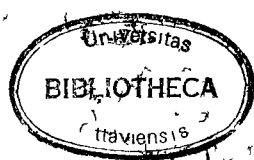


ELIZABETHAN REBIRTH IN CHRISTOPHER FRY

by Lewis Wesley 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

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.

¹George B. Woods, et al, The Literature of England. Chicago, Scott, Foreman, 2 vols, 1941; xiii-1200p, xiv-1190 p.

²Legouis and Cazamian, A History of English Literature, London, J. M. Dent, 1926, xi-1400 p.

³Sampson, The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, Cambridge, The University Press, 1941, xiv-1094 p.

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

⁴A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, New York, MacMillan, 1910, 1938, xiv-547 p.

⁵E.K. Chambers, William Shakespeare, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930, 2 vols, xvii-576p, xix-587 p.

⁶Emile Legouis 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...⁸

⁸Christopher Fry, in the Adelphi Magazine of London, op. citere.

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."⁹

IV.- Previous Work in this Field

At this date but one book has been written on Fry;¹⁰ 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

⁹Louis Cazamian, The Development of English Humor, 1930, 1951, Durham, Duke University Press, viii-421 p., p.6.

¹⁰Derek Stanford, Christopher Fry, An Appreciation, London, Nevill, 1951, 220 p.

evaluated 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 enmasse, they philosophize and reflect alone."¹¹ 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 "Bedazzled 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

¹¹Matthew Arnold, The Portable Matthew Arnold, edited by Lionel Trilling, New York, The Viking Press, 1946, xvi-659 p., paraphrase of a section in Arnold's introduction.

few serious articles have been written, articles which must be noted here. The two recent publications of the English World Review¹² 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 Review¹³ refutes this "Georgian Claim". In his latest book, Eric Partridge¹⁴ has a chapter on Fry's language. Much consideration is given to word imagery which is related to Shakespeare for wit, and to Donne in a spiritual and metaphysical sense.

Resting upon the authoritative definitions as to Elizabethan thought and 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

¹² J. P. Fitzgerald, "The Verse Plays of Christopher Fry", in the World Review, (no volume), issue of April, 1952, p. 4 et seq.

¹³ Robert Gittings, "Christopher Fry", in the World Review of England, (no volume) issue of July, 1952, p. 5 et seq.

¹⁴ Eric Partridge, From Sanskrit to Brazil, London, Hamilton, 1952, xiv, 146 p.

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, 1956. 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 scotch 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

INTRODUCTION

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 inspiriting experience he wrote a play for Dr. Barnardo'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 1939, 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, Pharoah 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, 1951, Sleep of Prisoners is as near to tragedy as it is possible to get without a 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....¹⁵

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, spare, cut and dried language. The other is that

¹⁵"The Lady's Not For Burning", in Time, of the United States, Vol. 56, No. 58, issue of November 20, 1950, p. 46 et seq. (Fry quoted 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. ¹⁶

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 Fry'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

¹⁶Robert Lewis, "Christopher Fry- Exponent of Verse Plays", feature in the New York Times Magazine, (no volume), (no number), issue of April 23, 1950, p.3 et seq.

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.

SECTION ONE

CONTENT

CHAPTER ONE

REBIRTH 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 man's soul 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-Classicalists 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 of 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 Gorboduc,¹

¹Sackville and Norton, Gorboduc, 1562

The Spanish Tragedy², Tamburlaine the Great³, The First Born⁴ and Thor, with Angels⁵, the main characters are of high birth and position. Tamburlaine, at first, a shepherd, 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 King Lear, tragedy results from different causes to the several characters. Gorboduc, the elderly king, chooses to present adulation of his sons

²Thomas Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy, 1586

³Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, 1588

⁴Christopher Fry, The First Born, 1946

⁵----- Thor, with Angels, 1948

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 mid-doings. 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

Bulstrode⁶ 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 Cordelia⁷; both have patience, faith and compassion. Rameses, Pharaoh's son, may be well likened to the noble Edgar.⁸ Seti and Moses represent the forces of evil as clearly as Edmund⁹ and Cornwall.¹⁰ 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

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

⁷Cordelia, heroine in Shakespeare's King Lear

⁸Edgar, noble personage in King Lear

⁹Edmund, evil force in King Lear

¹⁰Cornwall, 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."¹¹

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".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

¹¹Christopher Fry, The First Born, II, ii, ll. 117-21

¹²Ibidium, II, ii, ll. 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-prejudiced 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 Ramesses 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 Ramesses, 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

¹³Christopher Fry, The First Born, I, ii, ll. 400-4.

¹⁴Macbeth, tragic figure of Shakespeare's Macbeth

¹⁵Christopher Fry, The First Born, I, iii, ll. 408-18.

¹⁶Fry, Op Citere, III, ll, ll. 352-6.

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!¹⁷

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.
What 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.¹⁸

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:

¹⁷Ibid., I, ii, ll.570-6.

¹⁸Ibid., I, i, ll.686-693.

.....Thou has spoken right, 'tis true;
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.¹⁸

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 Berek states that Fry is "...showing the evil resulting from centralisation"¹⁹ 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 E. & P.W. Fitzgerald²⁰ who states that:

¹⁸Shakespeare, King Lear, V, iii, ll. 172-3

¹⁹Stanford, op citere, p. 26.

²⁰E. & P. W. Fitzgerald, "The Verse Plays of Christopher Fry, in the World Review of England, (no vol.) issue of July 1958, p. 7.

.... 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 Shakespearian 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. Tadfrid, 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

Now thou has 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.²²

time of agony for repentance to Cymen:

All make all:
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.²³

Tadfrin, lost, does not repent, and like Macbeth, fears but the ills of the temporal world.

21 Marlowe, History of Dr. Faustus, Scene XIV,
lines 65 et seq.

22 Marlowe, History of Dr. Faustus, Scene XIV,
lines 65 et seq.

²³Fry, Thor, With Angels, p. 53, lines 18ff.

Bring him to the tree; we'll off him
In Woden's way, the Woden death, Come on;
We'll be well out of our fear.²⁴

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."²⁵

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.

²⁴Ibid., p. 50, lines 6-9.

²⁵Fry, Thor, with Angels. p. 29.

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.

SECTION ONE

CONTENT

CHAPTER TWO

REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN COMEDY IN FRY

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 "M'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 wordly 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 man. 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 Sea¹ 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-

Piggie: It wouldn't take a minute, they took us all over their rubber plantation.²

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 ~~emperil~~ ^{imperil} their souls by the means they employ. It is in this sense that Fry's remark that "comedy is eternity in a moment"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 Lyly⁴ 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

³Christopher Fry, op citere (in introduction)

⁴John Lyly, (1554-1606) an Elizabethan author, and dramatist, noted for refinement and wit in comedy.

grace. To this, Robert Greene⁵ 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 Udall⁶ 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 triumphs, thou shalt be partaker of my torments. I love! Hephestion, 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...

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

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

⁷John Lyly, Campaspe, II, ii, ll.55 passim.

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.⁸

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

⁸Christopher Fry, A Pheonix too Frequent, London, Hollis and Carter, 1946, 70 p. (page 33)

developed by Shakespeare is revealed in:

Margaret: As it please Lord Lacy; but love's
foolish looks
Think footsteps miles and minutes to be hours⁹
.....

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.¹⁰

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

Is not heaven's joy before earth's fading bliss,
And life above sweeter than life in love.¹¹

Fry's Alizon, smitten with love for Richard cries
out: "I've an April blindness. You're hidden in a cloud
of crimson catlerine wheels."¹² 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 bumbee.¹³

Fry is in the best tradition of Greene and

⁹Robert Greene, Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay, III, ii,
11. 154-5

¹⁰Ibidium, III, iii, 11.51-54

¹¹Ibid., V,i, 11.75-76

¹²Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning,
I, line 141-2

¹³Ibid., III, 11.528-32.

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

Dekker¹⁵ 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:

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

¹⁴Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, Act III, ll. 550 and passim.

¹⁵Thomas Dekker, writer of the gayest Comedy in the Elizabethan era. The Shoemakers' Holiday was his best.

that work in the fields pray for brave days, We
work in a dry shop; what care if it rains?¹⁶

The humorous

imagination of Firk 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 arising 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

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

¹⁷Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, London, 1948, Oxford University Press, 97 p, (p. 9, 11.35ff.)

against death while there is still the urge to live:

Honestly, 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 tragic-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. 9, 11. 11 et seq.)

¹⁹ George Gordon, Shakespearean Comedy, and Other Studies, London, Oxford University Press, 1944. vi-158p. Gordon is paraphrased as to his chapter on "The World of the Comedies" commencing on page 45.

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:

Caesario, 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:

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

²¹Shakespeare, Twelfth Night. III, i, 11.152-5

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.²²

Viola, the lovely,
 witty heroine of Twelfth Night reflects many of the
 qualities of Jannet, Fry's heroine and empiricist 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. Was 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

²²Op. Citere, page 22.

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?
 Chorus, 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

Perpetua,

²⁴Christopher Fry, The Lady's Not for Burning, op. cit., page 59, ll. 4 et seq.

²⁵Christopher Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, op. cit., page 68, ll. 9 et seq.

a combination of Beatrice²⁶ and Rosalind²⁷ reveals the romantic elements of Elizabethan comedy:

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.²⁸

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 Doto²⁹, the

²⁶The witty, volatile heroine of Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing.

²⁷Rosalind, romantic idealist of Shakespeare's As You Like It.

²⁸Fry, Venus Observed, London, Oxford Press, 1949, p. 27-28

²⁹Doto, op. cit, p. 23

unimaginative Jessie Dill³⁰, the "this-worldly" Tappercoom³¹, and the rock and soil of Nicholas³² 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 comedy³³ 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,

³⁰Practical women in Venus Observed op. citere.

³¹Tappercoom, bored Justice in The lady's Not for Burning

³²Nicholas, op citere, p. 23

³³Refer 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 states³⁴ the drama ... parallels the novel in its preoccupation with social protest and with sex.³⁴ Typical plays which ~~bare~~^{show} the external trappings of comic-tragedy are: Mark Reed's, Yes, My Darling Daughter, Claire Boothe'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

³⁴Ludwig Lewisohn, The Story of American Literature, New York, The Modern Library, xxxi-650, p. 605.

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 tragic-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."³⁵

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

³⁵John Lyly, *Campaspe*, V, iv, ll.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 renouncing:

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.³⁶

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: What then can conquer him that kills not me",³⁷ 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. 83.

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

⁴¹Edith Sitwell, A Notebook on William Shakespeare, London, Mac Millan, 1948, xii-233 p. page 194.

⁴²William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, III, i.

⁴³Christopher Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, London, Oxford University Press, 1951, 51 p.

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:⁴⁴

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: Yell, then, the honesty

Adams: What honesty?

Meadows: Not to say we do a thing
For all men's sake when we do it only for our own.
And 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

⁴⁴Not 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.

⁴⁵Christopher Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, op. citere, page 46 passim.

One important quality he seems so far to lack--narrative power. He is content with little plot, and is not even greatly concerned to make 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:

⁴⁷W.A. Darlington, "London Letter", article in The New York Times of America, (no number), issue of Sunday, February 12, 1950, page K-3, col. 1., et. sequentia.

⁴⁸D. & 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 Mendip'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. (James 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".

⁵⁰R.A. Scott-James, "Christopher Fry's Poetic Drama", Nation, (no volume), no. 171, p.315 Cf. issue of Oct. 7, 1950.

⁵¹James Mason Brown, "Christopher Fry", article in the New Republic of America, no.123, issue of November, 27, 1950, p.22 et. seq.

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 criterion 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.

SECTION ONE

CONTENT

CHAPTER THREE

REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN DEATH AND DECAY IN FRY

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 III, 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 must²

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. 13ff.

²Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part Three, V, 11, 8ff.

die we must".

For sheer intensity of the death, rot and horror of man'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 Appius and Virginia³ 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.

³These 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.⁴

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.⁵

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?

⁴John Lyly, *Endymion*, *The Man in the Moon*, V,1,47ff

⁵George Peele, *The Old Wives Tale*, line 910-914.

Serlby: I live not, Lambert, to content the dead,
Nor was I wedded but for life to her;
The grave ends and begins a married state.⁶

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
nor age,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb nor
Beauty,
To make thy riches present. 'hat's yet in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
'ie hid more thousand deaths: yet death we fear,
That makes these odds all even⁸

⁷William Shakespeare, Two Gentlemen from Verona, I,iii, 65ff.

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 ears; soft stillness and the night
Becomes the touches of sweet harmony,
Sit Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with bright patines of gold
.....
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot see it.¹⁰

Fry writes in this
tradition.

Fry's most persistent and most moving theme is the
perpetual dialogue between despair 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 inconsequential
Hair, looking out of two small jellies for the means

⁹Ibid, lines 33-36.

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

¹¹Ibidium.

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.¹²

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

¹²Fry'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

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

¹⁴Ibid. 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 Not 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 stern, unyielding. The First Born. Fry takes on the note of Webster, Marlowe and a Shakespeare in his darker mood. It is not the death of fulfillment and frustration but the death from violence. Pose not the checker-board landscape:

My blood heard my blood weeping
 Far off like the swimming of feet under the sea,
 The sobbing at night below the garden. . . .
 My blood weeping.¹⁹

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 is the strength to have"²⁰. Because neither Moses, nor Seti 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 ideal 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 world²¹

¹⁹Fry, The First Born, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁰Fry, Sleep of Prisoners, op. cit., p. 47.

²¹Fry, 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.²³

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

²²The 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, etcetera, etcetera.
 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 wordly 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

²⁴Ibid., page 97.

²⁵Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 13

²⁶Ibid., 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 unforgottable hushed emerald
Of the coiling and fettering serpent²⁷

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:

..... As 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---²⁸
.....
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.²⁹

²⁷Fry, Venus Observed, p. 22

²⁸Ibidium, 98,99 passim.

²⁹Ibidium, 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

³⁰Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, page 49.

the idea of an escape, through denial and indifference,
from life, decay and death.

SECTION ONE

CONTENT

CHAPTER FOUR

REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN HUMOR IN FRY

In the Introduction¹ 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 irrespressible 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-seil-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 confines 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 restrained and too artificial and too rational to produce other than a

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 enthrone 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; it 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 Shavian 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, in broad humor 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.¹

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 Eumenides 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."² 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:

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.³

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,⁴ 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, roering 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:

³Fry, A Pheonix Too Frequent, p. 19.

⁴George Peele, The Old Wives Tale, (1595)

Here is the Englishman-
 Conquer him that can-
 Come for his lady bright,
 To prove himself a knight,⁵
 And win her love in fight.

At the times when the excursions into idyllic love are the most intense, Peele 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

⁵Peele, *op. citere*, ll. 540 et. seq.

⁶Fry, 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. And Humphrey
 Went twinkling like Lucifer into the daffodils.⁷
 When Babylon fell there wasn't a better thump.

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-blothering
 Chin-chuntering, chop-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

⁷Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 11.

⁸Falstaff, a comic, pseudo-philosopher and a
 braggart appears in several of Shakespeare's works.

⁹Fry, op. citere. The Mayor, Tyson, is the
 practical official.

¹⁰Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 27.

in his language to the Prince parallels 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 true, but that one knows isn't real at all. When 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 on one side, as a man
could you love me, Alizon?¹²

In much the same manner,
Shakespeare's Miranda¹³, 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

¹¹Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 77

¹²Ibid, p. 77.

¹³Shakespeare, The Tempest-Miranda, the heroine

¹⁴Ibid. 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. 's 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

¹⁵Louis Cazamian, The Development of English Humor, Durham, Duke University, 1952, p. 218.

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

¹⁶ Fry, The Lady's Not for Burning. p. 1.

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 Ben 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."¹⁸ 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. 221.

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
 wooed from his aptitude for death by being
 happy.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 Shakespearian 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

¹⁹Fry, 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.²⁰ 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 Egypt 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:

²⁰Shakespeare, Hamlet, II, 11, 11.595 et sequentia.

²¹Ibidium, II, 11, 11. 256-7

²²Fry, The First Born, I, ii, 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 themselves in a variety of forms. The common stream was the outlook that a free will manifested itself in laughter toward life and its experiences. The response was burlesque, light benter, 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.

SECTION ONE

CONTENT

CHAPTER FIVE

REBIRTH OF THE ELIZABETHAN MARCUING SPIRIT IN FRY

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 feat of the English bowmen at Greycy, 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 Tragedy ² the old marshal, Hieronimo had an exciting appeal to the Elizabethan. Not willing to abide the promise of divine retribution, he, aided by a 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. Balked by all the forces available to an anti-

¹Shakespeare, Hamlet, II,ii, ll.294-7

²Kyd, Thomas, The Spanish Tragedy, (1587)

semitic world, - Shylock³ urges his horrible revenge until checked by forces beyond his control.

While approving of the fate of Anthony and Cleopatra,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 Tamburlaine, the Great. Consider

Tamburlaine's words:

Thus am I right the scourge of highest Jove;
And see the figure of my dignity
By which I hold my name and majesty.⁵

The intense will

to action is also expressed by Tamburlaine:

So will I ride through Samarcanda streets,
Until my soul, dissevered from this flesh,
Shall mount the milk-white way, and meet him there.
To Babylon, my lords; to Babylon!⁶

³Shylock, one of the central figures in Shakespeare's 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.

⁴Shakespeare, Anthony and Cleopatra.

⁵Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, (II), IV, iv, 11.20-3.

⁶Ibidium, IV, iv, 11. 129-133.

Marlowe's will to war and conquest was also equalled by his portrayal of a love scene as intense as any in Shakespeare's Anthony and Cleopatra.⁷ The scene wherein Faustus⁸ 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.⁹ the young Prince of Wales, forsaking his evil ways and his evil companions was thrown into a strange and fearsome

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

⁸Marlowe, History of Doctor Faustus, Scene XVII, 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,¹⁰ 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,¹¹ 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?"¹² Later, he still protests:

Your Christian land was weak, it shook
Down, it burnt, its ash was blown
Into our food and drink. That 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
..... Why did my strength startle from
Your futility.¹³

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

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

¹²Fry, Thor, With Angels, p.26.

¹³Ibidium, p. 28.

While Cymon 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, Cymon, 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.¹⁴

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 *Wyrd*; 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.

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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 Cyren, 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 unconquered
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

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 Remeses 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 Brutus¹⁷ 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. As Moses finished: "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,

¹⁵Fry, The First Born, p. 45

¹⁶Ibidium, p. 82-3 passim.

¹⁷Tragic figure in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

damnable pass of time."¹⁸

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,¹⁹ 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.²⁰

Meadows²¹ 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.²²

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

¹⁸Fry, op. cit, p. 100.

¹⁹David King, the aggressive character in Fry's A Sleep of Prisoners.

²⁰A Sleep For Prisoners, p. 41

²¹Private Tim Meadows is the interpreter of Fry's thought in A Sleep For Prisoners

²²Fry, A Sleep For Prisoners, p. 48

his humble call

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

.....
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 into God.²³

Jennet²⁴ 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.....
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.²⁵
To taste our salt sorrow on his lips.

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

²³Fry. A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 49

²⁴Jennet, 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.

²⁵Fry, The Lady's Not for Burning, p. 85.

tales, concocted from old folk tales and legends,²⁶ 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. Jacques²⁷, Hamlet²⁸ and Macbeth^{28a} 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.

When Audrey and Touchstone, clownish characters in

²⁶George Peele, The Old Wives Tale, (1595)--The striking note in the loosely knit play is the keen enjoyment reflected for life.

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

²⁸Hamlet, 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.

^{28a}Macbeth's insight expressed in Macbeth, V,v,11. 24ff.

As You Like It have their romantic meeting, Jacques, for all his melancholy, still only cannot forego his basic concern and his admission with regard for the unusual, the unexpected and the non-realistic aspects of life. For he cannot avoid saying, "I could find fault in this too." 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 soliloquys. For one who resented his call to action, he exhibited a spirit toward his work that could be called little less than a warlike spirit. Macbeth, except for the one introspective lapse 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 dispiriting aspects of life, end their courses in a contradictory manner. Dry's Thomas, a star of scepticism, exclaims again and again at the fraud of life-much in the tenor of:

A darkening land sunken into prayer
 Lucidly in dewdrops of one syllable, ³¹
 Punc dimittis. 'Tis the twilight, mad man.

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

³⁰See note 29 on page 75.

³¹Dry, The Lady's Not for Turning, p. 40.

A decision on life has to be made; Thomas 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,
Even for the sake of my ultimate friendly death,³²

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

³²Ibid., page 97.

³³Merchant in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice

³⁴Shylock, vengeful Jew in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice

³⁵Portia, heroine of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice

³⁶Benedick, hero of Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing

³⁷Beatrice, heroine in Much Ado About Nothing

³⁸Three witty and lovable women in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night

³⁹Vivacious sprite in Shakespeare's The Tempest

⁴⁰Shakespeare's robust, noble, soldier buffoon

⁴¹Heroine of As You Like It.

get from him. They give the impression of being alive and of proving inexhaustible in the emotions they reflect in their actions. Even the non-human creatures, Ariel⁴² and Caliban⁴³ 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

⁴²Note 30 on page 90 of this thesis.

⁴³Slave and enslaver of man in The Tempest

⁴⁴T.S. Eliot, "Love Song 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 nurse⁴⁵, so do Fry's main characters, or first impressions, cast the lesser lights into an umbra. However, on re-reading, it becomes apparent, in both cases, that the entire work must be considered individually for each reveals some peculiar slant on life.

In The Lady's Lot for Burning, Margaret, the mother of the actors Humphrey and Nicholas, reflects on persons who can enjoy life, providing things are seen on an even keel. She has a zest for enjoyment of the sea, of wine and the life-tried:

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, Alizon?⁴⁶

While Jennet pursues her intense

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

⁴⁶Fry, The Lady's Lot 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:

Get the man away from here!
Good gracious, do you imagine the place to be
a charitable institution? Very mad,
wishes to draw attention to himself;
The brain a delicate mechanism; that's why
God more precise than a clockmaker;
Grant us all a steady pendulum.
All say Amen.⁴⁷

In another comedy by Fry,
A Phoenix Too Frequent, Dynamene, the widow, and Tegeus-
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 Doto, 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 Doto 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

⁴⁸Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 25.

⁴⁹Ibid, 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.⁵¹

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 persever-
 ing 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.⁵²

Jessie, replies:

"Now, I wonder who's the most likely person to have a
 stamp?"⁵³

⁵¹Fry, Venus Observed, p. 37

⁵²Fry, Venus Observed, p. 57

⁵³Ibidium, p. 58.

Realistic or romantic, material or immaterial, subjective or objective in nature, the personae of the dramas of both Fry and the Elizabethans might well be epitomized in and by:

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Auntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. "Hilde Roland to the Dark Tower came".⁵⁴

Norman Parkinson,⁵⁵ 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 quality of the two plays. In addition, while praising the word imagery, the excitement 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 have 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 examples given in the close analysis, that Fry is in the tradition of the Elizabethans. Intellectuals equating the Elizabethans

⁵⁴Robert Browning, "Hilde Roland to the Dark Tower Come," lines 100-51.

⁵⁵Norman Parkinson, "Christopher Fry: The Lost Titled of New Playwright, a review in the Verne of England, (no vol.), (no number), issue of May 15, 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 Cocktail 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 Lesser critics have not analyzed, intellectually, the philosophy so often expressed by Fry in each of his plays. The plays are not really any more of fragile organization than was Philip Sidney, who behind a be-ribboned and dainty exterior combined the qualities of poet, writer, statesman, gentleman, soldier and hero. Sidney, in a large 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 flavored with the Elizabethan qualities of laughter-now gay, now bitter-mortality, 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 16th century; they erupt with the boisterous, brawling spirit of those times; and they often touch the heart-strings

with a melancholic humor--not plaintive, not grim and bitter. Finally, both the Elizabethans and Fry devote their selves to the importance of the individual in the world. The spirit of the individual in his determination toward his self-determined end.

Only an analysis of each character and an interpretation of the individual according to a philosophic background can yield the rich harvest afforded by the dramatists. The plot may be trivial; it may be deficient according to technical standards, but if Fry has any treasures, it is in his characterizations.

SIXTH

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The metaphor of both the Elizabethans and Fry is not that addressed to the abstract beauty of the ideal. Shelley. While the flights are increasingly fantastic and stratopoeic, even their most ornate figures have earthly grounding. It is difficult to find many Elizabethan heroes and heroines, who, while they might make death a consideration of the living, were not in love with life. They are tied to this world with the same common-sense spirit as expressed in: Alison: "It sounds as though the night air is riding on a creaking saddle"¹. Shelley would use the elements of air, fire and water to lead the mortal along the path to abstract beauty which is far removed from earthly matter! When he speaks of:

That orbed maiden with white fire upon
Whom mortals call the moon
Slides glimmering o'er the flogges- floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn²

He is speaking of the

¹Fry, The English Poets, p. 100

²Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Cloud"

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 wonderful 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, Dynamene 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; Dynamene 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. What can exceed the gossamer loveliness of:

Alizon: 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 Bumblebee.⁴

While neither Fry nor the

³Fry, *Phoenix too Frequent*, p. 63.

⁴Fry, *The Lady's Not For Burning*, p.4.

Elizabethan had a monopoly on the use of metaphors, both by a degree of excellence not characteristic of other writers. Stanford states:

...a whole history might well be written of the use of verbs in Fry's composition. The very spelling of the sentence, so to speak, the verb offering a new test of a poet's power to activate language. The weakly imaginative conceiver leans upon his adjectives; the stronger but somewhat staid imagination plies its faith upon its nouns; but the revelation, in the energetic mind, in all its full vividness, is in the verb.⁵

Both the Elizabethans and Fry gained their metaphorical ascent through the action of the verb.

In The Spanish Tragedy, despite the fact that little action occurs on the stage, while the entire story is conveyed in long speeches, the use of the verb makes the story as dramatically graphic as stage action could be! A sample from the play is sufficient to indicate this point:

With pitiful silence hushed these trifling harms,
And lent them leave, for they had sorted violence
To take advantage in my garden plot
Upon my son, my dear Horatio.
There, merciless, they butchered up my boy.
He shrieks: (I heard- and yet methinks, I hear)
His diabolical outcry echo in the air.
With soonest speed, I hastened to the noise
"here, hanging on a tree, I found my son."⁶

⁵Derek Stanford, Christopher Fry, An Appreciation, London, Nevill Martin, 1961, 223 n., (p.200)

⁶Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine The Great, 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"⁷ 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 stabbing 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.⁸

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 Cleopatra⁹ is the masterpiece of Shakespearian 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.....

⁷Beowulf, great English Folk Epic of the 7th Century.

⁸Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great II, IV, iv, (185-9)

⁹Shakespeare, Anthony and Cleopatra, 1607.

.....In his livery
 Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
 As plates dropp't'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 lowering 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,

¹⁰ Ibid, V, ii, ll. 85-94.

¹¹ Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II, iv, ll-226-231.

¹² Shakespeare, 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" paints 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: "Nichols: 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:
Sobbing among the pears.¹⁵ Perhaps a nightingale

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. 16

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

¹⁵Ibid, A Phoenix Too Frequent, p. 35 passim.

¹⁶Ibid, 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, Pharoah'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 Pharoah father
Could sting him out of my arms.²⁰

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

¹⁷Fry, Thor, With Angels, p. 37-38 passim.

¹⁸Fry, The First Born, p. 3-4

¹⁹Ibid, p. 5.

²⁰Ibid, 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, realising 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 man
 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 IN FRY

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!¹

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

In frigates bottomed with rich Bethin 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, iii, ll.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,²
And entertain fair Margaret with their lays.

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

Zenecrote: As 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..³

While music plays an indicental 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 Spurgeon⁴ records at least as much music in forty-five lines as in the whole of any other play, the presence of music is

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

³Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, I, III, ii, 46 et seq.

⁴Caroline F. E. 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.⁵ 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.⁶

... 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.⁷

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 Illyria--in itself a musical name cast 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 fell:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor!⁸

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.....⁹

While Ariel sings blithely away:

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.¹⁰

⁸Ibid, Twelfth Night, I, 1, 11.1-6.

⁹Shakespeare, The Tempest, V, i, 11.50-55.

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 spirits 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 Partridge¹¹ 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 forth-coming 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 go, so shall we seem
In the gardens, hand in hand.
O fortune, fortune.¹²

Pharoah's sister, Anath,

¹¹Eric Partridge, From Sanskrit to Brazil, "The Language of Christopher Fry", pp. 91-108, London, Hamilton, 1952, 145 p.

¹²Fry, The First Born, p. 40-1.

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."¹³ It is Moses, unyielding nemesis of Egypt, who chants the vengeance of the Jewish Jehovah, at once lovely and awful.

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 spuny 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.¹⁴

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:

¹³Ibid, p. 64

¹⁴Ibid, 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.¹⁵

File, for Teusret,

her love for her brother, and for all living things, is
 made immortal in her musical pleas:

Have seen her, How can she be
 Too late? Is beauty not a wind? Then
 We shall live again. Oh Rameses,
 I'm Teusret. Are 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, Rameses.
 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,
 Glistening chalcedonyx and mille saphires.
 Doesn't their brightness come to you as their glitter
 Bothers into the chambers of your sleep?¹⁶

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 language
 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

¹⁵Fry, The First Born, IV, 11, 11.2-5.

¹⁶Ibidium, III, 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. Cymen, 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 spring:

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 Britain.¹⁷

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
 Leading himself along in the emerald wheat...¹⁸

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.

¹⁷Fry, Thor, With Angels. p. 33

¹⁸Ibidum, 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 attendant loveliness can escape from one's misdeeds and is a law for the lonely. Peter feels that music is one language which is capable of communicating the really sane thing in life: "It's the universal language, love. It's music."¹⁹ At a critical moment in the play when it seems as though the characters are to be submerged through a yielding to a sea of doubt and resignation, Peter whistles and sings. In a bitter argument with the aggressive, but doubtful David, Peter, like Merlin in Thor, with Incest, suggests how far man has travelled from the wonderful manifestations of God, from a positive truth that has not change despite worldly human conflict—the beauty of nature. The music is a glorious hymn:

Morning comes

To a prison like a nurse:
A rattling presence, as though a small breeze came,
And presently a voice, I think
We're going to live. The dark pain has gone,
The relief of day light flows over us,
As though beginning is beginning. The hills roll in
And make their homes, and gradually unfold the grass.
Breath and light are cool together now.
The earth is all transparent, but too deep
To see down to its bed.²⁰

¹⁹Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 1

²⁰Ibidum, p. 28-9.

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 view point, in an over-all sense, of the Elizabethans. For that reason, the dirge-like note that prevails while Dynamene 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. Dynamene 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 croddling of doves in the day.
I attribute my character to the shadows
And heavy roots; and my interest in music

²¹Fry, 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 Orsino in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night:

Why? Because I see no end.
To the parcelling 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

²²Ibid, p. 47-8.

²³Ibid. p. 58

²⁴Fry, 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
Looping and threading, tuning and entwining,
Flings a babel of bells, a carolling
Of such various vowels the ear can almost feel
The soul of sound²⁵

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 Perpetua 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."²⁶

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,...²⁷

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

²⁵Fry, Venus Observed p. 62

²⁶Fry, Venus Observed p. 97

²⁷Fry, 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 appetite³⁰
 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

²⁸Ibidium, p. 73

²⁹Ibidium, p. 84

³⁰Ibidium, 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"³¹

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" ³²

³¹Derek Stanford, Christopher Fry, An Appreciation, London, Nevill, 1951, 221 p., "Language", p. 199. The quotation used by Stanford is from Fry's Venus Observed.

³²"The Lady's Not For Burning", in Time of the United States, Vol. 56, No. 58, issue of November 20, 1950, p. 46.

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, inspiriting 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.

SECTION TWO

STYLE

CHAPTER THREE

REBIRTH OF ELIZABETHAN IMAGERY IN FRY

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

¹Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, And What It Tells Us. New York, Macmillan, 1935, xi-408, p. 5.

surge up into his mind."² 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, Spurgeon³ 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; Jenson, 195; Massinger, 193; Shakespeare, 190; and Marlowe, 120.

²Ibidium, pp. 5-6.

³Caroline 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"⁴; also, "with the cannon break the frame of heaven, batter the shining palace of the sun and shiver all the starry firmament."⁵

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, (III) 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."⁶

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."⁷

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

⁷Phillip Massinger, The Roman Actor, III, ii, 11.26-37 pass.

river that moves forever, and yet still the same."⁸

While Jonson is seized with life as resembling the course of the river, Chapman gave character to and personified his river imagery:⁹ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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

⁸Ben Jonson, Every Man In His Humor, V,1, passim.

⁹Chapman, Byron's Conspiracy III, 1 passim.

¹⁰Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, III, v, ll.134 ff.

fairly reek with the malodorousness of sin. The most striking Shakespearian 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.¹¹

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

¹³Shakespeare, Othello, V, ii, 13.

¹⁴Ibid, The Tempest, I, ii, 11.415 ff.

¹⁵Ibid, Twelfth Night, II, iv, 113.

¹⁶Ibid, Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, vii, 60 ff.

¹⁷Ibid, Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 133 et seq.

must she needs find out new heaven, new earth."¹⁸
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."¹⁹ The same thought is expressed in Measure For Measure: "Heaven doth with us as we with torches do, not light them for themselves."²⁰

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

¹⁸Ibid, Anthony and Cleopatra, I, i, 177 passim.

¹⁹Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, V, i, 90.

²⁰Ibid, Measure For Measure, I, i, 33.

horrible."²¹

In contrast there is noise and sound of another kind:

'Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That, if I had then waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
The clouds me thought would open, and show
Riches ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again."²²

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:

That a mad blacksmith creation is
who blows his furnaces until the stars fly upward
And iron Time is hot and politicians glow
And bulbs and roots sizzle into hyacinth
And orchis, and the sand puts out the lion,
Rearing yellow, and oceans bud with porpoises,
Blenny, tunny and the almost unresisting
Blindfish; throats are out, the masterpiece
Looms out of labor: nations and rebellions
Are spat out to hand on the wind....²³

²¹Ibid, The Tempest, V, i, 332

²²Ibid, III, iii, 11.141 et sequentia.

²³Fry, A Phoenix Too Frequent, pp. 14-15 passim

The idea of man ashore 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.²⁴
You cut the glassy water with a diamond keel.

The sombre presence of evil, with its loathesome 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 omen-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

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 Dynamene is as stirring as anything in Romeo and Juliet:

Oh, when I cross
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. Merlin,
 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.³³

At the closing stages of the Thor, With Angels,
 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?"³⁴

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."³⁵ 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.³⁶

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

³³Ibid, p. 33

³⁴Fry, Thor, With Angels, p. 53

³⁵Ibid, p. 34 - The First Born

³⁶Ibid, 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
 Far 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 shrieks its revolt:

Did he also bleak 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 Jannet pledges her faith in The Lady's Not For Burning, so Anath, Pharoah's sister, pledges hers

³⁷Shakespeare, King Henry VI, Part II, III, ii, 11.232-5.

³⁸Fry, The First Born, p. 13

³⁹Ibid, p. 30.

in The First Born;

I find it easier to believe that gods exist
Than 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 uproariously
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 she is its on its way to grave.⁴³

In much the same way, then, that Shakespeare in the neo-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 witch-craft, 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 Jonquill'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 gnat,
"Thy try to keep clean!"⁴⁴

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

⁴³Ibid, p. 6.

⁴⁴Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 25.

You bubbling-mouthing, fog-blattering,
Chin-chuntering, chap-flapping, liturgical,
Turgidical, base old men.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 in 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

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Fry, The Lady's Not For Burning, p. 34.

⁴⁷ Ibid, A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 17.

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 mangy 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 dreams, 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 floes
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,

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 35

⁴⁹ Fry, A Sleep of Prisoners, p. 49.

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 pentametric 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 recaptured 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 curiosity 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

contemporaries. 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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THE ABSTRACT OF THE THESES

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, With 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 onomatopoeitic 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 a 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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