find such aridity in Fry or his Elizabethan predecessors. There is none of the dessication reflected in:

But though I've wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head, grown slightly bald,
Brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet and here's no great matter. 44

To the Elizabethan and to Fry, all life, both kinds, is a very great matter and the characters are prophets of it. Lament some of its aspects they do; criticise it they must; fear old age they do most heartily; laugh at themselves and others, they do with gusto; love

42 Note 37 on page 30 of this thesis.
43 Slave and enslaver of man in The Tempest.
44 T.S. Eliot, "Love for of J. Alfred Prufrock".
and hate, they revel in; but that it's no great matter, they refute with all their being!

In the same way that the central figures in Shakespeare's plays tend, at first hearing or reading, to blot out the other characters, as for example, Romeo and Juliet overshadow the marvelous character, Juliet's nurse, so do Fry's main characters, or sirens as she, cast the lesser lights into an umbra. However, on re-reading, it becomes apparent, In both cases, that the entire cast must be considered individually for each reveals connections slant on life.

In The Lady's Lost for Burning, Margaret, the mother of the acs, Humphrey and Icholm, reflects: "People who can enjoy life, providing things are done upon an even keel, the heartiest for enjoyment of the speculative and the practical;" Nicholas, you always think
You can do things better than your mother. You can be sure you were born quite adequately on the first occasion. There is someone here I don't know. Who is it, alphonse?

while Jennet pursues her intense

45. Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet; the arc dies expresses a romantic outlook on life in realistic terms.

46. Fry, The Lady's Lost for Burning, p. 9.
desire to hold onto life and while Thomas is adamant in his intention of leaving it, Tyson, the mayor, represents, as does Margaret, the enjoyment of the status quo:

Good gracious, do you imagine the streets to be charitable institution? Very mad, wishes to draw attention to himself; The brain a delicate mechanism; That thy God more precise than a clockmaker; Grant us all a steady pendulum.

I'll say then, 47

In another comedy by Fry,

A Phoenix Too Frequent, Dynamene, the widow, and Heges-Chronis, the Egyptian guard, both derive their enjoyment of life by dwelling on the romantic aspects of life and death together; they divorce themselves as much as possible from realism; while Eoto, Dynamene's servant enjoys life as much by dwelling on its realities. She bustles; she acts; she marches; "I love all the world and the movement of the apple in your throat. Shall you kiss me? It would be better, I think, to go moistly to Hades." 48 Eoto helps bring her mistress to her senses by leaving death until its proper time: "Just you try to stop me madam, Something going is a kind of instinct with me. I'll leave death to some other occasion." 49

48 Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 95.
49 Ibid., p. 63.
In Fry's Thor, With Angels, Cymen, his sons, and his brothers-in-law are concerned with violence of emotions, with war and with vengeance. Martina, Cymen's daughter, represents a marching spirit of life that finds enjoyment in the trivial realities of life. Her romantic spirit magnifies the wonders of nature to the point where they become the goal and means in her life:

I'll not worry about my father,
Nor my mother, nor my uncles nor, between ourselves,
The gods. The universe is too ill-fitting
And large. I am very careful about small things
Such as wearing green in the third month
Or bringing blackthorn under the roof;
But the big things, such as gods, must look after themselves.50

In Venus Observed, there is a wealth of detail and a number of philosophies of life that reveal themselves when the reader turns his attention to the apparently lesser characters. Herbert Reedbeck, the agent of the Duke, has stolen from his master, so paradoxically enough, for immaterial reasons. Reedbeck considers that materialism is not conducive to the active life; therefore, he uses the money in order that his family may have experiences, naturally in life, that would have been otherwise denied to the family:

50Fry, Thor, With Angels, p. 44.
I care so much for civilization,
its patrician charm, its grave nobility;
He cares so little. Therefore certain eccentric
means have had to be taken for splendid ends,
Church and State, in away, agree
In justifying such a course of action. 

On the other hand,

Dominic Reedbeck's serious and honest son, has, as a mission
in life the intense day by day quest to ensure that the
world is kept morally on keel. While one of the Duke's
lady loves, Jessie, has made the well-ordering of the
world of small and realistic things her quiet but persevering mission, another of the Duke's mistresses puts a
romantic aura over the most mundane event. In order to
reduce the Duke to a realization of the temporal world,
she burns his laboratory—nearly burning the Duke in the
process. While Rosabel, torn with her love for the Duke
bemoans:

"Nothing matters
Except that he should be made to feel. He hurts
Whoever he touches. He has to be touched by fire
To make a human of him, and only a woman
Who loves him can dare to do it." 

Jessie, replies:

"Now, I wonder who's the most likely person to have a
stamp?"

---

51 Fry, Venus Observed, p. 37
52 Fry, Venus Observed, p. 57
53 Ibidium, p. 58.
Realistic or romantic, material or immaterial, subjective or objective in nature, the personae of the
dramas of both Fry and the Elizabethans right well be
epitomised in and by:

There they trod, ranged along the hillsides,
To view the "ast of me," living scene
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all, yet
-Amless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew, "Hildeboland to the dark Tower come." 54

Norman Parkinson, in a review on Fry, considers
that Fry, in The Lady's Not for Burning and Venus Observed
has produced two fragile, period pieces; he uses the word
"starchy organdie" to describe the "ast" of the two plays.
In addition, while praising the words and scenes, he criticises
and the general vocabulary, he laments Fry's inability to
sustain character. Norman Parkinson is a considerable
critic of the theatre. Nevertheless, he has suffered, as
did other reviewers, from the general idea that a play,
above all else, must be seen and heard in order to be enjoyed.

It has been maintained, and examined in a
close analysis, that Fry is in the tradition of
Elizabethan intellectual sculpture on the stage.

54: Robert Browning, "Hildeboland to the dark Tower
Come," lines 105-6.

55: Norman Parkinson, "Christopher Fry: The Lost
Tales of New Playwright," a review in The Nove of England,
(no vol.), (no number), issue of 15 Oct., 1950, p. 76.
works have given the theatre-goer and the student the large part of a standard to evaluate Shakespeare; the same may be said of all the Elizabethans. T. S. Eliot's play, "The Cock-tail Party" was reviewed, not with respect to its effect on an unprepared theatre-audience, but in the light of previous extensive study of Eliot's philosophy—philosophy which, no doubt, virtually each member of the audience associated Eliot with.

It is apparent that Parkinson and Lister critics have not analyzed, intellectually, the philosophy so often expressed by Fry in each of his plays. Fry's plays, not really any more of fragile ornamentation than Phillip Sidney, who had a be-ribboned and jingly exterior, combine the qualities of poet, writer, statesman, gentle-man, soldier and hero. Sidney, in a less degree, reflected the over-all spirit of Elizabethan England. The characters in each of Fry's plays reflect elements of tragedy in the Christian sense, comedy flushed with the Elizabethan qualities of laughter-now gay, now bitter-sourly, and individual love of life. They also have caught the Elizabethan expression of the awareness of decay and death. His plays sparkle with the brilliant humor of the 17th century; they erupt with the boisterous, brawling spirit of those times; and they often touch the heart-strings
with a melancholic humor—now plaintive, now grim and bitter. Finally, both the Elizabethans andDry devote their verses to the importance of the individual in his own autonomy, the spirit of the individual in his determinate end, toward his self-determined end.

Only an analysis of each character and interpretation of the individual according to a philosophical background can yield the rich harvest afforded us by dramatists. The plot may be trivial; it may be deficient according to technical standards, but if Dry has any merit at all, it is in his characterization.
The metaphor of both the 'Othello' and 'Ivy' is not that addressed to the abstract beauty, as in Shelley. While the flights are in a sinuous, stratospheric, even their most ornate figures have earthly ground. It is difficult to find our Elizabethan heroes and heroines, who, while they might raise death a consideration of the living, were not in love with 'tis. They are tied to this world with the same common spirit as expressed in Prior: "It sounds as though the night air is ride in a creasing saddle." Shelley makes use the elements of air, fire and water to lead the mortal down the path to abstract beauty, which is far removed from earthly matters.

Then, as he speaks off:

That orb of love, with white fire, on
When mortals call the moon
Clices: "Shivering, under the "fades,"
By the midnight breezes strown;

So he is spearing, o' a

1. ry, the adj. - not for 'urnin', etc.
2. ercy ry, as a 'ly', "the loud"
plane to which mortals cannot ascend. But to Fry and to
the Elizabethans, the elements of fire, air, and water
serve to feed the mental, spiritual and physical aspects of
man. Thus the metaphor, while tied in wonderous fashion to
the supernatural as well as to the natural elements, is
usually grounded on an earthly plane. Loto, after speaking
of the underworld and of the moon, has her mistress,
Dynemene return the verbal flights to this sphere:

Chromis, it's true; my lips are hardly dry.
Time runs again; the void is space again;
Space has life again; Dynemene has Chromis. 3

There is a wonder in tying one's language to the
elements for the sheer sake of loveliness; for if the
heart goes out in song, some of the song goes out to others.
There is a breath-taking spirit of metaphorical extraversion
now, in Fry, and then in his kinfolk of the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries, that can exceed the gossamer
loveliness of:

Mizzen: But whenever my thoughts are cold and
I lay them against Richard's name, they seem to rest
on the warm ground when summer sits
As Golden as a Humblebee. 4

While neither Fry nor the

4 Fry, *The Lady's Not For Burning*, p. 4.
Elizabeth had a monopoly on the use of metaphor, both by a degree of excellence not observable in other writers.

Stark's note:

In those latter eighties, there was a practice of the use of verbs in Fry's composition. The verb, eg. in the sentence, o to say, the verb offers indeterminacy of a poet's power to activate language. The vivid imaginative power of language over his objectives; the writer, upon its nouns; but the verbs, upon the energetic mind, in all its full vigor, is the verb.

Both the Latin ethos and Fry seized their metaphorical ascent through the action of the verb.

In The Spanish Fury, despite the fact that little action occurs on the stage, while the entire story is conveyed in long speeches, the use of the verb was the story's dramatically. (The action could not be conveyed through the act of speaking, but instead through the verb.)

Example:

"With pitchy silence loomed the terrible horrores.

And lent them leaves, for they had sorted olives.

To take advantage in my garden plot.

Upon my son, my dear Hortensio.

There, merelah, the bushes in my boy.

He screams: (heard ad yet methinks, "hear"

His diam. outcry echo in the air.

With solemn speed, I hastened to the noise

"Here, hanging on a tree, I found my son."

---


6. Christopher Fry: A. The Flame of the Comet, II.
Marlowe, at his best, an incomparable word artist, mastered the use of the art of metaphor. His use of the verb is akin to the power-laden verb action of the Anglo-Saxon literature. "Beowulf" is particularly studded with action affects—mainly dependant on the use of the verb. In Tamburlaine The Great (II), the horror that strikes the soul of Tamburlaine at the news of the illness of his wife which occurs at the moment of his greatest triumph, is heightened by the short stabbling verbs:

He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,
Ready to darken earth with endless night.
Zenocrate, that gave him life and light
Those eyes shot fire from their ivory bowers,
And tempered every soul with lively heat.

While the Elizabethans, even the most flowery, stiffened their metaphor with verbs of action, Shakespeare, of them all, used the most consistency and variation. For sheering brilliance, for towering action and for verbal grandeur, Anthony and Cleopatra is the masterpiece of Shakesperian metaphorical art:

His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm
Crested the world: his voice was propertied
As all the tunied spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as a rattling thunder............

7 Beowulf, great English Folk Epic of the 7th Century.
8 Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great II, IV, iv, (185-9)
9 Shakespeare, Anthony and Cleopatra, 1607.
REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN METAPHOR IN FRY

In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates droppt's from his pocket. 10

is a characteristic note
from that play. The glory of Juliet's love rides on the
verbal arrows as in:

O, she is lame! love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
Driving back shadows over louring hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love, 11
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.

Probably the happiest combination of thought and
action results from Shakespeare's Portia in her "mercy"
speech. Literally, it is Christianity in action. It is
the refutation of the word only, but paradoxically, it
depends on the word-expressed by the verb:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest,-
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. 12

Fry has captured the same
Elizabethan power of the verb in metaphor. Thomas sounds,

11Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II, iv, ll. 226-231.
12Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, IV, i, ll.
182-195.
in *The Lady's Not for Burning*, Fry's open avowal of the case for metaphor.

Thomas: Now you, for instance, Still damp from your cocoon, you're desperate To fly into any noose of the sun that should dangle Down from the sky. Life, forbye, is the way We fatten for the Michaelmas of our own particular Gallows. What a wonderful thing is metaphor.¹³

The unbelievable effect of the use of the harsh "extorting" instead of "exhorting" as contrasted with "lightness of heart" pains an indelible impression of the painful difficulty of a Calvinist in trying to reconcile the happiness of this world with his belief in a vengeful God: "Nicholas: It's the Chaplain, extorting lightness of heart from the guts of his viol, to the greater glory of God."¹⁴

In a *Phoenix too Frequent*, wine offered to Dynamene by Tegeus, symbolizes the lightening of the spirit from dark and gloomy thought. The verbs, "sings", "purling" and "sounding" counteract Dynamene's deathly gloom symbolized by the nightingale. The metaphor has its strength and beauty from the verb:

Dynamene: How good it is How it sings to the throat, purling with summer.

¹³Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, p. 3.
¹⁴Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, p. 70.
Dynamene: Perfectly, 
A cold bell sounding in a golden month.

Dynamene: Perhaps a nightingale 
Sobbing among the pears.  

Fry's Thor, With Angels contains a wealth of metaphor, which is studded with action tones. Beneath the apparent inventory of epithets tossed by the pagan Quichelm to the steward Colgrin, the reader compiles the verbs, which amassed, indicate the savagery of the speaker:

I'll carve your dropsical trunk into a tassel. 
Where's my sister? You were left to guard them, 
Not to roll your pig-sweat in a snoring stupor. 
Tell me where they are before I unbutton your throat.  

The contrasting elements of paganism and Christianity are revealed in the metaphor by the verbs, as well as by the general tone, wherein, Cymen, wishing to shake off the Christian spirit which has settled on him, revolts but then submits again:

God, our gods, Gods 
Of the long forced march of our blood's generation 
Dead and living, Goaders, grappling gods, 
Those iron feet pace on thunder's floor 
Up and down in the hall where chaos groaned 
And bore creation sobbing .......... 
We cannot come and stand between your knees, 
Why? By what stroke was the human flesh 
Hacked so separate from the body of life 
Beyond us? You make us to be the eternal alien.

15 Ibid, Phoenix Too Frenquent, p. 35 passim.
16 Ibid, Thor, With Angels, p. 2
In our own world. Then I submit. Separation
To separation! Dedicated stones
Can lie asunder until the break is joined.17

While the metaphor is more sparkling in the plays cited, it is more impressive
and grim in the tragedy. The First Born. The tone of
the verbal array is shadowy, gray and then dark.

In summing up the effect of a decree emblazoned
in gold and silver, which decree meant the death of Jewish
boys, Anath Bithiah, Pharaoh's sister, struck the sombre
note at the very beginning of the play: "Yes, they all
died of a signature."18 In the same passage, the verbal
strength is again apparent:

And when I found my hands and crowded him
Into my breast, he buried like a burr.19

All the court flew up and buzzed,
But what could they do? Not even my Pharaoh father
Could sting him out of my arms.20

In the A Sleep of Prisoners, David, the
aggressive, colorfully expresses his feeling of being
pent-up in a place where freedom of action is denied:

17 Fry, Thor, With Angels, p. 37-38 passim.
18 Fry, The First Born, p. 3-4
19 Ibid, p. 5.
20 Ibid, p. 5.
It's a festering idea for a prison camp,  
You have to think twice every time you think,  
in case what you think's a bit on the dubious side.  
It's all this smell of cooped-up angels.  
Worries me."21

Action, for David, is  
purely physical, but ironically enough, his metaphor is  
expressed in verbs denoting abstractions, intellectually  
weighted. It remains for Meadows, who, realizing that the  
greatest strength is that which results from inaction to  
express the restraint from action, in words that are  
dynamic.

The human heart can go to the lengths of God,  
Dark and cold may we be, but this  
is no winter now. The frozen misery  
Of centuries breaks, cracks begins to move;  
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,  
The law, the flood, the upstart spring.  
Thank God our time is now when wrong  
Comes up to face us everywhere,  
Never to leave us till we take  
The longest stride of soul men ever took.22

...............................

Good is itself, what ever comes.  
It grows and makes, and bravely persuades,  
Beyond all tilt of wrong;  
Strong than anger, wiser than strategy  
Enough to subdue cities and men  
If we believe it with a long courage of truth.23

Lord, where we fail as men  
We fail as deeds of time.24

21Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 3.
22Ibid, p. 49
23Ibid, p. 48
24Ibid, p. 48
Not only did the Elizabethans and Fry put together words in such a way as to form colorful metaphor, but they did so with a purpose other than to appeal to eye and ear. The phrases accentuate a philosopher, either directly or by paradox.

The metaphor has an earthly tie in much the same way as a child holds a strong string that should bring the soaring kite to earth. The metaphor, then, in Fry and his kin is not the same as that of Keats, Shelley and others who emit metaphor to betoken an inaccessible plane to the mortal.

While the metaphor of the Elizabethan and Fry can and does range from the whimsical and delicate to the robust epithet, the striking quality of their metaphor is in its first class use of the verb to obtain effect. The poet who uses the adjective, the writers who use the noun to obtain metaphorical effect are not to be derided. However, the test of the great artist is his ability to use all three, but particularly, his ability to enhance the verb in metaphor.

It has been shown that Marlowe and Shakespeare approached the Anglo-Saxon strength in verbal use. Fry has proven himself to be equally adept in its use. It must be evident that the examples given can only graze
the strength of metaphor common to these great artists. Finally, it must be considered that the language of metaphor used by these dramatists is not for the sake of word intoxication, but as a medium for better expression of the thought beneath.
CHAPTER TWO

REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN MUSICAL LOVELINESS TO ERY

No small part of the beauty of Elizabethan drama is due to the musical sound effects; they enhance the content. The crudities of the Morality Plays of the pre-Elizabethan era were modified by the interludes and the Masques. It remained for Lyly, Greene, Marlowe and Shakespeare to give drama the musical quality. There is, first, the deceptive melancholy and drowsy music of Lyly:

Sleep or die; nay, die, for to sleep it is impossible and yet I know how it cometh to pass, I feel such a heaviness both in mine eyes and heart that I am suddenly benumbed... It may be weariness for when did I rest? It may be deep melancholy, for when did I not sigh? Cynthia, ay so; I say, Cynthia!

The first of the romantic dramatists, Robert Greene, brought a deeper and richer music to the scene. In his Friar Bacon, Friar Punsey, there are many examples of musical loveliness:

In frigates bottomed with rich Cethin planks, Topt with the lofty furs of Lebanon, Stemmed and encased with burnished ivory, And over-laid with plates of Persian wealth, Like Thetis shalt thou wanton on the waves, And draw the dolphins to they lovely eyes,

---

1John Lyly, Endymion, The Man in the Moon. In this scene Endymion engages in a monologue addressed to the beautiful Cynthia. As a result, he falls asleep. II, lli, 11.20 et seq.
To dance lavoltas in the purple streams;
Sirens with harps and silver psalteries,
Shall wait with music at they frigate's stem,
And entertain fair Margaret with their lays.

The music of Marlowe is now dainty and lovely, now
Magnerian in its scope and range. The lovely lyricism
expressed by Tamburlaine's wife, Zenestrate, testifies to
his tender side, a side often over-looked by the reader
in Marlowe's aweful grandeur:

Zenestrate: The looks the Sun through Nilus
flowing stream,
Or when the morning holds him in her arms,
So looks my lordly love, fair Tamburlaine;
His talk much sweeter than the Muses song.
That sung for honor 'gainst Pierides.

While music plays an
indicent part in the wide range of Marlowe, it is part
and parcel of Shakespeare. His infinite variety of tones
comprehend all degree of music from the savage to the tender,
from the light to the profound, from the thoughtful to
love song.

In the Merchant of Venice, a play in which
Spurgeon records at least as much music in forty-five lines
as in the whole of any other play, the presence of music is

2 Robert Greene, Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay. In this scene,
Prince Edward plights his love to Margaret in verb 1 music,
III, i, 50ff.

3 Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, I, VII, i, 46 et seq.

4 Caroline F. W. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, and
What it Tell Us. New York, Macmillan, 1936, xviii-417, p. 269-
271 passim, and paraphrased.
constant. "When Lorenzo and Jessica await the return of Portia, Lorenzo, points to the stars and states: "There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest, but in his motion like an angel sings." Following this, he declares that the music in the physical environment finds its likeness when souls are in harmony. Jessica feels that sweet music arouses a melancholy feeling in her, whereupon, Lorenzo asserts that no man has great qualities who cannot feel the music within himself and who cannot be moved and changed by it! No wonder that Lorenzo felt that the musician:

Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods; Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage, But music for the time doth change his nature.

...But even this music must pall before the unrestrained song of Romeo and Juliet. Among the many musical passages is the occasion when Romeo sees Juliet appear at the window:

Romeo: What if her eyes were there, they in her head? The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars, As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven Would through the airy region stream so bright, That birds would sing, and think it were not night.

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5Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, V, i, 60.
6Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, V, i, 80-83.
7Ibid, Romeo and Juliet, II,1,11.66ff.
While the song in this play echoes young love, the Elizabethan idea of being in love with love is introduced so startlingly in *Twelfth Night*, that it shapes the entire atmosphere of the play! The lovesick and not too profound Orsino, Duke of Illyric—in itself a musical name—casts the spell of his notes over the play:

> If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die—
> That strain again! It had a dying fall—
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor!

The play, *The Tempest* combines both the elements of natural and supernatural music; it has music both gay and sad. Prospero introduces a thoughtful note:

> But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and, when I have required
> Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for..............

While Ariel sings

> Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
> In a cowslip's bell I lie;
> There I couch when owls do cry.
> On the b't's back I do fly
> After summer merrily.
> Merrily, merrily shall I live now
> Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

10Ibid, V, i, 11.80-87
In short, it is virtually impossible to escape the Elizabethan element of song in drama. When the reader considers the music of the poet Spencer, the chivalric nature of Sidney and Raleigh, and the other host of Elizabethan sonneteers, he must conclude that music not only reflected a joyous, yet often melancholy, zest for life, but that the type of life and spirit produced in turn the music. Fry has recaptured the elements of Elizabethan music.

In his recent book, a series of vignettes and essays upon language, Eric Partridge has been struck with the musical qualities in such an apparently grim, Hebraic and tragic vehicle as Fry's The First Born. The music is marked with a slow, majestic and sombre rhythm: The sad Teusret, realizing the coming tragedy of Egypt which not even her forthcoming marriage can avert sings:

why do we breathe and wait, so separate?  
The whirl in the shell and sand  
is time going home to think, Kissing to a darkness.  
So shall we so, so shall we seem  
in the gardens, hand in hand,  
O fortune, fortune.  

Pharoah's sister, 'nath,

---


catches the slow sad music of the land, expressed in terms of the Nile: "And that's the sun rising and setting and the smooth endless music of the Nile." It is Moses, unyielding nemesis of Egypt, who chants the vengeance of the Jewish Jehovah, at once lovely and aweful.

It is the God of the Hebrews, springing out of unknown ambush, a vigour moving in a great shadow, who draws the supple bow of his mystery, to loose this punishing arrow feathered with my fate; he who in his hour broke the irreparable dam which kept his thought, released the spunky cataract birth and death to storm across time and the world; he who in his morning drew open the furious petals of the sun. He, the God of my living, the God of the Hebrews, has stooped beside Israel and wept my life like a tear of passion on the iniquity of Egypt.

Finally, above and beyond the strife of man against man, Teusret sings the everlasting chord of love—a chord that outlasts the contentions of nations! At the end of the play, Moses, physically triumphant, realizes that his triumph is tainted by his evil means which he employed. In his attempt to rationalize his failure, even the stern chanting music has left him. All he can offer by way of explanation is:

13 Ibid, p. 64
14 Ibid, p. 72.
I do not know why the necessity of God
should feed on grief; but it seems so. And to know it
is not to grieve less.

"Life, for Taerret,
her love for her brother, for all livin' th'st, is
made immortal in her musical plea:

To be? Is beauty not a wand? Then
you still live again. Oh barbara,
I'm Teasret, 're you so taken with the dark
That what has dazzled me won't open your eyes?
I have whispered into your sleep at other times
and you've heard me, barbara.
She has come so gifted for you, possessing
A fable of rubies, and pearls like seeds of the moon,
With metal and strange horns, ebon and ivory,
"They form chalcedony and in the depth of your sleep.
Doesn't their brightness come to you? To pierce
Warily into the two rest of your sleep, if

The nature of the Anglo-Saxon life, with its
shortness and misery was not conducive to the flow of
music in its literature; the same may be said of the
Anglo-Norman literature, for it is not until the time of
Chaucer that melody is noted in the poetry. The
line now used by Fry in play, Thor, with angels, runs true to form
in that few notes of musical 'loveliness escape from the
savage figures. However, when the Celtic influence of
Merlin introduces itself, the sweet, whimsical and

15 Fry, The First Form, 11, 11, 11. 1. 1.
16 Ibidium, 11, 11, 11. 2 et sequentia.
mysterious music of the Celts and Welsh pours forth. Hoel, subjugated Briton, is sunken into apathy, both mental and spiritual. Symon, the Jute, pagan leader of his tribe is enraged at the hold that Christianity is beginning to exert upon him. There is no music in his savage and frustrated resentment. Merlin, indifferent to the contention and strife of men with politics and religion, speaks in words enriched with music of the ever-returning ap in:

Primrose and violets
And all frail privileges of the early ground
Gather like pilgrims in the aisles of the sun.
A ship in full foliage rides in
Over the February foam, and rests
Upon Brittin.

again the rich imagination

and fancy of the Celt speaks forth:

The sleep of spring, which grows dreams,
Nodding trumpets, blowing bells,
A jingle of birds whenever the sun moves,
Never so lightly; all dreams.
All dreams out of slumbering rock.
Lambs in a skittle prance, the hobbling rook
Like a witch picking sticks,
And pinnacle ears the hare
Ledling himself along in the emerald wheat...

Thus, along with the savagery of the Anglo-Saxon, the humbler virtues of Christianity, there exists in the immaterial culture of the people the gift for song and the love of earthly beauty.

117 Fry, Thor, with Angels. p. 33
118 Ibidium, p. 45.
In Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*, Peter Able represents one of those who realize how imprisoned man is by sin; but he considers the music of the world and its note could loneliness can escape from evil misdeeds in shown for the lonely. Peter feels that music is one universal which is capable of communicating the reality some truth: "It's the universal language, love. It's music." At a critical moment in the play, all seems as though the characters are to be submerged through a yielding to a sea of doubt and resignation, Peter whispers, "Since I am... in a bitter argument with the aggressive, but sweet... wild, Peter, like Kerith in *The White of the Salt*..." For man has traveled from the wonderful manifest of life, from a positive truth that "was not change despite worldly human conflict—the beauty of nature. The music is a glorious hymn.

Morning coaxes

To a prison like a nurse: A rustling presence, as though a smail breeze case, Indistinctly a voice, I think 'We're rain to live, the dark pain too. No, The relief of daylight flows over us; 'Tis though beginning is beginning. The hills roll in and take their shape, and gradually under the sun's breath and light are cool together no. The earth is all transiency, but too deep To see down to its bow."

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12 Fry, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, p. 1
20 Ibidium, p. 20-3.
The witty *A Phoenix too Frequent* expresses the idea that life should not only concern itself with spiritual matters, but that it should comprise a healthy interest and vigor in living with the idea of experiencing and appreciating the sorrows and joys of the temporal life. This, as has been shown, was precisely the viewpoint, in an over-all sense, of the Elizabethans. For that reason, the dirge-like note that prevails while Dynomene toys with the idea of remaining in the tomb of her departed husband until she overtakes his fate, is soon dissipated. The call of earthly music is too strong for the decayed atmosphere of the tomb. Dynomene admits the call of the world:

*A mystery's in the world*
WHERE a little liquid, with flavor, quality and fume
Can be as no other, can hint and flute our senses
As though a music played in harvest hollows
And a movement was in the swathes of our memory.
Why should scent, why should flavour come
With such wings upon us? 21

Tegeus openly admits his interest in this world and his love of nature's music:

FROM which comes the white owls of our nights
And the mulling and croaking of doves in the day.
I attribute my character to the shadows
And heavy roots; and my interest in music

21 Fry, *A Phoenix too frequent.* p. 36
To the sudden melodious escape of the young river
Where it breaks from nosing through the creases
And kingcups. 22

The love that bursts in the lives
of Tegeus and Dynamene is akin to the love of Romeo and
Juliet; neither could improve on Tegeus': "And now your
throat is a white branch and my lips two singing birds." 23

The music in Venus Observed varies from the spring
songs of Perpetua to the autumnal airs of the Duke. For
sheer loveliness of lyricism, this play by Fry probably
ranks as his greatest achievement to date and on a plane
with the best of Shakespeare. Many of the verses could be
put to music of an inspiring and enchanting nature.

Consider the Duke's ode to beauty, a note reminiscent of
the Duke Ursino in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night:

Why? Because I see no end.
To the parceling out of heaven in small beauties,
Year after year, flocks of girls, who look
So lately kissed by God
They come out onto the world with lips shining,
Flocks and generations, until time
Seems like nothing so much
As a blinding snowstorm of virginity. 24

While the Duke is in love with
loveliness, it is Perpetua, the young, the beautiful and

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23 Ibid, p. 58
24 Fry, Venus Observed p. 2.
the radiant who intones the pure sentiments of love:

The mild and fragile progress of the sense
which trills trebling like a pebbled stream
or lowers towards an oath intoning ocean
or with a careless and forgetful music
Loopering and threading, tuning and entwining,
Flings a babel of bells, a carolling
Of such various vowels the ear can almost feel
The soul of sound.

This is the melody of a girl in love with the world. The intimate dwelling on the notes of nature profess a yearning for more than the middle-aged Duke can offer in life. For Jemetaua the glorious overture of this day, this life! She sings: "Tomorrow to us all, but not too soon. I need soft pillows to make my peace." 25

In Fry's prize-winning *The Lady's Not for Burning*, Alizon sings in the tradition of Juliet. Her lovely arias are reflected by:

And the trees were as bright as a shower of broken glass.
Out there, in the sparkling air, the sun and the rain
Clash together like the clash of cymbals
When David did his dance... 26

Thomas, doubter and sceptic,
finds that his romantic nature bursts forth in lyricism to belie his cynicism:

26 Fry, *Venus Observed* p. 97.
27 Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, p. 4.
The interminable tumbling of the grey
main of moonlight, washing over
The little oyster shell of this month of April:
Among the raven quills of the shadows
And the white pillows of men asleep.
The night's a pale pastureland of peace. 28

While Thomas, from his
experience in the world, has entertained an idea of leaving it, Jennet, also despairing of this world, still desires to stay and try. After trying to solve the world's problems intellectually, she is forced to admit: "We have to look elsewhere, for instance into my heart." 29 With a sound reminiscent of the most reverent organ-music, she sings her faith to man and to God:

The least I
Can do is to fill the curled shell of the world
With human deep sea sound and hold it to
The ear of God, until he has appetite 30
To taste our salt sorrow on his lips.

Separate sections could well be devoted to Fry's use of alliteration and onomatopoeia, but these are so much included in his musical qualities of language as to constitute the core of it. In his use of alliteration and onomatopoeia, if they may, for example's sake, be

28 Ibidium, p. 73
29 Ibidium, p. 84
30 Ibidium, p. 85
considered separately from the music of his voice, he uses both, as the Elizabethan's did. However, being wise after the fact, he uses them more skillfully, for he uses them as intensely as the Anglo-Saxons did in their early literature. In *Thor, With Angels*, which reflects the savage culture of the times of the Angles, his uses of these devices gives the play a savage and breathless air.

As Stanford states: "But Fry has other more personal changes which he rings on the bells of language. Consider *Perpetua's* description of the individual tints of the autumn leaves:

- Lemon, amber,
- Umber, bronze and brass, oxblood, damson,
- Crimson, scalding scarlet, black cedar,
- And the willow's yellow fall to grace."

The theatre critics, in general, reflect *Time's* review of November 20, 1950: "The *Lady's Not For Burning*, child of poetry and prankishness—both parents springing from ancient British stock, recaptures something of what Aldous Huxley said Elizabethan poetry had and later poetry lost; an ability to fuse comedy with lyricism."  

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In summary, then, one of the principal virtues of Elizabethan dramatic art was the inclusion and the infusion of their literature with musical loveliness. In fact, this quality was a part of the life spirit of that time. Sidney and Spenser were even more lyrical in their poems than the dramatists in theirs. However, few dramas were written without verses of song included. While Marlowe, Greene and Lyly might excel in specific instances of musical language, it remained for Shakespeare to excel in the variety and consistency of such language.

In twentieth century dramatic art, Fry has introduced the refreshing, inspiring and lovely musical art of the Elizabethans. While some of the music may well border on the sombre, it has a breath-taking and exalting quality. The music gains its ascendancy over the emotions of the reader and audience by the craftsmanship of its general tone and the use of the qualities of alliteration and onomatopoeia. While the latter two were frequently used by the Elizabethans, Fry has, in the light of knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon art in literature, used them to heighten and to sharpen his moods. It is the intense musical note that sometimes leads the reader to neglect the more profound undertones of thought and philosophy.
It is true that metaphor should be included in the term "imagery"; it also covers, for this essay, every type of simile. Quite often the terms is limited to hint at the visual image alone, but for this essay, thesis, Spurgeon's definition is accepted as the guide:

I use the term as connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses, in the forms of simile and metaphor in their widest sense, for purposes of analogy.¹

Furthermore,

Spurgeon, who is an expert in the field of imagery, has found the field of Elizabethan drama a rich hoard of imagery. As he states: "in the drama, and especially drama written red-hot as was the Elizabethan, images tumble out of the mouths of characters in the heat of the writer's feeling or passion, as they naturally

surge up into his mind." Thus, metaphor, may be considered the overt sign of imagery. There will be occasions when a single metaphor will reveal one or more images—sometimes one word will suffice; at other times, several metaphors are required to reveal the imagery. Both Fry and the Elizabethans excelled in imagery.

In her monumental work heretofore cited, Spurgeon classifies Elizabethan imagery under the headings of nature, animals, domestic, body, daily life, learning, arts and imaginative states and emotions. For sake of comparison, she selected five of Shakespeare's contemporaries on the basis of five plays each. The dramatists used were: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Chapman, Dekker and Massinger. For one basis of comparing the number of images among the six, she used the heading "Daily Life" which included the sub-headings of: sport, classes, trades, war, substances, money, topical, roads, buildings, state and town life. The grand totals would indicate, on the basis of the five plays only, the following order from the greatest down to the least: Dekker, 206; Chapman, 200; Jonson, 195; Massinger, 193; Shakespeare, 190; and Marlowe, 120.

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2 Ibidium, pp. 5-6.
3 Caroline Spurgeon, op. citere., Appendices I-V.
It is not contended that the writer has broken down Fry's plays to this detail; but a check of his six plays reveal well over a hundred and fifty images in which trees, plants, flowers, sea, stars, sun, water, air, earth, fire, light, life, death, body, food, drink, action, war, money, metals, travel, simple beliefs, mythology, philosophy, law, science, drama, music, states and emotions and love, are mirrored for the reader. While there is a variation in the number of images for each item, the amazing point is the variety of images given for each subject—both in Fry and in the Elizabethans.

While the Elizabethans showed versatility in the use of imagery, each seemed to have a source preferable to others. For example, Marlowe, whose figures reflected dominance and aspiration, uses imagery on a grand plane: "fairer than the evening air, clad in the beauty of a thousand stars"; also, "with the cannon break the frame of heaven, batter the shining palace of the sun and shiver all the starry firmament."

In examining the imagery of Dekker, one finds the same romantic spirit of Greene as well as a concern with

4Marlowe, Dr. Faustus, line 1341.
5Ibid, Tamburlaine the Great, (II) II,iii.
the realism of everyday events. Notice the vividness of one of his images, a vividness that Fry is to recapture: "How like a new cart-wheel my dame speaks."  

Massinger, a serious and sometimes dull dramatist, had a wealth of imagery which his intellectualism tinged with a mechanical and sometimes grayish color. His metaphor did not soar as high as that of the other Elizabethans, but there is an aptness and a force in his imagery that creates an indelible impression. One finds the same staunch reality in some of Fry's more tragic plays. In his play, The Roman Actor, in Act III, Scene ii, he compares the lack of ostentation on part of the truly great with the fuss and fanfare of the would-be "greats": "They being the greater wheels that move the less." He carries the same thought forward in: "An upstart craned up to the height he has."  

Among the many topics for imagery, the idea of rivers, floods, oceans, golden banks, crystal rivers and other water symbols and images mark the Elizabethan drama. Ben Jonson's images are most numerous in this field. He toyed with the idea of a current, a torrent carrying all before it, a river running into the boundless ocean: "a pure and sprightly

6Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday, III, iv, 11.28
river that moves forever, and yet still the same."

While Jonson is seized with life as resembling the course of the river, Chapman gave character to and personified his river imagery:" The winding course of a subtle river, twisting about in open flat country, gliding "slyly by" the "little rivers" drinking up the brooks as they run to the ocean. Shakespeare's greatness depends to some degree on his amazing ability to be effective in all types of imagery.

It occurred to Shakespeare, on many occasions, that man is a frail object to confront the voyage of a turbulent life. Life is the great and uncertain belt of storms and the human life is beset with the tempest of its own passions! Capulet instructs Juliet:

Sailing in this salt flood; the winds, thy sighs:
Who, raging with thy tears, and they with them,
Without a sudden calm will overset
Thy tempest tossed body.

In dealing with the vice and sin of the world, Shakespeare images were so strong as to

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8 Ben Jonson, Every Man In His Humor, V, i, passim.
9 Chapman, Byron's Conspiracy III, i passim.
10 Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, III, v, 11.134 ff.
fairly reek with the malodorousness of sin. The most striking Shakespearean resentment of sin is reflected in Salisbury's horror at young Arthur's death:

Away with me, all you whose souls abhor
The unclean savours of a slaughter-house;
For I am stifled with this smell of sin.

His senses of touch, taste, vision and hearing are no less marked. In these, he and Fry are very close. For shocking realism, very few images conjure the sheer texture of blood on flesh! However, Shakespeare manages to harmonize sense data with moral revulsion in Angus' denunciation of Macbeth: "Now does he feel his secret murders sticking on his hands."12 In the same sombre mood, one turns to Shakespeare's concern, like Webster and Fry, with decay and death in the cycle of growth. The intimacy of the imagery on decay, death and growth hinges on Shakespeare's art at reducing his philosophy to an appeal to the senses. Othello's remark to the sleeping Desdemona testifies to this very great skill:

11Ibid, King John, IV,ii, 11.79-81.
12Ibid, Macbeth, V,ii, 11.16
When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither: I'll smell it on the tree. 13

His idea of the same cycle is expressed in his comparison of the disease and decay in man with that of nature: "something stained with grief, that's beauty's canker" 14 and "concealment like a worm in the bud, feed on her damask cheek" 15.

Passing from the sombre and melancholic in Shakespeare, there is his joyous side. In speaking of the greatness, the eternity and the infiniteness of love, he has given rise to moving imagery: "A thousand oaths, an ocean of his tears and instances of infinite love, warrant me welcome to Proteus." 16

For the idea of his scope of love, the two extremes, young love and adult love, Romeo and Juliet, and Anthony and Cleopatra offer many examples as: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep." 17 Anthony proclaims that if she sets "a bourn how far to be beloved", then

13 Shakespeare, Othello, V, ii, 13.
17 Ibid, Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 133 et seq.
must she needs find out new heaven, new earth."

Shakespeare and Fry have wonderful imagery to express the great power of that which is good and noble. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the power of good is revealed by Portia's exclamation to Nerissa: "How far that little candle throws his beams: so shines a good deed in a naughty world." The same thought is expressed in *Measure For Measure*: "Heaven doth with us as we with torches do, not light them for themselves."

The sound imagery which gives undertones and overtones of the lightest ditty as well as the most sombre overture is particularly marked in Shakespeare. He can produce the most discordant sound effects, but effects which seem peculiarly appropriate for the occasion. In Ariel's account of the shipwreck, the language is most congruous! The boatswain's account is even more appropriate: "with strange and several noises of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains, and no diversity of sounds, all

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19 Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 90.
horrible."

In contrast there is noise and sound of another kind:

[snip of text]

Due to the sombreness of its setting, Fry's A Phoenix Too Frequent offers the opportunity for dark imagery—treating of death, decay, and the ravages of time. At the same time, his zest for life evinces itself in colorful imagery, more colorful on account of its contrast with the tomb-like environment. Sound, color, life, death and eternal conflict are all rolled up into one in:

[snip of text]

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21 Ibid, The Tempest, V, i, 332
22 Ibid, III, iii, liv.141 et sequentia.
23 Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, pp. 14-15 passim
The idea of man as ship on the sea of life, an idea beloved of the Elizabethans, is caught by Fry:

He was the ship. He had such a deck, Doto, such a white scrubbed deck, such a stern prow, My husband, you have left a wake in my soul. You cut the glassy water with a diamond keel.

The sombre presence of evil, with its loathsome appeal to the senses is depicted by Dynamene:

Nothing can have the right of entrance Except those natural symbols of mortality, jabbing, funeral, sleek symbols of mortality with open-raven, the Death beetle who mocks time; particularly I'm afraid, the spider weaving his home with swift-generated slaughter And, of course, the worm.25

In contrast to the gloom of the Egyptian tomb, there comes Dynamene's response to the sparkling wine which represents the joy of life. The imagery is truly dazzling:

Dynamene: "Perfectly, a cold bell sounding in a golden month."26

How good it is, how it sings to the throat, purling with summer."27

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24 Ibid, p. 11
25 Ibid, p. 30
26 Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 30
27 Ibid, p. 35
The impermanence of earthly values occurs to Fry in all of his plays; as it did to Shakespeare in his. Tegeus bewails:

I mean that joy is nothing
But the parent of doom. Why should I have found
Your constancy such balm to the world and yet
Find, by the same vision, its destruction
A necessity? We're set upon by love
To make us incompetent to steer ourselves,
To make us docile to fate. I should have known:
Indulgences, not fulfillment, is what the world permits us.28

And again, he moans at the same determining elements in life: "At the best we live our lives on loan, at the worst in chains."29

His profession of love for Dynasene is as stirring as anything in Romeo and Juliet:

Like this the hurt of the little place between us
I come a journey from the wrenching ice
To walk in the sun.30

The symbols and imagery in Thor, with Angels is more reminiscent of the violence of Massinger, Webster and Marlowe than of Shakespeare. The symbols are, for the most part power symbols. It could well be Marlowe, instead of Fry who has Cymen state: "O gigantic heart,

28Ibid, p. 35
29Ibid, p. 65
30Ibid, p. 52
beating in the breast of the sky, Lordlust the white-hot
lion of the air, we are the men of earth; our metal shouts."31
The appeal to ear, to the eye and to all the senses has a
Massinger realism:

> His beard was twisted like mist in the roots of an oak,
> Beaded and bright with a slight rain, and he was crying
> Like an old wet leaf. His hands were as brown as a nest
> Of lizards, and his eyes were two pale stones
> Dropping in a dark well.32

Yet the romantic note of yearning for love, light and beauty is never far away.
In a refrain worthy of the best of the Elizabethans a series of dazzling and exalting images arise from the savage, dour note of the stern Thor, with Angels, Lirin, spirit of the whimsical, the superstitious, the mystic and the supernatural, lightens the entire play:

> But I can hear faintly on the twittering sea
> a sail
> Moving greatly where the waves, like harvest-home
> Come hugely on our coast; the men of Rome
> Returning, bringing God, winter over, a breath
> Of green exhaled from the hedges, the way of sky

31Fry, Thor, with Angels, p. 13
32Ibid, p. 21
Breached by larksong, Primrose and violet
And all the frail privileges of the early ground
Gather like pilgrims in the aisles of the sun.
A ship in full foliage rides in over February foam.

At the closing stages of the Thor, with Angels,
Primrose and violet
And all the frail privileges of the early ground
Gather like pilgrims in the aisles of the sun.
A ship in full foliage rides in over February foam.

Cymen, both confused and chastened, echoes the sentiments of Fry about the value of goodness:

"We are afraid to live by the rule of God, which is forgiveness, mercy, and compassion. And yet if we could bear daring to return good for evil without thought of what will come, I cannot think we should be the losers. Do we believe there is no strength in good or power in God?"

The idea of good is recurrent in other of his plays. For example, in The First Born, Moses intones: "Good is a singular strength not known to evil; and I, an ambitious heart needing interpretation."

In A Sleep of Prisoners, Meadows states:

"Imperishably. Good has no fear;
Good is itself, whatever comes.
It grows, and makes and bravely
Persuades, beyond all tilt of wrong:
Stronger than anger, wiser than strategy,
Enough to subdue cities and men
If we believe it with a long courage of truth."

The imagery is as strong and the truth as undeniable as that Shakespeare uttered:

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33 Ibid, p. 33
34 Fry, Thor, with Angels, p. 53
35 Ibid, p. 34 - The First Born
36 Ibid, A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 48
What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
And he but naked, though locked up in steel; 37
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

Grief and melancholy rear up in succession of images in *The First Born*. The grief and melancholy is not a passive introverted revelation. It cries out for action:

My blood heard my blood weeping
For off like the swimming of fear under the sea
The sobbing at night below the garden. I heard
My blood weeping. It is here it went and weeps. 38

It also cries out in protest against the horror of evil in an image that shreds its revolt:

Did he also bleach the glittering charcoal of the eyes
And sharpen beak and claws on his hone of lust?
What language is life? Not one I know.
A quarrel in God's nature. 39

Then, as in the drama of the great Elizabethans, there descends a hush of time during which a faith in the goodness of God asserts itself over images of evil. As Jennet pledges her faith in *The Lady's Not For Burning*, so Anath, Pharaoh's sister, pledges hers.

38 Fry, *The First Born*, p. 13
in The First Born;

I find it easier to believe that gods exist
Then believing that men do. A living body is a stranger,
Stranger than a spirit. How shall we comfort ourselves?
We can only sound our curious notes, without expecting
Any mating answer from any world,
Content to be a snatch of ambiguity,
Disturbing eternity with a kind of music. 40

The strong reliance of Jennet on the importance of
sense data is that which gives so much rise to images that
can be seen, felt and heard. It seems ironical that Jennet
with her realism should give so much rise to romantic
imagery, while Thomas, really a romantic, should express
such idealism in such a realistic, earthy, manner! How
wonderfully striking the image: "Body! You calculating piece of clay." 41 Then, the same Thomas, expresses his
disgust with the physical part of the human being:

I travel light; as light
That is, as a man can travel who will
Still carry his body around because
Of its sentimental value. Flesh
Weighs like a thousand years, and every morning
Wakes heavier for an intake of uproарiously
Comical dreams which smell of henbane.
Guts, humours, ventricles, nerves, fibres
And fat—the arterial labyrinth, body’s hell.
Still, it was the first thing my mother gave me,
God rest her soul. 42

40 Ibid, p. 87.
41 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 1
42 Ibid, p. 2.
In contrast to the empirical conversations of Thomas and Jennet, Alizon, the good, the lovely and the Juliet-like intrudes the note of goodness:

Richard: He is purgatory color.

Alizon: That shows its on its way to grace.43

In much the same way, then, that Shakespeare in the ne tragedy, The Merchant of Venice, brightens up the gloom of revenge, abduction, extortion, cruelty and hate with Portia's grace and kindness, so Alizon bestows the wand of charity on the entire play.

Jennet, wishing to protest against the ignorance of those believing in witchcraft, finds herself talking in the most romantic and mysterious imagery:

They tell one tale, that once, when the moon was gibbous and in a high dazed state
Of nimbus love, I shook jonquil's dew
On to a pearl and let a cricket chirp
Three times, thinking of pale Peter.
And there, Titania was, vexed by a cloud
Of pollen, using the sting of a bee to clean
Her nails and singing as drearily as a siren,
"Thy try to keep clean!"

Thomas, wishing to make a romantic protest against the prosaic realism of the meticulous and didactic Byron, the mayor, can only express himself in a horribly grotesque eartheness:


44 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 22.
You bubbling-mouthing, fog-blathering,
Chin-chuntering, chap-flapping, liturgical,
Turgidical, base old m'n. 45

On the occasion of the arrest of both Thomas and Jennet, the former on the suspicion of a self-confessed (false) murder and the latter on suspicion of horrible witch-craft, Thomas has a keen revelation of the difference between world and supernatural matters. He realizes that the Catholic awareness of death has the elements of the knowledge of evil and the possibility of damnation. His inability to express this idea is an idealistic language reveals an image that has spiritual as well as technical significance. Fry is striving to reveal the essential difference between the matters of flesh and those of the spirit:

Thomas: Into Pandora's box with all the ills.
But: not if that little hell-cat Hope's
Already in possession. I've hoped enough,
I've given the best years of my life to that little girl,
But I'm walking out with Damnation now, and she's
A flame who's got finality. 46

In A Sleep of Prisoners

David expresses the same thought in a much more terse image: "If life's not good enough for you, go and justify yourself." 47

46 Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 34.
The hard thudding sounds and strains of the temporal world are caught the strongest in *A Sleep of Prisoners:* for, as Meadows states: "Jog, jog, jog, jog, jog, ... Donkey ride is over. In under the salty planks and corrugated iron. Stable for many mokes. Tie up here."48

The solution to the riddle of the world is in action, whether the action is an act of forbearance, a physical act or an act of faith. As the knowledge of evil and the unquenchable forces of good lightened the Elizabethan dramas, so Fry again sheds his power of imagery to evoke the picture of a salvation that lies within the powers of man:

The human heart can go to the lengths of God. Dark and cold we may be, but this is no winter now. The frozen misery of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move; The thunder is the thunder of fles The thaw, the flood, the upstart spring. Thank God, our time is now when wrong comes up to face us everywhere, Never to leave us till we take The longest stride of soul men ever took. Affairs are now soul size. The enterprise is exploration unto God. 49

In summary, the images of good, evil, light, darkness, sound, touch, taste, music, death, decay, hope, faith,
charity, their opposites, romanticism and realism, pragmatism and apriri, and the wonder of both physical and spiritual goodness are the stock in trade of the Elizabethan dramatists. It has been shown that Fry uses the same types of imagery to reveal the characters in his plays.

His use of the Elizabethan irregular pentameter blank verse, intermingled with short dimeter and trimeter iambic measured songs aids him in achieving the maximum effects of his images. His ability to contain both realistic and romantic symbols in language that appeals to eye, ear and to touch are equal to most Elizabethans.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Not only has Christopher Fry, the new English dramatist, written in the verse style of the Elizabethans—irregular iambic pentametric verse—but also, he has re-captured the Elizabethan zest for life. This zest he has expressed in his treatment of tragedy, comedy, humor, death and decay and in his version of a stirring marching spirit.

His tragedy has the Christian elements not known to the Grecian tragic art, for, in both Fry and the Elizabethans, the Universal Law of God must never fall to the individual will of man.

He has recaptured and delineated the multi-aspects of comedy, which, like the Elizabethan comedy, ranges from rollicking laughter to the poignancy of the tragi-comic. In all the rich wealth of conflict, sometimes the Universal Laws of men win; sometimes the individual will of man; however, the conflicts respect the permanency of man's great institutions. Marriage, love and worship are always ascendant. The barrier to immorality of the supernatural strictures are always present.

The humor may range from burlesque to extreme subtlety, from the earthy to the intellectual. Like the Elizabethan sense of humor, Fry's characters are at
their humorous best when their comic spirit evinces itself in a way of looking at life's situations. The humor may aid an escape from painful reality; it may cause a return from a too-romantic flight.

The Elizabethans evinced a curiousity concerning death; they preferred to speculate on it in an imaginative as well as realistic way. There is none of the passive attitude in the drama of the Elizabethan and Fry. Both seem to be well taken with the unpleasantness of decay through evil and through old age. The healthy fear and respect accorded dissolution do not prevent them from casting aside a squeamishness about death.

One of the most characteristic notes of both the Elizabethans and Fry is that of a tremendous marching spirit in life. Despite a knowledge of the vicissitudes of life, both the Elizabethans and Fry insist that man holds his power to enjoy this life and to be worthy of the next in his own hand. The individual's advance to the battle of life and death is a quality and action that dignifies the name of "man".

Not only does Fry reflect the content of Elizabethan drama, but he also has the style and form to equal theirs. He has the richness of alliteration, personification and onomatopoeia of Shakespeare and his
In the richness of metaphor, in the musical loveliness of his verse and in his wonderful imagery, he approaches the great Elizabethans in these qualities. The variety of the metaphor, of the music and of the imagery have been shown to be not equal only to the scope of all the dramatists of the Elizabethan period, but to equal the variety of any one.

Fry's six major plays have had considerable success; the critics place the major emphasis on this success as due to the stimulating language and the refreshing note. Adverse criticism is directed at the point that audiences cannot understand the medium of language. The few serious attempts to analyze content and style center on the question as to whether or not Fry is strong on language and weak on the plot aspect; but characterization was a strong point. This thesis has produced considerable evidence favorable to Fry on this score. In order to establish the yardstick by which Fry is evaluated on Elizabethan grounds, established Elizabethan critics have been used. The main support on which the theme of Elizabethan rebirth rests is the textual comparison on Fry and the Elizabethans as well as the book by Stanford and Partridge.

This thesis claims that Fry has recaptured the spirit, the content and the style inherent in the art of
the great Elizabethans. It does not claim that Fry is an
Elizabethan, or a second Shakespeare.

The greatness of Fry lies in the fact that he has
the medium to express his messages that life is worth living
and that concern with both the temporal and the spiritual
worlds is at once the duty and great joy of mankind.
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To date this is the only book on Fry. Stanford, Fry's friend discusses the plays and Fry in an attempt to foster understanding between the public and Fry. It is partisan and lacks academic analysis.


This book was used to study T.S. Eliot for poetry and philosophy.

THE ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

In this thesis, Elizabethan Rebirth in Christopher Fry, it is contended that in matter and form, Christopher Fry has recaptured the qualities of the Elizabethan era, in particular, the qualities of the Elizabethan dramatists.

Under content, it is contended that Fry exemplifies Elizabethan Rebirth in his handling of tragedy, comedy, death and decay, humor, and the marching spirit of the Elizabethan era.

Under the section on style, Fry has manifested the Elizabethan qualities of metaphor, musical loveliness and imagery. In all, the matter and its form of presentation have shown Fry to be in the great Elizabethan dramatic tradition.

Fry's six plays that are treated in this thesis, Thor, Sith Angels, The First Born, Venus Observed, A Phoenix Too Frequent, The Lady's Not For Burning, and A Sleep of Prisoners, individually and collectively reflect aspects of the Elizabethan and Christian idea of tragedy. This idea concerns itself with the loss, in the spiritual sense, that obtains when the individual asserts his will over the Universal Law of God.

Fry reflects the Elizabethan idea of comedy, which, while ranging from burlesque to wit, never reaches the point where it preferred its wit and burlesque to the basic morals of life. The comedy of both Fry and the Elizabethans has been shown to have strong tragi-comic elements.
The lively interest and treatment of death and decay by Elizabethan writers has been caught and depicted by Fry. The various shades of humor, virtually all moral, reflected in Fry's plays are much akin to those of his Elizabethan predecessors—especially akin to Shakespeare's humor. Finally, as to matter, Fry's plays are saturated and impregnated with the zest for temporal adventure—a strong marching spirit is evinced.

In his expression of his matter, the style and form reflects the Elizabethan writers in Fry's use of rich and sparkling metaphor, in his use of verse as a medium of expression, in the ever-present musical loveliness of the verse, and in his rich imagery forms. The metaphor, the music and the imagery, combined with the alliterative and onomatopoetic elements are strongly indicative of an Elizabethan rebirth.

Both matter and form are combined by Fry to give the reader a look at existence that has meaning both in the temporal and spiritual sense. Like the Elizabethans, he considers that life, in preparation for man's ultimate destiny, must be morally, but fully lived in continuous experiences that reflect the idea and ideal that this life is worth living. While man must persevere in the challenges to his powers offered in this world, Fry and the Elizabethans both believed that good is the greatest force.
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