palgrave **key** concepts

KEY CONCEPTS IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

malcolm hebron

KEY CONCEPTS IN RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

Palgrave Key Concepts

Palgrave Key Concepts provide an accessible and comprehensive range of subject glossaries at undergraduate level. They are the ideal companion to a standard textbook making them invaluable reading to students throughout their course of study and especially useful as a revision aid.

Key Concepts in Accounting and Finance
Key Concepts in Business Practice
Key Concepts in Cultural Studies
Key Concepts in Drama and Performance
Key Concepts in e-Commerce
Key Concepts in Human Resource Management
Key Concepts in Information and Communication Technology
Key Concepts in International Business
Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics (second edition)
Key Concepts in Law
Key Concepts in Management
Key Concepts in Marketing
Key Concepts in Operations Management
Key Concepts in Politics
Key Concepts in Psychology
Key Concepts in Strategic Management
Key Concepts in Tourism

Palgrave Key Concepts: Literature
General Editors: John Peck and Martin Coyle

Key Concepts in Contemporary Literature
Key Concepts in Medieval Literature
Key concepts in Postcolonial Literature
Key Concepts in Renaissance Literature
Key Concepts in Victorian Literature
Literary Terms and Criticism (third edition)

Further titles are in preparation

www.palgravekeyconcepts.com

Palgrave Key Concepts
Series Standing Order
ISBN 978-1-4039-3210-5
(outside North America only)

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in the case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and the ISBN quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

Key Concepts in Renaissance Literature

Malcolm Hebron

palgrave
macmillan

First published 2008 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-230-50767-8 ISBN 978-1-137-05342-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-137-05342-8

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08

Contents

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Headmaster of Winchester College for granting me a period of reduced teaching to work on this book and to my English Department colleagues for making this leave possible by generously taking on extra classes. The Vacation Programme for Teachers run by Jesus College, Oxford, greatly assisted the early stages of research. At Palgrave Macmillan, Suzannah Burywood and Karen Griffiths have smoothly shepherded the book through the production process, while the series editors and an anonymous reader have provided helpful reports on the work at various stages. Needless to say, any errors that remain are my own responsibility.

General Editors' Preface

The purpose of Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature is to provide students with key critical and historical ideas about the texts they are studying as part of their literature courses. These ideas include information about the historical and cultural contexts of literature as well as the theoretical approaches in the subject today. Behind the series lies a recognition of the need nowadays for students to be familiar with a range of concepts and contextual material to inform their reading and writing about literature.

But behind the series there also lies a recognition of the changes that have transformed degree courses in Literature in recent years. Central to these changes has been the impact of critical theory together with a renewed interest in the way in which texts intersect with their immediate context and historical circumstances. The result has been an opening up of new ways of reading texts and a new understanding of what the study of literature involves together with the introduction of a wide set of new critical issues that demand our attention. An important aim of Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature is to provide brief, accessible introductions to these new ways of reading and new issues.

Each volume in Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature follows the same structure. An initial overview essay is followed by three sections – Contexts, Texts and Criticism – each containing a sequence of brief alphabetically arranged entries on a sequence of topics. Contexts essays provide an impression of the historical, social and cultural environment in which literary texts were produced. Texts essays, as might be expected, focus more directly on the works themselves. Criticism essays then outline the manner in which changes and developments in criticism have affected the ways in which we discuss the texts featured in the volume. The informing intention throughout is to help the reader create something new in the process of combining context, text and criticism.

John Peck
Martin Coyle

General Introduction

'Renaissance' means rebirth. In history books, the term usually denotes the four centuries between about 1300 and 1700: over this period, classical ideas were revived in scholarship and culture, and a number of momentous events in the spheres of religion and politics profoundly affected European consciousness. This period is in turn divided into two broad phases: in the first two centuries (the Early and High Renaissance) the movement was mainly contained within Italy; and from about 1500, Renaissance ideas crossed the Alps, bringing about 'The Northern Renaissance' including in England.

Books on the English Renaissance usually cover nearly two centuries of writing (1500–1660). A flourishing of Renaissance ideas occurred especially in the Elizabethan (1558–1603) and Jacobean periods (1603–1625). For some, it is the last phase, covering the Caroline Age (1625–1649) and the Commonwealth (1649–1660), which sees the fulfilment of the Renaissance movement, particularly in the writings of John Milton.

The validity of the term 'Renaissance', used to describe both a cultural movement and a time period, has been much debated. Some distinguished writers have declined to use the word at all, seeing it as too broad in its application to have any usefully specific meaning. But before we discuss this subject, let us look at a particular text and see what it can tell us about the time we label 'The Renaissance'.

The following lines come from the nineteenth elegy of John Donne (1572–1631), 'To His Mistress Going to Bed', probably written in the 1590s. In it, a lascivious male speaker describes his mistress undressing for bed, and then joins her there himself:

> Licence my roaving hands, and let them go, [roving
> Before, behind, between, above, below,
> O my America! My new-found land,
> My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd. [ruled
> My myne of precious stones: My Emperie, [emperor's land
> How blest am I in thus discovering thee?
> To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
> Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.
>
> (lines 25–32)

In these lines we can immediately find much to engage us. To begin with, we can admire the poet's skilful use of language: his deft handling of iambic metre and rhyming couplets (with the concluding quadruple rhyme); the witty wordplay ('My myne'), and the modulation of tone from rapturous adoration ('O my America') to decisive affirmation ('my seal shall be'). We also note that the poet draws on language from several fields to express the speaker's thoughts: besides the extended imagery (a conceit) of colonial discovery there is an approving reference to government by a single ruler ('with one man man'd'); and in the last two lines, the poet employs legal terminology in allusions to the bonds, rituals ('where my hand is set') and seal of the contract of marriage. The exclamatory language, the colourful and varied images and shifting rhythms all evoke the man's excitement at taking sexual possession of his mistress. She, by contrast, is silent. The man is a conqueror, and the woman is a newfound continent, existing – in the mind of the speaker – in order to be ruled, exploited (like a goldmine) and owned (signified by 'my seal') by the male; yet at the same time she is rather forbidding, a whole perilous continent, a hard mine of stones.

This use of language introduces us to some key elements of Renaissance culture. One of these is Rhetoric – the mastery of patterns in language for persuasive effect. Here the rhetoric seems ostentatious: the poet shows off his virtuosic handling of ideas, his clever puns and use of rhetorical figures. We recognise the paradox of line 31; and trained Renaissance readers would have seen in 'man man'd' an example of the figure *traductio*, in which a word is played on in different parts of speech (here, noun and verb). Through such skilful manipulation, the speaker's sexual triumph is mirrored in the poet's triumph over language.

Rhetoric in turn suggests something about the wider taste of the age. The word 'artificial' for us usually has a pejorative sense. But in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods it was a term of praise: it was used to applaud artistic skill, the craftsman's mastery of techniques and materials. We can see this quality of artful contrivance – equivalents to literary rhetoric – in many Renaissance artefacts, from miniature paintings to intricate polyphonic music. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, this cleverness often involves startling mental pictures. An example in our poem is the use of surprising analogy. Small is compared with big: the woman's body is like a continent, the husband is like a King. Another pleasant surprise is the way that unlike things are yoked together in unexpected comparisons: the woman's soft body, as we have noted, is like a mine of hard stones.

The poem's imagery is thus an illustration of Renaissance rhetoric and virtuosity. It also leads us into some major themes of Renaissance history. The lines we are investigating allude to the discovery of the New World,

following Columbus's voyage in 1492, and the subsequent colonisation by European powers of these new-found lands. In Donne's lines we can see some of the reactions to this episode: a sense of the marvellous ('O my America!') with a strong possessiveness ('O *my* America!'). The 'manning' of the woman reflects the brutal European exploitation of resources and enslavement of native populations, then just beginning. In this context, though, we need to remind ourselves that England at this time had no colonies to speak of: the lines express the *hope* for conquest – of territory and the woman's body – rather than the gloating voice of an established imperial power.

Colonialism led to competition between the European powers, or rather envy of the leading power, Spain. There is perhaps a more subtle reference to this here. 'Licence', the first word in our passage, means 'Allow'. But it could also refer to the licence, or permission, which Queen Elizabeth I (*r.*1558–1603) gave to men like Sir Francis Drake (*c.*1540–1596) and Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618) to plunder Spanish ships. If we follow this sense, then the lover's roving hands suggest the predatory ships of English privateers, roaming the ocean 'Before, behind, between, above, below'. Conquest of new lands is thus mixed with conflict between the powers of the old world, and there is an undertone of violent conquest in the lines of the poem. More straightforwardly, beneath the erotic energy of the text, we have a reminder that during much of the Renaissance period, England was a nation at war.

Next, there is the praise of monarchy in the line 'My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd' (possibly 'woman' hovers around the sound of 'one man', a sly reference perhaps to England's *female* monarch, Elizabeth). This line points us to the interest in different forms of government which plays such an important part in Renaissance culture and history, from Shakespeare's study of republicanism in the Roman plays to the actual establishment of a Republic in England after the execution of Charles I in 1649. We usually find in Renaissance writing that the public, political sphere and the sphere of private experience are inseparable, integrated at the level of normal thinking. More usually, one is described in terms of the other: the analogy drawn by Donne in these lines between the government of a state and the government of a woman by a man is typical of the way Renaissance writing reflects large-scale issues in depictions of private and domestic experience. Indeed, thinking through analogy – describing one thing in terms of another thing – is a characteristic of Renaissance writing generally.

Through these few lines, then, we can enter the flow of history and ideas, as they played on the feelings and imagination of one particular mind. It is not only the mind depicted in the poetry that is at issue here, though, but our own mind, too. A text brings us some of the

cultural baggage of one age, but in turn we bring our own assumptions and opinions to the text when we read. As inhabitants of a particular time in history, we most quickly recognise themes – such as gender relations and imperialism – which remain live issues for us. In the light of feminism, and post-imperial guilt, these are aspects of the poem that we will soonest respond to. We may well deplore the attitudes expressed by Donne's speaker, who apparently approves of the exploitation of colonised countries and regards the woman merely as a passive object to be appropriated and enjoyed. In this way, the poem can speak to us about topics which are central to our own age and move us to strong feelings of approval or disagreement.

Yet as well as being relevant to our own concerns, this text, like all writings from previous centuries, also challenges us to enter a different world and see through the eyes of people remote from us in their outlook and beliefs. How would an educated sixteenth-century gentleman – Donne's first audience – have responded to this text? Possibly he would have shared the ideas about women and colonies set out here, but it is equally likely that he would not have taken them very seriously to begin with. Our hypothetical reader would very probably have seen this text as first and foremost an ingenious literary exercise. He – and I stress 'he' since it is historically likely to have been a male reader, and a male reader is arguably implied by the text – would probably have read it intertextually, that is by mentally placing the poem against other texts, to appreciate how Donne was playing with certain traditional formulae. He would see, for example, that Donne is writing a *blazon*, a specific kind of text which specialises in describing a woman's beauties. Read against other blazons, the poem becomes a sophisticated literary exercise, playing with inherited conventions. Our hypothetical reader might also have considered the poem as variations on a source text, frequently of great importance in Renaissance writing. Where we might prize novelty and originality, Renaissance readers were interested in seeing what an artist could do with older materials – whether these were stories, literary forms or intellectual concepts. The most important text 'behind' Donne's poem is the *Amores* by the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC–17 AD). The *Amores* describe, with sensuous eroticism, the psychology of a lustful male: because of their sexual content, they were not taught in schools and could freely circulate only in Latin – thus they were safely restricted to the educated elite. Donne's sequence of elegies (so-called because they describe the sufferings of love) starts with some close imitation of his Roman model and then moves into freer variations on the basic theme of a man desiring a woman. Its first readers must have relished their 'forbidden fruit' quality, and have listened out for the poet's own witty play on the voice of the Ovidian male.

Donne thus looks back to Ovid, but at the same time he is clearly alive to the experience of colonialism, a key issue of his own day. This is the quintessential feature of much Renaissance culture: it looks back to the classics, but in order to shape and examine the modern. Renaissance art uses the materials of the past to make new things in the present. Just as Donne uses Ovid's verse to present the mind and voice of a sixteenth-century lover, with sixteenth-century preoccupations, the architects Inigo Jones (1573–1652) and Christopher Wren (1632–1723) used elements of classical buildings to make modern palaces and churches. The Renaissance is, we might say, both a 'rebirth' of the classical and a reshaping of classical elements to make a new world.

Having acknowledged that Donne is working within a tradition, we might still ask questions like 'Does the poet mean what he is saying? Does he want us to sympathise with the speaker and share in his expressions of delight?' Inevitably, we are going to have assumptions about the relation between text and writer, but these assumptions change from age to age. We are still influenced today by the Romantic movement, which conceived of poetry as the intense expression of a powerfully felt experience. At some level we still expect a poem to have some clearly traceable link with the psyche and biography of the poet. Yet Renaissance poems very often work differently. They are not usually a direct record of the inner experiences of the poet; rather, they are more like miniature theatres, in which different personae play out psychological dramas. We can see in Shakespeare's plays this fascination with the possibilities of 'trying on' another character in the many instances of disguise and pretence in his plots. In the same way, Donne in this poem may be 'trying on' the voice of a particular kind of lover, exaggerating his triumphant boastfulness to the point of comedy. Both poems and prose texts of the Renaissance often have this quality of performance: authors use writing to explore ideas by acting out parts, and the voices we hear may all be fictive, existing at an ironic distance from the thoughts and feelings of the writer. This still raises the question of a writer's responsibility for the words he puts down; and to say that Renaissance writers knew nothing of sincerity would be going too far. However, when reading a Renaissance text, we should be wary of assuming that it represents an attempt by the writer to present a truthful record of a real experience.

Still another challenge to the modern reader lies in the circumstances in which we meet a text. We are likely to come across a poem like Donne's in print, in a book, annotated by an expert editor, and possibly as part of a taught course. It is thus on several levels an 'authorised' text. We have already seen how Donne's readers would have regarded these quasi-pornographic pieces as something *anti-official*, with the pleasure of contraband goods (a printing of Marlowe's English versions of Ovid

was actually burned by order of the bishops in 1599). And while we may see Donne's poems as a book, the first readers saw it only in private handwritten papers. One hundred and fifty years after the invention of movable type, gentlemen like Donne still preferred to circulate their works in manuscript among friends. Consequently, the poem we have been discussing was not printed until some 70 years after it was written. It was passed around Donne's circle, rather as we might circulate an email or digital image to friends today. This 'coterie culture' creates a particular community of interpretation: there may be in-jokes, private understandings and coded references which outsiders struggle to understand. When the poem passed into print – itself a key Renaissance invention – its conditions of reception, and consequently its potential meanings, also changed.

It is time to summarise our findings. We have seen how some lines by Donne have led us to some key themes of Renaissance history of society: colonialism, war, attitudes to women, forms of government. They have also illustrated some aspects of literature and culture: rhetoric, artifice, the imitation and adaptation of classical models, the fictive persona, manuscript and print, the educated reader, coterie culture. These closely interrelated matters are among the topics we shall be exploring in this book. In studying them, we shall also take notice of the methods and insights offered by modern literary criticism and theory: Feminist criticism helps us to examine the depiction of women in texts; Rhetorical criticism trains us to perform detailed close readings, in Renaissance terms, while textual and bibliographical scholarship can help us to understand the forms in which texts were encountered. Literary theory can further assist us in exploring the kinds of questions which our brief discussion has raised: Is it legitimate to read a Renaissance poem out of its context and look for issues relevant to our own time? Or should we be thinking ourselves back into the age when a work was written and interpreting it in its own context? When we read, should we bring our own moral convictions to bear and make judgements on how a poem depicts women or people of other races? Or should we leave moral reactions to one side and accept that different ages have different values to our own?

There are, of course, other important Renaissance literary topics and themes, other critical approaches and other important theoretical issues. In this book, we shall be describing some of these, but inevitably leaving out many others. Part One explores the wider contextual world: political, religious and historical processes which flow through and around the writings of the age. In Part Two, we look at topics in literature, such as genres, modes and Renaissance theories of what literature was for. Finally, in Part Three, we shall consider some of the critical approaches

taken to studying the Renaissance today and the theoretical questions they raise.

Such is the structure of the present book. How it is used depends very much on the nature of the project being undertaken. We have seen how a few lines of one poem can take us into many themes and issues. Equally, one subject can cross many texts and involve material from history, literature and modern criticism: the study of a female Renaissance author, for example, would involve researching the situation of the Renaissance woman, the writings of women in the period and the approaches offered by modern feminist analysis. These are the kinds of tasks which this book is designed to assist. Neither the book nor its individual entries can hope to be comprehensive. But I hope that they are at any rate useful as a starting point, and above all suggestive of ways in which Renaissance literature may be studied. As well as helping with particular assignments, I also hope that the material in this book might encourage you to pursue fresh lines of enquiry, which in turn will enlarge our understanding of this rich and fascinating field.

1 Contexts: History, Politics, Culture

Historical Introduction

The English Renaissance has no clear beginning, but the date of 1485 will serve as a starting point. In this year, Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth and so initiated the rule of the House of Tudor that was to last through five monarchs until the death of Elizabeth I in 1603. The date of 1485 is a useful vantage point from which to look at a wider panorama. In Italy, especially in the Republic of Florence, humanists were engaging with the language and ideas of the Greeks and Romans, and artists and poets were similarly energising their work with classical ideas. In 1453, the city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) had fallen to the Turks. Greek scholars continued their emigration westwards at a faster rate, and the resulting spread of knowledge of Greek contributed to the detailed study of ancient Greek philosophy and re-examination of the scriptures and the early Christian Church: the latter avenue of enquiry would contribute to the upheaval of the Reformation. The fall of Constantinople also meant that the overland trade routes between Europe and Asia were effectively lost, and explorers were forced to search for alternative means of reaching the Indies (the source of luxury goods and essential spices for preserving food). The first voyage of Columbus, in 1492, was only a few years off, and the consequent discovery of a new continent (America) and a new ocean (the Pacific) was about to transform ideas about the size and nature of the globe and its human inhabitants. Printing in movable type had been invented about a generation ago, and Caxton had already set up his press in Westminster (1476). By selecting these elements, we can portray the age as one of revolutionary change.

Yet when Henry Tudor was crowned Henry VII, probably no one in England would have heralded the dawn of a new era. Bosworth could have been seen as just the latest in a series of conflicts between two branches of the royal family, the Houses of York and Lancaster. This conflict, known as the Wars of the Roses, had lasted 30 years (1455–1485), causing destabilising fragmentations of power and largely sealing English cultural life off from continental developments. On becoming King (and

his claim to the crown was decidedly weak), the Welshman Henry Tudor first had to consolidate his power in the realm. This he did by eliminating rivals, reducing the power of local lords and strengthening both royal finances and the national economy. By marrying the Yorkist Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, Henry symbolised a union between the two Houses; the Earl of Warwick, who had a stronger claim to the throne, was imprisoned and later executed. Two colourful episodes in Henry's reign were provided by pretenders to the throne: Lambert Simnel pretended to be Warwick and, having been easily defeated at Stoke (1487), was employed in the royal kitchens. Perkin Warbeck, who pretended to be the younger of the princes in the tower (allegedly murdered on the orders of Richard III), was executed (1497). A more insidious threat to central power came from overmighty local lords, who commanded bands of retainers amounting to small private armies. These were reduced through statutes which prohibited liveried servants in great households. Justice was enforced through the King's Council, the Star Chamber (so called because of the ceiling decoration), and by local justices of the peace. In all of these, gentry and lesser nobility loyal to the King supplanted the great magnates: the rise of these 'new men' is an important social theme in the period. Royal income was increased through the ruthless taxation methods pursued by the churchmen Morton and Fox and the 'ravening wolves' Empson and Dudley. England's principal export was wool, and important treaties were made with the Flemish, who imported this for their cloth industry.

Henry's chief aim was to unify the nation around the central power of the crown. Marriages were arranged with the aim of consolidating relations at home and abroad. Henry's eldest son Arthur was married to Catherine of Aragon (1501) – binding England to the great power of Spain – and his daughter Margaret was married to James IV of Scotland (1502): the kings of the House of Stuart in the next century spring from this marriage. Slowly the intellectual currents of the continent found their way to England: Henry's reign saw the first generation of English humanist scholars, such as Thomas Linacre (*c*.1460–1524), who studied in Italy, and William Grocyn (*c*.1446–1519), teacher to Erasmus, More and Colet. The climate for the 'new learning', based on the study of ancient Latin and Greek texts, was such that Erasmus, who came to Oxford in 1498, said that England could provide a first-rate classical education. The foundation of St Paul's School (1509) marks the spread of such education. In the same year, Henry VII died, leaving an England more united around the throne and with a full treasury.

National cohesion and financial security provided a strong foundation for Henry VIII on his accession. At the outset, Henry's popularity was consolidated by both his personal attributes and policies. His skill at

courtly pursuits, from martial exercises to music, was generally admired, and his intellectual interests in astronomy, literature, theology and other disciplines led Erasmus and other humanists to look to him as a great patron of learning. Henry sought an imperial image and presented himself as a Renaissance prince, the equal of the emperor Charles V and Francis I of France. To this end, a massive building programme was undertaken, and many new palaces, including Whitehall, were constructed in his reign. Henry's marriage (by papal dispensation) to Catherine of Aragon, his brother Arthur's widow, was also well received, as was the calculated execution of the hated Empson and Dudley. Early in Henry's reign, Scotland was defeated at the battle of Flodden (1513); this saw the death of James IV and the massacre of the Scottish nobility and thus severely damaged Scotland's own Renaissance fortunes. Abroad, the great powers were France and the Holy Roman Empire: English policy, run by the brilliant Thomas Wolsey (Chancellor 1515), was to maintain the balance of power between them. One particularly colourful event as part of this policy was the spectacular meeting between Henry and Francis I at the Field of Cloth of Gold (1520). France and the Empire had a protracted conflict as they fought over possession of the weak Italian states, and Charles V's sack of Rome in 1527 marked a significant gain for the empire and had momentous consequences for future English history.

Henry needed a male heir to continue the Tudor Dynasty, but the marriage with Catherine had produced only a daughter (Mary). Frustrated, and in love with Anne Boleyn, Henry sought papal permission for the annulment of his marriage on the grounds that marrying his brother's widow was sinful. However, the Pope was now prisoner of Charles V, who happened to be nephew to the Queen, and hence was in no position to grant a divorce. Wolsey was dismissed for his failure to resolve 'The King's Great Matter' satisfactorily and died shortly before facing trial for high treason (1530). Wolsey's position as Henry's right-hand man was taken by Thomas Cromwell (*c*.1485–1540), whose two main objectives were the establishment of the absolute power of the Crown and the separation of the English Church from Rome. With Cromwell's assistance, Henry proceeded to marry Anne Boleyn and break allegiance with Rome in a series of Acts passed by the 'Reformation Parliament' (1529–1536); in the 1534 Act of Supremacy, he was declared 'Supreme Head of the Church of England'. Parliament was itself a totally compliant body whose business was to enact the royal will: any voicing of independent views was liable to be construed as treasonous. England was now a self-governing 'empire'; in the contemporary sense of owing no fealty of any kind to any outside body. Henry was aware of the new Protestant ideas but was himself strongly Catholic: indeed, he had been acclaimed

defender of the Faith (*Fidei Defensor*) by the Pope for a book refuting Luther. England was technically still part of the Catholic Church, only with Henry rather than the Pope in charge in England: the 'Henrician Reformation' was thus based on establishing non-papal Catholicism. However, Henry was also ready to exploit resentment at the Catholic establishment which the new ideas had stirred up and was insistent that obedience to the crown superseded loyalty to Rome. His rule was as absolute as any of his continental counterparts, and arguably more so, since he was ruler in both realms, Church and State. Thomas More was executed for his refusal to accept this new supreme status (1535): failure to conform to the King's ruling on religious matters was tantamount to treason. The individual had no freedom of conscience whatever.

Henry next raised funds and grateful clients by raiding the vast holdings of the Church. Through the dissolution of the monasteries (1536, 1539), Church wealth passed to the crown, and the support of the new gentry was bought with massive transference of land. Many buildings fell into decay, while others were adapted as country houses. The welfare and educational services provided by abbeys and monasteries were utterly destroyed. A northern rebellion against these policies, the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536), was crushed, but it indicated the affection many people felt for the old religion, especially in the northern counties. English Church doctrine, enshrined in the Six Articles (1539), incorporated elements of both the new protestantism and traditional practices. Religious observance was a set of practices prescribed by the state and enforced by law; Church teaching was intrinsically connected to state power. The quest for a male heir claimed another victim in Anne Boleyn, who had given Henry another daughter (Elizabeth, the future queen), a crime for which she was punished by execution for alleged infidelity (1536). Henry's third wife Jane Seymour (m. 1536) eventually gave birth to Edward, who succeeded as Edward VI when Henry died an obese physical wreck in 1547.

Edward VI was only nine years old when he came to the throne, and his reign (1547–1553) is dominated by the two protectors, first the Duke of Somerset (1547–1549) and then the Duke of Northumberland (1549–1553). How much policy was owing to the clever and sickly boy king is a matter of debate. Somerset continued Henry's plan of marrying Edward to Mary Stuart (the infant Mary, Queen of Scots), but after the 'rough wooing', which consisted in invasion and the sacking of Edinburgh, Mary was instead married to the French prince, later Francis II. A moderate protestant, Somerset relaxed Henry's laws against heresy, and more continental reformers entered the country. In line with Reformation thinking, the Chantry Chapels (dedicated to saying masses for the dead) were deemed superstitious and dissolved in 1547; Cranmer's first Prayer Book in English of 1549 gave liturgical form to this blend of Protestant

belief and inherited custom and was reinforced by an Act of Uniformity which imposed it on the whole country (angering Cornishmen, who resented having to say prayers in English rather than Latin). Somerset's years of control were also marked by severe economic hardship, a situation worsened by the policy of enclosures: this refers to the enclosing (with hedges) of public land, which was sold to private landlords for sheep farming, causing unemployment and misery in rural areas (sheep farming requires far less human labour than the cultivation of crops). The uprisings which followed, such as Robert Ket's rebellion in 1549, led to Somerset's downfall and replacement by the rapacious Northumberland. Under him, England turned towards a more extreme form of Protestantism: churches were ransacked, and a huge number of ecclesiastical artworks were destroyed on the puritanical principle that they promoted idolatry (the worshipping of images). The second version of the Prayer Book (1552) and the accompanying Act of Uniformity were much more protestant in content. When it became clear that Edward was dying, Northumberland tried to avoid the passing of the crown to Edward's Catholic half-sister Mary (the daughter of Catherine of Aragon) and persuaded Edward to designate his (Northumberland's) own daughter-in-law Lady Jane Grey as heir. Yet when Edward died, Mary succeeded in escaping arrest and it soon became clear that it was she who commanded popular allegiance. The unfortunate Lady Jane Grey was 'Queen for nine days' before being executed. Mary duly took the crown in 1553.

Mary Tudor is still known as 'Bloody Mary' for her persecution of English Protestants as part of her policy of returning England to the Church of Rome. Yet she was initially welcomed after Northumberland's extreme brand of Protestantism had offended traditional sensibilities. Early in her reign, Mary dismissed several protestant bishops, and Parliament repealed religious legislation passed under Edward. However, Mary's plan to marry King Philip II of Spain caused apprehension: alliance with Spain would, it was feared, bring the loss of independence, and the introduction of the Inquisition, the most notorious of the tools of the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church's strategy of defending and reinforcing itself in the face of Protestant attacks. Sir Thomas Wyatt led a rebellion against this marriage in 1554; on its failure, he was executed, and Mary's half-sister Elizabeth (daughter of Anne Boleyn) was arrested and, initially, imprisoned in the Tower of London. Mary and Philip were married at Winchester in 1554, and the nation was pardoned by Cardinal Pole for the sin of schism (division of the Church). In 1555, the Marian persecutions began: the most famous victims were Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. The tribulations of the Protestant martyrs under 'Bloody Mary' were recorded in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and caused such revulsion that the cause of returning to the Catholic Church lost public support

(though it might be said they were mild compared to state atrocities elsewhere). The last years of Mary's reign saw the loss of England's last possession in France, Calais (1558). Mary died the same year, probably of a cancer which she took to be a pregnancy, the marriage with Philip having produced no heir. The next in succession was thus Elizabeth, whose long reign (1558–1603) produced the 'Elizabethan Age', which is at the centre of our general notion of the English Renaissance.

Under previous monarchs, the English Church had broken with Rome and moved from Catholicism to moderate, then extreme Protestantism and back again. Popular religious sensibility was probably a mixture of these various strands, while separate groups adhered rigorously to different confessions and positions. An important part of domestic policy was the 'Elizabethan Settlement' (1559), an attempt to forge a Church under which most English could unite. This so-called *via media* (middle way) combined elements of Catholic discipline (such as church ceremony) with protestant teaching. The Settlement excluded, as non-conformists, committed Catholics at one end and Calvinist Puritans and Presbyterians at the other (Presbyterians believe in a church governed by elders rather than a hierarchy of bishops): a degree of national unity was achieved, and enforced through compulsory church attendance and fines for absenteeism, though dissent continued throughout Elizabeth's reign. Elizabeth I herself seemed to wish for obedience rather than compelling inner adherence to certain articles of faith by making 'windows into men's souls'. Nobles and others with Catholic affiliations could be tolerated provided they paid their fines and did not make trouble. Nonetheless, persecution of heretics, including torture and execution, continued to be a routine method of state policing. Another unifying strategy, which also served to distract from such matters, was the cultivation of Elizabeth's image as the Virgin Queen, effectively portrayed through various media from portraits to tournaments. Under Elizabeth, the court flourished and was largely responsible for the flourishing of the arts: the age saw remarkable creations in art (Hilliard), music (Gibbons, Tallis, Byrd), architecture (grand country houses like Hardwick Hall) and of course literature. A frequent characteristic of artistic creation was rich pattern and ornament, partly to advertise the wealth of the new rich who paid for it. Next to artistic achievement, the age is also famous for its statesman (Cecil, Walsingham) and sailors and explorers (Hawkins, Raleigh, Drake). Such achievement did not take place against a background of national contentment, however. Rising prices, agrarian depression and unemployment continued throughout Elizabeth's reign, driving the desperate poor into London and other growing cities which were unable to manage them. State attempts to manage the hardship

and threat of civil disorder ranged from stern rules against vagabonds to the beginnings of state-provided welfare with the Poor Law of 1601.

Religious conflict was also a key feature on the European stage. The Counter-Reformation Catholic Church acted aggressively against Protestant countries: in 1570, Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth, inviting princes to overthrow her. Jesuits preached secretly in England and ministered to the Catholic faithful, and numerous plots against the crown were uncovered: hence to be Catholic was potentially to be regarded as a traitor. This situation lies behind the tragic story of Mary, Queen of Scots who fled her own kingdom after a series of misadventures and threw herself on the mercy of her cousin Elizabeth (in 1568). While under home arrest in England, however, Mary was the natural focus for Catholic hopes to depose Elizabeth, and when she was eventually implicated in a plot, Elizabeth had to authorise her execution (1587). Added to England's material assistance of the Protestant Netherlands who were rebelling against the rule of imperial Spain, this led to open war between England and Spain, something Elizabeth had been at pains to avoid. The most celebrated event in this conflict was the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, though the war continued until the end of the reign. Other problems facing Elizabeth included serious uprisings against Tudor colonial rule in Ireland, the lack of a direct heir to the throne and a House of Commons increasingly aware of its own power as a body voting in new taxes. The emerging independence of Parliament was a problem passed on to succeeding monarchs and led eventually to Civil War. Elizabeth died in 1603.

Elizabeth I reportedly approved as her successor James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Queen of Scots and great-great-grandson of Henry VII. With his accession, the English crown passed to the Scottish dynasty of the House of Stuart. As James I of England (*r.*1603–1625), the new King ruled over two kingdoms, though Scotland and England were not constitutionally united for another century (the Act of Union of 1707). With Ireland now brought under English control, the idea of the British Isles as one political entity was beginning to take shape. At the same time, the British Empire also grew under the Stuarts; under James, Elizabethan adventures turned to serious colonisation of the East coast of North America and the West Indies and the establishment of trading stations from Africa to India. This imperial expansion, eased by the peace with Spain which James signed in 1604, had several consequences: the growth of the slave trade, in which many great towns and families were involved; the importing of goods from tobacco to tea, together with the influx of precious metals which drove up prices and caused serious economic problems; and the enrichment of the middle classes who profited from the new commercial situation.

Money was a crucial factor in the greatest domestic problem of James's reign, the tension between the crown and Parliament. The King needed Parliament to pass money bills, to maintain the country's economy and also to fund his court's expensive lifestyle. But the newly rich Parliament increasingly flexed its muscles and resisted new taxation. James turned to unpopular money-raising policies, including the sale of peerages. Parliament found much to be offended at in James: the vulgar and profligate habits of a court packed with Scottish hangers-on; lectures on the divine right of kings and the handing of ministerial office to handsome and incompetent favourites, most notoriously George Villiers, the first Duke of Buckingham (1592–1628). James meanwhile was offended at the refusal of the House of Commons and the country's judges to offer their complete subservience to the crown, which he believed was an office held by divine right and thus surpassing national law and custom. James's mixture of genuine erudition and total inability to understand or manage the country's institutions led to him being called (by the French King Henry IV) the 'wisest fool in Christendom'.

King and Parliament were equally at odds over religion. On his accession, both Protestants and Catholics invested hopes in James: he came from a Scottish Presbyterian background and his mother (Mary, Queen of Scots) was a Catholic. But at the Hampton Court Conference (1604) – the most signal achievement of which was the instigation of the Authorized Version or 'King James Bible' eventually published in 1611 – James made his dislike of Puritanism clear. Consequently, the English Church adopted Catholic ceremonial aspects, particularly under William Laud (1573–1645), who became Archbishop of Canterbury under Charles I, while Parliament had a Puritan majority. Under the direction of their bishops, priests preached the doctrine of total obedience to the divinely appointed monarch. Thus Catholicism became associated with tyrannical monarchy and Calvinist Protestantism with Parliamentary freedom. This meant freedom for Protestants only, of course. Disappointed by the persistence of laws penalising their faith, some disappointed Catholics turned to plots, culminating in the attempt to blow up Parliament in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, an act of attempted terrorism which discredited the old faith in England for generations (we note in passing there is a serious argument that this plot was actually the work of the State). Parliament took the opportunity to pass various savagely repressive laws against all Catholics, restricting them to second-class citizens until the emancipation acts of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, James was totally at odds with the sensibilities of his subjects, pursuing the scheme of marrying his son Charles to the Spanish infanta (largely to secure a colossal dowry) and allowing the Spanish ambassador Gondomar to dictate England's foreign policy. It was largely to please

Gondomar that the old Elizabethan hero Sir Walter Raleigh was sent on an impossible mission to find the gold of El Dorado (in Guyana) and then executed after a staged trial for treason in 1618. The planned marriage alliance failed: an idiotic visit in disguise to the Spanish court by Charles and Buckingham (1623) did not help, the conditions demanded by Spain – amounting to a complete repeal of anti-Catholic laws – could not be met, and popular sentiment was fiercely against Spain and for the restoration of the Protestant Palatinate, from which James's son-in-law Frederick had been deposed by invading Spanish forces in 1618 (at the outset of the Thirty Years War). When James died, he bequeathed religious, financial, parliamentary and foreign policy problems which Charles I was unable to resolve, leading to the Civil War of 1642.

Charles I's reign lasted technically from 1625 to 1649, but his authority effectively ended in 1642, on the outbreak of Civil War. In terms of cultural history, Charles is associated with a high point of courtly arts: under him, and particularly owing to the enthusiasm of his French wife Henrietta Maria, the court masque was brought to a pinnacle of sophistication; he increased greatly the magnificent royal collection of paintings, by masters such as Rubens and Van Dyck; and the architect Inigo Jones introduced the austerely classical Palladian style to England. Politically, however, Charles's reign was dominated by conflict between the monarchy and Parliament, a crisis which led with the seeming inexorability of tragedy to civil war. In the first four years, a largely Puritan House of Commons was suspicious of Charles's marriage to an openly practising Catholic (the French princess Henrietta Maria), fearing the introduction of despotic Catholic rule in England, on the continental model. It was aggrieved also by the domination of the incompetent Buckingham (assassinated in 1628).

Parliament was reluctant to grant Charles the money bills required to pursue wars with Spain and France. Like James, Charles turned to other, frequently ingenious, ways of raising money. While Charles inherited his father's belief in divine right, Parliament, led by formidable men such as John Pym, Henry Coke and John Eliot, adamantly defended English freedoms. The Petition of Right (1628), attacking Charles's use of arbitrary imprisonment, forced loans and other offences against the people, is an important milestone in English constitutional history. Charles's response to this situation was to dismiss Parliament and govern without it until 1640 (referred to as the period of personal rule). During this period, hostility was increased by the actions of two of Charles's ministers: Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford (1593–1641), enforced the royal will through what he called 'thorough' government, first in northern England, then in Ireland, where he managed to alienate the whole population. These years are marked by some iconic moments in English

history, in which the Parliamentary cause found popular 'martyrs' to advance its cause: William Prynne lost his ears for publishing a pamphlet attacking episcopacy and allegedly besmirching the virtue of the Queen (1634); John Hampden was imprisoned (1637) for refusing to pay Ship Money (a contribution to naval defence that Charles effectively turned into a tax) and Sir John Eliot died in the Tower (1632). Puritan emigration to America, which had started under James, increased dramatically. Wentworth's aggressive attack on dissent through the courts was accompanied by the church reforms of William Laud (Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633), who enforced ceremony and the preaching of divine right, and thus associated the Anglican Church entirely with Charles, and raised fears that the Church of England was to be returned to Rome. The tension led to military confrontation when Charles and Laud attempted to impose the English Prayer Book on the Presbyterian Scots. Another iconic moment duly occurred when Jenny Geddes (1637) threw a stool at the Dean of St Giles in Edinburgh, and the so-called 'Bishops' Wars' (1639, 1640) followed, with a Scottish army occupying much of the north of England.

The need to deal with the Scots forced Charles to recall Parliament in 1640 (this was the so-called 'Short Parliament', April to May 1640, followed by the Long Parliament, beginning in November 1640 and lasting until 1660). Parliament duly took the opportunity to force a number of concessions: Laud was imprisoned (1640), and Strafford was imprisoned and executed (1641), with Charles feeling unable to exercise a royal pardon. Parliament was to meet every three years (the Triennial Act) and was not to be dissolved without its own consent. A list of 210 objections to Charles's government (the Grand Remonstrance) was passed (1641), and the Courts of Star Chamber and High Commission were abolished. Fears of Catholic powers were fanned by the Catholic Irish rebellion and the massacre of Ulster Protestants (1641). At the same time, fissures were opening within Parliament between those who sought a resolution through compromise with the monarchy and a revolutionary party who looked for wholesale constitutional change. The King's attempt to arrest five MPs in 1642 precipitated the slide into Civil War which officially began when Charles unfurled the royal banner outside the Castle of Nottingham.

The English Civil War of 1642–1646 was won by Parliament, who had the support of the navy, the rich merchant class and the City of London. The 'New Model Army' led by Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) also came to be superior to the royal army, which was supported by forces from Ireland and Scotland. However, the image of two coherent sides – Court and Parliament, the Cavaliers and the Roundheads – is simplistic. Parliament divided into two parties: the Presbyterians, who favoured rule

through the existing Church of England; and the Independents, who were more radical Protestants. It was from the Independents that the army was chiefly formed. In 1646, Charles surrendered to the Scots, hoping to exploit these divisions within the English Parliament, and he continued intrigues to that end even after the Scots handed him to Parliament in 1647. There followed a second civil war between the Presbyterians – allied to the King and the Scots – and the Independents. This was effectively a war between the army, who were unpaid and refused to disband, and those who wished for rule through Parliament. Key events in this second war were Cromwell's capture of Charles (1647), Charles's escape, the defeat of the royalist army at Preston (1648) and 'Pride's Purge', in which Colonel Pride expelled Presbyterian members from the Commons, leaving a 'rump' of 100 Independents. Thus, while the King lost the war, so did Parliament, as parliamentary democracy was dismantled by a military coup. Charles I was tried by an unconstitutional commission, whose authority he refused to recognise, and condemned by a minority of that commission, itself constituting a minority of an illegally manipulated Parliament, acting without the House of Lords. The general unpopularity of the execution of the King was manifested in the groan which greeted his execution at Whitehall (30 January 1649) and the popularity of the texts which were purportedly his prayers and meditations in *Eikon Basilike*. John Milton's learned attempts to counter this text and justify regicide had little persuasive effect on the people at large. For the next 11 years, England was ruled by a republican dictatorship.

Between 1649 and 1660, England was a Commonwealth, ruled by a Council of State and the rump Parliament. Its initial business was war. The execution of Charles I caused widespread revulsion abroad, including in other Protestant countries, and stirred royalist sympathies across the British Isles. Oliver Cromwell, who initially served purely as a military leader, put down royalist uprisings in Scotland (Edinburgh and the Lowlands were subsequently occupied by the English) and Ireland. In Ireland, Cromwell successfully besieged the strongholds of Drogheda and Wexford and then slaughtered the entire garrison (1649); English garrisons were then installed and the southern Irish given the choice between renouncing their Catholicism or being resettled in inhospitable marshland, an early modern instance of ethnic cleansing. Cromwell called this a 'marvellous great mercy', arguing that initial severity would deter future bloodshed, but to others it was 'the curse of Cromwell', and ensured lasting infamy for the English Commonwealth in Ireland itself. A Scots army in support of Charles's son, the future Charles II, was defeated at Worcester (1651), and Charles eventually escaped to France after famously hiding in an oak tree. There was war against the Dutch over trade: the background to the First Dutch War (1652–1654) was

competition over the East Indies, and the immediate cause was England's Navigation Act, which had the effect of banning imports carried by Dutch vessels. England won thanks largely to the skill of Admiral Robert Blake.

Domestically the new Republic also faced much turbulence. The army were resentful of the rule of the complacent Rump of MPs, who had not had to face re-election, and who moreover proposed to give themselves the right of veto over future members. Cromwell and a band of soldiers duly dismissed the Rump: Cromwell's terse statement 'You are no parliament' and reference to the mace as 'a bauble' have passed into popular history, and suggest the contempt of the self-appointed righteous few for Parliamentary rule. However, the righteous failed to come up with a workable alternative to the Commons: the rule of 129 sufficiently godly 'saints', the so-called 'Barebones' Parliament (1653), was hopelessly unworkable; the 'Instrument of Government', in which Cromwell as Lord Protector oversaw a unicameral Parliament of 400, was dissolved by Cromwell when some MPs presumed to criticise his king-like powers. Cromwell then divided England into eleven regions, each ruled over by a Puritanical major-general: fines for gambling, swearing, drunkenness and various other acts of puritanical legislation were deeply unpopular and served only to intensify the yearning for a return to some kind of monarchy.

Cromwell himself was a complex figure. Against his brutality on the battlefield and impatience with parliamentary debate can be set more sympathetic characteristics: like other Puritans, he was undoubtedly sincere and believed that godly government was best for the country; foreign policy in these years was notably successful; as a passionate bible-reader and philosemite, he invited the Jews to return and practise their religion (1656); and, provided they had no taint of Catholicism, protestants of all sorts could hold livings in the Church of England. Nonetheless, Cromwell's personal rule did not yield any lasting legacy. Like any monarch, he passed his office of Protector on to his son, Richard Cromwell (1626–1712), a country gentleman who was quite unready to resolve the problems facing the country. Richard Cromwell's Protectorate lasted only eight months (1658–1659). Government was virtually non-existent and Parliament and the army quarrelled. In January 1660, General George Monck led a march on London. He summoned a free parliament, which included a majority of Presbyterians (formerly expelled in Pride's Purge). Events moved swiftly towards a return to the monarchy. In the Declaration of Breda (1660), Prince Charles promised a pardon to those who had acted against the crown, and 'liberty to tender consciences' in matters of religion, provided that the kingdom was not subverted. A free Parliament of Lords and Commons was called and voted to invite

Charles Stuart to return to England as King. In 1660, the restoration of the monarchy brought an end to the English Commonwealth.

Further Reading

Introductory

George Chamier, *When It Happened* (London: Constable, 2006).
Robert Lacey, *Great Tales from English History: Chaucer to the Glorious Revolution* (London: Little, Brown, 2004).

General narrative

Rebecca Fraser, *A People's History of Britain* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003).
Simon Schama, *A History of Britain*, 3 vols (London: BBC, 2000–2002), vols 1 and 2.

The Tudors

Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors 1485–1603* (London: Allen Lane, 2000).
Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002).
James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 2005).

Stuarts, Civil War, Republic

Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England 1603–1714*, 3rd edn (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2003).
Stevie Davies, *A Century of Troubles: 1600–1700* (London: Channel 4 Books, 2001).
Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War* (London: Harper Collins, 2006).

Cultural History

John Buxton, *Elizabethan Taste* (London: Macmillan, 1963).
F. E. Halliday, *An Illustrated Cultural History of England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967).
Roy Strong, *The Spirit of Britain: A Narrative History of the Arts* (London: Hutchinson, 1999).

Biographies

There are countless biographies covering the period. The following are personal recommendations:
Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998).
Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004).
David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000) [see also TV series *Elizabeth*, on DVD].
John Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* (London: Viking, 2006).
Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC, 2003) [see accompanying TV series, on DVD].

The Book Trade

Printing was a key invention of the Renaissance and unlike manuscripts, printed books were published – that is, put into the public domain, not handed around between private owners. *Publisher* is a potentially misleading word. Some Renaissance title pages refer to the publisher as 'The Printer', meaning the person who caused the book to be printed. In others, the publisher is also the bookseller. A publisher was in fact anyone who acquired the rights to a text, paid for copies to be made and then sold them wholesale to booksellers. Most publishers were stationers: their main trade was selling books, and so they were in a good position to judge the market for a new title. 'Publishing' was a commercially speculative activity rather than a profession in its own right.

Publication of a book came under the control of The Stationers' Company. This was founded as a guild in 1403 and given a royal charter by Mary Tudor in 1557. The Company was based in Stationers' Hall, south west of St Paul's Cathedral. Consequently, the area around St Paul's, particularly to the west, became the hub of the London book market. Just outside the Cathedral, sermons were preached to large open-air audiences at Paul's Cross. The cluster of stationers, combined with the fierce oratory of the preachers, and discussion among their listeners, meant that this small part of the city must have become to some extent a forum for the circulation of ideas. Outside London, licences for printing were restricted to the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, leaving most of the country without any regular access to printed material.

The Stationers' Company was responsible for regulating the trade in books. Regulation was intended primarily to protect the livelihoods of those in the trade rather than as a system of censorship. Publishers paid a fee (usually sixpence to a shilling) for the right to enter a title in the Stationers' Register (such entries are the primary source of evidence for our dating of books). By doing this, they acquired exclusive rights to print that title. The licence to print a particular text would also be recorded on the author's manuscript, which was not usually returned and generally stayed with the printers, who turned it into printed text. Copyright for a work lay with the publisher rather than the author, who would usually have his work purchased from him in one transaction for a flat fee. This arrangement maximised the chances for a publisher to recoup his investment, and possibly make a profit. Besides rights for individual works, publishers could also secure lucrative patents for producing all books of a similar type: in 1575, Queen Elizabeth granted the English composers William Byrd and Thomas Tallis a monopoly on music publishing, giving them sole rights to print any kind of music.

The fact that copyright lay with the publisher put the author at the bottom of the publishing food chain. Indeed, it need not even be the