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Genre and the Literary Canon

Alastair Fowler

I. Canons of Literature

THE LITERATURE we criticize and theorize about is never the whole. At most we talk about sizable subsets of the writers and works of the past. This limited field is the current literary canon. Some have argued that much the same is true of individual works: that an “elasticity” in the literary artifact permits us to attend now to small samples, now to larger traditions and groupings of which the work in its unitary sense forms a mere constituent. This may be true in part, although much has still to be said on the side of the artifact’s integrity. But however that may be, few will dispute the elasticity of *literature*. The literary canon varies obviously—as well as unobviously—from age to age and reader to reader. The Dame Mutability who produces these marvelous changes has often been identified with fashion. Isaac D’Israeli, an early proponent of this view, argued that “prose and verse have been regulated by the same caprice that cuts our coats and cocks our hats,” and concluded his essay on literary fashion with the claim that “different times, then, are regulated by different tastes. What makes a strong impression on the public at one time, ceases to interest it at another . . . and every age of modern literature might, perhaps, admit of a new classification, by dividing it into its periods of fashionable literature.”¹ Now fashion’s claim to rule is not easily denied. A desire for novelty, which we should not undervalue, has much to do with pleasure in literary form. Nevertheless, “taste” is more than fashion and should not be subordinated to trivial laws of circumstance. But to recognize taste for what it is, we need at least to glimpse its involvement in multifarious processes, many of them apparently quite unconnected with literature. Their variety, which is the subject of Kellett’s challenging essay *The Whirligig of Taste*, calls for extended study. In the present paper I shall look at only one determinant, genre.

As soon as one thinks of genre in relation to taste, one is struck by how many of D’Israeli’s instances of displaced fashions are described in generic or modal terms: “the brilliant era of epigrammatic points,” “another age was deluged by a million of sonnets,” “an age of epics,”

“dream” (i.e., dream vision), “satires,” “romance,” “tragedies,” “comedies.” In fact, changes in the literary canon may often be referred to revaluation or devaluation of the genres that the canonical works represent.

The official canon, however, is sometimes spoken of as pretty stable, if not “totally coherent.” And the idea of canon certainly implies a collection of works enjoying an exclusive completeness (at least for a time). Yet the biblical canon was arrived at only after many vicissitudes and over a period of many centuries. At each stage it was categorically fixed (although subject to varying emphases, conciliatory, denominational, sectarian, individual); but when it enlarged or contracted, the new canon, too, was definitive. Moreover, canonical books of Scripture are not merely authentic but also authoritative. This normative sense has prompted a useful extension of the term to secular literature. Thus Curtius writes of “canon formation in literature [that] must always proceed to a selection of classics” and that embodies itself in lists of authors, curricula, histories of literature, and canons of taste.

The current canon sets fixed limits to our understanding of literature, in several ways. The OFFICIAL CANON is institutionalized through education, patronage, and journalism. But each individual has also his PERSONAL CANON, works he happens to know and value. These two sets have no simple inclusive relation. Most of us fail to respond to some official classics; on the other hand, through superior judgment or benefit of learning, we may be able to extend the socially determined canon usefully. We may depart from it, that is, in ways that are not merely eccentric: as by seeing merit in an experimental work or by revaluing a neglected one. Here, translations from foreign and early indigenous literature have obviously a considerable function (Wyatt’s Petrarch, Dryden’s Chaucer, Cary’s Dante). Infusion of elements from popular art have also a vital influence. So the narrative ballad, after centuries of belonging firmly to the popular canon and of being excluded from the literary canon, attracted the interest of the impartial Gray and was given art treatment by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The literary canon in the broadest sense comprises the entire written corpus, together with all surviving oral literature. But much of this POTENTIAL CANON remains inaccessible, for example, because of the rarity of its records, which may be sequestered in large libraries. There is thus a more limited ACCESSIBLE CANON. This is much narrower than the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* might suggest.²

Practical limitations work in various ways, which may be mutually

confirming. Most direct are the limits to publication: Traherne (1637–74) could hardly be canonical until his principal works were “discovered” (1896–97) and printed (1903, 1908). And even for a novelist with a readership as wide as Trollope’s, the canonical works (in the present sense) cannot extend beyond those recently reprinted. Similarly, contingencies of manuscript transmission have shaped the medieval canon: paperback publication and anthologizing still limit the accessible canon for some social groups: and the bibliophilic canon in unexpected ways influences the literature available even to scholars.³ With the performing arts, accessibility is particularly restricted. Who can tell how many Jacobean plays may not be better than the very few that happen to have been put on? Reviving neglected plays is so difficult and costly that even attempts at “reverse censorship” by state patronage have failed to counteract the competitive narrowing of theatrical tradition to a repertoire of half-a-dozen genres. As for restrictive censorship, that has at times drastically narrowed the literary canon—to the extent of prohibiting at least the contemporary exemplars of entire genres, such as satire.⁴

From this accessible canon further systematic preferences have often been exercised, leading to SELECTIVE CANONS. The selective canons with most institutional force are formal curricula, whose influence has long been recognized, and treated in such studies as R. R. Bolgar’s *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries*. But reaction to an official curriculum may issue in an “alternative” curriculum, equally strict, but until recently less examined by literary historians. And always there is a briefer, more rapidly changing, unseen curriculum of passages that are familiar and interesting and available in the fullest sense. Such selections are all responsive in one way or another to the CRITICAL CANON. This is surprisingly narrow. For most critics, indeed, the literature their work relates to is not that listed in bibliographies, but the far more limited areas of interest marked by repeated discussion in journals—particularly those that, like *Scrutiny*, acquire influence. From this canon, countless considerable authors are excluded. For example, the first fifteen annual volumes of *Essays in Criticism* (1950–65) contain no article on Vaughan or Traherne or Cotton or Diaper or Smart or Clare or de la Mare. In fact, *NCBEL* records no criticism on Cotton after 1938. And even within the canonical writers, critics tacitly agree to operate, in the main, on beaten tracks—*Piers Plowman* 18, Spenser’s Bower of Bliss, Dryden’s Achitophel, and the like—the best passages, of course.

Inevitably, the individual choices that follow all these selections include very few writers, although they may extend, by quirks of personal taste, to unfashionable outsiders such as de la Mare. It must be

judged fortunate that literature's generic nature is such as to enable samples to stand for much larger groupings, by incorporating their types. For the significance of the literary canon would be hard to exaggerate. Apart from its obvious exclusions and limitations, it has a vital positive influence by virtue of its variety and proportions. Arrived at through the interaction of many generations of readers, it constitutes an important image of wholeness.

Of many factors determining our literary canon, genre is surely among the most decisive. Not only are certain genres regarded *prima facie* as more canonical than others, but individual works or passages may be valued more or less highly according to their generic height.

II. The Generic Hierarchy

Genres may have several sorts of mutual relations, such as inclusion, combination (tragicomedy), inversion (romance and picaresque), contrast (sonnet and epigram). One of the most active is the hierarchical: relation in respect of height. So neoclassical critics regarded epic as "higher" than pastoral. When the two types came into juxtaposition, as in a formal georgic, style height changed correspondingly. Nevertheless, height was more than a rhetorical quality: its normative force is unmistakable. From the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, epic ruled as not only the highest but also the best of all genres: Webbe calls it "that princely part of poetry"; Sidney, "the best and most accomplished kind of poetry"; Mulgrave, "the chief effort of human sense"; and Dryden, following Boileau, tells us that in epic "fiction must employ its utmost grace."⁵ At the other extreme, love poetry, and short light poems generally, were rated low. Defending poetry against "lightness and wantonness," Harington writes that "of all kinds of poesy the heroical is least infected therewith." But he could not say the same for "the pastoral with the sonnet or epigram."⁶ Indeed, "sonneteer" was to become a term of disparagement for minor poets—as in Pope's "some starv'd Hackny Sonneteer."⁷ In the late seventeenth century, epigram came lowest of all: "the fag end of poetry."⁸ Dryden criticizes Tasso for including "points of epigram" in his *Gerusalemme Liberata*, "which are not only below the dignity of heroic verse, but contrary to its nature: Virgil and Homer have not one of them. And those who are guilty of so boyish an ambition in so grave a subject are so far from being considered as heroic poets that they ought to be turned down from Homer to the *Anthologia*, from Virgil to Martial and Owen's Epigrams, and from Spenser to Flecknoe; that is, from the top to the bottom of all poetry."⁹

From such statements, Ralph Cohen has concluded that the hierarchy of the genres “can be seen in terms of the inclusion of lower forms into higher—the epigram into satire, georgic, epic; the ode into epic; the sonnet into drama; the proverb into all preceptive forms.”¹⁰ And certainly the principle of inclusion was much discussed by Renaissance and neoclassical critics. Epic, the highest kind, and a norm for the others, was also said to be the most comprehensive. So Scaliger writes:

In every sphere some one thing is fitting and preeminent, which may serve as a standard for the others; so that all the rest may be referred to it. So in the whole of poetry the epic genre, in which the nature and life and actions of heroes are recounted, seems to be chief. According to its pattern the remaining parts of poetry are directed. Because these parts exist in variety . . . we shall borrow higher universal laws from the majesty of epic, so that their contents may be accommodated, agreeably to the natures of the different forms of each.¹¹

Nevertheless, it would be hard to apply this principle to other comprehensive kinds, or to extend it universally to all short forms. A sonnet or two might be found in a comedy here and there, but no theory can have been based on instances so exceptional. The Renaissance doctrine of inclusion, in fact, was beset with complications that need to be disentangled. Cohen rightly traces the idea to *Poetics* 26, a discussion whether epic or tragedy is the higher form of imitation. But Aristotle preferred tragedy (not epic) for a different sort of comprehensiveness: namely, the use of additional elements of representation, spectacle and music. He said nothing to imply that tragedy might contain inset epics.

In Renaissance epic theory, however, it often seems that inset structures are being discussed; and sometimes this is so. The epic can really contain inset forms. But even here confusion of terms may deceive. When Minturno calls epigram “*particella dell’ Epica Poesia*,” this has nothing to do with inclusion of epigrams in epics.¹² Here *epica* refers to one of the three broad presentational modes: “How many parts, then, has poetry?—Broadly speaking, three: one is called *epica*, the second dramatic [*scenica*], the third melic or lyric, as you prefer.”¹³ Minturno’s *parti*—that wonderfully omnipurpose term, without which Renaissance literary theory would have been impossible—here means something closely equivalent to “categories of representation,” or divisions according to presentational mode. Elsewhere, however, as in Sidney’s *Defence*, “parts” can mean genres, whether kinds or modes: “parts, kinds, or species (as you list to term them).”¹⁴ Italian theory may have been misunderstood through confusion of terms. In any

case, it was perfectly intelligible to regard lofty encomiastic epigrams as heroic in a modal sense. But what are we to think when Dryden, who knew as well as Herrick that *Cooper's Hill* was a prospective or georgic or descriptive poem, writes that "This sweetness of Mr Waller's lyric poesy was afterwards followed in the epic by Sir John Denham, in his *Cooper's Hill*, a poem which, your Lordship knows, for the majesty of the style is, and ever will be, the exact standard of good writing"?¹⁵ The main sense of "epic" here (missed by commentators and not in *OED*) is simply *genus mixtum*, that is, neither pure enarration nor dialogue, neither lyric nor drama.¹⁶ But a secondary, modal sense no doubt colors the passage, as "majesty" suggests. Similarly, when Dryden speaks of "heroic poetry . . . of which the satire is undoubtedly a species," the context in a discussion of *Georgics* 4 shows that he refers to modal admixture.¹⁷ The Virgilian passage has a local heroic coloring: "here is the majesty of the heroic." Dryden does not mean that epic as a kind "includes" the satiric kind. Perhaps because "the terms 'kinds,' 'species,' 'forms,' and 'genres' are used interchangeably" in Cohen's paper, neoclassical genre theory comes out seeming more self-contradictory than it really was; although admittedly that would be difficult.¹⁸

Seeing a contradiction between his inclusive principle and "the distinctiveness of kinds," Cohen is led to deny the latter (p. 35). Now it would certainly be hard to draw up a comprehensive code of genres that Renaissance and neoclassical critics would all have recognized. But the theorist of mutable genres is not obliged to produce any such system. And if early genre critics were sometimes confused in formulating concepts of mode, which first emerged in the Renaissance, this is no reason to doubt the existence of distinctive generic repertoires. These repertoires might be dimly understood, and yet function well enough for the genres themselves to be competently recognized. When "species" were bewilderingly included inside species, we should see this, with hindsight, as a promising attempt to organize the kinds in relation to the principal modes. Cohen is surely right to draw attention to the ordering of these modes by height in an "interrelated" hierarchy. Even in this limited field, it would be hard to maintain that a single hierarchy ever existed. But many height relations would have been agreed. So observers of a rainbow may agree that *red* and *violet* (or colors like them) are opposites, even though they divide the spectrum differently.¹⁹

In approaching early theories of genre we have to distinguish between full systematic accounts and brief surveys. Scaliger, Minturno, and others describe hundreds of genres and subgenres, some of them known only to genre theorists. By contrast, they often also list a few

main genres. These summary catalogues are mostly of genres susceptible to extension beyond their original external forms: the genres in fact that gave rise to what we should call modes: familiar genres, quickly recognized in reading, frequently mentioned in criticism. As the genres most often evaluated, they may be rank-ordered, in part, according to value. A typical example, with epic first, is Edward Phillips's list (1675) of the categories (or "kinds") "under one of which all the whole circuit of poetic design is one way or other included": epic, dramatic, lyric, elegiac, epoenetic, bucolic, epigram. The phrase "one way or other" reflects Phillips's sense of the heterogeneity of the traditional paradigm, in which "lyric," "epoenetic" (i.e., epionic), and "elegiac" had no modal force.²⁰ The paradigm ultimately derived from ancient authorities, particularly Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, and the fourth-century grammarian Diomedes.²¹ We can best understand it by comparing some of the variants widely distributed through ancient and neoclassical criticism (see Table).²² The lists

PARADIGM OF MAIN GENRES*

CICERO: tragedy, comedy, epic, melic, dithyrambic

HORACE: heroic, elegiac, iambic, lyric, comic and tragic (satyric)

QUINTILIAN: epic, pastoral, elegy, satire, iambic, lyric, comedy, tragedy

DIOMEDES: *genus commune*: heroic, lyric; *genus ennarativum*: preceptive, historical, didactic; *genus dramaticon*: tragic, comic, satyric, mimic

SIDNEY (1583): heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral

HARINGTON (1591): heroic, tragic, comic, satiric, elegiac, amatory (pastoral, sonnet, epigram)

MERES (1598): heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral (epigram)

PHILLIPS (1675): epic, dramatic, lyric, elegiac, epoenetic, bucolic, epigram

DRYDEN'S BOILEAU ([1674] 1683): epic, tragedy, satire, epigram, ode, elegy, pastoral

* For convenience of comparison the original sequence (explicit or implied) is exactly reversed in some instances.

of genres are ordered by several principles of articulation. One, particularly clear in Diomedes's influential work, arranges the genres according to presentational mode. By this Aristotelian principle, they are either dramatic (the author not speaking directly), enarrative (the author alone speaking), or mixed (both author and characters speaking). Although this is an analytic scheme, the genres inside each presentational category could easily be rank-ordered by value (e.g., *tragica, comica*). The Aristotelian scheme accounts for the unbroken sequence *tragic/comic/satiric* in Horace, Harington, and Meres. It explains Phillips's odd introduction of "dramatic." And of course it underlies the tripartite divisions of literature in Milton and many other critics.²³

Another principle ordered poetical genres according to their verse forms. This plan, adopted by Quintilian and Horace (whose ostensible subject in *Ars poetica*, ll. 73–98, is decorum of verse forms for various subjects), accounts for the "iambic" genre in Meres. But by 1598 the metrical differentiation was largely obsolete, so that his only examples are Harvey and Stanyhurst. Similarly "lyric," not to be confused with the modern term, might refer to genres using certain verse forms or music (thus excluding elegiac poetry, written for the flute). But it might also imply a principle of value, whereby lyric poets were preferred to melic poets.²⁴ The high valuation of lyric persisted in the seventeenth-century precedence of the ode: thus Charles Cotton, in a verse epistle to Brome, apologizes that he is unable to manage an ode. *Elegiac*, again, was highly ambiguous in the Renaissance, meaning "mourning elegy" (Harington), love elegy, or elegiac verse. Thus Phillips's lyric, epoenetic, and elegiac may all be metrical categories.

The combination of different ordering principles made for flexibility and allowed surprising room for development. However, in spite of the ingenious conservatism of such as Meres, more radical change was inevitable. And when the long-standing paradigm went, in the early eighteenth century, confusion apparently resulted. One historian has spoken of "collapse in all of the conventional literary structures." But the exaggeration of this is plain from the continuation: "all of the smaller enclosed literary kinds began to disappear or undergo mutation into their most misshapen possibilities."²⁵ In fact, the sonnet had given way to epigram long before. Every genre had been undergoing mutation all along: such change is continual.

This normal mutability means that we should not expect to understand the variants of the modal paradigm in synchronic terms, but only in the dynamic context of literary-historical development.

III. Changes in the Generic Hierarchy

The height assigned to pastoral has long been questionable. After it was given a new status by Virgil, its place became problematic. Diomedes perhaps attempted to compromise by treating *Eclogues* 1 and 9 as *genus dramaticon*; he regarded the others, presumably, as *genus commune*, the composite presentational category. But pastoral continued hard to value, since by the metrical criterion it belonged with epic, whereas in the *rota vergiliana* (which despite its name was commonly conceived as a vertical hierarchy) it rated low. In the Renaissance, pastoral claimed a place among the eight paradigmatic genres, as the lists of Sidney, Meres, and Boileau illustrate. (Harington, too, includes pastoral with other new "amatory" forms in his six-genre paradigm.) Pastoral was then a serious kind, capable of veiled meaning, which could "include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience."²⁶ But as Cohen has remarked, the scope of pastoral was subsequently reduced and its status lowered, until Johnson's famous remarks show it on the way out, the object of dispraise and distaste.²⁷

Epigram's mobility is greater still. In the older lists, it makes no separate appearance, although satiric epigrams, such as those of Archilochus, would have come under iambics.²⁸ Harington, himself a practitioner, gets epigram into his lowest, amatory category: "the pastoral with the sonnet and epigram." Meres cannot keep it out. He lists and exemplifies the traditional "eight notable several kinds of poets," then adds a paragraph on epigram, in indeterminate relation to the rest. Phillips, again, compresses the dramatic genres into one, but finds room, remarkably, for epigram. And in Boileau and Dryden, epigram is up at fourth place. These promotions were no more than recognitions of fact, for the early seventeenth century saw a remarkable rise of epigram to the status of dominant form. Rosemond Tuve connected the increased number of short sixteenth-century poems that were not songs with "the slow establishment of a reading rather than a listening public during a hundred years of printing."²⁹ One might also mention the wide use of epigram composition in teaching Latin. Étienne had published the *Anacreontea* in 1554 and the Planudean Anthology in 1566; and under their influence the Neo-Latin epigram was at a height of finish and brilliance by the early seventeenth century, when the Greek Anthology's full wealth of epigrams became accessible, through the copying of the Palatine manuscript and the publication of Grotius's Latin translation

of the Planudean abridgment, at just the right juncture for maximum effect on vernacular poetry. Perhaps the brevity and comparative freedom of subject was right for a time of rapid change. In any event, the epigram rapidly displaced other short forms. (Waller, Herrick, and other epigrammatists, had they lived a few decades earlier, might well have been sonneteers.) Moreover, the epigram had a profound formal influence on other kinds. It transformed them modally to produce new forms, such as the witty, pointed love elegy that we know as the Metaphysical Lyric. It had much to do with the cultivation of effects of closure in endstopped couplet verse. And it partly underlies the reconception of poetic processes in terms of wit.

Such modal influence may be the main warrant for epigram's new place in the generic paradigm. That seems to be implied by Boileau's somewhat disparaging comment (translated closely by Dryden) on "The epigram, with little art composed." He is critical of "points," and fears their popularity as threatening a dictatorial rule (one suspects, indeed, that he puts epigram fourth of seven genres, in the central place, to underline its "sovereignty" formally):

They overwhelmed Parnassus with their tide.
 The madrigal at first was overcome,
 And the proud sonnet fell by the same doom;
 With these grave tragedy adorned her flights,
 And mournful elegy her funeral rites:
 A hero never failed 'em on the stage,
 Without his point a lover durst not rage;
 The amorous shepherds took more care to prove
 True to their point, than faithful to their love.
 Each word, like Janus, had a double face:
 And prose, as well as verse allowed it place.³⁰

Boileau and Dryden write against the recently elevated status of epigram, trying by recommendatory historiography to restore what they see as a true sense of proportion: "affronted Reason," they hopefully pretend, at last shuts points out from serious topics: "none should use 'em without shame,/Except a scattering in the epigram." It is a typical neoclassic attempt to resist transformation of genres by reaffirming boundaries. This attempt, hindsight shows to have been a temporary aberration of criticism: the transformations, far from overwhelming literature, or being signs of "breakdown," were normal.

The same period manifested other changes of generic status, including some outside the modal paradigm. Donne and others raised the amatory elegy to new heights. And in the later seventeenth century satire was promoted above the middle position it had held (with

brief fluctuations) for a century: Dryden, Pope, Swift, and others considered it fit for some of their most serious and ambitious writing. If the heroic transformation of satire in *Absalom and Achitophel* does not quite demonstrate this, the possibility of a satiric epic such as the *Dunciad* surely does. A little later, according to Joseph Warton, the satires of Ariosto were more read than the *Orlando Furioso*, and Churchill was more in vogue than Gray.³¹

An even more striking case is georgic. Its right to any poetic status at all had been doubted by Étienne and by Sidney, who compares didactic writers to “the meaner sort of painters,” who “counterfeit only such faces as are set before them,” and lack invention of their own. By the early eighteenth century, critics were speaking of didactic poetry as “second to epic alone,” if not its equal.³² John Chalker has written an instructive and delightful history of the English formal georgic, which need not be repeated here. But the change in the esteem of georgic belongs to a larger development in didactic writing. Sidney referred to didactic writers generally: all “that deal with matters philosophical, either moral, as Tyrtaeus, Phocylides, Cato, or natural, as Lucretius . . . or astronomical, as Manilius and Pontanus; or historical, as Lucan”; the sort who “takes not the course of his own invention.”³³ Although his categories cut across the boundary between verse and prose, the passage serves as a reminder that the paradigm of genres had in effect become one of poetic modes. Indeed, the Elizabethan defense of literature was primarily a defense of imaginative literature or “poetry.” But in the seventeenth century Bacon, Browne, and others developed the essay and essaylike treatise in such a way as to restore writing about archaeology, geography, and history to its earlier, Renaissance status.³⁴ In the ensuing reevaluation, georgic and other didactic poetry rose to the very highest level of estimation. By the late eighteenth century, however, the didactic modes were no longer quite on this height. In his *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1756, 1782), Joseph Warton divides English poets into “four different classes or degrees”: (1) “the sublime and pathetic”; (2) “such as possessed the true poetic genius in a more moderate degree, but who had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyric poetry”; (3) “men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, though not the higher scenes of poetry”; and (4) mere versifiers, who nevertheless include such as Sandys and Fairfax. Having examined Pope’s works at very considerable length, Warton concludes that “the largest portion of them is of the didactic, moral, and satiric kind, and consequently not of the most poetic species of poetry; . . . his imagination was not his predominant talent.” This may seem to us to be ludicrously predictable and to demonstrate the limits of evaluation

by classifying.³⁵ But Warton's purpose was the finer one of discovering how much true poetry (imagination) there could be in the best didactic and satiric works of a writer he genuinely admired. And in the difficult task of assessing major achievement of the recent past he succeeds pretty well; Pope comes out "next to Milton and just above Dryden."³⁶ Johnson may seem to have put Warton down when he wrote, "To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made."³⁷ But the slide in Pope's reputation continued. Besides, Johnson's own estimation of didactic writing seems little different: "In a didactic poem novelty is to be expected only in the ornaments and illustrations." He admires the ornaments in the *Essay on Man*, but thinks metaphysical morality a subject matter "perhaps not very proper for poetry." As for the essay, he rates it lower than an essayist might be expected to—"an irregular indigested piece; not a regular and orderly composition."³⁸ This, after the publication of Hume's *Essays*.

The influential Hugh Blair (1783) took a similarly restrictive view of didactic writing. In Addison, he finds numerous examples of "the highest, most correct, and ornamented degree of the simple manner." Nevertheless, although "the most perfect example in English," he lacks "strength and precision, which renders his manner, though perfectly suited to such essays as he writes in the *Spectator*, not altogether a proper model for any of the higher and more elaborate kinds of composition."³⁹ Didactic epistles "seldom admit of much elevation"; and didactic poetry, unsupported by "high beauties of description and poetical language," pleases by spirited conciseness and sprightly wit, which "the higher species of poetry" seldom admit. Here the heights of style and of value are very closely associated: indeed, Blair judges that "in the enthusiasm, the fire, the force and copiousness of poetic genius, Dryden, though a much less correct writer [than Pope], appears to have been superior to him."⁴⁰ Pope was less distinguished in "the more sublime parts of poetry." The new value accorded to description is very striking.

In his *Preface* of 1815, Wordsworth lists six modes "in the following order": narrative, dramatic, lyrical, idyllium, didactic, philosophical satire. It is a scheme that shows perspective and discernment of emerging forms. While formal georgics fall in the didactic category, descriptive poetry exhibits a broad new mode, idyllium, "descriptive chiefly either of the processes and appearances of external nature, as the *Seasons* of Thomson; or of characters, manners, and sentiments." The "impassioned epistle" is now considered as "a species of monodrama," as if in anticipation of the development of the dramatic lyric.

The numerous and complex generic transformations of the nineteenth century do not lend themselves to brief schematic treatment. But some broad lines stand out, even in that period. When Wordsworth included in his narrative mode “that dear production of our days, the metrical novel”—alluding perhaps to Crabbe or to Scott⁴¹—he can hardly have foreseen quite how far novelistic forms would transmute literature during the century to follow. In that age, of which we are now becoming historically conscious, various kinds of novels came increasingly to dominate the interests of critics and the expectations of readers. The novelistic mode worked its way, in fact, to the highest position of the generic hierarchy. It would, of course, be difficult to construct a simple paradigm of genres for a literature so profusely inventive. But that is not because of uncertainty about dominant modes. This becomes clear when the criteria of the naturalistic novel are applied in value judgments. So Ruskin was in difficulty over Dickens: he thought him admirable, yet “as a caricaturist . . . he put himself out of the pale of great authors.”⁴² Of the growing status of the novelistic kinds, no demonstration is needed here. Henry James could unpreposterously aver that “the Novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms,” and by 1975 Frank Kermode was able to treat novels as classics in the same volume, if not quite in the same sense, with Virgil’s *Aeneid*.⁴³

Within “the novel,” of course, different strata exist, rightly or wrongly. Thus there is a relatively firm distinction between the probable novelistic kinds and various others, particularly formulaic genres such as thrillers, westerns, and fantasy. This may not be acknowledged openly as a hierarchical distinction. But libraries and bookshops segregate the serious and unserious genres more or less strictly. Science fiction was until quite recently sold together with pornography.

IV. Available Genres

Generic change ramifies in ways that have extensive implications for judicial criticism. It is not only a question of a league table within each genre: of mere fluctuations in that “imaginary stock exchange” proscribed by Northrop Frye as a serious subject.⁴⁴ We have rather to envisage large-scale changes in the interrelation of whole genres and in literature’s distribution between them—changes that even so innovative a paradigm as Wordsworth’s barely hints at. Above all, we must recognize that the complete range of genres is by no means

equally, let alone fully, available in any one period. Each age seems to have a relatively small repertoire of genres that readers and critics can respond to with enthusiasm. And the repertoire available to its writers is possibly smaller still: the temporary canon is fixed for all but the greatest or strongest or most arcane writers.

Moreover, each age makes new deletions from the potential repertoire. In a weak sense all genres may have existed in all ages, shadowily embodied in bizarre and freakish exceptions. (A history of the future was published as early as 1790: the anonymous *Reign of George VI.*) But the repertoire of active genres has always been small and subject to proportionately significant additions and deletions. In the early eighteenth century, for example, novel, satire, and georgic were greatly extended, while epic was effectively deleted. This crude generalization no doubt needs refining. We might wish to qualify its last part by allowing for heroic transformations such as mock epic, for translations, for criticism of earlier epics, and perhaps for Johnson's upsetting glimpse of quality in Blackmore. But the general observation probably stands, and could be taken with others like it to imply a system of genres such that any deletion has repercussions on neighboring genres. When epic declined (the argument might run), its functions passed to the georgic and novelistic genres, which correspondingly rose to occupy its fictive space. So, for example, the epic hero became the hero of prose fiction or biography. In our age, similarly, a decline of the probable novel might be seen as compensated for by a rise of biography (often semifictional) to supply the need for "solid" characters, lacking in fabulations. Other compensations might be argued for in connection with various genres of autobiographical memoir and history, or the neglected familiar essay and the greatly proliferating critical essay.⁴⁵ Some have even been tempted to think of a generic system almost on a hydrostatic model, as if its total substance remained constant, but subject to redistribution.

But at present we have no firm basis for such speculation, and do better to treat the relations between genres more simply, in terms of real aesthetic choices. Thus, deletion of epic posed a problem for the seriously adventurous writer. He could but turn to the next "highest" genre, which in the case of poetry was likely to mean georgic (since, in Virgilian georgic, elevated heroic passages played a great part). Later, description was his natural recourse. In prose, similarly, serious writers took up the essay, the relevant history with a great national action, the moral novel, or other forms whose summits were no longer overtopped by epic.⁴⁶ Montaigne explored the new subject of individual identity in an extracanonical genre of low or indeterminate status (which may have helped to earn him the sobriquet "bold ignorant");

but Carlyle, pursuing a similar subject in *Sartor*, aimed his essaylike papers at a far more sublime pitch, from the platforms of apparent vehicles, treatise and biography.

V. Reputations

The effective generic repertoire, because of its limitations and changes, influences the critical canon decisively. The case of Scott and Austen is instructive—the anomaly that Scott enjoyed an international reputation while Austen remained virtually unknown. This can only partly be explained by *Waverley*'s appearing in 1814, when Scott was already an established man of letters. It has also to be put down to the ease with which Scott's work could be related to existing genres, such as the regional novel made valuable by Maria Edgeworth. Edgeworth's novels, which also enjoyed Continental repute, were frequently treated by critics as the literary context of Scott's first romances. Scott himself was more anxious to draw attention to his individual combination of romance and history in *Waverley*. He multiplied allusions to serious romance predecessors, introduced romantic poems and songs both as quotations and as intrafictional events, explicitly followed an "ambagitory" narrative method, and continually emphasized the romantic character of landscapes ("this narrow glen . . . seemed to open into the land of romance"). On the other hand, he keeps referring to "my history," distinguishing between frivolous romance and the true romance of history, or recalling the historical perspective of "sixty years since." But in spite of all this, it was in the generic context of Edgeworth's Irish tales (deferentially acknowledged, indeed, in Scott's postscript to *Waverley*) that Croker and others assessed the *Waverley* novels. Hers was the norm: as her biographer puts it, "Critics begin informally to draw up their rules during the period that Maria Edgeworth is writing, often directly stimulated by her tales."⁴⁷ This favored Scott's loosely-articulated fictions. He could offer in abundant measure details of daily life, characters plausible as members of a real-life society, and episodes as coherent as hers. Austen's superiority (in construction, for example) was less obvious. And her novels, inevitably, were associated with the domestic, feminine, "lower" elements in Edgeworth's work.

When a genre drops out of the repertoire altogether, reputations may be more severely affected. At the present time, brief epic is not only inactive (like classical epic) but unrepresented by critically available examples in the vernacular—except *Paradise Regained*. In consequence, the reception of this solitary survivor is embarrassed and

uncertain. Our difficulty is not merely ignorance whether *Paradise Regained* surpasses other specimens of its kind. (Many critics might be prepared to concede that—to grant that the others are all poor specimens.) Rather is it a difficulty in appreciating where Milton's special efforts come. Was one of them the experimental development of an epic *stylus humilis*? When the poem appeared, opinion was—to Milton's impatience—divided. Edward Phillips relates that it was “generally censured [i.e., judged by the generality] to be inferior to the other [namely, *Paradise Lost*],” but that “it is thought by the most judicious to be little or nothing inferior to the other for style and decorum.”⁴⁸ Significantly, it is nevertheless on the style that the strongest recent attack on *Paradise Regained* fastens. One might attempt some defense against Wallace Robson's charge of stylistic colorlessness. Something could be made, for example, of Milton's astonishing accumulation of alternatives: a feature dismissed by Broadbent for failure in sensuous realization, but arguably miming the act of choice so as to draw the reader closer to Christ's predicament. Any such relatively sophisticated line of defense, however, would have to count on much common ground of familiarity with the brief epic form. And this is no longer feasible. Lewalski had to write a book merely to prove that the genre existed; Wilkes, an article to establish one of its rudimentary conventions (the use of set positions).⁴⁹ It should surprise no one, then, that *Paradise Regained* has the lowest reputation in the Milton canon.

Robert Herrick's reputation has suffered differently, from alteration rather than deletion of genres. *Hesperides* appeared in 1648, an unfortunate time from a political point of view. Subsequently, while the satiric mode was displacing the epigrammatic, he received little attention: at first anthologized anonymously, he was almost unknown to the century that followed. This discontinuity in critical tradition proved fatal to the true appreciation of *Hesperides*. When it was rediscovered, in the nineteenth century, several of the subgenres it employed (especially those once characterized as *foetidus* and *fel*) were so obsolete as to be unintelligible. Victorian readers consequently missed much of the complex variety and balance whereby its five epigram types offset and answer one another. Their overwhelming preference for *mel*, or sweet epigrams, led them to concentrate on one element in Herrick's work. It was almost exclusively the flower poems and erotic epigrams that were anthologized. On this inadequate foundation a towering reputation was raised—Swinburne could call him “the greatest song-writer . . . ever born of English race.” But a claim so insecure could hardly be sustained for long. T. S. Eliot seemed to be restoring sanity, almost, in “What is Minor Poetry?” He

necessarily preferred the Metaphysical “major” Herbert, but made an interesting, apparently balanced, plea for Herrick as a minor classic, worth reading *in extenso* for a “something” which is “more in the whole than in the parts.” Eliot nevertheless could not or would not see a unity in *Hesperides*: he missed “a continuous conscious *purpose* about Herrick’s poems.” My present point is not to fault his judgment in this (although “honest *ordinariness*” is not one of the phrases that springs to my mind when I think of Herrick) so much as to draw attention to the pressure of altered genres that worked to limit Eliot’s view of the true range and stature of the heroic epigrammatist.

In drawing his distinction between major and minor classics, Eliot insisted that different genres might offer examples of both—as indeed was the case with Herbert and Herrick. But the idea of genres inherently major or minor has also been mooted. Dame Helen Gardner brings out stipulations about the difference between a major poet and one who is merely very good, in terms that make this quite clear. She states implications about genre that are usually allowed to remain comfortably latent: “The major poet’s work must have bulk; he must attempt with success one or other of the greater poetic forms, which tests his gifts of invention and variation; he cannot claim the title on a handful of lyrics however exquisite.”⁵⁰ That proposition would be hard to disagree with; yet it entails a hierarchy of genres, with lyrics low and “greater poetic forms” high. Of course, the hierarchy need not be a rigid one. We may ask, for example, how large a handful of lyrics might bring majority (Herrick’s fourteen hundred?), whether lyric forms might combine to make a composite major work (Lowell’s *Notebook*?), whether *lyric* itself might not mean different things in different periods.

VI. Canons and Great Traditions

The previous section leads us to conclude that generic changes help to shape canons of taste, and consequently of availability.⁵¹ This could be brought out by comparing, say, the Renaissance poetic canons drawn up by various critics and anthologists. Johnson’s seventeenth-century lives were of Cowley, Denham, Milton, Butler, Rochester, Roscommon, Otway, Waller, Pomfret, Dorset, Stepney, John Philips, Walsh, and Dryden. His inclusion of Philips can be related to the recent promotion of georgic; and if that of Roscommon surprises, we need only recall that Pope “celebrated him the only moral writer of King Charles’s reign.”⁵² Conversely, the fact that the Augustans restricted the epigrammatic mode and rejected conceitism accounts for the absence of expected names.

Later changes in the canon may be exemplified from influential anthologies such as Francis Turner Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*.⁵³ So many generations of young readers formed their ideas of poetry from this remarkable work that for long it counted as a literary institution. Its generic bias can be guessed at from the title: *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*. Omitting singletons and doubletons except where a very long text is given, the 1861 canon was Drummond (seven), Dryden (two), Herrick (seven), Jonson (three), Lovelace (three), Marvell (three), Milton (eleven), Shakespeare (thirty-two), Spenser (one). The second edition of 1891 added Campion (ten), Sidney (five), and Vaughan (three), while increasing the representation of Herrick (eight), Marvell (five), Shakespeare (thirty-four).

Quiller-Couch's *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (1915) was on a scale three times larger; but went further back and forward in time, added many minor singletons, and attempted interesting learned promotions such as William Browne (seven) and Cartwright (four). Allowing for this, the chief changes were reduction in Campion (eight) and increases in Carew (six), Donne (eight), Dryden (five), Dunbar (four), Herbert (six), Herrick (no fewer than twenty-nine), Raleigh (five), Jonson (eleven), Surrey (three), King (three), Spenser (seven). In John Hayward's conservative and popular *The Penguin Book of English Verse*, the alterations of Quiller-Couch's canon are surprisingly few.⁵⁴ Proportionately, there are only cuts in Carew (two), Cowley (one), Milton (six), Sidney (three), and Spenser (three), with Dunbar and Greene disappearing altogether.

From the present viewpoint some of these changes are readily explicable—at least so far as explanation in terms of genre can go. They neither seem arbitrary expressions of taste (particularly when we consider the choice of individual items), nor random movements of fashion. We notice, first, the declining value of song, after a high point around the turn of the century. And much the same was true of other undramatic or “impersonal” lyric genres: hence the rise and fall of Herrick, Cowley, Carew, and Wotton. Exceptionally, Campion's representation did not much decrease—perhaps because of an apparent imagism. Secondly, during the same period, the dramatic lyric was increasingly favored (no surprise, in view of Browning's relation to modernism). Thus, Wyatt's and Donne's representations grew; more of the Sidney items came from *Astrophel and Stella*; and Herbert, as we have seen, assumed major status. A corresponding revaluation of plain and spoken styles showed up both in the 1915 *Oxford Book* and in Hayward (with additions to Wyatt, Jonson, Dryden), even if neither went to the extremes of Yvor Winters in that direction. A third

change elevated the genre that came to be called "Metaphysical lyric" (additions to Donne, Herbert, Traherne, Vaughan). Finally, Cambridge critics and New Critics agreed, a little later, to prefer short forms: Milton, at some sort of apogee in 1915, was dislodged; Cartwright and Browne of Tavistock were ignored again; and Drayton, Fanshawe, and Cowley cut.

These movements naturally find reflection in the canon of formal criticism. They could be traced in the journals, in Ford Madox Ford's splendidly individual *The March of Literature* (1938), in the almost institutionalized symposia of Boris Ford's *Pelican Guide* (1954-56), and in the relevant *Sphere* volume (1970). In the *Guide*, essays on single writers, or dominated by a single writer, presuppose a strikingly Metaphysical canon: Donne, Herbert, Marvell, even Cowley. The *Sphere History* confirms this movement, and indeed carries it further, compressing Jonson and the Cavalier lyricists into a single chapter. After thirty years the *Sphere* critics are still in step with Ford Madox Ford, for whom Donne was "supremely great" but Herrick "mere Herrick." The latter now gets seven pages, however, while Surrey and Sidney reappear. Moreover, the long forms begin again to attract interest: Spenser revives in his transatlantic Adonis-garden; Milton receives favorable attention; there is a chapter on the epyllion; and Drayton actually gets a few scattered mentions.

The canon of prose fiction operates still more severely, being less qualified by the effects of anthology publication and oral performance. In it, too, genre has a powerful influence. But it is a less conscious one, since many prose genres remain unlabeled. Saintsbury's *Short History of English Literature* (1898) lumps together probable novels and historical, gothic, and other romances. All are "novels." Thus, Reade and Peacock are admitted to the category without question; and Stevenson is the last "great novelist" of the nineteenth century. In subsequent criticism, however, the canon of valuable fiction has become effectually restricted to one genre, the naturalistic novel. This restriction, rather than any deficiency found in Stevenson's work, accounts for his being hardly mentioned in Ford's *Guide*, and being excluded altogether from earlier editions of Lionel Stevenson's *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (1964). For similar reasons, Stevenson and Peacock receive only the briefest of mentions in the *Sphere History*, and de la Mare, none at all. As for F. R. Leavis's influential great tradition—Austen, Eliot, James, Conrad—many have objected to its restrictiveness in the case of Dickens, whose only consistently serious work, according to the younger Leavis, was *Hard Times*. But Leavis was justified, in a way, as one of the few to apply the generic canon of his time with consciously sustained

awareness. And even now there is little understanding that *The Great Tradition* sets up consistent limits of genre. Sterne's work-in-progress form, Scott's historical romance, Dickens's allegories: all are off limits.

Still, we ourselves, being more given to theory, are free of genre prejudice, perhaps? It would be pleasant to think so. But the short story returns with us to favor, as does romance. (*Wuthering Heights*, scarcely mentioned by Saintsbury, is for Kermode a classic.) And a new great tradition—in which Dickens and Joyce figure—has dislodged the old. Indeed, beside the more recent canon, which includes Hawthorne, Melville, James and Conrad (in different aspects), Woolf, and Beckett, we already glimpse further “alternative traditions” based on emergent or previously uncanonical genres: the dystopic urban fantasy (Pynchon, Vonnegut); the fabulation (Barth, Barthelme); the work-in-progress (*The Golden Notebook*); and the historical novel of ideas (*The French Lieutenant's Woman*; *G*). So far as older literature is concerned, too, our most careful revaluations, even those that seem most inspired by instrumental rather than literary values, may spring from buried generic pressures. Perhaps individual revaluations can only succeed, in fact, when they are in accordance with laws of genre, such as the compensatory alternation of a preference for long and short forms, both between poetry and prose, and within each.⁵⁵ *Aurora Leigh* is currently being rediscovered not merely because it is a good poem, or a good poem by a woman, but because it is a good *long* poem.

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NOTES

- 1 Isaac D'Israeli, “Literary Fashions,” *Curiosities of Literature* (London, 1791).
- 2 B. Fabian and Siegfried J. Schmidt rightly draw attention to the “eminently canonizing effect” of the Cambridge Bibliographies: see the latter’s “Problems of Empirical Research in Literary History,” tr. Peter Heath, *New Literary History*, 8, No. 2 (1977), 218. But it is hard to know what else they can have expected: any bibliography is bound to exert such an effect simply by existing.
- 3 See J. Carter, *Taste and Technique in Book Collecting* (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 60 ff., on the effect of bibliophilia. Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 398–99, touches on the influence of anthologies, a subject on which fundamental work remains to be done.
- 4 For the earlier period, see F. S. Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476–1776* (Urbana, Ill., 1952), and (on the Inquisition) *Erasmus Newsletter*, 8 (1976), 5; for the more modern, Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, 1968), and Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (New York, 1969). There is an early attack on bookstall censorship in A. T. Quiller-Couch, *Adventures in Criticism* (New York, 1896), pp. 279 ff.
- 5 *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. G. Smith (London, 1904), I, 255; *Miscellaneous Prose*

of *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. K. Duncan-Jones and J. van Dorsten (Oxford, 1973), p. 98, hereafter cited as *Defence of Poesy; Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (Oxford, 1908–9), II, 295; John Dryden, *The Art of Poetry*, l. 590, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1958), I, 348.

6 *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. Smith, II, 209.

7 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, l. 419.

8 Edward Phillips: see *Critical Essays*, ed. Spingarn, II, 266.

9 *A Discourse Concerning Satire*, in “*Of Dramatic Poesy*” and *Other Critical Essays*, ed. George Watson (London, 1962), II, 82.

10 “On the Interrelations of Eighteenth-Century Literary Forms,” in *New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Philip Harth (New York, 1974), pp. 35–36.

11 J. C. Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem* (Lyons, 1561), 144. 1a. Guillén (p. 404) is grossly unfair to Scaliger, comparing him unfavorably with Minturno, and denying that he made any “attempt to adjust traditional systems to the masterpieces of his own age.” In fact, although Scaliger is primarily concerned with the ancient paradigmatic authors, he has also a keen interest in new generic forms. Thus he draws attention to the achievements in this regard of “magnus vir Sanazarus” (150. 1a), and can fairly claim to have himself extended the subject matter of pastoral.

12 As the continuation makes clear: “Epica Poesia, a cui non fa mestiere ne canto, ne rappresentatione.” See Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica* (Venice, 1564), p. 281.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 3. For epic in the sense *genus mixtum* cf. Diomedes’s classification, below p. 102.

14 *Defence of Poesy*, p. 94.

15 *Critical Essays*, ed. Watson, I, 7.

16 The classification made popular by Diomedes.

17 *Critical Essays*, ed. Watson, II, 149.

18 Cohen, “On the Interrelations,” p. 37, n. 12.

19 On the hierarchy of genres in the visual arts, see Michael Fried, “Toward a Supreme Fiction,” *New Literary History*, 6, No. 3 (1975), 543–85.

20 Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum*, in *Critical Essays*, ed. Spingarn, II, 266; discussed in Cohen, “On the Interrelations,” p. 36. On epionic verse, see Scaliger, p. 67.

21 See Guillén, pp. 403 ff.; E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953), pp. 440 ff.; Charles Trinkaus, “The Unknown *Quattrocento* Poetics of Bartolommeo della Fonte,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, 13 (1966), 87.

22 Cicero *De opt. gen. orat.* 1. 1. Horace *Ars poetica* 73–98; where the sequence may be determined by metrical considerations rather than any hierarchical principle of arrangement. Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 10. 1. 46–100; the sequence used in considering Greek authors. The Latin series reverses the orders of tragedy and comedy, and omits pastoral. Quintilian already notices a change in iambic, which he regards as no longer a completely separate form of composition (see further in Guillén, pp. 399 ff.). Since Quintilian moves immediately to consider authors of history and other “extraliterary” genres, the paradigm is not for him a closed canon. The same point could be made of, e.g., Dionysius Halicarnassus. Diomedes (see further in Curtius, p. 440) lists the following species of *genus enarrativum* (*exegetikon vel apangeltikon*, i.e., interpretative, descriptive, or narrative): *angeltike* (preceptive); *historike* (narrative, genealogical, etc.); *didascalike* (didactic). As in Aristotle, the *genus commune* (*koinon vel mikton*) is the presentational mode in which both poet and characters speak. *Defence of Poesy*, p. 81: “The most notable be the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and certain others, some of these being termed according to the matter they deal with,

some by the sorts of verses they liked best to write in." From the fuller review of "the special kinds" of poetry on pp. 94 ff., it is clear that by *elegiac* Sidney means "lamenting elegiac." Harington, *A Brief Apology*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. Smith, II, 209–10, where the purpose of defending against the charge of lewdness may influence the arrangement of genres. "Mourning elegy" shows that *elegy* is used in something like its later sense, rather than to imply elegiac meter or include amatory elegy. Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. Smith, II, 319. Phillips, preface to *Theatrum Poetarum*, in *Critical Essays*, ed. Spingarn, II, 266; Dryden, *The Art of Poetry*, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, I, 332–61.

23 *Reason of Church-Government*, in *Milton's Complete Prose Works* (New Haven, 1953–), I, 813–16. Not, however, Jacopo Mazzoni's different scheme in *Della difesa della "Commedia" di Dante: see Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. A. H. Gilbert (New York, Cincinnati, etc., 1940), p. 382. On tripartite ordering of the genres see Guillén, pp. 390–419.

24 See Guillén, pp. 400–401, and cf. Curtius, p. 441, on Diomedes's six *qualitates carminum*.

25 Peter Hughes, "Restructuring Literary History: Implications for the Eighteenth Century," *New Literary History*, 8, No. 2 (1977), 265.

26 *Defence of Poesy*, p. 95. Cf. Puttenham, cited by Cohen, "On the Interrelations," p. 39.

27 Besides the notorious dismissal of pastoral in connection with "Lycidas" (Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill [Oxford, 1905], I, 163–64), see Hill's Index s.v. *Pastoral poetry: Johnson's contempt for it*. Outgoing forms are often treated with acerbity: one might compare Johnson on alliteration.

28 When Sidney (*Defence of Poesy*, p. 95) speaks of iambic poetry as bitter rather than satiric, he may mean to include *fel* epigrams.

29 Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947), p. 242.

30 Dryden, *The Art of Poetry*, ll. 336–46, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, I, 341.

31 *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, in *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays*, ed. S. Elledge (Ithaca, 1961), II, 718, 763. On the *Dunciad* as true epic, see Aubrey Williams, *Pope's "Dunciad": A Study of Its Meaning* (Baton Rouge, 1955), pp. 131 ff.

32 See Cohen, "On the Interrelations," pp. 39–40, citing Addison and Tickell.

33 *Defence of Poesy*, p. 80.

34 Cf. Rosalie L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind; Genre-Theory in the Renaissance*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1973), pp. 86–87.

35 This view is taken by Lawrence Lipking in an important study, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 365–66. For the Warton passage, see Elledge, II, 719–20.

36 *Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays*, ed. Elledge, II, 762.

37 *Lives*, ed. Hill, III, 251.

38 *Ibid.*, II, 295; III, 242; *Dictionary; Rambler*, No. 158.

39 Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London and Edinburgh, 1783), Lecture 19: "General Characters of Style . . ."

40 *Ibid.*, Lecture 40: "Didactic Poetry—Descriptive Poetry."

41 *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (London and Boston, 1974), p. 177.

42 *Praeterita* (Orpington, Eng., 1887), II, ch. 4.

43 Preface to *The Ambassadors*, New York Edition (New York, 1909), XXI, xxiii.

44 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), p. 18.

45 See Colie, *The Resources of Kind*, pp. 92, 98–99.

- 46 See, e.g., Elizabeth W. Bruss's illuminating study, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore and London, 1976).
- 47 Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 347–48.
- 48 *The Life of Mr. John Milton*, in *Milton: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J. T. Shawcross (New York, 1970), p. 104. *Paradise Regained* was the second work of Milton's to receive critical treatment at full length (R. Meadowcourt, 1732).
- 49 B. K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of "Paradise Regained"* (Providence, R. I., and London, 1966); G. A. Wilkes, "Paradise Regained and the Conventions of the Sacred Epic," *English Studies*, 44 (1963).
- 50 Dame Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London, 1949), p. 3.
- 51 Some other influences on taste are studied in E. E. Kellett, *The Whirligig of Taste* (London, 1929), and B. S. Allen, *Tides in English Taste 1619–1800: A Background for the Study of Literature* (New York, 1958). But histories of reception and reputation in English literature are needed for most periods.
- 52 Johnson, *Lives*, ed. Hill, I, 235.
- 53 1861, more than twenty printings; 1891, more than twenty printings; etc.
- 54 Harmondsworth, 1956, with eleven printings by 1971.
- 55 In prose fiction the length to be considered is not only that of the complete work, but of its component parts: the work-in-progress, e.g., uses many short chapter divisions.