

II

EPIC AND ROMANCE

It is the nature of epic poetry to be at ease in regard to its subject matter, to be free from the strain and excitement of weaker and more abstract forms of poetry in dealing with heroic subjects. The heroic ideal of epic is not attained by a process of abstraction and separation from the meannesses of familiar things. The magnificence and aristocratic dignity of epic is conformable to the practical and ethical standards of the heroic age; that is to say, it tolerates a number of things that may be found mean and trivial by academicians. Epic poetry is one of the complex and comprehensive kinds of literature, in which most of the other kinds may be included—romance, history, comedy; *tragical, comical, historical, pastoral* are terms not sufficiently various to denote the variety of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The "common life" of the Homeric poems may appeal to modern pedantic theorists, and be used by them in support of Euripidean or Wordsworthian receipts for literature. But the comprehensiveness of the greater kinds of poetry, of Homer and Shake-

speare, is a different thing from the premeditated and self-assertive realism of the authors who take viciously to common life by way of protest against the romantic extreme. It has its origin, not in a critical theory about the proper matter of literature, but in dramatic imagination. In an epic poem where the characters are vividly imagined, it follows naturally that their various moods and problems involve a variety of scenery and properties, and so the whole business of life comes into the story.

The success of epic poetry depends on the author's power of imagining and representing characters. A kind of success and a kind of magnificence may be attained in stories, professing to be epic, in which there is no dramatic virtue, in which every new scene and new adventure merely goes to accumulate, in immortal verse, the proofs of the hero's nullity and insignificance. This is not the epic poetry of the heroic ages.

Aristotle, in his discussion of tragedy, chose to lay stress upon the plot, the story. On the other hand, to complete the paradox, in the epic he makes the characters all-important, not the story. Without the tragic plot or fable, the tragedy becomes a series of moral essays or monologues; the life of the drama is derived from the original idea of the fable which is its subject. Without dramatic representation of the characters, epic is mere history or romance; the variety and life of epic are to be found in the drama that springs up at every encounter of the personages.

“Homer is the only poet who knows the right proportions of epic narrative; when to narrate, and when to let the characters speak for themselves. Other poets for the most part tell their story straight on, with scanty passages of drama and far between. Homer, with little prelude, leaves the stage to his personages, men and women, all with characters of their own.”¹

Aristotle wrote with very little consideration for the people who were to come after him, and gives little countenance to such theories of epic as have at various times been prevalent among the critics, in which the dignity of the subject is insisted on. He does not imagine it the chief duty of an epic poet to choose a lofty argument for historical rhetoric. He does not say a word about the national or the ecumenical importance of the themes of the epic poet. His analysis of the plot of the *Odyssey*, but for the reference to Poseidon, might have been the description of a modern realistic story.

“A man is abroad for many years, persecuted by Poseidon and alone; meantime the suitors of his wife are wasting his estate and plotting against his son; after many perils by sea he returns to his own country and discovers himself to his friends. He

¹“Ὁμηρος δὲ ἄλλα τε πολλὰ ἄξιος ἐπαινεῖσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ ὅτι μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ ὃ δεῖ ποιεῖν αὐτόν. αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι κατὰ ταῦτα μμητής. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι αὐτοὶ μὲν δι’ ἔθλου ἀγωνίζονται, μμούνται δὲ ὀλίγα καὶ ὀλιγάκις· ὁ δὲ ὀλίγα φρονησάμενος εὐθὺς εἰσάγει ἄνδρα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ ἄλλο τι ἦθος καὶ οὐδέν’ ἀήθη ἀλλ’ ἐχοντα ἦθη.—ARIST. *Poet.* 1460 a 5.

falls on his enemies and destroys them, and so comes to his own again."

The *Iliad* has more likeness than the *Odyssey* to the common pattern of later sophisticated epics. But the war of Troy is not the subject of the *Iliad* in the same way as the siege of Jerusalem is the subject of Tasso's poem. The story of the *Aeneid* can hardly be told in the simplest form without some reference to the destiny of Rome, or the story of *Paradise Lost* without the feud of heaven and hell. But in the *Iliad*, the assistance of the Olympians, or even the presence of the whole of Greece, is not in the same degree essential to the plot of the story of Achilles. In the form of Aristotle's summary of the *Odyssey*, reduced to "the cool element of prose," the *Iliad* may be proved to be something quite different from the common fashion of literary epics. It might go in something like this way:—

"A certain man taking part in a siege is slighted by the general, and in his resentment withdraws from the war, though his own side is in great need of his help. His dearest friend having been killed by the enemy, he comes back into the action and takes vengeance for his friend, and allows himself to be reconciled."

It is the debate among the characters, and not the onset of Hera and Athena in the chariot of Heaven, that gives its greatest power to the *Iliad*. The *Iliad*, with its "machines," its catalogue of the forces, its funeral games, has contributed more than the *Odyssey* to the common pattern of manufactured

epics. But the essence of the poem is not to be found among the Olympians. Achilles refusing the embassy or yielding to Priam has no need of the Olympian background. The poem is in a great degree independent of "machines"; its life is in the drama of the characters. The source of all its variety is the imagination by which the characters are distinguished; the liveliness and variety of the characters bring with them all the other kinds of variety.

It is impossible for the author who knows his personages intimately to keep to any one exclusive mode of sentiment or one kind of scene. He cannot be merely tragical and heroic, or merely comical and pastoral; these are points of view to which those authors are confined who are possessed by one kind of sentiment or sensibility, and who wish to find expression for their own prevailing mood. The author who is interested primarily in his characters will not allow them to be obliterated by the story or by its diffused impersonal sentiment. The action of an heroic poem must be "of a certain magnitude," but the accessories need not be all heroic and magnificent; the heroes do not derive their magnificence from the scenery, the properties, and the author's rhetoric, but contrariwise: the dramatic force and self-consistency of the *dramatis personae* give poetic value to any accessories of scenery or sentiment which may be required by the action. They are not figures "animating" a landscape; what the landscape means for the poet's audience is determined by the character of his personages.

All the variety of epic is explained by Aristotle's remark on Homer. Where the characters are true, and dramatically represented, there can be no monotony.

In the different kinds of Northern epic literature—German, English, French, and Norse—belonging to the Northern heroic ages, there will be found in different degrees this epic quality of drama. Whatever magnificence they may possess comes mainly from the dramatic strength of the heroes, and in a much less degree from the historic dignity or importance of the issues of the story, or from its mythological decorations.

The place of history in the heroic poems belonging to an heroic age is sometimes misconceived. Early epic poetry may be concerned with great historic events. It does not necessarily emphasise—by preference it does not emphasise—the historic importance or the historic results of the events with which it deals. Heroic poetry implies an heroic age, an age of pride and courage, in which there is not any extreme organisation of politics to hinder the individual talent and its achievements, nor on the other hand too much isolation of the hero through the absence of any national or popular consciousness. There must be some unity of sentiment, some common standard of appreciation, among the people to whom the heroes belong, if they are to escape oblivion. But this common sentiment must not be such as to make the idea of the community and its life predominant over the individual genius of its

members. In such a case there may be a Roman history, but not anything approaching the nature of the Homeric poems.

In some epic poems belonging to an heroic age, and not to a time of self-conscious and reflective literature, there may be found general conceptions that seem to resemble those of the *Aeneid* rather than those of the *Iliad*. In many of the old French *Chansons de Geste*, the war against the infidels is made the general subject of the story, and the general idea of the Holy War is expressed as fully as by Tasso. Here, however, the circumstances are exceptional. The French epic with all its Homeric analogies is not as sincere as Homer. It is exposed to the touch of influences from another world, and though many of the French poems, or great part of many of them, may tell of heroes who would be content with the simple and positive rules of the heroic life, this is not allowed them. They are brought within the sphere of other ideas, of another civilisation, and lose their independence.

Most of the old German heroic poetry is clearly to be traced, as far as its subjects are concerned, to the most exciting periods in early German history, between the fourth and the sixth centuries. The names that seem to have been most commonly known to the poets are the names that are most important to the historian—Ermanaric, Attila, Theodoric. In the wars of the great migration the spirit of each of the German families was quickened, and at the same time the spirit of the whole of Germany, so that each

part sympathised with all the rest, and the fame of the heroes went abroad beyond the limits of their own kindred. Ermanaric, Attila, and Theodoric, Sigfred the Frank, and Gundahari the Burgundian, are heroes over all the region occupied by all forms of Teutonic language. But although the most important period of early German history may be said to have produced the old German heroic poetry, by giving a number of heroes to the poets, at the same time that the imagination was stirred to appreciate great things and make the most of them, still the result is nothing like the patriotic epic in twelve books, the *Aeneid* or the *Lusiad*, which chooses, of set purpose, the theme of the national glory. Nor is it like those old French epics in which there often appears a contradiction between the story of individual heroes, pursuing their own fortunes, and the idea of a common cause to which their own fortunes ought to be, but are not always, subordinate. The great historical names which appear in the old German heroic poetry are seldom found there in anything like their historical character, and not once in their chief historical aspect as adversaries of the Roman Empire. Ermanaric, Attila, and Theodoric are all brought into the same Niblung story, a story widely known in different forms, though it was never adequately written out. The true history of the war between the Burgundians and the Huns in the fifth century is forgotten. In place of it, there is associated with the life and death of Gundahari the Burgundian king a story which may have been

vastly older, and may have passed through many different forms before it became the story of the Niblung treasure, of Sigfred and Brynhild. This, which has made free with so many great historical names, the name of Attila, the name of Theodoric, has little to do with history. In this heroic story coming out of the heroic age, there is not much that can be traced to historical as distinct from mythical tradition. The tragedy of the death of Attila, as told in the *Atlakviða* and the *Atlamá*, may indeed owe something to the facts recorded by historians, and something more to vaguer historical tradition of the vengeance of Rosamund on Alboin the Lombard. But, in the main, the story of the Niblungs is independent of history, in respect of its matter; in its meaning and effect as a poetical story it is absolutely free from history. It is a drama of personal encounters and rivalries. This also, like the story of Achilles, is fit for a stage in which the characters are left free to declare themselves in their own way, unhampered by any burden of history, any purpose or moral apart from the events that are played out in the dramatic clashing of one will against another.

It is not vanity in an historian to look for the historical origin of the tale of Troy or of the vengeance of Gudrun; but no result in either case can greatly affect the intrinsic relations of the various elements within the poems. The relations of Achilles to his surroundings in the *Iliad*, of Attila and Ermanaric to theirs, are freely conceived by the several poets,

and are intelligible at once, without reference to anything outside the poems. To require of the poetry of an heroic age that it shall recognise the historical meaning and importance of the events in which it originates, and the persons whose names it uses, is entirely to mistake the nature of it. Its nature is to find or make some drama played by kings and heroes, and to let the historical framework take care of itself. The connexion of epic poetry with history is real, and it is a fitting subject for historical inquiry, but it lies behind the scene. The epic poem is cut loose and set free from history, and goes on a way of its own.

Epic magnificence and the dignity of heroic poetry may thus be only indirectly derived from such greatness or magnificence as is known to true prosaic history. The heroes, even if they can be identified as historical, may retain in epic nothing of their historical character, except such qualities as fit them for great actions. Their conduct in epic poetry may be very far unlike their actual demeanour in true history; their greatest works may be thrust into a corner of the epic, or barely alluded to, or left out altogether. Their greatness in epic may be quite a different kind of greatness from that of their true history; and where there are many poems belonging to the same cycle there may be the greatest discrepancy among the views taken of the same hero by different authors, and all the views may be alike remote from the prosaic or scientific view. There is no constant or self-consistent opinion about the character of Charles the

Emperor in old French poetry : there is one view in the *Chanson de Roland*, another in the *Pèlerinage*, another in the *Coronemenz Loois* : none of the opinions is anything like an elaborate or detailed historical judgment. Attila, though he loses his political importance and most of his historical acquisitions in the Teutonic heroic poems in which he appears, may retain in some of them his ruthlessness and strength ; at other times he may be a wise and peaceful king. All that is constant, or common, in the different poetical reports of him, is that he was great. What touches the mind of the poet out of the depths of the past is nothing but the tradition, undefined, of something lordly. This vagueness of tradition does not imply that tradition is impotent or barren ; only that it leaves all the execution, the growth of detail, to the freedom of the poet. He is bound to the past, in one way ; it is laid upon him to tell the stories of the great men of his own race. But in those stories, as they come to him, what is most lively is not a set and established series of incidents, true or false, but something to which the standards of truth and falsehood are scarcely applicable ; something stirring him up to admiration, a compulsion or influence upon him requiring him to make the story again in his own way ; not to interpret history, but to make a drama of his own, filled somehow with passion and strength of mind. It does not matter in what particular form it may be represented, so long as in some form or other the power of the national glory is allowed to pass into his work.

This vagueness and generality in the relation of heroic poetry to the historical events and persons of an heroic age is of course quite a different thing from vagueness in the poetry itself. Gunther and Attila, Roland and Charlemagne, in poetry, are very vaguely connected with their antitypes in history; but that does not prevent them from being characterised minutely, if it should agree with the poet's taste or lie within his powers to have it so. The strange thing is that this vague relation should be so necessary to heroic poetry; that it should be impossible at any stage of literature or in any way by taking thought to make up for the want of it.

The place of Gunther the Burgundian, Sigfred the Frank, and Attila the Hun, in the poetical stories of the Niblung treasure may be in one sense accidental. The fables of the treasure with a curse upon it, the killing of the dragon, the sleeping princess, the wavering flame, are not limited to this particular course of tradition, and, further, the traditional motives of the Niblung story have varied enormously not only in different countries, but in one and the same language at the same time. The story is never told alike by two narrators; what is common and essential in it is nothing palpable or fixed, but goes from poet to poet "like a shadow from dream to dream." And the historical names are apparently unessential; yet they remain. To look for the details of the Niblung story in the sober history of the Goths and Huns, Burgundians and Franks, is like the vanity confessed by the author of the *Roman de*

Rou, when he went on a sentimental journey to Broceliande, and was disappointed to find there only the common daylight and nothing of the Faerie. Nevertheless it is the historical names, and the vague associations about them, that give to the Niblung story, not indeed the whole of its plot, but its temper, its pride and glory, its heroic and epic character.

Heroic poetry is not, as a rule, greatly indebted to historical fact for its material. The epic poet does not keep record of the great victories or the great disasters. He cannot, however, live without the ideas and sentiments of heroism that spring up naturally in periods like those of the Teutonic migrations. In this sense the historic Gunther and Attila are necessary to the Niblung story. The wars and fightings of generation on generation went to create the heroism, the loftiness of spirit, expressed in the Teutonic epic verse. The plots of the stories may be commonplace, the common property of all popular tales. The temper is such as is not found everywhere, but only in historical periods of great energy. The names of Ermanaric and Attila correspond to hardly anything of literal history in the heroic poems; but they are the sign of conquests and great exploits that have gone to form character, though their details are forgotten.

It may be difficult to appreciate and understand in detail this vague relation of epic poetry to the national life and to the renown of the national heroes, but the general fact is not less positive or less capable of verification than the date of the battle of Châlons, or

the series of the Gothic vowels. All that is needed to prove this is to compare the poetry of a national cycle with the poetry that comes in its place when the national cycle is deserted for other heroes.

The secondary or adopted themes may be treated with so much of the manner of the original poetry as to keep little of their foreign character. The rhetoric, the poetical habit, of the original epic may be retained. As in the Saxon poem on the Gospel history, the *Héliand*, the twelve disciples may be represented as Thanes owing loyalty to their Prince, in common poetic terms befitting the men of Beowulf or Byrhtnoth. As in the French poems on Alexander the Great, Alexander may become a feudal king, and take over completely all that belongs to such a rank. There may be no consciousness of any need for a new vocabulary or a new mode of expression to fit the foreign themes. In France, it is true, there is a general distinction of form between the *Chansons de Geste* and the romances; though to this there are exceptions, themes not French, and themes not purely heroic, being represented in the epic form. In the early Teutonic poetry there is no distinction of versification, vocabulary, or rhetoric between the original and the secondary narrative poems; the alliterative verse belongs to both kinds equally. Nor is it always the case that subjects derived from books or from abroad are handled with less firmness than the original and traditional plots. Though sometimes a prevailing affection for imported stories, for Celtic or Oriental legend, may be accompanied by a relaxa-

tion in the style, the superiority of national to foreign subjects is not always proved by greater strength or eloquence. Can it be said that the Anglo-Saxon *Judith*, for instance, is less heroic, less strong and sound, than the somewhat damaged and motley accoutrements of *Beowulf*?

The difference is this, that the more original and native kind of epic has immediate association with all that the people know about themselves, with all their customs, all that part of their experience which no one can account for or refer to any particular source. A poem like *Beowulf* can play directly on a thousand chords of association; the range of its appeal to the minds of an audience is almost unlimited; on no side is the poet debarred from freedom of movement, if only he remember first of all what is due to the hero. He has all the life of his people to strengthen him.

A poem like the *Héliand* is under an obligation to a literary original, and cannot escape from this restriction. It makes what use it can of the native associations, but with whatever perseverance the author may try to bend his story into harmony with the laws of his own country, there is an untranslated residue of foreign ideas.

Whatever the defects or excesses of *Beowulf* may be, the characters are not distressed by any such unsolved contradiction as in the Saxon *Héliand*, or in the old English *Exodus*, or *Andreas*, or the other poems taken from the Bible or the lives of saints. They have not, like the personages of the second order of poems, been translated from one realm of

ideas to another, and made to take up burdens and offices not their own. They have grown naturally in the mind of a poet, out of the poet's knowledge of human nature, and the traditional ethical judgments of which he is possessed.

The comparative freedom of *Beowulf* in its relation to historical tradition and traditional ethics, and the comparative limitation of the *Héliand*, are not in themselves conditions of either advantage or inferiority. They simply mark the difference between two types of narrative poem. To be free and comprehensive in relation to history, to summarise and represent in epic characters the traditional experience of an heroic age, is not the proper virtue of every kind of poetry, though it is proper to the Homeric kind. The freedom that belongs to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is also shared by many a dismal and interminable poem of the Middle Ages. That foreign or literary subjects impose certain limitations, and interfere with the direct use of matter of experience in poetry, is nothing against them. The Anglo-Saxon *Judith*, which is thus restricted as compared with *Beowulf*, may be more like Milton for these restrictions, if it be less like Homer. Exemption from them is not a privilege, except that it gives room for the attainment of a certain kind of excellence, the Homeric kind; as, on the other hand, it excludes the possibility of the literary art of Virgil or Milton.

The relation of epic poetry to its heroic age is not to be found in the observance of any strict historical duty. It lies rather in the epic capacity for bringing

together all manner of lively passages from the general experience of the age, in a story about famous heroic characters. The plot of the story gives unity and harmony to the composition, while the variety of its matter is permitted and justified by the dramatic variety of the characters and their interests.

By its comprehensiveness and the variety of its substance, which are the signs and products of its dramatic imagination, epic poetry of the heroic age is distinguished from the more abstract kinds of narrative, such as the artificial epic, and from all kinds of imagination or fancy that are limited in their scope.

In times when "the Epic Poem" was a more attractive, if not more perilous theme of debate than it now is, there was a strong controversy about the proper place and the proper kind of miraculous details to be admitted. The question was debated by Tasso in his critical writings, against the strict and pedantic imitators of classical models, and with a strong partiality for Ariosto against Trissino. Tasso made less of a distinction between romance and epic than was agreeable to some of his successors in criticism; and the controversy went on for generations, always more or less concerned with the great Italian heroic poems, *Orlando* and *Jerusalem*. Some record of it will be found in Dr. Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762). If the controversy has any interest now, it must be because it provided the most extreme statements of abstract literary principles, which on account of their thoroughness

are interesting. From the documents it can be ascertained how near some of the critics came to that worship of the Faultless Hero with which Dryden in his heroic plays occasionally conformed, while he guarded himself against misinterpretation in his prefaces.

The epic poetry of the more austere critics was devised according to the strictest principles of dignity and sublimity, with a precise exclusion of everything "Gothic" and romantic. Davenant's Preface to *Gondibert*—"the Author's Preface to his much Honour'd friend, Mr. Hobs"—may show how the canon of epic was understood by poets who took things seriously; "for I will yield to their opinion, who permit not *Ariosto*, no, not *Du Bartas*, in this eminent rank of the *Heroicks*; rather than to make way by their admission for *Dante*, *Marino*, and others."

It is somewhat difficult to find a common measure for these names, but it is clear that what is most distasteful to the writer, in theory at any rate, is variety. Epic is the most solemn, stately, and frigid of all kinds of composition. This was the result attained by the perverse following of precepts supposed to be classical. The critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were generally right in distinguishing between Epic and Romance, and generally wrong in separating the one kind from the other as opposite and mutually exclusive forms, instead of seeing with Tasso, in his critical discourses, that romance may be included in epic. Against the manifold perils of the Gothic fantasy they set

up the image of the Abstract Hero, and recited the formulas of the decorous and symmetrical abstract heroic poem. They were occasionally troubled by the "Gothic" elements in Homer, of which their adversaries were not slow to take advantage.

One of the most orthodox of all the formalists, who for some reason came to be very much quoted in England, Bossu, in his discourse on the Epic Poem, had serious difficulties with the adventures of Ulysses, and his stories told in Phaeacia. The episodes of Circe, of the Sirens, and of Polyphemus, are *machines*; they are also not quite easy to understand. "They are necessary to the action, and yet they are not humanly probable." But see how Homer gets over the difficulty and brings back these *machines* to the region of human probability. "Homère les fait adroitement rentrer dans la Vraisemblance humaine par la simplicité de ceux devant qui il fait faire ses récits fabuleux. Il dit assez plaisamment que les Phéaques habitoient dans une Isle éloignée des lieux où demeurent les hommes qui ont de l'esprit. εἶσεν δ' ἐν Σχερίῃ ἕκας ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστάων. Ulysses les avoit connus avant que de se faire connoître à eux : et aiant observé qu'ils avoient toutes les qualités de ces fainéans qui n'admirent rien avec plus de plaisir que les aventures Romanesques : il les satisfait par ces récits accommodés à leur humeur. Mais le Poëte n'y a pas oublié les Lecteurs raisonnables. Il leur a donné en ces Fables tout le plaisir que l'on peut tirer des vérités Morales, si agréablement déguisées sous ces miracu-

leuses allégories. C'est ainsi qu'il a réduit ces Machines dans la vérité et dans la Vraisemblance Poétique."¹

Although the world has fallen away from the severity of this critic, there is still a meaning at the bottom of his theory of machines. He has at any rate called attention to one of the most interesting parts of Epic, and has found the right word for the episodes of the Phaeacian story of Odysseus. Romance is the word for them, and Romance is at the same time one of the constituent parts and one of the enemies of epic poetry. That it was dangerous was seen by the academical critics. They provided against it, generally, by treating it with contempt and proscribing it, as was done by those French critics who were offended by Ariosto and perplexed by much of the Gothic machinery of Tasso. They did not readily admit that epic poetry is as complex as the plays of Shakespeare, and as incongruous as these in its composition, if the different constituents be taken out separately in the laboratory and then compared.

Romance by itself is a kind of literature that does not allow the full exercise of dramatic imagination; a limited and abstract form, as compared with the fulness and variety of Epic; though episodes of romance, and romantic moods and digressions, may have their place, along with all other human things, in the epic scheme.

¹ *Traité du Poème Épique*, par le R. P. Le Bossu, Chanoine Régulier d Sainte Geneviève; MDCLXXV (p. 166).

The difference between the greater and the lesser kinds of narrative literature is vital and essential, whatever names may be assigned to them. In the one kind, of which Aristotle knew no other examples than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the personages are made individual through their dramatic conduct and their speeches in varying circumstances; in the other kind, in place of the moods and sentiments of a multitude of different people entering into the story and working it out, there is the sentiment of the author in his own person; there is one voice, the voice of the story-teller, and his theory of the characters is made to do duty for the characters themselves. There may be every poetic grace, except that of dramatic variety; and wherever, in narrative, the independence of the characters is merged in the sequence of adventures, or in the beauty of the landscape, or in the effusion of poetic sentiment, the narrative falls below the highest order, though the art be the art of Ovid or of Spenser.

The romance of Odysseus is indeed "brought into conformity with poetic verisimilitude," but in a different way from that of Bossu *On the Epic Poem*. It is not because the Phaeacians are romantic in their tastes, but because it belongs to Odysseus, that the Phaeacian night's entertainment has its place in the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* is the story of his home-coming, his recovery of his own. The great action of the drama of Odysseus is in his dealings with Penelope, Eumaeus, Telemachus, the suitors. The Phaeacian story is indeed episodic; the interest of

those adventures is different from that of the meeting with Penelope. Nevertheless it is all kept in harmony with the stronger part of the poem. It is not pure fantasy and "Faerie," like the voyage of Maelduin or the vigil in the castle of Busirane. Odysseus in the house of Alcinous is not different from Odysseus of the return to Ithaca. The story is not pure romance, it is a dramatic monologue; and the character of the speaker has more part than the wonders of the story in the silence that falls on the listeners when the story comes to an end.

In all early literature it is hard to keep the story within limits, to observe the proportion of the *Odyssey* between strong drama and romance. The history of the early heroic literature of the Teutonic tongues, and of the epics of old France, comes to an end in the victory of various romantic schools, and of various restricted and one-sided forms of narrative. From within and without, from the resources of native mythology and superstition, and from the fascination of Welsh and Arabian stories, there came the temptation to forget the study of character, and to part with an inheritance of tragic fables, for the sake of vanities, wonders, and splendours among which character and the tragic motives lost their pre-eminent interest and their old authority over poets and audience.