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BOOK REVIEWS

Geoffrey Bullough

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLIER COUNTRY COMEDIES

Shakespeare was born in a thriving country town of about two thousand inhabitants, many of them engaged in trades connected with farming. His father John Shakespeare was a farmer who became a whittawer or dresser of fine skins to make gloves and purses. His mother Mary Arden was connected with the gentry, and John Shakespeare had been her father's tenant at Snitterfield, a neighbouring village. One of Shakespeare's ambitions was to become a Gentleman and to own a large house in Stratford-upon-Avon; so after years in London he bought New Place and doubtless came home occasionally to refresh himself in Warwickshire air. As Camden wrote, Warwickshire was 'for the most part clothed with woods, yet it wants not pastures nor cornfields.' Stratford lay on the edge of the Forest of Arden, in the very centre of England, and Shakespeare in his boyhood imbibed many rural images which he later turned to poetry, e. g., the breeding jennet, the boar, and the terrified hare, in *Venus and Adonis*, the hunting scenes in Act II of *Titus Andronicus*.

When he went to London and worked in the theatre Shakespeare was rarely out of sight of green fields, for London itself was a small city sprawling narrowly along the river Thames and the theatres themselves were mainly on the South Bank, outside the City boundaries. It is not surprising that the early comedies (after the first brilliant experiment in a Roman comedy to outdo Plautus, *The Comedy of Errors*, probably written with the sophisticated gentlemen of the Inns of Court in mind), should contain

characters and devices reminiscent of the country humour with which the youth from Stratford was familiar.

The Taming of the Shrew presents the story of a cross-grained bride who is gradually made civil by harsh treatment at the will of a bridegroom who 'kills her in her own humour' by his boisterous, unpredictable behaviour. Sometimes he pretends that she is gentle when she rages, sometimes he falls into a fury to terrify her, while always declaring that he is obeying her every whim. He comes to his wedding ill-dressed and ill-mannered : 'To me she's married, not unto my clothes', he says, and drags her off after 'a mad marriage' to his country house:

> I will be master of what is mine own,
> She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,
> My household stuff, my field, my barn,
> My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything,
> And here she stands; touch her whoever dare. (III, ii. 226)

When she falls in the mire he leaves her there and beats his servant until she prays him to desist. He accuses the cook of burning the meat, and prevents her eating it,

> For it engenders choler, planteth anger;
> And better 'twere that both of us did fast,
> Since, of ourselves, ourselves are choleric. (IV. i. 156)

Petruchio treats her like one of his hawks, which must be starved till she obeys. He will find fault with every arrangement in the house, and at night,

> If she chance to nod I'll rail and brawl
> And with the clamour keep her still awake.
> This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
> And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour. (IV, i. 190)

He quarrels with the tailor and will not let her wear decent clothes :

> Well, come, my Kate; we will unto your father's,
> Even in these honest mean habiliments. (IV. iii. 165)

Thus he crosses her will in everything, until she submits, and finally she preaches a sermon on female subservience to her more conventional sister :

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign . . .
> Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
> Even such a woman oweth to her husband; . . .
> I am asham'd that women are so simple
> To offer war where they should kneel for peace;
> Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
> When they are bound to serve, love, and obey. (V. ii. 146).

Now this tale illustrates a type of popular rustic humour common through the Middle Ages and Renaissance in the Fabliaux, or 'merry tales' usually about the war of the sexes, the wiles of women and their seducers, or the pranks played by members of various trades or professions upon their rivals. Thus Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* described in down-to-earth fashion how wives got the better of their husbands, or daring young lovers got sexual satisfaction by trickery. Collections of such anecdotes were common in the sixteenth century and must have enlivened many wet evenings in the taproom.

Although *The Shrew* is set in and around Padua in Italy, the speech used is good plain bourgeois English. Contrasting with the rude wooing of Katharine is that of Bianca, who must not be married before her curst sister; hence the hurry to rid the family of Katharine. Bianca's wooing involves intrigue, impersonation and misunderstandings galore in an italianate imbroglio indebted to Ariosto. Shakespeare uses contrast between the two plots and places the taming of his shrew against scenes of more sophisticated city life. But as the Induction proves, he regarded *The Taming of the Shrew* as a play suitable for a tinker to enjoy since he put it all into a dramatic frame in which the Warwickshire tinker, Christopher Sly, turned drunken out of an alehouse to sleep by the roadside, is found by a local Lord (homeward bound from hunting) who for a whim has him taken to his mansion:

Carry him gently to my fairest chamber,
And hang it round with all my wanton pictures; . . .
Procure me music ready when he wakes; . . .
Some one be ready with a costly suit,
And ask him what apparel he will wear;
Another tell him of his hounds and horse,
And that his lady mourns at his disease;
Persuade him that he hath been lunatic,
And, when he says he is, say that he dreams,
For he is nothing but a mighty lord. (Ind. i. 44)

The main play is performed before Sly, by strolling players who (as they often did at aristocratic houses) offer their services. Much fun is caused by the contrast between Sly's real identity and the manner in which he soon accepts his new situation. There are several references to Warwickshire people and places : Sly comes from Burton-heath : he is 'by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker. Ask Marion Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not !' (Ind. ii). He mentions his father (?) 'Stephen Sly, and old John Naps of Greece (Greet)/And Peter Turf and Henry Pimpernell' (Ind. ii) etc. When the main play ends Sly is carried out and left where they found him. Wakened in the dawn by the Tapster and fortified by 'the best dream/That ever I had in my life . . . I'll to my wife presently and tame her too/And if she anger me.' No doubt Shakespeare ended the piece thus, with the sceptical Tapster seeing the Tinker home. It makes a suitable return to the initial impulse in the rural life of the time.

Love's Labour's Lost is a sophisticated court play, somewhat in the manner of John Lyly, mocking at the follies of young men in their extravagance, whether for forswearing love or in pursuing it. Pedantry, whether of false gallants or schoolmasters is also a major butt. The simple humour of the country man Costard and the maid Jaquenetta contrast well with the bombast of a man of fashion (Armado) and the logic-chopping of Holofernes. The central situation is set

however in the park outside the King of Navarre's palace where, obeying his oath of studious seclusion, he has to meet the Princess of France on diplomatic business yet cannot allow her to enter his court. She naturally is affronted : 'The roof of this court (the sky) is too high to be yours, and welcome/To the wide fields too base to be mine (II. i. 91). She and her ladies are lodged in tents, and their negotiations, political and amorous, take place in the open air. In III. i we learn from Berowne that 'the Princess comes to hunt here in the park,' and in Act IV the hunt is up and she (like Queen Elizabeth on a famous occasion in Cowdray Park in 1591) is to stand where the Forester tells her she 'may make the fairest shoot' — 'to play the murderer', she calls it, and bandies words charmingly with the man. Sport is likewise the basis of the verbal warfare in the next scene when Dull the Constable insists that the deer just slain was a pricket, and Holofernes the schoolmaster attempts to 'affect the letter' by making a ghastly alliterative jingle telling how 'The preyful Princess pierc'd and prick'd a pretty, pleasing pricket' (IV. ii. 52). Such versing smells of the lamp more than of the country air; yet the artificial comedy gains grace and freshness by its setting, and the masque of the Nine Worthies, so fatuously undertaken, since there are but three players, and so riotously interrupted by the young lords, is a truly comic burlesque of the presentation so frequently offered to visiting royalty by the villagers attached to the great country houses.

With *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we enter a different compartment of Shakespeare's imagination. In this fantastic medley play he blends miraculously Greek myth (Theseus), modern marriage and its problems, citizens ostensibly of Athens but actually from London or Stratford, 'rude mechanicals' (types of English tradesmen), and fairies from folk-lore and miscellaneous literary sources. The frame setting of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Shrew* is used in a different way (Theseus marriage), and all the various social and emotional layers are alternated and intertwined to produce a total effect

of irresistible humour and fancy. After the First Act the focus moves to the wood by the palace a mile outside Athens, and remains there until the close of Act IV.

In this wood the young lovers wander amorously and suffer the blundering interference of supernatural beings who are themselves involved in matrimonial disputes. The fairies indeed are very like human beings writ small, and Puck, the prime agent of transformation, is not only the daemon of mines but the mischievous house-fairy Robin Goodfellow brought into the greenwood to do Oberon's bidding, not always with complete success.

There is much of English provincial life in the scenes when the 'hard-handed men that work in Athens here' (V. i. 72) rehearse their lamentable tragedy for the Duke's wedding-feast. They might even be caricatures of local Stratfordians, named according to their trades. Thus, Peter Quince, the efficient manager who organises the show, is really (as Dover Wilson pointed out) *Quoins*, from wedges of wood used by carpenters. Tom Snout comes from the spout or nozzle used by tinkers; Snug the joiner will make his joints firm and close; Flute, a youth who has 'a beard coming', mends organs as well as housefire-bellows; Starveling fittingly describes a tailor, proverbially very lean; Nick Bottom the weaver is named after the core or reel on which he winds his woollen yarn.

The tradesmen first meet indoors to distribute their parts and the script. They will rehearse in the wood lest they be 'dogg'd with company, and our devices known.' Such secrecy was common in commercial companies, and these men are ambitious. Their tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe is a skit (though they do not know it) on amateur theatricals and also on some feeble tragic writing at the time; maybe even (if Shakespeare had already written *Romeo and Juliet*), on his own tragedy of love crossed by Fate.

The players show great delicacy towards their noble audience, expressing fears that Bottom might frighten the

ladies by killing himself as Pyramus, and Snug might do the same by roaring like a lion. Their precautions would entirely ruin any stage-illusion, but that does not matter. The actual performance in V. i. is rightly feared by Philostrate the Master of Ceremonies, but Theseus gently rebukes Hippolyta for her doubts :

> I will hear that play :
> For never anything can be amiss
> When simpleness and duty tender it. . . ,
> Our sport shall be to take what they mistake,
> And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
> Takes it in might, not merit. (V. i. 81)

Bottom is most amusing in the wood when Puck transforms him during the rehearsal by giving him an ass-head (*Cf.* Apuleius' *Golden Ass*). When Titania awakes and under the influence of the magic juice falls in love with Bottom he is unperturbed by the grotesque situation. His matter-of-fact acceptance recalls Sly. Bottom is genial and gracious to the fairies who offer him exotic delights such as 'apricocks and dewberries', and honey-bags stolen from the humble-bees. 'I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger I shall make bold with you' (i. e., to stop bleeding, as in folk-medicine).

In IV. i Bottom has taken command of his new realm, and gives orders to his fairies : 'Scratch my head, Peaseblossom.' He desires Cobweb to 'kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag; and . . . have a care the honey-bag break not.' He remains the rustic Philistine when offered some fairy music: 'Let's have the tongs and the bones.'

When he wakes Bottom readjusts speedily to the real world, hoping to get Quince to 'write a ballad of this dream', which he will sing before the Duke, perhaps at Thisbe's death. With unfailing self-confidence he takes command of his fellow-actors, and gives advice, anticipating Hamlet's to his players : 'Let Thisby have clean linen; . . . eat no onions

or garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt to hear them say it is a sweet comedy' (IV. ii. 35).

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedy of incongruities smoothed over by frolicsome fancy and good humour. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is thinner in content and not well unified, though full of bright ideas for future exploitation. I include it here because the action moves from the rich cities of Verona and Milan to a forest, where the hapless lover Valentine, deceived by his friend Proteus, and exiled, is confronted by outlaws. Their questions reveal that, unlike Jack Cade's followers (*2 Henry VI*), they have a high regard for learning. 'Have you the tongues', he is asked, and when he replies that his travels have taught him foreign languages, he is made welcome :

> By the bare scalp of Robin Hood's fat friar,
> This fellow were a king for our wild faction. (IV. i. 36)

The outlaws are murderers, or stealers of heiresses, banished gentlemen. They force him to accept the leadership,

> Provided that you do no outrages
> On silly women, or poor passengers; (IV. ii. 71).

a suggestion that they indignantly deny.

Valentine's lover, Silvia, wishing to seek him in Mantua, enters the forest, accompanied by the bereaved Sir Eglamour. Julia whom Proteus has abandoned, also goes, hoping to cross Proteus. The outlaws capture Silvia and will take her to their captain (V. iii). Valentine, happy in the solitude of the woods, hears the hallooing of his followers, then watches while Proteus claims to have rescued Silvia from rape, and forces unwelcome attentions on her (V. iv. 1-59). Julia overhears. Valentine saves Silvia and accuses Proteus of being a false friend. When Proteus repents (in five lines) Valentine shows improbable generosity by offering to let him have Silvia; whereupon Julia swoons, for she (unaccountably) still loves Proteus. Silvia remains silent, while Julia reveals

herself and apologises for wearing 'such an immodest raiment' (boy's clothes). How different from Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

Those outlaws have merely a mechanical part; we learn little of their way of life. Yet the bare reference to Robin Hood links them to *As You Like It* some years later where, when Oliver asks 'Where will the old Duke live?' Charles replies, 'They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England', &c. (I. i. 105). In *As You Like It* Orlando bursts upon the outlaws at their feast when Adam is failing through exhaustion and he is accepted by the old Duke. When next we see him he is marring trees by hanging verses on them. No more about Robin Hood, although there had been several plays about him, e. g.

Robert Greene, *George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield*, written before 1593, and published in 1599;

Robin Hood and Little John, S. R. 1594;

Anthony Munday, *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon, after-ward called Robin Hood of merry Sherwood, with his love for chaste Matilda, afterwards his fair Maid Marian*, 1598 (with Chettle);

Anthony Munday, *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon*, 1598.

The legend of Robin Hood did much to foster, not only May Games and archery with the long bow, but also the notion of Merrie England and the ideal life of the forest. It was helped by the popularity of such pieces as *The Tale of Gamelyn*, long thought to be by Chaucer, and a strong influence on Lodge's romance *Rosalynde* (1590) which in turn was the basis of *As You Like It*.

Another play which contains country scenes which should not be overlooked is *Henry IV*, which presents a different phase of rural life from those hitherto noted.

In *I Henry IV* where events from history are frequently set beside incidents of city tavern life, the two excursions into the country are to Rochester and Gadshill in connection with

the hold-up of the King's exchequermen (II. i and ii), and to the outskirts of Coventry where (IV. ii) Falstaff shows his cynical dishonesty in getting together his tattered company of foot:

> I have got, in exchange of a hundred and fifty soldiers, three hundred and odd pounds; . . . and now my whole charge consists of ancients, corporals, . . . slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, . . . discarded unjust servingmen, younger sons to younger brothers, revolted tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace (IV. ii. 13).

He admits that he has let recruits with money buy themselves out of service, so that he has impressed only the dregs of society. 'And the villains march wide between the legs, as if they had gyves on; for, indeed I had the most of them out of prison.'

This is very amusing, but it is a satiric glance by Shakespeare at a prevalent abuse which had given great concern to the military authorities both before the Spanish Armada and since. The troops were often ill led, by venal officers eager only for pickings, and the soldiers lived by stealing food and clothing: 'they'll find linen enough on every hedge.' Falstaff may have borne arms in his youth. He has now been given a charge of foot, about whom he is utterly indifferent: 'Food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better : tush man, mortal men, mortal men' (IV. ii. 63).

In *2 Henry IV* we are shown Falstaff recruiting soldiers in Gloucester after he has been summoned urgently to join the King's forces. He comes to the house of Robert Shallow, an elderly country Justice who is expecting his official visit. Shallow's duty is to present 'half a dozen sufficient men' from his parish, from whom Falstaff should choose the best four as soldiers in the King's army against the rebels. In some garrulous chat between Shallow and his fellow-Justice Silence, we learn that the former is nostalgic and boastful about his time long ago at the Inns of Court in London. He

knew Falstaff then, and is glad to greet him. As one by one the potential recruits come up to be examined Sir John makes jokes about their names and appearance. The first, Mouldy, is 'pricked' (marked as accepted) despite his protest that his mother will be helpless without him (III. ii. 104-15). The next, Shadow, is also pricked, 'for we have a number of shadows to fill up the muster-book.' (A shadow in this sense was a 'ghost', a fictitious entry to enable the officer to embezzle some pay). Thomas Wart is not pricked, for 'his whole frame stands upon pins.' Francis Feeble belies his name by showing courage, though he is a woman's tailor, and the proverb said that it took nine tailors to make a man. He is pricked and wants his friend Wart to go also, but Falstaff thinks Wart unfit. Peter Bullcalf, who lives on the village green, complains of a chronic cold caught by bell-ringing in the church to celebrate the Queen's Coronation day. But he is pricked.

So far Falstaff has behaved correctly, but when he goes off to dine with the Justices, Corporal Bardolph is approached by Bullcalf and Mouldy, each offering forty shillings to be let off.

The admirable Feeble is constant in his patriotism, but when on his return Falstaff is told untruthfully by Bardolph that he has three pounds (not four) to free Mouldy and Bullcalf, the shameless knight lets them off and takes Wart and Shadow, despite Shallow's weak protests.

In this scene Falstaff for all his *bonhomie*, shows himself to be one of those 'needy, riotous, ignorant and base captains who have made marchandise of their places, and without regard of their duty, or respect of conscience have made parte sale of their soldiers' blood and lives to maintain their unthriftiness and disorders' (Sir H. Knyvett, *Defence of the Realm*, 1596).

In Act V Falstaff is again with Shallow, after being reproved by Prince John for his tardiness (IV. iii) He has travel-

led back to Gloucestershire, where the old Justice insists that he be his guest. In this scene we have a further stroke of satire on the social system, for Davy, his factor, engages his interest on behalf of William Visor Woncot against Clement Perkes o' th' hill. Although Shallow says, 'That Visor is an arrant knave, on my knowledge' he accepts Davy's protest: 'a knave should have some countenance at his friend's request. An honest man, sir, is able to speak for himself, when a knave is not' (V. i. 40).

Friendly to Shallow in his presence, Falstaff ridicules him in his absence. Previously he called him a liar about his youthful exploits. Now he asserts, quite shrewdly: 'it is a wonderful thing to see the semblable coherence of his men's spirits and his. They, by observing of him, do bear themselves like foolish justices: he, by conversing with them, is turned into a justice-like servingman.' He intends to get anecdotes from this visit which will keep Prince Hal in continual laughter. Falstaff does not realise the great change that has come over the Prince through his father's illness and death.

I shall end this survey, as I began, with dramatised *fabliau*, for that is what *The Merry Wives of Windsor* largely was. Written in 1597 (or, as Professor G. Hibbard has recently argued—in his New Penguin edition—in 1599), this comedy not only portrays the jealousies of middle-class husbands and the possessive conduct of parents seeking good marriages and wealth for their daughters, but also presents Falstaff not exactly in love (as Queen Elizabeth was said to have demanded) but as a would-be seducer led on and bamboozled by two loyal but sportive wives in the small town near London where the Queen had a castle. The main setting has a provincial English atmosphere in which Falstaff the denizen of Eastcheap taverns, with his rabble of disreputable hangers-on, is definitely out of place. We also meet mine Host of the Garter Inn, a Welsh parson (Evans), a French medical doctor (Caius) and a Mistress Quickly (no

longer Falstaff's lively sparring partner but the doctor's servant, 'his dry nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his usher, and his wringer' (I. ii. 1). Evans and Caius cause much amusment as they 'Hack our English.' English country food is mentioned : 'Come', says Page, 'we have a hot venison pasty to dinner' (I.i .176) and later Evans looks forward to 'pippins and cheese to come' (I. ii. 14). Bardolph, when turned away by the impecunious Falstaff, becomes tapster at the Garter Inn. There are local references also. When Falstaff is forced to hide from the jealous Ford in a 'buck-basket' it is to be carried down to the Datching Mead between Windsor and the Thames ; and be borne off in the wash-basket which is supported on a pole, the 'cowl-staff'.

A quarrel between Parson Evans and Dr Caius leads to a challenge to duel in the fields, but the Host misdirects them and they cannot find each other, though Simple searches for Caius 'by the pittie-ward, the park-ward, every way ; Old Windsor way, and every way but the town way.' Finally Simple sees Page and Shallow coming 'from Frogmore over the stile, this way (III. i. 31), and the quarrel is healed by the Host.

There are many other allusions to rural customs, e.g. to the Jack-a-lent puppets (III. iii. 24) set up in that season for boys to throw stones at ; the 'eyas-musket' or sparrow-hawk (III. iii. 19) Page invites his friends to breakfast : 'after, we'll a-birding together : I have a fine hawk for the bush' (III. iii. 205).

Page's daughter Anne has three suitors: Dr Caius, of whom she exclaims : 'Alas, I had rather be set quick i'th' earth, And bowl'd to death with turnip's (III. iv. 85) ; Slender, Shallow's cousin, a fatuous youth who tells her he loves her 'as well as I love any woman in Glocestershire' (III. iv. 43) ; and Fenton, a young gentleman whom she loves. Their fooling of the other suitors forms a plot parallel to the triple plots of the two honest wives againat Falstaff. After Falstaff

has recovered from being dumped in the river 'with as little remorse as they would have drowned a blind bitch's puppies, fifteen in a litter' (III. v. 8), he is invited to Ford's house, where the jealous husband searches for him and he is smuggled out disguised absurdly as the 'fat woman of Brainford' whom Ford detests as an old witch. This time Falstaff is soundly beaten.

Not satisfied even now, the women resolve on a third coup ; and now Shakespeare provides them with a piece of invented folk-lore. Mistress Page remembers

> that Herne the Hunter,
> Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest
> Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
> Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns,
> And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,
> And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
> In a most hideous and dreadful manner. (IV. iv. 27)

She will get Falstaff there, dressed as Herne, with horns on his head, and have Anne Page and her little brother, as fairies, dance round Falstaff

> And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight;
> And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
> In their so sacred paths he dares to tread. (IV. iv. 56)

Mistress Page hopes that Dr Caius will carry Anne off during the revel and marry her at Eton (near Windsor). Page hopes to have Slender elope with her. But Anne knows her own mind, which is to deceive them both.

All goes well. Falstaff is given a chain to rattle and a pair of horns. Evans has trained some children to dance and sing, and they hide in the pit, while Page, Shallow and Slender are in the castle ditch. Falstaff comes at midnight thinking Ovidian thoughts of Jove who disguised himself as an animal to gain his ladies. When the two merry wives enter he cries, 'Divide me like a brib'd buck, each a haunch' (V. v. 22) ; but they pretend fear and leave him to be tormented by

the elves, his chastity tested by fire, his body pinched in time to their singing. Figures steal away with Caius and Slender ; Fenton takes Anne Page.

Falstaff is reviled and ridiculed by both husbands and wives. But there are surprises to come. Caius and Slender return woefully from their elopements, to the amazement of Mr and Mistress Page. Fenton arrives with his bride and rebukes them: 'Money buys lands, and wives are sold by Fate' (V. v. 220). Even Falstaff takes heart that he is not the only person hoodwinked, and the end is jollity :

> Let us every one go home,
> And laugh this sport over by a country fire;
> Sir John and all. (V. v. 228)

If this is not the richest in imagination of Shakespeare's comedies, or the deepest in characterization, it is the gayest, and one of the busiest in action. It never moves from its bourgeois setting except in the forest scenes, where there is some delightful burlesque of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Tha Merry Wives* provides a vivid contrast with the next country play, *As You Like It* : but that, as Kipling used to say, is another story.

Edinburgh

M. M. Mahood

GOLDEN LADS AND GIRLS

Critics and directors have often been at loggerheads over *The Merchant of Venice*. Directors, especially that defunct race, the actor managers, have seen it for well over two centuries as the star vehicle for the actor who plays Shylock. The Jew actually appears in only five scenes of the play; but these have been found to offer scope for every conceivable interpretation of Shylock : tragic, pathetic, magnificent, menacing, noble, ludicrous, detestable—or whatever combination of these characteristics the actor cares to attempt. The story of the flesh bond is made all important, the story of the caskets is demoted to a trifle. On the other side, the literary critics of the play are on guard against what seems to them a lingering nineteenth century obsession with character in Shakespeare. In their view, to focus on Venice and forget Belmont is grossly to distort the play. The most striking expression I know of their point of view occurs in a digression to a lecture that C. S. Lewis gave nearly thirty years ago, on *Hamlet*. It is quoted here *in extenso* because it puts with clarity, charm and vigour what has been expressed somewhat clumsily in many subsequent studies of the play:

> A good example of the kind of play which can be twisted out of recognition by character criticism is *The Merchant of Venice*. Nothing is easier than to disengage and condemn the mercenary element in Bassanio's original suit to Portia, to point out that Jessica was a bad daughter, and by dwelling on Shylock's wrongs to turn him into a tragic figure. The hero thus becomes a scamp, the heroine's love for him a disaster, the villain a hero, the last act an irrelevance, and the casket story a monstrosity. What is not explained is why anyone should

enjoy such a depressing and confused piece of work. It seems to me that what we actually enjoy is something quite different. The real play is not so much about men as about metals. The horror of usury lay in the fact that it treated metal in a way contrary to nature If you have cattle they will breed. To make money—the medium of exchange—breed as if it were alive is a sort of black magic. The speech about Laban and Jacob is put into Shylock's mouth to show that he cannot grasp this distinction; and the Christians point out that friendship does not take 'A breed of barren metal.' The important thing about Bassanio is that he can say, 'Only my blood speaks to you in my veins', and again, 'All the wealth I had ran in my veins.' Sir Walter Raleigh, most unhappily to my mind, speaks of Bassanio as a 'pale shadow.' *Pale* is precisely the wrong word. The whole contrast is between the crimson and organic wealth in his veins, the medium of nobility and fecundity, and the cold, mineral wealth in Shylock's counting-house. The charge that he is a mercenary wooer is a product of prosaic analysis. The play is much nearer the *Marchen* level than that.... Bassanio compares Portia to the Golden Fleece. That strikes the proper note. And when once we approach the play with our senses and imagination, it becomes obvious that the presence of the casket story is no accident. For it is also a story about metals, and the rejection of the commercial metals by Bassanio is a kind of counterpoint to the conquest of Shylock's metalic power by the lady of the beautiful mountain. The very terms in which they are rejected proclaim it. Silver is the 'pale and common drudge 'twixt man and man.' Gold is 'hard food for Midas'—Midas who, like Shylock, tried to use as the fuel of life what is in its own nature dead. And the last act, so far from being an irrelevant *coda*, is almost the thing for which the play exists. The 'naughty world' of finance exists in the play chiefly that we may perceive the light of the 'good deed', or rather of the good state, which is called Belmont.

The contrast of Belmont and Venice, then, in this view of the play, is the contrast of life and lucre ; on the one hand are heaven's patens of bright gold and the golden fleece of Portia's hair : on the other the gleam of Shylock's ducats. The third scene of the play in which Shylock first appears, establishes for us this contrast of value in the very different connotations that Shylock and Bassanio put upon the same word. Shylock asks: 'Antonio is a *good* man?' and Bassanio brindles : 'Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?'

'No, no, no, no, no. My meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient.' And then as Bassanio breaks in on his ruminative 'I think I may take his bond' with 'Be assured you may', Shylock replaces this word of a gentleman with his own meaning of 'assured.' What he needs, is security—'I *will* be "assured".'

Double meanings such as these lend force to the key-words of the drama. 'Thrift' is an example. At the start of the play, when Bassanio asks Antonio's help, thrift means 'success':

> O my Antonio, had I but the means
> To hold a rival place with one of them,
> I have a mind presages me such thrift,
> That I should questionless be fortunate. (I. i. 173)

Originally 'thrift' meant any form of good fortune : health as much as wealth, human increase as well as monetary increase. When we talk about a *thriving* family we mean it is numerous, not that it is wealthy. But the meaning of 'saving', even of 'parsimony', was already current by the fifteen-nineties. Shakespeare shows he was aware of this change when, in the passage just quoted, he makes Bassanio supply a gloss for the word. And in the third scene of the play he makes Shylock gloss the same word, but this time in the mercenary sense :

> He hates our sacred nation, and he rails
> Even there, where merchants most do congregate,
> On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
> Which he calls interest. (I. iii. 43).

So, when Shylock tells the story of Jacob's trick for producing parti-coloured lambs, he adds the comment:

> This was a way to thrive, and he was blest,
> And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not. (I. iii. 84)

But here he exposes himself to the medieval objection to usury, still often repeated in Shakespeare's lifetime, that it

was something unnatural ; you ought not to make money breed in the way you could make animals breed. Antonio's retort makes this very plain :

> This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,
> A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
> But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven. (I. iii. 86)

'Venture' is another keyword of the play. A deliberate contrast is made between the calculations of usury and the risks of trading ventures such as Antonio's—risks described with a sort of poetic exultation in the opening scene. Indeed Solanio and Salerio exist chiefly to establish this poetry of romantic commerce, and this saves them from Granville Barker's accusation of being the two biggest bores in the Shakespeare canon. Given the strong legal sanctions of the time against debtors, the usurer stood very little risk of losing his principal. In contrast, the merchant venturer put himself wholly into the hands of Providence; his undertakings were seen as an almost literal casting of his bread upon the waters.

Now one suspects that Shakespeare loved a gambler. And in the view of the play that we are now considering —that of Lewis and many more recent critics—the theme of *The Merchant of Venice* is 'Nothing venture, nothing have'; or in the words of the leaden casket, 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.' So Antonio gives his all to Bassanio, staking his life on his friend's venture; and in accepting the terms of the casket choice Bassanio, in his turn, gambles with the normal human hopes of a wife and children. Most of Portia's suitors chicken out of this gamble. Not so Morocco and Arragon; and in view of the fact that both lose high stakes, it seems only fair these parts should be played with some dignity. Of course, one can see the reason why, in so many productions, they have been made a couple of comic butts. Their calamitous choices alternate with the scenes of Jessica's elopement, and of Shylock's discovery

that he has lost both his daughter and his ducats; and if these scenes are made tragic, as stage tradition ever since Kean has tended to make them, then poor Morocco and Arragon must supply the comic relief. One cannot help being puzzled by the racial sensitivity of producers who present Shylock as a Hebrew more sinned against than sinning and then turn Morocco into a farcical blackamoor. The Prince is given lines worthy of Tamburlaine, and shows the aspiring mind of all Marlowe's heroes; at the end of this scene, holding the skull which is 'what many men desire', he is a sad symbolic figure of the pride of life. Arragon too, though he shows the overweening complacency the Elizabethans expected of a Spaniard, speaks some of the best moralising verse in Shakespeare. Not that one should substitute the tragedy of Morocco and Arragon for the tragedy of Shylock. Both are briskly dismissed by Portia; and for all their audacity, both show a self-absorption which sets them right outside the Belmont world of loving and giving.

The nature of that world is fully revealed in the scene of Bassanio's choice—revealed in thrilling music and heady verse. Portia's generous and immediate response to Antonio's danger matches the immediate generosity that Antonio had himself shown in the opening scene. And the behaviour of both, their complete responsiveness to another person, is a foil to the intransigence, the mechanistic behaviour which, in a flash-back to Venice, we have just witnessed in Shylock. When Shylock alternately chortles at Antonio's losses and groans at Jessica's extravagances, he seems to dance to the strings of his own egotism. And this obsessive, compulsive behaviour, which is absurd in this scene, becomes dreadfully menacing at the trial. Portia then has to throw against it not only her own generous behaviour, in disguising and coming to Antonio's rescue but the very generosity of heaven in giving us all mercy rather than justice.

We are, I think, to presume that Portia knows how she is going to be able to defeat Shylock before ever she enters

the court room. Why then does she allow the case to drag on as it does? One answer is obviously that she does so in order that we, the audience, can savour to the full the scene's peripety, the dramatic turning of the tables on Shylock; a peripety so powerful that we quite forget the legal impossibility of Shylock replacing Antonio as defendant in one and the same hearing. But a much more important reason for Portia holding back so long is that Shylock must be given every chance to show mercy. It is as if Shakespeare is forestalling the wrongheadedness of modern readers who protest at Portia condemning Shylock after her speech on mercy. In fact, Portia shows mercy from the start. Knowing all the while how she can turn the tables on Shylock, she yet pleads with him to walk out with a two hundred per cent profit in his pocket and the blessings of the court on his head. But in his determination to have the pound of flesh, Shylock behaves exactly like the unjust steward in the Gospel parable. Since there is a very deep, and most people would say perfectly right, human feeling that mercy should at least be tempered with justice, no one has ever suggested the unjust steward got a raw deal. In fact, even at the end of the trial, a good deal of mercy is shown Shylock by the person he has most wronged, Atonio. For Antonio to offer to hold his half of the Jew's fortune in trust for Lorenzo and Jessica, at a time when he believes himself to be destitute, and to ask that the other half be restored to Shylock, is on a level with Isabella's action in pleading for Angelo's life at the end of *Measure for Measure*. What does distress us is the forced conversion. At our present distance from Elizabethan ways of thought we simply have to take it on trust that the conversion would have been viewed as a way of saving Shylock's soul. It is, of course, open to him to refuse, and to die a martyr to his faith. But he prefers life and half his wealth; the miser, who is ludicrous, in the end gets the better of the Hebrew, for whom Shakespeare felt considerable respect. And this enables the scene to

end without our giving much further thought to the Jew of Venice.

We have been considerably shaken by the sight of the Merchant of Venice baring his flesh to Shylock's knife. A change of air, scene and mood is needed if we are to go home in the spirit of comedy. This change is triumphantly wrought by the last act, in a kind of mock trial, in which Bassanio and Gratiano are held accountable for the lost rings, and Portia pretends to demand her pound of flesh. This is no more than play-acting within the play; we know we are back in the world of loving and giving, where forgiveness is instant and spontaneous, and, in the words of the Elizabethan song, 'the falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love.'

Up to now, I have been trying to present the play in the terms of those critics for whom it is a harmonious whole, a celebration of the festive virtue of generosity. And I honestly believe that such an interpretation follows Shakespeare's explicit intention in this play. Indeed some of these critics have commented on this very explicitness. 'A recklessly bold and obvious play', M.C. Bradbrook calls it; and she goes on: 'The symbolism is almost blatant, the violence of the contrasts almost glaring.' So too Frank Kermode: 'It begins with usury and corrupt love; it ends with harmony and perfect love. And all the time it tells the audience that this is its subject.' And again C.L. Barber, who has written perhaps most persuasively of all about the play's contrast between the mechanistic use of wealth and the masterful, social use of it, feels not only that it is an explicit play, but an over explicit one: 'On reflection, the play's contrasts are too easy, the irony too neatly swept aside.'

Certainly, if we take a bird's eye view of the play, our sympathies are almost too clearly directed towards Belmont and away from Shylock. But in the actual playing, which the critical bird's eye view sometimes forgets, things are not so clear-cut. Let me try to illustrate what I mean by a close

look at one of Shakespeare's most powerful and effective pieces of dramatic writing : Bassanio's choice of the lead casket in Act III, Scene II.

It is a visually brilliant scene, of ostentatious wealth; the stage direction tells us Portia and Bassanio enter with 'all their trains'. It begins with Portia's admission, in that slip of the tongue which so delighted Freud, that she loves Bassanio, and wants to delay his fateful choice. Her 'I pray you tarry' is not only a striking anticipation of the moment when she will say to Shylock, his knife raised to strike, 'Tarry a little' ; it also establishes that we are in the festive, holiday world of Belmont where time can be manipulated to suit lovers—unlike the harsh world of commerce and usury in Venice, where time ticks inexorably towards Antonio's day of reckoning. Bassanio however wants to get on with his choice—'Let me choose, For as I am, I live upon the rack'—and this leads to a witty exchange between the lovers about the tortures of love. We may nod our heads knowingly here and say 'ah yes, a stock Petrarchan image' : but if we do this we miss a deliberate and ironic contrast between the idly rich world where the only pains are those of unrequited love, and the everyday harsh world—since torture was regrettably part of an everyday world for the Elizabethans—in which Shylock is planning to take a long time in the killing of Antonio. Yet we cannot forget either that it is Antonio who has enabled Bassanio to put on this splendid show before our eyes.

So Bassanio proceeds to make his choice, while Portia celebrates his boldness in richly evocative language, against a musical background. But we should not be so completely carried away by the spell of the verse as to fail to see just what is being evoked.

> Now he goes
> With no less presence, but with much more love
> Than young Alcides when he did redeem
> The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
> To the sea-monster. (III. ii. 53)

The rhythmic excitement does much to elevate Bassanio into a mythic hero and demi-god, Hercules, in place of the young fortune hunter we might otherwise think him. But is the gap so great? Hercules, on the occasion which is recalled here, was not so much concerned with chivalrously rescuing a damsel in distress as with winning the horses promised him by the damsel's father.

Next, the music turns to song—

> Tell me where is fancy bred,
> Or in the heart or in the head;
> How begot, how nourished ? . . .

All the final words rhyme, it has often been pointed out, with 'lead'. Moreover the song itself is a warning against passing fancy, such as might seize upon the glitter of gold or silver. But the song does more than drop this kind of hint. It is a warning against love itself, a reminder of the frailty of human choices, however idealistic and unmercenary they may seem to be. It is a warning that marriage itself is the biggest gamble of all, with or without a choice of caskets. And Bassanio's long, sententious speech supplies further ironies. Of course we quickly grasp the implied contrast between Portia's real beauty and the 'crisped snaky locks' which are the dowry of a second head. But at the same time we are uneasily aware that the kind of disguise Bassanio condemns is the kind he has himself adopted in coming to Belmont so magnificently attended. And once we gain such awareness, the prim words 'Thou gaudy gold, Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee' come oddly from the man whose first words about Portia had been: 'In Belmont is a lady *richly* left . . .'

Ironies, then, are pretty intrusive in this first part of the scene. They vanish, however, when Bassanio makes the right choice. What follows is, poetically, the triumph of love. First there is Portia's breathless 'O love be moderate, allay the ecstacy'; then the way Bassanio lingers over the portrait in the casket, as if afraid to believe his own luck and turns to

the original lest she vanish away like Eurydice; then the absolute rightness of Bassanio's image of himself as the successful and confused athlete; then Portia's frank declaration of her joy, with its graceful capitulation that was part of the courtly love code—Bassanio, servant in love, is now lord in marriage. When she says:

> I would be trebled twenty times myself,
> A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
> More rich, that only to stand high in your account,
> I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
> Exceed account. (III. ii. 153)

this language of commerce is used only to underline the completely uncommercial nature of her feelings. The scene has become the triumph of life over lucre, of Belmont over Venice.

Poets who can get on to such poetic heights as these are not invariably good at getting off them. Shakespeare always comes nimbly downhill. Here the modulation needed is achieved through Gratiano and Jessica. First, there is Gratiano's deflation of courtly love—

> Wooing here until I sweat again,
> And swearing till my very roof was dry
> With oaths of love . . . (III. ii, 204)

Then there is a further relaxation into mild bawdy where we discover a sort of comic reversal of the usurer's notion that he can make money breed: 'We'll play with them, the first boy for a thousand ducats.' Then, when we have virtually forgotten Venice, a sudden darkening, in comes Salerio, with Lorenzo and Jessica—the last a visual reminder of Shylock. The practical world of affairs that we have temporarily forgotten forces itself, with a striking pun, onto the notice of the world of myth and romance. Gratiano says to Salerio 'We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece' and Salerio, his thoughts wholly with Antonio's danger, retorts 'I would you had won the fleets that he has lost.' Bassanio begins to tell

Portia of Antonio's misfortunes; his story is an intrusion of the geographically real world—Tripolis, Mexico, England, Lisbon, Barbary and India—into this city of Belmont which could not be found on any map. But his tale brings more than this. It brings awareness of a terrifying, destructive passion, Shylock's hate: the very antithesis of the feelings we have watched reveal themselves in this Belmont scene. And lastly there intrudes, in the flat prose of Antonio's letter, another destructive passion that has no proper place in Belmont. Antonio's obsessive feelings for Bassanio are as alien here as would be Shylock's obsessive hate. Between these two evocations of Shylock's hate and Antonio's love Shakespeare sets Portia's offer of unlimited gold to buy off the Jew. It is a generous offer, as the whole world of Belmont is a generous world; but it is at the same time naive with the naivete of the very rich. Does Portia really know what money *means*? The fact that the question comes naturally shows that by the Belmont scene the existence of a hard, bargaining, business-like world has reasserted itself in our mind. The ironies which were unobtrusively present at the start of the scene, very discreetly, inviting us to question the security and confidence of Belmont, culminate at the end of the scene in a challenge, a confrontation. Can the values of Belmont transcend those of Venice? Or is Belmont just a through-the-looking-glass land?

Most of Shakespeare's great comedies have been well described as festive plays. They celebrate the Belmont world and Belmont virtues—audacity, generosity, wit. But the very title of *The Merchant of Venice* suggests that it stands somewhat apart from these plays. They are usually associated with a season of licence—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *Twelfth Night*—or they are given titles that suggest a flight to the seacoast of Bohemia—east of the sun and west of the moon, as the Brothers Grimm have it : *What You Will*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here, in contrast, is a comedy anchored firmly in place by its title :

The Merchant of Venice, as one might say *The Businessman of Bombay*. Venice, despite the legend of her wealth, was a very real trading port to the Elizabethans. Argosies did not belong to storybooks; you could go and look at them in the Pool of London.

One reason why *The Merchant of Venice* does not build its plot on festivity in the way, say, that *Twelfth Night* does, is that it is essentially a play for the public theatre. The only court performance on record belongs to the next reign, in 1605. Several features of the play suggest the public playhouse. There is the fairytale nature of the plot, handled with the directness of Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, or Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, rather than with the sophistication of *Cymbeline*. There is that very explicit contrast in basic values, which we have already noticed; and accompanying this is its sententiousness. Like *Hamlet*, we find it is a play full of quotations, mostly of the Polonius variety, that we pick up in our youth from ashtrays: 'He is well paid that is well satisfied' and the like. A popular audience enjoyed these good sentences, well delivered; they represented folk wisdom, and to cut them out or slur over them is as outrageous as to have the Duke fidget with a yo-yo while Portia delivers the 'quality of mercy' speech—the most notorious director's gimmick yet achieved in the production of this particular play. Not only is the play sententious, but it is singularly lacking in wit. The Launcelot Gobbo scenes make embarrassing reading. Fortunately they make good theatre, provided Launcelot is a skilful clown with an india-rubber face. I suspect that this was one play in which Shakespeare did not mind the clown speaking more than was set down for him. The second scene of Act II is simply an open invitation to Will Kempe to 'do his thing': the bits of business that follow must all have been the stock-in-trade of the company's funny man.

It seems to me that the ironies of the play, of the kind here demonstrated in the casket scene, also follow from the

fact that in this play Shakespeare was writing primarily for a popular audience. In plays written mainly for the audience at court, in the Inns of Court, or at a great house, the generosity celebrated is that of the well-bred man, the *generosus*. The people in these plays can be courtly and lavish because they are born to wealth and leisure; when the less exalted characters criticise them, they do so because they fall short of this ideal of gentility. When the callow young wits in *Love's Labour's Lost* try to laugh Holofernes out of his part in the entertainment, he protests: 'This is not generous, not gentle, not humble'; and on a similar occasion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Theseus reminds Hippolyta that *noblesse oblige*. *The Merchant of Venice* is unique in that its irony operates at the expense of an exquisite and luxurious society as such: as if Shakespeare were writing for an audience which, however much they might enjoy stories about rich and beautiful princesses, knew that Portia's fortune, as W.H. Auden puts it, 'had been made in this world, as all fortunes are made, by toil, anxiety, the enduring and inflicting of suffering.' Behind the romanticising of Belmont we sense from time to time the admission that the rich are indeed different from us: they have more money.

It has to be stressed that this irony, this persistent streak of criticism in the play, does not shift our sympathy onto Shylock. Shakespeare was enough in advance of his popular audience, and had enough innate sympathy with anything human, to know what it was like to be Shylock; but he none the less makes Shylock grotesque and menacing, as a popular audience expected a moneylending Jew to be. There was of course good precedent for this in Marlowe's popular play *The Jew of Malta*. In fact Shakespeare's play was, the Stationers' Register reminds us, 'otherwise called the Jew of Venice' as if to recall Marlowe's piece. But Shakespeare did not only draw on the audience's familiarity with that play in making Shylock monstrous as Barabas is monstrous: he also drew on it for an indictment of Christian greed, such as had

been made with biting force in the first scene of *The Jew of Malta*. There is the same kind of bite in Shylock's reminder at the trial that if the Venetians' right to own and work slaves was questioned (and the Venetian economy could scarcely have done without them), they would have retorted that they could do what they liked with their own. Traditional morality, of the kind being eroded away by new economic conditions in the sixteenth century, did not agree that man had a right to do what they liked with their own. If we go back to the passage about Jacob and Laban in the first scene with Shylock, we find that many biblical commentaries of the time condemned Jacob's interference with the course of nature, and elsewhere in his plays Shakespeare shows himself aware of this kind of argument. It is not possible to make a clear-cut moral distinction between Shylock's enterprises and those of the Venetians. Whether gain came through safe investment or dashing speculation, the motives were the same; to get rich quickly, to enjoy an unnatural luxury, to live on the toil of others. A mercantile society had no grounds for being self-righteous about usury, as was self-evident in London as in Venice: as Professor L.C. Knights has reminded us, profits of 3,000% and upwards were being reaped in Shakespeare's time from trading ventures ; Drake's round-the-world voyage brought its sponsors a yield of 4,700%.

However, traditional morality was as critical of what was done with these profits as of the use to which the capital was put. Prodigality was no less a vice than avarice. Gratiano states this theme when he compares a trading venture to the setting out of the prodigal son, and it is clear when Bassanio spends much of the money borrowed at Antonio's risk on a vast embarkation party, and on engaging servants like Launcelot, that we are meant also to see him as a prodigal. Jessica's theft from her father, and her subsequent prodigality are surely presented critically, though we must not distort them into the main cause for Shylock's

animosity against Antonio. Prodigality, together with greed, is very much a theme of *Il Pecarone*, the Italian tale which comes closest to being the source of *The Merchant of Venice*. There are no caskets in that story. Instead the lady of Belmont lets it be known that she is prepared to wed and enrich any young man who passes a successful night with her, but that those who fall asleep—having of course been carefully drugged by her—must surrender all they possess. She is in fact a very greedy lady, who is delighted to confiscate twice over the rich trading ships of the hero, financed for him by his old friend and benefactor, who has long made a practice of heaping money on him. At the third venture, however, the hero is successful, and marries the lady. After this, we are told 'Giannetto was magnanimous and began by giving gifts of silk and other rich things, and so he continued in this rejoicing and happiness and never gave a thought to poor Ansaldo who had given his bond to the Jew for ten thousand ducats.'

Poor Ansaldo-Antonio, merchant of Venice! he scarcely gets a thought from the play's commentators either. But after all the play takes its title from him. And Antonio, for all his successful merchandizing, is not an acquisitive character. 'I think he only loves the world for him' is Solanio's comment on Antonio's parting from Bassanio. This unworldliness may be improbable, but it is highly effective in setting Antonio apart from the brilliant, rich and idle group in the play. I have long been convinced that there is a very close link between the relationship of poet to friend in the Sonnets, and the relationship of Antonio and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as of Antonio and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* —a link strengthened by some thirty to forty verbal echoes of the Sonnets in *The Merchant of Venice*. It is good to find that Dover Wilson, at the end of a lifetime's editing of the plays, has confirmed this close connexion, in his edition of the Sonnets. So it may well be that some of the play's implicit criticism of the young exquisites of Venice

has its source in that torturing fear of trust felt by the working actor towards the leisured young man who could vanish so easily into a different social world—into Belmont. If so, the pressure of personal feeling adds force to an undertone of social criticism which must have stirred a response among an audience who were accustomed to toil so that others might spend.

The undertone must remain subordinated to the play's dominant effects. Basically, Portia is loveable and Shylock hateful, and the play a celebration of love, life, the warm wealth in human veins. I have only been concerned to suggest that the play's irony cannot be totally ignored but has to be present in even the liveliest production as a dark background to the brilliant Venetian colourings of its festivity; as the shadow that gives substance and makes *The Merchant of Venice* a play about men as well as metals.

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THE MOCKERY OF ART IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

An an image of life progressing from chaos and dissonance to well-proportioned beauty and order *The Winter's Tale* is not characterized by any degree of psychological plausibility or realism. In fact the kind of convincing motivation that can stand up to any rigorous, logical, test in the great tragedies of the preceding period is hardly validated here. Hence the genesis, growth and explosion of Leontes's paroxysm of jealousy in respect of Hermione looks not only sudden and inexplicable but downright irrational. It seems to be rooted in some kind of guilt complex which needs to be unearthed and is not referable to any tangible body of evidence in the immediate environment. On Leontes's persuasion Polixenes would not consent to prolong his stay in Sicilia and yet he is left with no option but to yield to the allegedly seductive manoeuvring done by Hermione. And this is enough to quicken the seeds of suspicion that lay embedded in the diseased psyche of Leontes despite the fact that he himself had prompted the 'tongue-tied queen' to do a little bit of coaxing. The eruption of his freakish jealousy becomes all too evident as he perceives her offering her hand to Polixenes. Apparently this is a mere gesture of high courtesy, an expression of social etiquette on her part, but is readily misconstrued by Leontes the moment it is made. Under pressure of the mounting tension of his perverted mind he bursts forth in an aside thus :

> Too hot, too hot !
> To mingle friendship far, in mingling bloods.
> I have *tremor cordis* on me: my heart dances
> But not for joy—not joy . . .

But to be paddling palms, and pinching fingers,
As now they are, and making practis'd smiles
As in a looking-glass; and then to sigh, as 'twere
The mort o' th' deer—O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows. (I, ii, 108-19)

The tortuous syntax of these lines is a fair index of the ever-increasing rhythm of lunacy in which the speaker's mind revolves. The undue intimacy between Polixenes and Hermione—the thorn in Leontes's flesh—is concretized in very bawdy images in the first instance. His own brain is heated to such a pitch of intensity as to make Leontes conceive of their sighing 'as 'twere th' mort o' th' deer'—death being the wages of sexual ecstasy. The incubus of his suppressed sexual energy finds its outlet in the *crescendo* theme which is both terrible and ugly:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career
Of laughter with a sigh (a note infallible
Of breaking honesty)? horsing foot on foot?
Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
Hours, minutes? noon, midnight? and all eyes
Blind with the pin and web, but theirs; theirs only,
That would unseen be wicked? is this nothing?
Why then the world, and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothing,
If this be nothing. (I, ii, 284—96)

Jealousy seems to strike the mind of Leontes like a pestilence and under the shattering impact of this experience he finds refuge in a nightmare world of fantasy. He imagines the two lovers to be undergoing the semblance of a sexual orgasm and paradoxically enough betrays his own pitiless exposure of nerves. Time is believed to move with feverish, volcanic haste for them and everything seems to be swept off by its terrific force. His own violence of suspicion is carried to such a height that the whole cosmos appears to reverberate with a kind of nihilistic horror. 'The whole of Leontes's behaviour,' Traversi

comments shrewdly, 'has now become a frenzied building-up of supposed certainties on 'nothing.'[2] He is very much in the grip of a libidinous invasion which is not unlike that of Othello in a similar context. While unburdening himself to Camillo he makes an ambiguous statement thus :

> Dost think I am so muddy, so unsettled,
> To appoint myself in this vexation; sully
> The purity and whiteness of my sheets,
> (Which to preserve is sleep, which being spotted
> Is goads, thorns, nettles, tails of wasps)
> Give scandal to the blood o' th' prince, my son,
> (Who I do think is mine and love as mine)
> Without ripe moving to 't? Would I do this?
> Could man so blench? (I, ii, 325-33)

This is an utterance in an entirely different key: it reflects a deeply ingrained nausea, an inner wrenching consequent upon a morbid dwelling on an obsessive disgust, even a touch of the obscene, and yet at the same time a no less urgent and insistent impulse to demonstrate that he has not been swerved by a blind and naked passion but by the dictates of steady and balanced judgment. Leontes is pulled in different directions, caught up as it were in a see-saw and finding it difficult to extricate himself from either of the two contradictory positions. Like Macbeth he is on the verge of murdering his own sleep.

Another facet of his distraught mind is brought out in a later context thus :

> Alack, for lesser knowledge! how accurs'd
> In being so bless'd. There may be in the cup
> A spider steep'd, and one may drink, depart,
> And yet partake no venom (for his knowledge
> Is not infected); but if one present
> Th' abhorr'd ingredient to his eye, make known
> How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
> With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider.
> (II, i, 38-45)

The macabre dance of the spiders, mediated through this passage, contains the full potential of the sinister in it. Apart

from the tingling horror sent along one's spine this soliloquy also raises a fundamental issue relating to the mechanism of the human mind. The quality of one's perception depends upon the specific act of remembering and focusing on the data which is dragged from the inner depths to the frontiers of consciousness. Feelings also become attached to the process of living out the personal past in the present. We know that what we ascribe to others in our fancy may as well be predicated of us. In a manner of speaking Leontes is engaged here in the effort to impose his own will on Reality, bending it to the image of his own passion.[3]

A little later when Antigonus tries in vain to defend Hermione's unsullied purity against calumny the former is not only accused of a gross insensitivity, through the ominous evocation of death, to the entire situation but the particularized vividness and immediacy of his own sensory reaction is insisted on in this way :

> You smell this business with a sense as cold
> As is a dead man's nose: but I do see't and feel't,
> As you feel doing thus; and see withal
> The instruments that feel. (II, i, 151-54)

Polixenes's is, on the contrary, a much more poised vision. With his usual urbanity of tone and capacity for detachment he puts an entirely different and a rather calculated construction on the matter to the following effect :

> This jealousy
> Is for a precious creature: as she's rare,
> Must it be great; and, as his person's mighty,
> Must it be violent; and, as he does conceive
> He is dishonour'd by a man which ever
> Profess'd to him; why, his revenges must
> In that be made more bitter. (I, ii, 451-57)

This objective stance adopted by Polixenes, this act of distancing the whole situation and looking at it with a critical eye is a far cry from the 'neurotic exposedness' of Leontes. What perhaps adds to his corrosive bitterness is the report

how Mamillius reacted to the news of his mother's ignominy. The news is broken to him in a deeply poignant and heart-rending way thus :

> To see his nobleness,
> Conceiving the dishonour of his mother !
> He straight declin'd, droop'd, took it deeply,
> Fasten'd and fix'd the shame on't in himself,
> Threw off his spirit, his appetite, his sleep,
> And downright languish'd. (II, iii, 12-17)

This miniature portrait of Mamillius is in sharp contrast with the figure of the precocious, impish child brought out in his conversation with Leontes and in his calf-like wantoning with the ladies-in-waiting. Leontes had invoked, it may be remembered, the 'welkin eye' of 'this kernel', 'this quash', 'this gentleman' as something providential and benignant that could sustain him in his hour of distress. It was he who was about to whisper into his mother's ear the tale, infixed within the fabric of the larger tale, of a man who dwelt by a churchyard and who is soon replaced with no less a person than Leontes himself whose mind is peopled with mis-shapen goblins and spirits of his own creation. And Mamillius eventually succumbs to death in desperation when the entirely whimsical and misconceived notion of Hermione committing adultery with Polixenes, advertised so blatantly and shamelessly by Leontes, reaches him. With the announcement of the prince's death Leontes arrives at almost the nadir of his misfortunes.

The first three acts of the play, which constitute the bizarre drama of a man of self-centered impulses, are bound up with the grave aspect of evil which eventuates in the dislocation of social and familial relations. The ideal friendship between Leontes and Polixenes disintegrates like a house of cards, Hermione feels deeply humiliated by the king, the heart of the young prince, Mamillius, cracks and Camillo is forced to take a clandestine flight from Sicilia to Bohemia. Thus the cohesiveness of the entire social

structure snaps at one single stroke. The estrangement between Leontes and Hermione is brought into focus in the latter's laconic and incisive comment to the following effect :

> Sir,
> You speak a language that I understand not:
> My life stands in the level of your dreams.
> Which I'll lay down. (III, ii, 79-82)

Leontes is the paranoiac man and the world he inhabits is the one which runs counter to that of actuality, the hiatus between the two looks almost unbridgeable. And in that world the image of Hermione has been completely tarnished and disfigured. He picks up the word 'dreams' and hurls it back upon her, investing it with all the venom it can bear :

> Your actions are my dreams.
> You had a bastard by Polixenes,
> And I but dream'd it. (III, ii, 82-84)

The polished, controlled, mordant irony lurking behind these lines is quietly and unobtrusively lethal. The word 'dreams' in the sense of delusions is used by Leontes earlier also when he speculates about the intensity of passion, obviously indulged in by Polixenes and Hermione, and which cuts across his own heart like a blade of steel:

> Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:
> Thou dost make possible things not so held,
> Communicat'st with dreams; (I, ii, 138-40)

The phantasies of passion may attach themselves to 'dreams' (or improbabilities and uncertainties) but they may also come to acquire the status of reality.

Almost till the end of the third Act the situation in the play threatens to be explosive and under the continuous strain of his delusional type of jealousy Leontes seems to be sitting on the edge of a precipice. But the words in Apollo's oracle to the effect that 'the king shall live without an heir, if that is lost be not found' constitute a spectrum of both value and incident in the play. The tension already built

up is further accentuated by the shipwreck on the desert coast of Bohemia, described in all its lurid details, the pathetic exposure of the newly born girl-child of Hermione to the mercy of the elements and the tearing of Antigonus's body by the bear reported in these matter-of-fact, neutral tones—not unmixed with a bit of callousness too—by the Clown : 'Now, now; I have not winked since I saw these sights : the men are not yet cold under water nor the bear half dined on the gentleman : he's at it now.' The accent here falls not so much on the substance he is eating as on the manner of his doing it. And similarly, when in the midst of 'the ship boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon swallow'd with yest and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into a hogshead' the old Shepherd comments on his amazing discovery of the derelict child thus : 'now bless thyself : thou met'st with things dying, I with things new born', we are made aware of the quickening of life out of the debris of the rotten and the decayed. In other words it focuses on the signal importance of the movement from chaos to harmony, from things dead to things leaping forth to life, from the winter of human condition to a state of renewal and fructification.

To bring the iconological figure of Time at a point in the action which marks off its two distinict halves is both significant and absorbing. Time brings into focus what Clifford Leech designates as the experience of both cycle and crisis,[4] and offers the only adequate means of crystallizing the kaleidoscopic duration in which events and characters are equally submerged. Besides being devourer and renewer of life Time also tests and unfolds events which are held as an undifferentiated mass in the womb of futurity. In other words Time looks both backwards and forwards and the entire sweep and tempo of change is regulated and controlled by it :

Let me pass
The same I am, ere ancient'st order was,

> Or what is now receiv'd. I witness to
> The times that brought them in; so, shall I do
> To th' freshest things now reigning, and make stale
> The glistering of this present, as my tale
> Now seems to it. (IV, i, 9-15)

The wintry landscape of death and life-denying passion, the murky hell of Leontes's self-inflicted dark broodings, the universe in which spasmodic jealousy and suspicion reign supreme—all this is replaced by an atmosphere of the resurgence of faith and love. Leontes had earlier suddenly turned into a sick man and recovered from this sickness only partially when his conscience was touched to the quick by the searing expostulations of Paulina and the severe blow dealt to him following his defiance of the Delphic oracle. His purgatorial penance begins at the right moment, but the reinvigoration of the kingdom he presides over, dependent as it is on the discovery of 'the little girl lost,' is yet enwrapped in the darkness of uncertainty. And Time which subsumes the patterns both of the past and of the present also provides the mirror in which are reflected the changing fortunes of Perdita. From the first three Acts of the play to the last two ones we are not only made to walk forth into an entirely unknown region but the whole dramatic action seems to be organized and worked out in terms of a voyage and a discovery. Having traversed through the mazy labyrinths of the Mundane Shell—the sea of material life with all its attendant perils and hazards—the soul of 'the little girl lost' emerges into a newfound world. And this constitutes the triumph of the choric Time over the tangle of events in the play.

That the pattern of guilt, remorse and reconciliation is interwoven into the action of *The Winter's Tale* is a fact which has been over-stressed to a fault. The assumption however needs restatement. Time's mediation has its point in so far as the vicissitudes of the contingent world are evaluated in terms of the movement of the hour-glass. Some foreshadowing, however vague, of the 'Whitsun pastorals' through which are articulated the organic rhythms of the

seasons may be gathered from the nostalgic vision of the shared experience of the two kings in their early life thus :

> We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
> And bleat the one at th' other: what we chang'd
> Was innocence for innocence: we knew not
> The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
> That any did. (I, ii, 67-71)

With the opening of Act IV, Sc iv we are transported from the oppressive darkness of the play into a sun-lit world—a world which although it reflects the summer's death and the not-yet birth of trembling winter, nevertheless, represents a continuity of the seasons and exudes energy, passion and exuberance. The reference to the 'Whitsun pastorals,' it has been very acutely observed by Traversi, 'introduces the theme of the Holy Spirit to stress the note of 'grace' (for whitsun is in the Christian cycle . . . the feast of the descent of the Holy Spirit, harbinger of grace) as a crown to that of spring and love.'[5] Within this specific context 'grace' is equivalent to the personal intuition of natural fertility and it is also not for nothing that the metaphor of the 'Bright Phoebus' which sheds its radiance over all objects and incidents in this part of the play is the presiding metaphor. The shift from the murky and error-ridden world to one of uninhibited and ecstatic delight is betrayed in the two lines of Autolycus's 'cuckoo song'[6] thus:

> *Why then comes in the sweet o' the year,*
> *For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.* (IV, iii, 3-4)

The 'red blood' is here an image of the unregulated, rebellious passion which asserts itself in the midst of the wintry landscape. Very much like the shepherd and the clown Autolycus's sensations too are rooted in the soil and his song, with vibrations of 'the tirra-lira' chanted by the lark, 'the doxy over the dale' and the act 'of tumbling in the hay' becomes evocative of the resonance of the sun-burnt mirth of this idyllic setting. It is also not unmixed with a grain of sensuality. The

process of renewed life is put in the frame of the circling seasons and the potencies underlying the world of Flora. The subsidence of Leontes's jealousy is as precipitate as was its eruption and neither makes much sense if strictly judged in terms of the canon of verisimilitude. And yet Leontes very much looks like a sick man ruling over a land as barren as his own heart and is in dire need of the act of self-forgiveness. In the fertility myth the two themes coalesce, and Perdita—the poor thing, condemn'd to loss! (II, iii, 191), but who emerges as 'Flora/peering in April's front' (IV, iv, 2-3)—is the one in whom this myth has been embodied and through whom it is made to function. By the alchemy of the imagination she is metamorphosed into a vegetation deity, a kind of queen who presides over 'the meeting of the petty gods.' Leontes's spiritual purgation reaches its climax in the recognition scene when in the midst of 'a notable passion of wonder,' 'the little girl lost' is ultimately discovered in a miraculous way.

At the heart of Act IV, Sc. iv lies the engaging and crucial dialogue between Polixenes and Perdita relevant to the balancing of art and nature. Carnations and gillyvors are named as 'Nature's bastards' because they are out of season and are the product of human artifice. On Polixenes's inquiry as to why she doesn't bother to have slips of them in her garden Perdita's implicit distaste for them betrays itself thus :

> For I have heard it said
> There is an art which, in their piedness, shares
> With great creating nature. (IV, iv, 86-8)

The excessive riot of colour (or 'their piedness') results from the process of grafting, and this goes to show that human ingenuity and skilfulness is capable of vying with nature in all its limitless fecundity. Despite some modicum of agreement between Polixenes and Perdita on the point that art can change the appearance of the objects of nature and is a co-

sharer of Nature's plenitude Perdita's reply reflects a sort of prudish undertone. Polixenes elaborates his thesis thus:

> Say there be;
> Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,
> Which you say adds to Nature, is an art
> That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend nature—change it rather—but
> The art itself is nature (IV, iv, 88-97)

This passage is a complex organization of variations on a Renaissance commonplace : art transmutes Nature's germens, conferring upon them or helping them realize a wholly unsuspected form and design, but in so doing it draws upon her inherent resources and ultimately becomes indistinguishable from Nature. She thus appears to be a seminal principle, a directing and controlling power, an exemplar to which the innovations of art approximate and for which she serves as the model. The analogy, woven into this generalization, grounded as it is in an horticultural process, has an implicit, unmistakable reference to the love-mating planned between Florizel—'a gentler scion', and Perdita—'the wildest stock.' This also glances remotely at the contemplated synthesis of the court values and the country values in the play and of which Autolycus, who offers a foil to Perdita, provides a kind of burlesquing. In the immediate context and as events unfold later Polixenes is trapped by the implications of his assertion, cunningly made to test Perdita's integrity, and is therfore led to repudiate the logic of his own premises. The indirect persuasion to seduction, contained in Polixenes's lines, is countered unequivocally by Perdita when she upholds:

> I'll not put
> The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
> No more than, were I painted, I would wish
> This youth should say t'were well, and only therefore
> Desire to breed by me. (IV, iv, 99-103)

One may add that she does not speak here as Flora, associated in the sixteenth century England with sensual love, but as Perdita who does not wish to give birth to illegitimate children. On the semantic level it may be of some interest to note that the two words 'marry' and 'conceive', occurring in Polixenes's speech, bear a close correspondence to 'breed' in that of Perdita, and similarly there is a verbal echo of 'in their piedness' in the phrase 'were I painted.'

Though at one with Polixenes in her consistent belief that art not only complements cosmic nature but even excels it by drawing upon its inherent potencies Perdita recoils from conceding the consequences of the analogy of grafting. With her sensitive grace and feminine perceptiveness she is able to recognize that what is desirable and legitimate in respect of changing the appearance of flowers is wholly inappropriate as far as her 'maiden garden' is concerned. Her attitude reflects a streak of Puritanism that is so evident here as well as in *The Tempest*, and in the last plays in general. It may not be wide of the mark to speculate that the fore-going speech of Perdita seems to bristle with the intimate, instinctive fear which was betrayed by her earlier while speaking to Florizel:

> even now I tremble
> To think your father, by some accident
> Should pass this way, as you did : O the Fates!
> How would he look, to see his work, so noble,
> Vilely bound up? (IV, iv, 18-22),

Cataloguing the various gods in the Greek pantheon who disguised themselves to sustain the make-believe of love and bringing his sense of the grotesque into play—'Jupiter became a bull, and bellow'd ; the green Neptune/ A ram, and bleated' (IV, iv, 27-29)—Florizel indulges in a gesture of shrewd self-identification thus :

> and the fire-rob'd god,
> Golden Apollo, a poor humble swain,
> As I seem now. (IV, iv, 29-31)

And by a not dissimilar act of invocation, though without any comic inflections, and naming flowers of multiple patterns and dispositions, which she would like to have, Perdita too, almost unconsciously identifies herself with the mythical daughter of Ceres and Jupiter in a moment of luxurious melancholy :

> O Proserpina,
> For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall
> From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
> That die unmarried, ere they can behold
> Bright Phoebus in his strength (a malady
> Most incident to maids); bold oxlips and
> The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
> The flower-de-luce being one. O, these I lack,
> To make you garlands of; and my sweet friend,
> To strew him o'er and o'er! (IV, iv. 116-29)

The cyclical motif of regeneration evoked by Persephone, the hankering after the spring flowers and the latent yearning to meet 'the fire-rob'd god' or Bright Phoebus'—all these disparate elements are fused together in a single complex tissue of associations. This is a vision of nature that demonstrates its creative power and discloses the unsuspected loveliness subsisting at the heart of the phenomenal world. The incredible massing of forms and colours and designs, with their individual specifications, and the poetry of the earth—at once so sensuous and ethereal—that flows from them is the object of aesthetic contemplation in this particular passage. Among the later poets it is Hopkins who in his *Pied Beauty* projects a similar dynamic texture of impressionism, though it is done with the deliberate purpose of deepening religious certitude. Perdita's lines, on the contrary, are couched in a pagan setting and it is the bewildering heterogeneity of the physical impact which is the main con-

cern of the speaker here. The undertones of melancholy, moreover, that are associated with indulgence in unsanctioned love may not be missed by any perceptive reader. Not only do the 'pale primroses / That die unmarried' underscore the lamentation over unfulfilled womanhood but the withering sense of the transience and fragility of life is also pervasive all through.

Perdita also offers, it may be intriguing to notice, some point of contact with William Blake's Lyca—'The Little Girl Lost and Found' of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Unlike Thel, Lyca—the emblem of the soul—makes a descent into Generation, is guarded by her mother—the emblem of the Intellect, and is safe with the beasts of prey in the deep recesses of the wood—symbolization of the material world. Persephone, who lives in the Hades—Pluto's underworld—for six months and is allowed to visit the upper world the rest of the year, seems to be the common archetype for both Lyca and Perdita. Unlike Lyca, Perdita's relationship with the father is as strong and perdurable as with the mother. But her close proximity to Lyca is demonstrated by the fact that she survives the storm and the shipwreck unscathed and is also spared by the bear—Bohemia is otherwise notorious for the ferocity of its bears—who dines on Antigonus. The Clown who reports this fact with palpable unconcern accepts it as part of the natural process of things. From Act IV onwards Perdita as a dramatic character matters less than as one in whom the mythical significance of the play becomes transluscent. At the same time the wasteland of Sicilia—the objectivisation of the neurotic self-involvement of Leontes and the final tryst of Florizel and Perdita—bursts into incredible fertility and unstinted profusion. The recognition scene in the last Act in which Perdita seems to release a positive reservoir of energy has therefore a ritualistic and symbolic significance as it is reported by the Third Gentleman in very elaborate and pellucid prose : 'Our king, being ready to leap out of himself for joy of his found dau-

ghter, as if that joy were now become a loss, cries, 'O thy mother, thy mother' (V, ii, 50-3). This is obviously linked up with the tenor of the divine Apollo's oracular word : 'and the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found' (III, ii, 134-6).

The last scene of the last Act in which 'the little girl lost' is confronted with her mother is of signal importance. Hermione had been supposed to be dead since the news of Mamillius's suddenly passing away was broken to her by one of the servants and Paulina, the guardian angel of both Leontes and Hermione, had drawn the former's attention to it by remarking : 'look down / And see what death is doing' (III, ii, 147-8). Her body was apparently consecrated in a chapel and such a halo of mystery had been allowed to gather round this incident that everybody was constrained to believe in this piece of fabricated truth. A persistent belief in this fiction is the most effective means of rendering Hermione's restoration to life as something startling and miraculous. Through the clever manipulation of sly hints thrown here and there the reader's mind is prepared beforehand for an easy acceptance of the myth of her eventual resurrection. Leontes is shown to have become so receptive of the wise counselling of Paulina as to declare unequivocally : 'My dear Paulina / We shall not marry till thou bid'st us' (V, i. 82-3). And Paulina, who has manipulated the entire strategy of the artifice and has been looking after the mechanics of the plot with scrupulous care, ensures the firmness of his commitment by replying to him thus :

> That
> Shall be when your first queen's again in breath:
> Never till then. (V, i, 82-84)

Hermione figuratively turned to stone is a fiction which was widely publicized by both Paulina and the Third Gentleman and as widely lent credence to by the common man. All the beauty, tenderness and passion of the queen

is believed to have been transfixed into the marmoreal statue. And in its uncanny perfection it reminds one of Keats's 'well-wrought urn' as well as of W. B. Yeats's 'monuments of unageing intellect,' with this difference however that the former's apparent frozen statuesqueness pulsates with life. Of the fabulous sculptor and painter it is reported that 'he would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione, that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer' (V, ii, 98-101). Here again the notion of art as transcending nature in its subtlety and excellence is reiterated. And the evocation of the myth of the artificer as god makes us in this particular context think of Pygmalion as the archetypal example. All this is part of the technique of illusionism which, though outrageous, has been employed with such superb artistry by Shakespeare as not to be suspected by the reader till the very last. The cryptic lines uttered by Paulina at this point:

> prepare
> To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
> Still sleep mock'd death: behold, and say'tis well. (V iii,18-20)

are followed by the stage direction: ('Paulina draws a curtain, and discovers Hermione standing *like* a statue.') Life is undoubtedly 'mocked' by dramaturgy, and the word 'like' contains the esoteric suggestion that Hermione is not dead but alive and would be exposed to the vulgar sight in the form of a perfect statue—erect, motionless and bearing a high degree of verisimilitude. Not only does Hermione's beauty appear to be caught into the stillness and fixity of the stone but the audience too have been hypnotized and Leontes, in a half-wakeful state, exclaims in the midst of rapturous wonder:

> O, thus she stood,
> Even with such life of majesty, warm life,
> As now it coldly stands, when first I woo'd her! (V. iii, 34-36)

Even the wrinkles on Hermione's face, wrought by the ravages of time, and claimed to be carved with such exquisite dis-

tinction and accuracy, evoke a blurred impression and thus help efface the boundary line between artifice and nature. Each little bit of detail like 'these veins' that 'did verily bear blood,' life which 'seems warm upon her lips' and 'the fixure of her eye' that 'has motion in't' makes us concentrate our vision both on the finesse of artifice and its opaqueness as also on the transparency of the teeming life shining through it. For exploding the fiction of death and for initiating the process of the resurgence of life what is needed at this stage is the playing of music. With the awakening of the impulse to faith (a point insisted on by Paulina) and the operation of the *motif* of music, which is an indication of the power of harmony according to Wilson Knight, the climactic point is reached thus:

> Come I
> I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay come away:
> Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
> Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs: (V, iii, 100-103)

Artifice and nature were evenly poised against each other and their paradoxes were in a way held in tension: now at one stroke the illusion is broken and the artifice (= timelessness) recedes into the background and nature or life (=time) gets the better of it. In other words we are made aware not of the fact that art is an illusion but that life which was regarded as an illusion thus far has been replaced by reality which we are required to respond to. Hence when the scales ultimately fall off the eyes of Leontes he is able to announce his credo thus:

> O, she's warm!
> If this be magic, let it be an art
> Lawful as eating. (V, iii, 109-11)

Putting it differently one may maintain that Leontes's fancy, stirred by 'affection,' had created sixteen years earlier an illusion which came to replace the real. Now under the provocation of his reborn faith and love another illusion is

created which declares itself as more real than the fiction of the statue which is ultimately rejected.

From the beginning of Act IV a kind of ambivalence was established between the solidity of the fiction of Hermione's statue and an erosion of that by providing us fugitive hints of her anticipated reanimation. In terms of *mimesis* we are gradually persuaded to accept the incredible as more miraculous and authentic than what is exposed to sense-perceptions directly. In Polixenes's formulation earlier art depended for its ultimacy upon *natura naturans* and in the last scene too artifice which is no more than a simulacrum of reality is subsumed by the broad sweep of life. Paulina ends up by saying [To Hermione] 'Turn, good lady, / Our Perdita is found.' And thus the two crucial themes of the play: coalescence between art and nature on the one hand, and the restorative and regenerative function of Perdita as a vegetation deity on the other seem to be inseparably intertwined.

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MACAULAY'S LITERARY THEORY AND SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM

In his excellent account of Lord Macaulay's pre-*History* years, Professor John Clive has argued that Macaulay was neither an out-and-out Augustan nor a wholehearted Romantic in his literary attitudes, but was drawn equally to both points of view.[1] Since Professor Clive's grand theme was 'the shaping of the historian,' he did not naturally canvass all the evidence that is available in support of his position. I propose in this article to gather the many scattered remarks of Macaulay on Shakespeare and relate them to his general literary beliefs in order to show how well-founded Professor Clive's thesis is. Since there is no discussion of Macaulay in Augustus Ralli's *A History of Shakespearian Criticism*, the article may be of some interest to Shakespeare scholars also.

It is undeniable that Macaulay's fame rests on his *History* and on his Indian work and that he was himself inclined to shrug off his achievement as a literary critic.[2] Macaulay's modest self-estimate was endorsed by Leslie Stephen who declared: Macaulay 'never makes a fine suggestion as to the secrets of the art whose products he admires or describes . . . he never gets below the surface or details the principles whose embodiment he describes from without.'[3] Nevertheless certain factors may be pleaded in Macaulay's favour which would soften the tone, if not materially alter the substance, of such a harsh verdict. As every schoolboy of fourteen knows, Macaulay was an extremely well-read man and he was gifted with a prodigious memory. (We need not stop to discuss with Stephen whether this memory was an

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ambivalent gift.) Within limits (well described by Cotter Morison in his EML volume[4]) he was a sensitive reader.[5] And he had a deep faith in both the healing[6] and the modernizing influence of European literature.[7] The faith expressed itself sometimes rather awkwardly and arrogantly, but it was genuine. He may have lacked Arnoldian culture,[8] but surely it was no Philistine who quoted with warm approval the opinion of Emperor Charles the Fifth that the learning of a new language conferred a new soul on a man. He even maintained that a man who was well acquainted with classical literature was 'likely to be far more useful to the State and to the Church than one who is unskilled or little skilled in classical learning.'[9] His capacity to compare and analyse what he read was far from negligible. His comparison of Dante with Milton is well-known, and his preference for the details of Dante over 'the vague sublimity' of Milton is very persuasively argued.[10] His attack on 'the singularly inhuman spirit' of Restoration Comedy is equally well-known. Comparing this comedy with Shakespearian comedy, he points out that Shakespeare never associates vice 'with those things which men value most, and virtue with everything ridiculous and degrading' (*Essays*, II, pp. 414-15). To use Coleridge's phrase, there are no 'innocent adulteries' in Shakespeare.

Why, then, was Macaulay so apologetic of his abilities and his achievement as a literary critic? Two reasons may be suggested. In an article on the Royal Society of Literature (1823) Macaulay expressed his doubt whether criticism served any useful purpose at all since there were no recognized principles. 'It is more difficult to establish the merits of a poem than the powers of a machine or the benefits of a new remedy' (*M.E.P.*, 386). But the second reason is more interesting and more important, for it is related to the argument of this article. Macaulay subscribed to the critical tradition that treated the imagination as the faculty which provides the images of poetry and which 'combines idea into new forms or assemblages.'[11] But he also agreed with the

view that it was the power of the mind which 'animated' those images and made them inseparable parts of the poem contributing something which the parts did not have in themselves and which defied analysis. In his essay on Dryden (1828) he maintains that criticism may analyse the images of a poem, but that which makes a living whole of them, 'the very element by which poetry is poetry,' is as impossible to analyse 'as it would be for an anatomist to form a living man out of the fragments of his dissecting-room. In both cases the vital principle eludes the finest instruments and vanishes in the very instant in which its seat is touched' (*M.E.P.*, 44-5). Thus ciriticism may point out, says Macaulay, all the features of Hotspur's character, and yet 'something is still wanting.' 'A man might have all those qualities, and every other quality which the most minute examiner can introduce into his catalogue of the virtues and faults of Hotspur, and yet he would not be Hotspur.' (*M.E.P.*, 43). In other words, the very nature of poetry is such that its criticism (except in the hands of a Goethe or a Lessing) is foredoomed to futility and superficiality. Therefore Macaulay claimed that he enjoyed works of the imagination all the better for not 'dissecting' them.

Macaulay conceived of literature as an imitation in words of 'the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the vicissitudes of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things which really exist, all things of which we can form an image in our minds by combining together parts of things which really exist' (*Essays*, II, p. 628). Imitation consists in the re-creation of the essential and permanent features of life and human nature, the distinction of poetic imitation being that only words can imitate 'the inner man.' (It will be observed that he has enlarged the use of the term to include not only actions but our passions and feelings also. Dryden's Lisideius, a post-Cartesian in this respect, declares that the painting of the hero's mind is more properly the poet's work

than physical action.) An imitation is superior to a copy. It can capture the reality in a way that a copy cannot. In his essay on History (1828) Macaulay compares imitation to portrait-painting. A portrait is a likeness, but only up to a point. No picture is exactly like the original; nor is a picture good in proportion as it is like the original. There are portraits which 'condense into one point of time and exhibit at a single glance, the whole history of turbid and eventful lives—in which the eye seems to scrutinize us and the mouth to command us—in which the brow menaces us, and the lip almost quivers with scorn—in which every wrinkle is a comment on some important transaction' (*M.E.P.*, 7-8). Those are the best pictures (and the best histories), says Macaulay, which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. The whole must be present in the part. The artist must select his details. 'It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another merely because he tells more truths' (*M.E.P.*, 8). 'Truths' are given by the analysing intellect, by the eye peering through a microscope. But 'truth' is given by the imagination. It alone knows how to select, how to combine, how to *animate* the whole. It is creative. Macaulay's distinction between portrait and likeness, imitation and copy, is superficially similar to Coleridge's suggestion that an imitation is a likeness implying 'difference conjoined with sameness.' (For a succinct explanation of Coleridge's distinction, see his essay, *On Poesy or Art*). Macaulay's perception does not however arise from any broad philosophy of art or metaphysical system. The Romantic conclusion that reality inheres in the revealing particular ('the one red leaf, the last of its clan') is echoed in Macaulay without the ontological support that it obtains in Romantic thought.

If poetry is an imitation of the permanent features of life and of human nature, 'and the instrument of that imitation is the imagination, it follows that poetry should not be subjected to 'rules which tend to make its imitations less perfect than

they otherwise would be; and those who obey such rules ought to be called not correct but incorrect artists' (*Essays* II, p. 628). Thus the Greeks of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, says Macaulay, 'bear a far greater resemblance than the Greeks of Racine (in *Iphigenie*) to the real Greeks who besieged Troy: and for this reason, that the Greeks of Shakespeare are human beings, and the Greeks of Racine are mere names, mere words printed in capitals at the head of paragraphs of declamation' (*Essays*, II, p. 623). Racine, says Macaulay, would never have been guilty of an anachronism such as Shakespeare's Hector referring to Aristotle, but Racine's whole play is 'one anachronism, the sentiments and phrases of Versailles in the camp of Aulis.' The passions and feelings of the inner man are *not* imitated in these declamations in Racinian tragedy.[12] Refering to Warburton's criticism that the office of the censor was created half a century after the days of Coriolanus and that Shakespeare has been therefore guilty of an anachronism in this regard in his play, Macaulay cries out impatiently: 'This undoubtedly was a mistake, and what *does* it matter ?' (Trevelyan, II, p. 422). In his essay on Dryden, Macaulay writes that we blame Dryden 'not because the persons of his drama are not Moors or Americans, but because they are not men and women—not because love such as he represents could not exist in a harem or in a wigwam, but because it could not exist anywhere' (*M.E.P.*, 65). Similarly, 'we can discover no eternal rule, no rule founded in reason and the nature of things which Shakespeare does not observe much more strictly than Pope' (*Essays*, II, p. 634). This rejection of 'rules' is of course a far cry from Coleridge's theory of the organic form which has its own inner laws of being and growth, but at the same time we must concede that it is not a mere echo of Dr Johnson either. (Macaulay grossly undervalued Johnson's edition including the noble preface—as the great Coleridge also did—though *he* did it for a very different, very fundamental reason). There is a greater recognition in

Macaulay than in Johnson of the unity of total effect that the imagination brings about. There are other differences also between Macaulay and Johnson which mark slight advances. Macaulay agrees with Johnson, echoing even Johnson's language, that the mingled drama of Shakespeare is necessary 'to make a just representation of a world in which the laughers and the weepers are perpetually jostling each other . . . .' (*M.E.P.*, 57). But he takes the defence a step further when he notes that 'the nonsense' of the Fool in *Lear* 'coming in between the bursts of the King's agony, heightens the effect beyond description' (Trevelyan, II, p. 415). (Coleridge's comments on this point, in his 1813 lecture, are of course related to his conception of the imagination as a reconciler of opposites.)[13] What Johnson might have said on this point may be gathered from his remarks in *The Rambler*. In Rambler 125 he speaks of 'the most important affairs' being made 'contemptible' by 'an intermixture of unseasonable levity.' 'There is scarce any tragedy of the last century which has not debased its most important incidents and polluted its most serious interlocutions with buffoonery and meanness.' Again, in Rambler 156 after stating that tragi-comedy should proceed from 'the justness of the design' rather than 'the vigour of the writer,' Johnson adds that the effects even of Shakespeare's poetry might perhaps have been 'yet greater had he not counteracted himself, and we might have been more interested in the distresses of his heroes had we not been so frequently diverted by the jokes of his buffoons.' Macaulay also vehemently disagrees with Johnson's criticism that Shakespeare has sacrificed poetic justice in *Lear*. 'Torn to pieces as Lear's heart had been, was he to live happily ever after as the story-books say? Wonderful as the whole play is, this last passage is the triumph of Shakespeare's genius. Every character is perfectly supported, (Trevelyan, II, p. 417.) (*Lear* moved Macaulay even more profoundly than *Hamlet*.) Again Macaulay differs from Johnson over the question of 'mean' metaphors. Johnson complained that the figure of

'O' for a circle ('this wooden O') was a very mean metaphor.[14] In Rambler 168 he explains that words become 'low' by the occasions to which they are applied or the general character of those who use them; and the disgust which they produce arises from the revival of those images with which they are commonly united (Ibid., p. 9). Macaulay does not seem to disagree with this principle, but he implies that such associations are personal and accidental. 'Surely if "O" were really the usual name of a circle, there would be nothing mean in it any more than in the Delta of the Nile' (Trevelyan, II, p. 418). In his attitude to the unities also Macaulay goes a step further than Johnson. (Though Johnson gives the unities short shrift in the Preface, whenever he finds that Shakespeare has sufficiently observed them as in *Measure for Measure* he draws our attention to the fact in the Notes). In his essay on Dryden, taking the hint from Dryden himself, Macaulay attributes the excellence of Elizabethan drama to two causes: the mixture of tragedy and comedy and the length and extent of the action. The latter enables us to get acquainted with the characters. We can enter into the life of a Shakespeare character and obtain that vast extension of our knowledge of life and human nature which it is Shakespeare's glory to confer on his readers precisely because Shakespeare has *not* observed the unities. The very development of the character calls for their suspension. 'It is clear, for example,' writes Macaulay, 'that such a character as that of Hamlet could never have been developed within the limits to which Alfieri confined himself. Yet such was the reverence of literary men during the last century for these unities that Johnson who, much to his honour, took the opposite side, was, as he says, "frightened at his own temerity" and "afraid to stand against the authorities which might be produced against him" ' *M.E.P.*, 624). Again Macaulay brings us to the very threshold, without however crossing it, of the Romantic view of reality as a process and not a finished state of being, of character developing instead of character developed. (Coleridge's

reasons for rejecting the unities, are available in his lecture on *The Tempest*. See Hawkes, p. 199 ff). Macaulay's position is also not easily reconciled with the distinction that he himself draws between copy and imitation, and it also ignores the fact that it is not the temporal length but the intensity of our acquaintance, our participation in the character's self-exploration and self-creation that matter. This intensity and this participation depend upon our response to Shakespeare's poetry. Although he ignores these considerations, Macaulay's position is an extension of Johnson's.

The conception of literature as imitation provides the basis not only for the repudiation of rules (he dismisses one of the reasons for a certain rule as a lady's reason) but also for preferring the drama of three-dimensional characters to the drama of 'humorous' characters. He concedes that humour characters have existed in history—he himself cites a few examples—and do exist in life. They are, hence, not ineligible for imitation, but the highest honours 'are reserved for the few who have excelled in the difficult art of portraying characters in which no single feature is extravagantly overcharged' (*Essays*, II, p. 604). It is the proportion of the features amongst themselves and to the activity of the play as a whole that matters. (One could work out from this an answer to the question: Why is Falstaff not simply the Braggart, the Vice, etc.) The silly notion, writes Macaulay, with perhaps William Richardson in mind, that 'every man has one ruling passion and that this clue, once known, unravels all the mysteries of his conduct finds no countenance in the plays of Shakespeare' (*Essays*, II, p. 602). Even Shylock is no exception:

> All his propensities are mingled with each other so that in trying to apportion to each its proper part, we find the same difficulty which constantly meets us in real life. A superficial critic might say that hatred is his ruling passion. But how many passions have amalgamated to form that hatred ? It is partly the result of wounded pride : Antonio has called him dog. It is partly the result of covetousness. Antonio has hindered him of half a million; and when Antonio is gone, there

will be no limit to the gains of usury. It is partly the result of national and religious feeling; Antonio has spit upon the Jewish gaberdine; and the oath of revenge has been sworn by the Jewish sabbath. (*Essays*, II, p. 602)

Shakespeare's characterization is never a caricature, says Macaulay. That the drama of caricature has its own artistic rationale and moral necessity, as T. S. Eliot explained in his essay on Ben Jonson (in *The Sacred Wood;* reprinted in *Selected Essays*) is a different issue.

Macaulay notes that Shakespeare's mode of characterization is truly dramatic in the sense that he makes his characters reveal themselves in speech; he does not report on them or elaborately analyse them. The characters speak in such a way that we see them. (Shakespeare's characters, said Coleridge, are like those in life, to be *inferred* by the reader, not *told to him.*) 'Shakespeare never tells us that in the mind of Iago everything that is beautiful and endearing was associated with some filthy and debasing idea' (*Essays*, p. 637). We are allowed to see it for ourselves when Iago speaks. In the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet* even the puns are in character; they belong to Sampson and Gregory and characterize them. Macaulay is very close here to the realization that dramatic imagery is a means of individualizing the character and endowing it with a many-layered mind, but he does not develop the point. He does, however, note that no character in Shakespeare is ever made to say anything which is not 'in the right place, from the right person.' Everything is subordinated to the total structure of the play. 'This is perhaps the highest praise which can be given to a dramatist' (*Essays*, II, pp. 637-38).

Macaulay's views on the role of language in poetic composition have been sometimes dismissed as a rehash of well-known doctrines, but such an interpretation may not be fair. Macaulay believes that good poetry requires a balance of language and imagination. It was first achieved by the Elizabethans, then lost by the Augustans, and was regained

by the Romantics. (Though his remarks on the Romantic writers do not clearly show that he understood what they were about, he gradually came to think highly of them, and spoke of 'the great restoration of literature' in his times.) The balance may be lost by the domination of either the imagination over the powers of expression or that of the powers of expression over the imagination. By the domination of the imagination—'despotic power' is his phrase—Macaulay refers to the inability of the poet's language to re-create and communicate the perception of the poet. Or, conversely, the imagination may be too feeble for a vivid perception to take place. Perception involves the re-creation of the object by the imagination. This perception is further re-created in the poem, for which adequate language is necessary. The history of poetry that Macaulay proposes in his essay on Dryden, read with other statements that he makes on the subject, may be summarised as follows : in primitive times, the original perception was strong, but the second re-creation was not effective because the powers of expression and communication had not developed. In the second phase, the original perception and its expression were in happy balance. In the third phase, the original perception became weak, and we get (if one may use Roy Campbell's irreverent phrase) 'the snaffle and the curb' without 'the bloody horse'; in other words, descriptive poetry instead of imitation. In the fourth phase, Pegasus begins to re-appear. In his essay on Dryden, Macaulay argues that one must distinguish between poetry as a mental act and poetry as a species of composition.

> If we take it in the latter sense, its excellence depends not solely in the vigour of the imagination, but partly also on the instruments which the imagination employs. Within certain limits therefore poetry may be improving while the poetical faculty is decaying. The vividness of the picture presented to the reader is not necessarily proportioned to the vividness of the prototype which exists in the mind of the writer. . . . In poetry as in painting and sculpture it is necessary that the imitator should be well-acquainted with that which he undertakes to imitate and expert in the mechanical part of his art. (*M.E.P.*, 48-9).

When Macaulay praises the style of Shakespeare and of Elizabethan drama in general, it is for this balance between perception and language which gives us the object of imitation. 'In the English plays alone,' writes Macaulay after discussing Greek and French plays, 'is to be found the warmth, the mellowness and the reality of painting. We know the minds of the men and women as we know the faces of the men and women of Van Dyke' (*M. E. P*, 55). In his review-essay on Moore's Life of Lord Byron, Macaulay affirms that 'the deeper and more complex parts of human nature can be exhibited by means of words alone' (*Essays* II, p. 628). Unfortunately he did not develop any theory of poetic suggestion to explain this unique capacity of words in their poetic use. (He was not of course unaware of poetic suggestion. Witness his remarks on Milton's style. *Essays* I, p. 157.)

Although it is very doubtful whether Macaulay understood the philosophic foundations of Romantic criticism as exemplified in Coleridge, many of his comments on Shakespeare's plays bear a striking resemblance to the remarks of Coleridge. (Macaulay recorded his comments in the margins of his Shakespeare set, the 12-volume 1778 edition carrying notes by Warburton, Johnson, Steevens and others.) For example: Referring to Johnson's shocked comment that Hamlet should want to damn his uncle's soul also in revenge, Macaulay writes : 'Johnson does not understand the character. Hamlet is irresolute, and he makes the first excuse that suggests itself for not striking. If he had met the king drunk, he would have refrained from avenging himself lest he should kill both body and soul' (Trevelyan, II, pp. 414-45). Coleridge similarly explains that Hamlet's determination to allow the guilty King to escape when he was apparently at prayer 'is only part of his indecision and irresoluteness' (Hawkes, p. 163). Macaulay thought that *Othello* was the best play extant in any language. (He knew the whole of it by heart..) It was Coleridge's opinion also that while there

was 'something gigantic and unformed in *Hamlet* and *Lear*, (in *Othello*) everything assumes its place and proportion, and the whole mature powers of his mind are displayed in admirable equilibrium' (Hawkes, p. 167). Coleridge instanced the first scene of *Romeo and Juliet* to illustrate Shakespeare's 'homogeneity, proportionateness and totality of interest'. 'The domestic tale begins with domestics that have so little to do that they are under the necessity of letting the superfluity of sensorial power fly off through the escape-valve of wit-combats and quarelling with the weapons of sharper edge, all in humble imitation of their masters' (Hawkes, p. 116). Macaulay lacks the philosophising mind of Coleridge, but his comment is somewhat similar. 'An admirable opening scene, whatever the French critics may say. It at once puts us thoroughly in possession of the state of the two families. We have an infinitely more vivid notion of their feud from the conduct of their servants than we should have obtained from a long story told by Capulet to his confidant *a la Francaise*. It is bad joking, but in character' (Trevelyan, II, p. 409). (Macaulay would take Neander's part in Dryden's dialogue on dramatic poetry.) Macaulay thought that *Romeo and Juliet* exhibited Shakespeare's best and worst modes of writing in closest juxtaposition, passages worthy of *Lear* and *Othello* rubbing shoulders with passages as poor as anything in *Love's Labour's Lost*. He thought that the play marked a turning-point in Shakespeare's dramatic career. Coleridge's opinion, likewise, was that in *Romeo and Juliet* were to be found 'specimens in degree of all the excellences which he afterwards displayed in his more perfect dramas, but differing from them in being less forcibly evidenced and less happily combined' (Hawkes, p. 123). These correspodences between Macaulay and his great contemporary support Trevelyan's claim that his uncle read his Shakespeare 'with reverential delight' as if mindful of Coleridge's admonition: 'The Englishman who without reverence, a proud and affectionate reverence, can utter the name of William Shakespeare, stands disqualified for the office of critic.'[15]

Macaulay is not an original or philosophical critic, and his judgments are distinguished more for their good sense than for any profound insight. Nevertheless his criticism deserves our attention for it illustrates the character of the criticism of an age of transition when new insights had not yet been built into a coherent structure. As Professor John Clive has remarked with admirable understanding and judgment: Macaulay was neither an Augustan nor a Romantic; he could neither bring himself to embrace the new wholeheartedly nor continue the old without serious reservations, but felt drawn to both in varying degrees.[16]

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[1] John Clive, *Macaulay: the Shaping of the Historian* (New York, 1973), p. 80. Another notable sympathetic critic is Joan Millgate, *Macaulay* (London, 1973). Less sympathetic critics would include: Terry Otten, 'Macaulay's Critical Theory of Art and Imagination', *JAAC*, 28, 1; 'Macaulay's Second-Hand Theory of Poetry', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 72, 2; Rene Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: The Age of Transition* (London, 1966). Professor George Levine's notable essay on Macaulay in *The Boundaries of Fiction* (Princeton, 1968) includes a few pages on Macaulay's literary beliefs but the thesis of his chapter inclines him to take a more negative attitude to Macaulay than his own quotations from Macaulay can fairly support.

[2] See G. O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols (London, 1961), I, p. 437. Abbreviated for further reference as Trevelyan.

[3] Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, 2 vols (London, 1892), II, pp. 352-3.

[4] See chapter, 'Characteristics'.

[5] Trevelyan says that his uncle had a sense of personal relationship between himself and the writers of the past. See Trevelyan, op. cit., II, p. 387.

[6] See Trevelyan, II, pp. 389 and 398.

[7] See his Minute on Indian Education.

[8] For Arnold's criticism on Macaulay, see his essay on Joubert in *Essays in Criticism*, First Series, and *Friendship's Garland*, letter 8.

[9] *Critical and Historical Essays*, Everyman's Library reprint, 2 vols (1974 and 1967), II, p. 412. For further references in the text abbreviated as *Essays*.

[10] *Lays of Ancient Rome and Miscellaneous Essays and Poems*, Everyman's Library reprint (1968), p. 265. For further references in the text abbreviated as *M.E.P.*

[11] James Beattie; quoted in B. H. Bronson, *Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism*, second impression (Chicago, 1968), p. 90. For a succinct account of eighteenth century theories of the mechanical operation of the imagination, see M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Norton Library reprint (1958), pp. 161-3.

[12] For an account of how the change occurred in the seventeenth century from a theory of art as the imitation of external reality to art as the imitation of men's passions and feelings, see Dean T. Mace, 'Dryden's Dialogue on Drama', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* (1962), p. 87 ff.

[13] See *Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare*, edited by Terence Hawkes, Capricorn Books (New York, 1959), p. 97.

[14] *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*, edited by W. K. Wimsatt (New York, 1960), p. 90.

[15] *Shakespeare Criticism*, edited by D. Nicoll Smith, The World's Classics, 1942 reprint, p. 258.

[16] John Clive, op. cit., p. 80.

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TO UNDERSTAND LOVE: THE STATEMENTS OF *AS YOU LIKE IT* AND *TWELFTH NIGHT*

Shakespeare's last two romantic comedies make complementary, but somewhat different, statements about the nature of love. Both plays not only expose the follies and absurdities of love, but also celebrate its joy and strength. In *As You Like It* Shakespeare emphasizes the growth from folly or excess to maturity and balance. The process is one of education, and the agent of that education is the disguised heroine who instsructs Orlando throughout the play. But in *Twelfth Night*, the disguised heroine has less opportunity to instruct, and the play is less concerned with educating one away from the excesses of love; it instead celebrates the shared humanity that accounts for the perfection of love. While Orlando's growth as a lover is detailed throughout *As You Like It* and is guided by Rosalind, Orsino's conversion in *Twelfth Night* is instantaneous and without the benefit of the specific and planned instruction. A closer look at both plays should suggest how their comments on love are complementary.

In the first place there is a strong satiric strain in *As You Like It*, a quality which is muted in *Twelfth Night*. The comic appeal of *As You Like It* is in the constant conflict between two points of view, the constant undercutting of a position or an ideal.[1] The play is structured on these contrasts in general and in the particular moment. When Rosalind disguised as Ganymede first enters the forest, she says, 'O Jupiter, how weary [or 'merry' if you accept the folio] are my spirits:' (II. iv. 1).[2] Touchstone counters, 'I care not for my spirits, if my legs were not weary' (II. iv. 2). Then Rosalind

overhears the love laments of Silvius and sees in the young shepherd's plight her own situation. But again Touchstone counteracts this sympathetic moment, for if Rosalind has found her own wound in the adventures of Silvius, so also has Touchstone, and he comments on the folly of love, a comment which serves as a point against which to judge the various pairs of lovers in the play. 'We that are true lovers run into strange capers; but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly' (II. iv. 51-3).

Touchstone will later instruct Corin on the advantages of the court life and the disadvantages of the country life. When Touchstone insists that Corin is damned for never having been in court and then attacks as shallow Corin's defence of himself, Shakespeare's gentle satire works in several ways. Touchstone's defence of the ways of the court is to us an attack on those artificial ways. Corin's defence of the shepherd's life undercuts the pastoral ideal espoused elsewhere in the play by Duke Senior and portrayed by those pastoral lovers Silvius and Phoebe, and emphasizes an ideal of common sense and practicality.

> Sir, I am a true labourer; I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck. (III. ii. 71-5)

And when Rosalind and Orlando, Silvius and Phoebe, and Celia and Oliver are preparing to marry, it is once again Touchstone who, dragging Audrey along, reminds us of the physical aspect of their loves: 'I press in here, sir, amongst the rest of the country copulatives, to swear and to forswear, according as marriage binds and blood breaks' (V. iv. 54-7).

A sound critic of folly, then, Touchstone questions the value of Arden, preferring the court to this rural retreat and damning Corin who has never seen the manners of the court. He too recognizes the absurdity of Orlando's rimes. But it is through his attraction to Audrey that Touchstone makes a most telling comment on the folly of love: 'As the ox hath

his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires' (III. iii. 71-2). Touchstone and Audrey then demonstrate humorously through their physical attraction the folly of love.

But it is not only Touchstone who plays this role as contrasting realist. All of the characters take their turns as those who undercut the pretensions of others or who are themselves undercut. Jaques, of course, is one of the major vehicles of Shakespeare's satire.

O. J. Campbell has discussed at length Jaques as Shakespeare's 'representative of the traveller recently returned from a sojourn on the continent, leaden with boredom and histrionic pessimism. His melancholy is artificial and his disgust with everything at home is a pose.'[8] Rosalind herself dismisses Jaques as a traveller: 'Farewell, Monsieur Traveller,' and Duke Senior suggests that Jaques has been a participant in all of those vices he now condemns: 'Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin. / For thou thyself hast been a libertine,/As sensual as the brutish sting itself' (II. vii. 64-6).

The most famous lines of the play are Jaques's seven ages of man speech. But this disillusioned view of life is too often separated from the movement of the play. His view of life leaves no room for any emotional commitment, and such an interpretation of life is immediately contradicted by the entrance of Orlando carrying his old friend and servant, the starving Adam. Shakespeare is not content with this one juxtaposition, for Orlando's entrance is followed by Amiens's song about false friendship:

> Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
> Thou art not so unkind
> As man's ingratitude:
> Thy tooth is not so keen,
> Because thou art not seen,
> Although thy breath be rude. (II. vii. 174-9)

Similarly Jaques's disparaging of love with Orlando is followed immediately by the meeting of Orlando and Gany-

mede. Jaques's perceptions are not only undercut, but in comparison those of Ganymede are obviously meant to be seen as shallow and naive.

But the true critic of love is neither Touchstone nor Jaques, but Rosalind. Rosalind is at one and the same time a girl in love with Orlando—and thus a participant in love—and the disguised Ganymede, who disparages the type of love represented by Orlando. She is, thus, both participant in and critic of love, and because of her disguise superior to all others in the play.[5] There is then a continuous tension between objectivity and subjectivity, between the critic and skeptic of love who instructs Orlando on how he can forget Rosalind and the lover who swoons when she hears of the plight of her beloved.

As critic Rosalind echoes the sentiments of Touchstone. 'Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do' (III. ii. 388-9). Orlando must be convinced that 'men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love' (IV. i. 101-103). When Orlando extravagantly claims that he will love 'for ever and a day', Ganymede is the voice of practicality: 'Say "a day", without the "ever" ' (IV. i. 138).

Ganymede is even more critical of the disdaining Phoebe:

> Down on your knees,
> And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love;
> For I must tell you friendly in your ear,
> Sell when you can, you are not for all markets. (III. v. 57-60)

But the comments must also apply to Rosalind and her treatment of Orlando. Though Orlando must be educated in the true value of love, he must not be scorned. And eventually Orlando, because of his education through the tutoring of Ganymede, becomes the critic; hearing of his brother's love for Celia, Orlando questions his haste.

> Is't possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her? that but seeing, you should love her? and loving, woo? and wooing she should grant? (V. ii. 1-3)

Now Orlando speaks as the critic, but his words not only question the rapid quality of his brother's love, but also scoff at his own initial and rapid love for Rosalind. Of course Orlando is not aware of this self-criticism, but we readers and playgoers must continually be aware of that tension between engagement and detachment, between the complete acceptance of the value and the beauty of love and that cold detached analysis of the folly of love.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare separated the human participants in folly from the critics of that folly. The four Athenian lovers are the participants, and although Titania tells us that Theseus has had his day in the wood, Theseus is the pointed critic:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact. (V. i. 4-8)

One of the strengths of *As You Like It* is that the participant and the critic are one and the same. Rosalind is both lover and satirist; to a certain extent so is Touchstone who weds Audrey. And Rosalind brings Orlando to a level of understanding which allows one both to appreciate and to share the fullness of romantic love and to scoff at in others and to avoid in oneself the excesses of that love. The satire in *As You Like It* is gentle and corrective. It is only Jaques who does not respond, who fails to participate. He remains aloof as critic, as non-participant, but his satirical stance is undercut by a more rounded, more humane, more gentle satire.

Rosalind is able to play this dual role of lover and satirist because she takes on her disguise as Ganymede. She creates a fiction for herself, and she is completely in control of that fiction. Such control allows her a continual superiority to all of the other characters, and only once—when she hears of Orlando's accident—is her mask penetrated; and it is

penetrated because she is reacting here to a situation she has not controlled.

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare explores this idea of the dual role further and adds an interesting variation. Viola creates a fiction; she will disguise herself as her supposedly lost brother Sebastian. But the audience learns at the beginning of Act II that Sebastian lives, and with this important knowledge can anticipate his eventual appearance and can realize that Viola's fiction is connected with a very specific reality.

At one level, then, Viola as Cesario functions in a manner very similar to Rosalind as Ganymede. In Act II, Scene iv, the Duke explains to Cesario how his love is so superior to that of a woman: 'There is no woman's sides/Can bide the beating of so strong a passion/As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart/So big, to hold so much: they lack retention' (94-7). Viola as Cesario is ostensibly the fellow advocate of this male chauvinistic view, but she subtly argues that in love there is a great similarity between man and woman. As Rosalind had to educate Orlando, so must Orsino be made to distinguish between the sensibility and the absurdity of love. But Orsino's conversion is not a gradual one, but an instantaneous one near the end of the play, when Viola's true identity is revealed. When Orsino proposes marriage to Viola, he is attracted now in the female form to those characteristics of Cesario which he had acknowledged in the male setting and which are explored in the male friendship theme in the play.

This theme of male friendship is initially explored in the Antonio-Sebastian relationship. Despite the personal danger to himself at Orsino's court, Antonio will accompany Sebastian. The theme is parodied by Sir Toby's duping of Sir Andrew. Cesario, as he represents Sebastian, is also a part of the male friendship theme. The friendship of Orsino and Cesario is symbolic then of the potential ideal male friendship of Sebastian and Orsino. In the same way, the love of

Olivia for Cesario is both comic because it is mistaken and serious since it is a symbolic prelude for the imaginative love of Olivia and Sebastian. Olivia can woo Cesario-Viola, but not win her; she can, however, both woo and win Cesario-Sebastian. Although one can question the ready acceptance of the marriage proposal by Sebastian, the marriage is also that of Olivia and Cesario. And surely one can not argue that Olivia has been educated. She has just found that a reluctant man has suddenly changed into a willing husband.

When both Sebastian and Viola stand before him in the last Act, Orsino and the audience recognize that the femininity of Viola and the masculinity of Sebastian have been combined into a humanity that man and woman share. The loyalty of Viola-Cesario to Orsino is paralleled by the friendship of Antonio and Sebastian. The love of Viola-Cesario for Orsino is a prognosis for both that relationship and also that of Sebastian and Olivia. As both male and female, Cesario is witness to the folly of both Olivia and Orsino, but beneath the surface folly is an objective appraisal of the humanity that links both man and woman. We know quite well that Orsino is wrong when he claims that no woman can love as he does, for he is silently contradicted by a person who loves more strongly than he does, and in V. i. 215-16 he recognizes that although there are two persons, they are equal in almost every other aspect: 'A natural perspective that is, and is not.'

What Shakespeare seems to suggest in *Twelfth Night*, then, is more than the satirical undercutting of a position. The folly of Orsino is obvious; the mourning of Olivia is short-lived; the postured righteousness of Malvolio is revealed for what it is; the holiday of Sir Toby is rejected for its excesses; and the pose of Viola is threatened by another fraud, Sir Andrew. Nor is Viola able to educate either Orsino or Olivia in the same way that Rosalind successfully worked with Orlando.

If in *As You Like It* Rosalind must make Orlando aware of

the follies and excesses of love, in *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare suggests a somewhat different idea. To be sure there are still those who suffer from the excesses. But Viola as Cesario has little effect on either; yet both are cured, and both are rewarded. Viola's fiction, as I suggested earlier, is supplemented by a more important reality. Cesario is not Viola's fiction, but Shakespeare's fiction, a character which bridges the gap between masculinity and femininity and symbolizes the common humanity, those androgynous characteristics of men and women. In disguising herself as Cesario, she subsumes her femininity in a questionable masculinity. Sebastian's entrance into the play completes the masculinity of Cesario but destroys the femininity. Cesario is an androgynous character who unites the positive qualities of Viola and Sebastian in a physically impossible situation. It is, however, this shared humanity of Viola and Sebastian that is important. Viola=Cesario=Sebastian. This formula is not a mathematical equivalent, for to drop out the middle unit is to create even more confusion. Viola and Sebastian are twins, but they obviously are not equal: Cesario serves as a bridge between the masculinity of Sebastian and the femininity of Viola.

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NOTES

[1] Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form* (Princeton, 1972) defines *As You Like It* as a 'synthesis of two structures, that of romance and antiromance.' The grand theme is 'the romantic ideal challenged by the probings of realism, common sense, and satire' (pp. 175-6). C. L. Barber *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, 1959) has summarized Shakespeare's satirical technique: 'The satirist presents life as it is and ridicules it because it is not ideal, as we would like it to be and as it should be. Shakespeare goes the other way about: he represents or evokes ideal life, and then makes fun of it because it does not square with life as it ordinarily is' (pp. 228-9).

[2] Quotations are from the new Arden edition of the two plays.

[3] O. J. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Satire* (London, 1943), p. 49.

[4] See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, (London, 1960), for a full treatment of Shakespeare's use of multiple levels of awareness in the comedies.

Masoodul Hasan

THE SYMBOLIC MODE IN *ENDYMION*

Endymion was Keats's first important, though immediately unavailing, bid for poetic fame. When it appeared in April 1818, a handful of malicious and factional reviews in two leading periodicals of the day—*Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*—branded it as immoral, meaningless and amost unreadable. Belated support from a few personal friends and admirers through short critical notices and letters in the press might have proved a psychological palliative for the young dejected aspirant, but they contributed little by way of any immediate success. Subsequently too in spite of his posthumous reputation this particular poem failed to receive more than a passing or apologetic notice. Even Arnold who was inclined to rank Keats with Shakespeare slurred over *Endymion* as an artistic failure. But this very year proved to be a turning point in the critical history of the poem, as a lady-admirer of Keats, Mrs Owen, attempted to focus attention on its allegorical perspectives, particularly as an account of the poetic imagination in quest of the spirit of Beauty.[1] Since then all successive writers on Keats have shown progressive interest in the deeper levels of meaning in this poem. Among others, Sidney Colvin, Robert Bridges, Wolff, Finney, Murry and Bush[2] have insisted on its predominantly allegorical character. Indeed, Finney has made a rather exaggerated and not well-substantiated claim that Keats had planned the allegory minutely.[3] These allegorical studies range from exclusively metaphysical and neoplatonic interpretations to the comparatively recent view of the poem as a consistent account of the psychic processes involved in aesthetic creativity. On the other hand, some writers like

Saintsbury, Amy Lowell, Newell Ford and Pettet are extremely skeptical about its allegorical intentions, though they are not unwilling to concede some casual symbolic strains in it. By implication the latter view suggests the want of architectonic quality in the poem, indirectly confirming the charge of aesthetic inadequacy. For a proper understanding and appreciation of the poem, therefore, it is important to examine if there is any structural unity in it, and if so, what is the mode of its construction.

A short while before beginning *Endymion* Keats had attempted its story in a skeletal form in 'I stood Tip-toe' bearing some stylistic resemblance to Leigh Hunt; but his own challenging nature and fertile imagination soon urged him to undertake a fuller and more ambitious treatment of the theme. He conceived of the new venture as a test of his poetic potentialities, and hence a means of self-realization and fame. Accordingly, while still working on Book IV, he wrote to Benjamin Bailey in a letter dated 8 October 1817: 'At any rate I have no right to talk until *Endymion* is finished—it will be a test, a trial of my Powers of imagination and chiefly my invention which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance and fill them with Poetry; . . .'[4] In the same letter he defines poetry as a 'little Region . . . in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading.' Keats had, thus, prescribed for himself the twofold task of expanding the story by interweaving into it some kindred stories, borrowed or even invented, and by introducing multi-layered images that would yield fresh meaning and ideas at each successive reading. Evidently this avowed interest in invention and stratification of images is suggestive of the poet's predilection for the symbolic rather than the allegoric mode of writing. Moreover, as pointed out by Pettet, in contradistinction to this stress on the multiplicity and pregnant nature of images Keats never claimed any allegoric pattern for his work,[5] which seems to lend support to the view

that the symbolic manner of communication rather than allegorical narration was the natural mode of expression for him. Even otherwise, the characteristic Romantic mode of writing then so very popular had a patently symbolic bias: and Keats's known sensitiveness to pervasive literary fashions was bound to lead him in the same direction.

Generally the allegorist proceeds from preconceived abstract ideas, and seeks in his literary work to crystalize them into plausible fiction. His usual passage is from the abstract and ideal to the concrete. On the contrary the symbolist's journey is invariably in the reverse direction. Choosing an accepted myth for treatment, he proceeds to probe it layer after layer, seeking to discover some spiritual or poetic reality in it. Allegory may thus be called a fanciful application of ideas to plausible situations or the transformation of ideas into a concrete, often fixed, pattern, while the symbolic mode may be said to comprise multi-angular apprehension of reality through the agency of evocative images and symbols. Keats's profound concern with the play of creative faculty through revealing and multi-layered images is well-known and references to it especially in connection with *Endymion* are quite significant. Identifying all passion with Beauty with reference to Book I and to the Ode to Sorrow in Book IV, he made the oft-quoted remark: 'What imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not.' Again, suggesting the revision of some lines on happiness (in Book I), he wrote to John Taylor, the publisher: 'The whole thing must I think have appeared to you, who are a consequitive Man, as a thing almost of mere words—but I assure you that when I wrote it was a regular stepping of the imagination towards a Truth.'[6] This 'regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth' forms the core of his pattern of thought and expression in all his major works. It is patently symbolic in character, and figures prominently in *Endymion* also, possibly in preparation of its more effective use in the later and maturer poems.

In numerological symbolism number 'Four' bears considerable mystical significance. The concept of four elements, four ages, four seasons, four directions, four forms of being, four rivers in the underworld, four tasks of Psyche, etc. has usually a special relevance in metaphysical discussion and interpretations of Reality. Echoes of this mystical concept may be readily recognized in Blake's famous four Zoas, or Shelley's four-faced charioteer in *The Triumph of Life*.[7] It seems that Keats was also fascinated by the mystic significance of the quaternion, and employed it frequently in his poems. The 'kisses four' in the original version of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* may, of course, be ignored as an exigency of the rhyme. But the 'Four lily stalks' making a coronal for Adonis' head in the subterranean paradise (BK. II. 407-9) indicate a deeper interest in the significant number. The hospitality offered to Endymion by the musical Cupid also consists of four items—'juicy pears, cream/Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam' 'blooming plums/Ready to melt between an infant's gum' and 'manna pick'd from Syrian trees.' Cybele's 'sombre chariot' too is drawn by four lions (II. 640-1). Likewise the four spirits in the *Song of Four Fairies*, and the quarternary structure of *Endymion* appear to be matters of studied choice not altogether devoid of symbolic implications. Furthermore, the last named poem does not only comprise four books, but each book has a four-fold structure. Book I comprises the prologue, the account of Pan's festival, Endymion's journey to Peona's island, and his narration of his previous encounters with Cynthia. The second book dealing with the hero's subterranean adventures also presents a four-fold division—description of Diana's shrine, the Venus-Adonis episode, the Alpheus-Arethusa affair, and again a chance intercourse with Cynthia. Concerned with happenings under the sea, Book III embodies the history of Galucus' love, the resurrection of Scylla and the host of other drowned lovers, the description of revelry in the palace of Oceanus, and lastly Endymion's dream.

Similarly four major sections may be noticed in Book IV—the history of the Indian maid, her empyrean journey in company with the hero, his visit to the Cave of Quietude, and finally his union with Cynthia. Apart from this structural pattern, Keats's interest in quarternion is also reflected in the quadruple recurrence of themes or incidents in the poem. Before his final union with Cynthia, Endymion meets her four times—thrice in Book I, and once in Book II. So also the experiences of dreaming and swooning are repeated four times each. Again, elaborate references to caves and cavernous imagery occur four times—the cave of Proserpine in Book I, the sounding grotto, Glaucus' cavern, and the Cave of Quietude in Books II, III & IV respectively. Thematically too the poem deals with four distinct love stories. In addition to the central story of Endymion and Cynthia, the supporting stories of Venus and Adonis, Alpheus and Arethusa, and of Glaucus and Scylla in Books II & III constitute the texture of the poem.

Certain cyclic patterns operating in the poem also tend to accentuate its symbolic undertones. For instance, one observes here a cycle of time and season that suggests the death-and-rebirth pattern. The story opens on the occasion of Pan's festival when rains had 'Green'd over April's lap' (I. 217) and 'young damsels danced along' each 'having a white wicker overbrimm'd,/With April's tender younglings' (I. 135-8). There are indications that the enactment of the final scene also takes place about the same time next year when Endymion and Cynthia 'Into the vallies green together went' (IV. 765). Towards the end we are told by Peona that 'Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls' (IV. 815)—possibly in preparation of the annual celebration of the festival once again. Since the poem was actually begun on 18 April 1817 with revision and retouching continuing till the following March, it may be argued that the time-span involved and the numerous references to seasons may have been occasioned by the poet's responses to the actual physical environments.

But Endymion's narration of his amatory experiences from the previous spring upto date, and the subsequent pointed reference to the dance of four seasons and the 'shadowy Hours' witnessed by him and the Indian maid in their serial journey suggest a deeper level of meaning than mere echoes and reflections of the changing scene around the writer. The cycle of seasons and dance of hours subtly underlines the theme of immortality and rebirth of which Endymion's spiritualization for his final union with Cynthia is a symbolic manifestation.

This cyclic pattern on the temporal plane corresponds to a similar design in spatial movement. The entire action in the poem proceeds as Endymion's journey through different regions of space. At first he descends into the cavernous regions and visits the subterranean marble gallery and Diana's shrine. There he meets Adonis, Venus and Cybele, has an unexpected amorous encounter with Cynthia, and overhears the plaintive dialogue between Alpheus and Arethusa. Thereafter he is transported to the submarine world where he is acquainted with Glaucus under whose instruction he effects the resurrection of Scylla and a thousand other lovers. After witnessing a celebration in Neptune's palace Endymion returns to his native land, an event foreshadowed in the drowned lovers' restoration to life. His next adventure is an aerial journey along with the Indian maid, and after a brief exhilarating sojourn in the Cave of Quietude he returns to Latmos once again. These journeys constitute two vertical cycles—(i) earth to the underworld, sea, and back to earth; (ii) earth to air, Cave of Quietude, and back to Latmos. This pattern reinforces the symbolic alternation of life and death referred to above. Incidentally, the previous journey of the Indian maid with the concourse of Bacchus had followed the horizontal east-west direction, and was by implication also a circular movement. The journeys thus symbolize the conquest of time and space in the context of the new divinity acquired by a mortal through his love for the immortal Cynthia.

Further evidence of the symbolic mode of communication may also be adduced from the use of parallelisms and metaphysical correspondence in the poem. As mentioned above the pattern of Endymion's love story is prefigured in the loves of Venus and Adonis, Alpheus and Arethusa in Book II and in the Glaucus-Scylla affair in Book III. Each one of these stories hinges on two pivotal points—the love of a mythical divinity for an earthly being, and the immortalization of the human lover as a result of this experience. With Adonis, Endymion shares the privilege of being loved by a goddess. In the case of Glaucus this correspondence becomes still richer; indeed the river god may in certain respects be taken as Endymion's prototype. Originally Glaucus was a contented fisherman suddenly seized by the desire for freedom of the seas, i.e. immortality. So he plunged into the sea, acquired immortality, and having fallen in love with the nymph Scylla sought the help of Circe who managed to seduce him herself for quite some time. Like him, Endymion was a happy shepherd-prince of Latmos, and having received the favours of his initially unidentified divine mistress, he too descends into the depths of the earth. At a later stage he comes across the dark-eyed Indian maid, and immediately transfers his allegiance to her, suppressing his former love for the time being at least. This similarity assumes particular significance in view of its anagogical implications—emergence from darkness to light, or from temporalness to a state of timelessness. In Book II the revival of Adonis and his upward journey in Venus' car typifies Endymion's return to the world of physical reality, and serves to reiterate the central theme. Similarly (in Book II) the Indian maid's brief account of her own peregrinations across the world indicates yet another correspondence with the hero's experience. Like him, she was melancholy and restless in the beginning, and yearned for love :

> Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
> I sat a weeping : what enamour'd bride,

Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

which is a flash-back of Endymion's mood just before the commencement of his underground adventures. The maid's ranging across the world had hardly supplied her want, and Endymion's wanderings under earth and water brought him no consolation either. It is in this kindred emotional state that they meet each other, and spontaneously recognizing his own psychic identity mirrored in her person he instantaneously falls in love with her. She is Endymion's spiritual counterpart, the female version of the adventure of self-realization.

This scheme of correspondence operates on a more material plane as well, highlighting the symbolic structure of the poem. Unlike the common picture of the underworld as a dark, horrible place either extremely hot or intolerably cold, the cavernous domain portrayed here is picturesque and climatically benign. It is a dark paradise traversed by rivers, fountains, waterfalls and springs, and even furnished with flowery bowers, decorated chambers, silken couches, a marble gallery, a 'long-pillar'd vista, and the 'mimic temple' of 'quiver'd Dian'? In effect it is a sophisticated replica of Latmos, especially of its landscape and the temple. Elsewhere Neptune's palace under the sea is shown to have the same gorgeousness about it. Presumably many of these details were distant echoes from the *Arabian Nights*, *Kubla Khan*, the underground explorations in *Alastor*, *Vathek*, and Southey's Dromdaniel Palace;[8] but Endymion's consecutive adventures in the earth, water and air, and the recurring architectural and vegetal imagery seem to underline the correspondence and relationship between elemental regions and various forms of existence. The sudden blossoming of flowers observed by the disconsolate lovers in the subterranean world may symbolize a poetic flash in moods of contemplation, or his subsequent reemergence

into the world of reality. This prefigurative method may be noticed in Endymion's dreams as well. As in Keats's other poems, dreams and 'cloudy swoons' awaken the dreamer not only to deeper reality—e. g. the poet's swooning at Moneta's feet, or Madeline's dream—here they even disclose hidden affinities and foreshadow the destiny. Thus in Book I Endymion relates to his sister his vision of the moon and the dream journey through the air, which actually materialize in Book IV. Moreover, some of the most significant stages in the story are preceded by a trance or dream. The young lover's first intimate acquaintance with Cynthia came in a dream, followed some time later by another meeting in a trance. Again in Book II after the departure of Venus and Adonis from the underground chamber Endymion himself swoons, and is lifted up by an eagle, reviving just before being dropped into a jasmine bower. It was here that 'stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss ! / A naked waist'. This intoxicating union with his beloved once again sends him into a rapturous swoon from which he recovers to feel Cynthia's passionate kisses on his lips. As the hour of fruition draws nearer, he experiences these dreams more frequently. During his empyrean journey with the Indian maid it is in a dream that 'brotherly he talks/To divine powers,' (IV. 408-9), sees the dance of seasons and hours, and holds a fleeting dialogue with Cynthia. Awakening, he finds the dream to be true. Even making due allowance for the vogue of the dream device in oriental romances then so common, the frequency of dream imagery in *Endymion* suggests a more than merely conventional usage, possibly revealing Keats's interest in symbolical treatment of the themes of illusion and reality, or life and immortality that figure as the central themes of some of his characteristic works.

Sometimes yet another level of significance and meaning is imparted to the story by means of an antiphonal structure of thought. The poem opens on a festive note. There is

music in the air, garlanded children are trooping round the altar of Apollo, while groups of young damsels and shepherds dance and sing in honour of Pan. But in this season of universal joy, Endymion alone feels sad. He is not only out of tune with external reality, but even oblivious of the people's deep interest in him :

> Now indeed
> His senses had swoon'd off : he did not heed
> The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
> Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
> Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
> Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms;
> But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
> Like one who on the earth had never stept. (Bk. I. 397-404)

This complete withdrawal into his inner self is temporarily redeemed through Peona's ministrations, and he reawakens into his normal self, assuring her

> No, I will once more raise
> My voice upon the mountain heights; once more
> Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar. (B.kl.4 77-9)

But the sweet recollection of Cynthia's company unsettles him again, and he relapses into a deeper mood of solitude. The psychic movement back and forth between interiority and exteriority forms a recurring pattern, and is symbolized in the hero's journeys in the elemental world. Symbolically these antiphonal shifts represent the metaphysical interrelationship between the ethereal essence and the physical world. Thus at one stage in his underground stay Endymion feels himself like a disembodied soul floating with Cynthia in the boundless space :

> I do think the bars
> That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
> Am sailing with thee through this dizzy sky! (Bk.II, 185-8)

For a moment the architectural details of the region seem to beguile him, but soon the journey in the reverse direction

begins, and he comes to experience once again the 'deadly feel of solitude', the total vacuity of mind. The antithetical note of exteriority or desire for communion with the external world creeps into his prayer for deliverance from 'this rapacious deep', the progressive symbolic fulfilment of which ensues in the spectacle of Venus, Adonis, Cupid, Cybele, and the accidental interlocking with Cynthia in an amorous embrace. Regaining his senses, and deprived of this imaginary compensation, Endymion feels once again 'most forlorn upon that widow'd bed' of grass. For a while he remains absorbed in 'melancholy thought', and is drawn out of this claustral mood by the dialogue of Alpheus and Arethusa. The Indian maid's ditty to sorrow is an expression of the same kind of alienation, while her mingling with the 'mad Minstrelsy' of Bacchus and his crew signifies the counter movement of realignment with external reality. This interplay and alternation of moods continues till the very end until Endymion becomes one with the essence of things, and is spiritualized in order to be united with his divine love.

Though usually analogous to moods of joy and sorrow, the experiences of inwardness and exteriority do not necessarily always correspond to them. The trend of interiority itself is represented either as utter vacuity of mind, or merely as a withdrawal from the external world, leading to meditation and the realization of serenity. Thus the isolation symbolized by Endymion's earlier descent into caverns is characterized by gloom and disconsolation, while the Cave of Quietude visited by him just before his final union with Cynthia is referred to as the 'happy spirit-home' (IV. 543). For the uninitiated soul, however, it was inevitably a native hell, though those divinized by love found it a rewarding experience to be there :

> the man is yet to come
> Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
> But few have ever felt how calm and well
> Sleep may be had in that deep den of all. (IV, 522-6)

This antiphonal structure of thought and experience deepens the symbolic character of the poem. In a way the contrastive pattern was Keats's favourite mode of expression that he was to employ in a subtler manner and with readily perceptible happier results in his great odes. Superficially these antithetical moods may appear to be mutually exclusive, but quite often they turn out to be mutually complementary—one being the extension and refinement of the other. Interiority, in Keats's phrase, was a repeated and 'finer tone' of the external reality; for distinguishing between the 'Life of Sensations' and that of 'Thoughts', he observed in a letter :

> It is a 'Vision in the form of Youth', a Shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further convinced me for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite Speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated.[9]

In its serener moments the contemplative mood or trend of interiority could foreshadow the eternal bliss.

Undertones of Christian symbolism in Keats's poems particularly in *Endymion*, have generally escaped notice. That he was at times fascinated by religious mysticism is attested by a letter to his sister written about the time that he was giving finishing touches to this poem. This letter of 31 March 1818 brings out not only his intimate knowledge of the Scripture, but also contains elucidation of some doctrinal points, and even offers typological interpretation of some biblical verses.[10] Apparently the pagan character and atmosphere of *Endymion* provided little scope for Christian themes and associations, yet certain apocalyptic touches in it are difficult to ignore. For instance, Endymion's dream-flight in Book I may be said to have common ancestry in the vast corpus of dream-and-journey literature; but the young adventurer's account of 'Watching the Zenith'—'And travelling my eye, until the doors / Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight' (Bk. I. 581-2) curiously reminds one of the open-

ing verse of Revelation IV: 'After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven.' Similarly Glaucus' rejuvenation after a thousand-year long spell cast by Circe, and the resurrection of the multitude of lovers who had foundered during his 'bondage' bear some resemblance to the account of the first resurrection in Revelation XX. According to the biblical version, the old serpent was 'bound' for a thousand years, and his release at the end of this term synchronized with the resurrection of the 'souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God . . .' Rather significantly, in Keats's pagan story also Glaucus is shown to have 'enshrined piously' the dead bodies with a Christian symbol on each : 'And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,/Put cross-wise to its heart' (Bk. III. 743-4). Another apocalyptic echo may be noticed in the epithalamic song in honour of 'The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night', inserted immediately after the description of the Cave of Quietude, 'the happy Spirit-home.' Endymion sees a 'skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude' who 'warbled' and 'past the vision in bright *array*', inviting the immortals to 'Cynthia's wedding and festivity.' It reminds one of the mystical marriage of the Lamb in Revelation XIX. Apart from the affinity of occasion and situation and the use of kindred imagery, there are even a few verbal similarities much too striking to be dismissed as merely casual echoes. In St John's vision a great 'multitude' of angels sings Alleluias, while the bride is '*arrayed* in fine linen, clean and white' (V. 8). Then follows the exhortatory verse 'Blessed are they which are called into the marriage supper of the Lamb' (V. 9). Moreover, Endymion's journeys down the earth and across the sky, and his Messianic role in the Glaucus story seem to present him as a prototype of Christ, just as Adonis' ascent from the under-world is reminiscent of the Saviour's rising from the grave. Endymion's nostalgic longing for the floral beauties of the earth, and his prayer:

> Young goddess! let me see my native bowers;
> Deliver me from this rapacious deep! (Bk. II. 331-2)

recalls to mind Jonah's similar predicament and prayer to the Lord for deliverance from the belly of Behemoth: 'I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever : yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O O Lord my God' (II. 6). Like Jonah, Endymion returns to earth to fulfil a deeper purpose, and since Jonah also is commonly taken to typify Christ, it is not altogether implausible to speculate that while writing the poem Keats was not completely oblivious of its hero's symbolic affinity with the Saviour. The parallelism is further strengthened by their common pastoral roles and their ultimate ascension to the heavens.

Cynthia's secret but constructive interest in the rovings of her mortal lover suggests an additional layer of religious symbolism. In this connection it is worth recalling that the initiative comes from her side; for she appears to him first in a dream, and even manages the whole affair. While he remains unaware of her real identity until the very end, she keeps traversing his ways. It was at her instance that a nymph beckoned him to the 'fountain's pebbly margin' and again it was at her behest that a cavernous voice invited the young shepherd 'Into the sparry hollows of the world' (Bk. II. 204). He would have been totally lost in the underworld but for the miraculous help from the goddess :

> And down some swart abysm he had gone,
> Had not a heavenly guide benignant led. (Bk. II. 377-8)

So also when left alone after Cybele's departure, he swooned; and it was a divinely sent eagle that transported him to a jasmine bower. While the ornamental value of these minor incidents by way of introducing variety cannot be denied, it is equally evident that they were also designed to reveal the goddess's watchful love through her timely intervention in moments of crisis. Finally the Indian maid turns out to be

none other than the divine lady herself who had undertaken the disguise in order to fulfil the deeper purpose of instructing and disciplining Endymion for the final communion. Seen in the context of Keats's Christian heritage, this looks like a symbolic projection of the principles of divine grace and election. One wonders if, for a moment, Keats envisioned Endymion as the elect soul on its way to beatitude. No doubt, the similitude is passing and momentary only, it lacks the consistency of elaborate allegorical treatment; but the fairly pronounced touches of religious symbolism invest the work with a deeper dimension, and highlight the method of symbolic suggestiveness that was to figure still more prominently in his later writings.

From the apologetic and self-effacing preface to *Endymion* it appears that while Keats was not totally happy with the poem as a whole, he was particularly dissatisfied with the first two books. A closer look at these would show that here he was concentrating principally on the principle of external expansion by means of elaborate descriptions and by introducing two kindred stories of Venus and Adonis, and Alpheus and Arethusa. But unlike the later addition of Glaucus' story, these have not been interwoven inextricably into the main story so as to make them artistically indispensable. Thematic affinity apart, they seem to have been merely strung on to the main story for the sake of 'fine excess' which Keats considered to be the mark of good poetry. In the two later books, however, he shows greater artistry and self-confidence in the suffusion of symbolic elements. No doubt, like the second book, the third one also hinges on a traditional myth—that of Glaucus and Scylla—but this has been inter-knit more effectively and convincingly. The hero is no more a mere observer of others' love; now for the first time he actively participates in their affair, and is even instrumental in the reunion of long lost lovers. This is so because of the poet's greater control of his material, and his readiness to take more liberty with the myth. In

the classical version Circe does not inflict any punishment in the sea-god personally in retaliation for his indifference to her overtures, but transforms only his beloved Scylla into a sea-monster. Keats, however, gives an additional edge to the sorceress's anger by making her cast a gerontic spell on Glaucus too. The process of addition and alteration is still more pronounced in Book IV, for most of the details in this part of the poem are Keats's own contribution. Cynthia's disguise as the Indian maid, the latter's global rovings in the company of Bacchus, and her conference with Endymion find no place either in the original account or in any of its previous treatments. But Keats had introduced the changes for the sake of his fovourite principle of expansion as well as for their symbolic value. Colvin has suggested that a slightly earlier poem, the anonymous *Lay of Alexander* may have provided the clue for the Indian maid's song, whereas Finney and Ian Jack are isposed to attribute her journey to a pictorial source—Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne'.[11] Leaving aside the question of sources, however, the artistic interweaving of multiple strands and more imaginative and creative treatment of material stand out as significant qualities of the fourth book. Consequently there is a thicker stratification and even ambivalence in the two later books than in the earlier ones. Possibly, these richer symbolic touches are largely responsible for giving the entire poem a mistakenly allegorical character.

In the *Ode on Indolence* Keats acknowledged his undying interest in the trinity of Love, Ambition, and 'my demon Poesy' (St IV). Previously too he had admitted in another poem ('Why did I laugh') that 'Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed'; and these three happen to be the overriding passions of his entire life. Ambition is understandably interchangeable with fame, the poet's yearning for which is reiterated in the rejected preface to *Endymion:* 'I have written to please myself and in hope to please others and for a love of fame. . .'.[12] His passion for fame is also reflected in two

of his rather cynical sonnets on fame, and in his letter to Shelley to whom he wrote in connection with *Endymion*: 'I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor Poem;—which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about Reputation.'[13] In the poem itself Peona, dissuading her brother from his love, points out that it was an impediment to 'high-fronted honour' (l. 759), and urges him to be 'in the trumpet's mouth.' Almost touched to the quick by this plea, he protests to her: 'ever have I long'd to slake/My thirst for the world's praises' (l. 769-70); and rather self-consciously he adds that of late he had set the target still higher—'of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope' (l. 374-5). Later in the same book he suggests that the end of fame being joy he aspired for true happiness through:

> fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
> Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. (Bk. I. 778-80)

Obviously desire for fame culminates in the quest of immortality. It may, however, be noted that Endymion had been led to it only after his conversation with the aged priest about the 'fragile bar/That keeps us from our homes ethereal' (l. 360-1). It is interesting to recall that while these musings on the mortal nature of life are supposed to have taken place in the morning, the auditory visions urging Endymion to explore 'the silent mysteries of earth' in order to be 'crown'd/ With immortality' (ll. 211-14) follow in the evening. Metaphorically the sunset would signify the end of mortal life, which seems to accentuate the implications of these lines. Similarly in the opening verses of Book III the contemplation on mortal regalities and the reference to the 'blown self-applause' as mere 'gilded masks' also suggest the theme of mortality and temporalness as contrasted with the almost simultaneous mention of the elemental essences:

> A thousand Powers keep religious state,
> In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;

And silent as a consecrated urn,
Hold sphery sessions for a season.

Towards the end of the same book Cynthia promises eternal bliss to Endymion, and his union with his unknown love, which marks the cycle of movement from time-bound reality to timeless existence. Likewise, in Book IV his conversation in a dream with the divine powers seems to presage his own approaching immortality and enlightenment, comparble to the enlargement of the poet's understanding in *The Fall of Hyperion* initially through Moneta's agency, but finally transcending into a direct vision of Saturn's fall. Symbolically this may be interpreted as the victory of human mind or imagination over Time. Just before the close of the poem Cynthia justifies the delay and time-gap in the consummation of Endymion's love on grounds of discipline and preparation needed for his immortalization:

And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state,
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change,
Be spiritualiz'd. (Bk. IV, 991-3)

In the rejected preface referred to above Keats wished this work to be considered as 'a poor prologue to what, if I live, I humbly hope to do.' The theme of spiritualization, therefore, was to figure again in some of his later works too. As noted above, the poet was 'spiritualized' by Moneta's ministrations to be able to pry into the secrets of the fallen Titans. Another variation of this theme is the Illusion and Reality or Imagination and Reality pattern that forms the core of his major Odes and *Lamia*. The spiritualization or fellowship with the essence of things is, however, attained through love and knowledge. Keats's earliest treatment of fame-spiritualization concept is found in *Endymion*.

Love was, to Keats, 'My Religion', 'My Creed', and he was naturally drawn to romantic stories and amorous themes. *Endymion* was his first in-depth study of this all-powerful passion, though it kept constantly recurring in his later works

too, such as *Isabella, The Eve of St, Agnes, La Belle Dame sans Merci, Ode to Psyche, Otho the Great* and *Lamia*. Among these poems, however, a patently symbolic mode of expression has been adopted in *Endymion* and *Lamia* only. Like his famous three gradations of happiness, symbolically love too is shown operating at three distinct but interpenetrating levels—personal or sensuous love, its humanistic manifestations, and the ultimate kinship with the essence of being. Sensuous love is possessive and selfish by nature, and tends toward inwardness, often causing disjunction between the individual and the immense reality around him. In the beginning Endymion's tantalizing and teasing visions of a coquettish love shut out his participation in the vernal festivities. Sensuous love thus may snap, or at least weaken, the natural bond of emotional relationship with total reality but is imbued with a self-correcting mechanism as well, so that Endymion's witnessing of the reconciliation of the divine lovers—Venus and Adonis—in the underground regions does not only fortify his own love, but it also awakens him to a new experience of sympathising with the unfortunate Alpheus and Arethusa. For a moment he even forgets his own pangs of separation, and shares their feelings, urging the goddess of his pilgrimage 'to soothe, to assuage' their passions 'And make them happy in some happy plains'. Like the blessings uttered by Coleridge's ancient mariner, Endymion's symbolic participation in others' sorrows sets in motion a spiralling regenerative process. As a result of this he himself is lifted immediately from the abysmal domain, and released from the shackles of egotistical absorption. His next adventure in the maritime world marks the culmination of this messianic role, leading to his own spiritualization and union with the object of his quest. Love is thus an ambition for and ascent to perfection, though rather significantly a touch of reality and humanism, as represented by Endymion's avowal of love for the Indian maiden, serves as a prelude to the consummation and ecstasy of love.

Unlike the traditional Platonists, and in spite of Keats's view of love as a progressive subtilization, sensuous passion is not to be completely discarded even after the initial stages. On the other hand, as in John Donne, it is a valuable experience constantly valid for revealing one to the other. Love is, therefore, a dynamic force, and its confinement to the sensuous stage alone is not only unnatural, but perverse and destructive, unleashing latent demonic energy as symbolized in Circe's thwarted love and the consequent evil spell on Glaucus. As such, sensuous love is unenlightened selfishness which must redeem itself through understanding and knowledge. In his wanderings Endymion seeks to know his unidentified love, and the realization comes to him only through the discipline of understanding, empathy, and a gradual extinction of the self. Love and knowledge are thus mutually complementary: they not only coexist, but also cohere. Indeed Love is Knowledge. Knowledge animated by love becomes intuitive and leads to the ultimate goal of divine fellowship as in the case of Endymion; but knowledge divested of sympathy and love remains only cold, meddling intellect searing and withering the beauty of imagination. Cold philosophy may have the merit of dispelling illusions, but it saps life, and therefore reality as well.

The triad of Joy-Beauty-Truth holds a central position in Keats's poetry and thought. He confided to his fiancee that he had ever 'lov'd the principle of beauty in all things.'[14] Elsewhere he enunciated the theory 'Beauty is Truth, truth Beauty', and *Endymion* opens with the memorable hypothesis 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' But what is this beauty that he was so passionately concerned with? In spite of his patent sensuousness it was the 'principle of beauty' rather than any actual physical manifestation that he was interested in; for sensations and feelings were only a means of apprehending and experiencing this principle. Beauty, therefore, was the inner principle,

essence or identity of things, and truth was an experiential realization of this spiritual identity of forms and beings. Joy was the fruit of this realization of fellowship with the essence of things:

> Wherein lies happiness? Is that which becks
> Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
> A fellowship with essence;

However, recognition of this fellowship presupposes not only amenable and 'ready minds' but also the realization of one's own identity or essence in order to feel at one with kindred essences, hence the variety and gradation of happiness, ranging between the mere observation of physical beauty and the ultimate identification with its inner existence. The point may be further elucidated in the light of Keats's famous 'Vale of soul-making' letter. As he puts it, mere intelligence or spark of divinity is to be distinguished from soul; for soul is the intelligence or mind that has acquired an identity of its own. Now this acquisition is made possible by a prolonged interaction of intelligence, human heart and the world of physical reality. The latter provides the pains, troubles and sorrow whose assimilation and experience by the human heart puts the particular stamp on the individual mind or consciousness that entitles it to be called the Soul. It is this mellowed, enlightened and self-conscious mind or soul that alone is capable of establishing fellowship with other things, leading to ultimate joy. Thus the discipline of sorrow in the physical world is indispensable for the attainment of happiness, and hence Keats's favourite antithetical joy-sorrow pattern in the Indian maid's song or in the *Ode on Melancholy*.

On the face of it *Endymion* seems to be concerned with only the first component of the triad of joy, beauty and truth. The poet himself appears to have avowed it in the opening verse of the poem 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' A closer study, however, reveals that even though joy happens to be the professed subject of the work,[15] the

other two themes of the triad have been interwoven through the symbolic mode. Like the poet himself, Endymion is in quest of happiness, a joy deeper than that represented by the rustic participants in Pan's festival. But before attaining this higher type of happiness the young seeker must undergo separation, sorrow and trouble of howsoever mild a nature, in order to realize and assert his own identity, and thus be able to perceive and recognize his own fellowship with other things and with the object of his pursuit. His adventures in the earth, water and air qualify him for the perception and experience of the goddess's real beauty. Prior to this successful completion of this course of preparatory exercises, he had met and seen his divine mistress thrice, but these encounters had left him unaware of her real identity, and consequently all the more disconsolate. These visions and cordial confrontations were therefore no more than mere illusions. Though beautiful beyond description, she had yet to be translated into forms of apprehensible reality for love and this could be done only after he had been 'spiritualized.' At long last Endymion realizes his identity, and also learns to assert it howsoever feebly as suggested by his voluntary substitution of the Indian maiden for Cynthia. Symbolically he has become an authenticated soul, and therefore is ready for divine relationship. One wonders if this emphasis on the realization and validation of identity through experience was Keats's unconscious and unacknowledged foreshadowing of the existentialist doctrine.

A recent biographer of Keats has claimed for him the distinction of being the first English poet to have perceived the symbolic—as distinguished form the allegorical—significance of classical myths.[16] Strictly speaking, it appears to be an exaggerated and inaccurate assessment; for it completely ignores the decidedly symbolic touches in some lesser known narrative poems of the seventeenth century, like Shakeley Marmion's *Cupid and Psyche* (1632), William Barksted's and James Gresham's versions of the

Myrah legend, and Reynold's *Echo and Narcissus* (1632) which gives in a prose commentary the 'geographic' and 'the physick sence' of the poem in addition to the customary moral and spiritual application of the story. Nevertheless the fact remains that Keats used the symbolic mode more consistently and effectively than most of his predecessors, and he first experimented with this mode successfully in *Endymion*. As the 'seed bed' of his philosophy[17] it foreshadowed not only his favourite themes but also the method of his later and better work. When Keats began this poem, Wordsworth had already appeared on the former's fast-changing spectrum of poetic influences, and though the younger poet had been baptized in sorrow, he possesed the gift of envisioning and enlivening the burthen of the mystery' through his insight into the spiritual unity of things. *Endymion* was his gospel of joy and inner health. Symbolically it is Keats's version of the *Intimations of Immortality* cast in the mythic mode.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Rule of Metaphor. By PAUL RICOEUR, translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1978, viii+384 pp.

Ricoeur's book differs in many ways from the numerous investigations of the subject. A book about metaphor, one expects (or should we say, 'hopes'?) would retain something of the flavour of the thing it ponders. The prime need is to come to grips with that elusive imp, so to say, the curious force that is implanted in the metaphoric process. A few crucial examples help bring that power into focus, and the discussion is normally carried out within a dominant literary ambience. Studies on the subject customarily take that line. And it is natural that most investigations should dwell, as they almost invariably do, on the two broad approaches that have characterized seminal thinking about metaphor through the ages—the cautious, conservative (classical) view that sees in metaphor a powerful ally of language that has yet no power to affect the 'reality' it helps reveal, and the more radical (romantic) view of it as a 'constitutive' element in the reality it in a sense both creates and reveals. Due note is taken of the way the intellectual climate of the age has affected writing on metaphor. The new interest in anthropology, in the pre-rational modes of articulation and the world to which it gives a 'being', places metaphor, once again, at the centre of attention. (Some of the best of this can be seen in eminent work like that of Cassirer and Susan Langer.) Similarly, note is generally taken of influential thought movements such as phenomenology and structuralism that have likewise been strong incentives for the study of metaphor. But the general trend has still remained literary.

In these respects, Ricoeur's is a notable departure. It is rarely that one presses the inquiry home, from the frontiers of literary criticism into philosophy proper, as he does. The study in a way assumes rather than incorporates the usual perspectives, keeps abreast of current thinking, and attempts a balanced scrutiny of contending theoretical positions that have been taken on the issue. But its main thrust as well as the analytical vigour with which the argument is pursued is philosophic rather than literary. Obviously, the mystery at the heart of metaphor cannot remain the exclusive preserve of the literary critic nor even that of the aesthetician. And it is not only anthropology that has a stake in the matter; so has linguistics and semantics for obvious reasons, and above all philosophy. Hence Ricoeur's investigation has the kind of comprehensiveness that is indicated in the book's sub-title: 'Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language'. And though the inquiry begins with Aristotle (inevitably so !) and takes note of such crucial contributions as those of the eighteenth century Vico, his purpose is far from that of a historical overview; the proper context of the discussion is contemporary thought.

The main argument concerns the shift that has taken place from diction to discourse in the critical examination of metaphor as a language phenomenon. The idea is to attempt a searching critique of the enormous change this means for a philosophical understanding of the metaphorical process and the emergence of meaning in a metaphoric statement. The emphasis, in fact, changes first from lexis to the sentence, and then from the sentence to discourse. With the corresponding shift taking place in the discipline we are progressively involved in, the change is seen to be really from rhetoric to semantics and from semantics to modern hermeneutics, the science of interpretation. And at each of these stages of the argument all the most effective formulations—the best part of contemporary thought—in the fields of linguistics, semantics and philosophy have been taken account of. While the

rhetoric of metaphor, as in Aristotle, took the word as its unit of reference, metaphor was classed with single-word figures of speech, a trope of resemblance (of similarity between things and ideas and of analogy between relationships) and implied an extension of meaning through a mode of transference and displacement.

With the prominent work of the English-language authors like I.A. Richards, Max Black, and Monroe Beardsley, Ricoeur shows how the force of a metaphor begins to be understood in terms of the semantics of the sentence. And with the present espousal of the hermeneutic point of view the level of discussion has again moved, this time from the sentence to discourse. And a new problematic emerges—that of the reference of metaphorical statement as the power to 'redescribe' reality. The final insight reached at the close of the inquiry is that metaphor as a strategy of discourse 'develops the heuristic power wielded by fiction and that, in this respect, there is kinship between the functioning of metaphor in the arts and that of models in the sciences as Max Black has demonstrated in his *Models and Metaphors*.

A bald summary hardly does justice to the meticulous care with which each speculative construction is given its due. Often an old position is placed in a new light. For instance, the ontological function of Aristotelian *mimesis* is freshly argued—removing an old misunderstanding in the process—by drawing attention to Aristotle's notion of 'becoming' and of 'potentiality' implict in Nature. In the same way, Richards's proneness to extremes is finely hinted at by asking such questions as : 'Could any two words and the transaction between them be metaphorical ?' or 'Is there a difference (at all) between the literal and the metaphorical ?' Valuable insights are offered showing how, for instance, semantics of Saussurean inspiration yields primacy to the word and how structural semantics revives the 'deviation' theory and the old taxonomy . . . and so on. The book is replete with rich suggestions in regard to such issues as Jakobson's notion of

poetry's *message* being centred in itself, Todorov's idea of the *opacity* of poetic discourse (and the corollary obliteration of the *ordinary* reference), Gaston Bachelard's concept of the poetic image which places us 'at the origin of our speaking being', Goodman's understanding of poetic discourse as redefining reality through 'heuristic fiction' or Wheelwright's depth analysis of *tensive* language. And this could only be a small sampling of the possible new leads that emerge.

One may have a quarrel with the book's general tenor, however. It displays too insistent a preoccupation with theoretical formulations, opposing one to another or dovetailing both into unity. This seems to inhibit free play of mind in the interest of intellectual tidiness. The author's anxiety to tabulate the minute differences and invalidating objections faithfully each time may of course make for a systematic survey. (A whole Section is devoted to the structural semantics sponsored 'neo-rhetoric' while admitting, to begin with, that nothing need be expected from it comparable to that which the English language authors—Richards, Black, Beardsley—have achieved.) What the approach rules out is a full-scale discussion of an original point of view; it is as though the book's aim were simply to be a recorder of intellectual events rather than display strong normative bases for its preferences. That's how the final impression remains somewhat nugatory and not quite like a grappling with the central problem of metaphor or an enriching confrontation with that prime mystery. The volume is more likely to impress as a sort of manual or *vade mecum* of theories advanced on the subject.

This has also meant an odd cluttering of abstract terminologies which generally makes it difficult going for the reader. Often one has the feeling that a simple point is rendered difficult because of the abstract terms by which it is surrounded. In the discursive context such an intellectual sophistication may be held unavoidable. All the same, a

constant effort to descend to common sense and to 'the common idiom', to submit the abstruse to the test of comprehensibility, would have enhanced the lucidity and value of this bold diving into the depths of a difficult subject. In fairness, however, one must concede that the exigencies of translation from the French into English may have unwittingly accentuated some of these irksome features.

Within these limitations, the conclusions Ricoeur reaches in this study nevertheless make a valuable contribution. One such is the concept of the 'split-reference', the kind of referential value that metaphor and, by extension, poetry possess. The old semantic issue in this way gains in clarity and admits of a plausible explanation : In poetic discourse, the *epoche* or suspension of ordinary reference is the negative condition allowing a second order of reference to unfold. This unfolding is governed by the power of redescription belonging to certain heuristic fictions, acting in the manner of scientific models. This involves first a disordering of customary categorizations of which the second order reference is the positive aspect. Inherent in the process is an invasion of language by the ante-predicative and the pre-categorical and a concept of truth other than the concept of truth-verification which is the concommittant of our ordinary concept of reality. Poetry's reference in this way is finally to a 'pre-objective' world which it brings to language; in it we are already rooted, and through it we express our potentialities, 'our primordial belonging.' This has a measure of corroboration in common experience as well. Poetry's referential value can only be understood in terms of potentiality in the Aristotelian sense, in relation to world not realized. Even a Shakespeare's naturalism can be seen to refer to 'the source of the movement of natural objects present in them either potentially or in complete reality'—what the Greeks called 'phusis' and signified 'nature generating what grows.' The poet is one who sees as whole and complete what is sketchy and in process.

This spells out, for the philosopher, that 'ontological power' which resides at the heart of the metaphoric activity; the positing of a special kind of referential value helps to distinguish philosophic discourse from metaphor though they be near kin. To this question the concluding Section of the book is addressed. Here we are increasingly aware of Husserlian and Heideggerian thought that has deeply influenced modern thinking about art. (The kind of post-'New-Critical' trend crystallized in Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* declares that impact.) Ricoeur's treatment of the relation between poetic discourse and philosophical discourse is like a probing at the root of philosophy and the root of poetry where these two are really one. In that luminous region we perceive, the differences begin to disppear. The later Heidegger is thus invoked and his metaphysical interpretation of metaphor : 'The flowers of our words . . . . utter existence in its blossoming forth.' And Ricoeur concludes on a typical Heideggerian note—asserting that between the two, poetry and thinking, there exists a secret kinship, and at the same time an abyss, for they 'dwell on the most widely separated mountains'.

All this has important implications for the activity involved in literary criticism whose distinction lies in its claim to mediate between the two discourses. Interpretation being of its nature a form of rationalization tends to eliminate the experience of the metaphorical process. It can do so only at the risk of being a *reductive* interpretation. Hermeneutical interpretation combines the two modes, metaphorical and speculative. That Is the order of language activity to which literary criticism belongs. Metaphor is living when it introduces the spark of imagination into our thought; and the struggle to think guided by that vivifying principle is the soul of interpretation. We seem to have there at once a 'blueprint' and a sanction for literary criticism. Thus, in a manner of speaking, Ricoeur's study helps clarify, though only indirerectly, the fundamentals of present-day literary criticism,

while on the other hand it might have the healthy effect of cutting to size the literary critic's intellectual pretensions.

In a larger context the study is seen to hold the balance between the two strong contemporary movements—Levi-Straussian structuralism and phenomenological thought. In another respect, too, it appears to take the middle position. Talking of metaphor from the point of view of literary theory or aesthetics is likely to throw the emphasis more on the poet's experience, while linguistics, looking at it as a species of special or deviant form *visa vis* some norm of standard usage, may lead to more formal analysis, straying away from the felt reality of metaphor. Here the excursion in abstract thought leads to a positive gain and is more likely to bring to us a livelier appreciation of metaphor in the result. Ricoeur's book offers us such an enhanced return. It places you at the heart of a great debate while masses of compulsive theories, so to say, circumambulate round a Secret 'that sits in the middle and knows!' It is essentially a philosophical exercise, and the gain to philosophy is immense. Philosophy recognizes and allows for the autonomy of the poet's world and his claim to truth on his own terms—what might be for it a painful concession to make. For metaphor is one of those issues that must bring the analytical mind to the end of its tether. It resists reductive explanations of the process involved. And it may be that, finally, even for philosophy metaphors *are* the truth.

V. Y. Kantak

Poetic Form in Blake's 'Milton'. By SUSAN FOX (Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press), 1976, xvi+238 pp.

In her penetrating analysis of Blake's *Milton*, Susan Fox attempts to reveal the coherence and originality of Blake's

art through a study of two major structural principles, in all their minute ramifications. These principles she names: (a) simultaneity, asserting that the entire action of the poem takes place in 'a single, unmeasurable instant', and secondly, (b) multiple perspectives, by which every facet of that action is analyzed from the point of view, or points of view, of every major character participating in that action. Her aim is to show that Blake's 'late prophecies are as profound in their poetic structures as they are in their thematic ones.'

She is careful to point out that Blake makes use of certain formal techniques of early nineteenth century poetry, as well as the techniques of an older tradition, the biblical prophecies, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and particularly Revelation. Yet Blake develops these techniques in a startlingly novel way. He abolishes the ordered sequence of the narrative form, and with it Time as we know it in our every day life. The central action of the poem is described as the purgation of the poet, Milton, from his selfhood, and his union with his feminine affinities, viz. his three wives and his three daughters, symbolised under the name, Ololon. It is in this union that past and future are joined in the abolition of Time, and a comprehensive vision achieved in a timeless eternity.

'The complexity of *Milton*,' writes Miss Fox, 'derives from its presentation of its focal event . , . on all levels of reality . . . . Blake skips back and forth among the conditions, not because he is absent-minded or eager to confuse, but because in so doing he can remind us again and again that what we thought of as sequence was not sequence, that the consummation of Milton's act of purgation began with the beginning of the poem and ended with the end, but that the beginning and the end are simultaneous' (pp. 19-20). The reason why the action in *Milton* seems a process is because 'language is linear and exposition sequential.' She further adds that precedence in description does not mean prece-

dence in occurrence either in Blake's poem or in Milton's *Paradise Lost* which begins 'with the result of an act not described till halfway through the poem.' She continues, 'The difference is that John Milton skipped back and forth in time in his poem, and Blake abolishes time in his' (p. 20).

Turning to multiple perspectives in Blake's poems, Miss Fox reveals their gradual development from a simple, autobiographical range to one of a far greater complexity and sophistication. As an example, she asserts that the difference between the perspectives in the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is 'simple, dramatic and absolute—a quantum distinction in individual understanding.' On the other hand, the difference between Eden and Beulah, or between any two states on the Eden/Ulro axis, is a 'matter of gradation at points so subtle as to be indistinct—*a universal principle of perception constantly in flux*,' (italics mine). In *Europe*, which she considers a prototype of the structure of *Milton*, she finds two polar perspectives : that of eternity, represented by the fairy, and that of recorded history, the eighteen hundred years of European tyranny. An intermediate perspective which forms a spectrum between them, she describes as 'cosmic.' Here, for the first time, we come across what Miss Fox explains as 'a layered organization of multiple perspectives . . . a superimposition of congruent perspectives. The fairy, the shadowy female, Enitharmon, and the English people all witness the same event, the variations in their perceptions being due to variations in their perspectives, not to any variation in the event, which does not change. This manifold focusing on a single event will develop, at various levels of reality, into a more subtle, complicated and absolute version that will form the basic organizational principle of the multiple perspectives in *Milton*. Thus, both Book the First and Book the Second offer 'a range of perspectives on its central action . . . . from remembered past to foretold future, but in each all perspectives focus on a single instant, the instant of the purgation and union of Milton and Ololon.'

A schematic division of the two books now follows. Each has three basic sections consisting of a prologue to the action, an account of the various aspects of the action and an epilogue defining the effects of the action. Each prologue has four parts, while each account of the action is a narrative in three parts with a continuously shifting focus. The epilogue embodies an intense visionary experience liberated by and coexisting with the action. The simultaneity linking all parts is Milton's descent to Ololon in Book I, and Ololon's descent to Milton in Book II, which is one and the same action through which Milton purges himself from his self-hood, Blake cleanses his own 'doors of perception', and the imagination, Los, illumines those interior worlds of delight which is human existence itself.

Having disrupted the ordered sequence of the narrative form, and having abolished Time, Blake naturally develops the action in *Milton* in what Miss Fox calls 'concentric circles,' or a spiral. One of the devices used to express this development is that of the vortex. Blake's explanation is explicit enough :

> The nature of infinity is this. That every thing has its
> Own Vortex; and when once a traveller thro' Eternity
> Has passed that Vortex, he perceives it roll backward
> behind
> His path, into a globe itself infolding; like a sun:
> Or like a moon, or like a universe of starry majesty,
> While he keeps onwards in his wondrous journey on the
> earth
> Or like a human form, a friend with whom he livd
> benevolent . . .
> Thus is the earth one infinite plane, and not as apparent
> To the weak traveller confin'd beneath the moony shade.
> Thus is the heaven a vortex passd already, and the earth
> A vortex not yet passd by the traveller thro' Eternity.
> (15:21-35)

Commenting on this passage, Miss Fox writes : 'Each observer stands at the point at which two vortices meet. Where-

ever he looks, he sees a vortex passed, or one yet to be passed through; thus is his standing point an infinite plane, a featureless, endless platform of vision. If . . . he sees with fourfold Edenic vision, he embraces what he "sees" as part of himself and there is no distance between perceiver and perceived. If he sees with a fallen eye, he establishes, by the very act of perceiving, his separateness from what he sees : he opens a vortex between perceiver and perceived' (p. 71).

There is hardly any aspect of this complex poem which has not been analyzed in depth and presented with skill and imaginative insight. All Blake's technical terms, negation, contrary, spectre, emanation, etc. have been defined with precision and their interactions shown. The poetic structure has been thoroughly explored : the paired stanzas, the balanced polarities, the parallels between Book I and Book II, have been exhaustively dealt with. The illustrations and their bearing on the text have been discussed in an Appendix.

Yet there is one important aspect which has not been touched upon, and this through no fault of Miss Fox. I refer to the Gnostic and Cabbalistic influences on Blake's later prophecies. The former are predominant in *Milton*, and the latter in *Jerusalem*. As there is no detailed study of these two major influences on Blake's thought, a critic can hardly be blamed for not making use of them.

It has been stressed, however, by various scholars, including J. Bronowski and Kathleen Raine, that Blake's poems are 'almost always an immediate record of his day-to-day reading or response to evnts.'[1] This is certainly true of *Milton* as far as Gnostic ideas are concerned. It is not generally known that an obscure and learned work, the *Grammatica Aegyptica utriusque Dialecti*, by Christianus

[1] Kathleen Raine 'The Little Girl Lost and Found and The Lapsed Soul', in *The Divine Vision*, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto (London, 1957), p. 21.

Schlotz, published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford in 1778, under the supervision of the well-known Coptic scholar of the day, C. G. Woide, contains some curious plates, engraved in black and white, at the end of the volume. One of these bears ths signature of Basire under whom Blake was apprenticed from 1771 to 1778. What is more, the *Appendix to the Alexandrian Codex* (Oxford, 1799), gives the first published reference to the acquirement by the British Museum in 1785 of the *Askew Codex*, Codex A, now known as the *Pistis Sophia*. Five out of the thirteen penitential psalms sung by the Pistis Sophia for her deliverance from the void are translated by Woide into Latin. The imagery and tone of these hymns are echoed and re-echoed in the lamentations of the various characters in *Milton*. Blake himself lapses into using a Gnostic term, such as Eon, instead of Emanation : 'He (Satan) set his face against Jerusalem to destroy the Eon of Albion' (*Milton* I. 12 Keynes edn.). Specifically Blakean terminology, such as the limits of contraction and opacity, female space, body and form, boundary, etc. owe much to similar terminology in the *Pistis Sophia*. Occasionally, there appears to be a direct borrowing by Blake from the Gnostic text, as when the Demiurgus boasts : 'I am God, and besides me there is none other' (Hippolytus, VI. 33), words which are put into the mouth of Satan/Urizen more than once. The three classes of men, the pneumatic, the psychic and the hylic, or as Valentinus translates them, the 'spiritual, material and animal', may have stimulated Blake to frame his own category of the three classes of men.[2]

Nevertheless, *Poetic Form in Blake's 'Milton'* is a compelling and rewarding study which repays more than one reading. Miss Fox is at her best when she writes with passion and directness :

'The end of time must be horrible to those in time. No vision of the promised release is honest without this sense of anguish to come. We

[2] Piloo Nanavutty, 'Blake and Gnostic Legends', *Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1976) pp. 168-90.

have heard throughout the poem the lamentations of all levels of reality at its imminence .... Yet even in this familiar dark prophecy the Book II epilogue maintains its restraint and integrity. There is no celebration, no orgiastic rite of sacrifice, no furious resistance here, as there has been in previous such passages. The steady calm of the passage is Blake's own expression of the visionary conviction of Milton's speech. It is born neither of ignorance nor of resignation, but of a profound sense that truth is the only good, and that the end of time is the final revelation of truth (p. 190).

New Delhi Piloo Nanavutty

Shakespeare's Dramatic Meditations: An Experiment in Criticism. By Giorgio Melchiori (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1976, xii+206 pp.

In the spectrum of possible approaches to Shakespeare's Sonnets, Professor Melchiori's book represents an important, though familiar, line of argument which refuses to be purely 'literary', calling for a bridging operation between literary criticism and linguistic analysis on the one hand, and a marked sociological orientation on the other. Clearly, this is a doctrine of eclecticism, and Professor Melchiori proposes to utilize this strategy of multiple critical methods to arrive at an 'overall interpretation' of the four 'atypical' sonnets of Shakespeare in which, as he claims, the bard's thoughts and feelings are best articulated. The result is a closely-argued and complex book.

Subtitled 'An Experiment in Criticism', the book opens with a brief chapter on its chosen methodology, justifying literary criticism's traditional, though often guilt-ridden, dependence on such non-literary disciplines as sociology, history, psychology, and linguistics. But it is to Professor Melchiori's credit that he shows his sensitiveness to so many

of the dangers that beset an approach of this kind : the danger of treating a grammatical analysis of a poem as the metacritical statement of its meaning; the danger of relying too much on personal impressions, however brilliant and stimulating; the danger of over-emphasizing 'content and context' at the expense of 'forms of expression', and vice versa. There is thus much good caution and alert observation throughout Professor Melchiori's argument.

Professor Melchiori finds most criticism of Shakespeare's Sonnets flawed by the 'errors' of critics who insist on reading these poems either as 'formal exercises' documenting the poet's mastery within the context of his poetic culture, or as 'confessional' poetry expressing the poet's 'private predicament'. It also leads him into an attack on the post-Empsonion exegeses which, though structural or semiotic in orientation, always fail to get beyond this 'critical impasse'. Tempted thus to sour rejection, Professor Melchiori steers a different course and tries to attempt an 'intellectual portrait' of Shakespeare based on the evidence found exclusively in sonnets 94, 121, 129, and 146, which contain the poet's 'dramatic meditations' on such non-conventional themes as the ethics of power, social behaviour, sex, and religion. Inclined to see these sonnets in terms of their intellectual, even philosophical, content, he hopes to rehabilitate Shakespeare less as the historically interesting Elizabethan than as the man whose essential humanity has still something important and crucial to say to us. It is in this that his eclectic approach is a necessity with him, not a panel-game facility.

Happily, Professor Melchiori is finely alive to one of the basic insights of modern linguistics which insists on treating data both on the 'diachronic' and 'synchronic' levels. That is, in this case, his professed intention is to study 'the general historical evolution of the context' in order to identify 'the individual position of Shakespeare as a thinking mind' in it. But how to go about it ? The answer is crucial to the

success of Professor Melchiori's methodology, and what he has to say is of the widest possible interest.

Professor Melchiori begins by identifying Herbert Donow's 'Concordance' as his 'source-book', which consists of statistically computerized 'data' drawn from the Elizabethan sonnet usage practised by Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare, Sidney, and Spenser—all in the form of 'lexical' tables, schemes, and diagrams. Here the choice of data as an 'abstraction' is perhaps forced on him by his commitment to 'avoid all temptation to sentimentalize or aestheticize' it. And in using it he makes a telling application of 'statistics' to literary criticism. But these configurations, Professor Melchiori warns us, should in no case be taken as representing 'a method of inquiry'; they are, what he calls, justifiably, 'a point of departure', providing only 'factual presuppositions' for his proposed study.

From these tables Professor Melchiori attempts to reconstruct a 'lexical' profile of the Elizabethan 'norm' in sonnet writing by concentrating only on those lexical items which show a tendency of 'high frequency' in the five sonnet sequences. Such a 'normative' profile of the genre, he argues, is sharply nuanced, on the communication level, by the predominance of the pronominals on the scale 'I'—'her'/'him'—'thou'/'you'; and on the connotative level it gets rounded off by a relatively high frequency of the word, 'Love', expressing the 'idealization of a conventional sentiment'. Given this, he expects to be in possession of a most sensitive instrument, enabling him to let a sociological perspective unfold on it. And it is here that the main weight of his eclectic approach is felt.

It is held, justifiably, that pronouns—providing 'lines of communication' between the poet and his social universe—are the main 'semiotic' pointers which tend to determine the communication network of a poetic discourse. It, therefore, immediately commits him to interpreting the predominance of the 'I', followed statistically by the second person pronomi-

nals, in his characterization of the Elizabethan sonnet norm. To begin with, we are asked to see it in terms of the 'courtly tradition' of lyric poetry, generated and sustained by a definite class structure, in which the court poet celebrates his speaking 'I', always distancing it from the rest of the mankind on which it contemplates with studied detachment. More immediately, and with regard to a strikingly low frequency of 'thou'/'you' in it, his interpretation achieves greater plausibility as we notice almost a total absence of any 'dialogue' which may involve I-thou relationship. Thus, he points out, 'Love' as a 'courtly game' becomes the most privileged theme in this 'I'-dominated poetry. In summary, most of what Professor Melchiori tells us here fits well into the 'aristocratic' conception of 'elite' poetry which seems to underlie the Elizabethan sonneteering—the 'patrimony of the privileged few' in that clientele system. This is, for example, quite obvious in the case of Sir Philip Sidney, undoubtedly the model of the English courtier, who adopted it 'as a form of expression proper to an elite'. However, for Daniel, Drayton, and Spenser, who as 'outsiders' were still aspiring to enter into this 'magic circle of the aristocracy', it turned out to be a 'means of social climbing'. But what about Shakespeare? Professor Melchiori turns again to 'statistics' for a possible answer.

That Shakespeare broke with this courtly tradition is a kind of insight that Professor Melchiori's sensitively applied statistical method does much to support. In particular, it enables him to 'measure' Shakespeare's deviations from the norm in the use of pronominal forms and in the treatment of the still privileged theme, 'Love'. He does it with particular authority, using once again the evidence he draws from his source book, Herbert Donow's 'Concordance'. Such evidence tantalizingly suggests that the norm of Shakespeare's Sonnets is characterized on the level of communication by achieving a balance between 'I' and 'thou'; and that it stands out on the connotative level by the 'prevalence of the

word 'Love' in relation to 'Beauty', 'Time', and 'Truth'. But what is the significance of these deviations ? In the first place, Professor Melchiori argues, Shakespeare's disruption of the 'normal' pronominal order, 'I'—'her'/'him'—'thou'/'you', results in his attempt to move away from the tradition of the sonneteer as an 'aristocrat', establishing a dialogue with, instead of contemplating, his interlocutor. That is, so the argument runs, Shakespeare behaves 'as par inter pares, or as man to man', entering into a 'vital and dramatic I-thou relationship' even while using the lyrical form. And one aspect of Shakespeare on which Professor Melchiori puts repeated emphasis is the poet's secure social standing as a playwright which places him on a 'totally different plane from that of the other sonneteers of his time in respect of the social hierarchy in which they were trying to find a place. This, therefore, obviated for him the need to use lyrical poetry as 'prestige' or as a 'means of social climbing'.

Surely, what we find here is not a routine assessment. Still more striking is Professor Melchiori's comment on Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of 'Love' in relation to 'Beauty' (physical beauty as a reflection of inner beauty), 'Time' (often personified), and 'Truth' (as the quality of being genuine and sincere). Here', Professor Melchiori reminds us, 'we are dealing with fundamental and typical motives of Shakespeare's poetry : his preoccupation with the pressure of time, his recognition of the temporal and transitory dimension of human existence, and his determination to defy time and death without trying to escape into another dimension; the exaltation of "Truth" is an affirmation of the necessity to remain faithful to oneself and to one's condition as a man, to be frank; and his authenticity—an essential moral quality—can constitute, together wiih beauty, a passport to immortality'. That is, he suggests, the theme, although of Horatian and Ovidian origin, assumes in Shakespeare a 'new ethical quality', going beyond its Renaissance usage which is essentially aesthetic. Thus

viewed, 'Love' is no more an 'idealization of a conventional sentiment' as treated by most of his contemporaries, but becomes an 'inescapable component of the human condition, a conflict between the life of the senses and an innate ethical need'.

But to describe Shakespeare in this way is to resurrect the 'typical' in the poet; the 'atypical' in him, however, is yet to be explored. When Professor Melchiori turns to this problem he looks hopefully to Shakespeare's departures from his own norm, assuming that such departures may reveal 'more directly the thought of the author beyond the self-imposed personal conventions and tricks of style which are merely the stock-in-trade of his poetic craft'. This, therefore, leads him to the actual choice of four sonnets—94, 121, 129, and 146—which are found to be 'atypical' in that they neither partake of the poet's much favoured I-thou dialogue nor celebrate his key connotative theme, 'Love'. And 'atypical' as they are, the argument claims, these sonnets document the poet's ambiguous attitude towards 'the upheaval in traditional ethical values in the moment of history in which he was living'. This, in fact, is the core of Professor Melchiori's argument.

Setting off from here Professor Melchiori writes four chapters, each of which is concerned with one of the four 'atypical' sonnets. In each chapter his plea is in favour of taking the poem under discussion on its own terms, treating it as a 'soliloquy' in so far as it gets away from the private context of the surrounding poems. Given this, his strategy in each case is to follow the suggestions of the language the poem uses and of the socio-economic code it applies. Thus by a careful construing of a 'socio-linguistic' context Professor Melchiori comes to recognize, for example, sonnet 94 as a 'political poem', sonnet 121 as a personal statement on the 'dialectics of society versus individual', sonnet 129 as dramatic meditation on the ethics of 'sex' and sonnet 146 as a 'Christian poem'. In particular, they are interpreted as

'explorations of the contradictions—in themselves dramatic—existing in the various views on the exercise of power, social behaviour, sex, and religion'. That is, Professor Melchiori reads them to discover the poet's 'awareness of the transition that was taking place at the time, a transition from an agricultural economy in the hands of the landed aristocracy to the progressive assertion of a merchant class accumulating wealth through commercial and banking operations, threatening the privileges of blood. There is also an interchapter on sonnet 20, which interprets the basic semantic antinomy between 'platonic love' and 'sexual passion'.

We must now ask where Professor Melchiori's eclecticism, has brought us, and what difference it makes to our understanding of the sonnets. There is, surely, on reflection, no methodological confusion although he has used a multitude of critical means to make his assessment of the sonnets clear to us. Here Professor Melchiori is not a mere exploiter of a changing taste in literary interpretation. We are, in fact, in his debt when he shows how to use 'statistics' as a 'discovery procedure' and how to transmute it into a critical tool of enormous potential. And even his sociological approach, used here for unfolding a socio-economic perspective, is not without its measure of success although at times, I think, it tends to labour points which could be made more simply. Above all, in the four interpretative chapters of the book, wherein Professor Melchiori's eclectic approach validates itself, we are offered a radically new reading of Shakespeare's sonnets, with some interesting insights into the Elizabethan sonnet usage.

It is, however, perhaps rather unfortunate for this thoughtful book to have relied exclusively on Herbert Donow's 'Concordance'—not an entirely safe source-book, as Kenneth Muir points out, for 'data hunting'.

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The Shakespearean Metaphor : Studies in Language and Form. By RALPH BERRY (London : The Macmillan Press Ltd), 1978, x+128 pp.

Notwithstanding its utility in the exploration of the associative patterns of Shakespeare's language, the formal image-study of his plays has confined itself mainly, if not exclusively, to the overtly figurative constituents of the text. In most cases, however, the study of imagery has been combined with interests of a different nature—ethical-poetic concerns (as in the *Scrutiny* critics) or symbolic interpretation of themes (as in Wilson Knight)—and has thus not entirely ignored what may be called 'dramatic symbolism', that is, the interpretation of reality through fictional elements. It would nevertheless be true to say that the interpretative studies of Shakespeare's language have generally ignored the possibility of dramatic symbolism being rooted in the non-figurative language of the play as well as in character, situation, narrative features, and emblematic stage-pictures and items of property. The 'interpretative' status of the play as a whole, its description of reality, as also its relationship (in expressionistic terms) of the artist's state of mind has generally been appreciated ever since Eliot's phrase about 'objective correlative' hinted at the metaphorical nature of the work of art. Such a view has been reinforced by certain heuristic and neo-Kantian philosophies of art, specially those deriving from the epistemological theory of symbolic forms. The incarnational ambiguity of art, its fusion of diverse planes of reality, have generally been recognised in the field of Shakespearian criticism where something like 'overinterpretation' is the rule rather than the exception.

It is in this context that the book by Professor Berry with its tacit refusal to overdo, combined with the willingness occasionally to ignore recognised frontiers, a variety of restrained freedom, is to be welcomed. The 'Studies in Language and Form' (as the book is sub-titled) of eight Shakespearian

plays have their unity in a concern with their 'controlling metaphors' as points of illumination if not the sole principle of organisation. The book makes few claims on the reader's assent with regard to its theoretical framework : all it seeks to do—and this notwithstanding its discussion of certain relevant aesthetic problems in the Introduction—is a widening of the scope of the traditional image-study so as to include the literal along with the figurative in the unifying associative pattern of the play. This, of course, cannot be done without transforming 'image' into 'metaphor' and assimilating into the latter some of the philosophical nuances of the interpretative and heuristic 'symbol'. (The traditional 'symbol' itself has rather been undervalued by Professor Berry, and the introductory discussion of metaphor makes no direct reference to its upgradation in recent aesthetic philosophy though an informed awareness of the fact is everywhere implied.) Though rejecting the total abolition of category distinctions between literal and metaphoric in language generally or in the context of poetic drama, Professor Berry rightly emphasises the blurring of frontiers between the two so far as the texture of Shakespeare's plays is concerned : 'One has to be on one's guard against assuming an absolute divergence between literal and figurative in Shakespeare' (p.3). Referring to Ulysses' comment : 'No trumpet sounds' (IV. v. 11) as an illustration of the literal use of language that nevertheless acquires metaphoric resonance Professor Berry goes on to comment that '*all* the language of a Shakespeare play is a vehicle to express meaning : and the customary distinctions between figurative and literal statements merely locate what one notices most easily, the rocks thrusting up from the surfaces of language' (pp. 3-4). This has been finely observed, and clearly exposes the lack of analytical rigour in most accounts of the 'poetic' texture of Shakespeare's plays. Inspite of the great methodological progress that the image-study of poetry indicates, it fails to satisfy on two counts On the one hand, as Professor Berry has so

aptly observed, it makes a false and unreal distinction between two levels of discourse in poetry : the literal and the figurative. On the other hand, and deriving form the first, it ignores the totality and organic nature of a work of art—and this notwithstanding its preoccupation with the underlying associative patterns in poetry. It certainly goes to the substratum of the metaphoric referents dispersed throughout the text, but those referents answer only to individual, local metaphors. It has no means of perceiving the unity as a whole, the referent of the work of art considered as metaphor—its iterpretation or description of reality. It may be pointed out that the unease voiced by Professor Berry relates only to the first of the two objections listed above. As we have already seen, he has rightly pointed out the all-important fact that, owing to its nature as poetic discourse, the language of Shakespeare's plays bears no discontinuity : 'In talking about "metaphor" one is committed, simply, to talking about as much "literal" language as one needs' (p. 4). At the heartof Shakespeare's semantic ambience lies the metaphoric tension between the circumscribed and the infinite, and the imperceptible shift from the one to the other is a matter of constant surprise. The essence of the matter, as the Introduction reminds us, is repetition and recall. Shakespeare could, however, achieve his most characteristic 'parabolic' effect even at the first or single occurrence of a linguistic element, merely through its dramatic location or verbal juxtaposition. The opening of *Hamlet* is a case in point. The examples of metaphoric intensification through repetition and recall are legion, and the ones chosen by Professor Berry for brief reference in the Introduction or more detailed treatment in separate essays are apt in that they possess both controlling and constitutive significance in their respective plays.

Professor Berry makes a plea for keeping critical categories 'fluid and provisional', a precept that he himself practises, for he defines the terms 'metaphor' and 'symbol' in a way that would help him to keep close to the reali-

ties of Shakespeare's text rather than to the generally accepted signification of the terms. Metaphor and symbol have their common origin in the perception of association, but while a symbol, according to Professor Berry, 'generates association, . . . a metaphor grasps towards analogy' (p. 2). Symbols are passive and 'imply content, an acceptance of a provisional codification of reality' (p. 2). Metaphors are active attempts to grapple with reality. They are striking, satisfying and inevitable; they seek an 'ever-elusive fruition, a state of definition' (p. 2). Apart from these distinctions that are valid in local contexts only, metaphors have a unifying power that Professor Berry finds missing in symbols. 'A group of . . . symbols does not simply happen to congregate in a play' (p. 3). 'Metaphor' is used by Professor Berry, 'not only for a local grasping after associative likeness, but the playwright's central impulse in bringing together numerous perceptions of association to organise and express a dramatic action' (p. 3). The definition thus given certainly answers to a central reality in Shakespearian and other poetic drama. One, however, feels that it may be possible to assimilate both metaphor and symbol as defined here into a schema of gradual fusion rather than of opposition. It begins with simile or loose perception of resemblance and ends up in radical metaphor or constitutive symbol thus ultimately leading towards a fusion of fact and significance, of fiction and the inhering idea. The formal metaphor (always so striking in Shakespeare) appears so arresting—virtually leaping in flashes from object to object and linking up disparate realms of experience—because we can go along its whole course in its act of the imaginative perception of association, defying and surprising rational analysis as it does so. In radical metaphors, on the other hand, the element of surprise is subsumed in a more comprehensive delight at the enlargement of consciousness. The unifying and controlling metaphor provided by the 'clothes' imagery in *Macbeth* has a remarkable irradiating power, but it is part of something more

organically unified, not 'irritable and appetent' but growingly satisfying though 'passive' in the way that a merely unifying metaphor is not—the play as a whole in its symbolic unity.

The book by Professor Berry, however, deals with the unifying and controlling metaphors in eight of Shakespeare's plays. That there is much to stimulate, if not everything to command assent, goes only to show that writing about Shakespeare is as much self-discipline as objective criticism. Nevertheless there is much in these individual studies to convince one about the value and relevance of approaching Shakespeare with fresh critical orientations. That this is true of Professor Berry's book is evident in the very first study, the one that deals with the provenance of the 'player' metaphor in *Richard III*. Professor Berry accepts Rossiter's envisagement of a two-part structure in the play with its basic pattern of retributive justice. He also refers to Miss Bradbrook's definition of Richard's various roles—the Plain Blunt Man, the Honest Soldier, the Lovesick Hero, and the Pious Contemplative. Combining the two ideas Berry finds the play's unity in the actor's assumption of roles—not dissimulation but aesthetic enjoyment—and his ultimate encounter with reality. Berry intensifies the idea of Richard's role-playing with reference to Susan Sontag's concept of 'camp' who defines it as 'theatricalisation of experience' and as 'a way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon ... the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre'. Berry himself defines it with reference to Richard's theatricality as 'a mannered projection of self that reflects an intense appreciation of being as role-playing' (p. 11). The 'actor' metaphor constantly surfacing in the text and fictionally enlivened by Richard's behaviour is also reinforced by 'play'—'the central verb of Richard's existence'. 'Play' is defined not only in terms of role-playing but also as suggestive of activity, challenge and contest. The recognition that 'play' metaphorically refers to a certain attitude to life on Richard's part leads Berry to make some very perceptive

observations on 'My kingdom for a horse' passage : 'To exist is to venture. And to succeed, is merely to have negotiated a further phase in a sustained gaming operation; which will continue until he has finally gamboled away his life. So "die" ["And I will stand the hazard of the die"—V. iv. 10] is the conclusive pun of *Richard III*' (p. 15). Richard's isolation does not take place in IV. ii but—as Professor Berry rightly points out—in III. vii. 1-3 : 'How now, how now, what say the citizens ? / Now, by the holy Mother of our Lord,/The citizens are mum, say not a word.' At this point in the play Richard is, in the words of Professor Berry, 'an actor who looks up from the joys of triumphant technique to encounter the stony faces of the audience', and the realization dawns that he is 'a fake, a Not-King' whose claim to kingship is being withheld by the very community whose values he has repudiated. Professor Berry is certainly right in stressing that the 'player' metaphor vitalises and sums up Richard's history, but there is a sense in which the dramatisation itself of the history of the player-king serves as metaphor for the playwright's peculiar awareness of life, a sense of the scope of self-abuse, of the intellect's negative perception of egotistical self-regard as the sole value in life. That a conceptualisation of the play such as this has not been attempted by Professor Berry serves only to highlight the realization that the metaphor of the play's structural unity contains also a clue to its ultimate significance.

Berry approaches *King John* in terms of its bastardy metaphor as a means of enlivening its theme of right and authority. The characterisation of the Bastard as the 'voice of reality' in the play (p. 28) and his links with the later protagonists like Henry V have been perceptively suggested. In envisaging a three-part structure in the play Berry is in fact trying to arrive at a 'central core of meaning' in it : the transition is from the idea of legitimacy and England-as-king to reality and England-as-realm. The first movement, one delineating an almost Brechtian alienation, can be summed

up as *claim* leading to the greater involvement in the perplexities of the situation in the middle, and culminating in a 'relieved acquiescence' in the tentative and rather contrived solution at the end. Berry is certainly right in according a crucial place to the Bastard in the play's clarification of values. He is also right in suggesting that at the end of the play, the Bastard is not at all 'evading the issue; he is stating it, and that for a fuller analysis of nationhood and sovereignty the play looks forward to *Henry V*. There is thus enough justification for regarding the Bastard as an 'incarnate metaphor' (p. 36). The central character, however, can be accorded a more comprehensive conceptual referent than one of political realism. As the play's most recent editor, R. L. Smallwood suggests (New Penguin Shakespeare, p. 46), the integrity and self-possession displayed by the Bastard are anticipations of the virtues not only of Henry V alone but also of the 'more tragically introspective heroes'. There is a sense in which 'patriotism' itself might be regarded as a metaphor for the soul's larger genialities.

In 'The Sonnet-World of Verona' Professor Berry presents a study of *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of 'an existential drama of the sonnet-life' (p. 40). The society of the play can be defined with reference to the attitudes inherent in the Petrarchan world of Elizabethan sonneteering. Implicit in this dramatisation, for Professor Berry, is a severe indictment of the mental framework of the sonnet-world : 'The language of *Romeo and Juliet* is a notation that implies a judgment on its speakers, and Shakespeare exhibits, in his selections of style, a profound detachment from the dramatis personae' (p. 6). What the play has in common with *Henry V*, according to Professor Berry, is its structuring through the Chorus. While the society of *Romeo and Juliet* is contained within the purview of the Chorus—the incarnation of the sonnet—the events in *Henry V* belie the Official Version point of view projected through the Chorus. Professor Berry perceptively observes that the dominant metaphoric ligature of the

latter play is represented by the series of 'therefores' implicit in its specious logic. However, while acknowledging the force of Professor Berry's analysis, it may be suggested that any attempt to disintegrate the imaginative harmony of the two plays—their precarious balance of irony and involvement —is bound to be only partially true. One feels that Professor Berry has rather overstressed detachment in *Romeo and Juliet*. The lovers do cerainly start with attitudinising, but the play soon picks up the larger concerns of Shakespeare's imagination—love, time and transcendence. *Henry V*, too, is not two-plays-in-one but an organic whole, one that seeks to validate its celebrative note in a context of maturity.

About *Hamlet* Professor Berry invokes Count Madariaga, L. C. Knights and the other desentimentalisers who have certainly 'over-read' the play in that they have imported their own highly sophisticated morality into the play, specially the latter. A 'simpler' Hamlet with whose 'nobility' of mind the spectator at once identifies himself is probably nearer Shakespeare's text. Like Knights, Berry too thinks that there is nothing 'intellectual' about Hamlet: Claudius has more of clear thinking. The foundation of the play is the disjunction between action and awareness though, according to Professor Berry, the play does not seek to identify the sources of this disjunction. Berry also stresses the strain of self-vindication in Hamlet's psychic make-up, referring to 'general censure' in I. iv. 23-36 and interpreting 'scann'd' in 'That would be scann'd' (in III. iii. 75) as 'assign a meaning to'. His antic disposition is the product of 'elemental calculation' (p. 65). From all this Berry goes on to his 'central contention' (p. 69) that 'Hamlet is a man moving towards the final awareness and affirmation of self'. Coming very close to Miss Mahood's recognition of 'I am Hamlet the Dane' as marking Hamlet's recovery of selfhood and identity, Professor Berry finds the metaphorical unity of self and situation on Hamlet's part in his acceptance of the role of the duellist. The recognition of this unity is indicated in 'It will be short,/The interim's mine,

and man's life is no more/Then to say one' (I. ii. 72-4)—with Dover Wilson's gloss on 'one' as a term in duelling. Hamlet's death is his final statement. In the death scene 'Hamlet the actor, and the actor playing Hamlet fuse in the climax of the drama'(p. 69). This indeed would be very acute did it not leave out of account something in the play that links up with what Michael Long in a recent study of the tragedies has termed as the world of raw kinesis, the irresistible traumatic energies that have overwhelmed Hamlet's mind leaving us little scope for ironic comment.

Hamlet is of too wide a scope to permit easy metaphoric formulation, a texture less rich only than that of *King Lear* or *The Tempest*. Even for plays like *Troilus and Cressida* and *Coriolanus* Professor Berry goes back to the more traditional image-studies. In the former Professor Berry finds a revised perspective on the themes of love and war as they had earlier been presented in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*. The changed perspective is that of Time. Bullough hnd already printed Books XII and XIII of Golding's translation of Ovid in his *Sources*. Berry would regard *Troilus and Cressida* as 'a dramatic meditation on a single epigraph : *tempus edax rerum*' (p. 87). The food imagery in the play reduces all values to mere appetite leading to the metaphoric conception of Time as Kronos. In the food imagery, Berry points out, 'the vehicle is food, but the tenor is Time' (p. 80). Time, however, is not all that is there in the play. As has been acutely observed in an existentialist reading of *Troilus and Cressida*, 'The frustration generated in [Troilus] derives partly from the action of time and partly from being forced to reading facticity into transcendence'.[1] Berry regards the projection of self as an elusive entity in the play highlighting the disturbingly provisional nature of human essence' (p. 48). We can recognise in 'truce' (the 'extant moment' of Agamem-

[1] A. A. Ansari, 'The Problem of Identity in *Troilus and Cressida*', *Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1978), p. 207.

non's courteous welcome to Hector—V. v. 166-71) the play's metaphor of transcendence, of challenge to Time's supremacy. 'Truce' would seem to cover both love and war : 'as the truce is an act of love, so love is a truce in a long war' (p. 84).

Of all the plays in the canon it is in *The Tempest* that controlling metaphoric formulations are most difficult to find. It is perhaps because everything in the play seems charged with suggestions of things other than itself, and yet, in the words of Nuttal, quoted by Berry, 'the mystery is never allowed to harden into an ontological dogma' (p. 101).

It is this intractability of the play that has been brought into focus in Berry's perceptive essay. If the play is 'the Shakespearian model of metaphor in action' it is not through 'the accumulation of figures classifiable as metaphors . . . but rather through its dramatic essence, which is the experience of half-perceiving, half-grasping for truth' (101). The part, however, of the play that is yet amenable to critical analysis can be reduced to a number of polarities that can further be summed up in a single concern : 'the exercise of power'. Prospero's 'art' is 'the disciplined exercise of virtuous knowledge', and that is the source of his power. The single metaphoric ligature of 'power' also includes the Ferdinand-Miranda relationship : 'They are both in either's pow'rs' (I. ii. 450). Prospero epitomises the play. As Professor Berry beautifully puts it : '*The Tempest* is what Prospero has learnt : the total play becomes the expression of the civilised consciousness' (p. 114). Abdication of authority is Prospero's route to self-knowledge : the Epilogue looks forward to a state 'for which "freedom" itself may be a metaphor'.

Professor Berry's approach to the play is in line with the consensus of modern critical opinion in its attempt to extricate 'ideas' half-buried in the associative patterns of dramatic structure and language though rejecting the nineteenth century schematic allegorisation of the play. It is well, however, to recall Frank Kermode's suggestion, made

many years ago, that the criticism of *The Tempest* may yet benefit from a more exact knowledge of its background. Frances Yates also has recently hinted (in her first Shakespearian book) at the possibilities of further exploring the intellectual-religious antecedents of the Romances in general. Not that ideas from specific sources are not transmuted by poetic imagination, but their identification can certainly help in the recognition of perspectives—metaphoric and others—in *The Tempest*. Our perception of what Professor Berry calls 'metaphoric ligatures' depends also on our ability to conceptualise the play, to be able to read 'ideas' (specially so in a drama of ideas like *The Tempest*) out of the text as well as images. There is a level beyond that of the 'controlling metaphors' where ideas, concepts, images, symbols and myths all represent in varying degrees that shift towards ideality which is the essence not of art only but of all thinking life.

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