10 Rome and the Roman Empire

The story of the founding of Rome by the twins Romulus and Remus is a strange Founding Myth. According to its account, Remus mocked Romulus' work by jumping over the scarcely-begun walls; Romulus then killed his brother and founded Rome alone, giving it his own name. Fratricidal rivalry is not usually considered to be a good beginning for an enterprise. The twins, said to have been suckled by a wolf as babies, were later described as descendants of Aeneas from Troy. That reflects a desire to connect Rome with the splendours of ancient Greek tradition and mythology.

The traditional date for the founding of Rome was 753 B.C. Archeology shows that by 575, if not earlier, small villages on the site of Rome were beginning to coalesce into a larger city-state (in Latin urbs,) with advances in civilized living being made under Etruscan influence. The first temple, of Jupiter on the Capitol, was built at this time. The Etruscans, whose still-undeciphered language was not of Indo-European origin, lived in areas near Rome and their artistic culture has left some remarkable clay statues of adult couples. They were finally completely assimilated into the expanding Roman culture.

Early Roman History

In 510, the last king (Rex), Tarquin the Proud, was driven out of Rome and an aristocratic republic established, with the imperium (supreme power) vested in two magistrates, later called consuls, elected each year.

The kings had naturally had a Council and this developed into the Senate, which was the main governing body of Rome, composed of men who had held public office, so similar to the Athenian Boule. The Senate served as the symbol and voice of the State, even when its power was reduced under the emperors. In times of crisis a dictator (similar to a Greek tyrant) might be appointed by the Senate to lead the people.

The citizens of Rome were divided into two classes, the aristocratic patrician families and the mass of the plebs, and much of the constitution of Rome arose in the struggle for power, as the lower class plebs established their right to representation, such as tribunes, and an Assembly. In the end, compromise led to solu-tions which, in Greece, were never found, partly perhaps because the expansion of Roman power over the Italian peninsula always gave the lower classes chances of becoming rich. The city soon developed a system of food subsidies, by which each citizen was entitled to free bread, as a means of reducing social tensions.

Greek attempts to assert power obliged Rome to exercise its military power across Italy and by the end of wars against the Greek Pyrrhus in 275, Rome had taken control of the whole Italian mainland. Pyrrhus gained two "Pyrrhic victories" against Rome between 280 and 278. (A "Pyrrhic victory" is one in which, although you win a battle, you lose the war). The Romanizing of Italy was done slowly, by colonizing, by treaty and by influence, until most people were speaking Latin, using Roman laws, and seeing the advantage of being Roman citizens. In 273, Ptolemaic Egypt recognized the importance of Rome. The expansion of Roman control over the Greek settlements in Southern Italy and Sicily by 241, brought Greek culture fully into Roman life. The Romans organized, first Sicily, then other overseas territories, as provinces, the units of government that were to compose the Empire.

The First Punic War was fought in Sicily against the power of Carthage, Rome's main rival (the word Punic is the same as Phoenician, for Carthage was a Phoenician colony). It ended in Roman triumph, Carthage being forced to leave Sicily. Then Rome drove the Carthaginians out of the western islands of Sardinia and Corsica too. Between 237 and 219, the Carthaginian generals Hamilcar, Hasdrubal and Hannibal took control of Spain and in 218 Hannibal launched an attack on Northern Italy. His exploit in marching an army of 30,000 men over the Alps in winter provoked the admiration of the Romans.

The Romans sent an army to Spain to prevent reinforcements arriving. They drove the Carthaginians out of Spain and thus isolated Hannibal while avoiding direct battle. They then invaded Africa and at last Hannibal was recalled to defend Carthage itself in 203. He had spent 16 years in Italy and left undefeated. He died by his own hand in 183 while Carthage was finally destroyed in 146, after

a third Punic war; but Rome had already ensured in the Second Punic War its international super-iority for centuries.

After the destruction of Carthage, Rome took control of the fertile lands of North Africa, then slowly expanded control north of the Alps and towards what is now Yugoslavia. In about 120, the southern area of Gaul (now called France) was formed into a province (it is still known as Provence). After serving for 20 years, each Roman soldier was entitled to a grant of farming land to which he could retire. Such provinces provided the land needed. Mean-while, the Romans had been drawn into Greece, where they sacked Corinth in 146 and transported vast masses of Greek art to Rome, where Greek philosophers were already lecturing by 155, although there was never a true university in Rome.

The Civil War

With the wealth of Greece and Carthage, Rome became immensely rich, and this led to increasing corruption across the empire, which in turn led to widespread resentment of the "greedy Italians." The struc-tures of administration had still to be created. In Italy, unrest came mainly from the slaves and the rural poor (uprisings in 135, 103). Germanic tribes, too, were already invading Italy and had to be pushed back (102). The dis-content built up into civil war, which could only be won by concessions. By about 90 B.C., all Italians were automatically Roman citizens, but all of this had made the Army, especially the Commander, immensely powerful. For many years, the Commander, and consul was Marius. But in 88 Sulla marched on Rome, opposing Marius, and the period of Civil War began, the Republic having already lost much of its credibil-ity. In 83 Sulla set himself up as dictator, in place of Cinna, but soon they both had to retire.

In 70, the general Pompey was consul with Crassus, and these two military leaders imposed their rule against that of the Senate. In 67 Pompey became Tribune, war-leader, and established the Province of Syria in 64. At the same time Julius Caesar (born in 100 B.C.) was rising in power at Rome. In 63, the consul Cicero unmasked a revolu-tionary conspiracy by a group led by Cataline, but by now Crassus and Julius Caesar were plotting to share power while Pompey had retired into private life. Since the Senate would not accept their demands, the result was a coalition uniting Crassus, Pompey and Caesar, called the First Triumvirate (60). Caesar, chosen as consul in 59, left to capture the northern parts of Gaul in a long campaign (58-50) which he described in his great book "The Gallic War" (Caesar is one of the greatest prose writers of ancient times). Gaul (now France) became part of the Empire, stretching from the English Channel to the Rhine. Caesar even crossed into Britain in 55 and 54, but did not establish any lasting control.

It was Julius Caesar who finally established the modern (solar) calendar with 365 days (or 366 in leap years) and twelve months. The Romans called the first day of the month the Kalends, the 5th or 7th the Nones, and the 13th or 15th the Ides (the later date for the 31-day months) and calculated dates by counting back from those, which had their origin in the older lunar calendar. The year began on March 1st, and this was only changed in the 18th century, which explains why the names of the months September - December do not now correspond to their position in the calendar (Sept = 7, Oct = 8, Nov = 9, Dec = 10). Roman years were often numbered by counting from 753 (the foundation of the city, in Latin *Ab urbe condita*, AUC)

Crassus having died in 53, the conflict between Caesar and Pompey became open war. Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, entering Italy without the Senate's permission, which signified civil war, and then defeated Pompey's armies in Spain (49) and Greece (48). He followed Pompey to Egypt, where he spent the winter fighting Ptolemy XIII, and having an affair with Cleopatra, whom he installed as Queen of Egypt and who bore his only son. He then returned to Asia Minor, for a victory at Zela (47), where he said the famous veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered). In Africa (46) and Spain again (45), he won other battles, each victory weakening the Republican cause. Caesar, as dictator, was clearly a personal ruler, whether or not he intended to change the basic constitution and become king. In 44, after he had been made Dictator for life, he received almost all the royal honours. At last, a group of conspirators under Cassius and Brutus assassinated Caesar in the Senate House on the Ides of March (March 15) 44 B.C.. He fell at the foot of Pompey's statue.

From Plutarch : The Death of Julius Caesar

When Caesar entered, the senate stood up to show their respect to him, and of Brutus's confederates, some came about his chair and stood behind it, others met him, pretending to add their petitions to those of Tillius Cimber, in behalf of his brother, who was in exile; and they followed him with their joint applications till he came to his seat. When he was sat down, he refused to comply with their requests, and upon their urging him, further began to reproach them severely for their importunities, when Tillius, laying hold of his robe with both his hands, pulled it down from his neck, which was the signal for the assault.

Casca gave him the first cut in the neck, which was not mortal nor dangerous, as coming from one who at the beginning of such a bold action was probably very much disturbed; Caesar immediately turned about, and laid his hand upon the dagger and kept hold of it. And both of them at the same time cried out, he that received the blow, in Latin, "Vile Casca, what does this mean?" and he that gave it, in Greek to his brother, "Brother, help!"

Upon this first onset, those who were not privy to the design were astonished, and their horror and amazement at what they saw were so great that they durst not fly nor assist Caesar, nor so much as speak a word. But those who came prepared for the business enclosed him on every side, with their naked daggers in their hands. Which way soever he turned he met with blows, and saw their swords levelled at his face and eyes, and was encompassed like a wild beast in the toils on every side. For it had been agreed they should each of them make a thrust at him, and flesh themselves with his blood; for which reason Brutus also gave him one stab in the groin.

Some say that he fought and resisted all the rest, shifting his body to avoid the blows, and calling out for help, but that when he saw Brutus's sword drawn, he covered his face with his robe and submitted, letting himself fall, whether it were by chance or that he was pushed in that direction by his murderers, at the foot of the pedestal on which Pompey's statue stood, and which was thus wetted with his blood.

So that Pompey himself seemed to have presided, as it were, over the revenge done upon his adversary, who lay here at his feet, and breathed out his soul through his multitude of wounds, for they say he received three-and-twenty. And the conspirators themselves were many of them wounded by each other, whilst they all levelled their blows at the same person.

When Caesar was despatched, Brutus stood forth to give a reason for what they had done, but the senate would not hear him, but flew out of doors in all haste, and filled the people with so much alarm and distraction, that some shut up their houses, others left their counters and shops. All ran one way or the other, some to the place to see the sad spectacle, others back again after they had seen it. Antony and Lepidus, Caesar's most faithful friends, got off privately, and hid themselves in some friends' houses.

Brutus and his followers, being yet hot from the deed, marched in a body from the senate-house to the capitol with their drawn swords, not like persons who thought of escaping, but with an air of confidence and assurance, and as they went along, called to the people to resume their liberty, and invited the company of any more distinguished people whom they met. And some of these joined the procession and went up along with them, as if they also had been of the conspiracy, and could claim a share in the honour of what had been done. As, for example, Caius Octavius and Lentulus Spinther, who suffered afterwards for vanity, being taken off by Antony and the young Caesar, and lost the honour they desired, as well as their lives, which it cost them, since no one believed they had any share in the action. For neither did those who punished them profess to revenge the fact, but the ill-will.

The day after, Brutus with the rest came down from the capitol and made a speech to the people, who listened without expressing either any pleasure or resentment, but showed by their silence that they pitied Caesar and respected Brutus. The senate passed acts of oblivion for what was past, and took measures to reconcile all parties. They ordered that Caesar should be worshipped as a divinity, and nothing, even of the slightest consequence, should be revoked which he had enacted during his government.

At the same time they gave Brutus and his followers the command of provinces, and other considerable posts. So that all the people now thought things were well settled, and brought to the happiest adjustment. But when Caesar's will was opened, and it was found that he had left a

considerable legacy to each one of the Roman citizens, and when his body was seen carried through the market-place all mangled with wounds, the multitude could no longer contain themselves within the bounds of tranquillity and order, but heaped together a pile of benches, bars, and tables, which they placed the corpse on, and setting fire to it, burnt it on them.

Then they took brands from the pile and ran some to fire the houses of the conspirators, others up and down the city, to find out the men and tear them to pieces, but met, however, with none of them, they having taken effectual care to secure themselves.

One Cinna, a friend of Caesar's, chanced the night before to have an odd dream. He fancied that Caesar invited him to supper, and that upon his refusal to go with him, Caesar took him by the hand and forced him, though he hung back. Upon hearing the report that Caesar's body was burning in the market-place, he got up and went thither, out of respect to his memory, though his dream gave him some ill apprehensions, and though he was suffering from a fever. One of the crowd who saw him there asked another who that was, and having learned his name, told it to his neighbour. It presently passed for a certainty that he was one of Caesar's murderers, as, indeed, there was another Cinna, a conspirator, and they, taking this to be the man, immediately seized him and tore him limb from limb upon the spot.

Brutus and Cassius, frightened at this, within a few days retired out of the city. What they afterwards did and suffered, and how they died, is written in the Life of Brutus. Caesar died in his fifty-sixth year, not having survived Pompey above four years. That empire and power which he had pursued through the whole course of his life with so much hazard, he did at last with much difficulty compass, but reaped no other fruits from it than the empty name and invidious glory.

But the great genius which attended him through his lifetime even after his death remained as the avenger of his murder, pursuing through every sea and land all those who were concerned in it, and suffering none to escape, but reaching all who in any sort or kind were either actually engaged in the fact, or by their counsels any way promoted it. The most remarkable of mere human coincidences was that which befell Cassius, who, when he was defeated at Philippi, killed himself with the same dagger which he had made use of against Caesar.

Augustus

Julius Caesar had named the son of his niece, Caius Octavius (born 63, died A.D. 14), to be his heir, since he himself had no legal sons. In 43, he was recognized as Caesar's "son" with the name Octavianus and in the same year he, Mark Antony (he had been the colleague of Caesar as consul) and Lepidus, were named Triumvirs. In 42 they defeated the Re-publicans under Brutus and Cassius, both of whom killed themselves. In 42, also, Julius Caesar was named a "god" and thus Octavian became "son of god." In 41, Antony was in Egypt, where he met Cleopatra, with whom he too began an affair, although he made a political marriage with Octavian's sister Octavia in 40.

In 36, Lepidus fell and, while Antony was busy in the East, Octavian took power over Italy and the West. In 31, at the naval Battle of Actium, Antony and Cleopatra were defeated. They killed themselves and Octavian became supreme ruler, the Empire was at peace. This Augustan Peace which lasted throughout his reign was marked by the construction of the Ara Pacis in Rome, and the Augustan Age was later felt to have been a Golden Age. In 29, the Senate con-firmed the title of Imperator (Emperor) which Octavian had been using since 38. His power was based on his prestige, but he tried to make the Empire aware of the values of Roman tradition by encouraging writers to express the imperial vision. Among them were Virgil and Horace.

In 27 he received the title Augustus, indicating his de facto position, and the month August got its name at this time. He had become a "con-stitutional emperor," ruling with the support of the Senate and Roman People (Senatus Populus que Romanus SPQR was the symbol carried at the head of the armies), but as he was more and more honoured as a god, his position was quite unique. Under his rule, the provinces became truly an Empire.

We might note that in A.D. 6, Judea (the area around Jerusalem) became a minor Province by annexation, after the deposition of Archelaus who had succeeded Herod the Great (died 4 B.C.). It was to be ruled by Procurators, nomi-nated for 10 years. In 27, Pontius Pilate became Procurator. Galilee was not part of Roman Judaea, it was ruled as a Tetrarchy by Herod Antipas, under whose rule Jesus of

Nazareth lived, and by whose command John the Baptist was executed.

Early Roman Literature

Rome has nothing to compare with Homer and Hesiod, Plato and Aristotle. It developed no great literary or philosophical tradition. There are the plays written by Terence and Plautus from the period 200-150, but otherwise nothing of note from before the time of Caesar and Augustus. At the time of Caesar, the leading Roman statesman was Cicero (born 106) whose full name was Marcus Tullius Cicero, so that he was also known (in Shakespeare etc.) as "Tully". He was opposed to Antony after the assassination of Caesar and he was murdered by Antony's agents in 43 B.C.. He had studied at the Academy in Athens, where he learned to present mostly Stoic morality in a simple, undogmatic way.

His main works are his Orations (speeches made in the course of his career as a lawyer and political figure), his 931 letters to 99 different people, and writings on rhetoric and style. As a philosophical figure, he wrote on political theory (De Republica, a dialogue), on ethical and on theological questions. He was deeply influenced by the Stoics but adopted an independent line on some questions. His main doctrine is that of humanitas, the qualities of mind and character that make a man civilized. A true Man should respect all men because humanity is worthy of respect. (The Stoics taught the universal Brotherhood of Man, based on the notion that each individual contains a spark of the same divine fire). No law, he said, can make a wrong thing right or a right thing wrong. The moral thought of Cicero has deeply marked the thinkers of Europe: Luther, Montaigne, Locke, Hume. He was mainly familiar as a moral thinker in the Middle Ages, but at the Renaissance his influence as a stylist in prose, as the model of Latin style, was enormous.

From Cicero's *De Officiis*

If every one of us seizes and appropriates for himself other people's property, the human community, the brotherhood of mankind, col-lapses. It is natural enough for a man to prefer earning a living for himself rather than for someone else; but what nature forbids is that we should increase our means, property, and resources by robbing others.

This idea that one must not injure anybody for one's own advantage is not only natural law, an internationally valid principle; it is also incor-porated in the laws which individual communities have drawn up. (...)

Magnanimity, and loftiness of soul, and courtesy, and justice, and generosity, are far more natural than self-indulgence, or wealth, or even life itself. But to despise these latter things, to attach no import-ance to them in comparison with the common good, really does need a great and lofty heart.

In the same way, it is more truly natural to model oneself on Hercules and undergo the most terrible labours and troubles to help and save all the nations of the earth than to live a secluded, untroubled life with plenty of money and pleasures. Mankind was grateful to Hercules for his services... So the finest and noblest characters prefer a life of dedication to a life of self-indulgence: and one may go further, and conclude that such men conform with nature and will therefore do no harm to their fellow-men. (...)

Everyone ought to have the same purpose: to make the interest of each the same as the interest of all. For if men grab for themselves, it will mean the complete collapse of human society.

If Nature prescribes that every human being must help every other human being, whoever he is, just precisely because they are human beings, then by the same authority all men have identical interests. Having identical interests means that we are all subject to one and the same Law of Nature: that being so, the very least that such a law must enjoin is that we may not wrong one another. (...)

People are not talking sense if they claim that they will not rob their parents or brothers, but that robbing their other compatriots is a different matter. That is the same as denying any common interest with their fellow-countrymen, or any consequent legal or social obliga-tions. And such a denial shatters the whole fabric of national life.

Another attitude is that one ought to take account of compatriots but not of foreigners. People who argue like this subvert the whole basis of the human community itself-and when that is gone, kind

actions, generosity, goodness, and justice are annihilated. And their annihilation is a sin against the immortal gods. For it was they who established the society which such men are undermining. And the tightest bond of that society is the belief that it is more unnatural for one man to rob another for his own benefit than to endure any loss whatsoever, whether to his person or to his property, or even to his very soul, provided that no consideration of justice or injustice is involved: for justice is the queen and sovereign of all the virtues.

Let us consider possible objections.

(1) Suppose a man of great wisdom were starving to death: would he not be justified in taking food belonging to someone who was completely useless?

(2) Suppose an honest man had the chance to steal the clothes of a cruel and inhuman tyrant, and needed them to avoid freezing to death, should he not do it?

These questions are very easy to answer. For if you rob even a completely useless man for your own advantage, it is an unnatural, inhuman action. (...)

As for the tyrant, we have nothing in common with autocrats; in fact we and they are totally set apart. There is nothing unnatural about robbing, if you can, a man whom it is morally right to kill, and the whole sinful and pestilential gang of dictatorial rulers ought to be cast out from human society... these ferocious, bestial monsters in human form ought to be severed from the body of mankind.

(Translated by Michael Grant)

Lucretius (94-55) is known only for his great philosophical poem De Rerum Natura, a didactic poem in six books exposing the theories of Epicurus in order to free people's minds from superstitious fear of gods, or trust in Fortune. All things, he says, are the result of the random motions of an infinite number of atoms moving in infinite space. There is therefore no immortality of the soul, so that it is foolish to fear death. This is a poem full of artistry, one of the great intellectual poems. Pope's Epistle on Man is in part a reply to it.

From Lucretius: *De Rerum Natura*

What has this bugbear Death to frighten man,
If souls can die, as well as bodies can?
For, as before our birth we felt no pain,
When Punic arms infected land and main,
When heaven and earth were in confusion hurled
For the debated empire of the world,
Which awed with dreadful expectation lay,
Sure to be slaves, uncertain who should sway;
So, when our mortal frame shall be disjoined,
The lifeless lump uncoupled from the mind,
From sense of Grief and pain we shall be free;
We shall not feel, because we shall not be.
Though earth in seas, and seas in heaven were lost,
We should not move, we only should be tossed.
Nay, even suppose, when we have suffered fate,
The soul could feel in her divided state,
What's that to us? for we are only we
While souls and bodies in one frame agree.
Though time our life and motion could restore,
And make our bodies what they were before,
What gain to us would all this bustle bring?
The new-made man would be another thing:
When once an interrupting pause is made,
The individual being is decayed.
We, who are dead and gone, shall bear no part

In all the pleasures, nor shall feel the smart,
Which to that other mortal shall accrue,
Whom of our matter time shall mould anew.
(From John Dryden's translation of *De Rerum Natura*)

Catullus (84-54) is above all remembered for the 25 poems in which he celebrates his lady "Lesbia" (surely not her real name, even if she was a real person). He was influenced by the Hellenic epigram, but made it into something personal and vivid. In this way he influenced the poets who came after him, and wrote some of the most perfect short lyrics in any language, full of intensity and vitality. Many of his poems are love-elegies, based on Greek models but Roman in feeling.

My sweetest Lesbia, let us live and love,
And though the sager sort our deeds reprove,
Let us not weigh them; heaven's great lamps do dive
Unto their west, and straight again revive
But soon as once set is our little light,
Then must we sleep one ever-during night.
(Version by Thomas Campion, 1601)

Sallust (86-35) was one of the first Roman historians, writing about the period of Marius and the first stages of the decline of the Republic.

Julius Caesar himself wrote "Commentaries" on his wars, seven books on the campaign in Gaul, three more on the Civil War, describing each stage in clear, simple prose. These have been much studied, for Caesar was one of the greatest generals ever, a master-strategist.

Augustan Literature

The Augustan Age was later often seen as a Golden Age, because of the quality of the writers, because it was a age of peace, because Rome was rebuilt in imperial style. Yet it was also an age of failure and disappointment, because Augustus was an authoritarian dictator, an autocrat who swept away the last democratic forms of the Republic and took control of every sector of life. Augustus established the Empire as it was to survive for 400 years, with a broadly unified culture that would spread across Western Europe, bringing many of the best things that had first been discovered by Greece. Augustus wished to give his people a higher vision of morality, of human dignity, and used art for that purpose.

Virgil (70-19) was born near Mantua, studied at Cremona, Milan, Rome. He was deeply influenced by the poems of Catullus and by the perfections of rhythms and form practiced by the Alexandrians. At the time of Caesar's death he went to live in the countryside near Naples, and here he began his bucolic (pastoral*) Eclogues*. These caught the attention of Octavian's rich and powerful advisor, Maecenas, the model rich patron of literature, who brought Virgil into the service of the rising future Augustus. The Eclogues were followed soon by the *Georgics*, written after he had met Horace. Later he began to write the *Aeneid* for Augustus. He went to finish it and study in Athens, from which he returned with Augustus in 19, but fell ill and died on the way home.

The *Eclogues* are modelled on the *Idylls* of Theocritus, but blend the Greek and the Italian landscapes. The action is located in Arcadia, an idealized land of shepherds acting as a symbolic contrast to the cor-ruptions of the contemporary city, so that "pastoral" poetry is satiric as well as escapist. The delicate sentiments and the pure music of Virgil's *Eclogues* have inspired many later poets, including Sidney and Spenser. The mysterious 4th Eclogue was long thought by Christians to be a "prophecy" of the birth of Christ.

From Virgil's "Pollio" : the Fourth *Eclogue* of the *Bucolics*

(Which Christians later believed prophesied the birth of Christ)

We have reached the last Era in Sibylline song.
Time has conceived and the great sequence of the Ages starts afresh.
Justice, the Virgin, comes back to dwell with us,
and the rule of Saturn is restored.
The Firstborn of the New Age is already on his way
from high heaven down to earth.

With him, the Iron Age shall end
and Golden Man inherit all the world.
Smile on the Baby's birth, immaculate Lucina;
your own Apollo is enthroned at last.

And it is in your consulship, yours, Pollio,
that this glorious Age will dawn
and the Procession of the great Months begin.
Under your leadership all traces that remain of our iniquity will be effaced
and, as they vanish, free the world from its long night of horror.

He will meet with the gods;
he will see the great men of the past consorting with them,
and be himself observed by these guiding a world
to which his father's virtues have brought peace.

(Translated by E. V. Rieu)

The *Georgics* are presented as a guide to being a good farmer, but the quality of the poetry shows that this is no mere handbook. These poems underlie many others written later about the details of ordinary daily life, especially working life, and the pleasures of rural activity. But they also show that there is a religious mystery revealed by contact with nature. For Dryden these were "the best poems of the best poet."

The *Aeneid* relates the story of Aeneas in 12 books. An epic of the legendary origins of Rome, with a strong unity of action, inspired by Homer. The style is highly polished, artificial, quite unlike the popular style of Homer. During the Middle Ages, it was read as an allegory of the human life but from Petrarch on, it was also seen as a model to be imitated by Renaissance writers of epic.

For Western culture, no work is more influential than the Aeneid. Homer was unknown for centuries, the Middle Ages knew only his name and had no Latin translation of his epics, in fact he was taken for a liar because there existed better-known Latin prose stories of the same events told from the Trojan point of view. These stories, bearing the names of Dares Phrygius ("The Fall of Troy") and Dictys of Crete ("Diary of the Trojan War"), were the main source of stories about Troy until the mid-17th century.

The *Aeneid* is equally a continuation of the Trojan side, Aeneas being shown as the son of Venus and a Trojan father, Anchises, in the Iliad, where he is second to Hector. The Aeneid is written with intense artistry, with all Virgil's sensitivity and compassion. It shows the foun-dation of Rome being prepared through great suffering, near-despair, and human weakness, thanks to a scheme of divine providence.

Since printing began in Western Europe, the Aeneid has been pub-lished in at least one new edition every year; from Roman times until then it had been read continuously, even when no other classical poetry was esteemed. Virgil was considered to have been a Prophet of Christ, and was given religious respect. He is a basic influence for Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Victor Hugo, Tennyson...

The *Aeneid* (Summary)

In Book 1 the Trojan survivors, led by Aeneas, escape a terrible storm and arrive in North Africa. There they are brought by Venus to the court of Dido, Queen of Carthage, who falls in love with Aeneas. She asks to hear his story, which occupies Books 2 and 3, with the destruction of Troy and his travels. They have settled down into a quiet life together, but without any wedding ceremony. In Book 4 Mercury is sent with a message from the gods, urging Aeneas to remember his mission to go to Italy and found a new Troy there. His departure causes Dido to commit suicide and is given as the reason for the centuries of war between Carthage and Rome in the future.

Arriving back in Sicily, Aeneas the "True" organizes Games to com-memorate the first anniversary of his father's death there, before the journey to Carthage (Book 5). From there they sail up to Cumae, near Naples, and visit the Sibyl (oracle of Apollo) in her cave. After an oracle on their future plans, Aeneas asks permission to go down into the Underworld and meet his father's spirit. He is given instructions and makes the journey (Book 6), one of the most famous parts of the Aeneid.

Once at the Tiber, difficulties and fighting return (Book 7), but the spirit of Tiber encourages Aeneas to enter Latium. He sails up to the site of future Rome, where Arcadians are living, and visits the Capitol and the Forum, still just rocks and fields. For future battle, Venus obtains armour from Vulcan, with a shield picturing the future story of Rome (Book 8). The remaining books (Books 9-12) describe the great battles and struggle between Aeneas and Turnus for control of the land, with Aeneas' last gesture of killing Turnus an unnecessary act of revenge for the death of Pallas, when Turnus was already beaten. The poem was left incomplete at Virgil's death.

The morality of the Aeneid is "Avoid excess, be true." Its basic theme is the importance of harmony and reconciliation, true nobility in living. The opening lines have often been imitated:

Arms, and the man I sing, who, forced by fate,
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
Expelled and exiled, left the Trojan shore.
Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
And in the doubtful war, before he won
The Latian realm, and built the destined town;
His banished gods restored to rites divine,
And settled sure succession in his line,
From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
And the long glories of majestic Rome.
O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate;
What goddess was provoked, and whence her hate;
For what offense the Queen of Heaven began
To persecute so brave, so just a man;
Involved his anxious life in endless cares,
Exposed to wants, and hurried into wars!
Can heavenly minds such high resentment show,
Or exercise their spite in human woe?
Against the Tiber's mouth, but far away,
An ancient town was seated on the sea;
A Tyrian colony; the people made
Stout for the war, and studious of their trade:
Carthage the name; beloved by Juno more
Than her own Argos, or the Samian shore.
Here stood her chariot; here, if Heav'n were kind,
The seat of awful empire she designed.
Yet she had heard an ancient rumor fly,
(Long cited by the people of the sky,)
That times to come should see the Trojan race

Her Carthage ruin, and her towers deface;
Nor thus confined, the yoke of sovereign sway
Should on the necks of all the nations lay.
She pondered this, and feared it was in fate;
Nor could forget the war she waged of late
For conquering Greece against the Trojan state.
Besides, long causes working in her mind,
And secret seeds of envy, lay behind;
Deep graven in her heart the doom remained
Of partial Paris, and her form disdained;
The grace bestowed on ravished Ganymed,
Electra's glories, and her injured bed.
Each was a cause alone; and all combined
To kindle vengeance in her haughty mind.
For this, far distant from the Latian coast
She drove the remnants of the Trojan host;
And seven long years the unhappy wand'ring train
Were toss'd by storms, and scatter'd thro' the main.
Such time, such toil, requir'd the Roman name,
Such length of labor for so vast a frame.

(Translated by John Dryden)

From Book VI of the *Aeneid*: The Underworld

Hence leads a road to Acheron, vast flood
Of thick and restless slime: all that foul ooze
It belches in Cocytus. Here keeps watch
That wild and filthy pilot of the march
Charon, from whose rugged old chin trails down
The hoary beard of centuries: his eyes
Are fixed, but flame. His grimy cloak hangs loose
Rough-knotted at the shoulder: his own hands
Pole on the boat, or tend the sail that wafts
His dismal skiff and its fell freight along.
Ah, he is old, but with that toughening age
That speaks his godhead! To the bank and him
All a great multitude came pouring down,
Brothers and husbands, and the proud-souled heroes,
Life's labours done: and boys and unwed maidens
And the young men by whose flame-funeral
Parents had wept. Many as leaves that fall
Gently in autumn when the sharp cold comes
Or all the birds that flock at the turn o' the year
Over the ocean to the lands of light.
They stood and prayed each one to be first taken:
They stretched their hands for love of the other side.
But the grim sailor takes now these, now those:
And some he drives a distance from the shore.
Aeneas, moved and marvelling at this stir,
Cried - 'O chaste Sibyl, tell me why this throng
That rushes to the river? What desire
Have all these phantoms? and what rule's award
Drives these back from the marge, lets these go over

Sweeping the livid shallows with the oar?'
The old priestess replied in a few words:
'Son of Anchises of true blood divine,
Behold the deep Cocytus and dim Styx
By whom the high gods fear to swear in vain.
This shiftless crowd all is unsepulchred:
The boatman there is Charon: those who embark
The buried. None may leave this beach of horror
To cross the growling stream before that hour
That hides their white bones in a quiet tomb.
A hundred years they flutter round these shores:
Then they may cross the waters long desired.'

(Translated by J. E. Flecker)

Horace (65-8) was born in a simple family, went to study at the University of Athens, then served under Brutus, but survived the defeat at Philippi (42) and was introduced to Maecenas by Virgil and entered the service of Octavian, who enjoyed his company. His combination of great poetic skill with a basically humorous attitude to life made him the great model for English writers such as Pope.

The Epodes are the earlier works, iambic poems in which Horace adopts a tone of bitterness, ferocity, which is often found not to be "real"; they are about love problems, politics, or are humorous exer-cises. They show refined techniques in epigram etc., derived from the Hellenistic Greek poetry.

The *Satires* follow a genre invented by Lucilius (died 101), the personal, autobiographical satire, about opinions, adventures, food, family, friends, morality, but Horace is much less bitter, far more humorous; a stream of anecdotes interrupts the flow of ideas, and we never know when Horace is being ironic because he mocks himself as much as everyone else. He uses a form of the epic hexameter, passing from the high style to the very relaxed, and this link between epic and satire is recalled in the 17-18th century English "mock-epic."

The *Odes (Carmina)* are designed to display Horace's great technical skill, modelled on the Greek poets, both Sappho and the Alexandrians. They are not "pure" lyrics, but explore many forms and situations, often expressing directly political comments, which until this were only found in epic forms of poetry. For Petrarch as for Ben Jonson, these were a major model, and they inspired Marvell's "Horatian Ode."

The *Epistles* (letters) are his own inventions, written after the Odes (from 20 B.C.), verse letters in which it is possible to deal with any subject in a personal, conversational way: how to get on with great men, the dangers of avarice, the value of the simple life, town versus country etc. They are not "real" letters, addressed to a particular person, but exercises in style. They were very influential from the Renaissance period onwards, from Donne to Pope especially.

Ars Poetica (Art of Poetry) is also a verse epistle, skillful and humor-ous, but although it talks about epic and drama, it is not quite clear what message it contains. Pope based his "Essay on Criticism" on it, and it was very important for theorists such as Boileau. The following texts are both free versions of parts of the *Ars Poetica*:

'Tis hard, to speak things common, properly:
And thou mayst better bring a Rhapsody
Of Homer's forth in acts, than of thine own
First publish things unspoken, and unknown.
Yet, common matter thou thine own mayst make,
If thou the vile, broad-trodden ring forsake.
For, being a Poet, thou mayst feign, create,

Not care, as thou wouldst faithfully translate,
To render word for word: nor with thy sleight
Of imitation, leap into a straight
From whence thy modesty, or Poem's Law
Forbids thee forth again thy foot to draw.
Nor so begin, as did that Circler, late:
I sing a noble War, and Priams fate.
What doth this promiser, such great gaping worth
Afford? The Mountains travailed, and brought forth
A trifling Mouse! O, how much better this,
Who nought assays, unaptly, or amiss?
Speak to me, Muse, the man, who, after Troy was sacked
Saw many towns, and men, and could their manners tract.
He thinks not how to give you smoke from light,
But light from smoke...

(Ben Jonson, 1604)

Observe what Characters your persons fit,
Whether the Master speak, or Jodelet:
Whether a man, that's elderly in growth,
Or a brisk Hotspur in his boiling youth:
A roaring Bully, or a shirking Cheat,
A Court-bred Lady, or a tawdry Cit:
A prating Gossip, or a jilting Whore,
A travelled Merchant, or an homespun Bore:
Spaniard, or French, Italian, Dutch, or Dane;
Native of Turkey, India, or Japan.
  Either from History your Persons take,
Or let them nothing inconsistent speak:
If you bring great Achilles on the Stage,
Let him be fierce and brave, all heat and rage,
Inflexible, and head-strong to all Laws,
But those, which Arms and his own will impose.
Cruel Medea must no pity have,
Ixion must be treacherous, Ino grieve,
Io must wander, and Orestes rave.
But if you dare to tread in paths unknown
And boldly start new persons of your own
Be sure to make them in one strain agree
And let the end like the beginning be.

(John Oldham, 1681)

Livy (64-A.D. 12?) is the great historian of Rome. He wrote a history from the beginnings, in 142 books, of which only 35 have survived. He exposes the history of Rome in vivid prose, full of descriptions, that make it a "prose epic," a form of literature. It is given a basic moral structure (Livy came from a very strict family in Padua) by the idea of old Rome as a place of discipline, simplicity, piety, virtue, all values lost in later corruption by luxury and avarice.

Propertius (54-16), the most "artistic" of the Latin poets, elaborate, witty and energetic like John Donne, is difficult. He gave the name "Cynthia" to his lady, who seems to be real.

Ovid (43-A.D. 17) became famous as a poet in the generation after the death of Virgil and Horace, by 8 A.D. he was the most famous poet in Rome, but then he displeased Augustus (How? We have no clear informa-tion) and he was exiled to Tomis on the Black Sea, a dangerous place on the edge of the Empire, where he died.

Ovid wrote all his works except the Metamorphoses in elegiac couplets. The Amores, a collection of love poems, suggesting a final rejection of love-conventions, translated by Marlowe, influenced Donne.

The *Heroides* (Epistles from Heroic Women) are mostly verse epistles or dramatic monologues written/spoken by famous women to absent husbands or lovers; a second group has pairs of letters in which the man writes/speaks first. These are explorations of the psychology of passion, of what we call "romantic love," the oppositions between the sexes exist in unresolved tension. Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard" is one of many modern imitations.

The *Ars Amatoria* (Art of Loving) is a parody of normal didactic poetry, teaching the arts of seduction and intrigue to men (books 1 & 2) and women (book 3). It must have shocked, but Ovid's "apology" or retraction, the Remedia Amoris (the Cure for Love), is no more serious. In the Middle Ages, Ovid's psychology of Love was immensely popular, especially in France, where it underlies what is often known as "courtly love."

The (Transformations), an epic poem in 15 books in epic hexameters, show the transformations found in old legends, from the beginnings of time until Julius Caesar. Ovid wished to be made immortal by this work, which is inspired by Alexandrian poetry. It is essentially a collection of fragmentary stories, anecdotes united by an overall thematic framework and by Ovid's narrative skill. The more philosophical theme of "mutability and permanence" stands to affirm a basically optimistic outlook. These stories are the main source of medieval and Renaissance knowledge of Greek mythology, interpreted in the Middle Ages in a moralizing, allegorical way. The Metamorphoses was often read and translated in England, especially by Caxton (1480) and by Arthur Golding (1567-7) whose translation had a great influence on Elizabethan poetry, including Shakespeare, who probably also read the original Latin.

Ovid, with Virgil, is one the first "literary poets," his poems show how much he had read of other poets. But he is writing about human emotions, exploring the heart and its passions. He has enormous tech-nical skills over language and metre, but above all a marvellous imagi-nation, which may be serious or amused. In any case, he teaches us to be more human at every point. Compared with the other Augustans, he is a man of freedom and sensitivity, aware of the good that exists in life. He and Virgil are the two poets who were read continuously, who were as familiar in the 12th century as in the 16th.

The beginning of the *Metamorphoses*

The golden age was first; when man, yet new,
No rule but uncorrupted reason knew;
And with a native bent, did good pursue.
Unforced by punishment, unawed by fear,
His words were simple, and his soul sincere:
Needless was written law, where none oppressed;
The law of man was written on his breast;
No suppliant crowds before the judge appeared;
No court erected yet, nor cause was heard;
But all was safe, for conscience was their guard....
The teeming earth, yet guiltless of the plough,
And unprovoked, did fruitful stores allow:
Content with food which nature freely bred,
On wildlings and on strawberries they fed....
From veins of valleys milk and nectar broke,
And honey sweating through the pores of oak.
But when good Saturn, banished from above,
Was driven to Hell, the world was under Jove.

Succeeding times a silver age behold,
Excelling brass, but more excelled by gold.
Then Summer, Autumn, Winter did appear;
And Spring was but a season of the year.
The sun his annual course obliquely made,
Good days contracted, and enlarged the bad.
Then air with sultry heats began to glow,
The wings of winds were clogged with ice and snow;
nd shivering mortals, into houses driven,
Sought shelter from the inclemency of heaven.
Those houses then were caves, or homely sheds,
With twining osiers fenced, and moss their beds.
Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke,
And oxen laboured first beneath the yoke.
To this next came in course the brazen age:
A warlike offspring prompt to bloody rage,
Not impious yet-Hard steel succeeded then;
And stubborn as the metal were the men.
Truth, Modesty, and Shame the world forsook:
Fraud, Avarice, and Force their places took....
Then landmarks limited to each his right:
For all before was common as the light.
Nor was the ground alone required to bear
Her annual income to the crooked shear:
But greedy mortals, rummaging her store,
Digged from her entrails first the precious ore,
Which next to hell the prudent gods had laid;
And that alluring ill to sight displayed.
Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold,
Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold:
And double death did wretched man invade,
By steel assaulted, and by gold betrayed.
Now, brandished weapons glittering in their hands,
Mankind is broken loose from moral bands;
No rights of hospitality remain:
The guest, by him who harboured him, is slain;
The son-in-law pursues the father's life;
The wife her husband murders, he the wife.
The step-dame poison for the son prepares;
The son inquires into his father's years.
Faith flies, and Piety in exile mourns;
And Justice, here oppressed, to heaven returns.

(Translated by John Dryden)

The end of the *Metamorphoses*,

All things do change; but nothing sure doth perish. This same sprite
Doth fleet, and frisking here and there doth swiftly take his flight
From one place to another place, and entereth every wight,
Removing out of man to beast, and out of beast to man;
But yet it never perisheth nor never perish can.
And even as supple wax with ease receiveth figures strange,
And keeps not aye one shape, nor bides assured aye from change,

And yet continueth always wax in substance; so I saw
The soul is aye the selfsame thing it was, and yet astray
It fleeteth into sundry shapes...
In all the world there is not that standeth at a stay.
Things ebb and flow, and every shape is made to pass away.
The time itself continually is fleeting like a brook:
For neither brook nor lightsome time can tarry still. But look!
As every wave drives other forth, and that which comes behind
Both thrusteth and is thrust itself, even so the times by kind
Do fly and follow both at once, and evermore renew,
For that that was before is left, and straight there doth ensue
Another that was never erst.
Now have I brought a work to end which neither Jove's fierce wrath,
Nor sword, nor fire, nor fretting age with all the force it hath
Are able to abolish quite. Let come that fatal hour
Which, saving of this brittle flesh, hath over me no power,
And at his pleasure make an end of my uncertain time;
Yet shall the better part of me assured be to climb
Aloft above the starry sky; and all the world shall never
Be able for to quench my name; for look! how far so ever
The Roman Empire by the right of conquest shall extend,
So far shall all folk read this work; and time without all end,
If poets as by prophecy about the truth may aim,
My life shall everlastingly be lengthened still by fame.

(Translated by Sir John Harrington)

The Emperors after Augustus

"I found Rome brick, I left it marble" said Augustus. The Rome of the empire, of which we see the remains still, was begun under Augustus. But he had no son or grandson to succeed him. Tiberias, a brilliant general, was chosen and adopted, and became Emperor when Augustus died in 14 A.D.. In his reign there was already a feeling of insecurity, there were mutinies in the provinces. Tiberias withdrew to the island of Capri in 26 and never returned to Rome. He died there, insane, in 37, in a climate of terror. Under his rule Pontius Pilate had Jesus executed in Jerusalem.

He was followed by Gaius whose universally-known name is Caligula (little boot). He is the first of the monster-emperors, of immense cruelty, probably insane, accepting honors which made him equal to a god in his lifetime, stirring up revolt among the Jews by a plan to put a statue of himself in the temple at Jerusalem. He was assassinated in 41, to be followed by the more reasonable Claudius. He was handicapped and physically weak, and became emperor by chance when the soldiers who had killed Caligula found him hiding in the Palace. He was interested in administration. In his days, in 43, Britain became a province of the Roman Empire and the city of London was founded on the Thames at the lowest place where a crossing could be made; London was to become the largest Roman city north of the Alps.

Claudius had at least four wives, the last of whom was his niece, Agrippina, who had already a son, Nero, whom Claudius adopted in 50 as guardian to his own son Britannicus. Agrippina, at first very powerful, but later rejected by Nero, turned to Britannicus, who should have become Emperor, as Claudius' son. In 54 Claudius died, perhaps thanks to some mushrooms given him by Agrippina, and Nero became Emperor. Britannicus had lost his right to the throne, and was poisoned, probably on Nero's orders, in 55. Nero was interested in poetry and art, thanks to his tutor Seneca who became his main advisor for a time.

In 59, encouraged by his mistress Poppaea, the wife of his friend Otho (who was to be emperor for 2 months in 69), Nero arranged the murder of his mother, who had perhaps been plotting his death. In 62 Seneca retired from imperial service, leaving Nero completely out of control. He then divorced

and murdered his wife, Octavia, in order to marry Poppaea (whom Otho had wisely divorced, he himself going to live in Spain). In 65 Poppaea died of a kick Nero gave her.

Nero was fond of Greek styles in art, and of gymnastics. He built a Gymnasium and founded Games for young men (Juvenalia) in Rome. He also wrote poetry which was loudly acclaimed. He was highly un-popular at Rome. In 64 a fire destroyed one half of the city; there is a report that he caused it ("Nero fiddled while Rome burned"), at least he took over a lot of the land thus cleared to build a vast palace, and decided quite arbitrarily to blame the Christians of Rome for the blaze, slaughtering many. According to widely accepted legend the martyrs included the apostles Peter and Paul (cf. the film Quo Vadis). Peter is said to have been crucified while Paul was beheaded.

In 65, a plot to assassinate Nero was betrayed and many were ex-ecuted or forced to commit suicide, including the great Stoic and writer of tragedies, Seneca, and the epic poet Lucan. By 66 the Jews were in revolt, Nero sent Vespasian to pacify them and left for Greece. By now Nero could not tolerate any rivalry, and forced generals to commit suicide because they were successful! In Greece he won the top prize in all the Games and Festivals, while there was a famine in Rome. Execu-tions continued. Revolts broke out in Gaul, Spain, Africa. At last Nero fled from Rome and committed suicide in June 68.

Literary Figures of the Post-Augustan Period

Phaedrus (15 B.C.-50) ought to be known for his adaptations into Latin of Aesop's Fables since his work established the fable, especially the beast fable, as a serious genre.

Seneca (4 B.C.-65) was above all a philosopher, Stoic and moralizing, but many of his works are lost. He is notable in literary history because his Latin versions of nine tragedies (Hercules Furens, Medea, Troades, Phaedra, Agamemnon, Oedipus, Hercules Oetaeus, Phoenissae, Thyestes) showed the Renaissance a form of classical tragedy that it found more congenial than the austere Greek originals. Seneca's tragedies are designed to be read in 'closet performance', not acted in a theatre. They are static, and in high style. The presence of ghosts, tyrants, madmen, nurses, traitors, of high emotions expressed in elaborate rhetoric, of violent events, and other such elements in Renaissance tragedy are all signs of Senecan influence. His work is designed to illustrate the Stoic idea that passion is essentially destructive; passion and revenge unleash the hounds of hell, and the innocent suffer as much as the guilty, while the gods remain above, indifferent.

Seneca's prose works are marked by noble humanism and moral en-lightenment. His style is epigrammatic, curt, and influenced the change in English prose style in about 1600. Until then, Cicero had been the model. Erasmus edited him, Montaigne chose him and Plutarch as his favorite writers. The English Essays of Francis Bacon show strong Senecan influence in their use of philosophical epigrams.

From the Moral Epistles

We need not lift our hands to heaven, we need persuade no one to let us approach the ear of some statue, as if by so doing we made ourselves more audible. God is near you, with you, in you.

Yes, Lucullus, within us a holy spirit has its seat, our watcher and guardian in evil and in good. As we treat him so he treats us. The good man, in fact, is never without God. Can any one rise superior to Fortune without his aid? Is he not the source of every generous and exalted inspiration? In every good person "Dwells nameless, dimly seen, a god" (Aeneid).

If you are confronted by some dense grove of aged and giant trees shutting out every glimpse of sky with screen upon screen of branches, the towering stems, the solitude, the sense of strangeness in a dusk so deep and unbroken, where no roof is, will make God real to you. Again, the cavern that holds a hillside poised on its deep-tunnelled galleries of rock, hollowed into that roomy vastness by nature's toils, not man's, will strike some hint of sanctity into your soul. So if you see a man undismayed by dangers, untroubled by desires, happy in adversity, calm in the midst of storm, eying mankind from above and the gods on their own plane, will you not be touched with awe before him? Into that body a divine force has descended. The splendid and disciplined soul, which leaves the little world unheeded

and smiles at the objects of all our hopes and fears, draws its driving force from heaven. So great a creation cannot stand without God for its stay... Thus a spirit, great and holy, sent down to give us a nearer knowledge of the divine, lives among us but cleaves to the fountain of its existence: from this it is pendant, on this its gaze is fixed, thither it strives, and moves among our concerns as a superior. (...) And what, you ask, is that? His spirit, and Reason as perfected in that spirit. For man is a creature of Reason. And what does this Reason demand of him? A very easy thing-to live in accord with his own nature. But it is made hard by the universal insanity. We push each other into vices.

(Translated by E. Phillips Barker)

Petronius, too, committed suicide in 65 after loosing Nero's favour. He is the author of one work, the Satyricon, which many consider the first novel. It is a kind of Menippean Satire, combining lyric and mock -epic, poetry with prose. It is full of low-class and disreputable heroes, humour of situation and lively, realistic dialogue that reminds one of Charles Dickens. Its structure is episodic, like the picaresque novel.

The Later Empire

Astonishingly, the Empire survived the excesses of Nero; the administration laid down by Augustus and Claudius did its job, even in the confusion that followed them. At first, after Nero's death, the Praetorian Guard (in charge of imperial security at Rome) and the Senate, chose Galba from Spain as emperor. The next year the Guard acclaimed Otho and killed Galba. The armies along the Rhine chose Vitellius, there was a battle which Otho lost, he committed suicide. In the East, the armies had chosen Vespasian; they marched on Rome, there was fierce fighting and Vitellius was killed. Vespasian ruled as Emperor for 10 years.

The long Jewish Revolt, centered in Jerusalem, was finally crushed by a Roman army led by Vespasian's son Titus who in 70 captured Jerusalem, destroying the city and the Temple, removing the veil and sacred ornaments to Rome. This event was recorded on the Arch of Titus that still stands near the Colosseum in Rome. From this moment, the Jewish identity could only continue in Diaspora (dispersion). In fact, since the depor-tation by Nebuchadnezzar in 587, there had been large communities of Jews living in Babylon; they remained there until the 20th century when most if not all went to live in Israel. In Alexandria one third of the population was Jewish at the time of Claudius.

The destruction of the temple did not mean the end of Judaism, which continued with the local Synagogue as the centre of worship, with community rituals marking each stage of life, and with the annual festivals including the family-centered Passover Meal with its final "Next year in Jerusalem!" Finally, in 135, exasperated by continuing Jewish revolts, Hadrian built a Graeco-Roman city on top of the ruins of Jerusalem and forbade Jews to live in it.

Under Vespasian, the Empire knew peace and ordered government, which could be continued because he left two sons who followed him as emperor, Titus (emperor 79-81) and Domitian (emperor 81-96). The role of the emperor now became clearer; he was effectively a monarch with absolute powers. Under Vespasian and Titus, this was expressed in good government, but Domitian, Titus' younger brother, after a good beginning began a reign of terror from 93, in which philosophers were banished from Italy and many people were executed. The emperor saw plots everywhere but at last his wife and others succeeded in murdering him in 96.

The new emperor is counted as the first of the "Five Good Emperors": Nerva (only ruled for 2 years), Trajan (98-117), Hadrian (117-138), Antoninus (138-161), Marcus Aurelius (161-180). One important factor was that all these men chose their successor as "the best man available," having no sons of their own. As soon as Marcus Aurelius made his son his successor, corruption returned. In this time, the Roman presence in Britain was being confirmed, and Hadrian is still remembered for Hadrian's Wall (built 122-7), which divides England from the lands to the north, stretching originally from coast to coast at the level of modern Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The fierce Pictish tribes of the North were too strong for the legions.

This is the great age of the Roman cities across the Empire. Peace meant that economic

development became possible, the great road system was expanded, trade went beyond the frontiers, to Scandinavia and China. This is the age that built the Colosseum, Trajan's Forum, the Pantheon in Rome, while theatres, baths, aqueducts, schools and libraries spread across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. This is the Silver Age of Latin Literature. At the same time, the Empire was becoming more international, more Oriental too, and Christianity was not the only Eastern religion spreading at this time, but it was to outlive all the rest.

The Writers of the Silver Age

Quintillian (30-100?) is only known by one work, "On the Training of an Orator," in which he outlines a traditional system of education based on speech-making. In the Renaissance, many scholars were tutors to high-class children and his ideas appealed to Erasmus, Vives etc. At the end, he gives a picture of the finished product, a Roman gentleman perfect in morals and diction. Pope refers to his suggestions about good reading in the Essay on Criticism.

Statius (40-96) left only one work that has survived, the epic Thebaid which was highly esteemed in the Middle Ages by Dante and Chaucer. It tells of the fratricidal conflict between Eteocles and Polynices for control of Thebes, ending in their deaths (they kill each other). Creon refuses burial to Polynices but Antigone and his wife perform the rites. Theseus of Athens intervenes, kills Creon, and destroys Thebes. The work is no longer admired.

Martial (40-104) has left us fifteen books with more than 1500 epigrams, often a single couplet. Some have a "sting" that is closer to satire than the Greek epigrams had ever been. But the humour ("wit") goes with deep understanding of humanity. Martial's epigrams were essential for the art of 17th-century poetry: Ben Jonson, John Donne, Herrick, Cowley. Renaissance critics distinguished between different tones of epigram: honeyed, pungent, mordant, ridiculous and foul.

Pliny the Younger (61-114) is best known for his 10 books of letters, 247 letters to 105 people. They were prepared for publication, so are more artificial than those of Cicero, but it is Pliny who taught the West the art of literary letters, a form of essay. One of the most famous letters contains his description of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 which destroyed Pompeii, in which his uncle died. Equally important is his letter to the Emperor Trajan, in which he asks how he should deal with the Christians in the province of Asia Minor he had been sent to govern.

Juvenal (50-127) is the greatest of the ancient satirists, fierce where Horace was amused, considering the evils of his age with "harsh, wild laughter." Some of the topics of his poems are: hypocritical philoso-phers, the difficulties of being poor, the faults of women, the evils of pride and ambition, the cruelties of people. He was popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Donne and other young men of his time enjoyed his caustic approach. Dryden was the first to translate him while adapting his references to contemporary situations, Boileau in France, Pope and Dr. Johnson, Burke, Hugo, Flaubert, Byron, all drew on his 16 surviving poems. His vision of the world is always on the darker side, his struggle is to remain human despite all the wickedness he sees.

Tacitus (55-117?) is a chronicler, a historian. He tells us almost all we know about the events between the death of Augustus and the death of Nero in his Annals, and is the source for Robert Graves' novels about Claudius, for the film "Quo Vadis," as well as for Racine's Britannicus, Ben Jonson's Sejanus (in which Shakespeare acted) etc. He is also a vital source of knowledge about the Germanic tribes in his Germania; some of them were later to cross the Channel and become the Anglo-Saxons while others took control of Italy. He even describes Britain in his Agricola.

Suetonius (69-140) is the founder of modern biography, in his lost De Viris Illustribus, in his "Lives of the Poets" and his "Lives of the Twelve Caesars." After him, history came to be seen in a biographical perspective, and thus he inspired St. Jerome's De Viris Illustribus (392), Einhard's Life of Charlemagne (820), William of Malmesbury's His-tory of the English Kings (1127) and all that follow.

His lives are told without prejudice or rhetoric, facts speak for themselves, and since the people he describes were so fascinating, his lives are reported like “case-histories.”

At the same time, but living in Greece and writing in Greek, lived Plutarch (50-120). For the last thirty years of his fife he was priest at Delphi and wished to revive the ancient Greek spirit. He is most famous for his Lives, although he wrote very many other works, mostly philo-sophical as with his Moralia. His Lives contain biographical portraits of 50 great men, some legendary like Theseus and Romulus, some almost contemporary like Julius Caesar and Brutus. Mostly they are written in pairs, with moralizing comparisons attached. The stories he tells are vivid, the nar-rative memorable, the style varied. Many of the Lives follow a pattern of family background - education - youth - climax - change of fortune, which helped to inspire the Renaissance historical tragedy. In France, he was trans-lated by Amyot in 1559, this was then put into English by Sir Thomas North (1579), giving Shakespeare his material for Julius Caesar and other plays. Montaigne, Dryden, Rousseau and the French Revolu-tionaries all drew on him. In Plutarch’s Lives, history is seen becoming literature.

Marcus Aurelius is unique among the emperors in being also famous as a writer. He was much engaged in provincial wars, in Syria and Egypt, etc. During his spare time he made notes on thoughts which struck him. Because of his own personality, and the difficulties sur-rounding him, these have great intensity, although the Stoic ideas expressed in these Meditations are not very new. It is a work which has appealed to thoughtful men of action over the centuries.

The Decline and Fall

After 200, civil war and chaos returned, although for most people normal life continued. The slaves remained slaves, the poor remained poor. Many emperors came and went, now from many countries, as they were imposed by military coups in different areas. Germanic tribes were pressing on the Eastern frontiers, and there were many problems. At last Diocletian (emperor 284-305) decided to divide the Empire into two parts, Greek--speaking to the East, Latin-speaking to the West, establishing two “junior Caesars,” Galerius and Constantius, who would take power when he retired. This did not work, and by 324 Constantine (his English name) was Emperor of the whole Empire.

In 330, he dedicated the new city of Constantinople, on the site of the old Byzantium, to be the “New Rome,” the capital in the East where the Emperor had to spend most of the time. It was modelled on Rome, with a Senate and free grain for the citizens, but there were no great temples in it, for Constantine had already chosen Christianity for his personal religion, although he was only baptized on his deathbed in 337. After him, the supremacy of Christianity in the Empire was almost guar-anteed, although Julian ‘the Apostate’ (360-3) made one last attempt to bring back the old paganism. Theodosius became emperor in 379 and only died in 395. It was during his reign that Christianity became the official religion and, especially from 391, many laws were passed that gradually closed down the ‘pagan’ temples.

Before Constantine, many emperors had tried to find a mythical basis for their authority in religion. It was Constantine who realized that the emperor could be seen as the earthly representative of the heavenly Lord found in the Christian Bible. In 282, Carus had declared that the emperor was Dominus (Lord), not merely princeps (first). Aurelian (270-5) had gone farther by proclaiming himself dominus et deus, Lord and god, and under Constantine the imperial liturgy was finally organized as it continued at Constantinople until 1453. The emperor was considered to be sacred; he dressed in purple and gold vestments similar to those of priests, with incense before him, and all approaching had to fall prostrate before him.

The economical and political structure of the Empire gradually grew weaker -and the main place of new vigour was the Church as it con-fronted its task of evangelizing the Empire. Already in 325, Constantine had presided over a Council of the Church’s bishops at Nicaea, in Turkey, asking them to overcome their doctrinal disagreements, centered on the so-called Arian heresy. This combination of Church and State marks one beginning of the Middle Ages. Most of the great writers of this age are found in the Church: Ambrose, Jerome, Hilary, Augustine, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil. Christianity spread quickly

In the deserts of Syria and Egypt, groups of men and women, fearing the corruptions of urban life, began to live alone as hermits or together in cenobitic communities, in lives consecrated entirely to God in prayer. Their single-minded consecration to God was expressed by the Greek word monos (single, one) and this is the origin of the English word 'monk'. The monastic life had begun, and would later yield the European monasteries whose libraries were to be the key to the survival of Roman literary culture during the coming Dark Age.

By about 404 the Roman legions left Britain to help defend Italy and after about 450 its eastern regions began to be occupied by new settlers: Saxons, Angles, Jutes from North Germany. Visigoths, Franks (who gave their name to France) and Burgundians, all Germanic, occupied much of Gaul, where they learned to speak the current form of Latin, that was to become French. In 410, the Gothic leader Alaric captured Rome and sacked it, marking the virtual end of the Roman Empire in the West. From far away to the East, the Huns had been advancing westwards for centuries. Under the leadership of Attila the Huns advanced into Gaul and Italy, sacking Rome in 452. Suddenly Attila died and the Huns disappeared from history.

The Vandal king Gaeseric again plundered Rome in 455, and from this time on, Italy became the scene of Ostrogothic (Lombard) kingdoms whose rulers acknowledged the Emperor in Constantinople and did as they wished. They used colloquial forms of Latin (romanice) and followed Roman laws, customs and culture. The Church continued to use the strict Latin language (grammatica), and in many cases was the only place in which writing was practiced, while the ordinary population developed new, relaxed forms of talking that became Italian, Spanish, French.

Slowly a new dynasty arose in northern Gaul, tracing its beginning from the Frankish leader Clovis (466 - 511) who made Paris his capital, became a Christian and extended his rule over all of what had been Gaul and was now becoming France. This 'Merovingian' dynasty ruled until they were ousted in 751. Pepin was crowned king, and when he died in 768, his son Charles (742-814) succeeded him as the greatest figure of the Carolingian Dynasty. He extended his kingdom to include vast areas of northern Germany, and also fought the Islamic Moors in northern Spain. In 800, on Christmas Day, Charles was crowned by the Pope in St. Peter's church at Rome as the new Holy Roman Emperor, but his throne was in Aachen, in Northern Germany; he is better known as Charlemagne.