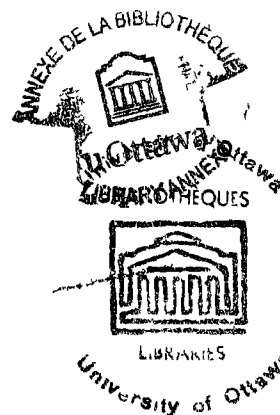


SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS AND LITERARY CONVENTIONS
OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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Dissertation presented to the
Department of English and the
School of Graduate Studies,
University of Ottawa, as
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Ottawa, Ontario
July, 1973



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PREFACE

Discussions of Shakespeare's sonnets frequently allude to the Elizabethan cult of friendship and to literary treatments of the theme by Lyly, Sidney, Spenser, and others. These remarks usually arise in attempting to explain the simple fact of why the bulk of Shakespeare's sonnets should be concerned with the poet's feeling for a young man and why that feeling should be so strong and lover-like. In the New Variorum Edition of the sonnets Rollins devotes some seven tightly written pages to critical opinions on "The Question of Homosexuality."¹ Among those who defend Shakespeare from anything improper the Renaissance background is typically invoked; these conventions and precedents of the age are presented strictly as arguments against a personal aberration, and they are touched upon only in the most general way. Also in this vein is J. W. Lever's statement that "Friendship between young men of noble minds was a major theme of Renaissance literature and philosophy. With the new seriousness that characterized sixteenth-century Italy, this male relationship was more highly esteemed than at any time since the days of Pericles."² But, beyond acknowledging the general "appeal to the imagination" of the theme, Lever does not specify any of its particular conventions or attempt to trace them in "Shakespeare's sustained exploration

¹A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets, ed. H. E. Rollins (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1944), II, pp. 232-239.

²J.W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet (London: Methuen, 1956), p. 164.

of the theme of friendship through more than a hundred and twenty sonnets."³ Lever admits the general force of the theme in the Renaissance in order to explain why Shakespeare might have chosen it, but he then goes on like all other critics to discuss the sonnets without reference to its specific provisions. Edward Hubler, too, refers to the conventional nature of terms of endearment (such as "lover") between friends and states that "There was also the Renaissance concept of the superiority of the friendship of man to man over the affection of man for woman."⁴ Elsewhere he dwells upon the poet's concern for the lack of equality between himself and his friend and states that "With Shakespeare the essence of friendship, as of love, is mutuality; and in the sonnets there is the recurrent fear that the basis of moral equality which mutuality demands does not exist."⁵ This observation, together with the analysis of specific sonnets which accompanies it, is very much to the point as regards the Renaissance conventions of friendship; yet Hubler does not mention the background and even implies that it is a peculiar notion of Shakespeare's ("With Shakespeare . . ."). The cult of friendship is invoked, that is, when it is a question of explaining Shakespeare's choice of a subject, but not when Shakespeare's particular treatment of his subject is in hand. James Winny also has valuable things to say about mutuality

³Lever, p. 165.

⁴Edward Hubler, The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 153.

⁵Hubler, p. 92.

and about "Truth and Falsehood" (the title of a chapter) as depicted in the sonnets; but he too fails to relate these preoccupations of Shakespeare with the conventions of the theme of friendship in the Renaissance. The following remarks, for example, cry out for just such a relation:

these claims to shared identity between friends . . . form a vital centre of Shakespeare's creative attention.⁶

the theme of identity with a second self maintains its place as a major preoccupation of the sequence.⁷

The relationship of these selves, who are both separate and identical, is not susceptible of rational explanation.⁸

Winnny, however, chooses to make his very interesting interpretation of this theme in the sonnets by reference to "Shakespeare's Dualism" as found in his narrative poems and dramatic works and representing a deep idiosyncrasy of his nature, "a condition of his imaginative experience without which his creative activity would not have been carried on."⁹ The recurring metaphor of friends' shared identity is characterized as one aspect of Shakespeare's general preoccupation with "the common theme of a self-destructive struggle within a body too deeply divided against itself to achieve unity of being."¹⁰ This idea of friends' identity is one of the commonplaces

⁶James Winnny, The Master-Mistress (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), p. 100.

⁷Winnny, p. 200.

⁸Winnny, p. 201.

⁹Winnny, p. 208.

¹⁰Winnny, p. 208.

of Renaissance friendship, but Winny has interpreted it entirely in the light of Shakespeare's own "psychology." As with Hubler, Lever, and the authors represented in the Variorum, the Renaissance background is ignored in the interpretation of specific sonnets and invoked only as an aid to explaining Shakespeare's choice of subject. Previous critics have made only the broadest of applications of the conventional background to the special preoccupations and themes of the sonnets. No truly extended reading of them has ever been made from the perspective of their participation in a tradition of friendship literature carrying a set of themes and conventions of its own. The goal of this study is to describe the treatment by Shakespeare's predecessors of several of the major provisions of this tradition, and from thence to proceed to a consideration of Shakespeare's handling of them in his sonnets.

In his lengthy study of the literature of friendship in the English Renaissance, L. J. Mills has demonstrated the classical sources (primarily Aristotle, Cicero, and Plutarch) of literate Elizabethan thought on the subject of friendship.¹¹

He has described its evolution from the classical program of education and conduct propagated by the early humanists into a well-defined and broadly familiar topic for literary treatment in various genres by the time Shakespeare came to write his sonnets. By the latter part of the century even such a

¹¹Laurens J. Mills, One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama (Bloomington, Ind.: The Principia Press, 1937).

slenderly trained humanist as Shakespeare would have been familiar with the basic conventions of friendship and could be expected to deal with them in some manner in any literary treatment of the subject. Cicero's De Amicitia and De Officiis had by this time been through numerous Latin and English editions and were in use as basic primers in the schools. Important works by such popular Renaissance authors as Erasmus, Elyot, Castiglione, Richard Edwards, Lyly, Greene, Lodge, Sidney, and Spenser had dealt prominently with the subject of friendship and always from an essentially classical point of view. Classical ideas were also in circulation in numerous less exalted forms--ephemeral pamphlets, miscellanies, collection of apothegms, ballads, and stories. Mills has catalogued all these items, and the reader is referred to his study for a comprehensive survey of Elizabethan literature of friendship. This present study is much indebted to his for its identification of the principal contributors to the tradition. Mills, however, was primarily concerned simply to identify the appearance of conventional ideas in a wide spectrum of literary works. My present intention is to select the more popular and important of Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries and to give to their treatments of friendship a more critical reading than was possible for Mills. I have profited from his identification of sources and from his general perspective, but I have not relied on him to any considerable degree in my own readings.

The conventions of friendship have been, for the sake of exposition, divided into three groups; but this division should

not be taken to imply any formal division in the topic. The survey of Shakespeare's predecessors' handling of each set of "commonplaces" aims at isolating what was most important and interesting and potentially useful in the tradition as it came to Shakespeare's hands. It was commonplace, for example, that friendship is formed on the basis of virtue; but I am concerned, not with proving this as commonplace (which, following Mills, may be taken as proved), but with describing in specific works of literature how this barren maxim is represented, modified, and developed. Summaries of the principal classical authors are made, without any claim to special expertise, but as necessary to provide the point of departure for the development given to the simple classical maxims by the Renaissance authors. In considering the sonnets themselves in the light of the conventions which antedate them and which they reflect, it is not implied that they constitute a systematic statement or that they are didactic in intention. Nor do I wish to imply that these conventions of friendship are Shakespeare's most important concern in the sonnets and that their complex utterances may be reduced to just so many statements of commonplaces. My chosen perspective will necessarily cause me to do violence to other major concerns, but, even within that perspective, I hope my readings will demonstrate the complexity and sinuosity of Shakespeare's response. Unlike most previous treatments of the theme of friendship, the sonnets are first and foremost poetic utterances; they

express states of feeling and arise from a dramatic reality which gives them their authenticity. But within the context of their genre they also reflect the preoccupations, themes, and conventions of the previous literature of friendship.

The limitations of this study are obvious, and I hope they will be recognized as the product of design rather than ignorance. In particular, I hope the omission of a discussion of the Petrarchan sonneteering conventions will not be taken for a contention on my part that they are somehow not operative or are subordinate to the concerns of friendship. Clearly, many images, attitudes, and ideas in the sonnets may be interpreted in the light of either or of both traditions. In this study I am not attempting to fix sources or to adjudicate the relative importance of rival concerns and traditions. Thus when I speak of Shakespeare's depiction of his friend's virtue as "visionary" or "metaphysical" or "Platonic," I do not mean to deny that it is also simply the stock Petrarchan depiction. It is perhaps first of all the stock Petrarchan depiction. I am concerned in this study, however, to see what consequences that depiction has (in a series of sonnets which is, after all, indubitably a celebration of a friendship) when viewed from the angle of the expectations and conventions of friendship. Thus I use the term "Platonic" most often in quotation marks, as indicating simply a descriptive and analytical term and not an attribution of source, as indicating the character of Shakespeare's treatment when viewed from one perspective only. It would be the business of some future study to attempt a

more comprehensive reading of the sonnets, making use of all or as many as possible of the multiple patterns and traditions which, as Stephen Booth has demonstrated, they bring into play.¹²

For advice in the writing of the following study I wish to thank Dr. Richard Pollard of the University of Ottawa, and, for its kind support of the writer, the Canada Council.

¹²Stephen Booth, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

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VIRTUE AS THE BASIS OF FRIENDSHIP

Of the commonplaces which appear most frequently in Renaissance treatments of the theme of friendship the most pervasive is that friendship is a relation formed on the basis of virtue. This idea may be expressed in various ways and may undergo different degrees of elaboration and refinement, much depending on the specific meaning attached to the abstract requirement of virtue and in the real operative force which it demonstrates in the examples and fictions of individual authors. But as a general maxim carrying a proverb-like sort of weight and authenticity one encounters it somewhere in virtually every author. "Where virtue doth not knit the knot, there friendship cannot reign" is an unsubtle but very typical instance of its assertion.¹ This commonplace (so it shall be called, without any reference to that term's employment by the Elizabethan rhetoricians) had its origins in the standard classical authors, underwent certain lines of development in the Renaissance, and emerged by the end of the sixteenth century with considerable dramatic and poetic potential. Shakespeare's own handling of it in his sonnets appears, as we shall see, directly in the line of this development, and for that reason considerably more attention will be given here to the commonplace's augmenting complexities and possibilities than will be necessary in the case of the two other, more static commonplaces. Emphasis will fall upon the increasingly problematic treatment given to a commonplace which, at its outset as an abstract requirement, appears to offer little hope of a satisfying imaginative treatment.

¹Richard Edwards, Damon and Pithias, from A Short Collection of Old English Plays, eds. Robert Dodsley and W.C. Hazlitt (15 vols; New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), IV, p. 103.

Plato's conception of 'virtue in friendship' is characteristically idiosyncratic and does not directly enter into the Classical tradition as it was interpreted by the English humanists. It is considered here because by other and more indirect channels it does manifest itself in Shakespeare's sonnets, where its presence, as will be seen, often constitutes a countervailing or at least modifying force against the dominant Ciceronian ideal. In an early dialogue, the Lysis, Socrates cites and then rejects a number of commonplaces about friendship, including the one that holds that "the good only is friend of the good, and of him only".² Lysis, the principal interlocutor, is at first quite willing to accept this evidently familiar idea, but, as commonly happens in the dialogues, the untested popular assumption gives way under Socrates' analytic probing. This comes about primarily because Socrates is allowed by his unwary interlocutor to put an absolute construction upon the term "the good." This clashes with another assumption, that friends confer mutual benefits upon one another or "do good" to each other. A man who is already perfectly good can, however, be in need of no further good, including the prescribed good offices of a friend: "will not the good, in as far as he is good, be sufficient for himself?"³ The contradiction is apparent, and thus the proposition in question, that the good are friends with the good, is refuted. The whole argument turns upon Socrates' insinuation of something very like "the idea of the good" in place of the conventional notion of "a good man."

²The Works of Plato, tr. Benjamin Jowett, ed. Irwin Edman (New York: Modern Library, 1928), p. 19.

³Plato, p. 19.

Later upholders of the virtue commonplace (notably Aristotle and Cicero) see the necessity of denying Socrates' idealization of the term; by giving it a popular and earth-bound definition they rescue it from such a rarefied domain as would be suitable only for philosophic contemplation. Socrates' construction of the term leads away from the lives of ordinary good men and toward that visionary realm of abstract forms described in the mature Platonic dialogues. A step is explicitly taken in that direction when, having knocked down the commonplace in its popular form, Socrates finds a way of reaffirming it in terms favorable to his own metaphysics: "Friendship is the love which by reason of the presence of evil the neither good nor evil has of the good."⁴ Friendship is defined as something inherently unrealized, as the "desire" of a normally unvirtuous person for one perfectly virtuous; it is essentially a longing to rise from an imperfect state of being to a perfect one. Implied in this conception is clearly something like the mature theory of Platonic love, where the "perfectly good" has finally ceased altogether to be a person and has become a pure and ideal form. In the Lysis the dialectic has not been pushed this far, and, indeed, no real description of the function or attributes of friendship is given; there is a conspicuous gap between the metaphysical notion of "perfect good" and the utilitarian rendering of services which is allowed to stand as typical of a friend's function. Even so, Socrates' tendency is clear; he is not concerned with the social and conventional

⁴Plato, p. 22.

phenomenon known as friendship, but rather with the metaphysical problems which it raises. But in this brief early dialogue he does not proceed much farther than knocking down the conventional assumptions and is content to let his own argument founder on the phrase, "by reason of the presence of evil". Would we not love the good even lacking a knowledge of things evil, he inquires? It is not an irrelevancy; for before the nature of friendship can, for him, be properly understood, it is necessary to arrive at an ontology comprehending all things good and evil.

The Symposium and the Phaedrus develop these early metaphysical hints into a finished statement of the nature of friendship qua being.⁵ The speeches preceding Socrates' own in the Symposium are comparable to the Lysis as a whole, insofar as in both places the conventional acceptance of virtue as the basis of friendship (or love) is called into question. Phaedrus and Pausanias speak nobly, but their positions are

⁵These dialogues make considerably greater use of the term eros than of philia, but, as L. Dugas has pointed out, "Les Anciens donnaient au mot 'amitié' l'extension que nous donnons au mot 'amour.' Ils disaient: l'amitié paternelle, familiale, l'amitié amoureuse, . . . toute affection entre personnes, large ou étroite, banale et froide, comme la philanthropie, ou personnelle et intime, comme l'amitié proprement dite . . . était, pour eux, de l'amitié." L'Amitié Antique (Paris: n.p., 1914), p. 1. See also Dugas, pp. 72 ff; A. E. Taylor, Plato the Man and His Work (New York: The Dial Press, 1936), p. 65; and Paul Friedlander (2 vols; New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), II, p. 102. Friedlander maintains that eros "is behind" philia in the Lysis and that the terms are used rather interchangeably there. In general the distinction between the terms appears to lie in the application of eros to describe the inner force of attraction between persons and philia to describe the completed relationship itself. A similar attitude seems to have re-established itself among such Platonists of the Italian Renaissance as Ficino. See O. H. Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, tr. Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp. 256-289.

vitiated by their obviously homosexual and pederastic intentions (parodied and condemned by Socrates later in his comic "rejection" of Alcibiades). Phaedrus makes love a sort of divine madness and inspirational force driving the lover to seek to please his beloved by the performance of virtuous acts, mostly of a conventional sort such as bravery in battle. These deeds are not desired for their own sake but so as to avoid being shamed in front of one's friend. Pausanias distinguishes between two types of love, earthly and heavenly. The former exists only for the sake of physical gratification and is especially associated with love for women; the latter is primarily that existing between an unformed youth and a virtuous, older preceptor. What casts doubt upon this as "love for the sake of virtue" is the fact that the youth is required to render services only too obvious in exchange for his instruction, and the question naturally arises whether virtue is really the raison d'etre of the relationship. Eryximachus, on the other hand, sets up an entirely non-ethical goal for friendship, a sort of physiochemical harmony among the parts of the cosmos. Aristophanes' fable envisages love as an altogether blind, maimed, and grotesque striving for physical wholeness, devoid of any ethical dimension except insofar as the ignoble human creature is made to fear the malevolent gods who might again add to his misery by further sub-dividing him." Finally, Agathon's praise of love is a superficial melange of all desirable attributes, including virtue, but can hardly be said to propose that quality as love's basis. Thus, when Socrates speaks to the issue of virtue in love, that commonplace, having been rigorously

attacked and unsatisfactorily defended by every previous speaker, has had a considerable fall in credibility.

Socrates' speech elaborates the implications of the Lysis, but with the difference that "beauty" rather than "good" is made the goal of love's aspiration. The terms are, however, linked together quite interchangeably; "the good" is at first invoked (as being perhaps more acceptable as a common assumption) but passes over, by way of several tacit or explicit equations with beauty, to that latter term (which is, after all, more appropriate to eros, as virtue is to philia):

Love . . . desires those good and fair things of which he is in want.⁶

'Then,' she said, 'let me put the word 'good' in the place of the beautiful, and repeat the question once more'.⁷

Then in wanting the beautiful, love wants also the good?⁸
This identification and equivocation of the terms had occurred previously in the Lysis, when, before arriving at his final formulation, Socrates had made the suggestion that "'the beautiful is the friend' as the old proverb says"⁹ and had made this "conjecture" the means of returning to the previously discredited idea of the good as the basis of friendship. This had been done by a simple identification of the two terms: the friend is the beautiful; "I affirm that the good is the beautiful";¹⁰ hence, the friend is the good. Thereafter the middle term was

⁶Plato, p. 369.

⁷Plato, p. 371.

⁸Plato, p. 367.

⁹Plato, p. 21.

¹⁰Plato, p. 22.

dropped, since Socrates' particular concern was with virtue per se; but in the Symposium it is the other way around, and virtue is the term which, having served its purpose in the argument, slips into disuse but is nevertheless implicit in "the idea of the beautiful". Diotima's fable of love's genealogy (love, being the child of Plenty and Poverty, occupies a position midway between the states signified by her parents and yearns to fulfill her deficiency by achieving the immortality of "birth in beauty") clearly has much in common with the definition of friendship offered in the Lysis-- the desire of the perfectly good by the not perfectly good. The metaphysical tendency of the former definition here becomes explicit, and if "the beautiful" implies "the good" it also implies "the one" or even "God", so remote from the concrete nature of ordinary friendship or love has Plato's dialectic carried him. The lover proceeds in contemplation from beautiful objects to beautiful forms, from fleshly beauties to intellectual ones, and, as his perception becomes ever more universal and abstract, culminates in the vision of

a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or another part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as, for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end.¹¹

¹¹Plato, pp. 378-9.

The human phenomenon of love is entirely subsumed to a visionary metaphysics; the quotation above begins with a purely metaphysical description of the operation of the idea of beauty in the natural world and concludes with an exhortation to the lover to ascend these pure heights, and it was an inquiry into the nature of love which gave rise in the first place to the metaphysical description. Nor does the ultimate contemplative goal of love exclude, at lower points in the ascent, right action and right knowledge, qualities akin to conventional virtue; Plato's conception is univocal and includes all aspects of virtue. His is, from one point of view, no more than the most visionary of statements of that most commonplace of notions, that "friendship is for the sake of the good". So it is, given Plato's construction of that term, unique in its dizzy ontological consequences, its quasi-mystical conflation of beauty and virtue.

Aristotle's discussion of friendship is, as might be expected from its position in books VIII and IX of the Nicomachean Ethics, strongly concerned with virtue, but in an altogether more conventional and sociable sense than in Plato. Book VIII follows directly upon a minutely descriptive account of the separate virtues which collectively comprise "virtue" (this in itself strongly contrasted with Plato's univocal "idea of the good"); "a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living."¹² Already the flexi-

¹²Introduction to Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 1947), VIII.i. All future references are to book and chapter of this edition.

bility of the conception is evident, and its integral connection with "a view to living". There follows a list of the eminently practical benefits of friendship: prosperity is guarded by friends; they are a refuge in misfortune; they provide instruction for the young and minister to the old. But friendship is "not only necessary but also noble; for we praise those who love their friends, and it is thought to be a fine thing to have many friends; and again we think it is the same people that are good men and good friends" (VIII.i). Here the appeal is explicitly made to the common understanding ("we praise", "it is thought to be", "we think"), and "the noble" is equally joined to "the necessary" in the conception. For all his flexibility Aristotle is, however, the source of a famous distinction between the "types" of friendship—that based on virtue, that based on pleasure, and that based on utility. In Renaissance authors the pleasurable and utilitarian types of friendship typically appear as base shams of the true virtuous type and provoke endless homiletic warnings and cautionary examples of the false friend, the flatterer, the "fair weather" friend, and so on—friends of convenience rather than for the sake of virtue. Aristotle's distinction is actually much less invidious. Virtuous friendship always brings pleasure and utility as a matter of course (VIII.iii); pleasurable friendship closely resembles virtuous friendship and sometimes develops into it (VIII.vi); and each type is legitimate in its own way, even the friendships of utility, which are appropriate for practical relationships (VIII.xiii). Complaints of the two inferior

types chiefly arise when one of the parties has desired something more of a friend; disappointment and recrimination then ensues. On this point Aristotle has a warning as to the necessity of testing and trying a friend before considering the bond with him as permanent; if he is found wanting, it is necessary to break with him:

What is evil neither can nor should be loved; for it is not one's duty to be a lover of evil, nor to become like what is bad. . . . But if one friend remained the same while the other became better and far outstripped him in virtue, should the latter treat the former as a friend? Surely he cannot. (IX.iii)

Breaking with a friend who has not come up to expectation or who has changed ought, however, to be done slowly, without heat or rancor, and keeping the memory of the former intimacy in mind. The inferior types of friendship may, in contrast, exist between unvirtuous persons, since pleasure and utility, while not bad in themselves, are qualities which are neutral with respect to virtue (VIII.iv). Once established, virtuous friendship alone is capable of enduring for the length of life, since it alone is based upon the fundamentals of character and not external circumstances. But these severe standards do make it difficult to establish and rare in occurrence in any man's life (VIII.iii). Yet Aristotle's conception, while laying such emphasis upon friendship's high standards, is by no means ascetic or essentially austere. Like all the Aristotelian virtues, friendship is founded upon a core of self-interest; for virtue's end is one's own happiness. Friendship gives occasion for the good man to practice his virtue, and it is an activity which he requires to complete his happiness: "With

others therefore his activity will be more continuous, and it is in itself pleasant, as it ought to be for a man who is supremely happy" (IX.ix). A good man will accordingly wish to render benefits rather than be benefited by his friend; and in the doing of mutual deeds "the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share in what is noble" (IX.viii).

In his De Amicitia Cicero follows the main lines of Aristotle, but with more warmth and amplitude. The connection between friendship and virtue is stated at the outset of the discussion, and, if anything, it is made more emphatic than with Aristotle: "This, . . . I do feel first of all--that friendship cannot exist except among good men."¹³ There is no question of designating "types" of friendship, Aristotle's inclusive concept being reduced to the single type of virtuous friendship. But that term is given the widest possible extension, and Cicero is more self-conscious than Aristotle about referring it to common knowledge: "let us interpret the word 'virtue' by the familiar use of our everyday life and speech", as distinguished from the "pompous phrase" of philosophers (vi). The partially true but impractical view "that no one is good unless he is wise" is rejected for the purposes of friendship; for it is something, unlike friendship, which "no mortal has yet attained" (iv). This is an obvious reference to Plato's position, in contradistinction to which Cicero's is deliberately practical and based on "things as they are in the experience of everyday life and not as they are in fancy or in hope" (iv).

¹³Cicero, De Amicitia, tr. William Armistead Falconer (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1923), iv. All future references are to chapters in this edition.

His is to be the friendship with a human face, located among the indubitable and commonly acknowledged virtues--loyalty, uprightness, fairness, generosity, and so on. This is virtue as practiced by those who "were accounted good in life" and became so, not by an exalted search for truth, but by following "Nature, the best guide to good living" (v). The tone of this sounds at times a little middle-brow, but it comes from a fear that the dictum of virtue will spoil the ordinary human sweetness or even the possibility of friendship. On the other hand Cicero is quick to deny utilitarian motives in friendship. It is said to exist typically among the self-sufficient: to the extent that a man is naturally free of dependency he will seek friends (ix). Material advantages may arise from a friendship, but they are not its reason for being; and a friendship based upon utility (following Aristotle) easily falls apart. Cicero's real perspective is not so much "middle-brow" as romantic. He stresses the tender, feeling side of the relation, which "springs rather from nature than from need, and from an inclination of the soul joined with a feeling of love rather than from calculation" (viii). This feeling, he continues, arises spontaneously when we meet a person possessed of virtue--thus the peculiar Ciceronian sweetness of that term. Friendship, indeed, almost displaces all other virtues within the confines of the De Amicitia and is consistently praised "before all things human" (iv). No matter how replete with wealth, political honor, or even ordinary virtues, we "all believe that without friendship life is no life at all, or at least they so believe if they have any desire whatever to live the life of

free men" (xxiii). Friendship is thus seen as the chief goal of human life, inextricably bound to the virtuous life but higher than virtue itself; for if "this very virtue is the parent and preserver of friendship . . . without friendship it cannot exist at all" (vi).

Romantic feeling in De Amicitia is sometimes mingled with sterner considerations and acquires a darker coloring. One is definitely not obliged to support a friend in a bad action, especially if it should involve treason to the state. In such cases one's Roman duty is clear, despite an inevitable division of loyalties (xi-xii). The strong allure of bad friendships is acknowledged, but they are especially rephrehended and singled out as a peculiar pestilence of the age (xii). From this line of thought follows the thoroughly Aristotelian injunction to test a friend and allow the passage of time to prove his worth, breaking with him if he is given to "outbursts of vice" (xxi-xxii). This is the sterner side of the requirement, but both the romantic and the "Roman" elements of Cicero's conception come out in a long discourse on the subject of giving advice and correction to a friend. Aristotle had barely suggested such an eventuality when he said that a man should not abandon his friend "if he is capable of being reformed" (IX.iii), but the remark is brief and not very positive about ways and means. With Cicero the possibility of dramatic confrontations and personal hurt enters the picture, a man's grief for his friend's bad ways and his struggle to reform him. In this context there is much on the subject, which will become one of the best-established of Elizabethan

commonplaces--the flatterer, the false friend who cares only for the pleasant or profitable side of friendship and shies away from speaking hard truths home. A true friend speaks out "not only with frankness, but, if the occasion demands, even with sternness" (xiii). Not to do so is both cowardly and unvirtuous, for "if we continually flee from trouble, we must also flee from virtue". This is as opposed to "certain people in Greece" (the Epicureans) who maintain that one ought not to get involved in or suffer for the faults of anyone else, including a friend (xiii). Cicero nevertheless lays great stress on the sociable and sympathetic nature of friendship and "the affability of speech and manner of friends". "While unvarying seriousness and gravity are indeed impressive, yet friendship ought to be more unrestrained, genial, and agreeable, and more inclined to be wholly courteous and urbane" (xviii). With such a norm the task of reforming a friend will be so much the more unpleasant and courageous. It will always be an unnatural aberration never to be undertaken without due cause, and one should at all times avoid being distrustful of his friend and "reject charges proffered by another" (xviii). Virtue is not a "hard and unyielding" quality, and when it must be used against a friend there will arise "distress of mind" (xiii). As opposed to the norm of friendship, that "delightful tranquillity of mind" where "happiness is our best and highest aim" (xii), here is the potential for tragic experience--in the apprehended loss of something dear, in the uncertainties of the struggle for reformation, in doubts as to one's own fitness for the task. Yet in such circumstances friendship may persist, and

tragic moments alternate with happy ones. This would make for an essentially more dramatic understanding of the rather cold and static commonplace, one representing a state of warring opposites, virtue and evil, happiness and misery, certainty and doubt. Here Cicero merely suggests what will become almost a convention in itself in the Renaissance, the conflict of ideal and reality:

that mental anguish of which I spoke and which must be felt on a friend's account, has no more power to banish friendship from life than it has to cause us to reject virtue because virtue has certain cares and annoyances. (xiii)

Virtue with its cares and annoyances and friendship with its mental anguish are suitable subjects for dramatic treatment.

Plutarch affirms most of the positions of Cicero, but upon one subject, "How to tell a Flatterer", he expands Cicero's cursory statement into a long essay of that title. Like Cicero he emphasizes the natural sweetness of friendship and iterates that "complaining and fault-finding generally is unfriendly and unsociable"; only the man who freely commends a friend for his good acts can effectively offer criticism of his bad ones, "since we believe, and are content, that the man who is glad to commend blames only when he must".¹⁴ But this inherent sweetness of friendship is precisely the quality that gives the flatterer his opening; indeed, flattery coincides with true friendship in most outward respects, making it very difficult to distinguish the devious flatterer from the true friend. Plutarch gives a lengthy account of the flatterer's devices. In general they

¹⁴Plutarch, *Moralia*, tr. Frank C. Babbitt (15 vols; Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 1. All future references are to chapter numbers of this edition.

involve an impersonation or imitation of the true friend's characteristics--giving of pleasure, being useful, sharing in activities, demonstrating a similarity of habits, interests, and general cast of mind to that of the person sought out. A flatterer will even perform good actions and imitate virtuous persons to gain his particular ends, but being naturally bad, he will be particularly apt to imitate and second the friend when the latter has fallen into bad habits (4-5). Flattery is, on the other hand, most likely to attack noble natures, good and noble men having a natural sense of their worth and legitimate cause for self-pride. Flattery seizes upon this weakness under cover of a friendly commendation (1-2). Because such natures are naturally averse to criticism, the true friend must be as wily in giving advice as the flatterer is in exercising his art. Plutarch lists a number of ploys and possibilities for him. He should use a gentle tone free from all bitterness or sharpness (26). Although it is easier to correct a friend in misfortune than in prosperity, he should make the attempt at all times that it is justified (28). He may use public opinion as a means of persuasion, and specifically the argument that a friend's enemies may seize upon his misconduct (31). He should give his advice in private so as not to embarrass his friend (32). He ought to mitigate the harshness of censure by bits of praise (33). He must try to avoid an inveterate nagging or the taking of a pompous, magisterial tone (35). These are a few of the suggestions offered by Plutarch in his casuistical discussion of the ways and means of giving friendly advice; together with his analysis of the habits of the flat-

terer, the discussion further enriches the dramatic possibilities inherent in the abstract commonplace. Cicero's deep emotionalism and anguished involvement in the moral state of the friend gave rise to possibilities of tragedy. Plutarch's particular contribution is in suggesting a dense field of plots, stratagems, and nuances in the battle for and against true friendship.

Sir Thomas Elyot's The Governour (1531) contains the first reasonably full account in English of the classical ideas of friendship, and it includes a fiction (the story of Titus and Gisippus) exemplifying the theory. The theory's primary sources are clearly specified as Aristotle and Cicero: "Aristotle saieth that friendship is a vertue, ioyneth with vertue; which is affirmed by Tulli, sayenge, that friendship can not be without vertue, ne but in good men onely".¹⁵ What follows is often little more than Aristotle or Cicero paraphrased. Good men are defined in the conventional way as those practising the commonly recognized virtues ("faithe, suertie, equalitie, and liberalitie") and who follow the rule of Nature. Friendship is warmly praised as the finest and most necessary of the virtues and as a gift of God:

For in god, and all things that commeth of god, nothing is of more greater estimation than love, . . . whiche taken away from the lyfe of man, no house shall abide standinge, no felde shall be in culture. And that is lightly parceived, if a man do remember what commeth of dissention and discorde. Finally he seemeth to take

¹⁵Sir Thomas Elyot, The Boke Named the Governour, ed. Henry H. S. Croft (2 vols; New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), II, p. 122.

the sonne from the worlde, that taketh friendshippe
from mannes lyfe.¹⁶

What is remarkable about Elyot's account of friendship is really not his invocation of God (in a context where virtue is so important), but rather the fact that he nowhere makes a biblical citation or refers his classical ideas to such kindred Christian concepts as charity or brotherly love. Ideas of friendship undergo certain changes in the Renaissance, but it is by no means a case of a pagan institution being bluntly Christianized. The passage above goes about as far in that direction as any we shall encounter, both in its evocation of love as an attribute of God and its slightly apocalyptic vision of a sunless world of universal "dissention and discorde" if friendship should cease to exist. The latter idea has classical precedent;¹⁷ but here the context is Christian (God's traditional symbol, the sun, is invoked, and there is a connection suggested between His love and human love). The description carries much of the dramatic tension of Christian interpretations of the struggle between good and evil; not just a single man's happiness but the well-being of the entire race is at stake. We may not be enjoined here (as Christ enjoins us) to repel the effects of evil by loving all men as our brothers, but we are told that the failure to find a single friend is a hellish thing. Another slight adjustment of a classical idea in a Christian direction occurs when Elyot states that true friendship not only is rare (the position of Aristotle and Cicero) but is near to extinction:

¹⁶Elyot, p. 123.

¹⁷E.g., Cicero, vii.

It is now so infrequent or strange amonge mortall men, by the tyranny of covetise and ambition, whiche have long reigned, and yet do, and that amitie may now unethe be knowen or founden throughout the worlde, by them that seeke for her as diligently, as a mayden wolde seeke for a small silver pinne.¹⁸

This passage, too, breathes a displaced religious spirit in its contrast of the splendid ideal of friendship with the reality of the fallen world; the last metaphor even suggests, probably inadvertently, the biblical parable of the woman and the lost great (Luke 15: 8-9). This despair of finding true friendship because of the corrupted manners of modern times occurs repeatedly among Renaissance authors, becoming a sort of commonplace in itself. It obviously adds a suitable world-view (not unlike that of Jacobean tragedy) for the augmenting possibilities of tragic experience within friendship. On the one hand life is hellish without friendship; and on the other, true friendship is nearly impossible to achieve (like true Christian life) in such a corrupted world. The classical goal of a happy friendship must grow more distant and heart-breaking under such distinctly post-classical conditions.

These tragic possibilities are barely suggested by Elyot. The story of Damon and Pithias (which he summarizes) and the story of Titus and Gisippus (which he tells at length) both have happy conclusions, and both sets of friends are entirely virtuous, trustful, and loving to a fault. Like the classical authors (by which phrase the Ciceronian-Aristotelian tradition is intended since it was altogether the dominant one with respect to Elizabethan ideas of friendship) Elyot strongly

¹⁸Elyot, pp. 119-120.

emphasizes the sweet, sociable, and pleasant side of the relationship;¹⁹ the problem of advising and correcting a friend hardly arises, though there is the usual attack upon flatterers.²⁰ The latter picks up Plutarch's point that flatterers "be the mortall enemyes of noble wittes and specially in youthe, whan comunely they be more inclined to glorie than gravitie".²¹ Flatterers will end by "adulterat[ing] the gentill and vertuous nature of a noble man, whiche is not onely his image, but the very man hym selfe". (Such a theme also has rather obvious dramatic possibilities, not developed by Elyot, but coming to fruition in Shakespeare's sonnets.) An idiosyncrasy of Elyot's treatment is that he tends to identify or exemplify virtue in the occupation of the scholar. Not much is said about Titus' and Gisippus' virtue at the outset of the story, but we seem to be expected to assume it from their "studie of Philosophie". A special delight of friendship is said to be "studies [which] have in them any delectable affection or motion". And "beneficence, that is to say, mutually puttinge to their studie and helpe in necessary affaires, induceth love".²² This is a tradition alien to Cicero but which is continued by later English humanists; in 1531, after all, being up on classical ideas about friendship meant being a committed scholar.

¹⁹Elyot, p. 129.

²⁰Elyot, pp. 175-185.

²¹Elyot, p. 180.

²²Elyot, p. 129.

Richard Taverner's extract and commentary on Erasmus' Adagies (1539) contains several maxims concerned with friendship and virtue. These are all weighted toward a practical understanding of that term: "frendes be more avaylable wout money, than money wythoute frendes" (xiiii); we ought to love as though we might sometime hate, and vice versa (xxxi); true friends are found only in adversity (li).²³ The maxims show a rather hard-headed and cynical approach to the topic; virtue is given its due, but only so far as "a man will have respecte to ^ey maners of these dayes" (xiii). Perhaps the most nearly heretical result of this is that a certain degree of evil is admitted as a legitimate constituent of friendship. "Know the fascions of thy frende, but hate them not. In ^ey maners of frendes some vices oughte to be dissimuled and wynked at" (xl). This is a truth seldom so explicitly acknowledged by later authors but one that becomes increasingly more manifest as the possibilities of friendship in a real and corrupt world are explored.

Castiglione's brief discussion of friendship in The Court-
yer (Hoby's translation, 1561) is interesting in that it explores some of the tensions and conflicts inherent within the dictum of virtue as interpreted by two speakers of differing temperaments. Syr Friderick, who has just previously discussed the matters of proper apparel and good deportment at some length, considers friendship in the same general context--a practical matter necessary to the courtier's good reputation:

²³Proverbes or Adagies Gathered out of the Chiliades of Erasmus, STC 10436.

who is conversaunt wyth the ignoraunt or wycked, he is also counted ignoraunt and wycked. And contrariwise he that is conversaunt with the good, wyse, and dyscreete, he is reckened suche a one.²⁴

Syr Friderick's way of understanding the concept of virtue is to refer it entirely to public opinion. This sounds very like Cicero, except that it suggests that mere association with the good is sufficient to satisfy the stern requirement for oneself. Bembo attacks this rather shallow and optimistic view of the matter from a position of high but soured idealism, citing a catalogue of modern friends' iniquities: one never finds true friends anymore, for two may live together for many years, "yet at the end beguile one an other, in one maner or other, either for malice, or envye, or for lightnesse, or some other yll cause".²⁵ It is a "post-classical" world-view similar to the one briefly stated by Elyot, connecting the decay of friendship with the general corruption of the times (which makes realization of virtue, strictly conceived, all but impossible). Bembo's description of this state, like Elyot's, has a hellish intensity; he has determined, after many past disappointments,

never to put a mannes trust in any person in the worlde, nor to give himselfe so for a prey to friend how deare and loving so ever he wer, . . . because there are in our mindes so many dennes and comers, that it is impossible for the witt of manne to knowe the dissymulations that lye lurking in them.²⁶

Bembo's harsh perception of the disjunction between appearance

²⁴Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtyer, tr. Sir Thomas Hoby, ed. W. E. Henley (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 137.

²⁵Castiglione, p. 137.

²⁶Castiglione, p. 137.

and reality, of the capacity of the human mind for perversity and treachery, Hamlet-like in its inverted idealism, is the aftermath of tragic experience; and it also suggests the poisoned love of that other great friend and then enemy of mankind, Timon. Friendship, with its promise of sweetness and its reality of betrayal, appears to such intense and noble spirits as take seriously its claims and requirements not unlike that other dangerous lure of female love--"a swallow'd bait / On purpose laid to make the taker mad".²⁷ One response to that tragic perception, the one made by Bembo and Timon, is renunciation. From one point of view this follows logically from friendship's demand for virtue: if virtue ceases to exist (not only in individuals but universally) then so must friendship. It must do so, that is, unless some compromise or modification of the harsh requirement is made--something like Erasmus' adage that a man should "wink at" his friend's vices. This is undoubtedly a violation of classical dictums, but then Aristotle and Cicero felt themselves to be living in a time when virtue was an attainable state. Post-classical authors (perhaps it is the legacy of "displaced" Christianity on this classical topic) often despair of it, and their despair is reflected in increasingly heretical and problematic treatments of the classical requirement. To preserve the ordinary sweetness of human friendship was also Cicero's goal and remains so through the Renaissance, but often under strangely lax or tortured conditions alien to classical idealism.

²⁷ Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. W. G. Ingram and Theodore Redpath (London: University of London Press, 1964), Sonnet 129.

Such possibilities are in process of development, but in The Courtyer Syr Friderick is allowed the last word, and, though acknowledging a little of the force of Bembo's critique, he basically returns the discussion to a point of classical optimism. He maintains that perfect friendship still exists as of old; that, although some abuse it, it is "so great a felicity" that it will never lose root in man's heart; that it is as true now as it ever was that friendship exists only "among the good and vertuous menne, because the friendship of the wicked, is not friendship".²⁸ Friends are given the conventional injunction to advise and correct one another, and are cautioned that this should be done without sharpness and should not extend to "naturall defaultes". Syr Friderick remains opposed to a priggish and unworldly interpretation of virtue in friendship; having begun by referring that concept strictly to keeping good company, he ends by making a rather wooden obeisance to classical formula, but an easy-going toleration of human weakness is still uppermost. His view is allowed to predominate in The Courtyer and Bembo's occurs mainly as an interesting foil. Bembo allows a strict interpretation of the meaning of virtue to break the back of friendship, and Syr Friderick allows a loyal adherence to friendship at least to bend the back of virtue. The two views are equally recognitions of the position of classical friendship in a changing world--the one, strict, intense, showing capabilities of tragedy in an unvirtuous world; the other, latitudinarian, practical, capable of preserving friendship for such a world. These positions continue throughout the Renaissance to

²⁸Casiglione, p. 138.

define polarities of response to friendship's favorite dogma.

Richard Edwards' interlude-like drama, Damon and Pithias (pub. 1571), is the first really substantial English fiction devoted to dramatizing classical ideas about friendship. These ideas are in fact rather likely to be bluntly expounded,²⁹ but some new and typically dramatic (as opposed to conceptual) strategies are also adopted in the presentation of the virtue commonplaces. As mere conception Edwards understands the virtue requirement quite literally and unproblematically, but he also appears to understand that direct presentation of such a prosaic theme makes for very dull drama. One solution to this peculiarly dramatic problem is to depict unvirtuous friendships in such a way as to make them cautionary examples; that is, to define the dull quality of virtue by reference to its undesirable but highly dramatic obverse, evil. Comic or terrible or merely interestingly bad friends are capable of amusing and engaging us, of compensating for the fact that the drama's paradigmatic good friends, for all their uplifting rhetoric, grow a little tiresome. The topic of friendship is helpfully equipped with those Aristotelian "types", so that friendships of pleasure and utility will be immediately recognized, despite their more entertaining nature, for what they really are--inferior versions of the true type. That type will thus be implied in the depiction of the other types, especially if the latter are shown to come to a well-earned grief. Edwards uses this strategy in the first scenes of his drama; there we see a ludicrous friendship of utility formed between two entirely nefarious and con-

²⁹See this thesis, p. 1.

niving courtiers, Aristippus and Carisophus. The former has just displaced the latter in the king's favor, and the two "friends" in reality hate one another; but Carisophus sees the possibility of using Aristippus in returning himself to favor, and Aristippus desires both to disarm Carisophus' antagonism and to make sport of him. Their vows of friendship are accompanied by all the commonplace vows, including professions of an everlasting devotion and readiness to die for one another. In private each is seen cursing the other and declaring his true motives.³⁰ Variants of this scene occur throughout the play, alternating with the "straight" scenes between Damon and Pithias (whose rhetoric is almost identical to that of the false friends), until at the very end of the play, when the true friendship of Damon and Pithias has been triumphantly vindicated, the false friendship abruptly collapses. Thus it is demonstrated (as Aristippus, the former philosopher, points out himself) that, as the ancients maintain, friendships of utility never endure and that in time of need false friendships are always detected--in both of which departments the true friendship of Damon and Pithias has just proved itself. The bad friendship of Carisophus and Aristippus thus demonstrates inversely (and somewhat more entertainingly) the same truths represented in the good friendship of Damon and Pithias.

Aristippus also exemplifies the stock character-type of the flatterer or false courtier. At the outset of the drama this former philosopher boasts of having renounced "the strait kind of life" for the pleasures of court:

³⁰ Edwards, pp. 18ff.

But I in fine silks haunt Dionysius' palace,
Wherein with dainty fare myself I do solace.

To crouch, to speak fair, myself I apply,
To feed the king's humour with pleasant devices, . . .³¹

There is much else in this vein--the vaunting and gamboling of a pleasant rogue. Aristippus' peculiar departure from virtue is characteristically located in an addiction to pleasure at the expense of the "strait kind of life" of philosophy (again implied as the special occupation of the virtuous). In this he conforms at once to the Plutarchan portrait of the flatterer and to the literary convention of the vice figure of morality plays and interludes. The two traditions coincide perfectly here, the function of the vice figure especially suggesting Elyot's previously described strategy of depicting virtue in the inverted guise of bad but entertaining characters. The audience is traditionally amused by the vice figure without being in any danger of mistaking him for the moral norm; and so it is by the bad friend and flatterer, Aristippus. Needless to say, Aristippus is offered numerous chances to perform the offices of the true friend and true courtier by giving the needed but unwelcome advice which his "friend", King Dionysius, deserves. Of course he always decides not to do so, even though recognizing his rightful duty, for fear of displeasing such a useful friend and endangering his position.³² Here again the depiction of the flatterer clearly implies the nature and duties of the true friend.

³¹Edwards, p. 16.

³²Edwards, p. 47.

which he assents.³⁵ Though not virtuous in the school-book sense, Stephano is a loyal and affectionate friend; his presence not only has the dramatic function of providing a little comic relief, but it inevitably suggests that friendship can take less austere forms than that of the two noble and boring young scholars. Their friendship is by no means undercut as the moral norm, but it is footnoted slightly from a native English source. It is, in a minor way, an instance of that "polarity" of stern and latitudinarian constructions of the dictum of virtue. Here the debate is merely comic, but it would have surprised Cicero.

In Euphues: The Anatomy of Wyt (1578) Lyly continues, with a little more subtlety, the strategy of exploring virtue in friendship by depictions of its absence therefrom. The friendship of Philautus and Euphues, like that of Aristippus and Carisophus, is contracted at the outset of the work to the accompaniment of the full rhetoric and with self-conscious comparisons to the text-book friends (Damon and Pithias, Titus and Gisippus, Pylades and Orestes, etc.). As a step in the direction of realism this bad friendship is not made so patently bad as that between Aristippus and Carisophus, obvious rascals; but it is non-virtuous enough to endow its failure with the characteristic moral implication. Euphues' peculiar fault is not so much utilitarianism as the less culpable (unless linked to flattery) pursuit of pleasure. Just prior to forming the the friendship with Philautus, he had rejected the advice of a "wise old man" to shun pleasure in the search for wisdom, and he had replied that the two pursuits were compatible. On

³⁵Edwards, p. 46.

first meeting Philautus he takes a liking to him, but one as to which the narrator plants doubts: "whether his pregnant wit, or his pleasant conceits wrought the greater liking in the mind of Euphues I know not".³⁶ And this "inviolable league" of perfect friendship is suspiciously contracted right on the spot, expressly against the classical injunction of testing a friend and proving him by time (Euphues does momentarily ponder the point but lets another commonplace, that friends are similar, over-ride it). In all Euphues' florid rhetoric and enumeration of classical commonplaces, there is in fact no mention of the most important one, the virtue of friends. The whole thing is suspiciously like the instant friendships which spring up between fellow tipplers, thus suggesting the Aristotelian "type" of pleasurable friendship (the one especially difficult to distinguish from virtuous friendship and which may develop into it).³⁷ The narrator underlines the moral in due course:

friendship is the iewell of humaine loye; yet whosoever shall see this amitie grounded upon a little affection, will soon conjecture that it shall be dissolved upon a light occasion: as in the sequel of Euphues & Philautus you shall see, whose hot love waxed soone colde.³⁸

With many embracings and protestations Euphues and Philautus go off banqueting (eating "sweet confections") and dancing; and ten pages later, Euphues, under the influence of love,

³⁶The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. Warwick Bond (3 vols; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), I, p. 196.

³⁷See this thesis, p. 9.

³⁸Lyly, p. 199.

is resolving to throw both friendship and virtue out the window.³⁹ A full discussion of the significance of love in the context of friendship properly belongs to the last chapter, but it is worth observing here that it has in this instance its normal significance as the corruptor of virtue and of friendship. Under its malign influence Euphues betrays Philautus, lies to him (giving rise to the narrator's interminable observations that "Muske although it be sweet in the smell, is sower in the smacke" and other such Euphuistic similes of "fair appearance, false reality"--conventional enough where the high expectations of friendship have been disappointed),⁴⁰ and he concludes by propounding a sort of Satanic philosophy of brute power as the justification for every action.⁴¹ The depiction of the collapse of a friendship not based on virtue is meant to be terrible and striking. Love may have been the immediate cause of that collapse and the means of liberating Euphues' vicious tendencies; but the ultimate causes, located in Euphues' defective character and his falsely constituted friendship with Philautus, were present and vaguely apparent from the beginning. Lyly "develops" these causes in a crude sort of way from a point of obscure possibility to a rampant actuality. Such a development is rich in dramatic potential, providing the rough framework of a plot for some future depiction of a tragedy (or tragi-comedy) of friendship. An apparently

³⁹Lyly, I, p. 210.

⁴⁰Lyly, I, p. 214.

⁴¹Lyly, I, P. 236.

virtuous friendship may thus be brought to the test which reveals the vice and disloyalty that was latently present all along. With the abrupt termination of such a friendship tragic emotion may be generated; or the collapse may not be permanent and may form a dramatic episode on the way to a reformation of the friendship on a new and better basis. What was at first falsely assumed (i.e. the reality of virtuous friendship) may be exposed by experience for what it is, and upon that hateful recognition of what was lacking, true friendship may in the end be established. Such a development composes a plot with a beginning, middle, and end, and it is one in which the external complications are given the moral significance that Aristotle requires of them. Here the plot's "middle" is concerned with the experience of evil and its possible consequences of increased awareness and suffering. If the good result of a restored and more truly virtuous friendship arises from such an episodic eruption of evil (as in a sort of brief felix culpa), then the effect of the drama must be to break down the static and theoretical separation of good and evil friendships as prescribed by convention. Good and evil are shown to be intimately involved with one another and difficult to distinguish. But these are future possibilities which Lyly scarcely suggests, except in outline; but he does show Euphues reversing his evil position on love and pleasure, and turning after cruel experience from hedonism to philosophy.⁴² His accompanying rejection of women and adoption of an excessive asceticism may be rather absurd in practice, but they are proffered as signs of reform-

⁴²Lyly, I, p. 241.

ation--proof of the therapeutic value of his experience of lust and disloyalty. This virtuous reformation in turn leads to the reconciliation of Euphues and Philautus on what is presumably a stronger, because more virtuous, basis. Thus the ingredients of tragi-comic plot have been assembled. In point of fact, however, the reconciliation is difficult to take seriously because of Lyly's cold and cursory presentation.

Euphues and His England (1580) contains discussions of two commonplace topics--giving of friendly advice and reconciliation of friends after wrong-doing. The former is another case of how not to do it. Philautus, himself burning with a lust which he has kept secret from his friend, undertakes to chastise Euphues for that very fault (when, moreover, it is clear that Euphues' love is "chaste"). Furthermore, his tone is sharp and hectoring, and his priggish speech ends with a surly take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum. All this masquerades under the pretense of friendship: "in this I have discharged the duetye of a friend, in that I have not winked at thy folly."⁴³ This is specifically what Cicero and Plutarch forbade in the giving of advice. Correction ought first to be just and then administered gently; personal spite has no place in friendship, and especially not under color of virtuous correction. These are commonplaces lengthily developed by Euphues in speeches clotted with Euphuism ("The admonition of a true friend should be like the practise of a wise phisition," and so on).⁴⁴

⁴³The Complete Works of John Lyly, II, p. 94.

⁴⁴Lyly, II, p. 100.

The upshot of Philautus' bad correction is that he totally alienates his friend and fails in his supposed objective of correcting such moral failures as Euphues actually acknowledges in himself. Thus Philautus' special lapse from virtue, his lust, corrupts this necessary office of a friend and leads plausibly to the prescribed rupture of friendship. The bare Aristotelian convention that lack of virtue brings an end to friendship is made more concrete and dramatic by this particular choice of unvirtuous acts.

In The Anatomy of Wyt the friends' reconciliation was accomplished too perfunctorily to carry much weight. The reverse of that is true in Euphues and His England: the intolerable length of the reconciliation renders it otiose. In due course Philautus repents of his lust and his treatment of Euphues, and he sues for a resumption of the former friendship. Thereupon an avalanche of letters descends, and a full discussion of the topic of reconciliation occurs. Philautus acknowledges his wrong-doing, proclaims his reformation, and produces the argument that friendship ought to be capable of withstanding any shock ("it keepeth his old strength & vertue, not to be qualified by any discourtesie", and so on), that, so far from being weakened by a momentary passage of evil,

the rages of friendes, reaping vp all the hidde malices, or suspicions, or follyes that lay lurking in the minde, maketh the knot more durable, . . . the minde as it were scoured of mistrust, becometh fit ever after for beleefe.⁴⁵

This is not quite Syr Friderick's "optimistic" view, but

⁴⁵Lyly, II, p. 143.

it does allow a place for necessary evils and belongs to the "latitudinarian" side of the conception; it also suggests the function of an "evil episode" in a plot leading to eventual reconciliation. In his reply to this, Euphues is, however, all the strict constructionist, and his view represents the opposite "polarity" of the debate. He maintains that friends should never have a falling-out in the first place. They should be by definition perfectly virtuous and loving; if a breach occurs, it is an indication that true friendship never really existed and that there is thus no basis for a reconciliation.⁴⁶ In his replies Philautus continues to expound a flexible and experience-oriented conception, and Euphues continues to press with an all-or-nothing theoretical formulation. In the process Euphuistic similes are wielded like clubs. Philautus likens friendship to the tuned strings of an instrument, "who finding in a discorde, doe not breake them, but either by intention or remission, frame them to a pleasant consort,"⁴⁷ and Euphues refutes Philautus' similes with those of his own, especially the endlessly elaborated one of "fair appearance, false reality." Philautus acquiesces to his friend's lectures and similes, humbly thanks him for his good counsel, but continues with his own similes and arguments. In the end Euphues, "casting in his minde the good he might doe to Philautus by his friendship", agrees to a meeting and then to a reconciliation.⁴⁸ The discussion has had quite a

⁴⁶Lyly, II, p. 146.

⁴⁷Lyly, II, p. 147.

⁴⁸Lyly, II, pp. 152 ff.

priggish moral tone; the rationale for the reconciliation was ostensibly a moral one (Philautus' moral well-being); and the first fruit of the renewed friendship is a series of insufferable harangues by Euphues against his friend's lust. So in the debate about the admissibility of moral lapses in friendship, Euphues' "stern" position would seem to have triumphed. A reconciliation has nevertheless occurred, and the friendship, tested by evil times, has presumably been re-established stronger than it was before. Vice has served its purpose in this process and does not yet appear entirely extirpated from the friends' motives (especially Philautus' continued desire of getting Euphues to forward his cause with the unassailable Camilla).⁴⁹ More significantly, it is impossible to avoid the impression that the true basis of the friendship's restoration has been, not Philautus' supposed reformation and Euphues' evangelistic motives, but the sheer entertainment value for both friends of the shared wit-combat. Their extended discussion of the virtue commonplace, while loud and long, appears slightly beside the point from this perspective, more a matter of bruised egos and brilliant talk than anything else. It is unlikely that Montaigne had anything so studied as Euphues in mind when he praised

une amitié qui se flatte en l'aspreté et vigueur de son commerce, comme l'amour, es morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes.

Elle n'est pas assez vigoureuse et genereuse, si

⁴⁹Lyly, II, p. 147.

elle n'est querelleuse . . .⁵⁰

Yet these qualities, expressed in a somewhat priggish and sophomoric spirit, characterize the real life of friendship as it is presented by Lyly. The classical commonplaces are abundantly honored in Euphues, but they are made to support an almost subversive weight of rhetorical rococo. The love of contentiousness for its own sake was a penchant of mankind not particularly prominent in the classical accounts of friendship; but it gets its due from Lyly, for whom it is inseparably bound to more noble conceptions. If it takes two to quarrel and if both parties take delight in that activity, the possibility of a peculiar type of long-lasting friendship arises—one in which an uncertain state of broken and emended relations is the permanent norm.

Thomas Churchyard's little pamphlet, A Sparke of Friendship and Warne Goodwill (1588), provides an even stranger example of a native variation of a classical theme. It is dedicated to Sir Walter Raleigh as a sort of gift to that noble patron in lieu of those services which the dedicator would prefer to render if, he says, other "creditors" had been as liberal to him as (in the past) Raleigh has:

your selfe 6. years past bestowed good speaches to the Q. Majestie in my behalfe, by the which I got some comfortable recreation, to quicken my spirites & keepe me in breath.⁵¹

Since that time the author claims to have written for "sev-

⁵⁰Montaigne, "De L'Art de Conferer," Essais (3 vols; Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), III, p. 138.

⁵¹Churchyard, A Sparke of Friendship and Warne Goodwill, STC 5257, no pagination.

erall men off good and great credite" some sixteen books "presently to bee bought" and yet received no compensation. Here is an odd mixture of cringing flattery, honest indignation, and practical proposal--to which is added, in due course, noble professions of friendship: "So finding my Muses franke and free from [past patron's] servitude, I addresse this woorke of unfeyned friendshippe to your good consideration". The frienship and admiration professed for Raleigh may be sincere, but desire of patronage is obviously a major consideration. Perhaps in recognition of the apparent disparity between his mercenary motives and noble topic, Churchyard briefly addresses himself to critics who would say that "I show a kind of adulation to fawme for favour on those that are happie." His defense is an appeal to the history of Raleigh's family (always ready to succour the worthy) and to the laws of nature: "the brute beastes that avoydes a sturdie storm, under the savegard of a strong and fluorishing tree." These considerations obviously have nothing to do with classical theory, but they perfectly suit Churchyard's strategy of tailoring the theory to his purposes while retaining its high-flown language. So much of it as is capable of forwarding the relationship between a hungry poet and a noble patron finds its way into print; the rest is conveniently omitted. Perhaps by way of compensation for his suspiciously "utilitarian" motives (and Aristotle's distinction among "types" of friendship is one item omitted), Churchyard's discussion is effusively idealistic and even vaguely religious-sounding. He begins with the usual complaints about the corruption of

modern times and the rarity of friendship (which somehow gets connected with the lack of patriotism), then gets into his stride with the following:

friendship of it selfe is so secrete a mysterie (shrined in an honest hart) that few can describe it, and tel from whence comes the privie and inwarde affection, that sodainly breedes in breast, and is conveyed to the hart, with such a content and gladnesse, that the whole powers of man leapes in the bowelles of the bodie for ioye at that instant.

Thus to hate without cause, and love earnestly without desart, is a matter disputable, and argues plainly, that friendship is (without comparison) the onely true love knot . . .

such a sweete and common consent of fraternall love and liking, that everything is wrested to the best construction, and no one matter may be ministred amisse, the mindes and manners of men, runs so mirrily together, as it were a sorte of pretie chickens, hopping hastely after the cheereful chucking, of a brooding hen.

Here is a sort of sloppy, home-grown English romanticism. His emphasis on "mysterie" does not prevent Churchyard from quoting Tully or citing scraps of theory; but for him the good for which friendship is supposed to exist has little to do with ethical norms. It is rather a sort of vague and sentimental dream-world, consisting of the attribution of all good and perfect and emotionally satisfying qualities, together with a willingness to forget all evil complications or exile them to the corrupt world beyond the borders of the narrow little utopia of friendship. This unphilosophical mysticism is rendered colorful by a native English extravagance of homely metaphors and images. Both here and in the more calculated expressions of Euphuism one observes the English language working its idiosyncratic will with classical theory.

Robert Greene's discussion in Morando (1584) contrasts strongly with those of his fellow university-wits, Churchyard and Lyly; it is as correct, sober, and bland as a master of arts could make it. He touches all the bases--the necessity of virtue, avoidance of flatterers, testing a friend, breaking with a bad friend, and so on--but it is done without much warmth of language or feeling and is accompanied by no fictional examples. It is an odd performance from the man who wrote conny-catching pamphlets and is testimony to the soporific power of the topic when taken literally, even by such a lively writer as Greene. If friends are to be virtuous, then they must be (perhaps the frustrated M.A. in Greene had to believe) the insufferably priggish scholars of humanist tradition. But with his tendency toward a fairly "strict" interpretation of the classical ideas also goes a recognition of the necessary imperfections within friendship:

(mens doings being never w^tout some evil) we must not presume to build such a perfect friendship as shalbe free of all vice. Therefore we must gently beare all wants & discomodities of our friend & oftentimes frame our selves to many passions, so they be not directly, but such as proceede from the imbecillitie and frailty of nature.⁵²

The necessary office of giving advice and correction ought not to be eschewed, but it should be exercised with caution and not upon the authority of "slanderous tongues, which watch for some small and light occasion, to pour out the poyson of discorde, thereby to rent and breake asunder our good and true friendship." And one should also continue

⁵²The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (15 vols; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), III, p. 155.

to defend a friend's honor and to work for his benefit even if some "iarre of displeasure" has temporarily alienated the two from one another. Greene's discussion, irreproachably classical as it is, thus admits some degree of imperfection in friendship and, given its general orthodoxy, is all the better evidence of the increasing importance of the latitudinarian view.

Thomas Lodge in Euphuus Shadow (1592) gives a more emphatic (and, of course, more Euphuistic) expression to the same tendency. One friend almost kills another in a mistaken fury, and yet the injured friend, with incredible magnanimity, offers his ready forgiveness on the grounds that anything is pardonable between friends: "thy Philamis lyveth, and hath forgiven thee: vertue in him hath overcome all thy disgraces, neyther canst thou bee so unkinde as hee is willing to pardon."⁵³ The meaning of virtue is made to consist in one friend's power of pardoning the other; the latter's vices do not seem to matter much. In subsequent speeches Lodge not only makes wrong-doing forgivable but argues its negligibility or even desirableness:

For as many ceaselesse showers, and infinite living springs, as the force of many mediterranean fountains, and the furie of raging rivers, alter not the saltnes of the sea: So neyther destruction of bodyes, alteration of place, or any casualtie of unkindnes, can chaunge hys affections in whom perfect amitie is placed. . . . The Rose is not to be contemned for one canker: the Cambricke, for one staine, the sworde for one flawe: the silke for one fret: neither all friends to be forsaken for one falling out.

⁵³The Works of Thomas Lodge, no editor (4 vols; New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), II, p. 79.

*[We esteem/ our friends as well in theyr faults, as
in theyr Favours. The silkes that have fairest glosse,
soonest loose theyr glory; and best mindes are soon-
est mooved, . . . though unkindnes fall among friends,
yet kindleth it affection.]*⁵⁴

Here again is Plutarch's idea that the most excellent persons are especially prone to corruption; and the language with which it is stated strongly suggests that of certain of Shakespeare's sonnets.⁵⁵ The notion that good and bad are inextricably bound together in a friend's character, that bad may even be lovable in him, that one will suffer any injustice from a friend-- these are attitudes, accompanied by Euphuistic similes, that recur in the sonnets. Good and bad have not become irrelevant terms for Lodge; they are as prominent as ever, but their real significance has begun to pass from the strict realm of objective morality to an increasingly subjective and private sphere. In this it harmonizes with the general tendency in the Renaissance to replace the sharp classical distinction between good and evil with an unpredictable mingling and mutual interaction of the terms.

Sidney's depiction of friendship in the Arcadia (written 1577-85; pub. 1590, 1593) at first seems rather old-fashioned in this respect. Virtue and its cultivation is the dominant theme of the passage which introduces the friendship of Pyrocles

⁵⁴Lodge, II, pp. 82-3.

⁵⁵See this thesis, pp. 86-9. While there is no consensus as to the precise dating of Shakespeare's sonnets, he was probably writing them sometime in the 1590's. The influence between him and Lodge might have gone either way or might not have existed at all, but the parallelism of their language and treatment is at least interesting as indicating that Shakespeare's interpretation of his topic conforms to the general drift of his times.

and Musidorus:

all the sparkes of vertue, which nature had kindled in thē, were so blowne to give forth their uttermost heate that justly it may be affirmed, they enflamed the affections of all that knew thē. For almost before they could perfectly speake, they began to receive cōceits not unworthy of the best speakers; excellent devises being used, to make even their sports profitable; images of battailes, & fortifications being delivered to their memory, which after, their stronger judgemēts might dispens, the delight of tales being coverted to the knowledge of al the stories of worthy princes, both to move them to do nobly; the beauty of vertue being set before their eyes & that taught them with far more diligent care, then Gramatical rules, their bodies exercised in all abilities, both of doing and suffering, & their mindes acquainted by degrees with daungers; & in sum, all bent to the making of princely mindes; no servile feare used towards them, nor any other violent restraint, but stil as to princes: so that a habite of commaunding was naturalized in them, . . .⁵⁶

Here the dictum of virtue is interpreted very much in terms of the humanistic ideal of the education of rulers, recalling early treatments of the topic in The Governour and The Courtyer. This statement, with its Miltonic weight and seriousness, comes precisely at the moment when Sidney undertakes to describe friendship in its full panoply of classical commonplaces. The heroes' laborious education for virtuous action certainly exists as a good in its own right, but it also functions as satisfaction of the commonplace, making possible their friendship. They underwent their educations together, and Musidorus "would teach to Pyrocles; and Pyrocles was so glad to learne of none, as of Musidorus".⁵⁷ Their friendship is at all times characterized by the giving of mutual instruction and mutual incitement to noble action; and each friend is

⁵⁶The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Albert Feuillerat (5 vols; Cambridge: University Press, 1965), I, p. 190.

⁵⁷Sidney, I, p. 190.

very watchful of the other's behavior and ever ready to reprimand him.⁵⁸ This rather austere and bookish construction of the meaning of virtue is, however, challenged in the course of the Arcadia by a more intuitive and flexible one specifically associated with the influence of love. When Pyrocles first falls in love and leaves his active, scholarly pursuit of virtue for a passive dreaming and self-communing, Musidorus upbraids him severely and concludes his corrective tirade with the Aristotelian ultimatum: "purge your selfe of this vile infection; otherwise give me leave, to leave of this name of friendship, as an idle title of a thing which cannot be, where virtue is abolished."⁵⁹ To this stern and unyielding application of the theory, Pyrocles (who had previously proposed a softer construction based upon our "hopes, griefs, longings, & dispaire"--our status as imperfect creatures with limited knowledge and capacity for virtuous action)⁶⁰ replies by the mute gesture of bursting into tears. Here in the most dramatic form yet encountered is another of those confrontations between two polar conceptions of virtue--on the one side, brittle and emotionless argument; on the other, a wordless and vulnerable show of emotion. In this instance it is the latter "view" which conquers. Musidorus falls silent like his friend, and the two gaze lover-like and grief-stricken into one another's eyes "as might well paint out the

⁵⁸Sidney, I, pp. 55, 78.

⁵⁹Sidney, I, p. 82.

⁶⁰Sidney, I, p. 80.

true passion of unkindnes to be never aright, but betwixt them that most dearely love."⁶¹ The upshot of this encounter is that Musidorus gives permission to his friend (even positively instructs him) to go on loving and "being unvirtuous"; the two friends embrace joyfully; Pyrocles confides his whole story to Musidorus; and within a few pages Musidorus is himself suffering from the unvirtuous passion of love. This amounts to more than the mere recognition of the inevitability of human weakness; it subversively suggests that the weakness (love, emotionalism, passive meditation) may comprise a sort of virtue in itself. Such a "wise passiveness" (to use Wordsworth's phrase) is the source of the friends' deepening awareness of human life's dark and inward truths, of the mysterious and elusive beauty of things which their speeches increasingly celebrate.⁶² If this is not precisely humanistic "virtue," it is nevertheless something of value. The "old-fashioned" view stated at the outset of the book is not decisively undercut, it is true; the friends continue to display a variety of active virtues alongside their weaker inclinations, and these two dispositions are not often in a state of mutual hostility. But the friends' pursuit of their loves is responsible for some very suspect actions; they assume the undignified guises of women, prowl stealthily about making love to their ladies, treacherously abscond with them, and at the conclusion of the book are on trial.

⁶¹Sidney, I, p. 83.

⁶²See J. F. Danby, Poets on Fortune's Hill (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), pp. 46-73, for a full discussion of this point.

Sidney's attitude is highly ambiguous; but, while the militantly humanistic ideal stated at the beginning is never actually rejected (and some would argue that the friends' sorry end confirms the prejudice against love), that ideal is revealed to be inadequate to the reality of friendship as it is actually portrayed. That friendship, despite its darker currents, remains strong, lasting, and sympathetic to the reader. Its relation to the abstract requirement of virtue is nearly always problematic, and yet it remains sound. It is able to keep much of its classic dignity and all its human value while sustaining a vital intimacy with the dark, passionate, and possibly evil side of the friends' natures.

In Book IV of The Faerie Queene (1596) virtuous friendship is depicted partly by its absence. As in the manner previously noted (in Damon and Pithias) the cartoon-like antics of a set of very unvirtuous friends provide a certain dramatic interest and at the same time carry an implication of the nature of true friendship. The two bad knights, Blandamour and Paridell, become friendly at the beginning of the book--because of their mutual interest in stealing the ladies of other knights. Meeting Sir Ferragut and the false Florimell, the friends are equally inspired by lust and by an unwillingness to fight. Blandamour attempts to incite Paridell (thus being guilty of giving bad counsel to a friend and of trying to use him for one's own purposes), and when this fails, he himself attacks Sir Ferragut and is successful. His friend Paridell is thereupon not at all happy (as one should be at a friend's success):

His hart with secret envie gan to swell,
And inly grudge at him, that he had sped so well.⁶³

He tries to steal Florimell away from his friend and, aided by Ate (who kindles his lust, persuades him of his own greater worth, his past wrongs, the dictum that friends should hold things in common, and so on), he attacks his friend, and the two begin to fight furiously, "Forgetfull each to have bene ever others frend" (II.xiv). It need hardly be observed, in the light of such a demonstration, that false friendship does not last. It may, however, easily be resumed when there is again a common use for it; and accordingly, when the fighting friends hear about the open tournament for Florimell's girdle, they resolve to co-operate in winning it and assuage their "furious flames of malice":

each to other did his faith engage,
like faithfull friends thenceforth to ioyne in one . . .
(II.xxviii)

The inconsistency and variability of bad friends is still more emphatically demonstrated in a later episode, when Blandamour and Paridell, together with another pair of bad friends, Druon and Claribell, enter into a chaotic series of shifting and dissolving alliances with one another, every friend fighting first with and then against every other one:

two barkes, this carried with the tide,
That with the wind, contrary courses sew,
If wind and tide doe change their courses change anew.
(IX.xxvi)

This is a striking emblem of the capriciousness of bad friends;

⁶³The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), II.vii. Numerals signify canto and stanza number of The Faerie Queene, Bk. IV.

the "mortall malice" and fury of their fighting, where, moments before, they were fast friends, suggests another commonplace: "Faint friends when they fall out, most cruell fomen bee" (IX.xxvii). The positive implication of these bad events is Aristotle's dictum that true friendship, based on the unchanging fundamentals of character, ought never to change or come to an end; and if it should do so, because of a failure of virtue in one of the parties, the estrangement should come slowly and leave behind no residue of hatred.⁶⁴

This much is familiar and conventional. More interesting is Spenser's depiction of the principal good friendship between Cambell and Telamond.¹ Here there is no question of either friend lacking virtue, and yet their virtue seems oddly irrelevant as a basis for friendship. The Triamond-Diamond-Triamond brothers originally meet Cambell in a fierce battle, and two of the brothers are killed (their souls returning to the remaining brother, Triamond); thus the future friends begin as the deadliest of enemies. Even so, they are virtuous, the brothers fighting honorably for the love of Canacee, Cambell honorably defending her desire of virginity. The fight is laid out as a tournament conducted according to perfectly equitable and chivalric rules, and virtuously devised so as to prevent the evil of a general disorder; everything is decorous and no one is at fault. Yet there follows a lengthy and horrendous battle (its havoc-filled description exaggerated even by Spenser's standards) interrupted only by the mirac-

⁶⁴See this thesis, p. 10.

ulous intervention of the mysterious personage, Cambina, bearing her magical drink of Nepenthe. But even her fantastical appearance is insufficient to put an end to the fighting; the antagonists politely salute her and turn back to their combat, ceasing only when "She smote them lightly with her powerfull wand" (III.xlvii). Without any choice in the matter they are made to drink of the Nepenthe:

Devized by the Gods, for to asswage
Harts grief, and bitter gall away to chace,
Which stirs up anguish and contentious rage;
In stead thereof sweet peace and quiet age
It doth establish in the troubled mynd. (III.xlviii)

The gods assign this drink to whom they may, though to "Few men, but such as sober are and sage" (a concession to the classical requirement); and later these are "advaniced to the skie" and thus become semi-divine. So friendship comes to men as a literal Deus ex Machina and is the cause of their one day reaching godly status themselves; it is a gift made to them without any regard for their conscious human will, and (in the case of Cambell and Triamond) even against that will. It is symbolically right that they should one day cease to be men, the ultimate acknowledgment that human virtue had little to do with their achievement. In a sort of swoon the foes drink and awake friends:

Instead of strokes, each other kissed glad,
And lovely haulst from feare of treason free,
And plighted hands for ever friends to be. (III.xlix)

This is the substance of romance and fairy-tale, not ethical discourse. In fact the swiftness and causelessness of the great reversal comes dangerously near to that capricious

variableness characteristic of the bad friends. But we must understand Spenser's specific allegorical intention here. He is not concerned with the virtue commonplace (which is largely taken for granted or consigned to the cautionary depiction of bad friends) but with the grand metaphysical problem of harmony and disharmony in the universe. Book IV reverberates to a constant dialectical interplay of order-disorder, quarrel-reconciliation, hate-love, occurring between virtually every pair of friends or lovers. The vicissitudes of friendship are not restricted to the bad:

[Sclaunder's] nature is all goodness to abuse,
 And causelesse crimes continually to frame,
 With which she guiltlesse persons may accuse,
 And steale away the crowne of their good name;
 Ne ever knight so bold, ne ever Dame
 So chast and loyall liv'd, but she would strive
 With forged cause them falsely to defame
 Ne ever thing so well was doen alive,
 But she with blame would blot, and of due praise deprive.
 (VIII.xxv)

Pain and disorder in human relationships are caused not only by horrendous figures like Ate, Sclaunder, Care, and Corflambo; they reside in the breasts of all friends and lovers and are inextricably bound to all friendly affections. Thomas P. Roche points out that the legend of Cambell and Telamond (the name itself may be construed as "perfect world") is concerned with "the miracle of perfect amity and concord achieved between enemies"; it is essentially a statement of the metaphysical doctrine of discordia concors--discord conceived as the inseparable companion and source of concord.⁶⁵ He observes

⁶⁵Roche, The Kindly Flame (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 17.

that even Cambina's chariot is drawn by two grim lions, wild beasts unpeaceful by nature who have been tamed to "forget their former cruell mood" and have literally become the bearers of peace. Whatever else the figure of Cambina may signify,

She means the bond of friendship wrought from discord.
She means the universal bond of harmony that sustained the world in which Spenser lived. She means the metaphysical mystery of love evolved from hate⁶⁶

This mysterious interpenetration of love and hate, good and evil, clearly has a kinship with the "unclassical" tendencies of Lodge and Sidney--their similarly mystical blurring and inter-connecting of good and evil. They, too, were pushing the conception away from simple ethical conduct and toward a more contemplative realm. This was also Churchyard's tendency, though without any specific recognition of the place of evil. With Spenser's extension of friendship to the realm of cosmic harmony, it was inevitable that simple ethical virtue should be still further de-emphasized; ethics exists on a plane remote from the "metaphysical mystery" with which Spenser is truly concerned. He does not explicitly denigrate it, however, and actually confirms it resoundingly immediately following the Cambina episode. Although all friendships partake of metaphysical vicissitude,

enmitie, that of no ill proceeds,
But of occasion, with th' occasion ends;
And friendship, which a faint affection breeds
Without regard of good, dyes like ill grounded seeds.
(IIIII.i)

That is, one has first of all to be good in order to receive

⁶⁶Roche, p. 27.

the gift of Nepenthe; but this is only an afterthought so far as the main allegorical episode is concerned, a deferential bow to classical formulas which have been rather beside the point in practice. The tale's message has been that, so far as one is an active seeker of friendship (rather than a passive contemplator of its cosmic effects) he is helpless against the tide of the disastrous or marvelous or simply absurd "occasions" of the universe. Perhaps it is no accident that the tale is a completion of Chaucer's unfinished "Squire's Tale" and that Spenser begins it with an invocation of "Dan Chaucer"; for the squire's father had told a similar, though far bleaker, tale of the frustration of two virtuous friends in a world ruled by the will of the gods.

It cannot really be said that Christopher Marlowe's conception of virtue is either "contemplative" or "metaphysical," but it is certainly subjective. Marlowe's handling of the dictum of virtue is like that of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries in that, while he departs radically from the conventional ethical norm, he reveals a knowledge of the classical position and a strong commitment to the relationship itself.⁶⁷ In the early scenes of Tamburlaine, Part I (c. 1587) a strong connection is made between friendship and virtue, though both terms are conceived rather idiosyncratically. Tamburlaine repeatedly refers to his political allies,

⁶⁷According to Paul H. Kocher, "The Aristotelian virtue of friendship . . . was one of his few real enthusiasms within the limits of orthodox principle. He developed the various friendships of Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Edward beyond anything required by his sources, and gave them a warmth greater than he gave to love or to any other relationship." Christopher Marlowe (New York: Russell & Russell, 1946), p. 46.

Techelles, Usumcasane, Theridamas, and Cosroe, as his friends.⁶⁸ These references are accompanied by displays of friendly affection and scraps of the rhetoric of friendship. Yet the utilitarian nature of these relationships is also evident; they exist unabashedly for the sake of helping Tamburlaine secure power, goods, and kingdoms:

For they are friends that help to wean my state,
Till men and kingdoms help to strengthen it, . . .
(I.ii.29-30)

Forsake thy king and do but join with me,
And we will triumph over all the world. (I.ii.171-2)

But Tamburlaine persistently proclaims his virtuous and classical intentions of sharing this wealth with his friends, and often his language is as nobly disinterested as Cicero himself could have wished it:

Theridamas, my friend, take here my hand--
Which is as much as if I swore by heaven
And called the gods to witness of my vow.
Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine,
Until our bodies turn to elements,
And both our souls aspire celestial thrones. . . .
These are my friends in whom I more rejoice
Than doth the king of Persia in his crown;
And by the love of Pylades and Orestes,
Whose statues we adore in Scythia,
Thyself and them shall never part from me
Before I crown you kings in Asia. (I.ii.231-45)

In the world of the play the traditional ideal-material duality, upon which the corresponding distinction between useful and virtuous friends depends, has little meaning. The second part of the speech above may begin "idealistically" by valuing friendship above a crown and by citing a famous example of

⁶⁸ E.g., in I.ii.29, 60, 213, 226; II.iii.43; II.v.67, 90; etc. The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1963). All references are to act, scene, and line number of this edition.

virtuous friendship; but it brazenly concludes with an affirmation of that very crown as friendship's goal and end. This vision of friends sharing the sweet fruition of an earthly crown in turn echoes and parallels the highly spiritualized vision of a few lines previously ("both our souls aspire celestial thrones"). Clearly no real distinction exists between being kings in Asia and sitting on celestial thrones; the latter image is perhaps a little richer in spiritualized rhetoric as the former is in material splendor, but each reflects its gleam upon the other. The hero glances first at earth and then at heaven, but in either case his gaze is filled with conquest. And in either case his vision requires the presence of friends, whether it be for the sake of mundane utility or spiritual fulfilment. This work's notion of virtue is bound to the upward motion of both the soul and the body--the speculative thrust of the imagination and physical acquisition of power and its trappings. Marlowe's general conception of "virtue" is well-known; but it has not been remarked that several typical and famous passages which expound it occur in the context of Tamburlaine's wooing of friends. That situation is especially telling because it inevitably brings up (even for so unorthodox a humanist as Marlowe) the commonplace that a friend is chosen on the basis of virtue. The necessity would obviously be to persuade these potential friends that one does indeed satisfy the theoretical requirement. Thus the famous passage beginning "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains" (one of Tamburlaine's

proudest assertions of his virtue or virtus--power, manliness) is elicited from an attempt to win Theridamas, an enemy, over to friendship with him. This "invitation to friendship" is at once a practical proposal, a gratuitous vaunt, and a satisfaction of friendship's demand for virtue. The speech concludes:

Join with me now in this my mean estate--
 I call it mean because, being yet obscure,
 The nations far removed admire me not--
 And when my name and honor shall be spread
 As far as Boreas claps his brazen wings,
 Or fair Bootes sends his cheerful light,
 Then shalt thou be competitor with me,
 And sit with Tamburlaine in all his majesty. (I.ii.201-8)

The classical commonplace that virtue need not be accompanied by wealth is suggested at the outset (where Tamburlaine is speaking of that quality in himself which is prior to wealth--native worth) but rapidly gives way before Tamburlaine's baroque vision of the material splendor which his native worth is sure to obtain for him and his friends. Theridamas capitulates before the powerful vision, giving the classical rationale that so much "worth" could not be resisted (II.iii.25-32). Another famous speech expressing Tamburlaine's conviction of his worth concludes with a reference to that quality as the basis of friendship; beginning with "Nature, that framed us of four elements," it proceeds through a dizzily Platonic statement of the soul's yearning for heavenly knowledge and ends characteristically in "The sweet fruition of an earthly crown" (II.vii.18-29).

Theridamas. And that made me to join with Tamburlaine,
 For he is gross and like the massy earth

That moves not upward, nor by princely deeds
 Doth mean to soar above the highest sort.
Techelles. And that made us, the friends of Tamburlaine,
 To lift our swords against the Persian king.
 (II.vii.30-35)

The conversion of Cosroe to Tamburlaine's party is also accompanied by a long set speech praising the hero's physical stature, nobility of mind, and heaven-storming ambition (II.ii). In all these cases Marlowe is, however perversely, honoring the classical requirement that friendship should be based on virtue. It is a measure of how flexible and open to interpretation that requirement has become just at the moment when Shakespeare was either writing or about to write his sonnets. Other authors had undermined or modified the meaning of virtue in the context of friendship; Marlowe brazenly interprets it by such qualities as Cicero would have considered positive vices. If a bizarre but highly charged rhetoric of earthly conquest and dizzy heavenward ascent, coupled with outrageously cruel and bloody deeds, could serve Marlowe as that "virtue" for which friendship exists, then some eccentricities in that regard should not startle us in the work of Marlowe's equally poetic fellow-dramatist.

The friendship of Barabas and Ithamore in The Jew of Malta (c. 1591) resembles those cautionary parodies previously described. It is explicitly formed on the basis of a common devotion to evil, first Barabas and then Ithamore citing long catalogues of their macabre misdeeds (as if performing the classically prescribed test of one another's "virtues");

Barabas. As for myself, I walk abroad 'a nights
 And kill sick people groaning under walls.
 Sometimes I go about and poison wells, . . . /etc.7

But tell me now, how hast thou spent thy time?
Ithamore. Faith, master,
 In setting Christian villages on fire,
 Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley slaves.
 One time I was an hostler in the inn,
 And in the night time secretly would I steal
 To travelers' chambers and there cut their throats. . . .
Barabas. Why this is something. Make account of me
 As of thy fellow; we are villains both.
 Both circumcised, we hate Christians both.
 Be true and secret; thou shalt want no gold.
 (II.iii.171ff.)

This grotesque union is brought about not only by the friends' "idealistic" villainy but by utilitarian considerations ("thou shalt want no gold"). As in other such comically bad friendships there are extravagant assertions of loyalty and affection (III.iv.14-17, 35-42, 57, 104) alternating with asides revealing the friends' true motives; "Thus every villain ambles after wealth" (50); "I'll pay thee with a vengeance, Ithamore" (112). The burlesque reaches its height of absurdity when Ithamore, forestalling his friend's plan of double-crossing him, turns the tables on Barabas and begins to blackmail him. This is Barabas' response:

'Tis not five hundred crowns that I esteem.
 I am not moved at that. This angers me,
 That he who knows I love him as myself
 Should write in this imperious vein. . . .
 O, love stops my breath.
 Never loved man servant as I do Ithamore. (IV.v.40-53)

Part of the parody's effect comes from one's recognizing the classical background; but this depiction of a bad friendship does not readily suggest (as in other such works it does) the "norm" of virtuous friendship. No "straight" example of friendship is given, and no one within the world of the play appears to possess much capacity for true friendship. Far from being the norm, friendship no longer even seems possible.

Previous authors have been seen to complain of the rarity of present-day friendship (to the point that it has become a sort of commonplace in its own right), but they nevertheless produced positive examples of it and exhortations urging their readers toward it. In The Jew of Malta the pessimistic strain of thought is expressed without qualification, evoking the classical ideal only by its sardonic perversion of every commonplace dear to it. In the world of the play that ideal is no more than a bad joke.

Edward II (c. 1592) is, as L. J. Mills has demonstrated, a tragedy of friendship in which classical ideas are the implicit and sometimes consciously cited norm.⁶⁹ Because of his deeply flawed character, his circumstances, and the contradictions within the theory of friendship itself, Edward is able to realize only certain parts of the norm. Tragedy arises when the omissions, attributable to ordinary human frailty and to the harsh nature of things, undermine what is sympathetic and noble in Edward's friendships. The principal defect in these friendships lies in the area of virtue; even so, Marlowe has moderated the harshness of his sources so as to preserve a measure of sympathy and nobility for his characters. Gaveston, for example, is not so mercenary or vicious in the play as in Marlowe's immediate source-material.⁷⁰ Although Gaveston does express pleasure at having titles and properties conferred upon him by his friend, these things do

⁶⁹Mills, "The Meaning of 'Edward II'," Modern Philology, XXXII (1934), pp. 11-31.

⁷⁰Mills, p. 14.

not figure largely in his speeches, and he even protests that they exceed his worth:

It shall suffice me to enjoy your love,
Which whiles I have, I think myself as great
As Caesar riding in the Roman street,
With captive kings at his triumphant car. (I.i.171-74)

The valuation of friendship above material goods is, of course, one of the commonplaces of virtuous friendship; and so too is the desire to confer such benefits upon a friend. The impulses of both friends seem genuine; for Edward sacrifices much, indeed everything, for his friend, and Gaveston never shows anything less than loyalty and affection for Edward. Gaveston's principal defects are his flippancy to the nobles and his egging-on of Edward to insult them (e.g. I.i.175-207); and, while his affection for Edward is relatively free of utilitarian motives, it exists very much for the sake of pleasure (that other inferior Aristotelian "type"). In the first speech of the play Gaveston, reading Edward's summons of him, exclaims:

Ah, words that make me surfeit with delight!
What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston
Than live and be the favorite of a king? (I.i.3-5)

Some lines later comes that perverse baroque description of projected courtly revels:

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
Musicians, that with touching of a string
May draw the pliant king which way I please.
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;
And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad.
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,
Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay. /etc/
(I.i.51ff.)

This is very much the character of the flatterer, the more so as it comes immediately following Gaveston's rejection (though not without giving them false hope) of three "poor men" who beseech him to forward their worthy causes. Gaveston does not care to do so ("These are not men for me") but desires rather to construct a perverse and exquisite paradise of pleasure in which to drown himself and his friends; a distinction between good and bad uses of friendship is clearly implied. This is, however, the flatterer's occupation carried to the point of a certain visionary magnificence. Edward, on the other hand, must bear considerable responsibility for allowing the friendship with Gaveston to destroy his capacity of governing--a Renaissance virtue of more importance than personal friendship. Edward's situation is reminiscent of that of the king in Damon and Pithias whose powers of statecraft have been corrupted by his attachment to flatterers and pleasure-seekers. The theme is an old one, first adumbrated in the context of friendship theory proper when Cicero cautions that loyalty to the state is to come before loyalty to a friend; and of course the formidable Mirror for Magistrates tradition lends its weight to the supreme importance of good kingship. In "virtuously" sacrificing everything for his friend (as prescribed by classical theory)⁷¹ Edward is guilty of most unvirtuously misruling his kingdom and precipitating that greatest of Elizabethan evils, civil war. These deficiencies, then, are evident in Edward's friendship, and

⁷¹See next chapter.

they produce their tragic consequences. But the play's effect is more pathetic than homiletic; if classical ideals have been partly broken by Edward and Gaveston, they have also been partly observed. Once again it is difficult to conclude that the "norm" is capable of ever being fully and untragically realized. The ideals may continue in a purely conceptual realm, but only to serve as remote commentary on the imperfect and unclassical relationships of real men. Fictional characters may violate parts of the theory, may be judged accordingly, and yet remain sympathetic in their attempt to secure such a portion of the noble ideals as is humanly possible. In the anarchic and valueless political world of Edward II Edward's flawed love of even such a dubious character as Gaveston carries some intimations of classical nobility.

Shakespeare's sonnets do not expound classical theory or deal with its complications quite so explicitly as do most of the works just examined. This is in keeping with their nature as brief lyrical utterances and with Shakespeare's general tendency to eschew abstract statements. It is also quite consonant with the development of the virtue commonplace in the latter part of the Elizabethan period into regions more subjective, romanticized, and remote from simple ethical norms. By the time Shakespeare was writing his sonnets, the commonplace had become an inevitable component of depictions of friendship (whether in theory or fiction), but it had also become open to great latitude of interpretation. It did not

require an explicit statement (at least in literature, such as the sonnets, addressed to an audience or individual with a more or less humanistic education); it formed an understood background, a sort of cantus firmus awaiting local variations from the pen of each author who undertook a treatment of the theme. The poet of the sonnets (so the speaker shall be called, with no necessary inference of Shakespeare the man) deals with the general theme of virtue and/or its absence in himself and his friend (so the youth of sonnets 1-126 shall be called) and with some of the aspects of that theme defined by previous authors--flattery, slander, constancy, bad reputation, forgiveness and reconciliation, appearance and reality, and friendship as opposed to materialistic values. To consider the sonnets from the point of view of these and other topics from friendship literature is, of course, to give a somewhat inflated view of their over-all importance. Stephen Booth has recently demonstrated the necessity of taking into account all the overlapping "patterns" (themes, sources, syntax, logic, rhyme scheme, rhetorical and phonetic patterns, etc.) which function in a sonnet before arriving at a full reading of any single one.⁷² This study does not pretend to any such critical finality; it aims only to restore to the general critical stock one of those patterns which has been heretofore neglected--the sonnets' treatment of commonplaces from friendship literature. In noting these we need not deny the presence of

⁷²Booth, An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

other and perhaps more significant concerns; in considering, for example, the poet's reaction to his friend's misconduct and treachery from the point of view of the classical demand for virtue, we need not deny its plain emotional rightness, nor its possible biographical origin, nor its formal purpose of providing conflict and tension within a given poem, and so on. These and a good many other "patterns" are clearly operative but are not the concern of the present study and must be largely ignored.

The sonnets contain almost no precise description of the friend's habits or appearance (dress, stature, features, mannerisms, and so on), but they never cease to sing the generalized splendor of his beauty. It is possible to understand this strictly in the light of Petrarchan sonnet conventions, in which the beauty of the beloved person is given a vaguely Platonic significance and functions as a sort of "objective correlative" for the poet's idealized emotion.⁷³ W. H. Auden has spoken of this sort of beauty as carrying "the notion of moral goodness" and as the source of the "visionary" (as opposed to the merely sexual) experience of love. In Plato, Dante, and Shakespeare "the love inspired by a created human being [is] intended to lead the lover towards the source of all beauty."⁷⁴ G. Wilson Knight emphasizes the visual and "Appollonian" nature of Shake-

⁷³ See Northrop Frye, Edward Hubler, Leslie Fiedler, et. al., The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 25-27.

⁷⁴ Shakespeare, The Sonnets, intro. W. H. Auden (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. xxxii.

spere's conception of the friend: "it is light, has intellectual clarity, is a vision of shapes and figures, . . . is sane, moral, political, and of the conscious mind", as opposed to the "Dionysian" (with which, however, it eventually achieves a kind of integration).⁷⁵ Shakespeare's description of his friend's beauty is seen by these and most other critics as carrying some sort of moral or ideal significance, as being, that is, more than the celebration of a simple physical or sensuous quality. This is not at all uncommon, as has been observed, in the Petrarchan and courtly love tradition, no doubt operative here and superimposed (partly because of the impossibility of ignoring the precedent of Petrarch in the genre invented by him) upon the typical concerns of friendship. But viewing the idealized description of the friend's beauty strictly from the latter perspective, it emerges as Shakespeare's particular construction of the meaning of virtue (even if it is simultaneously his homage to Petrarchan traditions). It was observed earlier that Plato's description of love and friendship involves a conflation of the qualities of beauty and virtue, and a removal of the beloved object to a visionary realm. We need not maintain that Shakespeare had any direct knowledge of Plato or even of such Renaissance neo-Platonists as Ficino (in whose writings friendship is similarly described).⁷⁶

⁷⁵Knight, The Mutual Flame (London: Methuen & Co., 1955), p. 26.

⁷⁶Paul Kristeller, The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, tr. Virginia Conant (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp. 256-289.

Shakespeare's particular construction of virtue in friendship has, at any rate, much in common with that heretical one of Plato's (altogether ignored, as we have seen, in the specific context of friendship literature), though his specific sources may be Petrarch, Spenser, or more obscure and general intellectual currents of his day. The fact that, with the exception of Ficino and a few others, these ideas were ordinarily attached to love for a woman rather than to friendship with a man does not alter the fact that Shakespeare used them in the sonnets exclusively in the latter context. It is from such a perspective that they acquire the significance (one perhaps hardly recognized by Shakespeare himself as "Platonic" and only then in the most imprecise way) of being a Platonic construction of friendship's conventional requirement of virtue.

Shakespeare's "Platonism" is often hardly more than the occasion for a graceful compliment of his friend:

Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
 Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
 They were but sweet, but figures of delight
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seem'd it winter still; and, you away,
 As with your shadow I with these did play. (98)

Two companion sonnets (97 and 99) ring changes on this theme of nature's beauty being "stol'n from thee" (99), the source of all merely natural beauty. Sonnet 18 proclaims the friend more perfect and unchanging than nature. Sonnets 67 and 68 chastise attempts to imitate his beauty by artificial means ("Why should poor beauty indirectly seek / Roses of shadow since his rose is true?"). Sonnets 59 and 106 claim

that the perfect descriptions of beauty in olden times were only an inadequate "prefiguring" of "such a beauty as you master now". These and other sonnets express what J. B. Leishman has called "un-Platonic hyperbole;" that is, though the poet's language and thought is Platonic-sounding, his final ontological goal is not, as with Plato, a pure noumenal region beyond all material forms but rather the beauty of a living person.⁷⁷ And yet this is only to say that the friend is described as if he were the immaterial ideal of Plato. Such a conception agrees completely with the non-specific terms of the poet's description; it is appropriate for his nature as a Platonic ideal enveloped by the mystic splendor of noumenal distances. Part of that mystery in turn comes from the fact that he is, for all the ideal quality of his nature, also human. Sonnet 53 is the most famous instance of such a description:

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
 That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
 Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
 And you, but one, can every shadow lend:
 Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
 Is poorly imitated after you;
 On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
 And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
 Speak of the spring and foison of the year,--
 The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
 The other as your bounty doth appear;
 And you in every blessed shape we know:
 In all external grace you have some part,
 But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

This tone of awe characterizes many of those sonnets in which the poet struggles to describe a beauty defying human comparison and yet suggesting it. Here the figures of a mythical beauty and a god, a male and a female, come together

⁷⁷Leishman, Themes and Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1961), pp. 149-177.

in the similes describing the friend's nature and blur any merely human image of him. Knight sees it as an instance of Shakespeare's "bi-sexual integration" of male and female beauty, and others have not been wanting to suggest a confused eroticism inherent in the confused similes.⁷⁸ From the standpoint of Platonic friendship these similes express the ideal nature of the friend's beauty, which transcends the bounds of male and female, god and man, past and present, real and literary figures. The male-female conflation in particular (also described, humorously and rather vulgarly, in the much nodded-over sonnet 20) is after all only a conceit or bit of "hyperbole." Yet it and the other contradictory similes are perfectly consonant with the mysterious and paradoxical nature of the friend (his "substance"), which is the sonnet's subject. "Shade" and "Shadow" are resonant words here; they have a Platonic significance as "images" of being ("substance" in its strict philosophical sense) and even directly suggest the literal shadows of Plato's parable of the Cave.⁷⁹ Even without such a precise philosophical construction of the terms, the friend is represented as a mysterious being of strange substance cloaked in shadows of his own making. Since he is often likened to the sun there is even some suggestion of God's paradoxical nature as traditionally described (e.g. Milton's "Dark with excessive light thy skirts appear"). The friend is similarly the

⁷⁸Knight, p. 35; Booth, pp. 103-104.

⁷⁹Plato, The Republic, bk. vii.

brilliant and unapproachable source of all earthly shades (in both senses of that term), his own nature being enveloped and concealed by the profusion of his creations--male and female, past and present, human and natural, spring and fall ("In all external grace you have some part"). And following the enumeration of these fantastic manifestations of his beauty comes the prosaic human virtue of constancy of heart. One may feel that, after the Platonic splendors of the first eleven lines, this homely compliment is rather inadequate as a conclusion. Does the friend's cosmic plenitude have anything to do with his observing conventional ethical virtues? His visionary beauty is really his fulfilment of the commonplace dictum. However, as with Plato,⁸⁰ Shakespeare's visionary conception nevertheless provides for good actions of a more or less conventional type. A connection between these two "types" of virtue (one of which might be called "metaphysical" and the other "ethical") is persistently made in the sonnets, though it is not always very convincing, especially when stated baldly and unproblematically (e.g. sonnets 20 and 105). In the present case it has a certain force from the fact that the paradox of such a mysterious and remote being exhibiting simple human loyalty fits the general pattern of paradox in the sonnet. Yet some disproportion remains; the existence of such a visionary being in the ordinary world of moral action is improbable as well as paradoxical. The "ethical" side

⁸⁰See this thesis, p. 8.

of the virtue requirement becomes more important in those numerous sonnets where the friend (or the poet) frankly reveal their moral weaknesses. The poet's effort to maintain his vision and yet come to terms with these ethical breaches comprises one of the principal sources of conflict within the sonnets, giving them a certain dramatic and narrative dimension in addition to their essential lyricism. It includes, among other things, a confrontation between the two contradictory constructions of the meaning of virtue.

W. H. Auden has not been alone in stating that the sonnets tell the story of "an agonized struggle by Shakespeare to preserve the glory of the vision he had been granted in a relationship . . . with a person who seemed intent by his actions upon covering the vision with dirt."⁸¹ These actions are on the whole rather vaguely indicated, though they do not have any less dramatic reality for that fact; the very indeterminacy of the description endows them with suggestions of radical evil. Aside from the manner of their description, the friend's sins inevitably acquire a "metaphysical" significance from the fact that they proceed from such a being; they raise questions of the status of evil in the general scheme of things. But the sonnets also contain, in addition to these more abstruse considerations, the discussion of at least one plain ethical commonplace from conventional friendship theory--viz. the susceptibility of a noble youth to flattery and the necessity of plain-speaking on the part of

⁸¹Auden, p. xxxiii.

a true friend. This traditional theme is compounded in the sonnets by the fact that the poet, whether or not he is really in the position of writer vis a vis patron (the subject of another study), is patently engaged in the writing of complimentary and celebratory poems. By their very existence the sonnets suggest the topic of flattery, which in a theoretical discussion or impersonal fiction would arise only from logic or from circumstances. Here the writing itself at every moment raises the question and does so (another anomaly) to the potential disadvantage of the writer, the more so as it appears that at least some of these praises were meant for direct perusal by the person with whom they are concerned. Under such conditions it is little wonder that the poet so repeatedly and self-consciously strives to clear himself from any imputation of flattery, most often within those very sonnets whose main function is praise, by professions of artlessness, plain-spokenness, and sincerity. Only once, however, does such a motive carry him so far as to reject the terms of his usual Platonic (or "un-Platonic") hyperbole. In sonnet 21 he states that he dares not compare his friend to the beauties of nature:

Oh, let me true in love but truly write,
 And then believe me my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air;
 Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
 I will not praise that purpose not to sell.

This brief moment of heresy is, however, very far from the poet's later rather brutal debunking of his mistress' beauty (even brutally playful 130, "My mistress' eyes are

nothing like the sun") and is prompted, as the latter is not, in good part by his own fear of compromising friendship's requirement of plain-spokenness. Sonnet 23 more typically refrains from any demystifying of the friend's beauty and merely paints a vignette of the poet's thunderstruck silence in the presence of his friend, excusing that state as the product of his strong and sincere feelings ("O'er-charg'd with burthen of mine own love's might"). The distinction between sincerity and volubleness is one that recurs again and again, not only with respect to physical muteness but also the poet's supposed failures of poetic fluency; the latter is either proudly claimed as the manifestation of his sincerity or, at the least, apologetically excused as the natural fault of sincerity. It appears that whenever that issue is at stake there must be either strong words and weak feeling or weak words and strong feeling (though in other contexts these alternatives are conveniently overlooked, as when verse is proudly advocated as the immortal opponent of time and age).

The friend, for his part, conforms to the Plutarchan pattern of the noble youth attacked by and susceptible to the arts of flattery; he seems always on the verge of renouncing his plain-spoken and inarticulate friend in favor of one with mighty words but suspect motives. In sonnet 82 the friend is given leave ("I grant thou wert not married to my Muse") to court this rival's meretricious praises--his "fresher stamp of the time-bettering days" (the phrase car-

rying suggestions of artifice and opportunism), his "strained touches rhetoric can lend", and his "gross painting" with debased words. Despite the poet's sardonic acquiescence, the friend's desire of receiving such false praises (as opposed to the "true plain words by thy true-telling friend") implies a pretty severe criticism of him. So too does sonnet 85, in which the poet bluntly states: "I think good thoughts whilst others write good words". The friend's failure to make that distinction and his "respect" for "the breath of words" argues his vanity and folly. In sonnet 83 the poet's dumbness is excused on the ground that the friend requires no such extravagant praises as are given to him by certain "others":

For I impair not beauty, being mute,
When others would give life and bring a tomb.

This seems as much a moral as an esthetic judgment, arguing not only the artistic failure of florid rhetoric but its essential coldness and insincerity. Sonnet 84 belongs to a series (including 38, 76, 78-80, 102, 103) in which it is correlatively argued that the friend's innate worth is sufficient in itself to endow the poems in his praise, however deficient in verbal brilliance, with value and beauty. This conceit is also obviously connected with the general Platonism surrounding the friend's nature, with the sonnets in his praise being in the place of the "shadows" or images attributed elsewhere to his beneficent influence. Here it appears in the context of plain-spokenness, though carrying such complimentary Platonic suggestions:

But he that writes of you, if he can tell
 That you are you, so dignifies his story;
 Let him but copy what in you is writ,
 Not making worse what nature made so clear,
 And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
 Making his style admired everywhere.

The poet manages to make the best of all possibilities, simultaneously excusing his plainness of speech (and thereby gaining credit for sincerity) and turning a pretty compliment. All this does not exclude an implied criticism of the friend's vanity and penchant for flattery; and it should be remembered that Plutarch himself recommended a mingling of praise with blame when administering correction to a sensitive and noble youth. The sonnet concludes acerbically:

You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
 Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.

Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of flattery is relatively conventional; he attempts to exonerate himself of it, and he blames his friend for susceptibility to it. The other components of his friend's misconduct are rather more vague and indeterminate. The vagueness is not only in the presentation but, often enough, in the poet's own mind; he often appears as uncertain of the reality of his friend's guilt as the reader is of its precise nature. In sonnet 70 he simply refuses to believe, as Cicero had advised, the slanderous reports of others:

That thou art blam'd shall not be thy defect,
 For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
 The ornament of beauty is suspect--
 A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.

Here the poet's confidence in his friend is apparently complete; the bad reports are dismissed as so many blots on "a pure un-

stained prime". One line, however, is ambiguous and appears in other sonnets as a patent image of corruption: "canker vice the sweetest buds doth love". Is that sweet bud touched by the reality of vice or only its rumor? In the companion sonnet 69 the reports of others are not dismissed as mere slander; these persons praise the friend for his external beauty ("Thine outward thus with outward praise is crown'd"), but then

They look into the beauty of thy mind,
 And that, in guess, they measure by thy deeds;
 Then, churls, their thoughts, although their eyes were kind,
 To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds.
 But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
 The soil is this--that thou dost common grow.

By calling the critics "churls" the poet would appear to indicate disapproval of them, and yet he does not bother to refute their perception of his friend's ill deeds and corrupted mind. Here the previous sonnet's "canker" is not an external enemy but an internal reality of the friend's beauty, and the world's opinion, churlish though it may be, is apparently correct. The sonnet's images keep these ill deeds non-specific; they exist as an abstract element in the poet's speculations on the general issues of fair appearance and false reality, beauty and corruption, truth and opinion. It is hard to say what the accusation "that thou dost common grow" might mean; it might refer to bad companions or vulgar habits, or it might simply complete the metaphor of the beautiful flower with weed-like smell. To be sure, the metaphor implies a real action, but one that, by remaining vague and generalized, gains a more ominous significance. The reader

is encouraged to wonder at and dread the corruption of a beautiful being rather than weigh his prosaic offences.

The poet's speculative uncertainty as between the external and internal, eye and heart, truth and beauty, harmonizes with the shadowy and unspecified nature of the friend's ill deeds. The poet is uncertain as to whether his friend is guilty, and we are uncertain as to what he might be guilty of.⁸² Sonnet 24 elaborates a complicated distinction between eye and heart for what at first appears to be complimentary purposes, but it concludes with a quite gratuitous application of that distinction:

Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art,--
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

This suggests that the friend's heart does not tally with his outward appearance, and it reveals the poet's typical uncertainty; for he "knows not the heart" and cannot arrive at any firm determination. The original mood of celebration has thus rapidly deteriorated into one of doubt and mute accusation by the agency of a conceit suggesting the always ominous distinction between the friend's beautiful exterior and his unknown interior. Sonnet 46, which begins "Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war", is also largely complimentary and, though it ends more positively than sonnet 24, suggests that outward beauty need not (even if here it does) imply inward truth:

mine eye's due is thy outward part,
And my heart's right thy inward love of heart.

⁸²For a full discussion of this point see James Winny, The Master-Mistress (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), pp. 121-44.

The poet's need to state a correspondence between the two terms does itself suggest the tenuousness of the connection.

The tone of sonnet 54 is considerably more intense:

Oh how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses.

The poet is clearly fearful of being deceived by external appearances (by those "canker blooms" with their "masked buds" and "thorns") and fearful that beauty may be unaccompanied by truth, its "ornament" (with all the fragility and accidentalness suggested by that image). In the sonnet's sestet the preservation of the friend's truth is secured by the poet's own immortal verse; but this is really a deflection from his original doubts as to the friend's personal moral guilt. Yet when the poet says of these false beauties that "their virtue only is their show" and they "Die to themselves", his language is really more appropriate to the problem of moral corruption than the ostensible one of the plight of beauty when deprived of a poet's services.

Sonnet 93 initiates a series which makes a more explicit and ironic use of the distinction between appearance and reality:

So shall I live supposing thou art true
Like a deceived husband; so love's face
May still seem love to me, though alter'd new,--
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place;
For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change;

In many's looks the false heart's history
 Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinckles strange;
 But heaven in thy creation did decree
 That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell,--
 Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be
 Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.
 How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow
 If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!

Here the friend's fault appears as some personal betrayal of the poet (possibly the seduction of his mistress mentioned more explicitly elsewhere) rather than as a state of generalized corruption or ill reputation. The unfailing outward beauty, rather than being a sinister mask of suspected corruption within, actually carries a sort of consolation for the poet in this case; its sweetness is such that he is unable to suffer much from his friend's essential falseness of heart. The latter is, however, a certainty to which the poet is resigned. The couplet's warning, with its biblical simile linking the friend's ill deeds with original sin, gives an unexpectedly severe conclusion to what had appeared to be a moment's respite from the ominous spectre of beauty's corruption. The following famous sonnet 94, whatever one makes of the octave's celebration of those who are "Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow" (i.e. whether ironic, literal, or some subtle mixture of the two moods), continues in its concluding lines the prophetic tone of the previous couplet:

But if /summer's/ flower with base infection meet,
 The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
 For sweetest things tum sourest by their deeds;
 Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

The sonnet is not specifically addressed to the friend, but it continues the imagery associated elsewhere with his fair appearance and potential corruption ("flower," "weed," "infec-

tion"). Here again a doubt as to whether such deeds have yet been committed is coupled to a lack of specificity as to what they may be. The poet's fear is nevertheless intense enough. He does not stop at underlining the similarity between cankers and roses but goes on to emphasize rather brutally a beautiful object's potential transformation, through a "souring" and "festering," to its true and ugly essence. These harsh expressions do not accord with the sweet tone in which a friend is supposed to be administered correction, and perhaps it is for this reason that he is not directly addressed. Sonnet 95, however, drops any such pretense to a delicate indirection:

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which like a canker in the fragrant rose
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
Oh, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!

Both the friend's vice and his beauty are straightforwardly described and combine to render the sonnet's tone somewhat dubious. Are these lines to be taken as deeply sardonic or as apologetic? Probably the tones are mixed, depending upon how literally one takes the poet's rather strained assertions. The "lascivious comments on thy sport" suggest a rather more specific sort of misconduct than is usual (if "sport" is taken in one of its Elizabethan senses of "sexual adventures").⁸³ Yet the very harmlessness of the word tends to modify the gravity of the friend's corruption, and it is followed by two lines which all but dismiss it in view of his extraordinary

⁸³Ingram and Redpath, p. 218.

beauty; of such a person one

Cannot dispraise, but in a kind of praise,
Naming thy name, blesses an ill report.

But the sonnet is not allowed to conclude on such a note of unmitigated praise. Like its predecessors it closes with a threat:

Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;
The hardest knife ill us'd doth lose his edge.

Sonnet 96, the last in the series, echoes the tone and argument of the others:

Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness;
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
Both grace and faults are lov'd of more and less,--
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.

The friend's "wantonness" and "sport" are again specified, and the poet readily dismisses such trivial youthful peccadillos as the not unexpected prerogative of high-spirited youth. Even allowing for a degree of irony, the sonnet would appear to express a "latitudinarian" view of the meaning of virtue. Yet this attitude seems a sort of emotional strategy on the part of the poet, an attempt to dismiss his friend's vices by belittling their importance, elsewhere so portentous even when merely suspected. Here an attempt is made to live with the fait accompli of the friend's viciousness, until, with the couplet, the poet's hurt and concern again breaks through:

But do not so; I love thee in such sort
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

This is more a request for a personal favor than, as in the previous sonnets, a threat; it expresses the mildest sort of disapproval of the friend's conduct. All the above sonnets show some degree of distress over the friend's supposed or

known ill deeds and raise the paradox of his fair appearance and false heart. Sometimes the paradox is given a sardonic twist or includes a threat that even such a beautiful exterior may in time be corrupted by bad actions; and yet it is often (and sometimes in the same sonnet) merely complimentary and apologetic. Whether the friend's ill deeds acquire a radical metaphysical significance or whether they are restricted to venial "sexual adventures," in all the above sonnets his Platonic beauty must bear the scrutiny of ordinary ethics. The poet's range of response is far broader than any suggested by the rather inflexible Ciceronian demand for virtue, and yet it pays due homage to the classical point of view.

Classical theory prescribes that friendship be long-lasting and friends eternally constant, since virtuous relationships (as opposed to bad or utilitarian ones) are supposed to be based upon the unchanging fundamentals of character.⁸⁴ The poet's friend is, on the other hand, not only obscurely corrupt but mysterious, elusive, surrounded by shadows. The poet is never very certain either of his friend's nature or of his actions. The poet's inability to perceive a stable and defined character in his friend is of a piece with his depiction of his friend's actual variableness, inconstancy, and treachery. The friend seems always just on the point of betraying or rejecting the poet, though it is a measure of his general elusiveness and the poet's general uncertainty that one hardly ever knows precisely where the two stand.

⁸⁴See this thesis, p. 10, for Aristotle's statement.

We have already noticed the friend's inability to reject the poet in favor of one who commands a mightier stock of flattery. This reveals, among other things, the fragility of a friendship based upon utility; for the friend's attachment to his two poets is continually depicted as depending upon their rendering him service as praisers of his person. He is, as will be shortly described at length, habitually prone to a cold calculation of the benefits to be derived from his association with the poet (though this is often ironically represented as his "strict" construction of the requirement of virtue in friendship). His variable affection and the tenuousness of his bond with the poet are in themselves hallmarks of utilitarian motives. Some sonnets speak even more specifically of the poet's fears of his friend's inconstancy and treachery. Sonnets 40-42 evidently refer to his seduction of the poet's mistress and provoke a reaction typical of that situation whenever it is depicted or alluded to--a mingling of forgiveness ("I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief"), and blame ("But yet be blam'd, if thou this self deceivest").⁸⁵ Sonnet 48 might at first reading (at least through line 7) seem to speak of this same "theft" of the mistress by the friend:

How careful was I when I took my way
 Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
 That to my use it might unused stay
 From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust!

⁸⁵For a full discussion of these sonnets see the following chapter.

But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
 Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief--
 Thou best of dearest and mine only care
 Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
 Thee have I not lock'd up in any chest
 Save--where thou art not, though I feel thou art--
 Within the gentle closure of my breast,
 From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part:
 And even thence thou wilt be stol'n, I fear,
 For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

The sonnet carries a slight weight of reproach, but it is not directed against the friend as thief but rather as an object too easily stolen by some other thief. Line 8 puts this reading of the identities of the thief and the thieved object beyond any doubt and immediately invalidates one potential reading of line 5 ("you who regard all my jewels as trifles"). That line may now simply be read as "you, compared to whom my jewels are trifles." The friend, then, is likened to an infinitely precious jewel likely to be stolen at any time (perhaps by the mistress, whose vulgarity and aggressiveness are attested to by other sonnets). The mood of uncertainty and the sense of the friend's vulnerability is of a piece with many other sonnets; but what this particular sonnet adds to the general situation is the poet's own self-willed effort to build within his own heart a place of safety. The friend is a jewel which cannot be locked up in the ordinary way; he must go about in the vulgar world and so be a constant "prey" because of his beauty and excellence. This is matter of grief to the poet and is a situation apparently without solution, the friend being an active man of

the world and not simply an inert object. That very difference is, however, the basis on which the poet secures some measure of certainty in lines 9 through 12. Despite the hesitations and qualifications of these lines (which suggest the very fragile nature of human fidelity), they arrive at the conclusion that the poet properly possesses his friend in spirit ("the gentle closure of my breast") and not as an object ("lock'd up in any chest"). Friendship is a spiritual relationship, and the spirit may not be confined; yet it is not the less constant. But the concluding couplet, as usual, returns the sonnet to the darker mood of distrust and fear and the images of precious object and thief. It may be in the spiritual nature of friendship to allow the friend to "come and part" "at pleasure"; but that is a perilous situation when one friend is as prone to folly as the young man of the sonnets. A jewel cannot resist a thief, and a prey to another's falseness would seem to be innocent. All responsibility is made to fall on the poet himself--in his onerous function as watchman doomed to guard this mysterious being whose suspect nature admits no restraint.

In sonnet 61 the poet's typical plight as an ineffectual watchman is described even more vividly:

Is it thy will thy image should keep open
 My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
 Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken
 While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?

At first he is able to persuade himself that his friend's

insubstantial image has somehow come to check up on his "shames and idle hours." This would at least be a proof of friendship, since it is a friend's office (even if, as the lines suggest, an unwelcome one) to be concerned for one's misdeeds. But, by a neat reversal, the sestet explains that nocturnal visitation by reference to quite another construction of virtue's failure:

Oh no! thy love though much is not so great;
 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake--
 Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
 To play the watchman ever for thy sake;
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
 From me far off, with others all too near.

The cause of the friend's imaginary visitation, at first unspecified and then tentatively attributed to his virtuous love, is suddenly revealed for what it is--the poet's habitual anxiety of his friend's betrayal of him with some "other." Under such altered circumstances the first quatrain's questions ("Is it thy will?" "Dost thou desire?") turn to bitter reproaches; the friend's treachery, not his love, is the source of all the poet's wakefulness. Sonnet 92 commences with a brave paradox:

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
 For term of life thou art assured mine . . .

This at first appears to be an assertion (albeit an ironical one) of the classical commonplace that true friendship is eternal; in this case it is capable of being preserved despite one party's active attempt to sabotage it. The next line reveals the full depth of the irony--that the friendship is "for term of life" only because the poet has it in his power to end his own life (or be killed by his friend's treachery).

Only thus, and by no fault of his friend, will he be spared
 "the worst of wrongs:"

I see a better state to me belongs
 Than that which on thy humour doth depend;
 Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
 Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
 Oh what a happy title do I find--
 Happy to have thy love, happy to die!

For all its harsh ironies and its indictment of the friend for disloyalty and inconstant "humour," the sonnet genuinely entertains the hope of staving off some vaguely unspecified final act of treachery, one so overwhelming as to put an end to the poet's very life and thus produce that sardonically described state of heavenly happiness. The poet's casuistry over the matter of his death procures that amount of hope for him in his present life; but it is a hope built precariously on the indubitable fact of the friend's basic waywardness. So long as the poet is alive the friend must be true; so runs the argument. The conceit is not only brittle and forced, but it overlooks the basic uncertainty of perception which everywhere else haunts the poet. The last line of the sonnet allows that thought to come seeping back and to undermine the whole delicate edifice of the argument: "Thou mayst be false and yet I know it not."

The poet's tendency to make excuses for his friend has been mentioned. It is in line with the Renaissance development of the virtue commonplace (in Taverner's Erasmus, Castiglione, Greene, Sidney, and so on) toward admitting some degree of vice as a normal constituent of friendship--what has been called here the "latitudinarian" construction. The sonnet examined

just above, for example, acknowledges the friend's treachery and, though it does not (as do some sonnets) directly excuse him, it nevertheless seeks a rationale and means of preserving the friendship in these vicious conditions. This is Syr Friderick's, not Bembo's, response to the perception of ill behavior in a friend. This is generally so throughout the sonnets, despite the accusations, the bitter ironies, the occasional threats with which they resound. Though a series of sonnets (soon to be examined) does speak of some past treachery of the poet's own, hardly any may be found which show the poet seriously meditating a break with his friend (as prescribed by Aristotle) because of the latter's misdeeds. His submission to his friend's willful misbehavior is indeed embarrassingly abject at times, as in the above treated sonnets 48 and 61, or in sonnet 57:

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
 Upon the hours and times of your desire? . . .
 So true a fool is love that in your will,
 Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

Or sonnet 40:

Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes.

Sonnets 33-35 come to much the same conclusion, but by means of more tortuous arguments. In each case the problem of the friend's misconduct and disloyalty is considered under the terms of his ideal beauty, with the poet's response varying distinctly from one sonnet to the next. In sonnet 33 the friend is not mentioned at all until the sestet, the octave being given to a splendid description of the morning sun "Kissing with golden face the meadows green," and then allowing

the clouds to obscure his face, "Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace." The poet's personal disappointment over this and the humanized terms of his description of the sun clearly suggest the friend; in the sestet that application is in fact made point for point (the friend is "my sun" and "but one hour mine," and so on). Thus the friend's personal unsatisfactoriness is excused as being as inevitable and harmless as the sun's cloudy days; the palliating simile is itself a flattering one, suggesting the Platonic emblem of Being (in the parable of the Cave) as well as the traditional Christian emblem of God. The conclusion is inevitable:

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

Here is a statement, albeit in somewhat metaphysical terms, of the old view that a degree of evil is to be tolerated in a friend. That admission is authorized by the friend's association with the sun's grandeur, and thus it does not deprive him of his habitual Platonic images; but he is now a "sun of the world" and one guilty of "stains." He occupies a less lofty place in the heavens than in previous celebrations of his pure Platonic splendor. He is not now incapable of having "his gold complexion dimm'd" (18); and his ethical shortcomings, even as the poet's argument strives to minimize them, reflect a dimmer perception by the poet. The simile serves as an excuse and a not unflattering one, but, in view of the Platonic paradigm, it is a come-down. Sonnet 34 employs a similar imagery but reveals a stronger, more personal response:

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,

To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
 Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?
 'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
 For no man well of such a salve can speak
 That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace;
 Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss;
 The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
 To him that bears the strong offence's cross.
 Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds;
 And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

The tone is frankly accusatory from the very first line, and, while the images are akin to those of the previous sonnet, they are stronger and darker ("rotten smoke," "storm-beaten face," "wound"). The sonnet refrains from squandering its octave in cosmic apologetics and is actually engaged in attacking those very analogies by line 5 ("'Tis not enough"). The poet expresses a general sense of "grief" and "loss" which make these but a "weak relief." Though unspecified as usual, the friend's deeds are not here allowed to remain as remote and unreal as the mere "stains" of the previous sonnet; his "ill deeds" are said to produce a "wound" and "disgrace," and the poet must "bear the strong offence's cross." Similarly, the sun's reappearance is not, as before, left as a mere emblematic act; it is followed by and equated with the more concrete images of "physic" for a "wound" and enumeration of real acts of penance ("Though thou repent," "The offender's sorrow," "tears"). The sonnet telescopes the cosmic and the concrete, allowing the latter's harsh images to get the better of the former's brittle Euphuism. The poet is not at first inclined to accept even his friend's real repentance, though in the concluding couplet he does so. There the con-

crete qualities of that repentance are emphasized, and the friend's tears are said literally to "ransom" his ill deeds (as though one object were exchanged for another). It is a dubious and hard-won reconciliation.

In sonnet 35 the poet shows himself unexpectedly self-conscious regarding his tendency to find apologetic arguments for his friend. The first quatrain is itself a pure distillation of such arguments:

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done;
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud,
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.

This is where sonnet 33 leaves off. The next line, however, makes a swift and subtle transition; it begins as if elaborating the quatrain ("All men make faults"), then unexpectedly shifts attention to the poet himself ("and even I in this"). By this time one is awaiting the revelation of some misdeed of the poet's which would further serve to excuse those of the friend; and thus it is all the more surprising that that "misdeed" should be specified as the business of excusing the friend:

Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
My self corrupting salving thy amiss,
Excusing their sins more than their sins are; . . .

This is, from one point of view, a witty recantation of the poet's "latitudinarian" habit of "authorizing thy trespass" in favor of the stricter construction of the virtue requirement. The poet condemns his previous analogies as corrupting both himself and his friend, giving a greater scope to the sins of nature (or the friend, depending on whether the pronoun in line 8 is emended to "thy" or left as it appears in the sonnets'

first edition)⁸⁶ than they (or he) actually require. By either reading of the pronoun the friend is authorized to continue and even to augment his vices by grace of the poet's arguments. In the sense that this would naturally make the poet an accomplice of evil it is a vicious action; but it is also vicious in the more specialized sense that it is a gross dereliction and perversion of the true friend's office of giving advice and correction. In the concluding lines of the sonnet the poet's full perversity is emphasized by the imagery of civil war:

For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense--
 Thy adverse party is thy advocate--
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence;
 That I an accessory needs must be
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

The mutual connivance (as reinforced by the aural parallelisms "sensual . . . sense" and "adverse . . . advocate") resembles that between the conventional flatterer and noble youth, except that, as a further irony, the specific misdeed for which the poet offers the friend his assistance is the betrayal of himself. For all his perception of the irony of the situation (made yet more acute by the legalistic language of advocacy and defense), the poet appears unable in the end to disentangle himself from this "sweet thief" and his "sour" robberies. The couplet succinctly states his clear perception of his friend's vices and his own involvement in them as an "accessory;" yet the term of endearment suggests his continued affection. The poet has the heart to make accusations only

⁸⁶Ingram and Redpath, pp. 84-5.

against himself, again letting the thief off free.

The sonnets' account of misconduct and "stains" upon the vision of friendship is not altogether to the disadvantage of the friend; the poet also reveals a lively sense of his own departures from perfection, and not only in ironic contexts such as the one above. The sonnets continually proclaim the poet's conviction of his own inferiority--in wealth, in beauty, in general worth, and even in virtue. Disparity of status is of course in the nature of their Platonic friendship; the friend is valued precisely because he possesses such visionary qualities as the poet (and every other merely mortal being) is barren of. But this unequal relationship contravenes the commonplace that friends ought to be equal and similar, in virtue and in every other respect.⁸⁷ The poet's general inferiority often carries the same "ontological" significance as does the friend's superiority; even if expressed merely as lack of beauty or social status it takes on the dimensions of a radical failure of "worth" (the term most often used in this context). Admittedly one can seldom be very certain as to exactly what is being referred; as was the case with the friend's misdeeds, the language and metaphors by which they are named may carry a general, a specific, or even a private reference. Moral corruption is often suggested. Sonnet 36 speaks of "those blots that do with me remain" and "my bewailed guilt;" the poet's response to that perception

⁸⁷For a full discussion of this commonplace see the following chapter.

suggests the Aristotelian dictum that if one friend outstrips the other in virtue he ought to separate from him; "Let me confess that we two must be twain". For Aristotle, however, this would simply mean an end to the friendship; it is typical of Shakespeare's more romanticized vision that the poet continues to cherish the hope, for all his anguish at parting, that "our divided loves are one"; "thou being mine, mine is thy good report." Here is an instance of the vicarious participation of the poet in his friend's superior status, expressed in this case as moral worth. Sonnet 72 proffers no such consolation, asks the friend to make no excuses for the poet after his death:

For you in me can nothing worthy prove,--
 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie
 To do more for me than mine own desert,
 And hang more praise upon deceased I
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart.

If the specific nature of the poet's worthlessness (again unspecified) is merely low social standing, then one must allow the possibility of some irony in the poet's commanding his friend to take that external hindrance so seriously. So too as regards his exaggerated deference for the opinion of the world, so often vilified elsewhere in the sonnets. The sonnet's final lines are nevertheless entirely orthodox from the point of view of classical friendship theory; after entertaining the possibility of the friend's telling a "virtuous lie" about him (perhaps "virtuous" because demonstrating the "good" quality of loyalty in friendship), the poet rejects that action as seeming to make their friendship "false"

and "untrue." This rejection is from the standpoint of the classical dictum that bad acts (such as lying) ought not to be done even for the sake of a friend. But, then, by such severe standards of virtue, the poet ought never to have been admitted as a friend in the first place, and his death is, like the physical separation proposed by sonnet 36, a necessary expedient; it merely puts an end to something that ought never to have occurred:

My name be buried where my body is
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you;
 For I am sham'd by that which I bring forth,
 And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

The last line is Aristotle paraphrased. It is significant that the language here is more suggestive of moral failure than general inadequacy; for the sonnet's correct classical conclusion depends specifically upon a moral judgment. Most unclassical, however, is the melodrama with which the classical dictum is invested, so that the simple requirement of virtue (which the poet fails to satisfy) is invoked to prevent the friend even from mourning or defending the poet's name after his death.

In sonnet 111 Fortune is blamed as "The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds"--by which the poet's acting and play-writing profession is apparently specified; "public means which public manners breeds." For the "brand" upon his name he asks pity of his friend; but to this softer and more sympathetic construction of a friend's offices he adds the sterner admonition of correction and promises reformation:

Whilst, like a willing patient I will drink
 Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection--

No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance to correct correction.

This is to acknowledge that the true means of preserving friendship must be the constant maintenance of a state of virtue in oneself. So quickly does a non-ethical failure (like low social station) assume the language and proportions of moral worthlessness, putting the poet in danger of the latter's logical consequence in friendship theory--rejection by his friend. Mundane considerations of snobbery and "peer selection" were no doubt operative in the actual relationship (if we may speak of it), but in the language of the sonnets they are buried beneath a moralistic surface strongly implying classical theory. Sonnet 121 makes a sharp about-face from the theory and from the poet's habitual attitude of self-effacement and self-deprecation; it implies some sort of bad conduct on his part, but shows him uncharacteristically standing adamantly for what he is and rejecting "others' false adulterate eyes:"

No; I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses reckon up their own;
I may be straight though they themselves be bevel;
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown,--
Unless this general evil they maintain;
All men are bad and in their badness reign.

If the poet is bad, all men must be bad--so runs the argument of the couplet. It is difficult to say whether the poet is arguing his own goodness or the world's corruption, but the main thrust of his assertions is to free himself of the warping influence of external judgments. His apparent indifference to virtue is really an indifference, or pretended indifference, to public opinion. Significantly, this is one of those few

sonnets (in the first 126) which do not directly allude to the friend; for the poet's confirmed obstinacy in his deeds cannot bear too close an application to the question of friendship, with its definite demand for virtue. The sonnet is quite heretical, both with respect to tradition and to Shakespeare's own attitudes elsewhere in the sonnets, but by its very isolated atypicalness it helps to define the more normal responses all around it. Insofar as it urges the friend not to credit the world's opinion too highly nor to judge the poet solely by its standards, it is not far from the classical admonition to ignore slander. Contempt for the world is an attitude frequently to be found in the sonnets, one that has in this instance carried the poet beyond his usual restraints regarding the general question of virtue.

One sonnet examined above (72) entertained hopes of the friend's going against the opinion of the world, but ultimately relented and accepted the justice of that opinion. Other sonnets are more openly ironic about the friend's tendency to refrain from such "virtuous lies" as would benefit the "bad" poet and to make unloving and mercenary applications of the virtue requirement against him. The poet, after all, tends to make latitudinarian allowances for his friend and endeavors to refute the slanderous reports of others. This is not to say that the poet is not deeply concerned about his own moral failures (as the sonnets examined above demonstrate), and he seldom manages to administer an outright rebuke of his friend for proceeding against him on those grounds. Yet there is often an implicit rebuke, by way of a muffled irony or mute

rebelliousness, against both the theory and its stern and hypocritical upholder. The sonnets about to be examined combine, in different mixtures, a sense of the friend's justice and a sense of his cruelty and coldness. Sonnet 49 envisages a time "When I shall see thee frown on my defects". The language is that of cold calculation; love's "utmost sum;" "Call'd to that audit by advis'd respects;" love's "reasons" of "settled gravity." The octave acknowledges the justice of these computations but makes them seem slightly repellent. The sestet goes so far as momentarily to question their justice but in the end capitulates ignominiously to conclude upon one of those typical self-abasing couplets:

Against that time do I ensconce me here
 Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
 And this my hand against myself uprear
 To guard the lawful reasons on thy part.
 To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws,
 Since why to love I can allege no cause.

The mood is briefly that of sonnet 121 ("I am that I am"), but here the classical dictum cannot be ignored and forces an acknowledgement of the "lawful" rationale for the friends' separation (a condition which the poet had himself recommended, and for similar reasons, in previous sonnets). Yet the imagery of cold calculation is continued, business terms giving way to legal terms, endowing the classical injunction with its unattractive connotations. The poet's brief moment of rebellion, together with his continued use of this imagery, bespeaks a mute and perhaps only partial rejection of the strict construction of the dictum of virtue. Seldom allowing himself directly to oppose such an established

commonplace, here the best he can do is throw himself upon his friend's mercy, making a personal appeal (not unlike that pathetic outburst of tears by Pyrocles when similarly unable to refute his friend's stern accusations in the Arcadia) addressed not to reason, which is all against him, but to mere "causeless" sentiment. The poet is himself divided in his attitudes, unable to reject on rational terms his friend's legalistic construction of the virtue requirement and unable to accept the consequences of that requirement (the termination of the friendship). Above all he is unable to stop loving his friend even while rebelling against his (the friend's) unfeeling and hypocritical administration of the classical demand for virtue.

Sonnets 87-90 continue this mixed mood, though they imply a considerably greater amount of contempt for the harsh theory and for its upholder, to both of whom they nevertheless pay the usual lip-service. In sonnet 87 the most mercenary and utilitarian images are sardonically imposed on this "virtuous" endeavor; the "worth" upon which friendship is supposed to be founded is given the sense of monetary value, and the relationship itself is described as if it were a business deal:

Farewell--thou art too dear for my possessing,
 And like enough thou know'st thy estimate;
 The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.
 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting?
 And for that riches where is my deserving?
 The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
 And so my patent back again is swerving.
 Thy self thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing;
 Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking;

So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
 Comes home again on better judgment making.
 Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter---
 In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

Even if the sonnet's language is all that of sordid commerce and petty calculation, its theme is ostensibly the "respectable" one of a virtuous friend's exercising his right and obligation of rejecting an unvirtuous one. The conventional plot is even suggested: a "contracting" of friendship on the supposition of virtue, discovery that there has been a "misprision," and consequent rejection of the offending friend. Yet the poet's use of commercial imagery to describe the friend's motives and his own depicted status as a passive chattel implies a bitterly ironic attitude toward the theory and the friend who wields it so crassly. Even if the imagery is merely fanciful and does not actually imply economic motives on the friend's part, it suggests by metaphorical extension a miserly sort of moral economy, a fastidious calculation of one's friend's virtues as though they were so many tradable debentures. This may be done with the best theoretical motives, but it is mean-spirited all the same; and it implies a pretty high value set upon one's own moral position. The language and tone of the sonnet are strikingly critical of the "stem" view of the virtue requirement, and they imply a warmer and more spontaneous affection of the heart as a desirable alternative. Sonnet 88 reverts to the milder tones of previous sonnets, defending with less obtrusive irony the friend's liability to reject him ("When thou shalt be dispos'd to set me light") on the basis of the familiar classical require-

ment. The friend's waywardness would prove that "thou art forsworn" (since friends are supposed to be constant) unless there were proper cause for it, such as the poet's moral worthlessness, which would release him from his obligations. But one senses the apologetic nature of the sonnet; by heaping wrongs upon himself ("bear all wrong"---a phrase which suggests the friend's mistreatment of him more than his own ostensible wrongdoings) the friend's wrongs become justifiable. He tries so melodramatically to "prove thee virtuous" by revealing "mine own weakness" and those "faults conceal'd wherein I am attainted." This situation, abetted by classical theory, puts the friend's treachery in an excusable and even favorable light, but it is hard not to feel that the argument is forced and ironic. Sonnet 89 makes use of the very same argument and patently compromises its authenticity:

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
 And I will comment upon that offence;
 Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,
 Against thy reasons making no defence;
 Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,
 To set a form upon desired change,
 As I'll myself disgrace, knowing thy will.

This is superficially the poet's habitual attitude of shuffling submission to his friend's "will," a posture which ordinarily occurs in contexts where the friend's inconstancy is at issue. The lines suggest that the friend's treachery, and not the poet's supposed inadequacies, is the real issue. The first two lines state the priorities clearly; first comes the friend's "desired change" (his inconstancy) and then the poet's endeavor to "set a form" upon it (by arraigning himself under the virtue

requirement). The word "form" suggests a rationale not altogether genuine or inherent in the facts themselves; and, similarly, the poet's ludicrously trumped-up vindications of his friend's charges ("Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt") reveal their inauthenticity. In this and the other sonnets external obeisance is made to the commonplace, but it is handled with irreverence, irony, and even subdued rebelliousness. One often senses its irrelevance to the poet's true motives and feelings even as it is being propounded. In the untender hands of the friend it is typically wielded against the poet like a weapon, one whose reality cannot be denied but whose effect it is often the poet's strategy to blunt or subvert by the indirect means of sarcasm or an appeal to the friend's better nature. Sometimes in the latter case the poet turns advocate against himself and admits the justice of what he would have the friend, on the grounds of mercy and human affection, pardon. His arguments, whose bitter ironies often come near to damning both the friend and his dreaded commonplace, nevertheless contrive with a forced logic to preserve the vision of the friend's goodness and the hope of his affection. And if the arguments help the poet to keep his vision alive within himself, they also appeal, more practically, to the friend's vanity and compassion. It is left to the indirect devices of tone and imagery for the poet to unburden himself of his rankling sense of maltreatment and appeal to his friend's sleeping sense of human (as opposed to legalistic) justice. The sonnets' mixture of the tones of praise and blame has the precedent of Plutarch, but their

labyrinthine subtleties are all Shakespeare's own.

In a cluster of sonnets near the end of the series (109, 110, 117-120) the poet deals with some specific disloyalty of his own against his friend; and in close proximity is another group (108, 116, 122-124) alluding to the past trials of the friendship and its remarkable constancy. Some sonnets belonging to the first group also conclude with assertions of constancy. Thus, while it is dangerous to be too positive in identifying narrative elements in a cycle whose order has been so hotly contested, an overview of the two groups (as well as readings of some individual sonnets) suggests that "plot" pattern (misconduct leading to alienation leading to reconciliation) which was adumbrated in Euphues, in episodes of the Arcadia, and in Euphues Legacy. Sonnet 109 specifies the poet's sin as an absence, but it does not appear to be the literal and compelled absence treated elsewhere in the sonnets (e.g. 50 and 51) but an absence of the heart and will. The poet commences with unusual defensiveness:

Oh never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify!

In other handlings of the theme of absence (e.g. 98 and 99) falseness of heart was never at issue; or, rather, it was likely to be the friend's real or feared falseness (48, 61). In the second quatrain of the present sonnet dark ambiguities appear: "if I have rang'd, / Like him that travels I return again". The effect of the simile is to cloud the circumstances of the poet's absence by merely likening it to a simple trip (thereby implying that it was in reality something

else); yet the comparison also functions to excuse the poet's absence by suggesting that it was, at any rate, no more harmful than a simple trip. This ambiguous simile is, moreover, imbedded within a hypothetical clause ("if I have rang'd") which does not clearly admit the reality of the charge; and the verb "rang'd" itself suggests both physical travel and a sort of disloyal waywardness. All this creates a good deal of vagueness as to particulars and a sense of the poet's evasiveness and hidden guilt. If the octave argues uncertainly for the innocence of the poet's absence, the sestet is more a pitiful cry for forgiveness than an argument:

Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
 That it could so preposterously be stain'd
 To leave for nothing all thy sum of good--
 For nothing this wide universe I call,
 Save thou my rose: in it thou art my all.

The particulars are still vague, and there is again a hypothetical construction ("though in my nature reign'd"); but the urgency of tone and language imply a dereliction more serious than a business trip ("All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood"). Such expressions suggest that general worthlessness which the poet so often ascribes to himself. Here the particular disloyalty which is evidently at issue becomes confused with that general state of "ontological" inferiority, and, paradoxically, that confusion serves the poet's cause; original sin (which the language actually suggests) is after all difficult to do anything about, and the poet's inferiority is a condition almost as inevitable. Like an erring Christian the poet sins because his state is fallen; but, also like him, he could never truly forsake his only source of comfort, no

matter how mired in petty sins which offend that deity. The poet's very worthlessness, while it carries him into bad acts, ensures him against any final desertion of his principle of good. The Platonic friendship celebrated in the sonnets is of an imperfect being for a perfect one, and those are the terms in which this particular sonnet comes to rest. Beginning with arguments and apologies the sonnet ultimately achieves an almost religious attitude of confession and penance.

Sonnet 110 utilizes images of the poet's play-writing and acting career to describe his special delinquency:

Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offenses of affections new.
Most true it is that I have look'd on truth
Askance and strangely; . . .

The images may be merely metaphorical, but they register the poet's disgust with the hurly-burly of life and accuse him of a lack of "truth" (perhaps, but not necessarily, the sort of betrayal of one's true tastes and inclinations brought about in the service of a vulgar and disreputable profession). Yet all this need not be, and so far has not been, applied to the question of betraying the friend; the remainder, however, makes it clear that these personal infidelities amount to such a betrayal. The connection may seem gratuitous, but the dictum of virtue applies, after all, to every facet of a friend's conduct, not merely his personal loyalty. Perhaps, too, the images simply reflect the friend's social disdain of the poet's profession. However that may be, the sonnet goes on to affirm the therapeutic effect of this "bad" act

as constituting a "proof" of the friend. Submitting friendship to proof is, of course, a classical injunction, but only occasionally (in Lyly, for example) is a period of evil and estrangement described in this way. In the present sonnet the two ideas (i.e. commission of an unvirtuous act and proving a friend), contradictory though they may be, are elided together, and thus the bad act is excused. It was intended, the argument maintains, only as a means of confirming the friend's loyalty and forbearance:

. . . but, by all above,
 Those blenches gave my heart another youth,
 And worse essays prov'd thee my best of love.
 Now all is done, have what shall have no end:
 Mine appetite I never more will grind
 On newer proof to try an older friend--
 A god in love, to whom I am confin'd.

At the end of this interim of testing an eternity of friendship is envisaged ("what shall have no end"), which, according to Aristotle, is the special legacy of a successful test.⁸⁸ The friend is also referred to as a "god" and "next my heaven the best," religious images consonant with those of the preceding sonnet, though in this case there is less of real religious feeling. The friend's superior status, so often problematic and guilt-producing, here again appears as a comforting and inevitable condition; and a god-like tolerance of the poet's poor human frailty is one of its favorable consequences. How one reconciles this perception of the friend with the cold and egocentric calculator of so many other sonnets is an open question. Perhaps it is simply another of

⁸⁸ See this thesis, p. 10.

those innumerable paradoxes which envelop his being.

In sonnet 117 he has resumed his more habitual role as rapacious attacker of the poet's foibles. The sonnet begins "Accuse me thus" and in ten scathing lines catalogs the poet's "wilfulness and errors," as if enumerating the counts of an indictment. Using the familiar legalistic imagery of previous sonnets, he again acts as advocate against himself on behalf of his friend. The penultimate lines plead for mercy and ask for something like a suspended sentence:

Bring me within the level of your frown,
But shoot not at me in your waken'd hate.

In contrast to other such sonnets this one does not, however, breathe any hint of sarcasm or carry an implicit criticism of the friend as a cold-blooded calculator. The poet's mood here is altogether one of self-condemnation; and perhaps this is connected with the fact that the "errors" enumerated suggest a personal "scanting" of the friend more than a general state of bad reputation or inferiority. About that sort of moral failure he is seldom ironic, and thus the couplet's half-hearted and unprepared-for statement of the testing rationale comes across as patently absurd:

Since my appeal says I did strive to prove
The constancy and virtue of your love.

The "appeal" is little more than a pretense of having a respectable excuse. The couplet links "constancy," "virtue," and the need to "prove" a friend in the most impeccable Aristotelian manner, but the language is stilted and too obviously self-interested. Here is the letter but none of the spirit of the testing requirement. Frail as the argument inherently

is, in sonnet 110 it had at least had the support of the poet's depiction of a revived and thriving friendship and of a god-like friend tolerant of such weak arguments.

In sonnets 118 and 119 a far more tortuous and studied attempt is made to explain the poet's guilt, which is specifically linked to his involvement with the so-called "dark lady."⁸⁹ Both sonnets employ an imagery of sickness and revulsion such as often occurs in the depiction of the latter relationship. Sonnet 118 speaks of these "ills" (the word suggesting in this context "sickness" as well as "bad deeds") as having been self-sought by the poet, for the sake of curing some other anticipated ills. The analogy is to the therapeutic value of vomiting:

Thus policy in love, to anticipate
The ills that were not, grew to faults assur'd,
And brought to medicine a healthful state
Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured;
But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

This is one way, albeit a feverish and obsessive one, of stating the testing requirement. Testing a friend is a sort of "policy in love" and an "anticipation" of those "ills that were not" in the sense that it attempts by wise stratagems to forestall or expose an unapparent but potential evil penchant in a friend. This seems to be the poet's rationale, but, as in the previous sonnet, darker actions and motives are ill concealed by it. In the first place it is difficult to believe that an apparently bad deed was done only for the

⁸⁹For a full discussion of this point see the last chapter.

sake of testing the other party's good faith (a whopping paradox); and, secondly, in this case that policy is confessed to have backfired and is described in ludicrously perverse terms. To be "rank of goodness" suggests disgust with goodness more than doubt as to its genuineness; and to be "sick of you" is not in the spirit of rational inquiry. These and other ambiguous phrases may be accounted for as after-the-fact expressions of the poet's chagrin over the failure of his policy, but policy alone (i.e. testing for virtue) can hardly be his main theme or concern. It is, as before, an only half-intended argument with its irony very obvious and all directed upon himself. To have lost the friend for the sake of such a ludicrously hare-brained policy is hardly believable or meant to be believed; it is surely an emblem of that underlying perverseness and willfulness (perhaps the taking up with the dark lady, perhaps merely growing tired of the friend) which caused him to forsake his friend for no good cause. The policy is said to contain the "poison" of "drugs" in it and, in its dark and devious arguments and images, mimes the diseased mind wandering through its mazes.

In sonnet 119 a condition of emotional pathology is also described, far more "realistically" and less "conceitedly" than in its predecessor and without any allusion to that red herring, the dictum of testing. Yet the sestet brings a miraculous reversal:

Oh, benefit of ill! now I find true
That better is by evil still made better,

And ruin'd love when it is built anew
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater;
 So I return rebuk'd to my content,
 And gain by ill's thrice more than I have spent.

No explanation of this reversal is offered, and from a formal point of view it may seem unjustified and unprepared. It gains strength, however, from its participation in the "plot" pattern of alienation and reconciliation which is operative in this cluster as a whole. Sonnets 110 and 117 reflect that pattern through the agency of an argument based upon the rationale of testing: a passage of bad conduct is proposed as the prescribed test of a friend which is supposed to lead to a firm institution of truth and constancy. In the present sonnet evil is also given the credit ("benefit") for "building anew" the friendship (which it began by "ruining") into a relationship "more strong, far greater;" but here the poet does not have recourse to the phoney-sounding testing argument. The reversal is not based upon any argument but merely asserts the miraculous paradox of restored and revitalized friendship arising out of hateful experience.

Sonnet 120 is a rather special case, insofar as it alludes to misconduct by both poet and friend--the previous "crime" and "unkindness" of the friend, the present "transgression" and "unkindness" of the poet. The language is similar, and the syntax emphasizes the equivalence of these deeds (e.g. "if you were by my unkindness shaken / As I by yours"). The parallelisms are moreover in the service of an argument (unrelated to the previous one based on the dictum of testing) which proposes, tit for tat, the cancellation of one friend's

sins by the fact of the other's:

But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

The commercial imagery carries the suggestion of fair exchange, but the sonnet's true appeal is to feeling and experience. It breathes a disinterested sympathy in the friend's supposed sufferings, as the poet is able to understand them from his own past experience of suffering. Its purport is less self-justification than remorseful recognition of the human cost of bad actions:

Oh, that our night of woe might have remember'd
My deepest sense how hard true sorrow hits,
And soon to you as you to me then tender'd
The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!

Here again recurs the "plot" pattern of a passage of evil leading to eventual restoration of friendship upon a stronger basis than before, and it is all the more convincing because its terms arise from human sympathy and remorse, rather than conceit and simple assertion. One may doubt that the friend, as he is normally depicted, could suffer so much or learn the lesson of human sympathy so well as the poet, but that is another matter; the poet's own remorse supposes a counterpart in his friend. The argument is not "latitudinarian" in the sense that it attempts to moderate the pain or the evil consequences of treachery to either of the parties; yet it allows these a role in the ultimate achievement of true friendship, not as a matter of theory but in recognition of human nature's empirical penchant: "for that sorrow which I then did feel" (that is, my own experience, not predisposition) "Needs must I under my transgression bow".

Most of the sonnets just considered commence with some allusion to the poet's treachery and proceed to an affirmation of renewed constancy or faithfulness, sometimes by way of self-justifying arguments derived from the dictum of testing a friend. If the reversal is not always very moving, it is at least consonant with the larger pattern of sin and forgiveness, alienation and reconciliation. Close by is another cluster of sonnets in which the last stage of the pattern (friends' unshakable constancy after adversity) is given the main prominence. Sonnet 108 belongs in part to yet another group (including sonnets 100-102) in which the poet's flagging inspiration and neglect of his friend in verse is the issue; it faces that situation and triumphantly conquers it, affirming that, despite the difficulty of finding new and apt words of praise,

. . . yet like prayers divine
I must each day say o'er the very same,
Counting no old thing old,--thou mine, I thine--
Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.

It is of course a commonplace to affirm the immortality of friendship in the face of time's opposition, but this statement has a more than ordinary urgency and intensity ("like prayers divine"), which is probably connected with the special weight given to time everywhere in the sonnets; it is at once the destroyer of beauty, the antagonist of immortal verse, and the foe of human virtue. Its presence (and it is often personified) nearly always evokes, whatever may be the context, a counter-statement of resistance by the steadfast human will.⁹⁰

⁹⁰For a full discussion of this theme see J. B. Leishman, "Shakespeare's Sonnets on Love as the Defier of Time," pp. 102-118.

The resolution to be constant is no more than commonplace, but the terms of its statement are often such as to make it appear miraculous and paradoxical, the human will's assertion of a logical impossibility:

Counting no old thing old,---thou mine, I thine,---
 Even as when first I hallow'd thy fair name.
 So that eternal love in love's fresh case
 Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
 Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place;
 But makes antiquity for aye his page,
 Finding the first conceits of love there bred
 Where time and outward form would show it dead.

The fact of beauty's failure under the onslaught of time is more serious than might at first appear; for the friend's beauty is, as has been described, the basis of the poet's visionary attachment to him. The feared or expected loss of his beauty is the subject of a large number of sonnets, usually culminating in an anguished but illogical denial of that condition's possibility. Here the logical consequence of beauty's decay is contemplated, viz. the inevitable rupture of the relationship which has beauty as its basis: "time and outward form would show it [the friendship] dead." But that logical consequence is denied, even if the initial assumption (of beauty's decay) is not. In other sonnets the death and rebirth of friendship is depicted as a consequence of a passage of evil and estrangement; here is depicted its simultaneous death and survival--its apparent external death, its miraculous inward survival. The friendship is kept alive and young by mere "conceit of love;" the aging friend is endowed with "love's fresh case" by no other agency than the poet's self-willed "eternal love" of him. His language underlines the paradoxes inherent in his procedure and suggests the tenuous

nature of this "eternal" constancy, so dependent upon the power of human will and imagination.

Sonnet 116 appears to refer to some recent alienation of the poet and his friend (perhaps the same one as was depicted in the last cluster of sonnets); "impediments," "tempests," and "alteration" are mentioned. Again a miraculous denial is made of love's susceptibility to any such hindrances:

. . . love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

There is alteration, and there is a remover, but love simply refuses to acknowledge these as impediments. As in the previous sonnet it was preserved from time's deprivations by means of a self-willed conceit, here it is preserved in the face of evident decay merely by means of an a priori assertion (actually a sort of negative definition: "love is not love . . .") that such external facts simply do not belong to its nature.

Love "looks on tempests and is never shaken" (i.e. weathers the storms of what is apparently personal disagreement of a rather violent nature), and it must also withstand the ravages of its old antagonist, time:

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Time's specific function is, as before, to make war on beauty; and while his attack's success is not denied, love is again heroically vindicated. The struggle to remain constant under such circumstances has a tragic intensity which goes far deeper than the mere commonplace; it is inseparable from man's greater

struggle to conquer the baleful fact of his human mortality.

In sonnet 122 a similar heroic faithfulness is promised:

Beyond all date even to eternity,--
Or at least so long as brain and heart
Have faculty by nature to subsist, . . .

The qualification ostensibly refers to the friend's gift of a book, which posterity, so long as it retains "brain and heart," will have as its eternal reading matter. Yet the expression also suggests the inherently frail life of man, upon whose "faculty by nature to subsist" the existence of friendship is founded. On these terms the concept of eternal constancy would once again come down to the facts of man's mortal life and immortal imagination. So much is the struggle against time a matter of the human will and intellect alone that the sonnet concludes by resolving to forego the assistance of such material "adjuncts" as books. Sonnet 123 commences in that spirit of a personal duel between the poet and personified Time which is so frequent in his handling of the theme: "No, time, thou shalt not boast that I do change." This is in despite of the ceaseless ebb and flow of events, which, because "Our dates are brief," we take for novelties. The poet resolves to resist that habit:

Thy registers and thee I both defy,
Not wondering at the present nor the past;
For thy records and what we see doth lie,
Made more or less by thy continual haste.
This I do vow and this shall ever be;--
I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.

Here time's opposition to friendship is not attributed, as before, to its devastation of beauty or its bringing of death. In this case constancy is threatened by the inherent mutability

of things existing in a state of time, which causes the "foisting" of old things for new ones and the "continual haste" from event to event. Such a state of flux is obviously hostile to constancy; it specifically suggests one friend's dropping another, altering in his affection, revealing an unstable character--such vices as friendship theory condemns but which have been previously ascribed to both the poet and the friend. But this type of threat by time is less cosmically overwhelming and more in the control of simple human "vows" than its onslaught on life and beauty; to refrain from the fads and trends of one's day is a matter of human choice. Time's malignancy is merely in its attempting to foist such changes upon us. Sonnet 124 similarly states that

If my dear love were but the child of state,
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,
As subject to Time's love or to Time's hate, . . .

The flux and change of time is again described as the norm against which the poet's constancy is claimed to hold firm. And allied with time is another antagonist--the world. The two terms are obviously related and are drawn further together by the concept of Fortune; for the elevations and descensions of the turning wheel of Fortune (alluded to in the second line above) traditionally symbolize the fluctuations of one's worldly status through time. The man who sets a value on worldly goods is dependent upon the random "accidents" of time, but virtuous friends ought doubly to be free of time's effects--both by remaining constant despite time's "novelties" and loving one another by reason of virtue rather than fluctuating utilitarian values. Shakespeare perhaps draws the

distinction between friendship and "the world" more sharply than previous authors (and here the word glitters with almost medieval associations; "smiling pomp," "thralled discontent," "policy"), for Aristotle and Cicero were content simply to make friendship independent of worldly considerations and give it the first place as to value; they did not disparage life in the practical world as such. By contrast, Shakespeare repeatedly depicts friendship as an alternative or "compensation" for worldly values.⁹¹ The sonnet above suggests an either-or choice between two mutually exclusive realms--the world of flux and the constant state of perfect friendship. Among previous authors only Marlowe (in Edward II) and perhaps Churchyard conceive this sort of absolute opposition; Cicero, with his abiding regard for public life and practical virtue (preventing him, for example, from preferring loyalty to a friend to loyalty to the state), would have flatly denied the distinction. This is perhaps another of those unobtrusive legacies of a Christian frame of mind, a casting of the basic opposition between spiritual value and the world into the terms of friendship; in sonnet 146, "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth," the terms are patently religious and traditional, the opposition of the two spheres absolute.⁹² Also involved are the poet's sense of his own lack of worldly status and his pervasive neo-Platonism, each tending to drive his conception toward a breach between ideal and material terms.

⁹¹See Leishman, pp. 202-213.

⁹²For a full discussion of this opposition in the sonnets see Edward Hubler, The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Hill and Wang, 1952), pp. 123-35.

Whichever "pattem" is most to be credited for the fact, it is certain that in the sonnet in question (as in numerous others) friendship is regarded as a value eclipsing and compensating for the hostile values of the world:

It fears not policy, that heretic
Which works on leases of short-number'd hours;
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat nor drowns with showers.⁹³

Shakespeare's distortion of this commonplace is but the final instance of his tendency to bend, manipulate, and enrich the various aspects of the classical dictum of virtue with which the topic of friendship provided him. In this chapter we have described his visionary conception of that requirement (following the trend of a more "subjective" interpretation of it, as established in previous Renaissance authors) and the consequent augmentation of its poetic possibilities. We have seen, however, that his retention of the traditional "ethical" construction of the meaning of virtue led to a highly complex, argumentative, and dramatic response to the beautiful friend's mundane sins, one that tended toward a "latitudinarianism" based upon the attempt to preserve a sense of the friend's primary excellence. The tendency to excuse the friend did not, however, exclude the poet from making severe criticisms of him, both outright and by means of irony and implication. The friend's susceptibility to flattery (and the poet's desire to absolve himself from that charge) are treated in a number of sonnets in which the tone swings

⁹³ See also sonnets 25, 29, 90, 91, 109, 112.

uncertainly back and forth between praise and blame of self and friend. In a series of sonnets near the end of the cycle the poet deals with his own sins, sometimes implying a criticism of the friend for his cold and legalistic construction of the virtue requirement with regard to them (and thereby questioning that requirement itself), sometimes voicing his own intense sense of guilt and unworthiness. Finally, this and another cycle of sonnets reproduce (both as a whole and in individual poems) a sort of "plot," such as had been identified in Lyly, Lodge, and Sidney, depicting the re-establishment of friendship after a period of suffering and evil. Sometimes the commonplace of testing is invoked in this context, with varying degrees of conviction and patent irony, but more compelling are those sonnets which express the classical commonplace of friends' eternal constancy—with an intensity and sense of the wonder of the human will which stems from the oppressive hostility of time and the world to this and every other human virtue. The expression of all these commonplaces is, in ways that have been described in this chapter, more intense, problematical, and full of shifts and shades of meaning than anything encountered in the literature of friendship from which they are drawn.

MUTUALITY IN FRIENDSHIP

Under the term "mutuality" will be comprehended the various commonplaces concerned with the manner of friends' association with one another. These state: 1) that friendship is always a reciprocal relationship in which each friend equally loves the other; 2) that friends are constantly in one another's company and may be said to "live together"; 3) that friends possess all things in common; 4) that friends are similar and equal in all respects (habits, opinions, social station, even physical appearance); 5) that a man will sacrifice everything, even his life, for his friend. These commonplaces all have to do with the concrete particulars of friends' participation in each other's lives--the social and even domestic side of the arrangement between them. As might be expected, Plato's visionary conception (though not the rather sociable reality portrayed in his dialogues) denigrates and reduces to absurdity all such concrete provisions. The Lysis does indeed take up several of the above commonplaces (reciprocation, commonality of goods, similarity of friends), but it does so only to reject them as unexamined and inadequate assumptions. The dialogue's final definition of friendship is the love of the neither good nor evil for the perfectly good; and thus a necessary inequality between the partners of a friendship is authorized, and the inhuman and merely abstract nature of the perfect friend strongly implied. The dialogue shuns consideration of ordinary social arrangements and practices of friends in favor of an abstract determination of its goal and end. That tendency, of course,

finds its fullest expression in the Symposium, where the ultimate goal of friendship is stated as a visionary ascent from lower levels of being to higher ones and finally to the disembodied "idea" of beauty.¹ Of the relationship between a man and such an abstraction it is difficult to speak except in the language appropriate to the religious mysteries; and to describe such a "friendship" in terms of the commonplaces of reciprocation, similarity, equality, common possessions, living together, and so on, is altogether absurd. Plato is, as before, heretical.

Aristotle specifically excludes grossly unequal relationships (as between a man and a god, or a subject and a ruler) from the name of friendship (VIII.vii), and he continually stresses the importance of similarity and equality between friends, beginning with the fact that they are equally virtuous (VIII.iii). They ought also to occupy equal social stations (VIII.vi) and ought to be approximately equal in beauty (VIII.viii). Friends have much in common with brothers and have a "common upbringing and similarity of age" (VIII.xii). The love one has for a friend is an extension of the love one has for oneself, and "a friend is a second self" (IX.iv, viii). Friends have all things in common (VIII.ix). This heavy emphasis on similarity and equality does not, however, exclude a certain degree of inequality--which generally must be compensated by the inferior partner's stronger love and greater services to the superior one (VIII.vii-viii). Yet only in utilitarian relationships do friends make a strict reckoning of goods and services owing to one another. A good

¹See this thesis, p. 7.

friend overlooks minor inequalities: "For friendship asks a man to do what he can, not what is proportional to the merits of the case" (VIII.xiv). Aristotle consistently stresses the human and social side of friendship, excluding from it the love of inanimate objects, pleasures, or persons known only from a distance. Friendship assumes reciprocation: "To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing good will and wishing well to each other" (VIII.ii). In true friendship, where the friends are of equal merit, "each gets from each in all respects the same as, or something like what, he gives; which is what ought to happen between friends" (VIII.iv). Far from being a cold-blooded exchange of goods, friendship requires friends to live together, "delight in each other and confer benefits on each other". It is, in the full Aristotelian sense of that term, an "activity"--which means that unless friends are directly engaged in benefitting and associating with one another, their friendship cannot be said to exist except as a mere "disposition" and "potential" awaiting actualization (VIII.v). For these reasons an absence or separation of friends plunges their relationship into momentary abeyance and may even lead to permanent estrangement (VIII.v). If friends do not live together constantly, then they are not really friends but only "well-disposed" to one another. Needless to say, for Aristotle friendship's greatest pleasure resides in actions undertaken mutually and carried through with mutual love and happiness in the desired end (VIII.vi, xii; IX.iv, xii).

Cicero describes "the whole essence of friendship" as

"the most complete agreement in policy, in pursuits, in opinions" (iv). In keeping with his warm and "romanticized" attitude toward the subject, he especially stresses the emotional sympathy between friends: "Friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things human and divine, conjoined with mutual good-will and affection"; and being with a friend is "as if you were communing with yourself" (vi). There are never any secrets between true friends (xxv). For Cicero the essence of similarity is more a matter of spiritual affinity between friends than their external equalities of age, rank, appearance, and so on; more freely than Aristotle, he admits external inequalities into the relationship, maintaining that where virtue and sympathy are equal there need be no inequality of affection (xix, xxvii). The inferior friend in such cases should, however, beware of over-possessiveness and refrain from complaints, reproaches, jealousies; and, following Aristotle, he must be more attentive and loving so as to compensate for his other failures. Friendship is first of all a matter of the heart, and Cicero rejects especially vigorously the mechanical formulae which hold: 1) that a friend should be valued at the rate set upon him by the world; 2) that a friend should be valued no higher than one values oneself; and 3) that friendship requires a calculated exchange of feelings and services (xvi). Nor does he state the Aristotelian idea that friends ought to hold all possessions in common; he does not so much deny this essentially materialistic arrangement as ignore it while stressing its more spiritualized correlative--that friends possess a common

soul (xxi). He is also inclined to hold out hope for the survival of friendship during absence, acknowledging its painful and deleterious effect but stopping short of Aristotle's rigid dictum that friendship simply ceases to exist when friends are apart. A true friend, who shares one's soul and is the spiritual image of oneself, is eternally present; "Wherefore friends, though absent, are at hand; though in need, yet abound, . . . though dead, are yet alive" (vii). The dead Scipio, Cicero's youthful friend, still lives in memory, and in that (rather sentimental) sense their friendship has not ceased even with the ultimate separation of death (iv). But the norm of friendship is, of course, a happy life together, and in these same early remarks on his dead friend, Cicero stresses with minute particularity the harmonious beauty of their shared moments:

I feel as if my life has been happy because it was spent with Scipio, with whom I shared my public and private cares; lived under the same roof at home; served in the same campaigns abroad, and enjoyed that wherein lies the whole essence of friendship--the most complete agreement in policy, in pursuits, in opinions.
(iv)

This catalog of friends' shared pursuits crops up over and over again in future discussions. To Aristotle's "mutual good-will and affection" Cicero adds a more romanticized component--the notion of spiritual "accord" or, in the words of a later author, "the marriage of true minds." Yet in his various warm evocations of friends' pleasurable intimacy, Cicero never strays very far away from the informing conception of virtue--the principal bond and source of every similarity

between friends:

by familiar association with him whom they have begun to love, they may enjoy his character, equal him in affection, become readier to deserve than to demand his favours and vie with him in a rivalry of virtue. (ix)

The classical commonplaces of mutuality do not undergo any such long and problematic development in the Renaissance as was described in the case of the classical commonplaces of virtue. With a few exceptions most authors are content to reproduce the classical ideas quite without modification and with, at the most, selective omission of such particular commonplaces as are not immediately pertinent to the author's concerns. Elyot's introduction of classical ideas into England in his Governour is quite faithful to his main sources, Aristotle and Cicero. Man seeks for his "semblable" on whom to "practise amitie":

For as Tullie sayeth, Nothinge is more to be loved or to be joynd to gether, than similitude of good maners or vertues; where in be the same or semblable studies, the same willes or desires, in them it hapneth that one in another as moche deliteth as in him selfe.²

It requires, however, more than mere similitude in virtue to establish friendship (some virtues, such as liberality and frugality, not mixing well with one another); a deep and broad correspondance of manners and habits is necessary. And still more, because there are so many lets and bars between men and because virtue is often austere and intractable, friendship requires a certain indefinable quality which neither "concord" nor "similarity" are quite adequate to describe.

²Elyot, p. 121.

It is a blessed and stable connexion of sondrie willes, making of two parsones one in havinge and suffringe. And therefore a frende is proprely named of Philosophers the other I. For that in them is but one mynde and one possession; . . .³

One indication of this mysterious correspondence of minds is the miraculous physical resemblance of friends; Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pithias, share identical physical likenesses (making each almost literally an "other I"). The same is true of the principal characters of Elyot's own fiction, Titus and Gisippus; the latter

nat onely was equall to the said yonge Titus in yeres, but also in stature, proporcion of body, favour, and colour of visage, countenance and speche. The two children were so like, that without moche difficultie it could nat be discerned of their propre parentes, whiche was Titus from Gisippus, or Gisippus from Titus. These two yonge gentilmen, as they semed to be one in fourme and personage, so, shortly after acquaintaunce, the same nature wrought in their hartes such a mutuall affection, that their willes and appetites daily more and more so confederated them selves, that it seemed none other, whan their names were declared, but that they hadde onely chaunged their places, issuinge (as I mought say) out of the one body, and entringe in to the other.⁴

Elyot, who, naturally enough, considers friendship an extraordinarily rare occurrence, invests it with a magic and a mystery which are somewhat alien to the classical conception. All the commonplaces of similarity and mutuality are stated, but in terms rather more extravagant than are to be found in Cicero. It need hardly be said that Elyot's friends live together and are equally affectionate; their terms of mutual endearment are consistently lover-like (Gisippus "therwith

³Elyot, p. 130.

⁴Elyot, p. 134.

embraced and sweetly kyssed Titus")⁵ and they vie as to who shall be allowed to sacrifice the most for the other: "Thus they of longe tyme with abundaunce of teares contended whiche of them shulde die for the other."⁶ The requirement of commonality of goods is given an especially odd twist. Titus attributes the friends' common love of the same woman to their natural similarity of mind and affection in all things, including tastes in women; and Gisippus substitutes himself for his friend on the wedding night (after first being the one to propose his friend's marriage) and several times speaks of his friend's marriage as "our marriage."⁷ Titus' immediate renunciation of the lady with whom he is supposed to be in love upon discovering his friend's equal love of her satisfies yet another commonplace of mutuality--one's willingness to sacrifice anything for a friend. Finally, despite the complete equality upon which the friendship of Titus and Gisippus is at first established, later events demonstrate the classical truth that a mere change of fortune ought not to hinder virtuous friendship. When Gisippus falls on bad times and returns in a state of beggary to his friend, Titus does not at first recognize him, but when he does so it is to resume the friendship on the old basis of equality. Yet, with characteristic pessimism, Elyot remarks that this action is very unlike the debased and mer-

⁵Elyot, p. 144.

⁶Elyot, p. 158.

⁷Elyot, p. 139-142. For a discussion of friends' commonality of goods as regards a mutually loved woman see the following chapter.

cenary ones of present-day friends, where if "fortune is more benevolent to the one than to the other, the friendship waxeth tedious, and he that is advanced desireth to be matched with one having semblable fortune."⁸

Richard Edwards' Damon and Pithias also heavily accentuates (both conceptually and dramatically) the physical and mental likeness of the two equally boring and virtuous heroes:

All one in effect, all one in their going,
 All one in their study, all one in their doing.
 These gentlemen both, being of one condition
 Both alike of my services have all the fruition:
 Pithias is joyful, if Damon be pleased;
 If Pithias is served, then Damon is eased.
 Serve one, serve both (so near), who would win them
 I think they have but one heart between them.⁹

Some variant of this passage is stated on a number of occasions in the course of the work, the parallelisms and repetitions of the verse drumming home the classical litany of friends' similarity and identity in every humblest detail. The play's action (as well as its set speeches) also demonstrates the truth that a friend is "another myself";¹⁰ Pithias offers to take the place of his friend, under sentence of death by the bad king Dionysius, and is allowed to do so. Of course this also demonstrates a friend's willingness to make any sacrifice:

Damon hath a friend,
 That loves him better than his own life, and will do

⁸Elyot, p. 172.

⁹Edwards, p. 26.

¹⁰Edwards, p. 45.

to his end.
 Take me, O mighty kings; my life I pawn for his;
 Strike off my head, if Damon hap at his day to miss.¹¹

When Damon does belatedly return, the two friends break into parallel speeches pleading for each other's lives, each avowing his desire of dying for the other in fulfillment of the vows of friendship.

The story of "The Love of Chariton and Menalippus" in Painter's Palace of Pleasure vies with that of Damon and Pithias as an example of friends' capacity for self-sacrifice. Chariton undertakes to redress Menalippus' grievance against the tyrant Phalaris, is captured and put to the rack. Menalippus, upon hearing of his friend's situation, confesses falsely that it was himself rather than Chariton who planned the action, and that it should be himself rather than his friend who suffers at the hand of the tyrant. Phalaris, overwhelmed by such examples of virtue, thereupon pardons them both.¹² Another story in Painter's collection, "Of a Jalous Gentleman," includes a striking statement of friends' commonality of goods:

there was betweene them but one harte, one bed, one house, one table, and one purse. Long time continued this perfect friendship; betwene whom there was but will and one woorde, no difference in either of them. . . . [They] appeared in al semblances to be but one man. . . . the married gentleman would not stick to suffer his friend to lie with him and his wife. But yet you ought for friendship sake to consider that the married man lay in the mids. Their goodes were

¹¹Edwards, p. 55.

¹²William Painter, The Palace of Pleasure, ed. Joseph Jacobs (3 vols; New York: Dover Publications, 1966), I, story X.

common betwene them . . .¹³

Yet an ambiguity as to just how "common" the woman ought to be in the end provokes the husband's jealousy and is the undoing of the friendship. To that extent the dictum of commonality appears to be slightly discredited, at least in the context of a wife. One must also admit that the vignette of the two friends and the woman sharing the same bed (with the husband strategically placed in the middle) tends to excite contempt for the commonplace. But this is really a special case of an undoubtedly valid truth of friendship being brought low by the entrance into the scene of the vile and corrupting passion of love. That passion (as the next chapter will demonstrate) characteristically leads to a dissolution of friendship's noble vows.

In The Courtyer Syr Friderick states that friends "should be alike in wyll, in mynde, in judgemente, and inclination". "For it seemeth by nature, that everye thing doeth willingly felawshippe with his lyke."¹⁴ In the ensuing disagreement between Bembo and Syr Friderick the former takes the view that true friendship ought to be a stern and upright fellowship of virtuous souls, such as in the present time no longer exists. Syr Friderick rather emphasizes the sociable and pleasant side of the relationship; according to him a friend should be "gentle, lowely, freeherted, easie to be spoken to, and sweete in company," rather than captious and over-observant

¹³Painter, I, p. 104.

¹⁴Castiglione, p. 137.

of trivial faults.¹⁵ Similarly, Montaigne, though exulting in the frank and vigorous speech which exists between friends, mainly stresses the lively and pleasant nature of the relationship. For example, he states that it is better to be in the care of strangers than of dear friends as one approaches death: "Vivons et rions entre les nostres, allons mourir et rechigner entre les inconnus." "Je me deffais tous les jours par discours de cette humeur puerile et inhumaine, qui faict que nous desirons d'esmouvoir par nos maux la compassion et le deuil en nos amis."¹⁶ This, indeed, agrees well with Aristotle's view that friendship ought to be a relationship sought by happy, active, and independent men, and is more likely to occur in prosperity than in need. For, despite the rather extreme gestures of self-sacrifice which comprise one aspect of mutuality between friends, its more typical form is envisioned by most authors as the situation of two persons living together harmoniously and happily engaged in mutual pursuits. Montaigne, for example, passionately develops the point (expounded initially by Aristotle and Cicero) that friends' mutual offices and duties do not arise from a cold calculation but from the spontaneous affection of the heart:

elle leur faict perdre le sentiment de tels devoirs, et haïr et chasser d'entre eux ces mots de division et de difference: bien faict, obligation, reconnoissance, priere, remerciement, et leurs pareils. Tout estant par effect commun entre eux, volonte, pensemens, jugemens, biens, femmes, enfans, honneur et vie, et leur convenance n'estant qu'un'ame en deux

¹⁵Castiglione, p. 139.

¹⁶Montaigne, III, p. 192.

corps selon la très-propre definition d'Aristote, ils ne se peuvent ny prester, ny donner rien.¹⁷

In Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit Euphues and Philautus duly strike up their friendship on the basis of similitude, but only on that basis and without regard to the need for virtue. The two are truly "semblable," but they are so in being equally seekers of pleasure careless of the virtuous life; such vicious similitude (as the story rather heavy-handedly demonstrates) is not in itself sufficient to maintain friendship. As a sort of weather-cock of intellectual fashion, however, Lyly's rhetoric may be briefly quoted on the subject of friends' mutuality and similarity. A friend is called "at all times an other I, in all places y^e expresse Image of mine owne person". "Doth not the sympathy of manners, make the coniunction of mindes? Is it not a by woord, like will to like?"¹⁸

Friends used not onely one boord, but one bedde, one booke (if so be it they thought not one to many). Their friendship augmented every day, insomuch y^t the one could not refraine y^e company of y^e other one minute, all things went in comon betweene them, which all men accompted comendable.¹⁹

But these noble sentiments are rendered ludicrous by the friendship's more important failures of virtue. Only once does Euphues allow a moment's doubt to enter his mind as to whether his friendship with Philautus has been sufficiently tested for sterner qualities: "Have I not also learned that

¹⁷Montaigne, I, p. 238.

¹⁸Lyly, I, p. 197.

¹⁹Lyly, I, p. 199.

one shoulde eate a bushell of salt with [a friend?]" etc.²⁰
 But this more strenuous consideration is immediately dispelled
 by a return of the comforting commonplace of friends' simi-
 litude; Euphues' abuse of that worthy commonplace is in fact
 one symptom of his general viciousness. He goes on at length
 about friends' mutual affection and their willingness to
 sacrifice themselves for one another—just after he has deter-
 mined to betray Philautus, having reached the howlingly false
 (by conventional standards) opinion that friendship is of
 less value than love.²¹ If the commonplaces are not them-
 selves called into question under such circumstances, their
 potential hollowness and treachery are at least suggested.
 Following the alienation of Euphues and Philautus, the former's
 disillusionment with love and reformation, and the friends'
 eventual reconciliation, the newly constituted (and presumably
 more virtuous) friendship proceeds to dispense with several
 of the old sources of mutuality. In place of the former
 mutual pursuit of pleasure there is now only a spate of
 moralistic homilies. The friend's tastes have grown apart,
 and they resolve to live separately--all this apparently
 without detriment to their new-found friendship:

the one was so addicted to the court, the other so
 wedded to the university, that each refused y^e offer
 of the other [to live with him], yet this they agreed
 betweene themselves that though their bodies were by
 distance of place severed, yet the coniunction of their
 mindes shoulde neither bee separated, by the length

²⁰Lylly, I, p. 197.

²¹Lylly, I, p. 212.

of time, nor alienated by change of soyle.²²

Here, again, is a brief suggestion of heresy; even allowing for a degree of irony in this reconciliation, it tends to call into question the conventional truth that friendship requires a shared life. In an admittedly rudimentary way it lays the foundation for a future portrayal of a friendship consisting, in the teeth of all the commonplaces, of absence and dissimilarity between friends.

Greene's account of these matters in Morando is absolutely orthodox, except perhaps that he lays a little more than usual stress on a friend's preparedness for self-sacrifice and tends to regard such an action as the best test of his sincerity. To be sure, he says, one ought not to require anything unjust of a friend or "seeking his hindrance," and his service "ought to exercise it selfe not for hire or for recompence, but onely for his love that is beloved of us." It ought nevertheless to be forthcoming "in iust and reasonable courses; as if one be oppressed uniuistly, if affliction and aduersitie follow hard at our heeles, if neede, povertie, or any other humane accident betide us".²³ (The emphasis might well fall in this direction in an author so frequently himself needing assistance from his friends.) A friend is one who ought to be better loved than a person's self and who ought to be given absolute trust; he is one whose every activity, whether in happiness or misery, ought to be shared

²²Lyly, I, p. 246.

²³Greene, III, pp. 152-3.

and from whom one should have no secrets.

Moreover wee must delight in the companie and conversation of our friend, as in that wherein the most pleasant and sweetest fruit of Friendship consisteth: And for want of this benefite hindered by distance of place, friends must communicate often by letters, thereby to shew that they live in remembrance one of another . . .²⁴

Here again is provision for friends' absences, not as a desirable but as an occasionally necessary state. Yet one more passage, however, proclaims Greene's typical message--the sympathetic aid and support that is owed to a friend who has been hurt by the neglect or hostility of the world:

his affliction, his adversitie, his mishap, and everie iniurie whatsoever offered unto him, either by envie, or fortune, ought to be common to us with him, wherein we are to assist and helpe him with all succour and sweet consolation . . .²⁵

Greene's remarks in this context only intensify the commonplace of self-sacrifice, but their passionate intensity is well to remember when considering certain of Shakespeare's sonnets.

In his Arcadia Sidney portrays at length a friendship marked by every sort of mutuality. This quality is set forth almost schematically when the friends' births and upbringing are first described. The fathers of Pyrocles and Musidorus had themselves been friends and had married each other's sisters; and Musidorus' father had later been killed while assisting Pyrocles' father in war, so that the latter undertook the ubringing of his dead friend's son along with

²⁴Greene, III, p. 153.

²⁵Greene, III, p. 154.

his own. Pyrocles and Musidorus were not born at exactly the same time (the latter was three years older), but the births of both were marked by identical disturbances of the heavens portending the greatness of both. Upon reaching manhood, Musidorus refrained, at much inconvenience to his own ambition, from taking up arms until his friend Pyrocles should be old enough to join him in the exercise of heroic virtue. The mutual education of the princes was described in the previous chapter; but the intimate connection between the activity of learning and mutuality ought to be re-emphasized:

Pyrocles bare reverēce ful of love to Musidorus, & Musidorus had a delight full of love in Pyrocles. Musidorus, what he learned either for body or minde, would teach it to Pyrocles; and Pyrocles was so glad to learne of none, as of Musidorus . . .²⁶

Not only were the two friends educated together, but each delights in educating the other, and on every imaginable topic, throughout the course of the Arcadia. It is one of the chief ways they spend their time together, though these "sterner" propensities do not exclude them, as we have seen, from a fair amount of mutual levity, of taking mutual pleasure in nature's beauties, and, above all, of being mutually in love. Pyrocles' falling in love and his consequently altered conception of life at first threaten to disrupt the friends' relationship, not only because it appears to violate the demand for virtue, but because it renders him dissimilar and disagreeable to Musidorus. When Musidorus himself falls in love

²⁶Sidney, I, p. 190.

only pages later, that act is made to seem as the sort of tit for tat which ought to occur between friends who are perfect in their similarity and mutuality. Or, to put it another way, Musidorus' acceptance of the condition of love in his friend leads, rather comically but logically, to himself falling victim to it; all impediments to the friendship's continuation are erased when Musidorus, failing to dissuade his friend from heresy, joins him in it and restores the necessary similarity and conformity of minds to the relationship. Thereafter the friends faithfully confide the secrets of their love affairs to one another, give and receive advice and support, and find in their mutually love-lorn states the strongest single bond between them.

The work is, however, full of unrelated actions of self-sacrifice, in strict conformity with that most austere aspect of the mutuality of friends. Musidorus, thinking Pyrocles killed by the shipwreck in which he has himself almost died, must be restrained from ending his own life. In the midst of Arcadia's beauties he can think only of his friend: "till I have him againe . . . I am in deed nothing".²⁷ Later, when, unbeknownst to one another, the friends wind up on opposite sides of a conflict, they wage a furious battle against each other until, Pyrocles having recognized his opponent, 'at once humbles himself and pleads for mercy: "he thought it more libertie to be his prisoner, than any others generall."²⁸

²⁶Sidney, I, p. 14.

²⁷Sidney, I, p. 43

In one episode Pyrocles is captured by a wicked king and is about to be executed, when (as in Damon and Pithias and "The Love of Chariton and Menalippus") his friend arrives and presents himself as a substitute. The two then promptly fall to arguing as to who should have the honor of dying for the other; this ceases when they get the chance to fight their way out of the situation, wielding their swords side by side.²⁸ The occasions of the friends' parting from each other are always fraught with the usual laments and arguments protesting continued faithfulness. Pyrocles, the younger and somewhat more emotional of the pair, falls into anguished self-questioning whenever the necessity arises of departing from Musidorus.²⁹ This is especially the case when affairs of love require an absence:

partlie his owne grieffe of parting from one he loved so dearely, partly the kinde care in what state he should leave Zelmane /i.e. Musidorus/, bredd such a conflicte in his minde, that many times he wished, he had either never attempted, or never revealed his secret enterprise.³⁰

Though it often occurs in the course of the Arcadia and though it never disrupts their friendship, separation is a condition which neither friend is able to view indifferently. Partings are invariably tearful, emotional, and full of assertions of selfless love. Musidorus states that even though parting wrings him with grief

because indeede I love thee for thy selfe, and in my

²⁸Sidney, I, pp. 198 ff.

²⁹Sidney, I, p. 264.

³⁰Sidney, II, p. 4.

judgement judge of thy worthiness to be loved, I am content to build my pleasure upon thy comforte; And then will I deeme my happe in friendshippe great, when I shall see thee, whome I love happie. . . . Let every thing yeeld his helpe to thy deserte, for my part absence shall not take thee from mine eyes . . .³¹

Finally, at the conclusion of the Arcadia, when the friends are on trial for their mutual misdeeds in the service of love (a rather low point for both of them from the point of view of their moral pretensions) the previous scene in which they pled for each other's lives is re-enacted, at greater length and with more pathos, since neither attempts to justify or save himself, only his friend. Their arguments abundantly utilize the conceit (or commonplace) of friends' identical souls and the continued existence after death of one friend's soul (or being) in that of the other:

Let Musidorus live, and Pyrocles shall live in him, and you /i.e., Musidorus' father/ shall not want a childe. A Childe cried out Musidorus, to him, that killes Pyrocles? with that againe he fell to intreate for Pyrocles, and Pyrocles as fast for Musidorus, each employing his wit how to shew himselfe most worthy to die, to such an admiration of all the beholders.³²

Spenser's main statement of the mutuality commonplaces occurs in his description of the brothers Priamond-Diamond-Triamond:

Borne of one mother in one happie mold,
Borne at one burden in one happie mome,
Thrise happie mother, and thrise happie mome,
That have three such, three such not to be fond; . . .
(II.xli)

The syntactical parallelisms and the repetitions of words mime the various similarities attributed to the brothers--

³¹Sidney, II, p. 3.

³²Sidney, II, p. 204.

identical appearances, identical ages, identical souls (as will shortly appear), and, of course, identical mothers (brothers being, according to Aristotle, potentially the best sort of friends by reason of their shared backgrounds).³³

The attribute of identity of soul, a conventional conceit of the perfect agreement of friends, is in this case literally demonstrated; for their mother extracts a promise from the fates that when any of her sons dies, his soul will join his nearest brother. (This is also a literal depiction of the commonplace that one is not truly separated from a friend in death, by reason of friends' miraculous identity.) During the brothers' battle with Cambell this magical device is actually employed: when Priamond and Diamond are slain, their souls pass to Triamond, who is then able to survive two certain "deaths" at the hands of Cambell. The fact that in this careful scheme there are three rather than the usual two friends is also significant; for it expresses Spenser's conception of friendship as a harmonious relationship extended to all members of society, and ultimately to the cosmos itself. Just as the work's principal emblem of friendship (Cambell and Triamond) also makes room for the friends' lady loves (Canacee and Cambina), and just as its various emblems of harmony culminate in that immense catalog of all the rivers of England at the marriage of the Thames and the Medway, so the brothers, by being three rather than two, emblemize the first extension of the concept away from the private bond. Next the friendship between the brothers is subsumed into the relationship between Cambell and Triamond, and then the ladies

³³See this thesis, p. 119.

are added, and the circle continues to widen outward. About one commonplace, however, Spenser speaks only once and then with ridicule. Paridell reminds Blandamour:

. . . when we friendship first did sweare,
The covenant was, that every spoyle or pray
Should equally be shard betwixt us tway: . . . (II.xiii)

The requirement of commonality of goods is alluded to. But this is a grotesque friendship and an obviously self-interested argument; Paridell's only motive is obtaining the services of his friend's lady, and the commonplace merely fuels his purposes. It is not the first time that this particular aspect of mutuality has been absurdly extended to the case of a friend's lady.³⁴ Spenser is more congenial to the traditional emblems of mutual self-sacrifice. On the second day of the tournament for Florimell's girdle, Cambell and Triamond perform prodigies of self-sacrifice for one another's sake. First, Cambell puts on his friend's armor and represents him on the field of battle (for Triamond has been incapacitated the day before), vindicating his friend's honor at the expense of his own--since, being mistaken for Triamond (another emblem of friends' identity), he is himself missed among the combatants. When Cambell, however, finds himself getting in trouble in the battle, Triamond rises from his sick-bed, puts on Cambell's armor, and goes out to rescue him (being in turn mistaken for his friend). The symmetry is perfect: two friends, each in the armor of the other, each sacrificing himself for the other's sake, fight side by side and at the end of the day are jointly

³⁴See this thesis, pp. 127-8.

awarded the prize. Thereupon ensues the usual debate about which friend will have the privilege of relinquishing that prize in favor of the other:

But Triamond to Cambell it relest.
 And Cambell it to Triamond transferd;
 Each labouring t'advance the others gest,
 And make his praise before his owne preferd; . . .
 (IIII.xxxvi)

Placidus similarly sacrifices himself for his friend Amyas, in their briefly interpolated story in Canto VIII. He voluntarily joins his friend in Corflambo's prison, substitutes for him in receiving the lustful embraces of Corflambo's daughter (the two friends being, of course, identical in appearance), and thereby allows Amyas to escape his prison while he himself is left behind, a monument of self-denial in the cause of true friendship.

Marlowe's treatment of these commonplaces is the most heretical to be found among pre-Shakespearean English authors. The principle of equality is hardly fulfilled in any friendship depicted in his plays. Tamburlaine's speeches to his allies are, as we have seen, saturated with friendship commonplaces (especially the one requiring a common sharing of the spoils of conquest), but there is never any question of his superiority of station or of merit. In the admittedly burlesque relationship between Barabas and Ithamore in The Jew of Malta, Ithamore, the petty thief and cut-throat, never ceases to fawn pitifully on his "great" master, which is the term with which he habitually addresses him. This does not prevent Barabas from using friendly terms of endearment or from constantly using the term "friend" when addressing Ithamore:

Come near, my love; come near, thy master's life,
My trusty servant, nay my second self . . . (III.iv.14-15)

Such terms, given the actual nature of the friendship, acquire a comical grotesqueness. In Edward II the disproportion between language and reality is similar, but with tragic rather than comic effect. Edward seeks continually to minimize the gross disparity between himself and Gaveston, a condition which flies so profoundly in the face of the true friendship to which he so seriously aspires:

What, Gaveston! Welcome! Kiss not my hand;
Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee.
Why shouldst thou kneel? Knowest thou not who I am?
Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston! (I.i.140-44)

He attempts here to circumvent the dictum requiring equality by citing the commonplace that a friend is "another I;" elsewhere he literally attempts to raise Gaveston's status nearer his own by heaping him with titles and honors. He also freely cites the commonplace of friends' shared goods (the "goods" being in this case the Kingdom of England). Thus in the first words of the play, the letter to Gaveston, Edward's invitation to "share the kingdom with thy dearest friend" indicates his intention of subordinating every other consideration to that of maintaining the orthodoxies (or the selected orthodoxies) of friendship. The elevation of Gaveston, whether it be to fulfil friendship's demand for equality or whether in defiance of it, is of course the main source of all Edward's initial troubles as a king (later on it is his attachment to other inferior friends). This friendship, invalid in several respects, nevertheless contrives to mask its weaknesses by numerous statements of orthodox friendship commonplaces. In

defiance of every other earthly value Edward claims that he will "either die or live with Gaveston" (I.i.138). Terms of lover-like (but also, as has been shown, friendship-like) endearment are constantly on the lips of both friends, and, though they do not actually die together, the friends die largely for one another's sakes. They are also seen enjoying life together, though briefly, in the pleasant and merry fashion prescribed for friends. Gaveston, after being outrageously heaped with material honors by his friend, replies, with apparent sincerity, "I have my wish in that I joy thy sight" (I.i.151). Edward's governing passion is in maintaining Gaveston in his presence, and, when the friends are forced to part, the usual anguished exchanges occur between them:

Edward. Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words.
Thou from this land, I from myself am banished.

Gaveston. To go from hence grieves not poor Gaveston,
But to forsake you, in whose gracious looks
The blessedness of Gaveston remains;
For nowhere else seeks he felicity. (I.iv.116-22)

Edward. Thy absence made me droop and pine away . . .
(II.ii.52)

In a sense the play's main action is a portrayal of the lengths to which Edward will go in sacrificing himself for the sake of his friends. Edward repeatedly states himself prepared to lay down crown and life for his friends, and ultimately the action requires him to do so.

And could my crown's reverence bring him back,
I would freely give it to his enemies
And think I gained, having bought so dear a friend.
(I.iv.307-309)

O Gaveston, it is for thee that I am wronged;

For me both thou and both the Spencers died,
 And for your sakes a thousand wrongs I'll take. (V.iii.41-3)

It is a measure of Marlowe's edgy and undetermined view of the mutuality commonplaces that such seemingly unexceptionable statements as the ones above, while they carry a weight of pathos and thwarted nobility, must be judged on the whole as expressions of Edward's misplaced and deluded loyalties.

The mutuality commonplaces are not developed in any such distinct direction by Renaissance authors as was the case with the commonplaces of virtue in friendship. There is, however, a tendency toward somewhat more extravagant application of certain of them--especially the requirements of mutual self-sacrifice (cf. Edwards, Spenser, Sidney) and friends' miraculous identities of soul and appearance. These developments, together with a general quality of heightened emotionalism surrounding such great events as friends' parting and friends' selfless sacrifices, suggest that the classical commonplaces, far from falling into disfavor, acquire a more intense and "romanticized" sense of conviction in the Renaissance. It is true that Lyly injects a critical note into this development when he suggests that the observance of mutuality may mask failings of virtue; and, similarly, Marlowe's treatment shows a cynical and dubious attitude toward them. But these are isolated cases in authors who had determined to achieve blatantly grotesque effects. The mutuality commonplaces largely embody the Renaissance authors' warm and passionate sense of the nature of the attachment between man and man, and they are

likely to be presented, not so much as the defining characteristic of the relationship (as was the case with virtue in friendship), but as descriptive and emblematic qualities more or less capable of being omitted. (Commonality of goods is, for example, largely omitted or invoked only for purposes of irony, and yet ordinarily without any intention of discrediting the fact of friends' personal intimacy.) The norm which they collectively embody is, however, indubitable--friendship as a relationship marked by an absolute intimacy of understanding and of physical presence at every level and in every respect.

Shakespeare's treatment must be attributed in good part to his "Platonic" conception. As we have seen, Plato's notion of friendship has little to do with (in fact, is contradictory to) the social and concrete side of the relationship and actually prescribes a tenuous sort of momentary contact between entirely unequal and dissimilar parties. Shakespeare, too, typically depicts his friend as a wonderful being far above himself--in beauty, in social station, in moral worth (i.e. when it is a question of a comparison to himself), in the general excellence of his being. These features have been largely described in the previous chapter. The sonnets are, however, so lacking in concrete details that one can point to few specific resemblances or dissimilarities between the friends; except in the matters of beauty and age (which have a "metaphysical" significance anyway), the poet's descriptions are limited to generalized lamentations of his own worthlessness and his friend's resounding excellence. That disparity often troubles and pains him, and it does so, at least partly, be-

cause it constitutes a violation of mutuality in friendship. The friend is regularly depicted as on the verge of rejecting the poet because of the latter's inferior and worthless state, and his frequently cited but seldom specified "strength of laws" (49) probably refers to the commonplaces of mutuality as well as those of virtue; for theory holds that friends ought to be similar and equal in every respect, virtue included. Such considerations belong to the conventional "ethical" interpretation of friendship theory, as opposed to the Platonized "metaphysical" one. On the one hand conventional theory demands similitude and reciprocity between friends, and on the other, Platonic ideas suggest disparity and distance. As was the case with his treatment of the virtue commonplaces, Shakespeare's conception of mutuality arises with much local variation and dramatic tension from the conflict of these two mutually exclusive conceptions. His response is at one moment almost purely Ciceronian, at another almost purely Platonic (or more properly, Petrarchan); and it is often an elusive and ambiguous compound of those two attitudes. This is the vital dialectic which the following discussion means to pursue.

Numerous sonnets depict the disparity between poet and friend in an untroubled and even joyful spirit, often adding to the essential mysticism of the poet's conception a prominent commonplace of ordinary friendship theory, that of the friend as an "other I." This is rather metaphysical-sounding in itself, but, coming from the best theoretical sources (it originated with Aristotle), it provides a kind of solid underpinning for Shakespeare's quite mystical and unclassical flights.

In sonnet 22 consolation for the melancholy fact of the poet's old age is provided by the argument that

My glass shall not persuade me I am old
So long as youth and thou are of one date; . . .

Here the disparity between himself and his friend is cause for rejoicing; the poet's real fear is that "Time's furrows" will one day render his friend only too like himself; "Then look I death my days should expiate". The friend's beauty has its normal Platonic significance (except for its potential subjection by Time), and the poet's participation in it evidently endows him with some of his friend's qualities. That "participation" is typically described in the terms of the identity commonplace: I am you (since a friend is an "other I") and therefore acquire those splendid qualities of yours which I do not possess in my own nature. How such similarity and disparity can co-exist remains a paradox, and one that is often underlined and pursued at length. Sonnet 22 continues:

For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me,--
How can I then be elder than thou art?
Oh therefore, love, be of thyself so wary
As I not for myself but for thee will, . . .

These are not particularly compelling lines, but their equivocation between the personal pronouns "I and thee" are characteristic of the poet's attempt to render the mystery of the merging identity of himself and his friend. The wispy tissue of paradox and conceit suggests the friends' concrete disparities quite as strongly as their mysterious identity. The specific image of one friend's soul or heart occupying the other's body (and thus emblemizing identity in the face of physical separation

as well as disparity) is one that will often return in the former context or wherever the poet requires a concrete image to prop up his literal assertions that a friend is an "other I." Aristotle and Cicero hardly intended any such metaphysical extension of what was for them a simple formula expressing friends' inherent similitude; Shakespeare's use of the formula, on the contrary, is intended precisely to compensate for the lack of any real similitude between himself and his friend. It shares in the Renaissance tendency to exaggerate and romanticize the classical formulae, but it patently violates the spirit of real mutuality which both classical and Renaissance authors require. One of the gains of such a usage is, however, the increased possibilities of dramatic and ironic conflict with which the commonplace becomes fraught. The paradoxical conflations and parallelisms of "I and thou" have been mentioned; the poet not only derives consolation from this source ("How can I then be elder than thou art?") but finds the occasion to deliver a gentle and slightly humorous warning to his friend to take care of his beauty, since it belongs to the two of them (with a suggestion, also, of the requirement of commonality of goods between friends).

In sonnet 36 the poet declares that the friends must keep apart, because of "those blots that do with me remain," and he concludes with the consoling thought of friends' identity:

. . . I love thee in such sort
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

This couplet (which is identical with that of sonnet 96, where the blots apparently lie with the friend rather than the poet),

has, however, a special poignancy from the fact that the friend is evidently unwilling to share the poet's troubles or associate with him in concrete terms. Several times the paradox of spiritual identity in the face of concrete separation and inequality is underlined, as in the opening lines:

Let me confess that we two must be twain
Although our undivided loves are one: . . .

And later:

In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite, . . .

In the following sonnet 37 the paradox is drawn less sharply and is without this tinge of bitterness. Admitting his disabilities, the poet simply proposes to take solace from his friend's "worth and truth." He could hardly emphasize the concrete disparities between himself and his friend more strongly than he does here; and yet it is with little sense of regret:

For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more,
Entitled in their parts, do crowned sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store;
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despis'd,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give
That I in thy abundance am suffic'd,
And by a part of all thy glory live: . . .

The poet's deficiencies, as before, are literally transformed by his association with his spectacularly endowed friend. In this case the identity of friends is only implied; perhaps it is "this shadow that doth substance give." The term "shadow" suggests such an imaginary source of consolation as would be derived from an abstract conceit; but it also suggests the lack of concrete relationship and the specifically Platonic

nature of the friend (cf. "shadow" in sonnet 53 and elsewhere) from which the poet typically draws all his worth or "substance." A state of deprivation-in-abundance is indeed the abiding condition of the poet in these sonnets, and it is not the least of the paradoxes with which they are studded.

In sonnet 39 a physical separation between the two friends is described (a topic which will shortly be pursued in its own right), and a consolation based upon the commonplace of identity again ensues. The argument is curiously involuted:

Oh how thy worth with manners may I sing
When thou art all the better part of me?
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring?
And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?

Thus, to avoid overpraising himself (that is, by praising his other self, the friend) the poet recommends a separation; for then "our dear love will lose name of single one." Not living together of course contradicts the normal state of friends, and in this case (rather exceptional in Shakespeare's sonnets) it also implies the loss of the mystical attribute of identity. Such an argument bears witness to Shakespeare's knowledge and conscious manipulation of the commonplaces; it is difficult, however, to accept its ostensible motive (avoiding self-praise) as the true source of the friends' estrangement. The heretical denial of the identity of friends is also rather ominous and suggests either irony or simple doubt as to the validity of maintaining a friendship constituted more from imagination than concrete reality. The sonnet's couplet perpetrates two blatant and clearly ironical "howlers" from the point of view of friendship commonplaces:

. . . thou teachest how to make one twain
By praising him here who doth hence remain!

Friendship is held by theory to be a unity compounded of two individuals and an association of persons in the flesh; whereas the friend's teaching is "how to make one twain" by his policy of remaining distant. The couplet ostensibly records one of those familiar prodigies of friendship, but its terms are precisely contrary to the norm and thereby suggest a criticism of the friend's wilful perversity.

Sonnet 42 is one of several cases in which the commonplace of identity is invoked in the context of the situation involving the dark lady (and therefore will be more fully treated in the following chapter). Here the couplet may be quoted, just prior to which the poet has, with characteristically tortuous logic where the triangle is concerned, secured solace for himself in the face of his companions' mutual infidelities from the fact that each one has found another equally dear to him (the poet).

But here's the joy; my friend and I are one.
Sweet flattery! Then she loves but me alone!

One may doubt the seriousness of this particular assertion of the commonplace (admitted by the poet himself to be "Sweet flattery"), for it is invoked in a context in which the real spirit of mutuality is evidently being violated. As is so often the case in the sonnets, this graceful metaphor of the shared life, the identity of friends, is loaded with a weight of argument whose function is precisely to justify a serious breach of friendly behavior. Who can believe the couplet above? It is either the bitterest of ironies at the

expense of both lady and friend, or it is a rueful exposure of the absurdity of the identity commonplace, or it is merely a mechanical formula hastily imposed on an inappropriate situation for the sake of achieving an optimistic conclusion (a tendency to which Shakespeare was after all prone in his couplets).

In sonnet 133 the formula has for once a certain logical, if deeply distressing, force; the friends' situations correspond in the sense that each has been the recipient of a "deep wound" given by the cruel lady:

Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
 And my next self thou harder hast engross'd:
 Of him, my self, and thee I am forsaken,--
 A torment thrice threefold, thus to be cross'd.

Here the structure of equivocations between the personal pronouns ("him, myself, and thee") creates a sense of the poet's confusion as to the boundaries between himself, his friend, and his mistress. The phrase "me from myself" is equivocal between the meanings "false to my true self" and "false to my second self (i.e., my friend)"; and there is a similar ambiguity in the final line, where the poet, admitting his bondage to the lady, states that "I perforce am thine, and all that is in me." The last phrase suggests that the poet is yielding himself to the lady, and it also again suggests that he is yielding his friend ("my next self") to her. If the commonplace gains a measure of logical force in this context of the friends' shared love, its graceful idealism is nevertheless rendered grotesque by the tormenting and treacherous nature of that love.

In sonnet 134 an extensive network of parallels between "him and me" is again constructed out of the situation of the friends' common love of the dark lady. The commonplace of identity arises naturally and not unfeelingly:

So, now I have confess'd that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgag'd to thy will,
My self I'll forfeit, so that other mine
Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still.

The irony is all at the expense of the lady and does not carry the usual suggestion of some wrongdoing on the part of the friend; he has merely been sucked in by her devilish wiles, as the poet has been himself. And the poet therefore makes a rather odd-sounding offer to the lady (to whom the poem is addressed) to "forfeit" himself to her if she will release his friend. From one point of view this is demonstration of the commonplace of self-sacrifice; like Pithias or Musidorus the poet proposes to substitute himself for his friend in the hands of a fearful tyrant. Two lines later the poet explains the friend's behavior similarly as a self-sacrifice for the sake of himself (the poet):

For thou art covetous, and he is kind;
He learn'd but surety-like to write for me
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.

It is the cruel lady's whim to "sue a friend came debtor for my sake"; and even though "He pays the whole, . . . yet I am not free." Despite the meticulous internal consistency and the real feeling behind these noble sentiments, they reveal a dark and labyrinthine area of confusion and emotional entanglement among these persons of the triangle. The commonplace carries not much joy or sense of a fulfilled

relationship but again takes the form of a tortuous argument, in which the facade of virtuous friendship is again maintained in circumstances of fearful treachery.

In sonnet 149 reference to the friend is more oblique and comes entirely by way of the identity commonplace:

Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not,
When I against myself with thee partake?
Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
Am of myself, all tyrant, for thy sake?
Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?

In the fifth line the allusion to "myself" is tied down either to the actual friend of the sonnets or to the generalized idea of a friend. The obvious reading of the phrase "against myself with thee partake" is, of course, "I am false to my true self." But, as before, the identity of friends renders this "I am false to my friend." In this case the latter reading (which does not exclude the former) obtains a cogency from the fact that the second quatrain goes on to speak of the poet's alienation from a (perhaps hypothetical) friend for the mistress' sake. The word "partake" also has much more appropriateness in the context of loving the lady "against myself" if the friend is indicated; for then the friends would be obviously ranged "against" one another, and they would be "partaking" of her in the sense of literally sharing her body between them. To "partake against oneself" is, on the other hand, a logical impossibility; one simply partakes by oneself or with someone else, unless the language is being used in a special way, which is in fact the case here. The verbal confusion mimes that inherent in the situation itself, and the use of the identity commonplace serves only to underline the

unnatural antagonism between friend and friend.

The discussion of these latter instances of the commonplace has emphasized the unfavorable circumstances with which it must deal and which frequently undermine its "pure" function, which is to convey solace and joy in defiance of the concrete failure of mutuality in friendship. The tension between this function and the distressing reality often depicted in the sonnets is, as has been described, in a constant state of variation from one sonnet to the next, but it is well to conclude our discussion of this particular commonplace with a sonnet where it is stated with a real warmth and conviction, even if in circumstances far from the norm of perfect friendship. Sonnet 109, as was described in the previous chapter, offers arguments excusing some indefinite but evidently grievous offense by the poet against his friend; but it ultimately achieves a mood of humble supplication and intense love. It is in this context that the commonplace of identity occurs, being offered both in excuse for a specific misdeed and as an emblem of the friends' intense connection despite all such lapses:

As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie; . . .

This outwardly resembles previous arguments in which certain sins and infidelities (of either friend) were excused on the basis of this or that conceit. The difference is that here one can believe in the poet's desire of mending his ways from the tone of humble submission with which the argument is submitted. The sonnet's means of emotional expression match

its statement of the noble commonplace, and the latter acquires conviction as more than a counter in an argument.³⁵

Several of the sonnets discussed above allude to the commonplace of commonality, especially as regards the dark lady. The last chapter will pursue this matter more fully, but here it is worth observing that Shakespeare does indeed demonstrate a lively awareness of that commonplace, frequently (as had been the case with Painter and Spenser) with ironic intent. Sonnet 40 begins as follows:

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all:
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call--
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more.
 Then if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest, . . .
/my stress/

The non-underlined instances of "my love" evidently refer to the friend or to affection for him; the underlined ones may be taken either as "my affection for you (the friend)" or "my mistress." Indeed some mixture of all these constructions is clearly necessary if one is to make any sense of the passage. In the ambiguous instances the first signification (of the friend) gains strength from the fact that the non-ambiguous ones also clearly indicate the friend; the second signification (of the mistress), on the other hand, introduces a parallelism between friend and mistress which seems necessary from the point of view of sense. If we read the ambiguous "my loves" exclusively as "my affection for my friend" we come up with an intolerable spate of fatuities; but if we read them exclu-

³⁵For a fuller discussion of this sonnet see this thesis, pp. 101-3.

sively as "my mistress" we come up with a more interesting but still confused statement of friends' commonality of goods. Since "All mine [i.e., love] was thine" (that is, since all the poet's goods were always his friend's, as specified by the commonplace) he can have no theoretical objection to this additional "taking" and "using" of "my love" (my mistress). Yet these lines clearly imply blame (as the sonnet indeed later states: "But yet be blam'd, . . ."), and not only because of the inherent churlishness of the friend in interpreting the commonality of goods in this delicate context. He is also implicitly blamed for his refusal to construe the phrase "my love" simply as "my affection for you"--thereby satisfying the classical requirement by a virtuous verbal quibble. Line 4 certainly implies a distinction between "my love for you" and "my mistress," and it is not to the advantage of the friend that he chooses the latter and therefore obtains, in distinction to the poet's "love" as "affection," the poet's "love" as "mistress"--which is "No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call". The passage may be over-subtle and dubiously successful, but it attempts to perform the difficult function of blaming the friend for his unlovely application of the commonality of goods and yet remain orthodox by not overtly attacking that requirement. The poet's attitude to the commonplace per se is actually of little importance; it becomes so only insofar as a means of defining the poet's ambiguous attitude toward his friend's action. The commonplace is quickly jettisoned in this particular sonnet and appears explicitly in no other, thus confirming one's

impression of its basic extraneousness. Its use above is patently absurd and is meant to be perceived as such, despite the attempt to remain orthodox with regard to it. The poet is indeed concerned with the concrete as well as the spiritual aspects of mutuality, and he constantly voices the hope or conviction of participating in the friend's "beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit" (37); but his assertions of mutuality are on the whole too tenuous and ideal to sort well with such a gross and prosaic requirement as common possession of goods. That requirement, though it is often mildly suggested in the sonnets, assumes a life of concrete association such as does not exist, or is at any rate highly problematic, in the friendship depicted.

Most of the sonnets so far discussed strongly imply a failure of this friendship to be reciprocal--to be that equally returned affection between individuals such as is prescribed by Aristotle and Cicero. The poet's own intense feelings are typically met by indifference or even hatred (or threatened hatred) from the friend. However, the sonnets do contain occasional assertions of apparently reciprocated affection:

Then happy I that love and am belov'd,
Where I may not remove nor be remov'd. (25)

Such passages are few and suspect. The optimistic couplet above concludes a sonnet about wordly success, or the poet's lack thereof; when contrasted to this disappointing situation, the state of friendship gets its brief and consolatory compliment. Sonnet 73 concludes, after a series of forceful depictions of age and death in the poet, with the following consolation:

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

This is more a theoretical conclusion than a description of the friend's actual behavior; it states what ought to be the response of a friend to the fact of human mortality, not necessarily what the friend's response has been. Sonnet 116 commences, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments", but the assertions that follow are generalized and concerned more with constancy than reciprocity. Now these objections would be negligible if the sonnets which give more particulars of the friends' association were not so decisively negative. It is enough to observe that sporadic and generalized signs of reciprocated affection do arise from the sonnets, stating an ideal only imperfectly realized in more substantial terms but preventing us from accepting indifference and hatred between friends as the moral norm. Sonnet 49 is typical of many sonnets in that, if it does not absolutely indict the friend for his coldness, it vividly depicts the imminent possibility of that state:

Against that time (if ever that time come)
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,
Whenas thy love hath cast his utmost sum,
Call'd to that audit by advis'd respects;
Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass
And scarcely greet me with that sun thine eye,
When love converted from the thing it was
Shall reasons find of settled gravity: . . .

The poet does not assert that this has yet come to pass; but he fears, evidently from signs of coldness in the present behavior of his friend, that the latter is capable of such actions. As we have observed, the friend is often depicted as basing his relationship with the poet on coldly rational

or even mercenary considerations, and many sonnets carry a tacit reproach of his deficiency in spontaneous natural affection. Sonnet 57 demonstrates how pathetically abject and one-sided the friendship can be:

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
 Upon the hours and times of your desire?
 I have no precious time at all to spend,
 Nor services to do, till you require;
 Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
 Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
 When you have bid your servant once adieu;
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
 But like a sad slave stay and think of nought
 Save where you are how happy you make those.
 So true a fool is love that in your will,
 Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

Sonnet 58 is nearly identical in language and attitude. In these sonnets the poet assumes a more than usually abject posture, but that they could be written at all in a work seriously concerned with friendship is the remarkable thing. The blatant contradiction of every principle of equality and reciprocity reminds one of Ithamore's grotesque maunderings in The Jew of Malta. The poet forfeits any claim to autonomy or independent life, and, what is more, foregoes the right of any intervention in the evidently cruel and careless doings of the friend. Now friendship authorizes the rendering of services to a friend, but these are intended to be reciprocated; here the friend may literally "do anything," including such things as evidently pain the poet terribly, and absolutely no form of reciprocation, material or emotional, is required of him. And it is clear that he, for his part, is indifferent or hostile to the poet--though, ironically enough, not to

some unspecified third party, perhaps the poet's mistress. Later in the cycle, the poet does indeed show himself capable of a "reciprocal" coolness toward the friend, or at any rate describes some such past mood (never literally depicted in the sonnets), which he is concerned to set right. Several sonnets apologize for a recent inattentiveness, an absence or a failure to keep up sonnet production; they nearly always attest, however, to a deep sense of guilt and typically end by asserting the constant (despite appearances) or renewed warmth of the poet's affection. Sonnet 102 finds the following cause to rejoice in whatever caused the past sad estrangement:

My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming;
I love not less, though less the show appear;
That love is merchandiz'd whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.

Again, in sonnet 115:

Those lines that I before have writ do lie,
Even those that said I could not love you dearer;
Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.

The poet almost never displays, for all his critical hits at his friend, anything close to a real present indifference to him. The sonnets bear witness from beginning to end and in all contexts to the warmth and intensity of the poet's devotion, whether it be in his fervent praises of his friend's beauty and excellence, his anxious concern for his friend's moral well-being and reputation, his almost embarrassing terms of personal endearment, his submission to all the neglect and mistreatment heaped upon his head, or his simple statements of his abiding attachment.

Against these evidences of the poet's affection, we may

put the previously mentioned instances of the friend's coldness (when he is on the verge of rejecting the poet entirely or of behaving simply indifferently to him). Also significant are those sonnets in which he so grossly fails to observe even the least part of the conventional requirement of self-sacrifice for a friend's sake. In nearly every previous treatment of friendship in the Renaissance, this commonplace had been especially high-lighted and exaggerated, typically carried to the extent of friendly arguments as to which friend may have the honor of dying for the other. In this context sonnet 71 has a rather odd sound, for all its genuine feeling:

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world with vildest worms to dwell;
 Nay, if you read this line, remember not
 The hand that writ it, for I love you so
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 Oh if, I say, you look upon this verse
 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
 But let your love even with my life decay;
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

The sacrifice of a tear is not required nor evidently expected of the friend, even as the poet gives an example of his own capacity for self-denial by authorizing that heartbreaking forgetfulness. This is, of course, the poet's suggestion and not a depiction of an actual fact, but, as is so often the case, it is hard not to believe that it is a forecast of the friend's expected behavior. How but as ironic can one take the concluding couplet, given the poet's obsessive contempt for "the world" everywhere else in the sonnets (in the fourth

line of this sonnet it is called "this vile world," to which the couplet's "the wise world" comes as a sardonic echo)? Moreover, it is characteristic of the poet to assert, by an act of the will and imagination, his own capacity of remaining eternally constant in the face of death and time. Here the friend is urged to break faith with that solemn obligation, and for no better reason than what he is everywhere else censured for regarding so inordinately--the wise world's estimation. Why should it mock him for his grief anyway? Despite these ironies one need not deny the poet's sincere desire of sparing his friend: it is, after all, a friend's part to do so. As is usual, love and criticism of the friend are inextricably mingled in the sonnet's complex tissues. In sonnet 90, however, the poet delivers a more scathing and direct reproach of the friend for his collusion with the world and neglect of himself (the poet):

Then hate me when thou wilt,--if ever, now--
 Now, while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
 Join with the spite of Fortune, make me bow,
 And do not drop in for an after-loss; . . .

Instead of the succour one is entitled to get from a friend in a time of distress (cf. especially Greene), the poet gets only threats of desertion, the more tormenting as being never decisively executed. His bitter invitation to his friend to join forces with the hostile world moreover suggests the latter's tendency to do exactly that, in default of any firmer basis of affection. The sonnet is the more terrible in that it suggests not merely cowardice or dislike of inconvenience as the friend's motivation, but outright indifference and

cruelty. Such a sonnet (as well as many others that demonstrate somewhat less flagrantly the friend's unwillingness to lend the poet any degree of aid or support in his various distresses) must be understood in the light of those prodigies of self-sacrifice, even to the point of death for one's friend, which comprise the commonplace's typical content. This convention, like friends' sharing of goods, also assumes a background of reciprocation and shared life between friends such as the sonnets cannot supply.

Sonnets describing the friends' separation occur repeatedly in the cycle and, despite variations of mood and context, produce a cumulative sense of a friendship entirely deficient in the requirement of concrete life together. Few moments of real association are depicted, and moments of separation are a significant staple among the themes of the sonnets. Considerations of dramatic impact, of the conventions of the genre of the sonnet, and of the bare fact that it is more natural to write about an absent person than a present one--these all doubtless enter in to the condition depicted in the sonnets. Absence from a loved person is a situation inherently fertile in emotion and one particularly hallowed by the sonnet tradition; and if the sonnets were written as a kind of "letters" from poet to friend, then it is only natural that they should speak of absence. From our point of view these speculations, interesting as they may be in themselves, are extraneous. The sonnets do indisputably depict the absence a great deal more than the presence of the friends, and this is a situation which, in keeping with the aims of this study

as a whole, deserves to be considered in the context of the literature of friendship. That the poet regards the situation as an unusual one has been suggested in the previous discussion of his treatment of moral failures in himself and his friends; separation is there typically treated as a consequence of his own lack of merit and/or his friend's mercenary coldness. If virtuous friends live together, then these bad ones will not or ought not to do so. Their apartness is a sign of their vice; it is not, however, regarded without pain and longing, at least by the poet. For him absence from his friend often brings a hellish state of self-recrimination, oblique attacks upon his friend, bewailings of the harshness of fate, and torturing thoughts of unknown misdeeds and infidelities being committed by his friend. And when he himself becomes guilty of similar offences they are often described in terms of an absence. All this was described in the previous chapter and is restated here to remind the reader that, from this "moralistic" view of the matter, Shakespeare does not regard the separation of friends as the norm; it is a departure from that norm intimately involved with the friends' departure from the norm of virtue. The pain that arises from friends' separation is after all a commonplace in itself, and one quite consonant with a sturdy respect for mutual association (as in the Arcadia). Shakespeare's treatment differs in these instances primarily as regards his greater perception of the obstacles in the way of achieving the desired norm and his depiction of that norm largely in terms of its undesirable opposite (recalling

those "cautionary" tales of unvirtuous friends). His treatment in these cases would, then, belong to the Ciceronian rather than the Platonic side of the conception; absence is not in the least described as a necessary or inspirational condition, as the latter perspective would dictate. Sonnets 50 and 51 are, for example, quite conventional laments of a woeful absence which is not expected to last very long. On some necessary business, the poet plods along on horseback, sad but not despairing; the prosaic image deprives the situation of much of its tenseness, and there are no disturbing suggestions that desertion or disloyalty caused the departure. The two sonnets also vaguely adumbrate the conventional mind-body distinction (bodies apart, minds together) from which parted friends typically draw consolation:

Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
 Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made,
 Shall neigh--no dull flesh in his fiery race: . . . (51)

Excuses and consolations for friends' absence always have this "ideal" or "imaginative" nature; they arise from the distance-dissolving power of imagination, mental fidelity in the face of physical absence, or even a mystical union of parted friends through the commonplace of their identity of souls (which bodily absence cannot affect). In the sonnet above the poet only goes so far as to claim an impatience with his beast's "dull flesh" (not his own) and to send his desire in advance of his beast. Absence retains its capacity to distress, but only temporarily and without apparent jeopardy to the relationship.

If absence from the friend typically brings some degree of pain and longing to the poet (and often implies its opposite as the norm), the fact remains that it is the condition in which the friendship has its being. The poet's moans and groans over his absent friend are seldom very far from his most exalted utterances of love and joyful celebration; absence is the common denominator of greatly disparate moods. Obvious parallels with the courtly love tradition exist, and the various critical and psychological analyses of that phenomenon are relevant; for visionary love seems necessarily to spring from physical separation or deprivation. Without attempting any such analysis here, we may simply observe that the poet's "Platonic" celebrations of his friend's beauty nearly always directly represent or strongly imply his own position as a distant contemplator. The friend's vague and shadowy nature, the lack of concrete detail in the poet's descriptions of him, his tendency to dissolve (like a Platonic ideal) into all external manifestations of beauty--these, though they may be conventional attitudes, all the same imply a distant and dazzled beholder in the person of the poet. (This need not, of course, have been the historical situation, but it is the dramatic one.) Distance is not altogether distressing to the poet in this context; not of much importance in itself, it is often implicitly accepted as a component of his frequently Platonized and quasi-mystical rendering of friendship--one quite important side of his total conception. But Platonic celebration is not the only side, and, as with the two opposing constructions of virtue in friendship, this implicitly

favorable view of absence clashes with the previously described hostile one. The two attitudes co-exist dubiously, alternate, or contradict one another in many sonnets, and the result is a quite fascinating dialectic between the opposing positions, more complex than anything hitherto encountered in treatments of the theme of absence.

Sometimes the optimistic attitude is offered only as a consolation for the overwhelming painfulness of separation, though with a degree of emotion and attractiveness which frequently threatens to overturn the ostensible "norm" of mutual association. The dramatic situation is typically that of the sleepless poet, alone at night and solaced by visions or imaginings of his friends:

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
 For all the day they view things unrespected;
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
 And darkly bright are bright in dark directed;
 Then thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
 How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
 By looking on thee in the living day,
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,
 And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.
 (43)

If this sonnet does not precisely writhe with pain, it nevertheless only states that this nightly vision is a compensation for the preferred daylight vision; actual "seeing" remains the norm for which mystical "vision" is a poor substitute. That vision, it will be noticed, has the mystical character and the "shadowy" depiction of the friend which typifies the poet's more straightforward "Platonic" celebrations of him.

Line 5 in particular suggests the friend's customary Platonic significance as an idea whose image or "shadow" endows all natural objects with such "brightness" as they possess. These terms also harmonize with the body-soul distinction conventionally employed as a means of consolation during absence; for the vaguely "spiritual" manifestation of the friend (a ghostly "presence" as much as a figment of the poet's imagination) suggests the identity of friends' souls. Shakespeare's literal extension and exaggeration of that commonplace is, from one point of view, perfectly in line with those Renaissance tendencies toward "romanticization" of the classical commonplaces that have been observed. The vision is attractive and positive, but it is, compared to the real friend, a "fair imperfect shade" and can suffice only "till I see thee." One may, however, wonder as to how soon that is to be; "How would" at the head of lines 6 and 9 sounds rather wistful and hypothetical than anticipatory ("if you would let me see you" more than "when I see you"). As a prolonged condition and one not without consolations, the hated absence might devolve toward acceptance in certain moods, the visionary consolation be transformed through the agency of the shaping imagination (which thrives on absence) into an outright satisfaction and the raison d'etre of the relationship.

In sonnet 44 a bridging of physical distance by visionary means is also proposed, but the terms are less mystical than in its predecessor:

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way;

For then despite of space I would be brought
 From limits far remote where thou dost stay:
 No matter then although my foot did stand
 Upon the farthest earth remov'd from thee;
 For nimble thought can jump both sea and land
 As soon as think the place where he should be.
 But ah, thought kills me that I am not thought,
 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
 But that, so much of earth and water wrought,
 I must attend Time's leisure with my moan;
 Receiving naught, by elements so slow,
 But heavy tears--badges of either's woe!

Here the emphasis falls, rather self-consciously and analytically, upon the imagination's powers and limitations within the human constitution. That faculty's "distance-dissolving" capacity is first described and then, by a dramatic reversal, its inadequacy to compensate for physical absence. Through the octave the conventional body-soul distinction is elaborated in the more precise terms of traditional physiology (man as a "little world" composed of elements), with the soul's affinity to the lighter elements of fire and air allowing it to perform prodigies of spiritual flight, "despite of space" and "Injurious distance." The expressive phrases, buttressed by "scientific" theory, seem entirely to have vanquished the condition of physical absence: if separation is not exactly approved, its alternative seems redundant and potentially destructive of the imagination's beautiful feats. The sestet abruptly puts an end to this domination of the spirit, reminding us of the simple fact, overlooked by the octave in its joyful extravagance, that "I am not thought." Man is compounded of earth and water (the body) as well as fire and air (the soul), and the latter elements remain unmoved by all the dexterities of the former ones; the heavy elements, left behind in the

poet's poor body while his soul is performing its wonderful act of levitation, weigh it down with a dull and melancholy load. The language of the sestet thus continues the octave's physiological terms, but emphasis is switched from soul to body, from ecstatic flight to melancholy heaviness. With the notes of woe and longing again dominant, the norm of physical presence again comes into its own as the desired goal of friendship; and the powers of imagination, while not rejected, are put into sober perspective as capable of bringing satisfaction to only a portion of the poet's total being. The spiritual powers simply drop out of view with the dramatic reversal which exposes the body's plight. The sonnet beautifully illustrates the poet's divided attitude toward the topic of absence--joyful contemplation at one moment springing from that fact, melancholy grief at the next.

That these alternations of attitude are largely a matter of gradation in mood and emphasis is shown, somewhat "conceitedly," in the following sonnet 45. It is linked not only by thought and imagery but by syntax to its predecessor, its first substantive ("two") requiring an antecedent ("elements") from sonnet 44. As before, a purely spiritual communion of the friends' souls is at first made possible by the powers of the imagination:

The other two--slight air and purging fire--
Are both with thee wherever I abide; . . .

But the poet, again reduced to his two "heavy" elements,

Sinks down to death, oppress'd with melancholy;
Until life's composition be recur'd
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,

Who even but now come back again assur'd
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me: . . .

This return to good spirits evidently has nothing to do with an actual physical reunion--which one would have supposed from the previous sonnet to be the only solution to the earth-bound body's problems. For here the bodies remain apart, and the poet's own returning spiritual elements physiologically reconstitute and cure the ailment which was caused by their departure; once again the poet is "whole." Putting the conceit to one side, one cannot but understand this alternation of moods as a purely gratuitous mental phenomenon, as a wild fluctuation of divergent attitudes toward the same permanent condition of physical absence from the friend. That absence is at times interpreted as a mournful circumstance (when, to use the physiological conceit, the poet is dominated by his heavy elements) and is at times implicitly approved (when his spiritual elements are in the ascendant). Everything depends on the delicate powers of imagination, unstable by necessity in the variously compounded nature of man, an instability dramatized in the poet's alternation of attitudes from sonnet to sonnet and even within individual sonnets. These alternations are self-consciously explained in the above sonnets by reference to the spirit's operations in the "little world" of man, but the emotional reality depicted is common to almost all:

This told, I joy; but then no longer glad
I send them back again, and straight grow sad.

Sonnet 27 is less self-consciously concerned with the physiological nature of the imagination but renders its powers

similarly and concludes with a striking image of the friend's visionary presence despite physical absence:

Weary with toil I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;
 But then begins a journey in my head
 To work my mind when body's work's expir'd;
 For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight
 Presents their shadow to my sightless view,
 Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night
 Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
 Lo, thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

This is precisely the dramatic situation of sonnet 43: the conventional distinction between body and soul (the body again oppressed by heaviness and "Weary with toil") and the friend's ensuing visionary presence (again a "shadow" miraculously visible "to my sightless view" in the dead of night). This sonnet differs from the other, however, in that here the friends' absence from one another is not in the least lamented, nor does the poet express any desire of ending the physical separation. That condition is indeed the source of the miraculous vision which it is the sonnet's chief business to describe. The soul's ascendancy is absolute, and the only indication of the poor body's restraint is its weariness (a weariness from lack of sleep as much as daytime labor).

In the following sonnet, however, the mood reverts back to pain and longing, and the compensating vision somehow fails to come off, despite all the customary accoutrements:

How can I then return in happy plight
 That am debarr'd the benefit of rest,
 When day's oppression is not eas'd by night,

But day by night and night by day oppress'd,
 And each, though enemies to other's reign,
 Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
 The one by toil, the other to complain
 How far I toil, still farther off from thee?
 I tell the day to please him thou art bright
 And do'st him grace when clouds do blot the heaven;
 So flatter I the swart-complexion'd night
 When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even:
 But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
 And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger.

The previous sonnet's background of physical weariness has here become the dominant reality and engenders a carping and querulous tone appropriate to a state of nervous exhaustion. Despite its theatrical imagery, the first half of the sonnet amounts to little more than a mundane complaint of insomnia, which gradually evolves into a somewhat more direct lament of the friend's absence. Accordingly, one feels that the lament of absence is secondary to the poet's exhausted physical condition, and, similarly, that that condition prevents him from achieving the visionary consolations which usually emerge from such states of lonely wakefulness. The mere physical reality, that is, dominates either pole of the poet's emotional response. The third quatrain feebly and self-consciously ("I tell," "So flatter I") attempts to conjure a vision of the friend, but the couplet relapses into physical complaints. Though the sonnet eschews the physiological terms of sonnets 44 and 45, it is a striking example of the spirit's momentary domination by the heavy weight of the body. These two sonnets (27 and 28) also make an apt conjunction; linked by imagery and situation, one depicts the spirit as dominant and unhindered by physical absence and the other shows the body as dominant

and all but overwhelmed by what was before borne so lightly. In the latter sonnet the hint of physical weariness in the former one has been made the central concern, creating a sense of time-lapse between the two sonnets such as would extend a slight weariness to outright exhaustion. Alternation of mood is, as before, the obvious dramatic reality as regards the poet's response to the fact of his friend's absence; and the tenuous balance of body and soul is again the mechanism responsible for that alternation.

Sonnet 61 reproduces the external situation of night and wakefulness but veers sharply away from visionary consolation and toward that sharp criticism of the friend customary in those "moralistic" treatments of absence found in other contexts. The friend is sardonically accused of willing the poet's pain and, obliquely in the couplet, of treacheries with an unspecified third party:

Is it thy will thy image should keep open
 My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
 Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
 While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?
 Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
 So far from home into my deeds to pry,
 To find out shames and idle hours in me,
 The scope and tenour of thy jealousy?
 Oh no! thy love though much is not so great;
 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake--
 Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
 To play the watchman ever for thy sake:
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
 From me far off, with others all too near.

There is a querulousness here similar to that of sonnet 28, and not only a failure of vision but a burlesque and rejection of it. The friend's spectral image, ordinarily a confirmation of the identity of souls and a consolation, is here only a

nuisance depriving the body of needed sleep. But this sonnet's resistance to vision goes deeper than the physical weariness of sonnet 28. In other sonnets the friend's visionary "shadow" was all the more splendid for being an "imaginary sight" and "presented to my sightless view" (27); here it is "shadows like to thee do mock my sight". They do so, presumably, because they are only imaginary; yet that was previously the very source of their value--as manifestations of the soul and its capacity to overcome physical separation. The poet's holding his friend responsible for these troublesome nightly visitations is a further ironic distortion of his usual laudatory attitude; but it is an irony which seems to imply a more substantial underlying criticism. The conceit alone does not seem quite adequate to explain the tone of accusation. The opening lines, for example, suggest a real cruelty on the friend's part (not foreign to his nature as depicted elsewhere with more precision), and this at first appears to be on the score of his wilfully absenting himself, a familiar ground of complaint. In so strangely directing his attack against the friend's visionary presence, the poet seems to imply by indirection a criticism of him for keeping distant (the underlying source of visionary experience). One assumes that it is the absence rather than the vision which truly provokes the poet's pique, the latter being explicitly attacked only to emphasize the inexplicable and perverse nature of the friend's cruelty. Such speculations as these, however, last only through the first quatrain; in the second, another explanation seems to be proposed--the friend's

jealousy--but this is in turn rejected as presupposing more love than the friend actually possesses (a bitter consideration even if somewhat softened in the utterance: "Oh no! thy love though much is not so great"). After these false alarms, which establish a mood of reproach and uncertainty such as is typical of those sonnets concerned with the friend's moral failings, the present sonnet comes to rest on that most prominent aspect of the friend's treacheries, his abandonment of the poet for the company of a third party, possibly the poet's mistress. This distressing situation, as one sees retrospectively, has underlain and provoked the poet's heretical attitude toward his friend's visionary presence all along. That marvelous conjuration cannot but be fraught with bitterness when confronted with the poet's irreducible awareness of his friend's real and very unmarvelous whereabouts. Here vision is thwarted and absence rendered insupportable not by the poet's overwhelming longing for reunion but by his nagging critical perceptions--an infertile ground for the spirit.

Sonnets 97, 98, and 113 strongly emphasize the fact of separation and ostensibly mourn the friend's absence; yet they include some of the purest statements to be found anywhere in the cycle of the friend as Platonic idea. The concept is, however, not presented in quite such apologetic terms as before nor in conjunction with arguments of consolation and friends' identity of souls. On the contrary, the friend's Platonic nature is directly implicated in the poet's woe and does not modify the pain of absence. Yet the sonnets hardly strike one as gloomy, and, despite his ritualized groaning,

the poet's emotion flows so smoothly in the channels of Platonic praise as to deprive it of any very great dramatic tension or urgency. Sonnet 97, for example, begins ominously:

How like a winter hath my absence been
 From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
 What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!--
 What old December's bareness everywhere!

But personal grief is soon deflected into "metaphysical" considerations--the effect of the friend's absence upon the natural world. Although it is the harvest time, nature is said to be chilled and unproductive because deprived of the friend (likened to her "lord" and the father of her "abundant issue").

For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
 And thou away the very birds are mute;
 Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
 That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

Thus the sonnet turns into a complimentary exercise, a Platonic celebration of the friend as a principle of natural fruition upon whose generative powers not merely the poet but the whole world depends. As is usual in such celebrations, the friend's nature assumes a mysterious and paradoxical quality: his life-giving relation to nature is not merely inherently mystifying but is made more so by the rather confused attribution of the seasons (the friend begot the "teeming autumn" in the "prime" and is attended by "summer and his pleasures"--a most perplexing time sequence).³⁶ The poet's personal need of his friend is thus deprived of any sense of urgency by being subsumed to the metaphysical and obviously rather

³⁶See Leishman, pp. 190-193.

fanciful "need" of nature for him; the poet's and nature's sorrow, flowing into such a gentle and stylized compliment, are equally remote from that real anguish displayed elsewhere in the sonnets. One may assume that in this case the poet desires a restoration of his friend (such is the import of the argument), but that seems a matter as much beyond his control or his passion as the progress of the seasons themselves. The sonnet is perhaps not "favorable" to absence, but it endows that state with a decorous and attractive resignation.

Sonnet 98 proclaims the poet's inability to participate in the joys of spring in the absence of his friend, and at the same time it sweetly and pleasantly describes those joys. That cheerful description is what chiefly determines the mood of the sonnet, despite the poet's rhetorical denials of its validity for him:

From you have I been absent in the spring,
 When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
 Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
 That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leapt with him.
 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
 Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
 Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
 They were but sweet, but figures of delight
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seem'd it winter still; and, you away,
 As with your shadow I with these did play.

In this case the friend's absence has not had a deleterious effect upon nature, and the fact that its beauties are called merely "figures" and "shadows" "Drawn after you, you pattern of all those" hardly seems cause for weeping (they are his typical Platonic praises). The state of absence in itself

carries connotations of sadness as a matter of course, but the poet's stated reasons for his grief have little force, at least until the couplet. The third quatrain, taken by itself, would simply seem a joyful and Platonic praise of the friend. We are thus again distracted from the potential sorrow of personal deprivation by considerations of the friend's "metaphysical" relation to nature. Nature does not as before share and thereby remove to a ritualistic plane the poet's sorrow; rather it proclaims the friend's marvelous powers even when he is absent and, for all the poet's personal negatives, creates a celebratory mood. The inseparableness of personal sorrow and Platonic celebration is nowhere better demonstrated than in the concluding couplet. There "shadow" has its Platonic sense and carries through the motif of metaphysical celebration, and yet the pathos of the poet's possessing only an insubstantial "shadow" of his friend is clearly suggested. The sonnet is allowed to conclude, for all its bright images and compliments, in a mood weighted toward the personal grief/^{that} was always near at hand anyway.

Sonnets 99 and 113 turn the balance sharply back the other direction. The former does not really indicate an absence or show any signs of mournfulness, but it appears to belong to this series by reason of its physical placement and its close resemblance in thought and imagery to its predecessors. The omission of any explicit sign of absence doubtless contributes to the sonnet's impersonal and metaphysical quality because allowing it to avoid that topic's painful personal connotations. Despite this important difference,

the sonnet may be regarded by virtue of its placement and its resemblances to its predecessors as extending their tendencies toward an ultimate conclusion--complete conquest of the personal grief of absence by means of the ritual of Platonic praise (something different, of course, from the Platonic "consolation" of some previous sonnets). Sonnet 113 responds similarly to the topic and, since it clearly indicates an absence, will be quoted and dealt with more fully:

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
 And that which governs me to go about
 Doth part his function and is partly blind--
 Seems seeing, but effectually is out:
 For it no form delivers to the heart
 Of bird, of flower, or shape which it doth latch;
 Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch:
 For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
 The most sweet favour, or deformed'st creature,
 The mountain, or the sea, the day, or night,
 The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature:
 Incapable of more, replete with you,
 My most true mind thus maketh mine eye untrue.

This is not precisely Platonic, since the poet's own mental operations ("mine eye is in my mind"), rather than the simple truth of things, is given credit for this vision of the friend as manifested in all natural beauties. But that state is not very far in its final result from what is described in sonnets 97-99, which are indubitably Platonic in conception. Also suggested are those numerous sonnets depicting the friend's quasi-mystical nightly visitations; these too were mental rather than sensory visions and showed the friend's image in places (the dark of night) where it literally was not. In any case, mystical tendencies are also allowed their mild triumph in the sonnet in question, which concludes upon a

note of joy and fulfilment ("Incapable of more, replete with you") after passing through some moments of uncertainty. The reader is at first rather perplexed as to the cause of the poet's blindness and as to whether it ought to be considered a painful, comic, or exalted state. To say "mine eye is in my mind" is from this point of view a not very helpful explanation, and the fact that an absence from the friend ("Since I left you") is involved suggests the possibility of pain. Thus the sonnet's final clarification of its central conceit (in lines 12-14) comes as a mild reversal of our expectations or at least a release from the situation's uncertainty, so that the metaphysical conclusion acquires an added dramatic frisson.

Sonnets 39, 52, 56, and 75 are markedly less ecstatic in their handling of the theme, but in each case the merits of absence are weighed, and cause is found for tolerating or even preferring that state to a more concrete association. This group is thus more akin to the group offering "consolation" for absence than to the previous group, though here consolation has become a positive satisfaction in its own right. The tendency of these sonnets is to modify the old commonplace of physical association, far more explicitly than has been heretofore encountered, in the direction of allowing to absence a necessary or even desirable status. The rank heresy of such assertions, when baldly stated rather than merely implied, does, however, raise the possibility that they are not altogether straightforward; that is, they may be meant as hopeful consolations or as bitter ironies approp-

riate to a situation which is, in any case, fait accompli. This is particularly so of sonnet 39, which begins with the strained conceit that the poet and friend ought to live apart since "what is't but mine own praise when I praise thee?" This is not a logical, let alone a probable, rationale for separation, since by the commonplace of identity (given by the poet as the reason for his absurd modesty) the two friends would remain together in spirit even when physically separate. It is hard to see how absence on those terms could endow the poet's praises with any more or less modesty than presence, and this peculiar citation of the identity of friends (normally a source of spiritual consolation during absence but here a consideration dictating absence) is heretical as well as illogical. Indeed, the poet's language throughout underlines the heresy: "let us divided live;" "our dear love lose name of single one;" "thou teachest how to make one twain." Such sharp departures from the norm of concrete association and identity must be partly ironic, not merely because they are departures (which, as we have seen, is Shakespeare's tendency) but because they are so bluntly and flagrantly expressed. Strictly speaking, however, the friend does stand above and apart from the poet, and separation from him is the state necessitated by the terms of the Platonic relationship. For the poet to praise the friend in his typically exorbitant terms is to acknowledge his own inability ever to achieve parity or any form of mutuality with such a being. So understood, the sonnet in question merely authorizes, not without pain and irony, the situation which exists of necessity:

Even for this let us divided live,
 And our dear love lose name of single one,
 That by this separation I may give
 That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone.
 O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,
 Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
 To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
 Which time and thoughts so sweetly dost deceive,
 And that thou teachest how to make one twain
 By praising him here who doth hence remain!

This sonnet draws a direct connection between physical absence and praise; "sour leisure" gives time for "thoughts of love" and stimulates the poet to overcome physical distance by "praising him here who doth hence remain." Even the argument for modesty gains cogency in this context, for it is only to acknowledge the poet's necessarily inferior status as a contemplator and praiser. We need not concede much force of imagery or feeling to this sonnet, nor an entirely unmixed attitude toward its subject, to find in it an explicit commentary on the general nature of the friends' relationship, dubiously balanced between the pain of separation and its visionary correlative, between criticism of the friend for his perverse detachment and acknowledgment of its inevitability.

Sonnets 52 and 56 are less ambitious and less significant; shunning all metaphysical considerations, they merely contrive to find in the state of absence a helpful transitional step on the road to an eventual concrete reunion. The imagery of sonnet 52 is conspicuously free of the usual spiritual connotations and emphasizes the concrete nature of the anticipated relationship. It is likened to the enjoyment of a long-awaited feast or jewel; and as deprivation of food or of the sight of a precious object heightens the appetite for

that thing and enhances the moment when one actually enjoys it, so with an absent friend:

So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some special instant special blest
 By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.
 Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope
 Being had, to triumph; being lack'd, to hope.

The last line sums up the sonnet's contention that absence and presence co-operate to bring satisfaction in friendship. This amounts to a sort of "gourmet" attitude toward the topic, which is rather unusual in the cycle as a whole where the fact of absence ordinarily provokes heightened or intense responses. Here the friend is treated with casual complacency, as a securely possessed object cosily packed away in time's chest where he may be brought out at will to satisfy the poet's exquisite taste. Such an argument may, as is so often the case, merely sugar-coat an inevitability, but in doing so it manages to convey an attitude, very rare in these prosaic and non-metaphysical terms, of genuine approval of the state of absence. The "gourmet" argument does, all the same, suggest a certain corruption of the ideal of mutuality, a degeneration of friends' desire for one another to the level of a jaded palate in search of a means of re-stimulation. The imagery of sensual gratification and repletion, however fanciful in intent, cannot but be unpleasant when applied to so idealized a topic as the mutuality of friends. It appears the more so in this case because of its near parallel with the imagery of such indubitably nasty sonnets as 118, where the inexplicable rot and dissolution of friendship is rendered with a hellish

intensity:

Like as, to make our appetites more keen,
 With eager compounds we our palate urge;
 As to prevent our maladies unseen
 We sicken to shun sickness when we purge: . . .

Sonnet 75 has some of this hellish mood, and it oscillates uncertainly between the conditions of "pining" and "surfeiting:"

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
 Or as sweet season'd showers are to the ground;
 And for the peace of you I hold such strife
 As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found,--
 Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
 Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
 Now counting best to be with you alone,
 Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure;
 Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
 And by and by clean starved for a look;
 Possessing or pursuing no delight
 Save what is had or must from you be took;
 Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
 Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

Here again is the imagery of food, treasure, and gratification, and the poet again appears as a hedonistic manipulator of his friend, who is represented as a passive object. Absence is not an important aspect of the argument, but it is referred to as a natural depletion ("surfeit") brought about by a satiety of concrete association ("all full with feasting on your sight"). This is a state evidently willed by the poet himself, and not so much for the purpose of heightening future periods of association as from an outright disgust arising from the present one. Images of satisfaction do occur, but the sonnet's predominant impression and concluding mood is composed of restless energy, anxiety, torment, sickness. The poet's authorization of absence appears as but one aspect of his feverish strategy of extracting the maximum of pleasure

from a friendship apparently on the wane. In sonnet 56 a decline of friendship is more explicitly indicated, with absence being again proposed as a means of re-invigorating it. Yet that very condition of absence is clearly symptomatic of the decline and is not without a measure of pain and longings:

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said
 Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
 Which but today by feeding is allay'd,
 Tomorrow sharpen'd in his former might;
 So, love, be thou; although today thou fill
 Thy hungry eyes even till they wink with fulness,
 Tomorrow see again, and do not kill
 The spirit of love with a perpetual dulness;
 Let this sad interim like the ocean be
 Which parts the shore where two contracted new
 Come daily to the banks, that when they see
 Return of love more blest may be the view:
 As call it winter, which being full of care
 Makes summer's welcome, thrice more wish'd, more rare.

Here the imagery of gratification and repletion is rendered less unpleasant by its assimilation to the drama of preserving and prolonging friendship in a time of trial. The argument externally resembles that of sonnet 52, but the latter's "gourmet" device has here become an intense struggle to maintain constancy despite the onslaught of weariness and evil. Absence is tolerated merely on the devout hope that it may be strategically helpful in this struggle: it is not as before a matter of hedonistic calculation, and only in the couplet does the poet find assurance of success. The sonnet has much in common with those describing the death and rebirth of friendship, its renewal and paradoxical constancy in the face of time's evil mutability. In those cases, like the present one, a passage of estrangement (often expressed in the terms of physical separation) was granted an implicit approval because functioning as a sort of necessary interim

stage on the way to a new and stronger union of friendship. In this sonnet absence is similarly depicted as a "sad interim" expressing at once the failure of friendship and the hope of its renewal. In such circumstances the mundane terms of the "gourmet" argument gain a dramatic impact and are raised to the level of the poet's comprehensive vision of friends' difficult and fluctuating constancy, "eterne in mutabilitie."

The friendship depicted in the sonnet is, when judged by the norm of mutuality, remarkably deficient, and that deficiency is the more remarkable when one considers that the mutuality commonplaces underwent no development in the direction of looser interpretation (as was the case with the virtue commonplaces). On the contrary, Renaissance authors exaggerated and "romanticized" those commonplaces, as has been described. With only one aspect of this development does Shakespeare's treatment remain orthodox--identity of souls--and in that case it is often as a consolation for or in disparagement of the more concrete and social intimacy dictated by theory. To what extent Shakespeare's actual conception is heretical and to what extent his treatment merely differs in its external particulars but infers a belief in the norm is a matter which, as we have seen, appears to admit of different conclusions from sonnet to sonnet. The strong "Platonic" streak in the poet's conception clearly works against acceptance of the more social and concrete side of the norm (which is its main side), but it exists in competition with the more conventional notions of mutuality. The

latter condition may seldom be directly represented (either because it did not exist historically or because Shakespeare's strategy favored indirection and dramatic conflict), but it is often depicted as the desired or expected state. On the other hand, absence is as often depicted with some degree of acceptance or even positive value. The poet's attitude is ever in a state of flux between these two extremes, both from sonnet to sonnet and within individual sonnets, and often manages to incorporate both, in varying proportion and to various effect. In the end one can hardly speak of Shakespeare's treatment as "conventional" or as "heretical;" for, whatever his private commitments to abstract theory, it is with the sonnets as with the plays: a given reality is depicted (in this case one that happens to be anomalous as to theory), and upon that reality layers of nuance endlessly accumulate. It has been the business of this chapter to unfold some of those swaths of meaning and to despair of any over-confident generalizations about their total import.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

The invidious comparison of friendship and love (that is, of the relationship of male and male and of male and female) comes to Shakespeare's hands as a prominent commonplace of the literature of friendship (accompanied by fictional conventions, especially popular among his immediate English predecessors, of a destructive triangular relationship formed among two friends and a commonly loved woman). It differs from other such commonplaces, however, in that it is less firmly rooted in the classical authors, being in large measure a Renaissance development and reflecting post-classical attitudes toward women. The classical authors make little differentiation between love and friendship, and then without particular regard for the object (i.e. male or female) of the attraction.¹ Such as it does exist, the distinction is to the disadvantage of the emotion of love and the attraction to women. In the Symposium Pausanias distinguishes between noble and base types of love, the latter of which is especially attributed to the emotion felt for women;² Aristophanes specifies love for women among the types of love in his parable and gives it the lesser status;³ and Socrates' final description of love begins with an account of its seeking, as the first and lowest step in its ascent to the ultimate realm of ideal beauty, the "birth in beauty" of human offspring.⁴ Aristotle

¹See this thesis, p. 4.

²Plato, p. 309.

³Plato, p. 318.

⁴Plato, p. 373.

allows to the marriage relationship the title of friendship, but this occurs only once and in a context where the term is extended indiscriminately to every type of human relationship.⁵ Cicero has nothing to say about love for women in De Amicitia, but the duties of father, husband, and householder (so important elsewhere in his work) are doubtless comprehended among the Roman virtues which the "good" friend ought to possess. Epicurus and Seneca, on the other hand, have harsh things to say about love in the context of their firm advocacy of friendship. According to Diogenes Laertius, "The Epicureans do not suffer the wise man to fall in love," nor to marry nor to rear a family. Epicurus is quoted as saying "No one was ever the better for sexual indulgence, and it is well if he be not the worse."⁶ Yet the same man considers "of all the means which are procured by wisdom to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends."⁷ The stoics are similarly critical of love. Seneca states that friendship always implies love but that love per se, being often unreciprocated, unequal, and unfounded on reason and virtue, need not imply friendship.⁸ Plutarch's essential position, in his moral essay defending married love,

⁵Aristotle, 1162a.

⁶Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, tr. R. D. Hicks (2 vols; Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1925), II, x, 118.

⁷Diogenes Laertius, 148, 149. In Book IV of De Rerum Natura Lucretius' depiction of love, though ostensibly in its praise, emphasizes its disorderly, unreasonable, painful nature.

⁸Seneca, Epistle 35.

is, on the other hand, that love has a quiet and useful domestic aspect in the context of marriage, that women may be rational and virtuous creatures, and that love of them may constitute a type of friendship:

it is ridiculous to maintain that women have no participation in virtue. . . . And to declare that their nature is noble in all other relationships and then to censure it as being unsuitable for friendship alone--that is surely a strange procedure.⁹

And yet the very rigorousness and explicitness of Plutarch's defense of married love against the charge that it is a disorderly, debauched, and irrational passion suggests the commonplace character of that charge. This is, however, no place to explore the comprehensive classical view of women, of marriage customs, or of hellenic homosexuality. It must suffice to observe that in the context of the major classical discussions of friendship love is either largely identified with friendship or, insofar as being directed toward women, is accorded little importance. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero assume the presence of an affection directed toward women and imply its subordinate status. They do not, however, regard it as being hostile to or offering rivalry with the more important relationship existing between man and man. Except in the case of Plutarch's patently dissenting view of women as suitable friends for men, love for them is either damned by faint praise or by neglect. And sometimes, as with many of the Epicureans and Stoics, it is damned outright.

⁹ Moralia, tr. E. L. Minar, F. H. Sandbach, W. C. Helmbold (15 vols; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), IX, 23.

Some of the early English accounts of classical friendship theory, such as Edwards' Damon and Pithias, are as austere and unconcerned with love as are their classical sources.

But in a remarkably large proportion of them, beginning with Elyot's The Governour, love for women is posed as problematic or actively hostile to the life of friendship. This does not exactly contradict the basic tendency of the classical authors, but it certainly distorts and exaggerates their, on the whole, mildly derogatory remarks. To put it another way, the Renaissance development flatly ignores the example of Plutarch, selects and exaggerates details from the major authors (Aristotle and Cicero), and accords most completely with the attitudes to be found in minor authors (i.e., in the context of friendship literature), the Stoics and Epicureans. Of more significance than this slender and rather mixed classical precedent is doubtless the fact, brought about by the intervening centuries, of changing attitudes toward women--particularly of the Christian tendency to disapprove of female sexuality and the evolution of the system of courtly love. Whether for good or ill, love for women is not a negligible force by the time of Elyot; and, offering such strong claims upon men's energy and capacity for affection, it is not hard to understand how a conflict with that more austere system of human relationship, friendship, could have developed. The men who sought to revive the classical theory and practice of that latter relationship (and one recalls the frequent complaints by them of its present degeneration) were scholars animated by the pursuit of classical virtue, of which friendship was supposed to be the crown. Their "propa-

ganda" for their cause naturally marked out love for women as an intellectual and perhaps actual rival, which it was accordingly necessary to discredit if friendship was to assume its ancient station as the crown of human affection. The association of love with pain, disorderliness, and dubious virtue, derived from classical sources and fostered both by medieval anti-feminist attitudes and by the courtly love tradition, especially offered itself as a contrast to the virtuous, orderly, and fulfilled relationship of friends. That natural contrast, connected with the indubitable intellectual and practical importance of love for women by the time of the Renaissance, could not but produce a lively sense of comparison and conflict between the two affections. Any work ignoring their rivalry would run the risk, no matter how fervently it celebrated the precepts of classical friendship, of being quite out of touch with the post-classical realities of the world. An additional consideration comes into play where there is a fictional or dramatic depiction of friendship involved--the possibility of introducing into the, as we have seen, rather barren dramatic situation a lively conflict centering upon that eternally interesting theme, sex. Such "triangular" plot situations have, indeed, medieval precedent, the most important instance being Chaucer's "Knight's Tale."¹⁰ The dramatic conflict generated by the hostile claims of a friend and of a woman (especially when the woman is mutually loved by the friends) obviously

¹⁰See also early English versions of the Gesta Romanorum, the Disciplina Clericalis, the romance of Amis and Amilon, and Lydgate's Fabula Duorum Mercatorum.

offers good material for a story, and it also offers the possibility of exploring the intellectual issues at stake in the conflict. In the medieval treatments of the theme a somewhat different notion of friendship is, however, revealed: one derived from feudal ideas of loyalty and blood-brotherhood rather than the classical conception of the common pursuit of virtue.¹¹ Love is not represented as an inevitable impediment to friendship but rather as an honorable passion which might, by an unlucky turn of events, develop into a conflict with that equally honorable relationship, friendship (such is the case in the "Knight's Tale," where there can be no doubt of the virtuousness of the friends' passion for Emilia). The dominant relationship depicted in medieval romances is, after all, that between man and woman, and friendship must be content with such companion status as it can obtain.

For whatever reasons the first major account in English of the classical theories of friendship (Elyot's Governour) includes a story whose plot and main theme turn upon the rival claims of love and friendship.¹² Gisippus acquired a liking for a lady and "leaving Titus at his studie secretly repayed to her," overcome with shame and a sense of his disloyalty to his friend.¹³ At last he "surmounted shamefastness" and told

¹¹For a full discussion of the medieval conception and its differentiation from classical and Renaissance ideas see Mills' chapter, "The Friendship theme in the Middle Ages," pp. 16-75.

¹²The source for this story is generally held to be Boccaccio's Decameron (X.viii). See Mills, pp. 100-103.

¹³Elyot, I, p. 135.

his friend of his secret visits. Titus encouraged his friend to marry, but Gisippus, "fearinge that mariage shulde be occasion to sever hym bothe from [his friend and the study of philosophy] refused of longe tyme to be parswaded". Against his better judgment he does in the end agree; for the lady is both virtuous and beautiful. Immediately thereafter, Titus, contemplating the lady's manifold perfections, suddenly and violently

had the harte through perced with the firy darte of blinde Cupide. Of the whiche wounde the anguisshe was so excedinge and vehement, that neither the study of Philosophie, neyther the remembrance of his dere frend Gisippus, who so moche loved and trusted hym, coulede anything withdrawe hym from that unkynde appetite . . .¹⁴

This is a description of love as the "disorderly passion" of both the classical and medieval traditions (though lacking the glories and remedies available through courtly love), a blind force which threatens, despite every assertion of reason and will, to overwhelm and destroy virtue, friendship, and the scholarly life (terms almost synonymous in this context). Elyot proceeds to describe at length the extremity of Titus' sufferings at the hands of love, of such severity that he eventually becomes physically ill and bed-ridden. In all this the lady is not assigned any specific guilt; she remains virtuous and proper throughout. Owing to "the fragility of our common nature" Titus fell victim to this ravenous passion; he "could not beholde [her] without ravissHINGe of mynde and carnall appetite".¹⁵ Here as in most other such cases love's evil effect

¹⁴Elyot, I, p. 136.

¹⁵Elyot, I, p. 139.

is not linked to an inherently evil nature in woman; rather, it is a question of the lover's evil emotion for a virtuous being. The story argues that the emotions, because contradictory and destructive of the philosophic (hence virtuous) life, lead to a betrayal of friendship; thus it is that Gisippus feels guilty about falling in love even though he has committed no other bad act. The fact that Titus betrays his friend (though only in desire) is simply the concrete proof of love's inherent lawlessness. But the story is not allowed to end on those terms; friendship is given the actual as well as implied moral triumph and is allowed to preserve the dignity of love. For when Gisippus learns of his friend's treacherous love for his (Gisippus') betrothed, he immediately hands her over with the encouragement to his friend to go on loving. This is evidently to be taken for a virtuous act and vindication of friendship's moral pretensions: despite a bad friend's lapse, a good one is able to tame the flames of love and perform the commonplace act of self-sacrifice. Also suggested is that the good friend, given a choice between retaining a friend and gaining a beloved, would choose the former alternative, that friendship is of a higher value than love. Thus the spectre of love's anarchic power, raised by the bad actions of one friend, is laid by the good actions of the other. At the end Gisippus can even spare some words of praise for the erstwhile rival passion: "suche fervent love entreth not in to the harte of a wise man and vertuous, but by divine disposition".¹⁶

¹⁶Elyot, I, p. 141.

Thus friendship is able to moralize upon love; but that was not the way it looked when friendship's brittle powers were collapsing under the force of love's powerful assault.

Castiglione's long and tortuous discussion of love in the Courtier, terminated as it is by Bembo's splendid Platonic flight of praise, inevitably confers upon that relationship a greater value and importance than the relatively brief and abstract discussion of friendship can do for the latter. No actual comparison of the two is made; each has its necessity and each its pitfalls for the good courtier. Before love has been finally vindicated by Bembo it has, however, received some very strong aspersions as a corrupt and useless passion, unseemly in a mature courtier. If that view had been allowed to stand and if it had remained alongside the prevailing notion of friendship as a rational and virtuous attachment, then something like the normal comparison would have resulted. Montaigne, another Renaissance humanist with a lively appreciation of women, is more explicit. His "De L'Amitié" is alive with comparisons, hateful and otherwise, between the two affections:

(L'amitié est) plus actif, plus cuisant, et plus aspre. Mais c'est un feu temeraire et volage, ondoyant et divers, feu de fiebvre, subject a accez et remises, et qui ne nous tient qu'a un coing. En l'amitie, c'est une chaleur generale et universelle, temperée au demeurant et égale, une chaleur constante et rassize, toute douceur et polissure, qui n'a rien d'aspre et de poignant.¹⁷

Montaigne's view is that love, being dependent upon bodily gratification, is lost the moment that purely physical longing is satisfied; friendship, on the other hand, is a spiritual

¹⁷Montaigne, I, p. 233.

longing whose pleasure is augmented by length of association. It would be highly desirable if the name and substance of friendship could enter into marriage, but Montaigne sees no possibility of that, not only because marriage is commonly a forced relationship but because something in the very nature of women is inimical to friendship:

la suffisance ordinaire des femmes n'est pas pour
respondre à cette conference et communication, nourrisse
de cette sainte couture; ny leur ame ne semble assez
ferme pour soustenir l'estreinte d'un noeud si presse
et si durable.¹⁸

The female sex simply "par nul exemple n'y est encore peu arriver." In another essay, "De Trois Commerces," Montaigne allows himself to hope for a glimmering of such rational qualities in women as would satisfy the requirements of friendship, and he admits his own liking for their company.

Si l'ame n'y a pas tant à jouyr qu'au premier [I'amitié],
les sens corporels, qui participent aussi plus à cettuy-
cy, le ramencent à une proportion voisine de l'autre,
quoy que, selon moy, non pas esgalle.¹⁹

The beautiful female body almost, but not quite, makes up for what is lacking of mind in women; after a conventional description of the force and violence of passion, Montaigne concludes that if one has to choose between beauty and mind in women, the former is most to be desired. The latter "a son usage en meilleures choses."²⁰ Montaigne's distinction between the two affections is, then, grounded not only on the inherent

¹⁸Montaigne, I, p. 234.

¹⁹Montaigne, III, p. 40.

²⁰Montaigne, III, p. 42.

"psychological" quality of each but upon the differing attributes of men and women. Only his characteristically truthful recognition of the legitimacy of his body's passions and his conservative respect for the institution of marriage (qua social institution) prevents Montaigne from altogether renouncing commerce with women in favor of the superior joys of friendship.

The story "Of a Jalouse Gentleman" from Painter's Palace of Pleasure depicts an amusing incongruity between friendship and love. When one friend marries, the other is permitted to sleep in the same bed with him and his wife, though "the married man lay in the mids."²¹ That precarious middle position between friend and wife suggests the harmonious even-handedness with which the married man would like to treat both friend and wife, but it also rather humorously implies a certain distrust of both and a necessary distance to be maintained between them. The married friend continues to try to observe all the precepts of friendship, including the dangerous one of commonality of goods: "Their goodes were common betwene them, and the mariage did yelde no cause to hinder their assured amitie." The husband goes so far as to require his wife "to doe all thinges (one thing excepted) and to make so muche of his companion as of himselfe." Despite, or perhaps because of, this attempt to maintain the commonplaces of friendship in the condition of marriage (especially commonality of goods as applied to the wife), the husband proceeds alternately to

²¹Painter, I, p. 104.

grow jealous of his friend and wife, and then to reproach himself for his jealousy. The friend is not very helpful in assuaging this jealousy when he affirms (quite rightly from a theoretical point of view) that even if he were to develop a love for the wife, that would be wrong only if it were kept a secret, since the commonplace of commonality authorizes the sharing of all goods without exception. And yet he adds, "surely I would never speak worde unto her, bicause I doe esteeme our friendship better than the greatest treasure."²² But once again the husband becomes jealous and this time is renounced by his erstwhile friend as unworthy of the state of friendship. All blame is put on the passion of jealousy and none on either the state of love or the female sex; yet the whole rupture has been the logical outcome of the divided loyalties in friendship and love. The presence of a woman in the case (more properly, in the bed) is represented as the immediate reason for the break-up of the friendship.

The work of John Lyly represents several clashes between friendship and love. In Euphues; the Anatomy of Wit the two friends, Euphues and Philautus, become estranged from one another over the matter of a woman. Their friendship, it will be remembered, was rather dubiously founded in the first place and suggested a violation of the dictum of virtue.²³ Euphues' treacherous seduction of Philautus' lady is accordingly the concrete proof of his unvirtuous state and unfitness for friend-

²²Painter, I, p. 105.

²³See this thesis, pp. 29-31.

ship. In the early stages of his passion Euphues is too patently corrupt even to agonize a great deal over a conflict of allegiances. He determines that love is not really the burning sickness it so much resembles but is rather a powerful natural and even divine affection against which it is impious to rail or resist: "Shall I not then hazard my lyfe to obtaine my love? and deceive Philautus to receive Lucilla? Yes Euphues, where love beareth sway, friendship can have no shew."²⁴ There follows an enumeration of the crimes and escapades of the gods under the influence of love; Euphues, following their example, resolves to throw away every pretension of virtue and "dissemble with him in wyles."²⁵ It is thus specifically the passion of love which involves Euphues in a horrific policy of subversion and treachery toward his friend. He hoodwinks him by lies and ruses, seduces his lady, and, when discovered and reproached for violating "the league of faythfull friendshipp" and for valuing "more the entising lookes of a lewd wench, then the entyre love of a loyall friende",²⁶ replies by making an unfavorable comparison of friendship to love:

The friendship betweene man and man as it is common so it is of course, betweene man and woman, as it is seldome so is it sincere, the one proceedeth of the similitude of manners, y^e other of the sinceritie of the heart . . .²⁷

This unfavorable comparison (continued through several Euphuistic

²⁴Lyly, I, p. 209.

²⁵Lyly, I, p. 210.

²⁶Lyly, I, p. 234.

²⁷Lyly, I, pp. 235-6.

similes) which is such a direct contradiction of the commonplace view is, together with the equally fallacious view that friendship is a common occurrence, an indication of Euphues' present state of folly and misplaced priorities. He all but equates love with crime and glories in that perverse equation. The gods, he argues, transformed themselves to beasts for the sake of love; therefore

he that cannot dissemble in love, is not worthy to live. I am of this minde, that bothe might and mallice, deceite and treacherie, all periurie, anye impietie may lawfully be committed in love, which is lawlesse.²⁸

He also attacks the commonplace of constancy in this mood: "the weake stomach if it be cloyed with one dyet doth soone surfet" (a metaphor uncannily suggesting Shakespeare's sonnet 118, where a triangular situation is similarly at issue). As the final plank of his immoralist philosophy Euphues proposes to protect his spoils by force and cunning:

As Lucilla was caught by frawde so shall she be kept by force, and as thou wast too simple to espy my crafte, so I think thou wilt be too weak to withstande my courage . . .²⁹

The picture of Euphues' absolute corruption is striking; he has degenerated by the time of the last quotation to the level of the stage "Machiavell." This degeneration, while its seeds are definitely in Euphues' unstable character from the beginning, is nevertheless especially connected with and brought out by the passion of love; its main feature is the immoralist glori-

²⁸Lyly, I, p. 236.

²⁹Lyly, I, p. 236.

fication of a criminal love as above the rational and virtuous relationship of friendship. These sentiments are not only implicit in the nature of Euphues' actions, they are proudly proclaimed by him in long speeches; and while it is expected that the right-thinking reader will make precisely the opposite value judgment, Euphues' qualitative distinction between the nature of love and the nature of friendship is bound to remain. Euphues' characterizations in fact remain the same even after his own value judgment has changed. When events bring him to his senses and force a reformation upon him, his first acts are to seek to re-establish a virtuous friendship with Philautus and to renounce once and for all the evil passion of love:

I had thought that women had bene as we men, that is true, faithful, zealous, constant, but I perceive they be rather woe unto men, by their falshood, gealousie, inconstancie. . . . now I see they have tasted of the infection of the Serpent . . .³⁰

There follows Euphues' "Cooling Card," a long denunciation of love, together with an admonition to choose instead "a faithful pheere [peer], with whom thou mayst communicate thy counsels".³¹ The association of love with criminality is thus left to stand and friendship proposed as its virtuous alternative, in a work whose popularity could not but strengthen the increasingly sharp lines being drawn between the two affections.

In Euphues and His England there is again an estrangement between Euphues and Philautus over a matter of love (though not this time a commonly loved woman). Philautus' lustful passion

³⁰Lyly, I, p. 241.

³¹Lyly, I, p. 256.

is the cause of his vicious and unjustified chastisement of Euphues' own innocent love and thus of the rupture of the friendship. The emotion of love is not per se at fault, but rather a certain type of evil passion which masquerades as love. This point is made repeatedly, and until he acknowledges that distinction Philautus lies languishing in feverish torments; and only after he does so is he allowed to sue for a renewal of friendship with Euphues. The virtuous friend need not renounce the good sort of love, only love as sexual gratification. Philautus' lady goes so far as to suggest that a virtuous attachment to herself might qualify as friendship:

I desire you . . . thinke me as a friende, and as a
 friende I wish you, that you blowe no more this fire
 of love, which will waste you before it warme me . . .³²

Thus, by the end of the work a virtuous love (much like friendship) is not deemed incompatible with a virtuous friendship, nor are women regarded as inherently noxious creatures. Such an attitude is, however, the legacy of a philosophical frame of mind, and a potential for disorder and evil remains in the emotion and in the sex.

Lyly's Endimion also represents a conflict between love and friendship, resolved as usual to the advantage of the latter though without requiring a repudiation of the former. When Endimion falls into a deep state of slumber after having become enamored of Cynthia, his friend Eumenides sets out to free him from this spell; but Eumenides himself becomes enamored of a lady (Semele) and is presented with the choice either of

³²Lyly, II, p. 106.

aiding his friend or prosecuting his own love affair. There is no apparent reason why one action need exclude the other, and the very gratuitousness of the conflict between the two loyalties strongly suggests its commonplace character. In anguished self-debate Eumenides cranks out the customary pros and cons of the two affections:

Fonde Eumenides, shall the intycing beautie of a most disdainfull ladie, bee of more force then the rare fidelitie of a tryed friend? The loue of men to women is a thing common and of course; the friendshippe of man to man infinite and immortall.³³

To Eumenides' hateful comparisons are joined those of the typical "wise old man" who speaks of love's elusiveness, mutability, and insubstantiality; whereas

friendshippe [is] the image of eternitie, in which there is nothing moueable, nothing mischeeuous. As much difference as there is betweene Beautie and Vertue, bodies and shadowes, colours and life; so great oddes is there betweene loue and friendshippe.

These comparisons, which are quite unjustified by any dramatic context, continue at length to proclaim friendship as the virtuous, immortal, unchanging relationship, as compared to love's whims, follies, and general instability. In the end Eumenides opts to sacrifice love to the duties of friendship. Later, when he has restored Endimion to good health a bystanding lady has the temerity to make the merely rhetorical observation that this event could make no one happier than herself. Eumenides sharply rebukes her: "doe not that wrong to the settled friendship of a man, as to compare it with the light affection of a woman."³⁴ Finally, at the very end of the drama, when

³³Lyly, III, p. 50.

³⁴Lyly, III, p. 67.

Cynthia attempts to bestow Semele upon Eumenides, that lady balks at the prospect because "He is no faithfull Lover, Madame"—that is, he previously chose friendship over love.³⁵ Semele is rebuked for this display of peevishness by everyone concerned, and she is about to have hertongue cut out on Cynthia's orders when Eumenides undertakes to substitute himself for her in that punishment. This action in turn pacifies Semele and she declares herself willing to have him after all: "for now only do I thinke Eumenides faithfull, that is willing to lose his tongue for my sake". Thus all ends happily, and the conflict between friendship and love is resolved, Eumenides having shown his willingness to make sacrifices for both friend and lady and rejoicing in his possession of both these companions: "Ah, happie Eumenides, that hast a friend so faithfull, and a mistris so faire".³⁶ Despite this harmonious conclusion (made possible by the generosity of the good friend, Eumenides) the comparison between love and friendship made previously is allowed to stand. Eumenides' self-sacrificing action toward his mistress in no way contradicts the lower valuation of her, and the whole incident expresses the lady's petty spitefulness, which is redeemed only by her lover's gallantry. The male is allowed moral superiority, just as friendship stands above love.

In his Morando, which is itself largely devoted to a general discussion of love, Greene makes only a transient comparison between the affections: "Love is a desire of the thing

³⁵Lyly, III, p. 77.

³⁶Lyly, III, p. 78.

loved, and the beginning of friendship, but friendship is an ancient and inveterate love, wherein is more pleasure than desire."³⁷ Despite all the favorable things which have previously been said, when it comes to a comparison of love and friendship the former is characterized as painful, unsatisfied, and unstable, and the latter as happy, fulfilled, and stable. In another work, Ciceronis Amor, or Tullies Love, a typical triangular plot situation appears. Lentulus, Cicero's friend, falls in love with Terentia; then she with Cicero; then Cicero with her. Cicero must therefore make a decision as between maintaining faithfulness to his friend and satisfying his love. The two affections are represented in the manner familiar from Elyot and Lyly: love is the burning passion, the sickness (both Cicero and Lentulus take to their beds with it), the immoral subverter of friendship, which is honorable, virtuous, and rational, but curiously vulnerable to love's incursions. Terentia, though ostensibly virtuous and chaste, threatens and storms in a manner worthy of Cleopatra when Cicero honorably undertakes to argue his friend's cause:

Womens thoughtes consistes, oft in extreemes, and they that love most, if abused, hate most deadly: fear this and beware of my frowne: as yet there is but wrinkle in my brow, but if it once prove full of angrie frownes, it will bee too late to take holde of occasion behind: Thou art forewarnd, be forewarnd and so farewell.³⁸

This speech has a dreadful effect upon poor Cicero, who, though resolved "to die with a honourable minde to Lentulus, then

³⁷Greene, III, p. 146.

³⁸Greene, VII, p. 204.

with a discredite to enjoy beautifull Terentia," nevertheless has little pleasure from either his virtue or his friend. The choice between friendship and love is presented as a choice between doing one's cold, hateful duty and abandoning oneself to a feast of pleasure. The emotions are all engaged in one direction and the moral senses all in the other, and in these circumstances love cannot but appear as a tyrannical and subversive force, the lady as a cruel temptress. Cicero "found not a salve to cure his maladie, but that Terentia rubbed the scare a fresh by shaking him up so sharpely".³⁹ The dilemma is typically resolved by the graciousness of the wronged friend, Lentulus, who on discovering his friend's faithfulness and passion renounces the lady in favor of him (as in Elyot's tale and, of course, The Two Gentlemen of Verona). The story's conclusion reaffirms the moral superiority of friendship, and Lentulus' self-sacrifice stands in high relief to Terentia's cruel tortures. Because of Lentulus' magnanimity, however, love is allowed its ultimate measure of dignity and satisfaction, and the story concludes with marriage of Cicero and Terentia.

Rather more harsh and sinister is the mood of two other works of Greene, Pandosto and Philomela, also depicting triangular relationships. The former (which is of course the source of The Winter's Tale) is more a study of the pathology of jealousy than of the conflict between love and friendship. Pandosto does briefly consider his situation from the latter point of

³⁹Greene, IV, p. 204.

view, musing upon the freedom of acquaintance between his friend and his wife:

He considered with himself that Egistus was a man, and must needs love; that his wife was a woman, and therefore subject unto love, that where fancy forced, friendship was of no force.⁴⁰

This perception of friendship's weakness before the onslaught of love is, as we have seen, conventional, but it ought also to be put down in part to Pandosto's diseased state of mind. To put it another way, Pandosto's suspicions have at least the rationale that they refer to the conventional triangular situation which obtains between two friends and a woman. Previous works have portrayed the triangle from the point of view of a friend struggling to sort out the claims of love and friendship, to make a choice between emotional satisfaction and moral duty. Here the point of view is that of the formerly "unsuspecting" friend--except that this time he does suspect, is uncertain, and agonizes over what turns out to be (but need not have been) a non-existent triangle. This is a less oppressively moralistic perspective and presents other conflicts than that of the usual one between duty and pleasure. Here several dramatic possibilities could develop--the agonizing attempt to appraise the faithfulness of friend and mistress from their conduct toward each other in one's presence, the imposing of degrees of unfaithfulness beyond which treachery would be impossible to ignore, the determination of which party is most to be blamed, the sense that one's own suspicions are foully misplaced, and so on. The point is that such a perspective

⁴⁰Greene, IV, p. 238.

places the emphasis less upon the homiletic nature of the conflict between the two affections and more on its dramatic and psychological reality. These possibilities are to fructify more completely in Shakespeare's sonnets.

In Greene's Philomela there is again a morbidly jealous and anti-feminist protagonist, a husband who begins by urging his friend to make advances toward his (the husband's) wife so as to test her constancy, of which he has a pathological mistrust somewhat reminiscent of that of the husband in Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale." Philippo, the husband, is not satisfied by his wife Philomela's repeated rebuffs of the feigned advances of his friend, Iutesio; he continues to rail insanely against the falseness and lechery of women and to incite his friend to further and further advances. Iutesio comprehends the absurdity and perversity of this behavior and actually contemplates treachery to such a foolish friend: "seeing he will needs have me court his wife in iest, were it not well if he might have the Cuckow in earnest".⁴¹ To make the pretense of love to a friend's fair lady is dangerous for the realistic reason that "beawty is a baite that will not be dallied with." Philippo's strategy is indicted not so much because based upon an unjust suspicion as for being stupidly conceived: this testing procedure provides the wife with an occasion for unfaithfulness which she might not otherwise have had. Friend and wife nevertheless remain loyal, though they become friendly with one another; Iutesio is supposed by her to be making an honorable

⁴¹Greene, XI, p. 143.

attempt to bridle his passion, and she accordingly sympathizes with him. This innocent kindness is mistaken by Philippo for the passion of love, and for the first time he becomes truly jealous of his friend, undergoing self-torturing reflections as to the mutual actions of wife and friend and entertaining the usual commonplace about the flimsiness of friendship when the force of love urges.⁴² He begins to spy on the pair, becomes convinced of their treachery toward himself, trumps up a false charge of adultery against them, and goes out of the picture a certified madman, foaming at the mouth about "comiting thus my selfe, my soule, my goods, mine honor, nay my wife, to his honour, only reserving her from him".⁴³ One cannot escape the admittedly Freudian conclusion that Philippo had compulsively desired his wife's infidelity all along, had tried to force her to it with his friend, and had finally persuaded himself with a morbid satisfaction that it had really occurred. It is an odd tale, more a study of the psychopathology of jealousy than of the conflict between love and friendship. But, as in the previous instance, the commonplace character of that conflict is affirmed. The madman's careful implication of his friend in the triangle and his explicit appeal to the traditional hostility of the two affections gives his otherwise rootless jealousy a sort of "literary" plausibility.

The plot of Lodge's Euphues Shadow turns upon still another conflict between love and friendship. Philamour (as

⁴²Greene, XI, p. 165.

⁴³Greene, XI, p. 165.

his name somewhat self-consciously suggests) is possessed of a passionate love which causes all the usual fevers and wakings and eventually lands him in the usual sick-bed. His friend Philamis (whose primary loyalty is similarly indicated by his name) tries vainly to dissuade Philamour from the extremity of his passion, but the latter remains obstinate and even charges him to carry his suit to the lady, Harpastes, in the form of a letter. This Philamis agrees to do, for the sake of his friend, but with a heavy heart: "since the lawe of nature tyeth me, and the league of amitie enioyneth mee, I will rather fayle my selfe than loose thy welfare."⁴⁴ However, through no fault of his, Harpastes falls in love with him rather than with Philamour and sends him back with a cold reply to his friend. But before this particular matter can be carried any further, Philamis falls in love with yet another lady, is coyly rejected by her, and denounces her and all women ("foormes of sinne, and the fiendes of Satan: the gate of the Devill, and the Serpentes venome," etc.).⁴⁵ In the end he concedes his own fault for ever having conceived the vile passion of love, and he retreats to a position of chaste philosophic contemplation. All this violence of rejection is despite the fact that the lady's reply had not been very harsh or final, especially in view of Philamis' extravagant protestations and proposal of marriage upon his first meeting her. The episode, which occurs in the space of a single

⁴⁴Lodge, II, p. 55.

⁴⁵Lodge, II, p. 63.

paragraph, is nonsensical in itself: it merely gives the opportunity of making a parenthetical comment upon the vileness of love. Such is also the burden of the main plot, which resumes and immediately begins to show the dire effects of love on friendship. When Philamour is given his lady's unsatisfactory message he at once suspects the treachery of his friend, is overcome by fury, challenges Philamis to a duel, and leaves him for dead--a speaking picture of the destructive effect of love and another instance of insane and unjustified jealousy directed against a friend on account of a woman. But Philamis does not die and has the satisfaction of offering a magnanimous pardon to Philamour, on the grounds that a true friend will suffer anything.⁴⁶ Once again we are presented with the spectacle of friendship curing the effects of the injurious passion of love by means of its own moral superiority. The story's conclusion emphasizes the reconciliation of the two affections: Philamis rather incredibly undertakes once again to woo Harpastes for his friend and this time is successful. Thus at the end Philamour and Harpastes are living together happily and Philamis is living happily alone, the latter's exquisite renunciation having made the former event possible. Incredible as such a conclusion may be (and intolerable as are Philamis' moral harangues), it fits with the general pattern whereby love's disorderliness is at once exposed and tamed by the very quality of friendship which it has injured.

⁴⁶See this thesis, pp. 41-2.

Sidney's Arcadia contains a rich and subtle meditation on the relationship between the two affections. Sidney's attitude toward love is, as has been previously described, somewhat paradoxical; he allots to it much of the conventional disorderliness but also a large measure of mysterious glory. Conflicts between love and friendship (and the spiritual values which these embody) do occur in the course of the work, but antagonism between them is not represented as the norm. At the very outset of the story two shepherds, Strephon and Claius, proclaim their loves of the same lady; but she is so virtuous, and they have been so ennobled by their love, that they have no trouble remaining fast friends:

hath not shee throwne reason upon our desires, and, as it were given eyes unto Cupid? hath in any, but in her, love-fellowship maintained friendship between rivals, and beautie taught the beholders chastitie?⁴⁷

The possibility of love's disorderliness and disruption of friendship is considered even as it is denied. Another interpolated story is squarely in the tradition of Lodge, Lyly, and Greene; in it Amphialus argues the cause of his friend Philoxenus before Queen Helen, but he only succeeds in winning her love for himself.⁴⁸ Horror-struck, he heaps abuse upon his own head while continuing to praise his friend to the queen, but to no effect. Philoxenus finally discovers what has happened, falls into an insane fury, pursues the distraught Amphialus, forces him to give battle and is killed by him.

⁴⁷Sidney, I, p. 8.

⁴⁸Sidney, I, pp. 66-74.

Philoxenus' old father arrives at the scene of the battle in time to witness his son's death and to fall dead himself. Amphialus, his mind completely unhinged, throws away his armor and retires to the woods accompanied only by his friend's old dog. The story has greater pathos than previous ones in Lodge and Greene, and it is not overtly moralistic or derogatory to women; it is nevertheless a statement of the commonplace of love's destructive conflict with friendship. Love's effect upon Philoxenus is dire and dreadful in its consequences, and the fact that it is Amphialus who survives their battle, alone with his grief and his friend's dog, comprises a far more terrible conclusion than the usual one--reconciliation of all concerned through the magnanimous act of a true friend.

Something of the nature of Sidney's distinction between friendship and love as it occurs in the case of the protagonists, Pyrocles, Musidorus, and their ladies, has already been described.⁴⁹ The cultivation of friendship was described as an inseparable part of that strenuous education for virtuous action which the two princes mutually received in their youths; and each continues to invoke the office of a friend in keeping the other from bad or ill-advised actions, among which love is at first listed. When Pyrocles falls in love he withdraws from the life of overt virtuous action, from scholarly pursuits, and from the confidences of his friend--derelictions for which he is severely upbraided by Musidorus. Pyrocles thereupon undertakes to produce a rationale, not for love, which he has

⁴⁹See this thesis, pp. 44-46.

not yet acknowledged as his guiding light, but for its effects, solitariness, introspection, passive communion with nature:

who knowes whether I feede not my minde with higher thoughts? Trulie as I know not all the particularities, so yet I see the bounds of all these knowledges; but the workings of the minde I finde much more infinite, then can be led unto by the eye, or imagined by any, that distract their thoughts without themselves.⁵⁰

An ecstatic description of the beauty of nature, evidently the legacy of these introspections, immediately follows. While love is shown as guilty of ridiculous and improper actions in the course of the Arcadia, it is consistently associated with this special poetic and half-mystical response to things. Friendship is, on the other hand, more particularly associated with the practical realm of virtuous action and knowledge acquired by study rather than intuition. Neither affection is without its special glory and its special limitation; each complements the other. In line with this conceptual agreement of the affections the events of the story underline the actual harmony of friendship and love in the lives of the two heroes. There is a brief moment when Musidorus, not as yet in love himself and still unaware of love's special virtues, turns upon his friend with the hostile ultimatum to choose between maintaining friendship with him or love for the lady. But, as has been described, he is vanquished on that occasion by his friend's tearful and wordless appeal for understanding; and not long afterwards he is in love himself. The friends' love affairs are difficult and painful, and they draw aid

⁵⁰Sidney, I, p. 56.

and support from one another in these matters as in matters of war and honor. In especially bad moments their comradeship as disappointed lovers almost seems the chief function of their association:

Alas, . . . deare Cosin, that it hath pleased the high powers to throwe us to such an estate, as the only inter-course of our true friendshippe, must be a bartering of miseries.⁵¹

On one occasion Pyrocles' services are demanded by both Musidorus and his lady, and he sorrowfully asserts that though he would normally do anything at all for his friend, his promise to his lady is still more sacred. Typically, Musidorus fully consents to this decision, and so any conflict of loyalties is avoided: "But my promise caried me the easier, because Musidorus himselfe would not suffer me to breake it."⁵² Contrary to the commonplace, this decision is made in favor of love, but only very reluctantly and with the full approval of the displaced friend. At every point the friendship of Pyrocles and Musidorus abets their loves, joining the two in ridiculous female disguises, night-time prowlings and vigils, sympathetic giving of advice and comfort, the dubiously ethical abduction of their ladies. Such escapades may not constitute honorable actions, but they are engaged in as heartily as the usual feats of derring-do, the relieving of distressed kingdoms from tyrants and the rescuing of innocents from the jaws of tigers. Their friendship includes the poetic and farcical actions of distraught lovers, and it includes

⁵¹Sidney, I, p. 153.

⁵²Sidney, I, p. 299.

the high and noble ones of humanist-princes. One's final judgment of the former escapades and, generally, of the effects of love on the character of the heroes may be adverse, but love is too vitally implicated in their friendship to allow one the liberty of hateful comparisons between the affections.

Spenser's treatment of the commonplace in Book IV of The Faerie Queene is at once entirely conventional and yet unmistakably of a piece with his conception of the discordia concors, as previously described.⁵³ The Amyas-Placidus-Aemylia story has clear affinities with the triangle plots of conventional practice, but with significant differences. Amyas, in love with Aemylia, is captured and shut up in prison by Corflambo, where he is voluntarily joined by his friend, Placidus, who gives as his reason for doing so the sacred bond of friendship as compared to love: "Aemylia well he loved, as I mote ghesse; / Yet greater love to me then her he did professe" (VIII.lvii). Yet the story reveals no actual denigration of love and no conflict between friendship and love. Placidus goes on to offer himself as a substitute for Amyas in the prison, thus freeing his friend from the wicked advances of Poena (which would make Amyas unfaithful to Aemylia if returned but which, under the circumstances, are difficult to resist). This friendly sacrifice thus secures the preservation of chaste love, and that magnanimous action provokes Spenser to a further conventional comparison:

⁵³See this thesis, pp. 50-51.

Hard is the doubt, and difficult to deeme,
 When all these kinds of love together meet,
 And doe dispart the hart with powre extreme,
 Whether shall weigh the balance downe; to weet
 The deare affection unto kindred sweet,
 Or raging fire of love to woman kind,
 Or zeale of friends combynd with vertues meet.
 But of them all the bond of vertuous mind
 Me seemes the gentle hart should most assured bind.

For naturall affection soone doth cease,
 And quenched is with Cupids greater flame;
 But faithfull friendship doth them both suppressse,
 And them with maystring discipline doth tame,
 Through thoughts aspiring to eternal fame. (IX.i-ii)

This comparison is perhaps partly provoked by Poena's lustful conduct, but that event is only the springboard to a statement of the general commonplace. Love (not merely lust) is an unsteady and unconstant "raging fire;" whereas friendship is "the bond of vertuous mind." The latter is named the superior affection and is said to be capable of "maystring" the former's disorderliness. And yet this entirely conventional statement is not arrived at without some doubt and difficulty in choosing between "these kinds of love." A similar comparison may be found in the description of the inhabitants of the pleasure garden outside the gates of the Temple of Venus. These are for the most part pairs of frankly sensual lovers:

All these together by themselves did sport
 Their spotlesse pleasures, and sweet loves content.
 But farre away from these, another sort
 Of lovers lincked in true harts content;
 Which loved not as these, for like intent,
 But on chast vertue grounded their desire,
 Farre from all fraud, or fayned blandishment,
 Which in their spirits kindling zealous fire,
 Brave thoughts and noble deedes did evermore aspire.
 (X.xxvi)

Here is implied the usual distinction between the affections--
 love as an attachment to body, friendship as an attachment

to mind. The comparison is not, however, pursued at any length, and the indictment of love as a "fraud" and "fayned blandishment" hardly seems justified in the context of the profusion of the Temple of Venus. That place is the most important emblem and shrine of love to be found anywhere in Spenser's work, and in reality it shares very few of its glories with friendship. The same might be said of Book IV as a whole, which, though nominally dedicated to friendship, gives small shrift to its titular heroes, Cambell and Telamond; of the seven most important relationships depicted in the book, five are between men and women. This is perhaps partly for reasons of dramatic interest and of tying up the loose ends of the previous book on love (though the connection between the books goes deeper than this and is a matter of the theme's being properly dealt with in its dual aspects of love and friendship). Spenser's personal enthusiasms may also be relevant: the man whose energies are so heavily engaged in the celebration of married love can give little but the requisite humanistic deference to the austere realm of classical friendship. Actually, both relationships are comprehended under the over-arching conception of concord. As was previously described, the true commitment of Spenser's allegory is to the mystery of personal and cosmic harmony as it arises from the ordinary flux of hates, disorders, and contrarieties which hold sway in the world. In such a context friendship, whose theory consistently proclaims constancy, happiness, and harmony, is an apt image of the ultimate state

of concord envisaged by Spenser. Love is also directed to this end but is conventionally a less settled and fulfilled state; therefore it is appropriate that the painful and unfulfilled yearnings generated in Book III (devoted to love) should be successfully resolved in Book IV (devoted to friendship). This is to consider friendship not so much as a concrete phenomenon existing between man and man as an emblem of the harmonious relationship of individuals. Spenser's treatment of the "idea" of friendship functions to collapse the commonplace distinction between it and love; for, as the book amply demonstrates, both affections (understood concretely rather than allegorically) reveal the potential for discord and seek the ultimate goal of harmony. Ate, the prime enemy of all harmonious relationships, comprehends under her malicious purview the entirety of man's social relations, from civilization taken as a whole to the various degrees of bonds between "private persons"--friends, kinsmen, and lovers:

Some of swome friends, that did their faith forgoe;
 Some of bome brethren, prov'd unnatural;
 Some of deare lovers, foes perpetuall. (I.xxiv)

Spenser's handling of the conventional triangle plot has already been described in the case of the story of Amyas-Placidus-Aemylia; there friendship was allowed its emblematic function as the healer and harmonizer of love, yet no serious conflict between it and the norm of chaste love appeared. The convention is used, but is modified in the use. In the case of the triangle formed among Blandamour, Paridell, and the false Florimell, it is invoked to more parodic effect. False

Florimell (Blandamour's lady) incites the willing and faithless friend of her lover by shameless blandishments, and the two "friends" quickly fall to reproaches and then to furious combat over their mutually beloved lady. In this they are urged on by both her and Ate, who invoke the claims of love to drive the friends to ever greater hostilities: "Bidding them fight for honor of their love" (II.xix). Though love is the immediate cause of the disruption of this friendship, the latter is itself too comically evil to credit with any value, and the commonplace is therefore reduced to the status of an absurdity embedded within an absurdity. The conflict between the affections is presented as the natural outcome of evil friendship, evil love, and the presiding genius of disorder (Ate), rather than as the normal opposition of what is virtuous (friendship) to what is vicious (love). This episode appears at the outset of the book and serves notice that friendship's serious enemy is not to be its conventional opponent, love, but rather that evil spirit of discord which afflicts both affections. A wrong attitude to love usually goes with a wrong attitude to friendship. This is also demonstrated in a later episode when Paridell and Blandamour are joined by another pair of bad friends, Claribell and Druon, and these four friends embark upon a shifting series of combats and alliances for no apparent reason except their inherently unstable natures and their various wrong attitudes toward love. Druon believed in a single life; Claribell was "enraged rife / Withe fervent flames;" Blandamour's love was constantly changing; and Paridell "lusted

after all" (IX.xxi). The mechanisms of all this meaningless conflict are never clearly explained, but it has something to do with this variety of bad loves in these bad friends, the two evils being inextricably linked.

Another sort of triangle is formed among the book's titular heroes, Cambell and Telamond, and the lady Canacee. It is, however, a very defective triangle from the geometrical point of view. The figure named "Telamond" in the book's title commences his career as the three brothers, Priamond-Diamond-Triamond; the brothers do indeed love the lady, but Cambell merely has a brotherly affection and concern for her honor; Cambell and the brothers do not begin as friends, hence their battle over Canacee cannot be interpreted as a conflict between friendship and love; and finally, after the battle's interruption and the contraction of friendship between its former participants, the erstwhile "triangle" rapidly expands to a quadrangle by the addition of Cambina to it as a lover for Cambell. (There might also be said to have been a "quadrangle" formed between the three brothers and Canacee. The brothers, however, being perfect friends--for "Telamond" literally means "perfect world"--are united and harmonious in their love as in all other things; indeed, after the death of the first two they continue to fight and finally to enjoy the benefits of love in the person of the remaining brother.) Spenser's departures from the customary triangle situation show his disapproval of its typical import. His modification makes the initial conflict a matter of love as against brotherly duty (rather than friendship); and the

final arrangement makes room for a lady for each friend, rather than leaving one friend loveless. In this case the loyalties of the friends are equally divided between lady and friend to produce an emblem of fully harmonious intercourse between mutual friends and their lovers. No partial loyalties can break the spirit of harmony wrought by the miraculous draught of Nepenthe:

Where making ioyous feast their daies they spent
 In perfect love, devoide of hatefull strife,
 Allide with bonds of mutuall couplement;
 For Triamond had Canacee to wife,
 With whom he ledd a long and happie life;
 And Cambel took Cambina to his fere,
 The which as life were each to other wife,
 So all alike did love, and loved were,
 That since their days such lovers were not found elsewhere.
 (III.lii)

In Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Part I the hero's wooing of Zenocrate has a kind of parallelism with his courting of friends; the two acts occur in counterpoint in the same scene (I.ii), and the same argument is used in either case—Tamburlaine's vaunt of his overwhelming worth. These similarities do not, however, so much belong to the consideration of love and friendship as to the depiction of the audacious single-mindedness of Tamburlaine when bent on achieving any objective whatever. Zenocrate is not so much a loved woman as a principle created by Tamburlaine in his imagination and loved like himself; and, similarly, his friends are little more than extensions of himself in the realm of his political power. Between such insubstantial personages there seems little chance of a serious conflict developing. In The Jew of Malta there is, on the other hand, a grotesque parody of the conventional

triangle (somewhat in the manner of Spenser's treatment in the episode of Paridell, Blandamour, and false Florimell) involving the figures of Barabas, Ithamore, and Bellamira. When Bellamira flirts with Ithamore he immediately and unhesitatingly betrays his good friend, Barabas: "I'll go steal some money from my master to make me handsome" (IV.iv.47). "Sweet Bellamira, would I had my master's wealth for thy sake!" (IV.iv.52). The choice of love over friendship (or false love over false friendship) is made without a moment's internal conflict or weighing of the rival claims of the affections. Ithamore's thoughtlessness is, indeed, part of the humor of the situation; he readily assents to his mistress' suggestion to blackmail Barabas and actually drives the price upward ever more extravagantly, concluding his calculations, "Hang him, Jew!" (IV.iv.77). The grotesque character of this friendship is equalled by that of the love affair between Bellamira and Ithamore. With Pilia-Borza, Bellamira's real lover, acting as pimp, she croons over her "sweet-faced youth" (Ithamore), bemoans their parting, vulgarly entreats him to lie in her lap. He in turn is provoked to grandiose praise of her as "Love's queen" and sovereign of his heart, but likewise concludes with comic vulgarity: "Come, my dear love; let's in and sleep together" (IV.iv.125). The two rival affections are thus equally compounded of absurd rhetoric and sordid reality, and their "conflict" has no moral connotations whatever, except perhaps to undercut the moral pretensions normally present in triangle situations. Whereas

Spenser's treatment suggested that the conflict between love and friendship is owing to an evil aberration of them both, Marlowe's suggests that such conflict is the norm and that evil is the reality of every human relationship. In Edward II the conflict between friendship and love (or perhaps one should say marriage, since Edward never shows any love for his queen) is too blatant to need much comment. In this case the triangle does not take the typical form of two friends mutually in love with a woman; Edward is rather mutually beloved by a wife and a friend. Nor is the conflict invested with the least amount of moral force; Edward simply prefers Gaveston to his queen (for rather unvirtuous reasons, as was mentioned previously) and makes no qualitative, and certainly no moral, differentiation between friendship and love. The typical anguished struggle to remain faithful to one's friend despite the tyrannic power of love has here degenerated to a simple struggle, made by both male and female, to possess at whatever cost the person of the desired individual. Marlowe's treatment of the commonplace does not fail of his customary cynicism and perverseness.

The discussion of Shakespeare's handling of the present commonplace, which is about to be begun, may seem somewhat anticlimactic in view of the rather lengthy discussion of his predecessors which has just been concluded. It is true that his treatment of this theme in the sonnets is restricted to a handful of instances, some of them rather dubious, and that

the rich and extended "discussion" (if one may apply that term to lyric poetry) given to the commonplaces of virtue and mutuality is here lacking. Yet those few sonnets which more or less clearly delineate a triangular situation among the two friends and a commonly loved woman (40-42, 133, 134, 144), as well as a great many others which more vaguely suggest some such situation, have aroused great interest in almost all Shakespeare's critics and have usually been interpreted by them either as a bizarre and idiosyncratic invention on his part or as too peculiar a circumstance to have arisen from anything but biographical fact. Much critical energy has consequently gone into the task of unraveling the story which the text appears to relate with such maddening terseness and obscurity of detail. Now the benefit of the previous discussion is that it has established the commonplace character of the rivalry between friendship and love and of the utilization of "triangle plots" to depict that rivalry. It puts us in a position to regard the situation depicted in those few crucial sonnets from quite another point of view from the one usually taken; we can see it as a literary convention intimately attached to the very topic of friendship. This is not to deny the possibility of biographical reference, nor is it to suggest that Shakespeare's treatment was altogether predetermined by his topic; but it is to deny that that treatment was starkly original or that it can be adequately discussed without a knowledge of those conventions to which it adheres so closely. If our description of the conventional background of this theme in the sonnets appears to be out of proportion to the magnitude of

the theme's presence there, that fact is perhaps justified by the total ignorance of it which critical discussions have hitherto shown. We need not now struggle with such fierceness and ingenuity to "reconstruct" the implied narrative which is buried in the sonnets but can rather refer their occasional and vague references to a triangular situation to our knowledge of that convention. That is to say, we may take this situation almost as a donne and may infer a sort of general background without attempting to decipher every concrete link in the sequence of events which led to the forming of the triangle (which would in any case be impossible). The sonnets, while they contain narrative elements, are not primarily concerned to tell a story; they are essentially lyrical utterances in which, in some cases, a triangular relationship among the poet, the friend, and a commonly loved mistress serves as the basis of the poet's emotion. In the following discussion we will content ourselves with describing the poet's response as it occurs within these rather narrow bounds, particularly avoiding a comprehensive consideration of Shakespeare's presentation of love in sonnets 127-154, both because that would be a study of too great length and familiarity and because it would carry us away from our more specific interest in his presentation of the rivalry of friendship and love, especially within the context of "triangle plots."

We have seen that a strong emphasis upon the moral duty of a friend is one characteristic of most previous triangle stories. They are often told from the point of view of the

friend who must struggle, successfully or not, to remain faithful and virtuous to his friend while love of his friend's mistress takes its evil toll (sometimes landing him in the sick-bed). The sonnets, though they proceed rather from the point of view of the wronged friend, similarly reveal a concern for moral issues. Criticism of the friend (i.e., the beautiful youth) is characteristically blunted, however, or he is even absolved altogether by the poet's placing all blame on the mistress. In sonnets 40-42 the poet shows his preoccupation with placing the blame somewhere and expresses pain at the loss of his mistress, but his attitude of resignation and his evident desire of maintaining the friendship are not so very far from the magnanimous renunciations of the wronged friends in tales of Elyot and Greene (not to mention The Two Gentlemen of Verona). Sonnet 40 does not (as do its successors) refer explicitly to a "her" or a "woman" as the third party in the case, but its position and imagery and argument all link it to the situation delineated more clearly in sonnets 41 and 42. As was mentioned in the previous discussion of this sonnet, a crucial ambiguity operates in its repeated use of the term "my love;" the reference is in most cases two-fold--to the person of (or emotion felt for) the friend and the mistress:

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
 No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call--
 All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more.
 Then if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest,-- . . .

The poet declares that "I cannot blame thee" and "I do forgive thy robbery," but this is a part of his "magnanimous" attitude

and does not conceal an implicit reproach and displeasure. Our previous discussion of the sonnet indicated that one such mechanism of censure is the unfavorable comparison suggested between the poet's love and the lady's love--and therefore the criticism of the friend for choosing the latter.⁵⁴ This type of evaluation of the two affections has after all been observed to be quite conventional, and nowhere more so than when it is a question of choosing one or the other. The lady's love is said not to be "true love;" the poet claims that he has given all that to the friend (that is, that he himself has loved her much less than the friend); and in stealing her the friend has gained "all my poverty" (admittedly an ambiguous phrase but one suggesting that the lady was not worth much). The low valuation of the lady is nevertheless not free from ulterior motives. It comes in a sonnet which is addressed to the friend and which seeks to persuade him to desist from his deprivations; how better do so than argue that the booty is not worth the taking? The poet is at all events not untouched by the loss of his mistress, and in this particular instance he does not blame either her or the emotion of love in general for that event. Typical of his practice in the sonnets the poet applies the word love uniformly to both relationships, and, less typically, draws no distinction between the quality (as opposed to value) of the two affections.

In sonnet 41 there occurs a self-debate as to whether

⁵⁴See this thesis, pp. 155-156.

the friend or the mistress ought most to be blamed:

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
 For still temptation follows where thou art:
 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won;
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd;
 And when a woman woos what woman's son
 Will sourly leave her till he have prevail'd?
 Ay me! but yet thou mightst my seat forbear,
 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forc'd to break a twofold truth,--
 Hers, by thy beauty tempting her to thee;
 Thine, by thy beauty being false to me.

Here some familiar themes--absence, "pretty wrongs," the excuse of beauty--converge upon the specific matter of the friend's seduction (or vice versa) of the poet's mistress. Reading such a sonnet, it is possible to imagine that the obscure sins or misdeeds of the friend so often referred to elsewhere in these terms (but not, as here, specifically linked to the triangle) actually alluded to that situation. How many other sonnets speak of a mysterious corruption of the friend's beauty, of casual sins which are almost justified by that beauty, of an "absence from thy heart" filled with thoughts of treachery? So many of those sonnets would acquire an additional pregnancy from being referred to the triangle. Yet it must remain an insoluble problem as to whether the friend's infidelity in this particular instance is to be taken as merely a single example of his general nature, or whether this particular misdeed is the basis of all the poet's conclusions about his friend's general nature. There is of course no way of "proving" either alternative, and an ambiguity must remain, in which each perspective always suggests to greater or less

degree the other. Those innumerable sonnets which speak of the friend's treachery and ill deeds must inevitably acquire some of the specific coloration of the triangle situation, which is almost the only concrete circumstance of the friend's misbehavior which appears anywhere in the sonnets. Be that as it may, in this particular sonnet the friend is at first only lightly berated for "pretty wrongs," in a mood very much reminiscent of that of sonnet 96 ("Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport; . . . Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort"). The lady is principally blamed, on the ground that, like the ladies in stories of Sidney, Lodge, and Greene, she has been the aggressor. Unlike the characters of those stories the friend has been unable to resist the lady's advances, however; and it is this circumstance, so contrary to the actions of the virtuous friends of other triangles, which leads to the sestet's abrupt change of mood. The fact of the lady's initial advances is not a sufficient excuse for the friend's treachery any more here than in other triangle stories. In the sestet/^{emerges} something like the conventional conflict between love (connected with the disorderly realm of sensual pleasure: "thy beauty and thy straying youth / Who lead thee in their riot") and friendship (connected with duty: "Where thou art forc'd to break a twofold truth"). The friend is blamed for having allowed the admittedly powerful force of love to overwhelm his sense of duty. In the previous sonnet he was blamed for valuing love above friendship; here he is blamed for valuing pleasure above duty. As we have seen, both sets of terms are conventional in this context.

In sonnet 42 the friend and the mistress are seen as equal participants and as co-conspirators, both of whom, the argument implausibly insists, acted for the sake of the poet. The irony is directed against both parties, but neither does it exclude a continued affection for both:

Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye:--
 Thou dost love her because thou know'st I love her;
 And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
 Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.

We need not interpret this tortuous logic in a literal sense to feel that the tone is affectionate and genuinely concerned to put a good face upon these rather dastardly acts. The poet is gently reproachful rather than bitterly ironic. The sonnet's opening quatrain is especially interesting in that here, without any of the ulterior motives of sonnet 40, the poet directly compares the intensity of his love for his friend and for his mistress:

That thou hast her, it is not all my grief;
 And yet it may be said I lov'd her dearly;
 That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly.

Both friend and mistress are loved, but the former more than the latter--a situation sometimes felt to be peculiar but, as we have seen, firmly authorized by the literature of friendship.

It was previously remarked that Greene, in his handling of the triangle situation in his Philomela and Pandosto, exploited the dramatic possibilities arising from presenting the situation from the point of view of the friend who thinks himself wronged and who is doomed to entertain lonely suspicions of his friend and his wife (or mistress) without knowing any-

thing certainly. The situation in the sonnets is similarly presented from this point of view (i.e., of the wronged party, the poet), and while the sonnets just examined do not show him in a state of uncertainty or suspicious vigilance, some others do so. In none of these cases, however, is the third party actually specified as the mistress or a woman, and it is left to the reader in each case only to feel the appropriateness of that inference. These sonnets also belong to and suggest that large group, previously discussed, in which the poet, apart from his friend in the lonely night, broods upon that young man's whereabouts and actions and tries to find consolation through the means of Platonic vision. It is once again easy to imagine that the root situation behind all these lonely vigils (which nearly always carry an implicit reproach of the friend) is the friend's night-time activities with the lady. But the terms of these sonnets are general and concerned with the metaphysical and simply human truths of separation; it is not proposed here to "re-interpret" them all as cries of sexual jealousy, only to suggest that among their many ambiguities and overtones exist intimations of the triangle situation. In sonnets 48, 57, and 61 these intimations are as strong as anywhere. The first of these has already been discussed at some length, and it remains only to iterate that in it the absent poet shows anxiety for his friend's "truth" at the hands of a "vulgar thief." The friend, unlike the poet's other "jewels," cannot be locked up "in sure wards of trust," but is rather free to come and go "Within

the gentle closure of my breast"—a condition which does not inspire much confidence in him. It is uncertain whether he has actually been stolen by this thief or whether he himself is the thief, but the poet's tone of reproach and anxiety is appropriate to the situation described in sonnet 41—where the lady is also indicated as the aggressor (here the "vulgar thief") but where the friend is likewise responsible for not resisting her advances (here for not maintaining "truth"). The real interest of the sonnet, as has been described, lies in its dramatic representation of the uncertainty of mind felt by the poet when absent from his friend.⁵⁵ Sonnet 57 does not carry through any such extended meditation on the subject of the friend's infidelities; it simply attests the poet's abject willingness to put up with any inconvenience at the friend's hands, including long lonely vigils when he is absent. The third quatrain, however, introduces into this very general theme a rather more pointed reference:

Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But like a sad slave stay and think of nought
Save where you are how happy you make those.

The poet is uncertain and "dares not question" his friend's affairs or companions; but he is jealous of them for the happiness which they enjoy. Among these happy associates of the friend it is hard not to believe that the mistress is at least one and perhaps the main one whom the poet, by his own admission, is jealous but dares not inquire about. It is

⁵⁵See this thesis, pp. 81-83.

typical of the sonnets, where every theme and situation is swathed in such rolls of ambiguity, to make this oblique reference and stop short just at the indefinite substantive, "those." The reader is forced to think of the lady; he is also forced to think of the rival poet; and yet any of the shadowy figures in that great "world" for which the friend has such regard may suffice. Here, as so often, the poet's uncertainty is ours and includes the triangle situation but extends beyond it almost to the bounds of the social world. In sonnet 61 the case is similar to the above sonnets: a night-time wakefulness is depicted and leads, quite without warning, to a sinister suggestion as to the friend's actual presence:

Oh no! thy love though much is not so great;
 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake--
 Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
 To play the watchman ever for thy sake:
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
 From me far off, with others all too near.

The train of thought is this: the friend being absent, the poet supposes a visionary visitation by him; this is explained as the effect of his jealous love; that explanation is rejected on the ground that his love "is not so great;" the true explanation is given that the poet himself is the jealous and wakeful one; and then occurs the reference to the friend's being "all too near" certain "others." The deep irony is that not the friend's love for the poet but, it is implied, for this "other" has kept him distant; and not the friend's jealousy but the poet's is at the bottom of the latter's wakeful state. Thus the very general condition of absence and vision winds to this rather suggestive and disturbing conclusion. The couplet, in

particular, carries a sly sexual innuendo: this is night-time and since the poet complains of wakefulness he is presumably in his bed; now the friend is also said to be wakeful and might similarly be assumed to be in bed, but he is not (as the poet has just concluded) thinking about the poet but is rather "with others all too near." The phrase "all too near" has a sort of drolly euphemistic sound in this context; it suggests that that third party is as near as could possibly be and, given the time of night and the friend's probable position (i.e., in bed), also suggests a sexual explanation of why he might be awake. All this inevitably, though admittedly by way of a good deal of indirection, points to the lady and conforms to the state of mind of one who, desiring to put a good construction upon his friend's absence or at least to avoid torturing thoughts, is led by degrees to face its true causes and ends by imagining, obliquely and ironically, its sexual facts. Thus, all three sonnets just examined exploit the dramatic possibilities arising from the point of view of the "wronged" friend who is uncertain and who is condemned to brood in loneliness over the facts of the case. It is Shakespeare's particular gift to be able to depict the mind in its manifold twists and turns, and through that convoluted passage one arrives at intimations of the triangle situation, the more sinister sounding for being indistinct.

We have seen that in some previous works it is considered a disloyalty or at least a shameful act for either friend merely to fall in love at all, even if no conflict of interest is directly involved. Thus in Elyot's tale Titus is ashamed

and keeps secret from Gisippus his love for his lady; and, similarly, in the Arcadia Pyrocles keeps secret his love and is at first reproached strongly for it by Musidorus. In several of Shakespeare's sonnets the poet also seems to regard his affair with the dark lady as an act disloyal to his friend. These occur in that group near the end of the series where the poet dwells upon certain specific bad deeds and treacheries to his friend; and, as before, it is open to the reader to interpret the entire group in the light of the triangle. We shall content ourselves with pointing out, quite tentatively, such suggestions of the affair with the lady as seem to be made. This is principally a matter of pointing out similarities of imagery between sonnets 118-120 (which speak of the poet's misconduct in a general way) and a number of the sonnets where the poet's affair with the dark lady is plainly specified. Sonnets 118-120 all speak of some specific treachery of the poet toward his friend and conclude by asserting or hoping for their reunion now that that treacherous act has ceased. (Sonnet 120 additionally links the acts of the poet with some previous ones by the friend. Now this time scheme would not quite agree with the usual one, but the close identification of the two friends' misdeeds suggests that the poet's was, like his friend's, his affair with the lady.) Sonnet 118 uses the imagery of appetite to describe the poet's general objectives and states that, having grown tired of the friend, he decided on a therapeutic illness to act as a sort of purge. This is described as "bitter sauces," a disease, and a sickness;

But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
 Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

All this physical imagery pretty evidently refers to a state of moral corruption as well as physical disgust, and phrases such as "faults" and "ills" allude to the poet's bad acts at the same time as they describe his sufferings. The octave of the following sonnet 119 carries through the mood of disgust and distraction even more vehemently:

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears
 Distill'd from limbecks foul as hell within,
 Applying fears to hopes and hopes to fears,
 Still losing when I saw myself to win!
 What wretched errors hath my heart committed
 Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never!
 How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted
 In the distraction of this madding fever!

As in the previous sonnet, this bad and diseased state is described as a self-willed act of the poet and is specifically regarded as the emblem and cause of his alienation from his friend. We have seen that a friend's falling in love is often so regarded in friendship literature, and we have seen that the emotion of love is typically described as this same sort of unruly and destructive passion (often requiring the lover to take to his sick-bed). To this general convention must be joined the poet's own description of love in sonnets 127-154, where images of distraction, madness, and disease are prominent. The poet's attitudes to the lady and to his love for her are not entirely composed of physical and moral disgust, but these are suggested, sometimes rather playfully, in almost every sonnet and predominate in several (129, 137, 140, 144, 147, 150, 151, 152). Sonnet 129 ("The expense of spirit in a waste

of shame") is perhaps the most famous and extreme statement of this attitude, but sonnet 147 carries through the imagery of sickness, fever, appetite, and physic in a manner more strikingly suggestive of sonnets 118 and 119:

My love is as a fever, longing still
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
 My reason, the physician to my love,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
 Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
 Desire is death, which physic did except.
 Past cure I am now reason is past care,
 And frantic mad with evermore unrest;
 My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
 At random from the truth, vainly express'd:
 For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

But aside from these general correspondences of mood and imagery, there is one rather more specific linkage of sonnet 119 to the affair with the dark lady. That sonnet refers to "potions . . . drunk of Siren tears / Distill'd from limbecks fowl as hell within". Now these "limbecks" must in plain fact be eyes, eyes that are "foul as hell within." The mistress' dark eyes, which both attract and repulse the poet, are of course among her most prominent features and are doubtless referred to, along with her general brunette complexion, in the sonnet just above ("Who art as black as hell, as dark as night") and again in sonnet 137 ("so foul a face"). Similarly, the "potion" which these are said to distill and which was drunk by the poet and made him mad suggests sonnet 129's "a swallow'd bait / On purpose laid to make the taker mad". Finally, when the poet complains that his eyes have "out of their spheres been fitted," he closely echoes the same sentiment that is several

times expressed in connection with his false infatuation with the dark lady:

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
That they behold, and see not what they see? (137)

Oh me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight? (148)

Who else is the "Siren" of sonnet 119 than the "dark lady" of sonnets 127-154? If, upon the basis of these manifold correspondences, we consent to the proposition that the affair with the dark lady is indicated in this sonnet (and perhaps also in 118 and 120), then several less obvious correspondences also follow. The phrase, "Applying fears to hopes and hopes to fears," readily suggests that uneasy state of lonely wakefulness in which the poet so often ponders his friend's possible infidelities even as he attempts to put the best face upon them, swinging uncertainly from mood to mood. The phrase, "Still losing when I saw myself to win," may simply mean something like "losing my friend through devoting myself too fully to my mistress;" but it very closely parallels those rather more tortuous lines of sonnet 42:

If I lose thee my loss is my love's gain;
And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;
Both find each other, and I lose both twain;
And both for my sake lay on me this cross.

The triangle situation provides a sort of echo chamber in which almost any line from these sonnets (118-120) can similarly be made to resonate. For our purposes it is of most importance to observe that in them the poet regards his affair with the dark lady as an act bringing physical and moral corruption to himself and causing him to break off relations with his friend.

Both attitudes are, as we have seen, conventional within the literature of friendship, but the vividness and intensity with which Shakespeare expresses them are all his own.

The sonnets so far discussed belong to the long main series concerned with or addressed to the friend; the remaining pertinent sonnets (133, 134, 144, 149) occur within the shorter series concerned with the dark lady. This fact is in itself a good argument that the third party referred to in each case is either this friend or this mistress; the situation is, so to speak, cross-referenced. Perhaps more important, this scheme allows the poet to revolve his depiction of the triangle from two perspectives—that of friendship and that of love. Where friendship was at issue the poet was concerned with the moral duty of fixing blame and the practical one of preserving the precious relationship with the friend; where love is at issue his concern is almost unvaryingly and oppressively directed toward depicting that emotion's degrading and destructive influence. Of the four sonnets in this series which refer to the friend not one has a kind or affectionate word to say about the mistress (as many others of course do), and the poet's criticism of her is not at all like the sort of mild reproaches and hopeful persuasions administered to the friend. She is regarded as a sort of remorseless and unappeasable force of nature, against whom he can only rail hopelessly and to whose malign power he submits, in spite of what he knows to be right. Sonnet 149 most simply and schematically expresses the deep division and paralysis within the poet's soul:

Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not,
 When I against myself with thee partake?
 Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
 Am of myself, all tyrant, for thy sake?
 Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
 On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?
 Nay, if thou lour'st on me, do I not spend
 Revenge upon myself with present moan?
 What merit do I in myself respect
 That is so proud thy service to despise,
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
 But, love, hate on; for now I know thy mind;
 Those that can see thou lov'st--and I am blind.

Here are many oblique references to the friend, within a sonnet which expresses, like several others in the series, the poet's irrational and masochistic attraction to a person described as entirely devoid of either merit or beauty (and the poet's blindness and the seductive "motion of thine eyes" are again invoked in this context). The defects of the lady and of the poet's love for her are clearly perceived, and yet no hope of breaking free from the relationship is entertained. One aspect of that bondage here is its malign effect upon friendship. As was previously argued, the "myself" of the second and fourth lines carries a reference to the friend (by means of the identity commonplace), and, taken in this sense (reinforced by the explicit use of the term "friend" in the fifth line), the lines would aptly describe the rivalry ("against myself") and sharing ("with thee partake") which went on between the friends where the mistress was concerned. The fifth and sixth lines are more general and may not refer specifically to the triangle (for the friend would not have appeared to hate the mistress nor she to frown on him) or may do so ironically; but they indicate that the poet would sacrifice the sacred

claims of friendship to the whims of the mistress--whatever they might be. Finally, the eleventh and fourteenth lines appear to return obliquely to the matter of the triangle, viewed this time from the perspective of the friend's, rather than the poet's, love of the mistress. The friend is frequently called "all the better part of me" (39), which is a special application of the identity commonplace, so that when the poet states that "all my best doth worship thy defect" and does so shortly after having invoked the identity commonplace in a general sense, the reader is encouraged to make the construction, "my friend doth worship thy defect." In the last line the poet states that "Those that can see thou lov'st--and I am blind," where the indefinite pronoun "Those" might similarly be taken to refer to or to include the friend. Thus in this sonnet love's fearful effects upon the poet's judgment and integrity are described in such a way as strongly to suggest the disloyalty and treachery involved in the triangle--the poet's betrayal of the friend, the friend's of the poet, for the sake of the same worthless woman. Friendship is shown as victimized by love, and the poet even makes that fact the basis of his appeal to the lady; but it is only as if to say, "having done such vile and heretical things for your sake (which I am far from excusing), you owe me a little kindness."

Sonnets 133 and 134 characterize the effect of love similarly, and they also make use of the identity commonplace; but their terms are much more explicit:

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me!

Is't not enough to torture me alone,
 But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
 And my next self thou harder hast engross'd:
 Of him, my self, and thee I am forsaken,--
 A torment thrice threefold, thus to be cross'd.
 Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
 But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;
 Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard:
 Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail.
 And yet thou wilt; for I, being pent in thee,
 Perforce am thine, and all that is in me. (133)

In this sonnet as in the following one the poet speaks for both himself and his friend, equally the victims of the foul lady's chains. From the point of view of conventions this is rather unorthodox: the two rival friends are usually depicted either as being at loggerheads over the commonly loved lady, or one of them graciously consents to give place to the other. The lady is at any rate looked upon as a desirable prize in most previous cases. Here she is regarded as a terrible and cruel trap in which both the poet and his friend are caught, and either of whom (certainly the poet) would willingly escape. This particular characterization of her is likewise somewhat unprecedented, insofar as the lady in such cases is customarily described either as virtuous or at least as relatively blameless; the heaviest blame usually falls upon the emotion of love itself, which, it is true, is often described in the terms of cruel and tormenting bondage. Presumably it is such a passion which in this case constitutes the "torture" and "slavery" and "prison" which bind the poet and the friend, against their wills, to the lady. Yet not the emotion in general but she herself is held responsible for that bondage, and the poet freely heaps

accusations of cruelty and evil upon her. The poet's attitude here and in the other sonnets combines with the normal revulsion for the disorderly passion of love a very specific disgust for the person of the lady, who almost appears the embodiment of a diseased and vicious passion. That characterization may partly have arisen as a means of absolving the friend from too great a guilt in the matter (and possibly also himself); be that as it may, it clearly functions to bring the two friends closer together and even to restore a sort of pathetic mutuality to their plight. The great aim of the sonnets almost everywhere is to maintain and celebrate friendship, even in its darkest moments, and here even the events of the triangle are turned to that purpose.

Sonnet 134 continues this line of thought and, in addition to the identity commonplace, uses the commonplace of a friend's self-sacrifice to describe the actions of both the poet and the friend:

So, now I have confess'd that he is thine,
 And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,
 My self I'll forfeit, so that other mine
 Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still.
 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free;
 For thou art covetous, and he is kind;
 He learn'd but surety-like to write for me
 Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
 The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
 Thou usurer, that putt'st forth all to use,
 And sue a friend came debtor for my sake;
 So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
 Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me:
 He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

The two friends are again described as mutually and equally bound to the mistress, whose motives this time are characterized by the metaphor of usury. It is unclear what this may signify

(though "putt'st forth all to use" has the same nasty suggestiveness of sonnet 137's "the bay where all men ride"), but, as a conceit, it is the dubious basis on which the suspect actions of the friends acquire a semblance of selflessness and nobility. The poet offers to "forfeit" himself to the mistress if she will release the friend; now this has all the heroic sound of the actions of Damon and Pithias, and yet the plain sense of it is that the poet would like to have the friend back for himself ("to be my comfort still") and is prepared, perhaps not so reluctantly as he makes out, to continue his subservience to the lady. The commercial imagery ("mortgaged to thy will") makes that action appear a sacrifice on the poet's part, but it leaves open the possibility, admitted elsewhere in the sonnets, that he seeks and desires just such a loss of freedom. This self-serving quality of the conceit is even more apparent when the friend's action is examined. The mistress will not release him because she is simply "covetous," which is in keeping with her evil nature and provokes no further comment from the poet; but, more disturbing, "he will not be free." The poet's fiction in the previous sonnet was that he and his friend had been victimized by the lady and were being held by her against their wills. Here that implausible pretense falls through, and the poet's first attempt to reconstruct a rationale for his friend--that "he is kind"--similarly admits of the invidious interpretation that that kindness (taken in a cynically euphemistic sense) is all directed toward the lady. But in line 7 the usury

conceit, coupled with the identity conceit, is brought fully into play; the friend was "kind" enough to assume the poet's obligation as regards the lady ("surety-like to write for me / Under that bond"), which was indeed a kindness if the obligation was as onerous as the poet makes out. The friend stood in the place of the poet for these considerate reasons and for what was evidently meant to be a short time only; but the lady promptly bound him as hard and fast as the poet, and the conclusion is, just as before, that both friends lie under her cruel bonds. The poet would like to rescue the friend from her, and the friend would like to rescue the poet; yet, while the sonnet shows nothing but disgust for her, neither friend, apparently, is willing to leave the lady, and each gives as his rationale this argument of redeeming the other from her clutches. The knotty tissue of conceit attempts to explain away the evidently divided loyalties of both the poet and the friend, rendering their actions entirely from the point of view of the noble motives of friendship.

The final sonnet in this series, 144, gives the most striking of all depictions of the triangle:

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
 Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
 The better angel is a man right fair,
 The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
 To win me soon to hell, my female evil
 Tempteth my better angel from my side,
 And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
 Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
 And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
 Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
 But being both from me, both to each friend,
 I guess one angel in another's hell:
 Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt
 Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

This famous sonnet needs little commentary, for it merely states in the baldest terms yet encountered several attitudes of the poet which have been previously observed--his characterization of the mistress as an evil being and of the friend as a good being, his description of the woman's role as a temptress, his uncertainty as to the outcome of her advances. Not all the sonnets, as we have seen, are free from criticism of the friend's role in the triangle, but their general tendency is to veil that criticism, to offer excuses for the friend, or to avow the poet's continued love for him and his acceptance of the situation. The mistress, on the other hand, is frequently the object of violent denunciations or expressions of disgust. In this sonnet those two polarities are simply brought together in stark opposition; the friend is made a "comfort" and an "angel" and a "saint," while the mistress is made "my female evil" and "worser spirit" tempting him with her "foul pride" to turn "fiend" and "devil." Shakespeare's tendency to exaggerate the convention attributing evil to love and, to a far lesser extent, to the woman simply arrives here to its logical conclusion, where the terms are those of a morality play and the stakes are salvation and damnation. The unfavorable comparison of love to friendship, where the former is typically made the disorderly, irrational, and evil passion and the latter the calm, philosophical, and virtuous one, acquires in this instance its most lurid and memorable expression. The vividness of the sonnet's language and the dramatic heightening with which the comparison is made are Shakespeare's own; but after

a study of the conventional background one does not feel that his attitude, while admittedly extreme, is bizarre or necessarily biographical. It is, like his endlessly shifting attitudes to all the commonplaces of friendship, the product of a mind intensely and subtly revolving the possibilities of maximum poetic expression in the subject at hand.

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ABSTRACT

No previous discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets has taken into account the specific conventions and preoccupations attached to the theme of friendship as it came to Shakespeare's hands. The description of the Renaissance background has ordinarily been limited to a general indication of the emotional intensity of the friendship bond and the conventional nature of warm and lover-like terms of endearment between friends. This is often plainly for the purpose of absolving the bard from imputations of homosexuality and stops short after having observed that there are conventions and precedents for treating this subject. The present study attempts to describe in specific terms several of the conventions of Renaissance friendship literature (treated under the headings of "Virtue as the Basis of Friendship," "Mutuality in Friendship," and "Friendship and Love"). Since Renaissance thought on the subject of friendship derives from classical authors (principally Aristotle, Cicero, and Plutarch), each chapter commences with a brief summary of classical thought, proceeds from thence to a chronological discussion of the major English authors antedating Shakespeare, and concludes with a fairly extended reading of Shakespeare's sonnets from the point of view of the special themes and preoccupations established in each case by his predecessors. The historical survey does not pretend to comprehensiveness but aims only at establishing the basic conventions and in isolating the elements of the tradition which were to be most important and useful to

Shakespeare. Summaries of the classical authors are made without any special claim to competency but only in order to establish the necessary background for a consideration of Renaissance authors. In considering the sonnets themselves in the light of the conventions which antedate them and which they reflect, it is not implied that they constitute a systematic theoretical statement or that they are, like most previous treatments of the theme, didactic in intention. The sonnets are primarily poetic utterances; they express states of feeling and arise from a depicted dramatic situation which endows them with their authenticity. But within the context of their genre they also reflect the themes and conventions of previous friendship literature, and it is this particular perspective from which the study makes its reading of the sonnets.