

MEDIEVALISM IN SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

by

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PURPOSE

Shakespeare lived at a point in history scarce a century removed from the close of medieval times. Moreover, he was born and reared in Warwickshire, a rural section of England, where thought and manner had been less strongly affected by the changes of the century than had those of the urban centers. Finally, it was to the writers of medieval times that Shakespeare and his contemporaries turned for the inspiration for a large portion of their dramatic productions. Consequently, we must expect to find much that is medieval in the plays of Shakespeare and of his fellow-writers of the Elizabethan period.

The purpose of this study is an attempt at a brief classification of the references to things medieval in social, political and ecclesiastical life, as exemplified in the Shakespearean tragedy, Hamlet. Those references are included which allude to practice, dogma or thought of medieval time, regardless of whether such practices, dogmas and ideals had originated before, or have been continued since. However, no allusion is considered which does not antedate 1500, A. D., which date is commonly considered as

the close of the middle ages¹, as it marks approximately the period at which the Renaissance brought about a revolution in the world of culture, the Reformation in that of religion, and the discovery of the Western Continent in that of politics, thus introducing the modern era.

METHOD

A careful survey of the source material available was made for the three colleges: Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas; St. Benedict's College, Atchison, Kansas; and Mount St. Scholastica College, Atchison, Kansas.

An annotated bibliography of the topics under study as treated in the literature available in the libraries of these colleges was next made.

After this preliminary preparation, the drama, Hamlet, was carefully examined for allusions to the topics selected for special study. The annotated bibliography and the collection of allusions formed the material on which this thesis is based. Migne's Patrologia Latina, a compilation of medieval works, was the source of many references, and

¹Shahan, Thomas J., The Middle Ages, pp. 136-139.

is indicated throughout the thesis by the abbreviation,
P. L.

INTRODUCTION

The medieval era, which forms the time scope for the present study of Shakespeare's Hamlet, is the second of the three great time divisions of the Christian era, and may be considered as extending from about the fourth century² till the sixteenth³.

The middle ages, in turn, may be considered as being divided into three great time periods; the first extending to the coronation of Charlemagne; the second from that time till the fourteenth century; and the last to the sixteenth century⁴.

The first of these periods (312-800 A. D.) is that of transition from the old Roman Empire to the new one which was to become a center for European action for the next five centuries. At its beginning, the laws and customs of old classic Rome formed the working basis for society.

²Sellery, G. D. and Krey, A. C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, p. 1.

³Shahan, Thomas J., The Middle Ages, pp. 136-139.

⁴Etton, Francis S., Ancient and Medieval History, pp. 287, 333.

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Soon they were modified by the influences of the barbarians who crowded down from the north of Europe⁵, by the Mohammedans who penetrated into Spain in the early eighth century⁶, and lastly by the Catholic Church, the only social force unaffected by the collapse of the old Roman Empire and the inroads of the barbarian and the Moslem⁷.

The second period (800-1300 A. D.) of the middle ages, enjoying a comparative stability of government under the Holy Roman Empire, included within its term three great movements which have profoundly affected the history of all time since. These three movements were: the organization of the Crusades, the founding of the universities, and the evolution of the feudal system.

The last centuries of the second period of the middle ages were years of great progress and achievement. They witnessed the origin of modern classical literature, embracing the Spanish Cid, the English Arthurian legends, the German Niebelungenlied and the works of the Minnesingers and the Meistersingers, the French Trouveres and troubadours, ending with the earlier works of the great Ital-

⁵ Betten, Francis S., Ancient and Medieval History, p. 298.

⁶ Ibid., p. 316.

⁷ Ibid., p. 302.

ian, Dante⁸.

The modern drama takes its rise from this second period of medieval history. In England it seems to find its origin in the Quem Quaeritis trope⁹, in Italy in the Nativity plays of St. Francis of Assisi¹⁰.

The center of medical knowledge during this period was Salerno, in southern Italy. Its physicians were mentioned as early as the ninth century and several books of medieval medicine were either translated or composed there
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The modern trade union had a counterpart in the guild system of the middle ages, whose prosperity occurred in the years between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These guilds were formed as protective associations of merchants or craftsmen, and were economic, political and religious in their aims and achievements. They regulated prices and wages, stipulating periods and conditions of apprenticeship and journeymanhip; served as social and religious confraternities for their members; and as a power

⁸Walsh, James J., The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries, p. 167.

⁹Adams, Joseph Q., Chief Pre-Shakespearean dramas, p. 71².

¹⁰Walsh, James J., The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries, p. 239.

¹¹Osler, Sir William, Evolution of Modern Medicine, pp. 86-88.

to be reckoned with by state authorities, they helped gain political power for the lower classes¹².

The governments of the age were monarchical in character, absolute in theory and usually absolute in practice. The power of the king was tempered by the usages of the feudal system, which tended to diminish the central authority of the magistrate or baron¹³.

St. Thomas of Aquin (d. 1274) was surprisingly modern in his enunciation of the theory of government:

"One of the principle things to be considered with regard to the good establishment of princes is that all should have part in the government; for in this way peace is preserved among the people, and all are pleased with such a disposition of things and maintain it. The next thing to be considered is the form of government, of which there are principally two kinds: a Kingdom, in which one rules, and an Aristocracy, in which a few exercise the authority. The best form is that in which one rules over all, and under him are others having authority, but the government pertains to all, because those who exercise authority can be chosen from all and are chosen by all"¹⁴.

The second period of the middle ages saw also the establishment of two religious orders which through the

¹²Dewe, Juhn Adalbert, History of Economics, p. 149.

¹³Ibid., pp. 86-88.

¹⁴St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 1^a, 2^a^o, questio 105, 1^a.

labors of their members, were to exert a great influence over the society, not only of their own day, but also over our times as well. St. Dominic¹⁵ (1170-1221) and St. Francis of Assisi¹⁶ (1180-1226) founded the two religious orders which bear their names. Among the famous sons of St. Dominic are St. Thomas of Aquin and Albert the Great; those of St. Francis are Duns Scotus, Alexander Hales, St. Bonaventure and Roger Bacon. Pante and Louis IX of France both belonged to the third order, which St. Francis of Assisi organized as a confraternity for the laity.

The third period of the middle ages embraces the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During this time there arose in Italy an increase in fervor in the study of the classical masterpieces of pagan Rome. This literary aspect of the Renaissance called Humanism, because of its emphasis on the classics as opposed to theological learning¹⁷, included not only the study of the classics, but also of the languages in which they were written, and the creation of new literary productions, either in classical tongues, or

¹⁵Robinson, Paschal, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, pp. 107-109.

¹⁶O'Connor, John B., Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VI, pp. 221-230.

¹⁷Sellery, G. D. and Krey, A. C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, p. 361.

in the vernacular.

Francis Petrarch¹⁸ (1304-1374) is considered the father of humanism, as the new learning was called to distinguish it from scholasticism. He was educated for the law, but preferred to devote himself to literature. For a number of years he wandered through the cities of Italy, seeking the codices which preserved the literary works of classic times. He discovered works of Cicero, and part of the Institutiones of Quintilian. He wrote a number of Latin works, but his fame rests on his Italian verse, particularly the Trionfi and the Canzoniere. These two works established a style of writing termed Petrarchism, which persisted until the literary mode changed to that of copying only the original classic models.

About 1350 began the friendship between Petrarch and Boccaccio¹⁹ (1313-1375) which lasted till the death of the former. Boccaccio lectured on the Commedia of Dante, wrote a biography of the great Tuscan poet, and compiled a dictionary of classic mythology, De genealogiis deorum gentilium. But his most famous work is the Decameron, rich and varied in adventure and analysis of feeling and passion.

¹⁸Ford, J. D. M., Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XI, pp. 778-779.

¹⁹Dunn, Joseph, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. II, pp. 607-608.

Like Shakespeare, Boccaccio borrowed his plots from many sources, but transmuted them by his genius into creations of individuality and beauty.

About 1450²⁰, John Gutenberg invented a printing press which employed movable type, and from Mainz the art of printing quickly spread throughout Europe. The first printing press in Italy was set up at the ancient Benedictine abbey of Subiaco, the first house of the order, and thus it was that the monks who had preserved the treasures of learning during the dark times of the early middle ages were likewise the first to give to Italy the means of circulating more generously these treasures their scribes had hitherto so laboriously produced²¹.

The invention of printing was followed closely by a series of events which mark a decided departure from the traditions of medieval times. The discovery of America²² opened new lands to conquest and settlement; the Protectorate under Cromwell, a few years later (1653), marked a break in the century-old form of English government²³,

²⁰ Hayes, Carleton J. H. and Moon, Parker, Modern History, p. 86.

²¹ Butler, Cuthbert, Benedictine Monachism, p. 551.

²² Hayes, Carleton J. H. and Moon, Parker, Modern History, p. 50.

²³ Ibid., p. 257.

while the Reformation in Germany (1520)²⁴, and the defection of Henry VIII in England (1534)²⁵ destroyed the tie of religious unity which had bound Christendom to a common faith. Hence it is that the close of the fifteenth century is, by many historians, deemed the close of the medieval age.

Each of the three periods of medieval history contributed its quota to the betterment of society. The first saw the formation of the Holy Roman Empire from the scattered elements of the Roman state and the northern barbarian²⁶; the second the organization of the Crusades, the rise of the universities, the foundation of new religious orders, and further advancement in government in the establishment of the feudal system²⁷. The last period was signalized by the brilliance of its achievements, especially in art and in literature. With the Renaissance²⁸ as its climax thus ended the second period of the Christian era, the middle ages.

²⁴ Hayes, Carleton J. H. and Moon, Parker, Modern History, p. 104.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 35-37.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 29-31.

MEDIAEVAL CIVIL LIFE IN HAMLET

INTRODUCTION TO MEDIEVAL CIVIL LIFE IN HAMLET

Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet contains many references to the customs of medieval peoples. The routine of their every-day life, their games, their folk-lore, their learning alike find notice in the play.

Hamlet's denunciation of the tendency of the Danes toward excessive drinking

"This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:"¹

finds a parallel in the complaint of William of Malmesbury, who in his Gesta Regum Anglorum, bewails the almost universal drunkenness of the Saxons at the time of the Conquest².

Hunting was a favorite out-door recreation of the medieval nobleman³. Hamlet's references to hunting:

"Why do you go about to recover the wind of me,
as if you would drive me into a toil?"⁴

¹Hamlet, I, 4, 17-18.
²Kendall, Eliz. K., Source Book of English History, pp. 42-43.
³Dale, Edmund, National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature, pp. 203-207.
⁴Hamlet, III, 2, 331.

and to hawking:

"We'll een to't like French falconers, fly
at anything we see:"⁵

prove Shakespeare's familiarity with those forms of sport which had been dealt with in scientific treatises in the twelfth⁶ and thirteenth centuries⁷.

When forced to remain indoors the nobility passed their time feasting and listening to the minstrels or watching the jugglers⁸. The fool of the castle, of whom Yorick⁹ is a type, furnished entertainment for his masters¹⁰.

The mystery and morality plays gave both instruction and entertainment to their spectators¹¹. Although Polonius' statement that he "played once i' the university"¹² refers to a rather modern form of drama, yet "out-herod's Herod" and "Termagant"¹³ are both reminders of the typical

⁵Hamlet, II, 2, 434.

⁶Haskins, Chas. H., Studies in the History of Medieval Science, p. 299.

⁷Ibid., p. 28.

⁸Tappan, E. M., When Knights Were Bold, pp. 93-94.

⁹Hamlet, V, 1, 183.

¹⁰Salzman, L. F., English Life in the Middle Ages, p. 29.

¹¹Dale, Edmund, National Life and Character in the Mirror of Early English Literature, pp. 249-250.

¹²Hamlet, III, 2, 100.

¹³Ibid., III, 2, 15.

medieval mystery cycles¹⁴.

Shakespeare, in Laertes' exclamation, "The devil take thy soul"¹⁵, takes note of the vice of cursing. Benedict the Deacon, 727 A. D., in his Collectio Capitularium inveighs against this same fault:

"Quod hi nomen Domini adsumpsert,
graviter feriuntur".¹⁶

Hamlet's mourning suits of black¹⁷ find medieval counterparts in writings of as early as the fifth and sixth centuries¹⁸.

The folk-lore of the play contains many medieval notes. Hamlet's references to "the hands of fortune"¹⁹ and "fortune's star"²⁰ recall passages from the great Italian poet, Dante²¹. The references to Fortune's wheel²² have a parallel in a passage from a sermon of the philosopher, St. Bonaventure:

¹⁴Moulton, Richard Green, Modern Study of Literature, pp. 178-179.

¹⁵Hamlet, V, 1, 262.

¹⁶Benedictus Diaconus, Collectio Capitularium, Liber II, P. L. XCVII, column 753.

¹⁷Hamlet, I, 2, 78-79.

¹⁸Smith, Wm. and Cheetham, Samuel, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, II, p. 1430.

¹⁹Hamlet, II, 2, 240.

²⁰Ibid., I, 3, 35.

²¹Taylor, Howard Osborne, Medieval Mind, II, p. 750.

²²Hamlet, II, 2, 500.

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"Haec est illa corona, qua quis pingitur
coronatus in rota fortunae; nam quia rota
semper volvitur, nec ad momentum stare per-
mittitur, cum ad summum pervenit, descendere
cogitur."²³

The ghost lore of Hamlet likewise finds many paral-
lels in medieval writings. Shakespeare's frequent refer-
ences to the power exercised by the cock over wandering
spirits, particularly the speech of Horatius:

"But even then the morning cock crew loud,
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,"²⁴

has somewhat the ring of a selection from St. Bonaventure:

"Leo (diabolus) timet cantum galli et fugit..."²⁵

The breviary hymn, ascribed to Prudentius

"Callus jacentes excitat
Et somnolentes increpat"²⁶

is reminiscent of another selection from the play, also
ascribed to Horatius:

"The cock, that is the trumpet of the morn,
Both with his lofty and shrill sounding throat
Awake the god of day:...."²⁷

²³ St. Bonaventure, Sermones de Sanctis, P. L. XLII,
Tom. 13.

²⁴ Hamlet, I, 2, 217-218.

²⁵ St. Bonaventure, Sermones de Sanctis, XIV, 47a.

²⁶ Prudentius, Breviarium Monasticum, pars hiemalis,
p. 61.

²⁷ Hamlet, I, 1, 150-152.

Hamlet's declaration that the ghost can do no harm to his soul²⁸ corresponds closely to the admission made by the familiar, Orthon, as recorded in Froissart's

Chronicles:

"I have no power to do ill to any one, only to awaken these and disturb thy rest, or that of other persons."²⁹

The cathedral schools, required of every cathedral by the Council of Lateran in 1176³⁰, were the forerunners of the great medieval universities, which reached a high point of development in the thirteenth century³¹. Wittenberg, to which Shakespeare refers as the Alma Mater of Horatio³², was not founded till post-medieval times. However the picture the insinuations of Polonius³³ suggest in regard to the university of Paris was substantiated by the turbulent character of many of the students and the rather nominal discipline often imposed upon them.

The astronomy of Hamlet, as that of the middle ages,

²⁸Hamlet, I, 4, 66-67.

²⁹Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles, p. 383.

³⁰Stowe, John, Survey of London, p. 66.

³¹De Wulf, Maurice, History of Medieval Philosophy, pp. 263-264.

³²Hamlet, I, 2, 113.

³³Ibid., II, 1, 22.

is Ptolemaic. "Doubt that the sun doth move"³⁴ places the earth as the fixed center of the universe, the sun and planets revolving about it in transparent, concentric spheres³⁵. The astronomy of the play often shades into astrology, agreeing with that of Venerable Bede, who asserted:

"Cometae sunt stellae flammis orintae, repente nascentes, regni mutationem, aut pestilentiam,³⁶
aut bella, vel ventos, aestuave portendentes."³⁶

On the other hand, "We defy augury"³⁷ seems a more practical adoption of the view point of St. Bonaventure who insists that

"...securius dici potest quod cometae aut non significare mortem principis, sed solum hoc accidit, quod moriatur in ejus apparitione."³⁸

The medieval popular belief in the influence of the stars on the affairs of men, as manifested in many writers of those ages³⁹, seems sanctioned by Polonius' warning to Ophelia that

"Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star."⁴⁰

³⁴Hamlet, II, 2, 117.

³⁵Haskins, Chas.H., Studies in History of Medieval Science, pp. 100-102.

³⁶Beda Venerabilis, De Natura Rerum, P. L. XC, pp. 243-244.

³⁷Hamlet, V, 2, 223.

³⁸St. Bonaventure, Sententiarum, Liber II, p. 602.

³⁹Haskins, Chas.H., Studies in the History of Medieval Science, p. 602.

⁴⁰Hamlet, II, 2, 142.

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St. Bonaventure, true to his usual conservatism, refuses any such power to the stars, holding that to concede such a power would be to deny free will.

"Si diversitas morum causaretur...a positionibus siderum...ergo non erit liberium, nec valebit consilium, nec meritum erit, nec laus, nec vituperium..."⁴¹

Shakespeare, in Hamlet's "plunge him into more cholera"⁴² subscribes to the medieval doctrine of the four humours, fluids of the living body, of which Hippocrates mentions four; blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. These humours were considered to be the principal seats of disease in man⁴³. Hugo de Folieto agrees with Hippocrates in his enumeration of the four humours:

"quatuor humores corporis humani sanguis, cholera rubra, cholera niger et phlegma."⁴⁴

Health was secured by a proper proportion of these humours, a proportion often secured by blood letting, a method of treatment frequently subject to regulative code in monastic houses, and even by the decrees of civil authorities⁴⁵.

⁴¹St. Bonaventure, Sententiarum, Liber II, p. 600.

⁴²Hamlet, III, 2, 291.

⁴³Americana Encyclopedia, Vol. XIV, p. 494.

⁴⁴Hugo de Folieto, Le Medicina Animae, P. L. CLXXVI, col. 1184.

⁴⁵Ludovicus et Lotharius, Capitularia, P. L. XCVII, col. 582.

The chemistry of the play is thoroughly medieval--resting on the four elements as its basis⁴⁶. "...sea or fire... earth or air" Horatio thus declared the elements in the first act of the play⁴⁷. The chemical reaction of petrification, noted by Frederick II in the thirteenth century⁴⁸, gives rise to an interesting simile by which the King compares the result of the people's love for Hamlet to "the spring that turneth wood to stone."⁴⁹

Shakespeare, in Hamlet, agrees with Venerable Bede in acknowledging the rotundity of the earth:

"For so this side of our known world..."⁵⁰

In addition to the testimony of Bede, we find a ninth century manuscript, formerly of Cambrai declaring:

"forma eius rotunda atque spiralis."⁵¹

The philosophy of the play, as that of the age it depicts, is largely medieval. The works of St. Thomas of Aquin, of St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, St. Albert the Great and of St. Anselm furnish many passages parallel to

⁴⁶Garrison, Fielding H., Introduction to History of Medicine, p. 80.

⁴⁷Hamlet, I, 1, 153.

⁴⁸Haskins, Chas.H., Studies in History of Medieval Science, p. 263.

⁴⁹Hamlet, IV, 7, 20.

⁵⁰Ibid., I, 1, 85.

⁵¹Haskins, Chas.H., Studies in History of Medieval Science, p. 100.

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those of Hamlet. Especially interesting is the meditation of Hamlet, "What a piece of work is man."⁵² and the expansion of the idea by Hugo de Folieto in a passage comparing man, the microcosm to the macrocosm, the universe.

"Homo microcosmus, id est minor mundus appellari ab antiquo solet, quia per similitudinem majoris mundi figuram tenet. Potest autem assignari magna convenientia in compositione corporis humana et constitutione mundi. Unde coelum capiti, aere pectori, mari ventri, terra extrema corporis parti assimilatur."⁵³

Throughout the play Shakespeare's philosophy of life is sound---free will is recognized by Hamlet's declaration:

"Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice."⁵⁴

The spirit of the dead king assumes the responsibility for his acts when he states that he must linger in Purgatory

"Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away..."⁵⁵

Hamlet himself acknowledges the supreme importance of intention in determining the morality of actions:

"...there is nothing either good or bad, but
thinking makes it so."⁵⁶

Finally, Hamlet in his exhortation to his mother to

⁵²Hamlet, II, 2, 312.

⁵³Hugo de Folieto, De Medicina Animae, P. L. CLXXVI, col. 1184.

⁵⁴Hamlet, III, 2, 64.

⁵⁵Ibid., I, 5, 13.

⁵⁶Ibid., II, 2, 251-252.

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separate from his uncle, agrees with St. Thomas of Aquin⁵⁷ in his statement of the psychology of self-restraint in the formation of good habits:

".....refrain tonight
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence."⁵⁸

A careful study of the play, from the view-point of the medieval gives a rather fair cross-section of the civil life of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

⁵⁷ St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, 22, XLIX-LXXXIX, Vol. 7, p. 52.

⁵⁸ Hamlet, III, 4, 162-164.

Popular Folk Custom

Medieval

Black hood, gown and mantle used for mourning from 14th till 16th century¹.

"...for the men mourning, and the women clad in mourning habits."
St. Gregory of Tours².

Poor entertained at feast, as a sort of alms for the dead³.

An old custom to deck the bridal bed with flowers⁴.

"Friday is St. Valentine's day, and every bird chooseth him a mate (mate)."
Paston Letters⁵.

Shakespeare

"Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off."¹

"'Tis not my inky cloak,
good mother,
Nor customary suits of
solemn black."²

"...the funeral baked
meats."³

"I thought thy bride bed
to have deck'd."⁴

"Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime
And I a maid at your window
To be your Valentine."⁵

¹ Barnard, Medieval England, p. 169.

² Smith, Wm. & Cheetham, Samuel, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, II, p. 1435.

³ Ibid., II, 1435.

⁴ Lyster, T. F. T., Folklore of Shakespeare, p. 355.

⁵ Colby, Chas. W., Sources of English History, p. 120.

¹ Hamlet, I, 2, 68.

² Ibid., I, 2, 78-79.

³ Ibid., I, 2, 180.

⁴ Ibid., V, 1, 247.

⁵ Ibid., IV, 5, 46-49.

Medieval

Ascencius (1462-1535)
gives instructions concerning honor due parents⁶.

"They have the incredible courtesy of remaining with their heads uncovered... whilst they talk to each other."⁷

"Si quis inhonoraverit patrem aut matrem, tres annos poeniteat. Quod se manum levaverit, aut ei percussione intulerit, septem annos poeniteat."⁸

"See that thou hast in thy company men, whether religious or lay, who are right worthy and loyal." Advice of Louis IX to his son⁹.

Shakespeare

"Who, in her duty and obedience."⁶

"Put your bonnet to his use;
'tis for the head."⁷

"We shall obey, were she ten times our mother."⁸

"Have you your father's leave?"^{8a}

"Those friends thou hast,
and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul
with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm
with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade."⁹

⁶Prentano, Sr. Mary Theresa, Relation of Latin Facetus Lit. to Med. Eng. Courtesy Poems, 34.

⁷Colby, Chas. W., Selections from Sources of Eng. Hist. 131.

⁸Theodorus, Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, Poenitentiale, cap. xxxiv

⁹P. L. XCIX, 943.
⁹Joinville, Jean, Memoirs of Crusades, 321.

⁶Hamlet, II, 2, 206.

⁷Ibid., v, 2, 94.

⁸Ibid., III, 2, 318.

^{8a}Ibid., I, 2, 257.

⁹Ibid., I, 3, 62-65.

Medieval

"May thou be blessed in the town, in the country, at the court...blessed with thy father, blessed with thy brother." Liber Manualis, 842, A. D.¹⁰

"I will, in God's name."¹¹

"And great shame it is to the realm of France, ...that scarcely can any one speak without saying: 'May the Devil take it'."¹²

Treatises on falconry written in 12th century. Vienna MSS 2504, earliest Latin treatise on hunting¹³.

"When the deer is arered he fleeth to a ryver or ponde...cryeth and wepeth..."¹⁴

¹⁰ Shahan, Thomas J., Middle Ages, 251.

¹¹ Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles, 425.

¹² Joinville, Jean, Memoirs of Crusades, 309.

¹³ Haskins, Chas. H., Studies in Med. Science, 21.

¹⁴ Lyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, 180-181.

Shakespeare

"My blessing season thee in this."¹⁰

"With what, i' the name of God?"¹¹

"The devil take thy soul."¹²

"We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see."¹³

"...If now he be return'd As checking at his voyage."^{13a}

"...I know a hawk from a handsaw."^{13b}

"Let the stricken deer go weep."¹⁴

¹⁰ Hamlet, I, 3, 80.

¹¹ Ibid., II, 1, 76.

¹² Ibid., V, 1, 262.

¹³ Ibid., II, 2, 454.

^{13a} Ibid., IV, 7, 60-61.

^{13b} Ibid., II, 2, 383.

¹⁴ Ibid., III, 2, 255.

Medieval

Hunting great medi-
eval sport. De Arte
Venandi cum Avibus by
Frederick II (1194-
1250)¹⁵

"...they make games
of hazard serious occupa-
tion...on the last and
final throw they stake the
freedom of their own
persons."¹⁶

The rouse a large
glass in which a health was
given; drunk by the
company, a carouse¹⁷.

Old English liter-
ature condemns drunkenness.
In Juliana the fiend
draws men to strife when
they are drunk¹⁸.

To swallow a pearl in
wine common to indicate
prodigality from Roman
times¹⁹.

¹⁵ Haskins, Chas. H.,
Studies in Med. Science, 299.

¹⁶ Kendall, Eliz. K.,
Source Book of Eng. Hist. 11.

¹⁷ Dyer, T. F. T.,
Folk-lore of Shakespeare, 528.

¹⁸ Cale, Edmund, Nat'l
Life & Character in Mirror
of Early Eng. Lit. 77.

¹⁹ Dyer, T. F. T.,
Folk-lore of Shakespeare, 392.

Shakespeare

"Why do you go about to
recover the wind of me, as
if you would drive me
into a toil?"¹⁵

"The king, sir, hath
wagered with him six
Barbary horses; against
the which he hath im-
poned, as I take it, six
French rapiers and
poniards."¹⁶

"The king doth wake and
take his rouse."¹⁷

"We'll teach you to drink
deep ere you depart."¹⁸

"Stay, give me a drink.
Hamlet, this pearl
is thine."¹⁹

¹⁵ Hamlet, III, 2, 30-31.

¹⁶ Ibid., V, 2, 149-151.

¹⁷ Ibid., I, 4, 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, 2, 175.

¹⁹ Ibid., V, 2, 285.

Popular Folk Lore

Medieval

Rosemary supposed to strengthen the memory²⁰.

Primrose associated with sadness and sinful pleasures²¹.

Violet considered emblematic of early death, because it saw only the spring of the year²².

Centaur, who had head and trunk of man, the remainder of body that of a horse²³.

"Pie pellicane, Jesu Domine,
Ne imundum munda
Tuo sanguine."²⁴

Shakespeare

"There's a rosemary, that's for remembrance."²⁰

"Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads."²¹

"...lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring."²²

"As he had been incorporated
And demi-natured with the brave beast."²³

"And like the kind life rendering pelican
Repeat them with my blood."²⁴

²⁰ Dyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, p. 240.

²¹ Ibid., p. 237.

²² Ibid., p. 244.

²³ Bullfinch, T.,

Golden Age of Myth and Legend, p. 157.

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, Rhythmus, Breviarium Monasticum, (400).

²⁰ Hamlet, IV, 3, 153.

²¹ Ibid., I, 3, 50.

²² Ibid., V, 1, 242-244.

²³ Ibid., IV, 7, 86-87.

²⁴ Ibid., IV, 5, 126-127.

Medieval

"Ferunt, vagantes
 daemones,
 Laetos tenebris noctium,
 Gallo canente exterritos
 Sparsim timere et cedere."²⁵
 Prudentius, Ad Gallicinum²⁵

"Hoc esse signum praescii
 Morunt repromissae spei
 Qua nos saporis liberi
 Speramus adventum Dei."²⁶
 Prudentius, Ad Gallicinum²⁶

Prudentius: "It is
 said it (the cock) can
 put wandering demons
 to flight."²⁷

"Leo (diabolus) timet
 cantum galli et fugit
 virtute cujusdam la-
 pidis quem in se habet
 gallus."²⁸

Superstition from
 early times that ghosts
 had some particular reason
 for returning to earth²⁹.

Shakespeare

"It was about to speak
 when the cock crew."²⁵

"It faded on the crowing
 of the cock."²⁶

"The bird of dawning
 singeth all day long
 And then, they say, no
 spirit dare stir
 abroad."²⁷

"But even then the morning
 cock crew loud,
 And at the sound it
 shrunk in haste away."²⁸

"My father's soul in arms!
 All is not well."²⁹

"This bodes some strange
 eruption to the state."^{29a}

²⁵ Furness, Horace
 Howard, New Variorum,
 Hamlet, I, 23.

²⁶ Ibid., 23.

²⁷ Hand, Edward

Kennard, Founders of the
 Middle Ages, 209.

²⁸ Bonaventure, St.
Sermones de Sanctis,
 XIV, 47a.

²⁹ Dyer, T. F. T.,
Folk-lore of Shakespeare, 46.

²⁵ Hamlet, I, 1, 147.

²⁶ Ibid., I, 1, 157.

²⁷ Ibid., I, 1, 160-161.

²⁸ Ibid., I, 2, 219-220.

²⁹ Ibid., I, 2, 256.

^{29a} Ibid., I, 2, 89.

Medieval

Ghosts supposed to assume exact appearance as in life so as to be recognized by living³⁰.

Spirits supposed to speak to none save those concerned in reason for apparition³¹.

Spirits supposed to speak only when interrogated³².

"Ignis inferni est potius tenebricosus quam lucidus, quia magis visum impedit, quam adjuvat."³³

"Se transfiguratur in angelum lucis, ut adoretur."³⁴

Shakespeare

"...a figure like your father,
Armed at point, exactly,
esp-a-pis."³⁰

"Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet; for,
upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us,
will speak to him."³¹

"It would be spoken to."³²

"And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell, whereto it goes."³³

"...the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape."³⁴

³⁰Dyer, T. F. T.,
Folk-lore of Shakespeare, 44.

³¹Ibid., 45.

³²Ibid., 45.

³³St. Bonaventura,

Liber Sententiarum,
IV, vi, 495 ab.

³⁴Ibid., III, 210.

³⁰Hamlet, I, 2, 199-200.

³¹Ibid., I, 1, 169-171.

³²Ibid., I, 1, 42.

³³Ibid., III, 3, 94-95.

³⁴Ibid., II, 2, 605-606.

Medieval

Shakespeare

"Gallus jacentes excitat
Et somnolentes increpat,
Gallus negantes arguit.
Gallo canente, spes redit,
Aegris salus refunditur,
Mucro latronis conditur,
Lapsis fides revertitur."
St. Ambrose³⁵.

"...I have heard
The cock, that is the
trumpet of the morn,
Doth with his lofty and
shrill sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and
at his warning,
Whether in sea, or fire,
in earth or air,
The extravagant and
erring spirit hies to
his confine."³⁵

"Cujus Christi Nativitate...celebratur ut
per ejus mysterium et
dignam participationem
a potestate diaboli
liberemur."³⁵

"Some say that ever
'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's
birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning
singeth all night long:
And then they say, no
spirit dare stir abroad,
No fairy takes nor witch
hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so
gracious is the time."³⁶

"So this life of mine
appears but a short space,
but of what sent before,
or what is to follow, we are
utterly ignorant."
King's man to Paulinus³⁷.

"For in that sleep of
death what dreams may
come
When we have shuffled off
this mortal coil,
Must give us pause:..."³⁷

³⁵ Prevariarium Monasticum,
pars biemalis, 61.

³⁵ Hamlet, I, 1, 149-155.

³⁶ Beda Venerabilis,
Homilia XCV, De
Nativitate Domini, P. L. XCIV,
498.

³⁶ Ibid., I, 1, 158-164.

³⁷ Beda Venerabile, Ecclési-
astical Hist. of Eng.
Nation, 91.

³⁷ Ibid., III, 1, 66-68.

Medieval

"Gavete, fratres, ab
eis qui mentiuntur, quod
quando quisque nascitur,
stella eis secum nascitur,
qua fatum eius constituitur."
Radalphus Ardens,
11th century³⁸.

"...two comets appeared
...as it were presaging
much destruction."³⁹

"Non pur per ovra della
rote magne,
Che crizzan ciascum some
ad alcun fine,
Secundo che le stelle
son compagne;"⁴⁰

"...quare dicitur
cometes significare
mortem magnatum et
bella futura."⁴¹

³⁸Grimm, Jacob,
Teutonic Mythology, I, 860.
³⁹Bede, Venerable,
Ecclesiastical Hist. of
Eng. Nation, 227.

⁴⁰Dante, Alighieri,
Paradiso, XXX, 109-111.

⁴¹Albertus Magnus,
Liber I, Meteororum, Opera
Omnia, 4, 507.

Shakespeare

"Young Hamlet is a prince
out of thy star."³⁸

"As stars, with trains
of fire, and dews
of blood."³⁹

"Disaster in the sun; and
the moist star
Upon whose influence Nep-
tune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to
doomsday with
eclipse."⁴⁰

"Whose phase of sorrow
Conjures up the wandering
stars and makes them
stand
Like wonder-wounded
hearers."⁴¹

³⁸Hamlet, II, 2, 142.

³⁹Ibid., I, 1, 117.

⁴⁰Ibid., I, 1, 118-120.

⁴¹Ibid., I, 1, 259-261.

Medieval

"There are also people
...that do utterly be-
lieve and suppose, when
great uproars come that
then great treasons are
abroad." (1455)⁴²

"O ciel, nel cui girar
par che si creda
Le condizion de quaggiu
trasmutarse."⁴³

"Vera praedicunt circa
motus et accidentia cor-
porum caelestium, non
vere circa actus liberos."⁴⁴

Shakespeare

"And prologue to the omen
coming on
Have heaven and earth
together
demonstrated."⁴²

"... or Fortune's
star..."⁴³

"We defy augury:"⁴⁴

⁴² Grimm, Jacob,
Teutonic Mythology, 2, 1772.
Dante, Alighieri,
Purgatorio, XX, 13-14.
⁴³ St. Bonaventure,
Opera II, 602 b-603a.

⁴² Ibid., I, 1, 123-124.

⁴³ Ibid., I, 4, 33.

⁴⁴ Ibid., V, 2, 223.

Education

Medieval

In early feudal ages boys of noble birth not expected to have education in letters unless destined for ecclesiastical careers⁴⁵.

Medieval universities originated in twelfth and thirteenth centuries⁴⁶.

Influx of foreign students to French schools at height at time of Abelard. (1079-1142)⁴⁷

No formal discipline maintained in medieval universities. Students impatient of authority⁴⁸.

"Col viso retornai per tutte quante Le sette spere."⁴⁹

Shakespeare

"I once did hold it, as our statista do,
A baseness to write fair,
and labor'd much
How to forget that
learning."⁴⁵

"You played once i' the university, you say?"⁴⁶

"My thoughts and wishes
turn again
toward France."⁴⁷

"But sir, such wanton,
wild and usual slips."⁴⁸

"That as the star moves
not but as his
sphere."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Stephenson, Carl, Medieval History, p. 257.
⁴⁶ Putnam, C. H., Books and Their Makers, pp. 173-179.
⁴⁷ De Wulf, Maurice, History of Medieval Philosophy, I, p. 67.

⁴⁸ Munro, Dana C. & Sontag, Raymond James, Middle Ages, pp. 374-376.

⁴⁹ Dante, Alighieri, Paradiso, XXII, 133-134.

⁴⁵ Hamlet, V, 2, 33-36.

⁴⁶ Ibid., II, 1, 100.

⁴⁷ Ibid., I, 2, 55.

⁴⁸ Ibid., II, 1, 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid., IV, 7, 15.

Medieval

"A darne tempo gia stelle
propinque
Sicure d'ogni intoppo
e d'ogni sbarro."⁵⁰

"Placet igitur celestium
sperarum circulos numerum
ordinem quo verius potero
quantumque humana patitur
ratio aperire, ut quo a
Ptholomeo in sua sinthasi
disponuntur circuli in
speris etiam quo modo possint
inveniri laborantibus in
hac arte via terratur."⁵¹

"Inter coelum terramque
septem sidera pendunt,
certis discreta spatii."⁵²

Liber Marii and Liber
de Elementis in Cotton
MSS (c1200) treat of
the four elements.⁵³

Proper proportions of
humours produced health.⁵⁴

Shakespeare

"When yond same star
that's westward from the
pole
Hath made his course to
illumine that part
of heaven."⁵⁰

"Make thy two eyes, like
stars start from their
spheres."⁵¹

"...like stars, start
from their spheres."⁵²

"...in sea or fire, in
earth or air."⁵³

"Your wisdom would show
itself more richer to
signify this to the
doctor."⁵⁴

⁵⁰Dante, Alighieri
Purgatorio, XXXIII, 41-42

⁵¹Haskins, Chas. H.,
Studies in Hist. of Med.
Science, 100.

⁵²Beda Venerabilis, De
Natura Rerum, XII, P.L.XC, 208.

⁵³Haskins, Chas. H.,
Studies in Hist. of Med.
Science, 93-94.

⁵⁴Garrison, Fielding H.,
Int. to Hist. of Medicine, 81,
189-190; 25-26.

⁵⁰Hamlet, I, 1, 37-38.

⁵¹Ibid., I, 5, 17.

⁵²Ibid., I, 5, 17.

⁵³Ibid., I, 1, 153.

⁵⁴Ibid., III, 2, 289.

Medieval

"Sunt enim quattuor humores
in homine...Sanguis regnat
in pueritia. Cholere...in
adolescentia...Melancholia...
in maturitate. Phlegma...
in senectute."⁵⁵

Medieval metallurgy
treated in Liber Marii,
also in Liber Particu-
laris (Michael Scott,
12th century)⁵⁶.

"Restat autem tegram
rotundam dici."⁵⁷

Petrifying properties
of water known to Freder-
ick II (1194-1250)
who sent messengers to
Norway to verify reports
of such a spring⁵⁸.

A belief from time of
Pliny that oil from seeds
of this plant, poured into
the ears would produce
insanity⁵⁹.

⁵⁵Beda Venerabilis, De
Mundi Coelestis Terrestriusque
Constitutione, P. L. XC, 881.

⁵⁶Haskins, Chas. H.,
Studies in Hist. of Med.
Science, 263.

⁵⁷Beda Venerabilis, De
Mundi Coelestis Terrestriusque
Constitutione, P. L. XC, 883.

⁵⁸Haskins, Chas. H.,
Studies in Hist. of Med.
Science, 263.

⁵⁹Furness, Horace Howard,
New Variorum, Hamlet I, 101n.

Shakespeare

"...for me to put him to
his purgation would
perhaps plunge him into
more cholere."⁵⁵

"...like some ore
Among a mineral of metals
base
Shows itself pure."⁵⁶

"For so this side of our
known world esteemed
him."⁵⁷

"Like the spring that
turneth wood
to stone."⁵⁸

"With juice of cursed
hebanon."⁵⁹

⁵⁵Hamlet, III, 2, 290-291.

⁵⁶Ibid., IV, 1, 25-27.

⁵⁷Ibid., I, 1, 85.

⁵⁸Ibid., IV, 7, 20.

⁵⁹Ibid., I, 5, 62.

Medieval

Bartholomeus Anglicus in *De Proprietatibus* tells of soporific effects of rinds of mandragora, sodden in wine.⁶⁰

Convention used by authors of French romances, adhering to rules of courtly love.⁶¹

Everything naturally loves itself, hence strives against destructive agencies. Suicide unnatural.⁶²

Duns Scotus (d.1308) maintained doctrine of supremacy of will over intellect⁶³.

⁶⁰Thomas, P. G. *Eng. Lit. before Chaucer*, 103.

⁶¹Dodd, Wm. George, *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower*, 130.

⁶²Rickaby, Joseph, *Aquinas Ethicus*, II, 42-43.

⁶³Taylor, Howard Osborne, *Med. Mind*, II, 545.

Shakespeare

"Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected."⁶⁰

"He raised a sigh so piteous and profound As it did seem to shatter all his bulk."⁶¹

"O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans."^{61a}

"The single and peculiar life is bound With all the strength and armor of the mind To keep itself from noyance."⁶²

"Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice."⁶³

⁶⁰*Hamlet*, III, 2, 241.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, II, 1, 94-95.

^{61a}*Ibid.*, II, 2, 120-121.

⁶²*Ibid.*, III, 3, 11-13.

⁶³*Ibid.*, III, 2, 64.

Medieval

No food or drink, considered in itself, sinful. Use of wine unlawful to those who easily become drunk, who have vowed not to drink, or who give scandal⁶⁴.

Order of justice requires obedience of inferior to superior, otherwise no preservation of state and condition of human society⁶⁵.

Parody of *Duns Scotus'* requirements for morality of an act: an object good in nature, end and circumstance⁶⁶.

St. Anselm: "The evil consists in willing this nothing (un-righteousness) instead of the prescribed something."⁶⁷

"Nuovo pensiero dentro a me si mise,
Del qual piu altri nacquero e diversi:
E tanto d'uno in altro vaneggial."⁶⁸

Shakespeare

"This heavy-headed revel, east and west
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations;
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase,
Soil our addition."⁶⁴

"...both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasure more into command
Than to entreaty."⁶⁵

"An act hath three branches: it is to act, to do and to perform."⁶⁶

"...there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."⁶⁷

"...with wings as swift
As meditation, or the thoughts of love."⁶⁸

⁶⁴Rickaby, Joseph, *Aquinas Ethicus*, II, 42-43.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 199.

⁶⁶Minges, Parthenius, *Cath. Ency.*, 197.

⁶⁷Erdman, Johan Eduard, *Hist. of Philosophy*, I, 307.

⁶⁸Dante, Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, XVIII, 141-143.

⁶⁴*Hamlet*, I, 4, 18-20.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, II, 2, 27-29.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, V, 1, 11-12.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, II, 2, 251-252.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, I, 5, 29-30.

Medieval

Mental fatigue: "Si
vero in intelligendo
fatigatur corpus, hoc
est per accidens, in
quantum intellectus
indiget operatione
virium sensitivarum,
per quas ei phantasmata
praeparantur."⁶⁹

"Per amor de la genta
Vas cui eu sui acia,
En cui ai m'ententa,
E mon coratge assis;"
Bernard de Ventadour,
12th century.⁷⁰

"Amor sementa in voi
d'ogni virtute,
E d'ogni operacion che
merta pene."⁷¹

⁶⁹St. Thomas of Aquin,
Summa Theologiae in
Turner, Wm., Hist. of Phi-
losophy, 169.

⁷⁰Stephenson, Carl,
Med. Hist., 454.

⁷¹Dante, Alighieri,
Purgatorio, XVII, 100-101.

Shakespeare

"What to ourselves in
passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth
the purpose lose."⁶⁹

"When the blood burns,
how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows;
these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than
heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise,
as it is a-making
You must not take for
fire."⁷⁰

"This is the very ecstasy
of love,
Whose violent property
fordoes itself
And leads the will to
desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion
under heaven."⁷¹

⁶⁹Hamlet, III, 2, 181-182.

⁷⁰Ibid., I, 3, 116-120.

⁷¹Ibid., II, 1, 102-105.

Medieval

"Che riso e peante son
tanto seguaci
Alla passion da che ciason
si spieca
Che men seguon voler me
piu veraci."⁷²

"Per lei assai di lieve
si comprende
Quanto in femmina fuoco
d'amor dura."⁷³

"...the destruction or
diminution of a habit
results through the
cessation from act."⁷⁴

"Io gl'imagino si chg
gia li senta."⁷⁵

"...terrent somnia visiones
centurbant. Et licet non
sint in veritate tristia, vel
terribilia, seu laboriosa, quae
somnia somniantes, tamen
in veritate tristantur,
terrentur et fatigantur."⁷⁶

Shakespeare

"Give me that man
That is not passion's
slave,
And I will wear him
In my heart's core."⁷²

"Frailty, thy name is
woman."⁷³

"...Refrain tonight
And that shall lend a
kind of easiness
To the next abstinence:
the next more easy."⁷⁴

"He waxes desperate with
imagination."⁷⁵

"I have had dreams."⁷⁶

⁷²Dante, Alighieri, Pur-
gatorio, XXI, 106-108.

⁷³Ibid., VIII, 76-77.

⁷⁴St. Thomas, Summa, 22,
XLIX-LXXXIX, Vol. 7, 52.

⁷⁵Dante, Alighieri,
Inferno, XXIII, 24.

⁷⁶Innocentius, III,
Papae, De Contemptu Mundi,
P. L. CCXVII, Cap. XXV.

⁷²Hamlet, III, 2, 72-73.

⁷³Ibid., I, 2, 146.

⁷⁴Ibid., III, 4, 162-164.

⁷⁵Ibid., I, 4, 86.

⁷⁶Ibid., II, 2, 255.

Medieval

"...there is not a nation
under heaven with such an
evil reputation for adultery
as the English nation of
this day." Thomas Brunton,
c. 1376.⁷⁷

"Nulla poena gravior mala
conscientia."⁷⁸

"Io era come quei che
si risente
Di vision obblito."⁷⁹

"Se non che coscienza
mi assicura,
La buona compagnia che
l'uom francheggia
Sotto l'osbergo del
sentirsi pura."⁸⁰

Shakespeare

"...O most wicked speed,
to post
With such dexterity,⁷⁷
incestuous sheets."

"How smart a lash that
speech doth give my
consciencel
The harlot's cheek,
beautiful with plaster-
ing art, Is not more ugly
to the thing that helps
it
Than is my deed to my
most painted word."⁷⁸

"A dream itself is but a
shadow."⁷⁹

"Whether 'tis nobler in
the mind to suffer
The stings and arrows of
outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms
against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing
end them."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Gasquet, Francis Aiden,
Old Eng. Bible, 86.

⁷⁸ St. Bonaventura,
Pharetra, V. 7, 126.

⁷⁹ Dante, Alighieri,
Paradiso, XXIII, 48-49.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Inferno,
XXVII, 115-117.

⁷⁷ Hamlet, I, 2, 156-157.

⁷⁸ Ibid., III, 1, 50-53.

⁷⁹ Ibid., II, 2, 254-255.

⁸⁰ Ibid., III, 1, 57-60.

Medieval

"Che sempre l'uomo in
 cui pensier rampolla
 Sovra pensier da se dilunga
 il segno
 Perche la foga l'un
 dell'altro insolla."⁸¹

Shakespeare

"...this visitation
 Is but to whet thy
 almost blunted
 purpose."⁸¹

⁸¹Dante, Alighieri,
Purgatorio, V, 16-18.

⁸¹Hamlet, III, 4, 107-108.

MEDIEVAL POLITICAL LIFE IN HAMLET

Introduction To Medieval Political Life Of Hamlet

A study of Hamlet from the standpoint of its portraiture of the political life of medieval times shows that the play contains many references to the court and military customs of the middle ages, as well as to the prevailing forms of government.

The feudal regime, which had been gradually established in the ninth and tenth centuries, had reached its completion in the eleventh century¹. In England the development of early feudalism had resulted at first in the formation of a strong central administration, dependent on the crown², whereas in Germany decentralization was consequent upon the establishment of feudal forms of government³.

Hamlet's rather cynical characterization of the observance of court etiquette:

"...let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,"⁴

¹ Munro, Dana C. and Sellery, George C., Medieval Civilization, p. 116.

² Eland, A. E., Brown, P. A. and Tawney, R. H., English Economic History, p. 19.

³ De Wulf, Maurice, Philosophy and Civilization During the Middle Ages, pp. 19-25.

⁴ Hamlet, III, 2, 61.

corresponds with Froissart's relation of the actions of the French courtiers, whom he represents as kneeling before the king and returning him "the greatest thanks" for the favors the royal clemency had conferred upon them⁵.

Hamlet's repeated admonition to Oeric to put his bonnet on his head⁶, shows that it was customary to remain with uncovered head in the presence of the nobility.

The court feasts which celebrated both the marriages⁷ and the funerals⁸ of the nobility are mentioned in Hamlet's complaint that the cold meats from his father's funeral served for his mother's wedding feast⁹.

The court fools, who by their witty jests and clever antics amused the medieval nobility¹⁰, find a typical representative in Yorick¹¹.

The recreations for the nobility--dancing, fencing, quarreling, carousing and gambling--are mentioned through-

⁵ Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles of England, France and Spain, pp. 496, 591.

⁶ Hamlet, V, 2, 94.

⁷ Seignobos, Charles, History of Medieval and Modern Civilization, 195.

⁸ Smith, Wm. and Cheetham, Samuel, Dictionary of Christian Antiquity, II, 1435.

⁹ Hamlet, I, 2, 181.

¹⁰ Tappan, E. M., When Knights Were Bold, 96.

¹¹ Hamlet, V, 1, 183.

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out the play. Polonius bids Reynaldo expect that the companions of his son accuse Laertes of gambling and carousing¹², a charge brought likewise in medieval times, as Goliath complains in his Confessions:

"Yet a second charge they bring
I'm forever gaming."¹³

We read that the early English made gambling so serious an occupation that they were accustomed to wager even the very freedom of their persons¹⁴.

The "swaggering up-spring reels"¹⁵ with which the King and his boon companions whiled away the hours of carousal seem to find a medieval counterpart in a wild dance of the early Germans¹⁶.

The national vice of drunkenness to which Hamlet attributes such great loss of national prestige, in that it

"Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards,..."¹⁷

was attacked in Saxon times by William of Malmesbury, who complains in the Gesta Regum Anglorum, that drinking was

¹²Hamlet, II, 1, 56-57.

¹³Waddell, Helen Jean, Medieval Latin Lyrics, 171 f.

¹⁴Kendall, Elis. K., Source Book of English History.

11.

¹⁵Hamlet, I, 4, 9.

¹⁶Lyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, p. 432.

¹⁷Hamlet, I, 4, 18-19.

carried to such excess that day and night was passed in eating and drinking¹⁸.

The assertion of Polonius to Ophelia that Hamlet's
 "...will is not his own,"¹⁹

in regard to his choice in marriage is substantiated by Seignobos, who emphasizes the strict adherence to social status in arranging the marriages of medieval nobles²⁰. Froissart, likewise, in his Chronicles relates the deliberations of the council in regard to the marriage of the king²¹.

The fatherly warning of Polonius that greater liberties might be taken by Hamlet than by Ophelia²² is an echo of William of Malmesbury, who bewails the fact that princes take advantage of their position to indulge in sinful liberties with impunity²³.

The military customs of the middle ages also find mention in the play. In Act I, Hamlet repeatedly commands

¹⁸Kendall, Eliz. K., Sources Book of English History, p. 43.

¹⁹Hamlet, I, 3, 17.

²⁰Seignobos, Charles, Feudal Regime, p. 32.

²¹Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles of England, France and Spain, p. 406.

²²Hamlet, I, 3, 125-216.

²³Colby, Charliss W., Selection From the Sources of English History, p. 228.

his companions to swear secrecy upon his sword²⁴. He is here true to a custom which dates back to the Crusades --that of taking an oath upon a sword, whose transverse bar, separating blade and hilt, formed a cross²⁵.

The nightly watch, alluded to several times during the first act of the play²⁶, is of medieval origin, having been introduced into English cities and borough towns by Henry III in 1255²⁷.

The cannon, at whose "daily cast" Marcellus wonders²⁸, was also an invention of the middle ages, having been first employed with gunpowder about the middle of the fourteenth century²⁹.

The symbolic insignia of heraldry, by which the rank of the soldier or nobleman was distinguished, find notice in:

"With heraldry more dismal; head to foot
now is he total gules"³⁰

and again in the complaint of Laertes that his father's corpse has had

²⁴Hamlet, I, 5, 148.

²⁵Dyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, p. 542

²⁶Hamlet, I, 1, 6; I, 2, 226.

²⁷Stow, John, Survey of London, p.92.

²⁸Hamlet, I, 1, 73

²⁹Betten, Francis S., Ancient and Medieval History, p. 499.

³⁰Hamlet, II, 2, 461.

"No trophy, sword nor hatchment o'er his bones,
Nor noble rite nor formal ostentation."³¹

Passages from Froissart tell of the heraldic decorations of the shields which the nobility bore in battle³²; while Davis mentions the regulations for the display of crests and flags at funerals³³.

The form of government of the state presented in Hamlet is largely feudal, tinged here and there with a trace of that absolutism which would make the king the state.

The Thomistic theory of government which considers all temporal power as derived from God³⁴ is subscribed to in the passage:

"I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious kind."³⁵

The note of responsibility of the sovereign to his subjects sounded in

"Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep these many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty."³⁶

rings true to the promises contained in the coronation

³¹Hamlet, IV, 5, 195-196.

³²Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles of England, France and Spain, p. 60.

³³Davis, H. F. C., Medieval England, p. 227.

³⁴Rickaby, Joseph, Aquinas Ethicus, I, p. 276.

³⁵Hamlet, II, 2, 43-44.

³⁶Ibid., III, 3, 8-10.

oath of Ethelred II (979, A. D.):

"...I promise and enjoin justice and mercy in all judgements, in that a just and merciful God may give us His eternal favor."³⁷

The boast of the usurper king:

"There's such divinity doth hedge a king"³⁸

is closely paralleled by repeated utterances of Charlemagne:

"Carolus, a Deo coronatus"³⁹

and

"Karolus, Die gratia rex Francorum."⁴⁰

The duties of the feudal vassals to their lords-- service and fealty in exchange for land⁴¹--both find mention in the drama:

"And here give up ourselves in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet."⁴²

That this service might be commuted to the payment of tribute is attested both by medieval source material and by the play itself. The King sends Hamlet to England, ostensibly to collect the tribute which that vassal

³⁷Kendall, *Mis. K.*, Source Book of English History, p. 30

³⁸Hamlet, IV, 5, 102.

³⁹Carolus Magnus, Opera, Pars II, P. L. XCVII, col. 1073.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, col. 1080.

⁴¹Dawe, Juhn Adalbert, History of Economics, pp. 118-119.

⁴²Hamlet, II, 2, 30-31.

country owed to Denmark⁴⁵. Bland states that in the reign of Edward I, money payments were imposed in lieu of knight service⁴⁴.

The oath of fealty, by which the vassal pledged faith to his lord on the reception of his fief⁴⁶ is renounced by Laertes:

"To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!"⁴⁶

It was in England, particularly, that the feudal system developed in such a way as to secure a rather strong central government, in which all fiefs were responsible to and dependent on the Crown⁴⁷. The authority of the lord over his vassal extended to marriages contracted⁴⁸, and to trips outside the boundaries of his fief⁴⁹. It is for permission to leave his fief that Laertes sues when he begs of the King:

"Your leaves and favors to return to France."⁵⁰

⁴⁵Hamlet, III, 1, 173-174.

⁴⁴Bland, A. E., English Economic History, p. 30.

⁴⁵Sellery, G. D. and Krey, A. C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, pp. 137-138.

⁴⁶Hamlet, IV, 5, 10.

⁴⁷Bland, A. E., English Economic History, p. 19.

⁴⁸Kendall, Eliz. K., Source Book of English History, p. 49.

⁴⁹Munro, Dana C. and Sellery, George C., Medieval Civilization, p. 169.

⁵⁰Hamlet, I, 2, 51.

The Truce of God and the Right of Sanctuary restrained no less the lawless warfare and rash justice of the medieval peoples than those of their suzerains as well. The Truce of God, introduced through the efforts of the Cluniac Benedictines, sought to introduce to the minds of the feudal barons Christian ideals of peace by restricting the times during which they might engage in warlike hostilities⁵¹.

The Right of Sanctuary, by which a fugitive from justice might, for a specified time, take shelter from his pursuers in consecrated precincts, was recognized by the Justinian Code in 399, A. D. It received papal sanction from Pope Leo III about 460, A. D. and is mentioned in the Code of King Ethelbert of England in 600, A. D.⁵²

The statement of Charlemagne in his Capitularies:

"Ut homicidas aut ceteros reos qui legibus mori debent, se ad ecclesias confugerint, non exurgantur, neque eis ibidem victis detur."⁵³

agrees in sentiment with that saying of the King, who in response to the threat of Laertes

⁵¹ De Wulf, Maurice, Philosophy and Civilization During the Middle Ages, pp. 24, 29.

⁵² Alston, G. C., Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, pp. 430-431.

⁵³ Carolus Magnus, Capitularia, P. L. XCVII, p. 127.

"To cut his (Hamlet's) throat in the church"⁵⁴ condones his rash words by expressing the wish that

"No place indeed should murder sanctuarize."⁵⁵

That such violent profanation of the sanctuary must have occurred is shown by a ruling of Pope Boniface VIII:

"Benefacius...

Hic decrevit ut nullus trahatur de ecclesia."⁵⁶

Thus a study of the play from the standpoint of its expression of political life makes it evident that Hamlet presents a rather faithful picture of the medieval state, feudal in form of government, and in the customs of court and of camp, but monarchical in ideal.

⁵⁴Hamlet, IV, 7, 125.

⁵⁵Ibid., IV, 7, 126.

⁵⁶Chronica Sigberti, P. L. CLX, col. 1112.

Court Custom

Medieval

Social status rigorously hereditary in thirteenth century.. To marry out of class entailed deprivation of inheritance rights of children¹.

As a rule, performances furnished by professional itinerant players².

Jesters, by their quips and antics, amused noble masters³.

Customary for every monarch to have a ring, temporary possession of which invested holder with authority of rightful owner⁴.

Shakespeare

"...his will is not his own
For he himself is subject to his birth;
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself..."¹

"There are the players."²

"This same skull, sir,
was Yorick's skull,³
the king's jester."³

"I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of
that Danish seal."⁴

¹Seignobos, Charles, Feudal Regime, p. 32.
²Sellery, G. D. and Krey, A. C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, p. 143.

³Salzman, L. F., English Life in the Middle Ages, p. 29.

⁴Lyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, p. 386.

¹Hamlet, I, 3, 17-20.

²Ibid., II, 2, 372.

³Ibid., V, 1, 183.

⁴Ibid., V, 2, 40-50.

Medieval

"...they advanced to the king's chamber...and... they cast themselves upon their knee."⁵

Whether a prince was married, married off his daughter...the banquet lasted several hours⁶.

"...the king's counsel introduced the subject of a marriage with their king; for the country was very desirous he would marry."

"I speak of princes, who from the greatness of their power might have full liberty to indulge in pleasure."⁸

"Yet a second charge they bring:
I'm forever gaming."
Confession of Goliath⁹.

⁵ Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles, p. 496.

⁶ Seignobos, Charles, History of Medieval and Modern Civilization, p. 195.

⁷ Froissart, Sir John, Chronicles, p. 408.

⁸ William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, p. 34 (in Colby, Selections From Sources of English History, p. 223).

⁹ Waddell, Helen Jean, Medieval Latin Lyrics, 171 f.

Shakespeare

"And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee."⁵

"...furnish forth the marriage tables."⁶

"He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The health and safety of this whole state."⁷

"...with a larger tether he may walk
Than may be given you."⁸

"There was a-gaming,
o'ertook in's rouse;
There falling out
at tennis:"⁹

⁵ Hamlet, III, 2, 61.

⁶ Ibid., I, 2, 181.

⁷ Ibid., I, 3, 19-21.

⁸ Ibid., I, 3, 125-126.

⁹ Ibid., II, 1, 53-57.

Medieval

When forced to remain indoors, the feudal noblemen seem to have spent their time largely in drinking, feasting and gambling. ¹⁰

Shakespeare

"Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling." ¹⁰

¹⁰ Stephenson, Carl, Medieval History, p. 262

¹⁰ Hamlet, II, 1, 26

Military Custom

Medieval

Swearing by the sword
a custom from the time of
the Crusades. ¹¹

Henry III commanded
watches in 1253. ¹²

Gunpowder first used
in battle of Crecy, 1346. ¹³

"He bore...a shield
azure...with battoon gules
upon the shield." ¹⁴

"No coats of arms, flags,
...to be set up in churches,
at funerals of gentry below
the peerage." ¹⁵

Honor, the rule of the
knight, regulated occasions
for the need of fighting. ¹⁶

Shakespeare

"Upon my sword." ¹¹

"Swear by my sword." ^{11a}

"You come most carefully
upon your hour." ¹²

"And why such daily cast
of brazen cannon?" ¹³

"With heraldry more dis-
mal, head to foot,
Now is he total gules." ¹⁴

"Nor trophy, sword nor
hatchment o'er his
his bones." ¹⁵

"...Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without
great argument." ¹⁶

¹¹Dyer, T. F. T., Folk-lore of Shakespeare, p. 542

¹²Stow, John, Survey of London, p. 92

¹³Betten, Francis S., Ancient and Medieval History, p. 499

¹⁴Froissart, Sir John Chronicles, p. 60

¹⁵Barnard, Francis P., Medieval England, p. 227

¹⁶Seignobos, Charles Feudal Regime, pp. 82-84

¹¹Hamlet, I, 5, 146

^{11a}Ibid., I, 5, 148

¹²Ibid., I, 1, 6

¹³Ibid., I, 1, 75

¹⁴Ibid., II, 2, 461-462

¹⁵Ibid., IV, 2, 53-54

¹⁶Ibid., IV, 2, 5, 195

Government

Medieval

Medieval theory of authority predominantly monarchical. This idea grew from the idea of God as supreme monarch of universe¹⁷.

England had been a vassal of France in reign of Philip Augustus (1180-1223). Hence possible for one country to be vassal of another¹⁸.

Chief duty of vassal military service to his lord, at the vassal's expense¹⁹.

Oath of fealty taken by vassal when receiving his fief²⁰.

Homage might be demanded at each change of suzerain or vassal²¹.

Shakespeare

"I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious king."¹⁷

"...He shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute."¹⁸

"And here give up ourselves in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet."¹⁹

"To hell, allegiance!
Vows to the blackest devil."²⁰

"...I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation."²¹

¹⁷Taylor, H. O., Medieval Mind, II, p. 306.

¹⁸Betten, Francis S., Ancient and Medieval History, p. 420

¹⁹Bonard, Chas. and Monod, G., Medieval Europe, p. 253.

²⁰Sellery, G.D. and Krey, A.C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, pp. 137-138.

²¹Munro, Dana C. and Sellery, George C., Medieval Civilization, p. 171.

¹⁷Hamlet, II, 2, 43-44.

¹⁸Ibid., III, 1, 173-174.

¹⁹Ibid., II, 2, 30-31.

²⁰Ibid., IV, 5, 110.

²¹Ibid., I, 2, 52-53.

Medieval

St. Thomas of Aquin:
"Order of justice requires
that inferiors obey
superiors."²²

St. Thomas of Aquin
teaches that princes of
earth are instituted by
God, in order that they may
serve the common good.
The Prince should be the
guardian, the personifi-
cation of all that is just²³.

"Carolus divina donante
clementia Imperator
Augustus."²⁴

English feudalism
succeeded in establishing
a national administration
dependent on the crown²⁵.

"Bonifacius...hic decrevit
ut nullus trahatur violenter
de ecclesia."²⁶

²²Rickaby, Joseph,
Aquinas Ethicus, II, p. 199.
²³De Wulf, Maurice, Phi-
losophy and Civilization During
Middle Ages, pp. 222-241.
²⁴Carolus Magnus, Opera,
Para. I, Sect. II, XXI, P. L.
XCVII, p. 1071.
²⁵Bland, A. E., Economic
Hist. p. 19.
²⁶Sigbertus Gemblacensis,
Chronica Sigberti, P.L. CLX,
p. 1112.

Shakespeare

"...both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign
power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasure
more into command
Than to entreaty."²²

"Most holy and religious
fear it is
To keep those many many
bodies safe
That live and feed upon
your majesty."²³

"There's such divinity
doth hedge a king."²⁴

"...Thy free awe
Pays homage to us--thou
Mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process."²⁵

"To cut his throat i'
the church."²⁶

²²Hamlet, II, 2, 27-29.

²³Ibid., II, 3, 8-10.

²⁴Ibid., IV, 5, 102.

²⁵Ibid., IV, 3, 63-65.

²⁶Ibid., IV, 7, 6.

Medieval

When apprenticeship had been completed, one became a journeyman and worked for wages under a master workman²⁷.

"Ut homicidas aut ceteros reos qui legibus mori debent, si ad ecclesiam confugerint, non excusarentur, neque eis ibidem victus detur."²⁸

According to the law, the vassal could not absent himself from his (Laertes) fief without permission from his lord²⁹.

"Che in te avra si benigno riguardo...
Che del fare e del chieder tra voi due
Fia primo quel che, tra gli' altri, e piu tardo."³⁰

Shakespeare

"I have thought some of nature's journeyman had made men."²⁷

"No place indeed should murder sanctuarize."²⁸

"Your leaves and favor to return to France."²⁹

"...What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father!"³⁰

²⁷Thorndike, Lynn, History of Medieval Europe, p. 331.

²⁸Carolus Magnus, Capitularia, P. L. XCVII, p. 127.

²⁹Munro, Dana C. and Sel-
lery, George C., Medieval Civil-
ization, p. 169.

³⁰Dante, Alighieri, Paradise, ³⁰Ibid., I, 2, 45-49.
XVII, pp. 72-74.

²⁷Hamlet, III, 2, 34.

²⁸Ibid., IV, 7, 126.

²⁹Ibid., I, 2, 51.

MEDIEVAL ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE IN HAMLET

Introduction to Medieval Ecclesiastical Life of Hamlet

A study of Hamlet from the viewpoint of its reproduction of the religious life and customs of the middle ages presents a peculiar problem, for although some medieval folk-customs of religious bent have passed away with those years, still many of the beliefs, customs and rites of the middle ages persist unchanged to this twentieth century.

The most striking feature of the ecclesiastical life of the middle ages was their universality¹--the creed of the peasant was that of the king. It is this very universality which simplifies the consideration of the religious aspects of Hamlet, requiring for study but one form of worship, with its tenets, practices and laws.

For the man of the middle ages, religion ran through the whole of life. Though the teachings of Christian tradition might not have been lived up to perfectly, yet its ideals were questioned by none². This unity of belief furnishes indications of the color which religious folk-customs led to every-day medieval life. Hamlet, brooding

¹Sellery, George C. and Krey, A. C., Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization, p. 127.

²Jarrett, Bede, Social Theories of the Middle Ages, p. 213.

over his mother's hasty marriage, bases his hope for remembrance after his death on the building of churches³, a common type of good work among the wealthy classes of medieval times. Bland speaks of the foundation of a chantry chapel by Henry III⁴, and William the Conqueror was buried in St. Stephen's Monastery which he had founded⁵.

Although pilgrimages, or journeys of piety to celebrated shrines had been practiced from pre-Christian times, this form of devotion was a popular one in the middle ages. Pilgrimages were made to their many shrines and scenes of apparitions, churches possessing relics of apostles and martyrs, and especially to the Holy Places in Palestine⁶. Ophelia refers to the conventional dress of the pilgrim when she says that her love might be known by his "cockle hat and staff"⁷.

The extent to which religious thought colored the speech of daily life is shown by the invocation of God's blessing:

"God be wi' you."⁸

³Hamlet, III, 2, 125.

⁴Bland, A. E., English Economic History, pp. 22-23.

⁵Kendall, Eliz. K., Source Book of English History, p. 46.

⁶Sullivan, John F., Visible Church, p. 262.

⁷Hamlet, IV, 5, 25.

⁸Ibid., II, 1, 69; IV, 5, 180; II, 2, 553.

Ophelia's prayer for her true love:

"God have mercy on his soul!
And on all Christian souls, I pray God"⁹

is paralleled by passages from Venerable Bede in which he bears testimony to the general use of this expression in his times¹⁰.

The speech of Hamlet to his father's spirit, in which he questions whether the ghost be a spirit from heaven or a demon from hell rings true to medieval tone of thought. St. Catherine of Siena, in her letters, voices her concern lest she be circumvented by some snare of the evil one¹¹; and St. Bonaventure warns his readers:

"Diabolus semper habet voluntatem, sed non semper potestatem nocendi, nisi quando a Deo permittitur."¹²

The liturgy may be defined as the exercise of public worship according to Church regulations. It comprises all those prayers, ceremonies and functions prescribed by the Church for use in all services performed by a public minister in her name¹³. Shakespeare's fidelity in depicting

⁹Hamlet, IV, 5, 180.

¹⁰Bede, Venerable, Ecclesiastical History, p. 122.

¹¹Scudder, Elizabeth, St. Catherine of Siena as Seen in Her Letters, p. 7.

¹²St. Bonaventure, Expositio in Librum Sapientiae, p. 321.

¹³Pallen, Conde B., New Catholic Dictionary, p. 566.

medieval liturgical life in Hamlet may be gauged by a comparison with the liturgical writers of the middle ages.

Chief among the liturgical functions of the Church are the Mass and the Divine Office. To the former Shakespeare refers in Polonius' rather irreverent "by the Mass"¹⁴; to the latter in the spirit's declaration:

"The glow worm shows the matin to be near."¹⁵

Although the Mass has been celebrated from Apostolic times, yet as a testimony to its celebration during the medieval period the decree of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury may be cited. In his Penitentiale he ordered that no commemoration of the suicide be made in the oblation (the Mass)¹⁶.

In regard to Matins, the morning office of the Church medieval writers furnish an abundance of references. Dante, in the thirteenth century wrote:

"...Come orologio, che ne chiama.
Nell' ora che la sposa di
Dio surge a mattinar la sposa."¹⁷

¹⁴Hamlet, II, 1, 50.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 5, 89.

¹⁶Theodorus, Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, Penitentiale, Capitulum XXVI, P. L. XCIX.

¹⁷Dante, Alighieri, Paradiso, X, 139-141.

Of the Requiem Mass for the dead, the priest performing the funeral service for Ophelia states:

"We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls."¹⁸

In regard to Masses for the dead, St. Louis of France, in the thirteenth century, said to his son:

"Cause Masses to be sung for my soul."¹⁹

Shakespeare mentions four of the seven Sacraments: Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Eucharist, and indirectly in his references to his mother's second marriage, Matrimony. The spirit of the dead king refers to the sacrament of Penance, when he complains that he was killed without warning, "not shriving time allowed"²⁰. Of this same Sacrament, De Goesbriand quotes from the works of Aleuin, an instruction to travelers, that before setting out on the journey:

"Iter tuum confessione confirmare memento."²¹

It is customary that the sick be fortified in the pains of mortal illness, and in the agony of death by three

¹⁸Hamlet, V, 1, 239-241.

¹⁹Joinville, Jean, Memoirs of the Crusades, p. 323.

²⁰Hamlet, V, 2, 46.

²¹De Goesbriand, Louis, History of Confession, p. 99.

Sacraments; namely, Penance, Holy Eucharist and Extreme Unction. The spirit of the dead king refers to these three Sacraments in his speech to his son:

"Cut off even in the blossom of my sin,
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled,
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head."²²

Charlemagne regulated thus concerning the administration of these Sacraments in medieval times:

"...quando quis infirmatur, inducat presbyteros ecclesiae, et orent super eum, unguentes eum oleo in nomine Domini."²³

and

"...de infirmis...ut morientes sine sacra olei unctione et reconciliatione et viatico non deficiant."²⁴

Cardinal Gasquet gives a quotation from Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests illustrative of medieval English custom in regard to the three Sacraments:

"...thou (the parish priest visiting the sick)
shalt hym Soyle
And give hym hosul and holy oyle."²⁵

²²Hamlet, I, 5, 76-79.

²³Carolus Magnus, Capitularia de Caroli Magni de Presbyteris, 17, P. L. XCVII, col. 326.

²⁴Carolus Magnus, Capitulare Generale, P. L. XCVII, col. 124.

²⁵Gasquet, Francis Aiden, Parish Life in Medieval England, p. 206.

The death of Ophelia is the occasion for a discussion of the rites of burial of suicides. The statement of the officiating priest that

"...her death was doubtful;
And, but that great commandment o'erways the
order,
She should in ground un sanctified been lodged,"²⁶

agrees with the legislation of the Church concerning the burial of suicides. Theodore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rules that in the case of suicides, no commemoration of them should be made in the Mass, nor should their bodies be carried to burial with the singing of psalms²⁷.

Two references are made to the liturgical function of exorcism, by which the evil spirits are driven out from the bodies of those possessed by them²⁸:

"Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio"²⁹

and

"I'll cross it."³⁰

Venerable Bede, in his Ecclesiastical History, speaks of exorcisms, in which evil spirits expelled by the merits and authority of the saints³¹, leave their victims.

²⁶Hamlet, V, 1, 230-232.

²⁷Theodorus, Archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, Penitentiale, Capitulum XXVI, P. L. XCIX, col. 945.

²⁸Sullivan, John F., Visible Church, p. 128.

²⁹Hamlet, I, 1, 42.

³⁰Ibid., I, 1, 127.

³¹Bede, Venerable, Ecclesiastical History, p. 25.

Hamlet's admonition to Ophelia:

"Get thee to a nunnery"³²

alludes to the monastic institutions for women, found in Egypt as early as the fifth century³³. The Benedictines, founded in the sixth century by St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, were introduced into England before the seventh century³⁴.

Three references are made to the liturgical year: one to Christmas, that season

"...wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated";³⁵

one to the penitential time of Lent,

"What lenten entertainment";³⁶

and another to the weekly observance of the Lord's day,

"...whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week."³⁷

Duchesne says of the feast of Christ's Nativity that from the end of the third century the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Christ had spread throughout the whole Church³⁸.

³²Hamlet, III, 1, 121.

³³Smith, Wm. and Cheetham, Samuel, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, II, pp. 1410-1414.

³⁴Brother Leo, English Literature, p. 92.

³⁵Hamlet, II, 3, 519.

³⁶Ibid., I, 1, 75-76.

³⁷Ibid., I, 1, 75-76.

³⁸Duchesne, Louis M., Christian Worship, p. 260.

A verse attributed to St. Gregory the Great states the medieval observance of Lent:

"Ex more docti mystico
 Seruus hoc jejunium
 Deno dierum circulo
 Ducto quater notiesimo."³⁹

Canute ruled in regard to the observance of Sunday:

"Et die Solis mercaturam etiam severissime prohibemus, et omnem conventum populi, nisi pro maxima necessitate sit, et venationem, et ab omnibus mundanis operibus in hoc sancto die seculo cessandum sit."⁴⁰

Shakespeare's enunciation of the requisites of true prayer:

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
 Words without thoughts never to Heaven go."⁴¹

correspond closely with the teachings of St. Bonaventure:

"...nihil aliud in oratione cogitet, praeter illud solum, quod precatur."⁴²

Dante, speaking on the same subject of prayer, expresses a similar belief in the Purgatorio of his Divina Commedia:

"Se orazione in prima non m'aita
 Che surga su di cor che in grazia viva:
 L'altra che val, che in ciel non e udita?"⁴³

³⁹Britt, Matthew, Hymns of the Ereviary and the Missal, p. 118.

⁴⁰Canute, Leges Ecclesiasticae Canuti Regis, XV, col. 1174, P. L. CLI.

⁴¹Hamlet, III, 3, 97-98.

⁴²St. Bonaventure, De Perfectione Vitae, Vol. 12, p. 219.

⁴³Dante, Alighieri, Purgatorio, IV, 129-131.

The explanation of Purgatory given by the spirit of Hamlet's father that he is

"...confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in days of nature
Are burnt and purged away."⁴⁴

corresponds with the teaching of Richard of St. Victor, that those who were prevented by death from making satisfaction for their sins in this life, expiate them in the fires of Purgatory⁴⁵.

The offer of Horatio to render aid to the spirit:

"If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease and grace to me"⁴⁶

is paralleled by two passages from Dante's Purgatorio:

"...Se tal decreto
Piu coto per buon preghi no diventa"⁴⁷

and

"Pero col prego tuo talor mi giova."⁴⁸

Hamlet's fear that, should he kill the king at prayer, the latter would be saved⁴⁹, is substantiated by a passage from the Elucidarium of Honorius, from the twelfth century:

⁴⁴Hamlet, I, 5, 11-13.

⁴⁵Richardus Sancti Victoris, De Potestate Ligandi et Solvendi, P. L. CCXVI, col. 1175.

⁴⁶Hamlet, I, 1, 130-131.

⁴⁷Dante, Alighisri, Purgatorio, III, 140-141.

⁴⁸Dante, Alighieri, Purgatorio, XIII, 147.

⁴⁹Hamlet, III, 3, 85-86.

"...qui tamen ex corde poenitent, etiam in ipsa morte misericordiam invenient sicut latro, in ipso mortis exitu, ut dicitur: 'Quaecunque hora ingemueris, salvus eris'.⁵⁰

A study of Hamlet from the viewpoint of its presentation of the ecclesiastical life of the middle ages shows that the religious questions dealt with are those concerned with the moral problems raised by the action of the play. A contrast of Shakespeare's religious notions with the teachings of the acknowledged authorities of medieval times cannot fail to impress the student with the soundness of the former's religious beliefs. Whatever may have been his faith; there can exist no doubt of Shakespeare's familiarity with the teachings and practices of the Catholic church, so perfect is the agreement between her medieval doctors and the tragedy, Hamlet.

⁵⁰Honorius Augustodunensis, Elucidarium, P. L. CLXXII, col. 155.

Religious Folk Custom

Medieval

"Almighty Jesus preserve
you, both body, and soul."
Paston letters¹.

Erection of chantry
chapels common type of
good work in perig²
after Black Death³.

Oath on Holy Cross:
"In the name of the
Holy Trinity..."
Coronation oath, 979,
A. D.⁴.

"...it is proverbially
said, 'Lord have mercy
on their souls.'⁴

Shakespeare

"God be wi' you."¹

"He must build churches
then;
or else he suffer not
thinking on."²

"No, by the rood."³

"God ha' mercy on his
soul! And of all
Christian souls,
I pray God."⁴

¹Colby, Charles W., Se-
lections From Sources of Eng-
lish History, p. 122.

²Crossley, Fred H., Eng-
lish Church Monuments, p. 15.

³Kendall, Elis. K., Source
Book of English History, p. 30.

⁴Dee, Venerable, Eccle-
siastical History, p. 122.

¹Hamlet, II, 1, 69.

²Ibid., III, 2, 125.

³Ibid., III, 4, 16.

⁴Ibid., IV, 5, 179-180.

Medieval

Recognition of Providence:
 "...to the Providence of
 God was the work committed."
 Gervase of Canterbury¹⁰.

"I am always afraid, on
 account of my frailty and
 the astuteness of the devil."
 St. Catherine of Siena¹¹.

Shakespeare

"There is special
 providence in the
 fall of a sparrow."¹⁰

"So horribly to shake our
 dispositions
 With thoughts beyond the
 reaches of our souls?"¹¹

¹⁰ Colby, Charles W., Se-
lections from Sources of Eng.
Hist., p. 82.
¹¹ Scudder, Elizabeth, St.
Catherine as Seen in Her
Letters, p. 77.

¹⁰ Hamlet, V, 2, 222.

¹¹ Ibid., I, 4, 55-56.

Medieval

Pilgrimages common form of devotion. Trips to shrines, not only at home, but in foreign lands⁵.

Recognition of God's will:"
...things grew ever worse...
may God mend them when such
is His will." Saxon
Chronicle⁶.

"In hanc itaque modum
angelus Satanae trans-
figuratur se in angelum
lucis, ut sub virtutis
specie formaque sancti-
tatis ministrat consilia
erroris peragiturque
negotium iniquitatis."⁷

"God sent him down his
angel cherubin...So the
count's soul they bare to
Paradis." Song of
Roland⁸.

"God...have you in His
merciful keeping."
Paston Letters⁹.

Shakespeare

"By his cockle hat
and staff."⁵

"There's a divinity that
shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we
will."⁶

"God willing."^{6a}

"Be thou a spirit of
health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs
from heaven or blasts
from hell,
Be thy intent wicked or
charitable,
Thou comest in such a
questionable shape."⁷

"And flights of angels
sing thee to thy
rest."⁸

"God bless you.
Let him bless thee,
too."⁹

⁵Gasquet, Francis Aiden,
Eve of the Reformation, 366.

⁶Kendall, Eliz. K.,
Source Book of Eng. Hist.
pp. 458-460.

⁷Richardus Sancti Vic-
toris, Mysticae Admonitiones in
Psalmos, P.L.CXCVI, col. 398.

⁸Stephenson, Carl., Med.
Hist. p. 295.

⁹Colby, Charles W., Sel-
ections From Sources of Eng.
Hist. p. 121

⁵Hamlet, IV, 5, 5, 25.

⁶Ibid., V, 2, 10-11.

^{6a}Ibid., I, 5, 187.

⁷Ibid., I, 4, 20-23.

⁸Ibid., V, 2, 364.

⁹Ibid., IV, 2, 6-7.

Liturgy

Medieval

Liturgical office said before sunrise. Mentioned by St. Gregory of Tours in 615, A. D.¹².

Introit of Requiem Mass: "Requiem aeternam, dona, eis, Domine," 2nd century¹³.

"...suademus istis diebus Quadragesimae omni puritate vitam suam custodire, omnes pariter et negligentias aliorum temporum his diebus sanctis diluere."¹⁴

"Confessionem coram sacerdotibus agentes." Annals of Fulda, 895, A. D.¹⁵.

Shakespeare

"The glow worm shows the matin to be near."¹²

"Rest, rest, perturbed spirit."¹³

"...what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you."¹⁴

"Not shriying time allowed."¹⁵

¹²Smith, Wm. and Cheetham, Samuel, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, II, p. 1443.

¹³Lefebvre, Gaspar, Daily Missal, p. 1776.

¹⁴St. Benedict, Regula, cap. XLIX.

¹⁵Geesbriand, Louis, Hist. of Confession, p. 99.

¹²Hamlet, I, 5, 89.

¹³Ibid., I, 5, 182.

¹⁴Ibid., II, 2, 319-320.

¹⁵Ibid., V, 2, 46.

Medieval

Shakespeare

"Ut presbyter semper eucharisticam habeat paratam ut quando quis infirmaverit... statim eum communicet, ne sine communione moriatur."¹⁶

"Cut off even in the blossom of my sin, Unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneld, No reckoning made, but sent to my account With all my imperfections on my head."¹⁶

"The general council... alone has the authority to canonize anyone." Marcellinus of Padua, 1324, A. D.¹⁷

"...thy canonized bones, hearsed in death."¹⁷

Exorcisms liturgical functions, hence in Latin language¹⁸.

"Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio."¹⁸

"...ut virgines non velantur ante viginti quinque annos, nisi rationabilis necessitate cogente."¹⁹

"Get thee to a nunnery."¹⁹

¹⁶ Carolus Magnus, De Presbyteris, P.L. XCVII, col. 326.

¹⁶ Hamlet, I, 5, 76-79.

¹⁷ Thatcher, Oliver J. and McNeal, Edgar H., Source Book of Medieval History, p. 322.

¹⁷ Ibid., I, 4, 47.

¹⁸ Toner, P. J., Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, 710-711.

¹⁸ Ibid., I, 1, 42.

¹⁹ Carolus Magnus, Capitularis, 46, P.L. XCVII, col. 498.

¹⁹ Ibid., III, 1, 121.

Medieval

"Placuit ut qui sibi ipso
voluntariam...inferunt
mortem, nulla in oblatione
pro illis commemoratio fiat,
neque cum psalmis ad
sepulturam deducantur
eorum cadaver."²⁰

"Ut opera servilia
diebus dominicis non
agantur."²¹

"Si homo...nescit
aliquid nisi ubique discurre
re et occidit semitipsum
quacunque causa, prodest
ut cretur pro eo, ~~et~~ ante
religiosus erat."²²

Shakespeare

"Is she to be buried in
Christian burial that
wilfully seeks her own
salvation?"²⁰

"...whose sore task
Does not divide the
Sunday from the week."²¹

"Her obsequies have been
so far enlarged
As we have warrantize:
her death was doubtful;
And, but that great
commandment o'erways
the order,
She should in ground
unsanctified been
lodged
Till the last
trumpet."²²

²⁰Theodorus, Archiepiscopus
Cantuariensis, Poenitentiale,
Cap. XXVI, P. L. XCIX, 945.

²¹Carolus Magnus,
Capitularia, P. L. XCVII, 259.

²²Theodorus, Archiepiscopus
Cantuariensis, Poenitentiale,
Cap. X, P. L. XCIX, 932.

²⁰Hamlet, V, 1, 1.

²¹Ibid., I, 1, 75-76.

²²Ibid., V, 1, 229-235.

Medieval

"...thou shalt hym Soyle
and give hym hosul and
holy oyle."²³
Erit. Mus. Claud. A, 11²³

"Signaculum crucis virtutem
passionis Christi ostendit...
Quando contra imminens peri-
culum apponitur, ²⁴adversaria
virtus fugatur."

Shakespeare

"Unhousel'd,
disappointed,
unaneled."²³

"I'll cross it..."²⁴

²³ Gasquet, Francis Aiden,
Parish Life in Medieval
England, p. 206.

²⁴ Hugo Sancti Victoris,
Opera Logmatica, Pars II,
Cap. VIII, P. L. 475.

²³ Hamlet, I, 5, 77.

²⁴ Ibid., I, 1, 127.

Religious Teaching

Medieval

Council of Agde
(506, A. D.) states:
"A man may not marry his
brother's widow."²⁵

"O dignitosa coscienza
e netta
Come t'e picciol fallo
amaro morso."²⁶

"...for none comes hither
Revisits his home to reveal
to men
What manner of mansions the
Almighty inhabits,
What seats of glory are
God's abode."
Gnomic verse in Cotton MS²⁷.

Shakespeare

"...married with my uncle,
My father's brother...
...O most wicked speed,
to post
With such dexterity to
incestuous sheets."²⁵

"How smart a lash that
speech doth give my
conscience."²⁶

"...the dread of
something after death
The undiscovered
country from whose
bourne
No traveler returns,
puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear
the ills we have
Than fly to those that
we know not of."²⁷

²⁵Smith, Wm. and Cheetham,
Samuel, Dictionary of Christian
Antiquities, I, p. 35.

²⁶Lucente, Alighieri,
Purgatorio, III, p. 35.

²⁷Spaeth, J. D., Old
English Poetry, p. 157.

²⁵Hamlet, I, 2, 151-157.

²⁶Ibid., III, 1, 50.

²⁷Ibid., III, 1, 87-92.

Medieval

Shakespeare

"...nihil aliud in oratione cogitet praeter illud solum quod precatur."²⁸

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go."²⁸

"In carne enim: non spiritu orat, qui polluta mente orat." 1277, A. D.²⁹

"Pray can I not, Though inclination be as sharp as will: My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."²⁹

Suicide against natural inclination. Life, a gift divinely bestowed, subject to God's power.³⁰

"...that the Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self slaughter."³⁰

Fourth Commandment. Position of women affected by devotion to Blessed Virgin.³¹

"Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive Against thy mother's sight; leave her to heaven And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge, To prick and sting her."³¹

"They (the fiends) could not injure Guthlac's soul." Guthlac (673?-714A.D.)³²

"And as for my soul, what can it do to that, Being a thing immortal as itself?"³²

28 Onaventure, St., De Perfectione Vitae, vol. 12, 219.
 29 Hervous, Burgidolensis monachus, Opera Omnia, P. L. CLXXXI, 1277.
 30 Rickaby, Joseph, Aquinas Ethics, II, p. 199.
 31 Jarrett, Bode, Social Theories of Middle Ages, p. 82.
 32 Gordon, R. K., Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p. 238.
 28 Hamlet, III, 3, 97-98
 29 Ibid., III, 3, 38-40
 30 Ibid., I, 2, 151-152.
 31 Ibid., I, 5, 84, 85.
 32 Ibid., I, 4, 66-67.

Medieval

Liber scriptus proferetur, in
quo totum continetur, unde
mundus iudicetur." Dies Irae,
Thomas of Celano, 1260³³.

"Wherefore it is no marvel
that the unclean race of men
should greatly fear...the
judgment³⁴ of the Lord."
Cynowulf³⁴.

"Sine poenitentia et
confessione de hac luce
ad tormenta inferni migrassi."
St. Boniface³⁵.

"Ch' assolver non si puo
chi non si pente,
Ne penter e volere insieme
puessi
Per la contraziog
che nel consente."³⁶

Shakespeare

"And how his audit
stands who knows save
heaven?"³³

"...sent to my account
With all my imperfec-
tions on my head."³⁴

"When he is drunk,
asleep, or in his rage,
...or about some act
That has no relish of
salvation in't;
Then trip him, that his
heels may kick at
heaven."³⁵

"..iforgive me my foul
murder?"
That cannot be; since I
am still possess'd
Of those effects for
which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own
ambition, and my
queen."³⁶

³³Lefebvre, Gaspar, Daily
Kissal, 1776.

³⁴Cook, Albert S. and
Tinker, C. B., Select Trans-
lations From Old Eng. Poetry, p. 89.

³⁵Geesbriand, Louis, History
of Confession, p. 106.

³⁶Dante, Alighieri, Inferno
XXVII, p. 116-120.

³³Hamlet, I, 5, 182.

³⁴Ibid., I, 5, 78-79.

³⁵Ibid., III, 3, 89-93.

³⁶Ibid., III, 3, 52-55.

Medieval

"Infernus³⁷ locus tormentorum
est."

"Per lo piaccio uman che
rinnovella."³⁸

"What if when we (prelates)
should be correctors of
souls we be...but reeds and
straws."³⁹ Thomas Brunton,
c. 1376 .

"E qui convien, ch'io
questo peso porti
Per lei, tanto che a
Dio se satisfaccio
Poi ch'io nol fei tra
vivi, qui tra morti."⁴⁰

³⁷Hugo Sancti Victoris,
De Sacramentis, P. L.
CLXXVI, p. 586.

³⁸Dante, Alighieri,
Paradiso, XXVI, 129.

³⁹Casquet, Francis Aiden,
Old English Bible, p. 81.

⁴⁰Dante, Alighieri,
Purgatorio, XI, pp. 70-72.

Shakespeare

"As if he had been
loosed out of hell."³⁷

"This world is not for
aye, nor 'tis not
strange
That even our loves
should with our for-
tunes change."³⁸

"Do not, as some un-
gracious pastors do,
Shew me the steep and
thorny way to heaven,
Whilst, like a puff'd
and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose
path of galliance
treads."³⁹

"Till the foul crimes
done in my days of
nature
Are burnt and purged
away."⁴⁰

³⁷Hamlet, II, 1, 83.

³⁸Ibid., III, 2, 187-188.

³⁹Ibid., I, 3, 47-50.

⁴⁰Ibid., I, 5, 12-13.

Medieval

"Quod tanta sint in inferno tormenta, ut nulla vox exponere, nullus valeat sermo explanare." 9th century⁴¹.

"Sunt multi qui...morte praeventi tempus satisfaciendi non habent, et his quidem in eorum peccatis...purgatorio igne excoquitur."⁴²

"...it was necessary that angels should be deputed for the guardianship of men, in order to regulate them and move them to good."⁴³

"...et ideo pro alio...satisfacit...sibi quidem meretur aeternam gloriam."⁴⁴

"...the Lord changed them all to devils, because they His deed and word Refused to worship," Caedmon's Genesis.⁴⁵

Shakespeare

"...but that I am forbid To tell the secrets of my prison house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood."⁴¹

"No reckoning made, but sent to my account With all my imperfections on my head."⁴²

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Be thou a spirit of health."⁴³

"If there be any good thing to be done, That may to thee do ease and grace to me."⁴⁴

"It is a damned ghost that we have seen."⁴⁵

⁴¹Hayamon, Episcopus Halberstatensis, Opera Omnia, P. L. CXVII, 952.

⁴²Richardus Sancti Victoris, De Potestate Ligandi et Solvendi, P. L. CXCVI, 1175.

⁴³Thomas, St., Summa Theologica, I, 2e, CII-CXIX.

⁴⁴Bonaventure, St., Liber Sententiarum, IV, 76.

⁴⁵Gasquet, Francis Aiden, Parish Life in Med. England, 206.

⁴¹Hamlet, I, 5, 13-16.

⁴²Ibid., I, 5, 78-79.

⁴³Ibid., I, 4, 39-40.

⁴⁴Ibid., I, 1, 130-131.

⁴⁵Ibid., I, 5, 77

Medieval

"...preghe
Devota, per lo tuo ardente
affetto
Da quella bella, spera mi
disleghe."⁴⁶

"Contra mal dilectar con
guiste pene."⁴⁷

"Post mortem vero purgatio
erit aut nimius calor ignis,
Aut magnus rigor frigoris,
aut aliud quodlibet genus
paenarum; de quibus tamen
minimum majus est quam
maximum quod in hac vita
excogitare potest."⁴⁸

Shakespeare

"Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins
remembered."⁴⁶

"And oft 'tis seen the
wicked prixe itself
Buys out the law: but
'tis not so above."⁴⁷

"I am thy father's
spirit:
Took'd for a certain
time to walk the night,
And for the day con-
fined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes
done in days of nature
Are burnt and purged
away."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Dante, Alighieri,
Paradiso, XXIV, p. 28-30.

⁴⁷Dante, Alighieri,
Paradiso, VII, p. 78-90.

⁴⁸St. Thomas Of Aquin,
Summa Theologiae, III, p. 237.

⁴⁶Hamlet, III, 1, 88-89.

⁴⁷Ibid., III, 3, 59-60.

⁴⁸Ibid., I, 5, 9-13.

Medieval

St. Gregory of Nyssa:
 "If anyone who loves
 and believes in Christ
 has failed to wash
 away his sins in this
 life, he is set free after
 death by the fire of
 Purgatory."⁴⁹

"Where are the gracious
 gallants now
 That of old time I did
 frequent...
 Stark dead are some,
 their lives are spent
 There rests of them nor
 mark nor trace."
 Villon, (b. 1431?)⁵⁰

Shakespeare

"My hour is almost come
 When I to sulphurous
 and tormenting flames
 Must render up
 myself."⁴⁹

"...all that lives must
 die,
 Passing through nature
 to sternity."⁵⁰

⁴⁹St. Thomas of Aquin,
Summa Theologica, III, p. 237.
⁵⁰Stephenson, Carl,
Medieval History, p. 706.

⁴⁹Hamlet, I, 5, 4-8.

⁵⁰Ibid., I, 2, 73-74.

FINDINGS

In this study of the Shakespearean tragedy, Hamlet, an attempt has been made to classify the references to medieval civil, political and ecclesiastical life contained in the drama. In order to substantiate the claim of a passage to medievalism, either a parallel quotation from a medieval author, or a reference proving the validity of the claim has been advanced.

This work can lay claims to but a mere glimpse of the field of study--the extent to which it can be carried out is limited only by the time at the disposal of the investigator and the reference matter available. A more detailed exploration of the works of St. Albert the Great would, no doubt, have yielded many interesting parallels to Shakespearean plant and animal lore, had an indexed set of this author been available. However, the medieval authors whose works are contained in the Migne collection, as well as the works of St. Thomas of Aquin and of St. Bonaventure afforded interesting proofs of the medievalism of the allusions selected.

A study of the Divine Comedy of that thoroughly medie-

val poet, Dante, showed a striking similarity to the thought of Shakespeare in many passages.

In the study of medieval popular folk-customs, it was found that Shakespeare's Hamlet was true to the ways of medieval times in its pictures of mourning and marriage customs, of the filial duties of children to parents, to customs of courtesy, to the ways of the hunt, and to the recreations of the rude nobility of the middle ages.

In a study of folk-lore popular beliefs concerning birds, plants and animals were noted. Especially interesting was the collection of superstitious beliefs concerning ghosts, all of which found medieval parallels. Shakespeare agreed with the enunciations of writers of the middle ages in his statements as to the influences of the stars on the lives of men.

The system of astronomy advanced is typically Ptolemaic--the sun moves, the stars revolve in their spheres.

Investigation showed that the doctrine of the rotundity of the earth, hinted in "for so this side of our known earth" (IV, 1, 25-27) was taught by Venerable Bede in the eighth century.

Medieval chemistry, medicine and metallurgy receive notice in references respectively to the four elements of

which all matter was supposed to be composed, to the four humours of the human body, and to the ores found among base minerals.

An investigation as to the allusions to medieval learning and educational systems revealed references to the medieval universities, especially those of France, with hints of the wild lives of the roving students.

The philosophy of the play is medieval--true especially to the teachings of St. Thomas of Aquin, of St. Anselm and of Duns Scotus. Medieval ethics form the basis for judging the morality of action, the reason for action, or of refraining from it.

In its portrayal of medieval political life, Hamlet is found to be true to the notions of feudalism. The idea of government is monarchical, corresponding to that of St. Thomas of Aquin, with whom likewise Shakespeare agrees in his statement of the responsibility of princes to those whom they govern.

The ideas of medieval ecclesiastical life are found to coincide closely with the notions given by writers of those ages, especially with those given by the Church writers and by Dante in his Divine Comedy. The notions of dogma are very correct--so much so that the student cannot but wonder

where Shakespeare acquired his minute knowledge of religious teaching.

It is by no means to be inferred that the drama, Hamlet, is exclusively medieval in tone; it has many references to things contemporary with its author. However, this study does show that in his references to the medieval, Shakespeare exhibits remarkable fidelity to the thought and practice of the middle ages.

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TRANSLATIONS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE QUOTATIONS
IN THESIS

- p. 14, 16 "Quod hi nomen"
Let it be considered serious that these misuse the name of the Lord.
- p. 15, 25 "Haec est illa corona"
This is that crown, which is represented crowned on the wheel of fortune; the wheel always turns, nor is it permitted to stop for a moment, as soon as it arrives at the summit, it is compelled to descend.
- p. 15, 25 "Leo timet"
The lion (the devil) fears the singing of the cock and flees.
- p. 15, 26 "Gallus jacentes"
The cock arouses the prostrate
He admonishes the drowsy.
- p. 17, 36 "Cometae sunt stellae"
Comets are stars, tailed with flames, which springing forth suddenly, portend change of kingdom, or pestilence, or wars, or tempests, or tides.
- p. 17, 38 "...securius dici potest"
It may be said more fearlessly that a comet does not signify the death of a prince, but it only happens thus, that he die at (the time of) its appearance.
- p. 18, 41 "Si diversitas morum"
If a diversity of manners be caused by the position of the stars, therefore, there will be no free choice, nor will deliberation avail, nor will there be merit, nor praise nor blame.

p. 18, 44 "Quatuor humores"

The four humours of the human body; sanguine, red choleric, black choleric and phlegmatic.

p. 19, 51 "Forma eius"

Its form is round and spiral.

p. 20, 53 "Homo microcosmus"

Man has been accustomed to be called the microcosmus, that is the lesser world, from ancient times; because through a similitude, he has the figure of the larger world. This can be designated (pointed out) both in the composition of the human body and in the arrangement of the world. Whence the sky may be likened to the head; the air to the chest; the sea to the bowels; the land to the extremities of the body.

p. 23, 8 "Si quis inhonoraverit patrem"

If any one shall have dishonored his father or mother, let him do penance for three years. But if he shall have raised his hand (against them) or shall have inflicted a blow, let him do penance seven years.

p. 26, 24 "Pie pellicane"

O Jesus, Lord, O kindly Pellican,
Do Thou cleanse me, unclean,
In Thine own blood.

p. 27, 25 "Terunt, vagantes daemones."

The wandering demons are happy for the shadows of the night; at cock crow, terrified, they scatter and depart.

p. 27, 26 "Hoc esse signum"

I have learned that this is the signal; they know not of the promise of hope, by which we, favored children, hope for the coming of God.

p. 27, 28 "Leo timet"

The lion (devil) fears the crowing (singing) of the cock, and he flees the power of a certain stone which the cock has in itself.

p. 28, 33 "Ignis inferni"
The fire of hell is rather gloomy than light, because it more hinders than helps the sight.

p. 28, 34 "Se transfigurat"
He changes himself into an angel of light, that he may be adored.

p. 29, 35 "Gallus jacentes"
"The cock rebukes our slumbering eyes
Bestirs who still in sleep would lie,
And shames who would their Lord deny.
New hope his clarion-note awakes
Sickness the feeble frame forsakes,
The robber sheathes his lawless sword,
Faith to the fallen is restored."

Translation by W. J. Copeland in The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal, Matthew Britt, O. S. B.
pp. 50-51.

p. 29, 36 "Cujus Christi"
The Nativity of Christ is celebrated today, that through this mystery and through worthy participation (in it) we may be freed from the power of the devil.

p. 30, 38 "Cavete, fratres"
Beware, brethren, of those who deceive, that when anyone is born, his star is created with him, by which his fate is determined.

p. 30, 40 "Non pur per ovra"
Not by the work of that mighty wheel, that marks the seed to some certain end, whether the star be favorable or ill.

p. 30, 41 "...quare dicitur"
Wherefore comets are said to indicate the death of the great, and future wars.

p. 31, 43 "O ciel"
O heaven, to whom I believe, it is given to guide and change mortal state.

- p. 31, 44 "Vera praedicunt"
They predict truly concerning the movements and accidents of the heavenly bodies, but not concerning the acts of free (agents).
- p. 32, 49 "Col viso retornai"
Her gaze, returning through all the seven spheres.
- p. 33, 50 "A darne tempo"
The time now approaching when the star whose conjunction, free from hindrance, brings on a season.
- p. 33, 51 "Placet igitur"
It is accepted, therefore, that the number and order of the circles of heavenly spheres, more truly than I may be able, or than human reason may disclose, as Ptolemy disposed the circles in spheres in his Syntaxis and even in this manner they may be found gliding, moving in accord with the theory, on their way.
- p. 33, 52 "Inter coelum"
Between heaven and earth hang seven stars (planets) in certain fixed places.
- p. 34, 55 "Sunt enim quattuor humores"
There are indeed four humours in man. The sanguine reigns in childhood; the choleric in youth; the melancholy in maturity (manhood); the phlegmatic in old age.
- p. 34, 57 "Restat autem"
The earth, however, is said to remain spherical.
- p. 36, 68 "Nuovo pensiero"
A new thought arose within me
From which were born other and varied thoughts
And so much from one to the other I wandered.
- p. 37, 69 "Si vero in intelligendo"
If truly, in reasoning, the body be fatigued, this is by accident, in as much as the intellect stands in need of the operation of the powers of the senses, through which images are prepared for it.

- p. 37, 70 "Per amor de la genta"
 Through love of the lady toward whom I lean; in whom
 my thoughts are centered, for whom my passion burns.
- p. 37, 71 "Amor sementa"
 Love within you is the seed of every virtue
 As well as of every deed that deserves punishment.
- p. 38, 72 "Che riso"
 For laughter and tears follow so closely
 The passion from which each springs
 That they least follow the will in the most truthful.
- p. 38, 73 "Per lei assai"
 Through her it may be easily learned how long in
 woman lasts the flame of love.
- p. 38, 75 "Io gl'imagino"
 As he imagines, so he feels.
- p. 38, 76 "...terrent somnia"
 Dreams terrify, visions disturb (the sleeper).
 And notwithstanding that they may not be, in truth, sad
 or terrible or laborious, yet those who dream dreams are,
 nevertheless, really saddened, terrified and fatigued.
- p. 39, 78 "Nulla poena"
 No punishment is more serious than a bad conscience.
- p. 39, 79 "Io era come"
 I was as one remembering a forgotten dream.
- p. 39, 80 "Se non che coscienza"
 If conscience does not reassure me,
 The good companion which encourages a man
 Under the breastplate of feeling himself pure.
- p. 40, 81 "Che sempre"
 The man in whom thought after thought plunges through
 his bosom, fails in his purpose, in that one wastes the
 others strength.
- p. 48, 39 "Carolus, a Deo"
 Charles, crowned by God.

- p. 48, 40 "Karolus, Die gratia"
Charles, by grace of God, King of the Franks.
- p. 50, 55 "Ut homicidas"
That murderers, or other criminals, who by law ought to die, should not be excused, if they took refuge in a church, nor should food be given them there.
- p. 51, 56 "Bonifacius...hic decrevit"
Boniface decreed this, that none should be dragged from the church.
- p. 57, 24 "Carolus divina donante"
Charles, by divine gift and clemency, Emperor Augustus.
- p. 57, 26 "Bonifacius...hic decrevit"
Boniface decreed this, that none should be dragged violently from the church.
- p. 58, 28 "Ut homicidas"
(See translation of 53, p. 44)
- p. 58, 30 "Che in te avra"
Who toward you will have such a kind regard
That in regard to doing and asking, between the two of you,
that will be first which between others delays longer.
- p. 61, 12 "Diabolus semper"
The devil has always the will, but not always the power of harming, unless when permitted by God.
- p. 62, 17 "Como orologio"
As clock, that calleth up the spouse of God
To win her Bridegroom's love at matin's hour.
- p. 63, 21 "Iter tuum"
Remember to fortify your journey by confession.
- p. 64, 23 "...quando quis infirmatur"
Whenever anyone may be ill, let the priests of the Church be lead in, that they may pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

p. 64, 24 "...de infirmis"

Concerning the sick, that dying without the unction of the sacred oil, and reconciliation (confession) and Viaticum, they may not fail.

p. 67, 39 "Ex more"

Taught by mystic custom
We keep this fast
Well known, a circle
Of four times ten days.

p. 67, 40 "Et die Solis"

And on Sunday we prohibit most severely trading, and all assembly of the people, unless for the greatest need, and hunting, and let all diligently cease from worldly affairs on this holy day.

p. 67, 42 "...nihil aliud"

Let him think of nothing other in prayer, than that alone, which is prayed.

p. 67, 43 "Se orazioni"

If prayer do not first me aid
That riseth from the heart living in grace
What other kind avails, not heard in Heaven?

p. 68, 47 "Se tal decreto"

If such decrees be not by the prayers of good men made shorter.

p. 68, 48 "Pere col prego"

Therefore with thy prayer assist us sometime.

p. 69, 50 "...qui tamen ex corde"

Nevertheless, he who shall repent from his heart, even in the very hour of his death, shall find mercy, even as the robber in the very going forth of death, as it is said: "In whatsoever hour thou wilt have cried, thou wilt have been saved."

p. 71, 7 "In hanc itaque"

In this manner, therefore, the angel of Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and under the appearances and form of virtue and holiness, he directs the plans of error and carries out the affairs of sin.

- p. 72, 15 "Requiem aeternam"
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
- p. 72, 14 "...suademus istis"
We exhort all during these days of Lent to guard their lives in all purity, and let all wash away all negligences of other times during these holy days.
- p. 72, 15 "Confessionem coram"
Making confession in the presence of priests.
- p. 73, 16 "Ut presbyter semper"
That the priest may always have the Eucharist ready, that whenever any one may become ill, he may immediately give him Communion, lest he die without Communion.
- p. 73, 19 "...ut virgines"
That maidens should not take the veil before their twenty-fifth year, unless impelled by reasonable necessity.
- p. 74, 20 "Placuit ut"
It is determined that for those who voluntarily inflict death on themselves, there be made no commemoration in the Oblation, nor let their corpse be brought to the grave with psalms.
- p. 74, 21 "Ut opera servilia"
That servile works should not be performed on the Lord's day.
- p. 74, 22 "Si homo"
If a man be ignorant of everything, save only to wander everywhere, and he kill himself for any cause, it is of benefit to him that he be prayed for, if before he were a religious man.
- p. 75, 24 "Signaculum crucis"
The Sign of the Cross shows forth the power of the Passion of Christ. As often as it is opposed to threatening danger, its virtue puts to flight the adversary.
- p. 76, 26 "O dignitosa conscientia"
O noble and clear conscience, how bitter a sting to thee is a small fault.

- p. 77, 28 "Nihil aliud"
Let him think of nothing other in prayer, save only that which is prayed.
- p. 77, 29 "In carne, enim"
He prays in the flesh, not in the spirit, who prays with a sinful (polluted) mind.
- p. 78, 33 "Liber scriptus"
The written book is opened wide, in which is contained all by which the world shall be judged.
- p. 78, 35 "Sine poenitentia"
Without repentance and confession he departed from this life to the torments of hell.
- p. 78, 36 "Ch' assolver"
No power can absolve the impenitent, nor is it possible at the same time to will and to repent, which contradiction absolutely forbids.
- p. 79, 37 "Infernus locus"
Hell is a place of torments.
- p. 79, 38 "Per lo piacere"
For naught that man desired forever was lasting.
- p. 79, 40 "E qui convien"
I must groan under this weight which I carry till I satisfy God; since I did not do it while living, I must do it among the dead.
- p. 80, 41 "Quod tanta sint"
No voice can expound, no speech explain how great may be the torments in hell.
- p. 80, 42 "Sunt multi qui"
There are many, who, prevented by death, have not time for making satisfaction, and these are indeed refined (purified) from their sins by purgatorial fires.
- p. 80, 44 "...et ideo pro alio"
And he therefore, who makes satisfaction for another, deserves indeed eternal glory for himself.

p. 81, 46 "preghe devota"
Thy devout prayer, through thine ardent affection,
has set me free from that beautiful sphere.

p. 81, 47 "Contra mal"
Against evil pleasure with just pain.

p. 81, 48 "Post mortem"
After death there will be truly purification,
whether by heat or fire, or the greater rigor of cold,
or whatever other kind of punishments, of which indeed
the least is greater than the greatest which can be
imagined in this life.

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