Studies in English, New Series

Volume 4 Article 6

1983

Edward III and the Countess of Salisbury: A Study in Values

Samuel M. Pratt
Ohio Weslayan University

EDWARD III AND THE COUNTESS OF SALISBURY: A STUDY IN VALUES

SAMUEL M. PRATT

OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

During the second half of the sixteenth century, numerous versions of a story involving King Edward III and the Countess of Salisbury appeared in Europe—in France and Italy but notably in England. Here I shall sketch the progress of the story from its emergence in the fourteenth century to a point in the late sixteenth century, by which time enough modifications had been introduced to make the story morally acceptable to the Elizabethans. I emphasize what is easily overlooked—that Elizabethan writers were very much aware of the moral values embraced by the large center of society, not only aware but supportive of these values (I present evidence on the point in this study). To be acceptable, a story had to conform to such values—mostly in its ending (the plot had to come out right) but also along the way because of the possibility that the story-teller would invade territories forbidden to him.

Not only shall I sketch the progress of the story; more important, I shall sketch the progress of the meaning—what the story meant to those who shaped it and what, in turn, that meaning tells us about them and, by extension, about their age.

The evidence strongly suggests that what the writer, pressured by his cultural values, *wanted* to think about an English king and an English noblewoman determined his treatment of the story; the illumination that history could give was not really sought. For these reasons, the story of Edward III and the Countess of Salisbury provides an unusual glimpse into the culture of the times. I say "unusual" because we can see the writers—Painter and Drayton, for instance—struggling with the material, wrenching it into acceptable patterns and leaving us their observations on the problems.

Now to the story. During the late autumn of 1341, Edward III marched toward the Scottish border to wage war against his northern neighbors, who were then waxing strong in the perennial border skirmishing. Among other ventures, the Scots had besieged the castle of Wark[1] in Northumberland, then the property of the Earl of Salisbury. Unfortunately, some months earlier, while fighting for his lord and king, the Earl had fallen captive to the French. During his

absence, his wife, the Countess of Salisbury, held out against the Scottish invaders, and in due time Edward relieved the castle.

So goes the story up to a point—to the end of chapter one, let us say. That much of it is credible and is the normal prelude to exciting and—to some critics—strictly incredible action that follows. Chapters two and three—to continue our arbitrary organization—existing in numerous versions and in three languages, were preserved in the fourteenth century by the chroniclers, Jehan le Bel and Jean Froissart, and retold in the sixteenth century, most memorably in the 1590s. The basis of chapters two and three is the passionate love for the Countess that smote Edward soon after his arrival at the castle. Edward avowed his love. The Countess, being a good English wife, resisted him. End of chapter two. In chapter three, the story depends upon the teller, there existing in print about as many resolutions of the conflict as can be imagined.

We start with Jehan le Bel, the Belgian chronicler described by W. P. Ker as "an author with a mind and style of his own, who now has his proper place among the masters of the French tongue....[who] writes like a man of honour and a man of good sense, acquainted with great affairs and able to find the right words for them."[2] Jehan was contemporary with Edward III, dying about 1370 when more than eighty years old. He spent time in England, thereby acquiring much of his information first-hand. In view of these facts and of Ker's opinion, it is ironic and revealing that Jehan's version of the story, the earliest we have, has been either repudiated or disregarded ever since. Jehan writes that Edward, not to be denied by the honorable resistance of the Countess, took his pleasure of her by force and then returned to London. Eventually her husband, the Earl, freed from his French captivity, rejoined her, who, grieving greatly, told him of the king's villainy. The story closes with a confrontation scene some time later in London: in a spirit of moral condemnation the Earl magnificently stands his ground before his king.

According to no less an historian than A. F. Pollard, one key detail in the story is wrong: it was 1340, not 1341, when the Earl became a prisoner of the French.[3] This point alone injures much of the story as Jehan tells it. The story may or may not be injured by biographical facts about Edward and the Countess. That Edward was a married man and the father of a growing family is probably irrelevant, his character being what it was. On the other hand, that the Countess was much older than Edward lessens the probability of the story. Consid-

ering the story in his life of Edward in *DNB,* William Hunt concludes: "The friendship that existed between the king and the earl would give a peculiarly dark character to Edward's crime if it was committed. Possibly Jehan le Bel may have been mistaken as to the countess, but scarcely about Edward's not committing the crime of which he is accused upon some lady or other."

To check the story for historical probability is one thing (though, after all, Jehan le Bel entitled his work *Les Vrayes Chroniques*); to check it by literary standards is another. As narrative it has merit in characterization, dialogue, and structure. Not inconclusive as an historical episode can so easily be, this story comes to a fine moral decision in the Earl's speech to the King. Of Jehan's version entire, W. P. Ker wrote, "It remains as one of the finest things in old French prose."[4]

When Froissart came to this story, he made several changes, a somewhat surprising development since he relied heavily on Jehan le Bel for much of his early material. There is no rape of the Countess. Not only did Froissart exclude that episode from his text; he also, in the Amiens manuscript, wrote a lengthy note repudiating it.[5] Thus, when Edward's kingly tongue and personality go to work on the Countess, but without success, Froissart has the King withdraw, a frustrated yet noble figure. The chastity of the Countess is inviolate. To be sure, some time later Edward holds a lavish tournament in London, "for the love of the countesse of Salisbury,"[6] as Lord Berners says, but again chastity rather than passion triumphs. No more successful on his own ground than in the castle of the Countess, Edward tries no more.

The climax of Froissart's story comes in one of his additions to Jehan le Bel's version, a game of chess played by King and Countess in her castle. This charming episode adds depth to the characterization of both players. Chess was only the apparent contest. The greater one between them continued. How much symbolism Froissart *intended* by this game I wish I knew. That the game ends with the King checkmated by the Countess, a result of Edward's letting himself be defeated, is surely a parallel more than accidental. The wagers in the game are a pair of rings, a valuable one with a large ruby placed by Edward, a much less valuable "light ring of gold"[7] placed by the Countess. Edward does not win the "light ring of gold," and the Countess refuses to accept Edward's ring with the large ruby.

Shortly after the game of chess, and after some artfully drawn

scenes of refreshment and farewell, Edward departs. Several chapters later, the tournament in London is pure anticlimax. There, no scene with Edward and the Countess together takes place. The love theme evaporates, and soon Froissart is immersed once more in the battles of the time.

What I would emphasize is the process of adjustment so clearly under way at this early point in the history of the story: Froissart accepts, rejects, or modifies the material coming to him, and he does so on moral grounds. Furnivall may be confident (see footnote 5) that Froissart's changes reflect historical fact, but to me the nature of the changes indicates a moral motivation. The tone of Froissart's repudiation of Jehan le Bel's account is one of moral indignation.[8]

Next, Bandello told the story,[9] and his version, written two centuries after the event, became the basis of late sixteenth-century English versions. From Bandello the path passed through the Frenchman, Boaistuau, to the Englishman, William Painter, whose forty-sixth novel in the famous *Palace of Pleasure* constitutes what I shall call the Bandello-Painter point in the development of the story.[10] Here we are once more amidst questions of historical accuracy and moral acceptability. In a kind of preface Painter asks the questions and answers them in a matter-of-fact way to his own satisfaction. Next, he fairly faithfully sets down Bandello's story as it came to him from Boaistuau, including those features to which he has objected.

On the historical side, problems arise because Bandello gave the ending a new twist, neither rape nor withdrawal. Edward married the Countess! This development, protests Painter, is impossible. "Altogether vntrue," he writes, "for that Polydore and other aucthors do remember but one wife that hee had, which was the sayde vertuous Queene Philip."[11] The verdict of history agrees with Painter: Edward III did not marry the Countess of Salisbury. Nevertheless, this new ending to the story contained one fine moral development that appeared in later versions, for which we credit Bandello. It also prompted the assertion that it had really not been King Edward who lusted for the Countess but rather his son, the famous Black Prince, a theory for which we credit Painter. The moral development more emphatically renders the resistance of the Countess, leading to a thoroughly acceptable (to the sixteenth century mind) ending of marriage (more on this later). We measure this resistance in the reaction of the King; or perhaps we should say that Bandello, like Froissart before him, refined the character of the King to make it what he thought it

should be. Either way, the Bandello-Painter Edward contrasts with the depraved Edward of Jehan le Bel and the subdued but unregenerate Edward of Froissart. In a dramatic scene near the end of the story, the Countess plucks out a sharp knife hidden under her kirtle and, according to Painter, begs the King either to slay her with his sword or suffer her to kill herself—death rather than dishonor.

Writes Painter:

> The king, burning with amorous heate, beholding this pitifull spectacle, and consideringe the inuincible constancie and chastitie of the Countesse, vanquished by remorse of conscience, ioyned with like pitie, taking her by the hand, said: "Rise vp Lady, and liue from henceforth assured: for I will not ne yet pretende all the dayes of my life, to commit any thing in you against your will." And plucking the knife out of her hand, exclaimed: "This knife hereafter shall bee the pursiuant [*sic*] before God and men of this thine inexpugnable chastitie, the force whereof wanton loue was not able to endure, rather yelding place to vertue, which being not alienated from me, hath made me at one instant victorious ouer my selfe."[12]

Here is an Edward with conscience and heart, an Edward to whom virtue is not alien, though a still unsatisfactory Edward to Painter the translator. His preface with its objections to and corrections of Bandello concludes with this comment, "Whereof I thoughte good to giue this aduertisemente: and waying with my selfe that by the publishing hereof no dishonour can dedounde [*sic*] to the illustre race of our noble kinges and Princes, ne yet to the blemishinge of the fame of that noble kinge, eternized for his victories and vertues in the auncient Annales, Chronicles and Monuments, forren and domesticall...."[13]

In this climactic scene, it should be noted, Bandello writes more convincingly than Painter. The Countess plays heavily on the King's promise to grant any request she may make (except that he stop loving her). After dramatically pulling out her knife, she begs him to slay her with his sword. If he does not and persists in his suit, she asserts that she will slay herself—no question of her ability to do so, no asking the King's permission.

I have referred to the Bandello-Painter point in the story. As we have just seen, there are differences, of course, in the two versions. I find another interesting difference after the action moves from the castle to London. Painter involves the King in "Tilt and Torney, Maskes, Momeries, Feastes, Banquettes, and other like pastimes"[14] in

his campaign to win the Duchess. This strategy reminds us of what Froissart alleged and is not to be found in Bandello.[15] The latter, instead, presents an Edward who, wholly enslaved by his passion, pursues the prize with single-minded zeal. Following is a sample of Bandello's view of Edward's condition:

> ...he fell into such despair of that his love that he was like to go mad. He passed night and day on [*sic*] like wise, without taking any jot of repose; he ate little or nothing, never laughed, but sighed alway; nay, whenassoever it was possible to him, he stole away from his company and shutting himself alone in his chamber, had no mind unto otherwhat [*sic*] than his lady's dire and cruel rigour, for thus did he style her pure and steadfast chastity.[16]

This is not a man who can participate in tournaments and feasts. What strikes me is that the person wholly consumed by his passion, who goes directly to his object, is found throughout the novels of Bandello. Do national characteristics show here?

If we take the first quarter of Bandello's novel, we have the story essentially as Froissart wrote it, with the notable exception of the game of chess.[17] Since Froissart dropped the story at that point, we suppose that he had no more to tell. Bandello, however, has three-quarters of his story yet to go. His sense of artistic unity will not permit him to be satisfied with the inconclusiveness of Froissart. The result is a tale in which "all ends as happily as *Pamela.*"[18] To get this ending, Bandello shows no concern for historical accuracy. The first requirement is that the Countess become eligible for marriage. Thus the Earl dies shortly after his release from prison in France, before he can be reunited with his wife. In fact, he died in 1344. Bandello elevates the Countess in the social scale, making her the daughter of one of Edward's closest counsellors, the Earl of Warwick. This alteration was accepted by an unknown playwright and by Deloney in two late and important versions of the story. Actually her father was an inconspicuous baron. Bandello exploits the opportunity of having the parents, to save their own position, urge the daughter to yield. Furthermore, at the time of the King's passion, writes Bandello, she was twenty-six years old. Though we can not ascertain her birth date, her first child was certainly born in 1328, and, even at that time, a thirteen-year-old mother was rather unlikely. Throughout, Bandello replaces the inconclusiveness of life with the decision of art. His contribution to the story is substantial, though the unknown playwright to whom we shall come makes it clear that the role of the parents was offensive to the values of the late Elizabeth age.

The next work to consider is not the next chronologically; instead, it is the pair of epistles written by Michael Drayton and first published in 1598. I take this pair next because they show most strongly the influence of Painter's criticism of Bandello. Drayton accepts Painter's assertion that it was Edward the Black Prince, not Edward the King, who lusted for the Countess. As a result, *Englands Heroicall Epistles* contains an exchange of letters between the Black Prince and the Countess. Not only does Drayton seize upon the wrong man;[19] actually he has the wrong woman as well. Following Painter's criticism to the letter, he thinks that the lady whom the Black Prince did marry was the Countess of the story. She was not; Drayton has confused two women. To deal with the involved errors stemming from this confusion, however, is not relevant to this study.

Why did Drayton accept such changes when he knew the established characterization in the story? The general reason was that as a poet Drayton consistently had a sharp eye for the moral character of his material. He was a man of his times; the conventional standards of society were his standards. The particular reasons for his character substitutions appear in his notes to the epistles. These notes make clear that Drayton thought it impossible for an English king to have played such a role as the traditional story assumes. Specifically, he blames Bandello for the fame of the story, and his words provide a penetrating insight into the proud, moral, very English sense of superiority of his age. "Bandello," he writes, "being an Italian..." (one notices the tone of condescension). For the "errors in the truth of our Historie," Drayton generously excuses Bandello "as being a stranger."[20] Indeed, Drayton stands so staunchly on the side of conventional morality that Mrs. Tillotson comments on one of his notes as having "the true Richardsonian ring."[21] In part this note reads: "Here first the Prince saw her [Drayton refers to her castle, besieged by the Scots], whose Libertie had been gained by her shame, had she beene drawne by dishonest Love to satisfie his Appetite: but by her most prayse-worthie Constancie, shee converted that humour in him to an Honourable purpose, and obtained the true reward of her admired Vertues."[22] There, in truth, *is* the formula of *Pamela:* be steadfast; eventually the lustful one will settle for marriage.

As narratives these epistles are poor, though to say so is unfair to Drayton. He did not intend them to be narratives. Rather, his intention, consistently found throughout *Englands Heroicall Epistles,* was

to capture a moment near the end of a lovers' relationship. For the Black Prince and the Countess, the moment he chose came after the stay at the castle. Thus the epistles contain only brief allusions to the encounter which is central to this study. Their high point, if I understand Drayton, is the section in which the Black Prince first glorifies the chastity of the Countess and then proposes marriage:

> When all thy Trials are enroll'd by Fame,
> And all thy Sex made glorious by thy Name,
> Then I a Captive shall be brought hereby,
> T'adorne the Triumph of thy Chastitie.
> I sue not now thy Paramour to bee,
> But as a Husband to be link'd to thee.[23]

I think of Drayton's treatment as a diversion, as the creation of a new story rather than further development of the old. Still, nowhere else in the works of this study are tastes and standards more apparent, and they are at once the tastes and standards of conventional society and the author.

Leaving Drayton, we come to the story as a virtually isolated episode in a play, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third,* first published in 1596.[24] Here the story runs without interruption from Act I, Scene ii, through Act II. Though the source seems clearly to have been Painter, the dramatist has revised the ingredients considerably and, unlike Drayton, has rejected Painter's suggestions about the correct cast of characters. Thus the dramatist has the problem of dealing with an English king turned lustful. In a series of refinements of the Bandello-Painter version he achieves a result worthy of all characters concerned and possible, at least, historically. The Countess does not become Edward's queen; therefore, the Earl does not have to die as in Bandello-Painter. But less conspicuous changes are equally indicative of the dramatist's fiber. One of the repugnant features of Painter's novel is what F. J. Furnivall calls "Bandello's pander-mother."[25] In the play the mother of the Countess is not present. The father is present and encourages the Countess in her resistance to the King.

The ending of the episode is a polished piece of plotting and, incidentally, a bit of tense, powerful drama. In Painter, we recall, the Countess finally appears before the King, apparently acquiescent, only to draw a knife and beg the King either to slay her with his sword or "suffer" her to slay herself with the knife. The critical reader may think Painter somewhat clumsy. Must the lady ask permission to slay

herself? Is the formality of request probable in a lady so desperate? No such questions arise from a reading of the play. The Countess appears before the King and declares that against the fulfillment of their love stand two lives that must be eliminated—the Earl's and the Queen's. Edward agrees. The Countess responds:

> Keepe but thy word, great king, and I am thine.
> Stand where thou dost, Ile part a little from thee,
> And see how I will yeeld me to thy hands.
> *(Turning suddenly upon him, and showing two daggers.)*
> Here by my side doth hang my wedding-knifes:
> Take thou the one, and with it kill thy Queene,
> And learne by me to finde her where she lies;
> And with this other Ile dispatch my loue,
> Which now lies fast asleepe within my hart. (II, ii. 171-178).

This, the climactic speech of the episode, with the Countess a poised and thrilling woman continues for twelve more lines. Having withdrawn some distance from the King, she is determined to conclude this affair once for all. If Edward moves toward her, she kills herself. If he refuses to drop his "most unholie sute," she kills herself. Magnificent in character, she kneels to her sovereign as she ends her speech. Though a loyal subject, she is uncompromising toward a desire that lies beyond Edward's law.

Edward is overwhelmed. The Countess has shown him his baseness and her greatness. The episode ends, as the King, recalling the rape of Lucrece, exhorts:

> Arise, true English Ladie; whom our Ile
> May better boast of, then euer Romaine might
> Of her, whose ransackt treasurie hath taskt
> The vaine indeuor of so many pens. (II, ii. 195-198).

If the meanings of this episode do not essentially differ from those drawn from other versions, they have at least been sharpened, and the narrative elements producing the meanings have been refined and improved. Warnke and Proescholdt view the ideas of the episode as follows: "The virtue and chastity of the Countess form the bright star which leads the king back again to the way of honor and duty. Having conquered himself, Edward, truly great, may conquer others....Thus, it will seem, the author has tried to show in his play that he only deserves to be crowned with success, and to become a master of others

who strives to check his own passions, and to be a master of himself."[26] The Countess, A. W. Ward writes, is "the true representative of high breeding united to moral purity. Bright and courteous in word and demeanour, she is as firm in her adherence to virtue as the prude who has no answer but a shudder to the first suggestion of harm. She is the type of what the king acknowledges her to be, when her constancy has overcome his passion: 'Arise, true English lady.' "[27]

The King-Countess story in the play is an artistic triumph. As such it contrasts with the next work in the chronology, a ballad written by Thomas Deloney in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Having the jogging meter and forced rhymes that characterize so much of Deloney's work, this ballad merits small consideration from the standpoint of art, but to the student of the King-Countess story Deloney's work deserves attention, for it represents the last example in the long process of story development with which I have been concerned. Let us see how Deloney tells it.

Having fallen deeply in love with the Countess (or was it only lust he felt?), Edward presses hard for sexual satisfaction. With nobility of character and forceful reasoning the Countess courteously but firmly rejects his suit. Her father, asked by Edward to persuade the Countess to yield, aligns himself rather with the Countess in her resistance. Finally, the Countess confronts the King and, unwilling to yield to dishonor, "tooke hir knife: / And desperately she sought to rid her selfe of life."[28] Instantly the King senses both the evil he has been pursuing and the worth of the lady. He declares:

> ...liue thou still, and let me beare the blame,
> Liue in honour and high estate
> With thy true Lord and wedded mate:
> I neuer will attempt this suit againe.[29]

The demands of morality have been met.

In view of the values (Deloney's) revealed, it matters little that the *action* of the ending will not stand much critical scrutiny, but we might note the major flaw. The King is sitting when the Countess draws her knife. Edward starts from his chair and stays her hand. How long does it take to plunge a knife into one's heart? Still, as we have seen, Deloney was not the first to have difficulty with this moment in the action.

In his own artless way Deloney solves problems distressing to most other tellers of the tale: he ends with three virtuous characters—

the King, the Countess, and a parent—an achievement that most others found beyond their reach. As we finish the ballad, we sense that he feels the story has come out right. We realize that the historical facts are of no concern. Deloney contributes to a story (is it folklore? legend?) in which the values demonstrated, rather than verifiable fact or objective truth, are important.

Returning to the play, *The Raigne of King Edward the Third,* I would add, in view of our study of the ballad, two points to my previous analysis. First, the lack of attention the ballad has received from students of the play is remarkable, for the ballad and the play show similarities so close that a relationship between the two is unmistakable. Because we have no evidence to the contrary, we must credit Deloney with the borrowing. On this subject editors of the play have no opinion.[30] Second, in the ending Deloney introduces a minor departure from the play. As in Bandello-Painter, the Countess produces only one knife.

The very existence of the ballad, poor as it is, supplies conclusive evidence of the process that has been going on—the adjustment of story to society's values. This process involves both a view of literature and a view of history. The Elizabethan ballad was a response to what people wanted—wanted not only to hear but also to believe. Time after time the Elizabethan ballad testifies both to the popularity of a subject and to the tastes and standards of society. Witness ballads on Sir Lancelot, Fair Rosamund, and Jane Shore, to mention only three striking examples of character presentations derived from works of greater fame and consequence. That the late Elizabethan period was a time of nationalistic fervor is a commonplace observation, but I submit that what in the literature of the age may appear motivated by this fervor may actually have had another source. From the time of *The Mirror for Magistrates*[31] to the end of the reign, Elizabethan writers sought and found in the English past the material for their didactic writing. It was not the heroic that they sought (Shakespeare's *Henry V* is an exceptional rather than a representative work). It was the stuff of moralizing. Thus Edward III, however rightly he acted in the endings written by Painter and the unknown playwright and Deloney, could not be called *heroic.* An heroine was present, to be sure, an heroine of triumphant righteousness, and her strength together with the ultimate decency of the King made possible the endings of those versions. Jehan le Bel's version never had a chance. It was not that an English king had been villainous (Elizabethans painted Edward II

and Richard III in dark colors). It was that Jehan's version showed the defeat, not the triumph, of righteousness in the person of the Countess. When Froissart asserted that there had been no defeat, the way lay open for the development of a significantly altered story. The two possible courses for a satisfactory triumph of the Countess were used: the marriage of King and Countess (Bandello-Painter) and the acknowledgment by the King of the wrongness of his pursuit (the play and the ballad). Standing by in protest on historical and moral grounds, let us recall, was Michael Drayton.

In addition to the inferences we draw from the adjustments and comments made by Froissart, Painter, and Drayton, we may find in the views of two influential critics of the sixteenth century, Roger Ascham and Sir Philip Sidney, the kind of thinking that the adjustments reflect. In *The Scholemaster* Ascham lashes out at two categories of narratives that he finds very offensive: Italian stories recently translated into English and Arthurian stories. Of the former he can say no good: "Ten Sermons at Paules Crosse do not so moch good for mouyng me to trewe doctrine, as one of those bookes do harme, with inticing men to ill liuing."[32] As for *Morte Arthure* [*sic*], "The whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest Knightes, that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit fowlest aduoulteries by sutlest shiftes."[33] These are moral positions; clearly Ascham dislikes Italian and Arthurian stories for their episodes and plots. In the passage on Italian books, from which I have quoted, he openly calls for an official ban on their publication.

The relevant position of Sidney is perhaps his most basic: that "the ending end of all earthly learning, being verteous action, those skils that most serve to bring forth that, have a most just title to be Princes over al the rest."[34] In *The Defense of Poesie* Sidney argues that poesy is the effective teacher of virtue. He repeatedly emphasizes the images that promote virtue in the reader. For example, he asks "whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to vertue, as that which teacheth what vertue is, & teacheth it not only by delivering forth his very being, his causes and effects, but also by making knowne his enemie vice, which must be destroyed, and his combersome servant passion, which must be mastred."[35] That is strong stuff. Such thinking cannot permit the image of a rapist-king; the image must be altered.

That the story had vitality is attested by Joshua Barnes, who in 1688 published a long history of Edward III. He has no patience with the story. The treatment in Barnes is complicated by his finding that the tournament held by Edward came before, not after, the alleged encounter of the King and the Countess at the castle of Wark. Therefore his first assault on the story develops from that tournament, which he maintains Edward held "to express his Joy in a most Magnificent and Royal Manner at the time"[36] of the baptism of his son, Edmund of Langley: "I will not dissemble, that all this by most Historians is said to have been done for Love of the Countess of *Salisbury,* with whom they make King *Edward* to be at this time deeply in Love: But this is a most Fabulous and Irrational Tradition (as we shall shew in due place) and utterly to be exploded of all Discreet Persons....it will appear the next year, how as yet the King had not received even that supposed wound of Love, of which many Authors make such pleasant Tales."[37]

Of the encounter at the castle, Barnes writes:

> I shall wholly wave that Popular, but exploded, Story of the Kings Amours with her at this time, and only proceed in a way more conformable to Reason, and undeniable Authority. When King *Edward* had unarm'd himself, he took 10 or 12 of his Barons with him, and went to the Castle to salute the Countess, and to see the manner of the *Scots* Assaults, and the Defence that was made against them. As soon as the Countess heard of the Kings coming, she commanded the Gates to be set open, and came forth to meet him in her most Rich Attire, so that it is not to be doubted, but that the Fame of her Courage preparing Mens minds, and the Splendour of her Garb being added to a Person of that Sex, of an high Quality, and not too far gone in Years, she might appear charming enough to give occasion of much merry talk among the Souldiers, who saw her at that time; and did possibly scatter such Reports, as might propagate an erroneous Tradition even down to us. When she came before the King, she kneeled upon the Earth, and returned her Dutifull Thanks for this his seasonable Succour. The King took her up Graciously with a cheerful and hearty Aire, and perhaps (as One of that Sex and Quality, who had Honourably acquitted her self in a Danger, brought upon her upon his account) saluted her at the same time. And so taking her by the hand, he walk'd her easily toward the Castle, talking no doubt pleasantly upon the way, as a King not fully 30 Years old might probably do on such an occasion. Whoso is minded to believe the other account of this Story, where the King is made to fall in love with her, him I refer to *Froisard* who discourses it at large, and is, I must confess, as to the main, a very credible Historian: Altho in this he is not to

be followed by those, who seriously confer circumstances of Names, Times, Places, and Persons.[38]

What our writers sought, as they worked on this story, was something of genuine human interest, and yet, since it involved a king and a countess, something through which nobility of character would shine. Thus the rape of the Countess appeared in one telling, and one telling only. Froissart's version, excellent though it was in parts, lacked the integration and decision that a popular story must have. Overcoming the faults of Froissart, Bandello introduced some of his own. Though Painter adopted Bandello's version, he stated his objections, and on the question of marriage his objection replaced error with error. Drayton got caught in the tangle created by Painter, with the result that in the development of the story his rendering was the least important. Finally, the unknown dramatist presented the story with scarcely a blemish, either morally or artistically. Deloney then compressed this version, substantially, into a ballad.

Surveying the range of versions, one may well feel that the difference between historian and imaginative writer tends to disappear. One must conclude that both groups were concerned with the quality of the story told rather than historical fact. To some this concern led to the creation of literary art—a unified story with beginning, middle, and end. To others it meant a stress on moral value, with virtue exalted and vice deemphasized. One way or the other, the quality of the story—not historical authenticity—was what counted. Jehan le Bel (historian) told the story most artistically. Froissart (historian) told the story most morally. Joshua Barnes (historian) would not even allow a married English king to fall in love with another woman—let alone become sexually involved. As Froissart repudiated le Bel, Barnes repudiated Froissart. So it went with the historians: the *quality* of the story was what counted. If we run through the imaginative writers, we find equally striking evidence of the same concern, from Bandello's extension of the story (by means of narrative artistry) to the point of moral resolution, then through Painter's and Drayton's wrenchings on moral grounds, finally to the literary and moral adjustments of the playwright and Deloney.

NOTES

[1] "Wark" (or "Werk") is the name of the castle in the more respectable works, such as the account of Edward in *DNB* and in Joshua Barnes, *The*

History of that Most Victorious Monarch Edward III (Cambridge, 1688), p. 251. But elsewhere the castle is named Roxborough by Drayton in his *Heroicall Epistles;* Rocksborough in the play *Edward III;* and, depending on the edition, Rosbury or Roxbury in the ballad.

[2] Introduction to John Froissart, *The Chronicle*, trans. Lord Berners, *The Tudor Translations* (London, 1901), 27: lxv.

[3] *DNB* s. v. "Montacute, William, first Earl of Salisbury."

[1] Froissart, p. lxii.

[5] This note has been reprinted in Jehan le Bel, *Les Vrayes Chroniques*, ed. M. Polain (Bruxelles, 1863), 2.29. F. J. Furnivall, *The Royal Shakspere* (London, n. d.), 1: cxiv, sums up this point as follows: "Froissart first believed in Jean le Bel's story that Edward III had used force and violated the Countess. Then when he came to England, he inquired right and left as to the truth of the story, and having found it, set it down."

[6] Froissart, p. 216.

[7] Froissart, p. lxxiii.

[8] For a translation of Froissart's repudiation, see Peter E. Thompson, trans. and ed., *Contemporary Chronicles of the Hundred Years War* (London, 1966), p. 13.

[9] It is Novella 29, "Part the Second."

[10] The passage of stories from Bandello through French translators, like Boaistuau in the case of the King-Countess story, has been treated in René Pruvost, *Matteo Bandello and Elizabethan Fiction* (Paris, 1937).

[11] William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (London, 1890), 1: 336.

[12] Painter, p. 361.

[13] Painter, p. 336.

[14] Painter, p. 343.

[15] That Painter knew Froissart's account is clear from two precise references to it (with Froissart named) in Painter's prefatory remarks.

[16] John Payne, trans., *The Novels of Matteo Bandello* (London, 1890), 4:200-201.

[17] Actually the game of chess is not present in Lord Berners' translation of Froissart. As W. P. Ker writes: "Some of the liveliest of Froissart's episodes did not find their way into the vulgate text, and so did not reach Lord Berners. One of these is the game of chess between King Edward and the Countess of Salisbury" (Froissart, p. lxxii). Ker then prints a translation of the episode.

[18] Notes to the *Works of Michael Drayton,* ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford, 1941), 5:109.

[19] To be sure, it is questionable to write about "the wrong man" when the whole story may be fiction. At the same time, the alleged events have a set of circumstances that eliminate the Black Prince. For example, in 1341 he was only eleven years old.

[20] These quotations are from Drayton, *Works,* 2:180-181.

[21] Drayton, 5: 109.

[22] Drayton, 2: 180.

[23] Drayton, 2: 187.

[24] The author is unknown. Some scholars have held the play to be Shakespeare's. Others have thought him responsible only for the King-Countess episode. For a good discussion of the authorship, see Karl Warnke and Ludwig Proescholdt, eds. *King Edward III* (Halle, 1886).

[25] Furnivall, (cf. n 5 above), p. cxiv.

[26] Warnke and Proescholdt, p. 34.

[27] Adolphus William Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature* (London, 1875), 1:456-457.

[28] *The Works of Thomas Deloney,* ed. Francis Oscar Mann (Oxford, 1912), p. 375.

[29] Deloney, p. 375.

[30] In the following studies and editions of the play, no mention is made of Deloney's ballad: Furnivall (n 5 above); Warnke and Proescholdt, (n 24 above); G. C. Moore Smith, ed. *Edward the Third—The Temple Dramatists* (London, 1897); and C. F. Tucker Brooke, ed. *The Shakespeare Apocrypha* (Oxford, 1908).

[31] First published in 1559.

[32] *English Works,* ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge, 1904), p. 230.

[33] Ascham, p. 231.

[34] *The Defence of Poesie,* ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1923), p. 12.

[35] Sidney, p. 12.

[36] Barnes, op. cit. (n 1 above), p. 246.

[37] Barnes, pp. 246-247.

[38] Barnes, p. 254.