

1095

1095

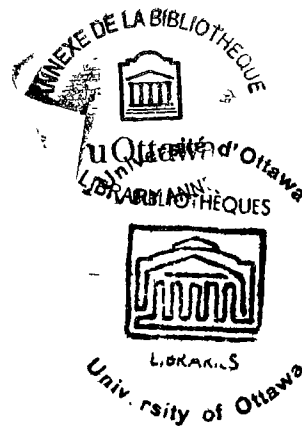
UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

THEMATIC IMAGERY
IN SHAKESPEARE

Love and Time
In Love-Tragedies

by Sister Francis Marie Manning, S.S.M.

Thesis presented to the Department of English,
Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa
as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



*Spec printed
May 20th 1966
Dr. Sedgwick
Secretary*

Ottawa, Ontario, 1966

UMI Number: DC53651

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI Microform DC53651
Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Sister Francis Marie Manning was born September 7, 1916, in Yoakum, Texas. She entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Mary in 1937.

She received the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Our Lady of Victory College, Fort Worth, Texas, in 1940. She was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in Library Science by the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. in 1941. She received the Master of Arts degree in English Literature from the Catholic University of America, in 1952. Her thesis Parental Authority in Elizabethan England, studies the mores and milieu of the times as an indication of the popular acceptance and interpretation of Romeo and Juliet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Reverend Leo A. Cormican, O. M. I., of the Department of English of the University of Ottawa.

The writer is indebted to him and to the other members of the English Department for their interest and help; to the Superiors and Sisters of the Congregation of Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur for making possible this period of study; to the University of Dallas for granting a leave of absence for the work; to all who have so graciously assisted; and to the librarians at the following institutions for their courteous and generous assistance: University of Ottawa Library , Ottawa, Canada; the University Library, Cambridge, the Nuffield Library, Shakespeare Center, Stratford-upon-Avon, the British Museum, London, England; the Texas Christian University Library, Fort Worth, and the University of Dallas Library, Dallas, Texas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	page
INTRODUCTION	iv
I.- Fate, Time, and Love in <u>Romeo and Juliet</u>	1
II.- Time, Love, and War in <u>Troilus and Cressida</u>	31
III.- Nature, Time, and Love in <u>King Lear</u>	61
Part 1 Nature	
Part 2 Time	
Part 3 Love	
IV.- Political Realities, Time, and Love in <u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>	136
Part 1 Political Realities	
Part 2 Time	
Part 3 Love	
Epilogue	206
Bibliography	208

INTRODUCTION

The current mode of Shakespearean studies, however indebted to former eras for establishing the canon and text, for searching out sources and relating them to the play, has centered its attention on the nature of poetic drama. One phase of study concerns Shakespeare's sonnets in relation to his drama, particularly as to themes and interests. Another phase looks at images as they reveal the workings of psychology or Shakespeare's own mind. Our present concern is to explore Shakespeare's handling of the imagery and the themes of time and love. We limit our investigation to the love tragedies. Our effort will be to see in these tragedies how time and love interact, how the tensions set up by them aid in exploring another major theme within each play, and how the themes give coherence to the basic interests Shakespeare chose to examine in the love tragedies.

The choice of the tragedies for the study was not haphazard. The obvious love interest in the tragedies whose titles link the names of lovers insured their inclusion. Therefore, Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra raise no problem as far as that is concerned. The appropriateness of including Troilus and Cressida, however, may be questioned, as much as it is commonly referred to as a problem comedy. The decision to include it came after a

consideration of the tragic mode of both the atmosphere and the structure of this play. Precedence in ranking it among the tragedies is set by Una Ellis-Fermor, Henri Fluchere, L.C. Knights, Harold S. Wilson, and others.

In omitting Othello, I noted that although the love element is prominent, it is not the focal point of the tragedy itself. The distrust and jealousy of Othello and the malice of Iago are responsible for the tragic outcome. On the otherhand King Lear resulted from Shakespeare's deepest probing into the nature of man himself. At the core of reality, Lear finds love, in the person of the rejected daughter. Moreover, King Lear is the focus toward which the drama previous to it moves.

To attempt a survey of previous writings about Shakespeare's tragedies or about the poetic qualities of his drama is to bid the thunder to peace. However, Lear tried even that, and since my attempt cannot fail more completely than his did, I will indicate some of the important studies.

Imagery as a Shakespearean interest has developed rather recently. After an early attempt, nearly two centuries ago, by William Whiter "to convince at once the Reader and the Commentator that the stores of knowledge are

not ultimately exhausted in the elucidation of Shakespeare"¹ imagery lapsed again into oblivion. Whiter's book, according to his own comment, was poorly received. In 1924, Henry W. Wells² published a pioneer study which collected and schematized certain images from Shakespeare's plays and poems. Two other books published in the twenties worked with imagery; one to illustrate laws of aesthetics³ and the other to watch Shakespeare's development.⁴ The thirties brought out some studies that even yet have pertinence. F.C. Kolbe⁵ with specific reference to Shakespeare shows the image in relation to mood and theme. G. Wilson Knight began his series of detailed studies of which the first published work is an introduction.⁶

1 William Whiter, A Specimen of Commentary on Shakespeare, T. Cadell, London, 1794.

2 Henry W. Wells, Poetic Imagery, Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature, N.Y., Russell and Russell, 1924.

3 Brown, Stephen J., The World of Imagery, London, 1927.

4 Holmes, E., Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery, 1929.

5 Kolbe, F.C., Shakespeare's Way, London, 1930

6 G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, Methuen, London, 1930.

Caroline Spurgeon⁷ followed Knight shortly in her deservedly well-known Shakespeare's Imagery. More than a decade later, E.A. Armstrong⁸ published his psychological study of Associationism in the dramas of Shakespeare. In his first book on imagery, Robert B. Heilman⁹ concentrated his attention on the images and theme in one play, King Lear. He was followed in 1951, by Wolfgang Clemen,¹⁰ whose work had been published originally as Shakespeare Bilder in 1936. It shows the progressive development of Shakespeare's art as it made more structural use of imagery. During the past fifteen years, books and articles report further studies; the bibliography at the end of this thesis lists the important ones. It is into this much frequented area that I enter this study as one further attempt to reveal Shakespeare's handling of basic human tendencies, perplexities, and desires.

7 Spurgeon, Caroline, Shakespeare's Imagery, and What it Tells Us, Cambridge University Press, 1935.

8 Armstrong, E.A., Shakespeare's Imagination, Lindsay Drummond, Limited, London, 1946.

9 Heilman, Robert, B., This Great Stage, Baton Rouge, Louisiana Press, 1948.

10 Wolfgang H. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1951.

CHAPTER ONE

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

Even in his earliest writings, Shakespeare shows a marked interest in nature, human and non-human, and in the constant cycles of birth, maturation, and senescence taking place within plants, animals, and men. He ponders the processes of fructification and productivity, of quiescence and decay, noticeable in all realms of living beings, and he observes the cycles of the seasons. One change follows another and leads him to question the meaning of their ephemerality. But he is not satisfied to ask simply, "where are snows of yesteryear?" He rather investigates the corruptive forces wherever he sees them at work. All nature suffers decay; even the choicest flower wilts, the strongest oak sheds its leaves, the most virile man becomes feeble. This action of deterioration takes place inevitably; mortality and evanescence mar the works of nature. Nothing under the sun is lasting. All things fall victims to Time. What, then, is it in Time which causes such loss? What power has Time which can subjugate all material things? The unanswered question concerning the transience of growing things leads Shakespeare to note the impermanence of institutions and human establishments, also. Not only man's institutions and social, artistic and architectural achievements, but

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

2

also man's morality meet challenges, presented in Time, often with such ferocity or perseverance that his very integrity is at stake.

But just as surely as all things come to naught does man seek for permanence and stability. If he cannot make the sun stand still, he can at least secure his name. His yearning for infinity finds some reflection in lasting structures and human stability. What in man has most power to stand becomes to Shakespeare the subject of investigation. Reputation, power, wealth, beauty fade, but one thing seems to endure -- nature, itself subject to cycles yet blessed by a remarkable perpetuation. And just as non-human nature endures the processes of birth, growth, death, and yet continues through a constant and endless return to life, so too is humankind in such a cycle of evolution-devolution-revolution. And just as physical man follows the cycle from birth to death, so also morality responds to forces, interior and exterior, which corrupt or ennoble him. Shakespeare ponders human behavior: why one man is grasping and ambitious and another contented and self-effacing; why one son in a family is generous and his brother selfish; why behavior often belies the promise of youth; how temptation operates to seduce long practiced virtue; what constitutes a force as corruptive. His powers of observation in the natural plane sharpen his penetration into the psyche. And his growing

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

3

psychological insights discern patterns of behavior and the effects of emotion on man's conduct. One virtue especially interested the young writer -- love, in all its various manifestations and relationships: love of parents for children and children for parents, adolescent love, conjugal love, legitimate self-love, the selfish love of oneself, and promiscuous and lascivious attachments that sometimes go by the name of love. He sees the mortality of each as it falls a victim of Time. The interaction of the two great forces of love and time continue to interest him throughout his life. He eventually comes to his greatest achievements by portraying the conflicts within man which lead to his self-destruction.

Every man, Shakespeare realizes, meets with obstacles which impede his course just as he also encounters friendly collaboration and complicity in his endeavors. Man and social institutions have tangible or rational manifestations to be dealt with on human planes, and their operations remain within the normal, understandable confines of activity. However, against the uncontrollable, the unpredictable manipulation of man and man's affairs, he can only rage, lament, or wait. Such were the forces of fate, fortune, the sterner aspects of nature, and time. The age in which Shakespeare writes accepts the medieval belief in the stars as controlling man's destiny and witches as instruments of

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

4

darkness. Indeed, the belief in occultism seems common to all ages, if we may judge by our own time, which sees the daily publication of horoscopes and which supports fortune-tellers and conducts seances. We do not say that Shakespeare accepted the current view, although no less a person than King James I did and even found it opportune to write a defense of witchcraft against the expose published by Reginald Scot in 1584. ¹

Whether Shakespeare believed or not is of no special concern to literary study, but that Shakespeare appeals to the popular belief in the action of stars and in the power of witches is. Of course this practice was not to the exclusion of more acceptable (at least to us) causality. Hamlet is aware of the special providence even in the fall of a sparrow, and all the great tragedies acknowledge an absolute. It was not sufficient, however, for tragic heroes to come to the boundaries of their powers beyond which only mystery extends. Even with lesser men there is a specific need of an absolute and a belief in the mysteries which minds can only guess at. Human condition and need require something greater than reason in order to find life bearable.

¹ King James in Demonologie, 1597, characterizes Scot's opinion in The Discovery of Witchcraft as "damnable", and he ordered all copies of the book to be burned.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

5

Human love and sympathy are at times great, and to the degree in which they are great, they become analogous to the possible greater love and sympathy whereby an infinity is yearned for. Shakespeare thus uses them.

Time and nature become for him corrosive and preservative, respectively. When Shakespeare came to write Romeo and Juliet the analogues were at hand, but it remained to him to make them creative.

Romeo and Juliet, the tragic story of romantic love opposed by time and chance, is set within the milieu of a society in conflict. Mutual enmity between two great medieval households engages all the levels of society. The servants of the families at one end of the social scale and the prince at the other point to the involvement of all men. Between these two levels the common people, clergy, and aristocrats, and the scions of the wealthier classes are, in one way or another, embroiled. Thus the opening scene, which introduces these various strata of society, incorporates the city in a disaster not confined to the families of the two leading citizens but threatening all within the confines of the imagined world. The seriousness of the strife contrasts forcibly with the ludicrous enactment of it in the dispute that arises among the menials of the families, and yet the servants' unreasoned motives for their contentiousness serves to prepare us for the triviality and senselessness of

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

6

the conflict itself. It becomes, as it were, a satire on the inhuman situation that nourishes itself on the deaths, not the lives, of its cherished members. The opening scene, moreover, is that embryo from which the rest of the play grows. 2

The sonnet, which is the prologue to the first act, has already alerted the reader that the "ancient grudge" will "break to new mutiny." It speaks also of the "pair of star-crossed lovers" "whose misadventured piteous overthrows/Do with their death bury their parents' strife." Even before the action begins, we thus become concerned with the uncontrollable factors of fate, chance, and human destiny on the one hand and hate on the other. When the action begins, we glimpse first the hate that embroils the city: it is, in the language of the prince, fiery, pernicious, mistempered, cankered. In opposition to this passion is

2 S. T. Coleridge, "The First Scene of Hamlet" in Lectures, points out that one of Shakespeare's striking dramatic powers was in his management of his first scenes. Referring specifically to Romeo and Juliet, he says: "With the exception of Cymbeline, they either place before us at one glance both the past and the future in some effect, which implies the continuance and future agency of its cause, as in the servants of the two houses in the first scene of Romeo and Juliet," or in other ways prepare for subsequent action. Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, ed. T. M. Raysor, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press, 1930, pp. 37-8. See also, L. A. Cormican, "Medieval Idiom in Shakespeare", SCRUTINY XVII (1950), 188.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

7

another: Romeo's sentimental love of Rosaline. He characterizes it as smoke, fire, the sea, a madness, gall and a preserving sweet. These epithets could as easily be associated with hate as with the infatuation Romeo calls love. In fact, Romeo does associate the two passions in a series of oxymora in the sentimental vein of Renaissance poetry:

Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.
 Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
 O anything, of nothing first create!
 O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
 Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
 Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick
 health!
 Still waking sleep, that is not what it is!
 This love feel I, that feel no love in this. 3
 (I.i.181-8)

The very ferocity of his expressions in describing his emotion forecasts its rapid and inevitable end. For the time, "he broods", as Edward Dowden remarks, "on the luxury of his sorrow."⁴ Oppressed as he is, he questions the nature of love: "Is love a tender thing? it is too rough, Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn"(I.ii.25-6). But Romeo has not yet met Juliet, and his questioning is as shallow as his attraction for Rosaline.

³ For ease of reference all citations, unless otherwise noted, are from a single-volume edition: The Complete Works of Shakespeare, edited by Hardin Craig, Chicago, Scott Foresman and Company, 1951.

⁴ "Atmosphere and Character in Romeo and Juliet" from Shakespeare: His Mind and Art, reprinted in Paul Seigel, His Infinite Variety, J.B. Lippincott Co., Phila., 1924, p. 271.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

8

Even Juliet, womanly though she is in the wholeness of her love, resorts to the strained technique of the oxymoron when she is informed of the death of her kinsman Tybalt at the hands of her husband:

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
 Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
 Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
 Dove-feather'd raven! wolfish-ravens lamb!
 Despised substance of divinest show!
 Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,
 A damned saint, an honorable villain!
 O nature, what hadst thou to do in hell,
 When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
 In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?
 Was ever book containing such vile matter
 So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell
 In such a gorgeous palace! (III.ii.73-85)

Such antitheses belong to the "new-found methods" of Renaissance poetry. Professor Cruttwell describes the technique as an expression of the taste for incongruities prevalent in the poetry of those writers who spurned the lavish sweetness and decoration of the Elizabethan sonnet.⁶

Although Shakespeare continues his use of the technique in his later plays, he does so rarely and then in a much subtler fashion to reveal, for instance, basic incongruity and complexity. Cruttwell notes one instance in Henry V and another in Troilus and Cressida. Others are easily located. Shakespeare's surer style becomes more realistic,

⁶ Patrick Cruttwell, The Shakespearean Moment, New York, Random House, 1960, p. 50.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

9

less ornate and studied, less in need of the ornamentation that befits the pathetic story of the fateful love of Romeo and Juliet.

Immediately after the encounter of the two families on the streets of Verona, the Montagues absorb our attention with a dissension within their own ranks: Romeo, heir to their name and fortunes, has withdrawn from social intercourse and estranged himself from the family. He is beset with civil strife within himself. Enamoured with fair Rosaline (it is his fate to love a Capulet), he is dejected because she remains adamant like the typical harsh lady of the contemporary sonnet sequences. He, indeed, describes her in the language of the sonnets: "she hath Dian's wit;/ And in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,/From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd (I.i.215-7). Romeo moves on in his development of his lady's cruelty into a theme more characteristic of Shakespeare's sonnets than of the usual sequences of Elizabethan practice. He decries her waste of beauty, inevitable as a result of her rejection of his suit:

O, she is rich in beauty, only poor
That when she dies with beauty dies her store.⁷
(I.i.221-2)

⁷ With these lines, Sonnets 1 - 17 may be compared.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

10

With large promises of faithfulness in his love for Rosaline, Romeo, under persuasion, agrees to "examine other beauties."

By way of contrast with the Montague disquiet, the Capulets prepare a party for their kinsmen, "a trifling foolish banquet" Lord Capulet is pleased to call it. This age-old symbol of unity -- a meal in common -- is antithetical to two events it gives rise to: the crashing of the party by members of the rival family, and the consequent disruption of harmony by the angry outburst of Tybalt and his reprimand by his uncle Capulet. Again Shakespeare stresses the contentiousness and strife in society and the inevitable manifestations in other levels of human relations of the same spirit of pugnacity. Yet the banquet and its attendant dance are not without beneficent effects -- effects that climax in the reunion in love and amity of the long estranged families. Romeo acts in contrast with the violence of his passion for Rosaline; he looks on Juliet and finds that indeed does "looking liking move", as she has just expressed herself in docile acquiescence to her mother's injunction to favor Paris' suit. Romeo's instantaneous offer of love to Juliet could justifiably cause some doubts about its steadfastness in as much as his former passion had been so violent and so fickle; however, the suddenness of his shift from Rosaline to Juliet cannot have been known to her and it does not impede her return of love. Juliet is aware that Romeo belongs to

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

11

the inimical family. In spite of this, she makes up her mind to marry him. Knowing nothing of his marital status, she prophesies more acutely than she could have guessed, "if he be married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (I.v.136-7). She lapses then into the paradoxical manner she was to use again under great duress:⁸

My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy. (I.v.140-4)

Her remarks bring Act I to an end, but before we resume the progress of love and the discussion of its imagery, we should stop on the word prodigious. This word with its awesome, ominous connotations sends our attention back to the words of the prologue, "star-cross'd" and to subsequent references to those uncontrollable forces we have thus far neglected. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the meanings, ominous and portentous are now obsolete, but cites these meanings for the word in Elizabethan times.⁹ The prologue uses an ominous vocabulary. Even prior to the mention of the lovers we learn that the contentious fathers, all unwittingly, in begetting their scions, operated as agents of fate, and in the same act, there devolved upon their children the condition of being destined for disaster.

⁸ Cited previously on page 8.

⁹ According to OED, Shakespeare uses the word in 1590 in Dream, V. i. 419; and Holland uses it in his 1601 translation of Pliny I.224.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

12

This double meaning is possible for the phrase "fatal loins." The prologue dwells upon the inauspiciousness of the children's love; it is "death-marked," marked for and by death.¹⁰ Just how inauspicious were the times, the people, and the strife unfolds with the progress of events.

Romeo, like Juliet, believes in powers beyond the human. He has misgivings about his premonition of disaster "yet hanging in the stars." He interprets his uneasiness as a prognostication of disaster eventuating in his "untimely death." Having communicated his worry to his friends and confidants, Benvolio and Mercutio, he dismisses the doubts with an act of faith in divine Providence and a prayer for supernatural aid: "He, that hath the steerage of my course, Direct my sail!" (I.iv.2-3) Romeo's love language is not far removed from the language of religion, but the religion is a natural one somewhat in opposition to the idea expressed in the prayer for Providential guidance. Rosaline has been the "devout religion" of his eye; by his own words, he adjudged that fickleness on his part would constitute him a heretic deserving to be burnt (I.ii.93-6). Nonetheless his first sight of Juliet prompts him to stand so that he can touch her hand and thus bless his own. She becomes for him

¹⁰ M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (London, Methuen and Co., 1957, p.56) discusses the implications of the line of the prologue in which this expression occurs.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

13

a holy shrine, a saint, the object of faith -- a cult and a quest, and he convicts himself of fickleness (and, therefore, of heresy) -- a result that does not become recognized until Friar Lawrence cautions moderation.

Time collaborates with the stars to defeat the lovers. It is not introduced in such emphatic ways as it is in the sonnets; at no point is there reference to injurious time, or wasteful time, yet the effects of time impend, and time seems to be actually envious and vengeful. Juliet is represented as a mere child of fourteen, "yet a stranger in the world," and not of marriageable age. Her father momentarily tempers Paris' suit for her hand: "Let two more summers wither in their pride/Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride" (I.ii.10-11). The nurse's insistence on Juliet's age and her pride in her own retentive memory accentuate the importance of time. Our attention is never allowed to waver from the onrush of time. Understandably, time seems to slow to almost a standstill when sadness or anxiety impede its course. Romeo, as yet ensnared in his passion for the unyielding Rosaline, laments that his aged father is fleet of foot in contrast to his own turpitude: "Ay me! sad hours seem long! Was that my father that went hence so fast?" (I.i.167-8) Benvolio, pursuing his purpose of finding out "whence his Romeo's sorrows grow," answers simply, "It was your father" and returns to question the cause of his friend's sorrow:

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

14

"What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?" Romeo, perhaps because he is at least partially feigning love, is able to diagnose his behavior and moodiness. He acknowledges that he is sad because he is "out of her favor" whom he professes to love.¹¹ Romeo accepts the remedy prescribed by his friend. He agrees, as we have already seen, to "examine other beauties" by attending the Capulets' feast. The tardy entrance of the maskers causes Benvolio to comment that they are arriving too late for the supper. Romeo still has misgivings: "I fear, too early." He predicts that some fateful consequence will "bitterly begin his fearful date" with the soiree and that "untimely death" will end his own "despised life" (I.iv.106-111).

At the party, time is the preoccupation of the elder Capulets. Living in the past, they recall their youthful exploits and make efforts to remember the dates of the events. Their talk counterpoints the events occurring on the dance floor before them. Romeo, masked as the old men were in their by-gone days, sees Juliet and loves at first sight. His actions draw Tybalt's attention and rouses the anger that makes this younger Capulet tremble and vow vengeance. (I.v.93-4)

¹¹ L. C. Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes (London, Chatto and Windus, 1959, p. 61) calls Romeo's infatuation "nine parts show." His romantic stance -- all his behavior -- is strongly reminiscent of the lover in the Renaissance sonnets, other than Shakespeare's.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

15

Romeo's previous reluctance to go to the dance now becomes reluctance to leave. He delays long enough for Juliet to send the nurse to inquire who he is. Love has already made the maid cautious. She first feigns interest in other guests before she can bring herself to ask the question she wants answered. Then, when she knows his name, she hides her interest by referring to Romeo as "one I danced withal" (I.v.45). The "trifling foolish banquet" has become most truly the love feast.

Time now momentarily favors the lovers. Prologue II announces the meeting of the two as the stolen access, made possible to them by the power lent by passion and the means afforded by time. Act II has as its business the exchange of love and the exchange of vows. In this play and more specifically in this act, Shakespeare shapes "human love for this time in timeless form", Wolfgang Clemen tells us.¹² He calls attention to the light motif and he credits Caroline Spurgeon with being the first to show how the image operates:

. . . the two lovers appear to each other as light against a dark background, and all these light-images, in which sun, moon, the stars, lightning, heaven, day and night figure, thus aid in spreading over the whole play an intensive atmosphere of free nature.¹³

¹² The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, London, Methuen and Company, 1951, p.66.

¹³ Ibid. p.72. For Miss Spurgeon's analysis of the light motif, see Shakespeare's Imagery, Boston, Beacon Press, 1958, pp. 310-316.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

16

Clemen further discusses the imagery of the garden scene in which each lover gazes on the other, and he notes the symbolic movement of light.

In this image [he writes] three functions merge, which we usually meet separately: it is the enhanced expression of Romeo's own nature, it characterizes Juliet (light, the most important symbol for her, occurs here), and it fills the night with clouds and stars, thus creating atmosphere.¹⁴

One image that has not been sufficiently considered, at least to my knowledge, is the nautical one, introduced even in Prologue I by its reference to "fearful passage," and "traffic"; "death-marked" too has the same sea referent as the "ever fixed mark" of Sonnet 116. These passages have been cited by M. M. Mahood in Shakespeare's Wordplay.¹⁶ We may further notice the image of the prayer Romeo makes and to which we have previously referred: "He that hath the steerage of my course Direct my sail!" (I.iv.112-3). Having seen Juliet at the party, he seeks her out secretly as soon as he emerges from the hostile house. To Juliet's fearful question as to how he found the garden, he replies:

I am no pilot; yet wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with farthest sea,
I would venture for such merchandise. (II.ii.82-3)

Juliet takes her cue from this image and measures her love by the sea:

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee
The more I have, for both are infinite. (II.ii.133-5)

¹⁴ Op. Cit., p. 67.

¹⁶ London, Methuen and Company, 1957, p.56.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET 17

Una Ellis-Fermor comments that this comparison of love with the boundlessness of the sea reveals a depth of love that remains with us throughout the play.¹⁷ Romeo directs the nurse to prepare for his rendezvous by taking home to Juliet a rope ladder that his man would have procured. His image, perhaps suggested by his name for the ladder, is elaborated in nautical terms:

Within this hour my man shall be with thee,
And bring thee cords made like a tackled stair;
Which to the high top-gallant of my joy
Must be my convoy in the secret night.
Farewell, be trusty. (II.iv.200-04; Italics mine)

In referring to the ladder the nurse continues the image; she tells Juliet that it will be at hand so that her love can climb a bird's nest when it is dark. The sailors' term for the high look-out is "crow's nest;" nevertheless, in view of the other misuse the nurse makes of words -- e.g., "confidence" for "conference", "ropery" for roguery," it seems altogether believable that she refers to the look-out by this strange substitution. I doubt that we could justify the substitution of the less pejorative word on the grounds of fine feeling.

Although time permits Romeo and Juliet to meet, to marry, and to consummate their love, time seems slow paced to the two lovers until the events are accomplished. When

¹⁷ The Frontiers of Drama, London, Methuen and Company, 1964, p. 81.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

18

Romeo sets the hour of nine as the time for the nurse to inquire of him the details for their wedding, Juliet laments, "'tis twenty years till then" (II.ii.170). Romeo too is impatient; he urges the Friar to marry them "today," and to the Friar's pleas for circumspection, Romeo offers an impulsive reply: "I stand on sudden haste" (II.iii.93). Meanwhile at nine o'clock as they had agreed, Juliet dispatches the nurse to Romeo to learn "where and what time" the marriage will take place, and she nervously watches the time and puzzles about the delay:

. . . from nine till twelve

Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me. (II.v.10-15)

When the nurse returns, the wait must still go on while exasperating trivialities keep her from giving the message. Juliet pleads, "Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?" (II.v.55)

It is now Romeo's turn to wait. He discourses with Friar Lawrence until Juliet arrives. The Friar is still somewhat fearful, and he eases his anxiety by praying that "after hours with sorrow chide us not" (II.vi.1-2). Romeo can as yet say, "Amen," but holds as of no account any sorrow that might befall him when it is compared with "one short minute" of joy that derives from Juliet's presence. He

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

19

foolhardily challenges "love-devouring death" to do what he dares do. Friar Lawrence again counsels moderation so that love will be longlasting. Juliet comes "so light" of foot that it suggests to the Friar a comparison of her love with the everlasting flint on which she walks. "The play's central paradox of love's strength and fragility," Professor Mahood writes,¹⁸ "is most clearly expressed in the short Marriage scene." She marks the conflicting themes of satisfaction on Romeo's part and frustration on Friar Lawrence's that are joined in this brief comment on Juliet's approach. It is well to quote the lines word for word to allow them to speak for themselves their four-fold meaning: "Here comes the Lady, O so light a foot, Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint" (II.vi.16-7). Professor Mahood gives a complete interpretation:

An ambiguity of pronunciation between "near" and "ne'er" and another meaning in wear out enable us to distinguish four possible readings here before with cormorant delight, we swallow the lot. Juliet's foot is so light that

- (i) it will never wear away the everlasting flint;
- (ii) it will never last it out;
- (iii) it will nearly outlast it;
- (iv) it will nearly wear it away.

The first of these is the obvious meaning, platitudinously suited to the speaker. The second anticipates our fear that the lovers are too beset with enemies on the hard road of life to be able to last

18 Op. Cit., p. 65.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

20

the course, whereas the third contradicts this by saying that Juliet's love and beauty, because time will not have chance to wear them away, will last in their fame nearly as long as the rocks of earth. And this contradiction is heightened by (iv) in which flint has a suggestion of Juliet's luminous beauty, and the flint is that of flint-lock; so that the line is connected with the sequence of paradoxical light images running through the play.¹⁹

The richness of the lines resembles somewhat Juliet's love-- both are "as boundless as the sea."

To Romeo, Juliet's approach and the music of her voice suggest the harmony and riches of a love too deep to be conveyed by mere sound.

Time has smiled on the union but the wheel turns.²⁰ The season is hot -- Mid-July, as the nurse has told us -- and Italy is indeed sultry in mid-summer. Choler at such a time is easily aroused and enemies are sure to encounter. Romeo is but one hour married when he is challenged by Juliet's kinsman, Tybalt. The love Romeo bears to his wife and the newly contracted kinship he has for Tybalt prompt him in the name of love and law to reject the challenge. As chance would have it, Mercutio, whose inbalance of humors

¹⁹ Op. Cit., p.66. Such an extended interpretation may strike us as extravagant; I quote it to illustrate the trend of recent studies. In view of it, the four levels of meaning in some medieval literature (e.g., The Divine Comedy) do not seem abnormal. Miss Mahood's work has recognized merit.

²⁰ The link of Time with Fortune's wheel is made in The Rape of Lucrece (1.952), as S.C. Chew points out in his interesting essay on "Time and Fortune", ELH VI(1939) p.111.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

21

makes him fiery, seizes his sword and joins in battle with Tybalt, who slays him when Romeo intervenes to halt the fight. What love has forbidden, friendship now demands. Romeo gives himself over to fire-eyed fury and takes revenge for his friend's death.²¹ The death of Mercutio is central to the action. A kinsman of the prince, he is also a friend of Romeo and an enemy of the Capulets. His untimely and unfortunate death prepare for Romeo's own, not merely in that it arouses the vengeance that has mortal consequences, but also in that Romeo's own death is both untimely and unfortunate.²²

Romeo's choler has not time to subside before Tybalt returns, as if in the hand of Fortune, and meets his death at Romeo's sword. The deed having been done, Romeo immediately recognizes that he has served as the rash agent of per-verse Fortune: "O, I am fortune's fool" (III.1.141). Doom falls even before the offender is sought for. The prince acts with the same speed as Romeo has just acted, and the judgment he pronounces demands the same celerity of performance: "let Romeo hence in haste, / Else, when he's found, that hour is his last" (III.1.199-200).

21 For a discussion of the humors in relation to this play, H. E. Cain's "Romeo and Juliet: Reinterpretation," SAB XXII(1947)163-92, is detailed and scholarly.

22 See M. C. Bradbrook, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, London, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 118.

FATE, TIME AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

22

In the quiet and peace of the Capulet garden, Juliet awaits the arrival of her husband. Her soliloquy pleads that time, which always hangs heavily on those who wait, will move quickly. She has leisure to invoke mythological steeds of the sun to hasten his return to his lodging and allow love-performing night to close up the curtains of "the garish sun." The lovely, often repeated invitation, "Come, night" of her epithalamion makes comparison of her contracted love with the purchase of a home and with the new garments that a child has received and longs to wear. The sense of expectancy is intense and ironic. Juliet does not know that fortune has turned the wheel. The nurse returns with the news but with seeming perversity misuses time in conveying the message. The moments of indirection become hours of torture for Juliet before she is able "to find direction out." Mistakenly thinking that Romeo is dead, she exclaims, "Can heaven be so envious?" (III.ii.40) In her perturbation, she directs invectives against her heart as a poor bankrupt, her eyes as criminals, her body as vile earth. With tragic irony she invites death to come to take her so that she and Romeo can share the same bier (III.ii.57-60).

Fortune has changed, but Juliet's love has not. When the nurse uses abusive language against Romeo, Juliet recants her own "unreasonable fury" and asserts her womanliness in defense of her "three-hours" husband. And though

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROME AND JULIET

23

she can rail at fate that has banished him, she does it strangely and strongly. Juliet moans:

. . . if sour woe delights in fellowship
 And needly will be rank'd with other griefs,
 Why follow'd not, when she said "Tybalt's dead,"
 Thy father or thy mother, nay, or both,
 Which modern lamentation might have moved?
 But with a rearword following Tybalt's death,
 "Romeo is banished," to speak that word,
 Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
 All slain, all dead. "Romeo is banished!"
 There is no end, no limit, me sure bound,
 In that word's death; no words can that word sound.
 (III.ii.116-26)

In her extreme distress she identifies parents, kinsman, husband, and self in a universal disaster -- banishment.

Banishment is equally calamitous to Romeo. Friar Lawrence, trying to prepare for his yet unknown sentence the Prince has passed upon him, uses ameliorative terms for fate and fortune. "Affliction," he says, "is enamour'd of thy parts, and thou art wedded to Calamity" (III.iii.2-3). The unsuspecting Friar is unready for Romeo's outburst at the word "banishment":

'Tis torture, not mercy: heaven is here,
 Where Juliet lives: and every cat and dog
 And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
 Live here in heaven and may look on her,
 But Romeo may not. (III.iii.29-33)

Refusing comfort because the heaven of his earthly love is denied him, Romeo throws himself on the floor in an excess of grief. The nurse, coming as an emissary from Juliet, chides his display of emotion and calls on him for Juliet's

FATE, TIME AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

24

sake to act as a man. The name Juliet brings a quick response:

Does she not think me an old murderer
Now I have stain'd the childhood of our joy . . . ?
(III.iii.93-4)

Love even under grimmest provocation can rise to beauty -- "The childhood of our joy," and it can be precise about time limitations -- "an hour but married." The friar is also aware of time. He asks for moderation until time is propitious for announcing the wedding and he warns Romeo against the imprudence that "pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love" (III.iii.144). And best of all, he contents him by affording him the opportunity of visiting Juliet.

Fortune is but fickle. Her smile in arranging the ecstatic union changed to a frown in permitting Lord Capulet to arrange a precipitate marriage that would unite Paris and Juliet. The nurse is sent to summon Juliet to hear the news of this planned marriage and her coming interrupts the aubade the lovers sing as Romeo takes his leave reluctantly. Ironically, Juliet has prayed that fortune will be fickle and not keep Romeo long from her. Such severity as Fortune now devises Juliet has not dreamt of. Time becomes a veritable demon in the rapidity of the demands for this second marriage. Father, Mother, Nurse -- all in whom Juliet has confided become estranged and unapproachable. She pleads with them to delay the marriage "for a month, a week/Or if

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

25

you do not, make the bridal bed/In that dim monument where Tybalt lies" (III.v.201-3). The elders remain adamant and the irony of the plea wounds the readers' sensibilities. Juliet is left to her own resources to devise a plan to defeat fate.

Now instead of many days in a minute (III.v.45) that marks the slow progress of time when lovers are separated, time speeds by and Paris is "nothing slow to slack his haste" (IV.i.3). Separately, Paris and Juliet resort to Friar Lawrence -- the one to give the reason for the abridgement of time before the wedding, the other to ask a remedy for the desperate situation. Juliet's father advances the time for the wedding from Thursday to Wednesday and Juliet prepares for this "so sudden business," in a fashion far different from that which her father would have sanctioned. The soliloquy Juliet engages in just before she drinks the "distilled liquor", is admirably discussed by Dr. Clemen in his 1964 presidential address to the Modern Humanities Association. Professor Clemen writes: ²³

Juliet is left alone and her long soliloquy is an accompanying text for the action, in the course of which she drinks the vial, deposes a dagger at her bedside and eventually throws herself on her bed. The soliloquy thus creates and interprets the action,

²³ "Shakespeare's Soliloquies," Cambridge, University Press, 1964, 15-16.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

26

but we still find the self-awareness and "self dramatization" so characteristic of Shakespeare, for Juliet introduces her performance by the words: "My dismal scene I needs must act alone." The lines that follow are an example of the way in which Shakespeare contrives to combine quite different things in a soliloquy, so that the concept of "self reflection" or "introspection" (Eliot's terms) does not suffice. Doubts about the efficacy of the potion, apprehensions of what might happen if she should wake up before Romeo's arrival, a suggestive pictorial anticipation of the "vault To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in," a grim illusory scene of "mangled" Tybalt's resurrection, a parting address to Romeo -- all this is made articulate in Juliet's soliloquy.

She ends her monologue by accepting the consequences of this her desperate action in a toast to her lover. John Lawlor adds the comment that this soliloquy is at once the test and vindication of her maturity.²⁴ She has lived a long life in a short time. It is now the turn for her parents to mourn. The marriage baked meats coldly furnish forth the funeral tables, if we may be allowed thus to misquote Hamlet. Capulet directs his household: "All things that we ordained festival Turn from their office to black funeral" (IV.v.84-5). And funeral services become as pre-emptory as the marriage ceremonies were planned to be. Speed, the race against time, characterizes this action as it does much of the action in the play. Bradbrook links several instances of this violent

²⁴ "Romeo and Juliet" in Early Shakespeare, London, Edward Arnold, Publishers Ltd., 1961, p.134.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET 27

action: "The quenched torch, the meteor gliding through the night, the wedding cheer changed to burial feast, all are embodiments of the same theme." 25

There is an interlude following the discovery of the "dead" girl in which musicians summoned for the marriage prepare to disband. Music has implications of harmony and controlled time consonant with lives of concord. But music suitable for a wedding is scarcely appropriate for a burial. It was therefore expedient that the musicians be dismissed. Failures in love -- dissensions, self-assertions, failure to respect the rights of even fourteen-year-olds, dissimulations -- can not be symbolized by music, even though "musical confusion" can resolve and "echo in conjunction." Quarrelling has no patterns.

News of the "death of Juliet" reaches Romeo and finds him unprepared for further buffets of fate. With sudden resolve to confound fortune, he utters his challenge: "I defy you, Stars!" The wedding arrangements Capulet made for his daughter were no more precipitate than are Romeo's frantic plans. Mischief is "swift To enter in the thoughts of desperate men!" (V.1.35-6) Fortune cannot be thus easily scorned. A series of misfortunes, mischances with grievous

25 Op. cit., p. 118.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

28

consequences, oppose human prudence and foresight: Friar Lawrence's letter, acquainting Romeo with the plan whereby he would have his Juliet, unexpectedly miscarries; Paris' elegiac liturgy is obstructed; Romeo's private opening of the tomb is interrupted when he is forced to kill Paris; Friar Lawrence's arrival is just too late to halt Romeo's poisonous cup. Present when Juliet awakes, as he had planned to be, Friar Lawrence is unable to persuade her to depart from "that nest of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep." The motive he urges for her withdrawal reaffirms the belief in a force beyond man's control: "A greater power than we can contradict Hath thwarted our intents" (V.iii.153-4).

Juliet, like her husband, dies with a kiss on her lips.²⁶ Romeo's supreme efforts to defy fortune come to naught. United in death, the lovers are no longer subject to time. They pay the "price" in any case. In the natural plane, only the poet can make "immortal mortal men and mortal maids". This was a feat Shakespeare accomplished by the sonnets and surely also by his plays. Indeed, in this

²⁶ Katherine V. MacMullan, "Death Imagery in Antony and Cleopatra" Shakespeare Quarterly XIV (Autumn 1963) 409, makes a pertinent comment: "Shakespeare's tragedies of love, culminating in Antony and Cleopatra, are related to each other by their dying scenes. The lovers Romeo, Othello, and Antony, having suffered from various forms of delusion drawn from the nature of their passions, "Die with a kiss -- Romeo in joining Juliet to save her from the lustful advances of Death . . ."

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET 29

play, love's enemies, as Mahood points out, have only a Pyrrhic victory: Romeo has his Juliet, and the reconciliation of the feuding families which the marriage could not effect, results, nevertheless, from their deaths.²⁷ Moreover, as Siegel writes, "the adverse destiny of the lovers, pitiful and grievous as it is, is presented as part of the larger plan of divine providence. It is the means, the necessary means, by which their parents are punished in a manner that brings an end to the feud which had endangered the peace of the state."²⁸

The symbol of the union is a monument in pure gold on which Romeo's statue "by his lady's lies."

It is somewhat more than realistic to recall what Shakespeare thought of monuments as symbols of permanence. If the feud truly ended, as the Friar expected and as he hoped even as he consented to the marriage of the "star-cross'd lovers," then indeed the play itself is more fitting than statues are as a monument to their love. According to the poet himself in Sonnet 55, the words would be a more lasting memorial than stone:

²⁷ Op. cit., p.69.

²⁸ "The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise," Op. cit., p.255. The chance for a lasting peace between the families, things being as they are, is indubitably slight.

FATE, TIME, AND LOVE IN ROMEO AND JULIET

30

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
 Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rime;
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
 And broils root out the work of masonry,
 Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
 The living record of your memory.

Romeo and Juliet is the first in a series of tragedies which Shakespeare used to examine the transience and impermanence of things and explore man's desires to attain some stability and permanence in a world of endless reversals and revolutions. Shakespeare retained this interest in change and permanence, in the productive and destructive forces he saw at work in reality, and in human waverings and resolution. His interests he centered around situations as a focus and developed both sonnets and plays exploring the interests and giving them a permanence in writing.

The next play we will examine combines the themes of time and love within a situation of active warfare. Troilus and Cressida explores the values of love when it is opposed by time and by war between nations. For the new investigation, Shakespeare had readied himself by experimenting with the themes in sonnets, showing the impact of mutability and time on the situations he creates for the purpose. Often Troilus and Cressida verbally echoes some sonnet or other. Themes repeated frequently in the sonnets come to our minds as we read the play. Love and Time are obvious concerns of both sonnets and Troilus and Cressida.

CHAPTER TWO

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

In Romeo and Juliet we saw Time operating sometimes in favor of and sometimes in opposition to the fortunes of the young lovers. In moments of happiness time seemed to fly; in times of waiting or suffering, it passed with leaden feet. When calamity was impending, time was mercurial, and the lover had to engage in "war with time for love" of her, as Sonnet 15, puts it. In the end, Romeo and Juliet sought to "set up an everlasting rest," where fate and time would be powerless to separate them. Obviously the time represented in drama is not clock time -- although it too has a place -- but rather moral time, the dimension by which human action can be accomplished; it passes slowly or quickly in proportion to awareness of it. One can become its slave as Richard II does in Pomfret Castle. Having time on his hands in his prison, he creates a world in his imagination and becomes, as he says, the "Jack o' the clock," beating out the hours until his release, which comes, ironically, when for him time is no more. Or we can "possess" time, as Antony fails to learn in Antony and Cleopatra.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 32

Our present study, Troilus and Cressida, reveals a concern with time and mutability, with fluctuating passions and fortunes. There is an attention, too, to the need for a stability that can eternalize love. Values of love and honor are subjected to an agonizing scrutiny that "calls all in doubt." Do the laws of nature and nations have validity? Is the worth of a possession or virtue determined by the person evaluating it? Can war test man's virtue? Can love have permanence? Can it transcend time and become immortal? Such are the perplexities which Shakespeare concerns himself with in this tragedy. It marks a stage in his developing interest in the change and permanence of all things as they are ascertainable in human situations.

In approaching Troilus and Cressida, we notice the images of time and references to it by which characters show their attitudes toward it and the effects it has upon them and their ideals, particularly their ideals of love and honor. These are presented, as we have said, in the milieu of a war that has raged for seven fruitless years.

Troilus, standing with Pandarus in front of the palace, is oppressed by a restiveness brought on by Cressida's evident coldness toward him and by the fatigues

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

33

of battle.¹ A tension between his fruitless efforts in his private "war" of love and the wearisome uncertainty of the war with the Greeks outside the walls of Troy enervate him and make him put his armor, now on, now off. Time has grown unbearably long. Pandarus, his hope in the private affair, recommends patient waiting until the time when his suit is ripe. He uses the image of the process of making a cake from wheat: grinding the grain, sifting the flour, leavening, kneading, and setting the dough, heating the oven, and baking and cooling the cake. With this lengthy procedure, Pandarus introduces into the play an image that recurs throughout -- food.² Here it is used to indicate the passing of time. Time is slow like the process of cake-making, and waiting is difficult.

1 David Kaula, "Will and Reason in Troilus and Cressida," S.Q. 12 (1961), comments thus: "The basic tension in Troilus reveals itself with full force in the play's opening scene... . /He employs/ imagery that shows a conventional Petrarchan extravagance.../and/ a clear, rarified quasi-mythical imagery which implies a complete escape from the profane, heterogeneous world in which he finds himself so painfully involved." P.273.

2 Caroline Spurgeon, in Shakespeare's Imagery (Boston, Beacon Hill Press, 1958) discusses the food imagery. P. 320-4.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

34

To the Greeks, too, time goes slowly. In their demand for indemnity for the war, they list -- along with the release of Helen -- "honor, loss of time, travail, expense, /Wounds, friends, and what else dear is consumed/ In hot digestion of this cormorant war" (II.ii.4-6). For both Trojans and Greeks, the passage of time is a process of food preparation and consumption. War is the scavenger that devours what was once precious.

But, perhaps, the most memorable image that depicts time -- here also associated with food -- is Ulysses' conception of it as calculated to convince Achilles that it is futile to rely upon his reputation for valor and prowess in battle because forgetfulness and ingratitude obliterate past good deeds:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingrattitudes;
Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done.

(III.iii.145-50)

The monster Time devours goods and forgets them as soon as

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

35

they are done.³ The beggar with a wallet on his back has iconographic antecedents as well as present-day equivalents that make the image graphic. The wallet is related to Time's chest in Sonnet 65. This too becomes the receptacle for spoils -- those goods of beauty or wealth which "sad mortality o'er-sways."

Time, too, is "a fashionable host/ That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand,/ And with his arm out-stretch'd, as he would fly,/ Grasps in the comer: welcome ever smiles,/ And farewell goes out sighing" (III.iii.165-9). This image presents a congenial well-wisher, hearty in the reception of his guests, but too much involved with receiving others to offer all the expected courtesies to those departing. He represents the general attitude of men: always reaching out for what is new, disdaining what has become usual; always striving for the shiny, rejecting the shoddy. So reputation moves into the limelight, but as soon

3 Dr. Alice Walker, editor of The New Shakespeare edition of TROILUS AND CRESSIDA (Cambridge, University Press, 1957) cites the prelude to the last book of the Metamorphoses as the source for this image: "tempus edax rerum...invidiosa vetustas." P. xlv.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 36

as accustomed to the glare, recedes into the background while the beacon light picks out another for its focus. The progression of Ulysses' images moves on from the cordial host to the envious calumniator who viciously attacks reputation, virtue, and strength. Ulysses presses home his point: "O, let not virtue seek/Remuneration for the thing it was" (III.iii.169-70).

Troilus, too, knows of the fickleness of time and uses images quite similar to Ulysses' to characterize it: "Injurious time now with a robber's haste/Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how" (IV.iv.44-5). Time now is a robber who like Ulysses' beggar has a pack into which he casts things of value, heedless of order and sensible only to the urgency. Time no longer takes alms given but "steals away the treasure" (Sonnet 63).

Agamemnon, like Ulysses and Troilus, is pre-occupied with the passing of time. In his greeting to Hector and Troilus when they come as guests to the Greek camp, he is a model of the "fashionable host." He seems almost to strain in bidding the Trojan princes welcome. He obliterates the past and future, as if by an all-encompassing gesture, and

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 37

leaves only the present moment of faith and trust in the cordial communing of friends:

What's past and what's to come is strew'd with husks
And formless ruin of oblivion;
But in this extant moment, faith and troth,
Strain'd purely from all hollow bias-drawing,
Bids thee, with most divine integrity,
From heart to very heart, great Hector, welcome.
(IV.v.166-71)

The word "oblivion" links this passage up with Ulysses' pointed remark to Achilles to remind him that "good deed past" are "a/ims for oblivion" (III.iii.148). Agamemnon dismisses past and future time as worthless -- husks for cattle not men; ruins are no concern of the moment. We are men, he seems to say, granted this instant to use in such a way as befits men. War does not so benefit him; friendship does. If in all "faith and troth" Agamemnon means his words, he takes a strong stand for the love of friendship and against warfare. In this one speech he joins the three themes of love, time, and war.

Time, according to all the warriors, both "the still and mental parts/That do contrive," and the "many hands... /that/ strike,/When fitness calls them on" (I.iii.200-3), has value only in the present. The "extant moment" is for being, for loving as for fighting. To make the present

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 38

permanent, to give immortality to fame, infinity to love -- this is an intense compulsion shared by the warriors yet not by all. We cannot forget Ulysses' conviction that fame will be forgotten. Troilus, in particular, is impelled to break the bonds of time. "He is created," Willard Farnham skillfully comments, "within the frame of Renaissance infinitization of man's quest on earth."⁴ His reputation commends him for prowess, honor, and intelligence. Ulysses speaks of him to Agamemnon as "a true knight. . . His heart and hand both open and both free. . . in heat of action more vindictive [sic] than jealous love" (IV.v.96ff.). In love with Cressida, he reveals both intense emotion and unsureness of himself and her. He awaits her approach feverishly, "I am giddy," he says; "expectation whirls me round." In his soliloquy he combines the theme of love, which he is anticipating, with those of taste, time, and war. He fears that his joy may be so exquisite that there may result a swoon or death or the blunting of all taste whereby he would "lose

4 "Troilus in Shapes of Infinite Desire," in Shakespeare 400, Essays by American Scholars on the Anniversary of the Poet's Birth, edited by James G. McManaway, N. Y. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p.258.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 39

distinction/As doth a battle /blunt7, when they charge on
 heaps/ The enemy flying" (III.ii.28-30). D. A. Traversi
 says that Troilus's passion is "strong only in anticipation",
 as revealed in his attempt to verbalize his "insubstantial
 and incorporeal emotion."⁵ In the anticipation of his joy,
 Troilus has fears. He will do all that love can devise for
 a test of his fidelity. Just as lovers in the Arthurian
 romances and those of the jukebox age make protestations of
 love that they are willing to prove by tremendous feats, so
 Troilus is ready "to weep seas, live in fire, eat rocks,
 tame tigers" (III.ii.84-5). Yet he does admit that there
 is a monstrous element in love:

This is the monstrosity in love, lady, that the
 will is infinite and the execution confined, that
 the desire is boundless and the act a slave to
 limit. (III.ii.88-90)

It is as if Troilus realizes that the human capacity for
 feeling, for joy, wealth, honor, for whatever is held valu-
 able, is bound in by its sheer finitude. He is not deceived,
 as Henri Fluchère notes, "by the ambitious aspirations of

⁵ An Approach to Shakespeare, N. Y., Doubleday
 Anchor Books, 1956, p. 69.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 40

human love." ⁶ Indeed, Troilus himself offers the reason for his fears: "the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit." But explanation does not relax the tension: humanity simply cannot be infinite in act, but it can in desire (a Renaissance emphasis).

By an agreement of war, an exchange of prisoners forces Troilus to sacrifice his loved one to the contingencies of war. He verbalizes the ritual:

I'll bring her to the Grecian presently:
And to his hand when I deliver her,
Think it an altar, and thy brother Troilus
A priest there offering to it his own heart.
(IV.iii.6-9)

When Troilus gives Cressida into the custody of Diomedes to escort to her father, the separation realized is a subtle exteriorization of what Troilus had known all the time: all things earthly are in time and are therefore limited by time.⁷ It is interesting to hear Calchas, removed as he is

⁶ Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, N.Y., Hill and Wang, Incorporated, (Dramabook) 1956, p.199.

⁷ L. C. Knights in Some Shakespearean Themes (London, Chatto and Windus, 1959) says that the separation is "merely incidental in that it only emphasizes what is in fact intrinsic to their relationship." P.77.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 41

from the whole situation, argue the "advantages of... the time" as a motive for choosing that particular instant, when Troilus and Cressida are most in love, to ransom his daughter from the Trojans. Here time operates in much the same way as in Romeo and Juliet, when Capulet hits upon the wedding night to promise his daughter's hand to Paris. Time is envious. As Paris says while the exchange of prisoners is being discussed in council and not yet accomplished, "The bitter disposition of the time will have it so." (IV.i.47-9). Appropriately, Troilus has instinctive fears, which, like Juliet's premonitions of death, are yet prophetic of separation. For this reason, he needs must hear her say that she will be true. If his persistence annoys her, it is because he is himself so intense:

O that I thought it could be in a woman --
 As, if it can, I will presume in you --
 To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
 To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
 Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind
 That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
 (III.ii.165-70)

Ascribing simplicity and truth to himself, he doubts, with what is almost a cynic's skepticism, that woman can "keep

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 42

her pledged constancy." ⁸ With what is almost a Machiavellian individualism, he holds up his own integrity as a measure for Cressida's. In doing so, he employs an image from agriculture to evoke the ultimate in purity to match the fineness of his love: "That my integrity and truth to you / Might be affronted with the match and weight/ Of such a winnow'd purity in love" (III.ii.172-3). Winnowed grain is free from all chaff. Troilus fears that Cressida's love is not thus pure. He wins from her an exaggerated statement of love beginning, "If I be false" and concluding "let them say... 'As false as Cressida.'" (III.ii.190ff.). Troilus accepts the statement -- and Cressida apparently means it -- as a promise of fidelity. Robert Ornstein commenting on the situation says, "Troilus' romantic ideals demand that Cressida be faithful; his self-esteem demands that she be true to him." ⁹

8 The expression is Hardin Craig's, in a footnote on the passage in his edition of the plays.

9 The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1960, and extracted by the author in his Discussions of Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, Boston, D. C. Heath Company, 1961, p.33. Troilus is like Othello in this. Both lovers have an exaggerated self-esteem.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 43

When the time comes to prove herself faithful, Cressida is true only to what she evidently regards as her own good. Her vows of constancy to Troilus are belied, and even the chivalric token he has given his lady, she coquet-tishly flaunts before Diomede with the result she probably expected: he snatches the token and attaches it to his helmet. Cressida's "good deeds past" are, in fact, "forgot as soon as done." Theodore Spencer in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, comments that we view the situation from four angles: "At the back of the inner stage, are Cressida and Diomed, the main focus of attention; on one side of the front stage, are Troilus and Ulysses; Thersites is on the other. Cressida and Diomed talk, she strokes his cheek, and their talk and actions are interpreted by Troilus, -- emotional, agonized, incredulous; -- by Ulysses, rationally trying to control Troilus, and by Thersites. . . . Passion, reason and cynicism form the discordant demonstration of the evil reality... under what had seemed so fair an appearance." 10

10 N.Y., Macmillan Co., 1949, and reprinted in Paul N. Siegel, His Infinite Variety, Major Shakespearean Criticism Since Johnson, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Co., 1964, pp. 199-200.

TIME, LOVE AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

44

As Troilus overhears, at first innocently and then wilfully, the encounter of Cressida with Diomedes, he becomes increasingly involved in a perplexing debate within himself that is, one may say, either the culmination of tensions that have been from the beginning growing in his mind, or the catastrophe that dwarfs them so that they are negligible. Not wanting to believe his senses, Troilus decides rather to "swagger himself out on 's own eyes" -- the expression is Thersites' -- by rationalizing that the Cressida he sees is not the one whom he knows, but Diomed's. Immediately he reflects on the process of his mind and ejaculates:

O madness of discourse,
That cause set up with and against itself!
Bi-fold authority! where reason can revolt
Without perdition, and loss assume all reason
Without revolt: this is, and is not Cressid.
(V.ii.142-6)

What Troilus cannot encompass is the belief that one can swear a thing and then absolutely contradict the oath. Hoy accounts for the perplexity by calling it a "metaphysical contradiction wherein what seemed to be single and whole is found to be various and partial."¹¹ The distraught lover

¹¹ Cyrus Hoy, The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation Into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy and Tragicomedy, London, Chatto and Windus, 1964, p.55.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 45

relates this fall from truth to the whole universe: "The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolved and loosed" (V.ii. 156); this is, of course, the usual Renaissance belief in the Great Chain of Being. It corresponds to Ulysses' speech on Order, which will occupy us shortly. Faced with the problem before him, Troilus, the lover becomes Troilus the warrior, who can react only as a warrior does. He will redeem his sleeve from Diomedes by blows from his sword striking with all the force and noise of the hurricane.

Shakespeare here again intertwines the themes of love and war. We have never been allowed to forget the state of war that serves as background for the scenes which alternate between the Trojan city and the Grecian camp. In the former ¹² we are mindful of women, and love and feminine intuition, and selfless fear. We see paternal correction accepted in silence if not in humility. We hear courtly language discoursing on the high values of honor and love.

12 Clifford Leach, in "Ephesus, Troy, Athens" (in Stratford Papers, 1963, ed. by B. W. Jackson, Toronto, W. J. Gage Ltd., 1964) speaks of the "intensely social life within the walls of the city." P. 162.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

46

But we would have only a one-sided view if we saw only this facet. Troy holds its court sessions in dignified order, it is true, but it does not deny free expression to its nobles. They do not all agree, most certainly. And Troy does have a Pandarus, if not a Thersites. To understand somewhat the Trojan rationale of war let us look at the Royal Council just after King Priam has received the Greek proposal of surrender. If the Trojans are presented as nobler than their political enemies, they nevertheless show human fallibility. Hector, at the King's bidding, begins the discussion on the point at issue -- the surrender of Helen. Noting that already their ranks have been decimated, lives lost dearer to the Trojans than Helen is, in order "to guard a thing not worth to us" (II.ii.21), Hector urges the assembly to return Helen. His sane rationality Troilus by-passes straightway to plead the honor of the king. He asks whether Hector will try to calculate infinitude in terms of money, whether he will try to encompass greatness with measures as small as fears and reasons. His argument is interesting at several points. It is politic: the King whose honor he brings into question is present to hear what is said; he introduces the idea of infinity in a matter that is strictly of time; he

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 47

rejects reason as a norm; and he ends, as he began, by an emotional cry of shame. "Fie, fie, my brother," he says, "for godly shame!"

Helenus answers his younger brother's argument: the King can rule with reason, despite Troilus' lack of reason. But Troilus, not to be outdone, launches an ad hominem attack against the priest his brother, by belittling his office, his intelligence, and his valor. He climaxes his debate with an appeal for what he thinks are honor and manliness: "Nay, if we talk of reason. /Let's shut our gates and sleep: manhood and honor/Should have hare-hearts, would they but fat their thoughts/ With this cramm'd reason: reason and respect/ Make livers pale and lustihood deject" (II.ii.46-50). When Hector, again turns the argument back to the issue by asserting that Helen is not worth what it costs to keep her, Troilus poses a question savoring strongly of personalism as opposed to objectivity: "What is aught, but as 'tis valued?" (II.ii.52) Hector still able to adduce right reasons, explains that a thing has an intrinsic value as well as a value assigned by the person who esteems it. By hypothesis, Troilus takes the case of Paris and Helen. Varying his images and piling them one on the other

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

48

(navigation, food, divorce, merchandising) he urges the fact that Paris had the approval of King and Council to take vengeance on the Greeks for an offense offered the Trojan royal family. He weighs Helen's beauty and their former estimate of it in the balance, and he shames the Trojans to have "stol'n what we do fear to keep!" (II.ii.93)

Hector continues to propose compelling arguments: the laws of Nature and nations as opposed to passion. He offers them emphatically: "Hector's opinion/Is this in way of truth" (II.ii.188-9). Convinced of his position, Hector suddenly reverses his "wise decision"¹³ to release Helen to the Greeks in view of the strong involvement of the honor of the Trojans in the affair. Troilus delivers the rallying cry: "She is a theme of honor and renown/A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds" (II.ii.199-200). Hector, while both noble and earnest, yet assents to a course of action he knows to be other than rational. Farnham warns against condemning Hector for giving in to Troilus and Paris.¹⁴ The issue is

¹³ The expression is from John Bayley, "Shakespeare's Only Play" in Stratford Papers, p. 76.

¹⁴ Op. cit. p.262.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

49

not simple, Farnham says, and Hector was able to see other facets than those he argued for. His submission is then rather an acknowledgment of the complexity of things. The decision of the Council is for continued war under the command of its ablest general, Hector. At least the Trojans know what they are fighting for and can count on the cooperation of all the leaders to press on toward victory.

Among the Greek leaders there is no comparable unanimity. There the objective of their Council is two-fold: to convince dissident leaders to rejoin the forces, and to unite all forces to launch a vigorous attack against the Trojans. Agamemnon is not another Priam who presides almost wordlessly; neither is he as garrulous as Nestor. He takes a strategic stand by consoling the generals for seven years of unsuccessful effort and by interpreting their failure to take Troy as a trial sent by Jove to test "persistive constancy in men" (I.iii.21). To illustrate ¹⁵ and prove his statement, he adduces the example of the growth of knots in pine

15 F. Quinland Daniels, "Order and Confusion in Troilus and Cressida I.iii" S.Q. XIII(1961)285-9, makes an interesting study of the speeches of the Greek Council.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 50

trees. Despite the "checks and disasters" in nature, the tree grows and the sap makes a passage around the knot. Distinction between men comes by trial, just as grain is refined from chaff by winnowing.

Nestor matches the images with some of his own: the frail and the mighty boats in a storm at sea, the tiger and the gadfly as pests to cattle in tranquillity and in oak-splitting tempests.

Both speakers yield to the "pure dianoia" ¹⁶ of Ulysses. The matter and the manner of his speech, in obvious contrast with Agamemnon's expansive rhetoric of philosophical acceptance, give a direct and disciplined account of the familiar Renaissance concept of degree. ¹⁷ He concludes aphoristically: "Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength" (I.iii.137). Ulysses wins the day and, besides pointing out the illness and its cause, he prescribes a remedy. By manipulation of a lottery, the Generals will

16 David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1956), so characterizes the famous speech on order. P. 29, n.3.

17 G.Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, London, Methuen (University Paperbacks) 1960, treats the content and implications of the speeches. Pp.48-52.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 51

choose "blockish Ajax" to meet Hector's challenge. A beneficent effect will be guaranteed whatever the result: if victorious, he will challenge Achilles' pride and force him to fight; if defeated, the Trojans still have Achilles to fear and will at the same time be deprived of the boast, "We are victors in that we have defeated the best of the Greeks." Ulysses and Nestor agree to broach Agamemnon with the "taste" of their stratagem. Nestor's comment on the rivalry they plan to set up between Achilles and Ajax suits the action well: "Two curs shall tame each other: pride alone/ Must tarre the mastiffs on, as 'twere their bone" (I.iii.391-2).

The Greek Council meeting is a mirror of the whole Greek camp. The attitudes reflected there are indicative of the whole progress of the war. Agamemnon's generalship is unsure and unsuccessful because his ideals are not disciplined and definitive. It is almost unbelievable that never once does the immediate goal of the war come into discussion. Helen's name is not mentioned, perhaps for the reason that the Greeks do not value her. Diomedes expresses what he takes to be the popular opinion:

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

52

She's bitter to her country: hear me, Paris:
 For every false drop in her bawdy veins
 A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
 Of her contaminated carrion weight,
 A Trojan hath been slain: since she could speak,
 She hath not given so many good words breath
 As for her Greeks and Trojans suffer'd death.
 (IV.i. 68-74)

Paris, the Trojan host of Diomedes at the instant, patiently listens to his wife's defamation, but entertains another opinion. The far-off objectives of "separating the men from the boys" and the bi-product of uniting the forces are not urgent enough to motivate action. Furthermore, the goal of restoring the honor of their name is lost in personal struggles for fame and in the overweening individual pride of some members. The meeting breaks up in the customary, inconclusive manner. It was later that Ulysses and Nestor reached the agreement already referred to. They have no doubt that Agamemnon will accept complicity in the trickery in order to induce the cooperation of the dissident warriors. This attitude is one that prevails, but it develops according to fuller, harsher terms. Trickery becomes treachery, when the fighting begins again with the Trojans.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 53

At the earliest opportunity when the truce is ended, Troilus sets out to regain the token Cressida's betrayal of trust had handed over to Diomedes. The sleeve assumes ambivalent value: it is at once the token of dedicated love and the standard of furious warfare. These meanings are clear to both Troilus and Diomedes. Troilus, however, in his interpretation universalizes both. Cressida's infidelity attaches to all women; her words are but wind that he casts to the wind when he tears her letter. His anger with Diomedes is not merely a personal rage; it is also a patriotic duty. And Diomedes becomes the one goal against whom he directs his offensive.

Hector takes to the field despite the ominous predictions of his wife and sister. Finding Achilles worn with battle, the Trojan hero nobly allows him to withdraw unharmed. Then seeing "one in sumptuous armor" and, as if compensating for having acted virtuously in regard to Achilles, Hector orders the Greek to halt; when he does not, Hector goes in pursuit. What is significant about the incident is that Hector's fancy for the armor, seems to convert him into a hunter and the fleeing man into a beast. Hector calls out: "Wilt thou not, beast, abide?/Why, then fly on, I'll hunt

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 54

thee for thy hide" (V.vi.30-1). This man-hunt betrays Hector's ideals and brings about fatal consequences. The next time we see him, he is standing over the body of the slain man. He addresses him: "Most putrified core, so fair without/Thy goodly armour thus hath cost thy life" (V.viii.1-2). The speech has, besides the meaning Hector intended, another meaning that is ironic. The armor cost both Hector and the slain man their lives. While Hector is securing it, Achilles and the Myrmidons entrap him, unarmed, and slay him. Achilles too has finished a hunt. He had directed his men, "when I have the bloody Hector found,/ Empale him with your weapons round about;/ In fellest manner execute your aims" (V.vii.4-6). The Myrmidons execute the order when Achilles cries to them, "Strike, fellows, strike; this is the man I seek" (V.viii.10). S. L. Bethell, in his interpretation of the levels of meaning in drama, makes a meaningful comment, which, however, is too inclusive in that it fails to take into account the pervasive sense of waste:

The "sumptuous armour" with its "putrified core" thus becomes a symbol of all the play presents to us, an allegorical enactment of the theme of "fair without, and foul within"... It applies to the war, with its false chivalry and inadequate aim; to Helen, to Cressida, and a good many more of

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 55

the personages involved; and it applies lastly to the death of Hector, with which it is so closely linked in presentation. ¹⁸

The "fair without and foul within" characterizes the dastardliness of Achilles in all his actions. His murder of Hector is of a piece with the rest.

Before Hector is ambushed, he notices the setting sun, and tired from the day on the battlefield, says, "Now is my day's work done; I'll take good breath:/Rest sword; thou hast thy fill of blood and death" (V.viii.3-4). The address to the sword is appropriately applied to Hector himself. For him the "day" of life is ended, and the "good breath" is his last. Like the sword, he has his "fill of blood and death." Achilles, entering at that moment presses the image further:

Look, Hector, how the sun begins to set;
How ugly night comes breathing at his heels:
Even with the vail and darkening of the sun
To close the day up, Hector's life is done...
The dragon wing of night o'er spreads the earth
And, stickler-like, the armies separate.
(V.viii.5-8, 17-8)

Like an umpire, night parts the combatants. The dragon has multiple significances: first, violence and fury as in

¹⁸ Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London, Staples Press, Limited, 1944, p. 104.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 56

Lear's "Come not between the dragon and his wrath"; then, loneliness as in the "lonely dragon" to which Coriolanus likens himself; and still further, sleeplessness as in the medieval fables to which Deighton refers.¹⁹ Whatever else it is, it is most especially a graphic presentation of the glowering malevolence that prevails when the hero dies. Well might Agamemnon say, "If in his death, the gods have us befriended, / Great Troy is ours, and our sharp wars are ended" (V.ix.9-10). Hector had once said when Ulysses predicted that Troy would fall, "I must not believe you... the end crowns all, / And that old common Arbitor, Time, / Will one day end all" (IV.v.221.ff.). Now time is the preoccupation; Hector had noted it, and Ulysses refers twice to the close of day and the approach of night. The inference is that with Hector's end so too is Troy's. Here again at the end of the play, time controls events. Time is omnipotent, as Watson²⁰ points out and Knights discusses. We quote Knights:²¹

19 K. Deighton, editor, Troilus and Cressida (Arden Edition) London, Methuen, 1922.

20 C. B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960, pp. 402-3.

21 Op. cit., p. 67-8.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 57

Throughout this play, in compressed metaphor, in self-conscious and detailed analysis, and thence in dialogue and incident, we have a philosophy of love which regards it as essentially un-at-home in time and incapable of continued concrete embodiment in the difficult flux of events. The love-interest turns on this theme: the theme of immediate value, killed or apparently killed by time.

Both love and war are contingent on time, as every thing else under the sun appears to be. Time devours human values. The values we are now concerned with, love and honor of soldiers, are both cherished by Troilus. The value of love is that toward which his private world aspires; the value of warfare and chivalric honor that toward which his public world is built. The first is concretized in Cressida with whom he exchanges vows of everlasting love; the other is made real for him in both his brother's flawless valor and spotless reputation, and in Achilles' great name and honor. Time tests each value and each fails the test. Romantic love collapses under the pressures of time and separation. Its ruin throws Troilus with full force into the defense of honor on the battlefield. Human limitation confronts him there also; Achilles' treachery and Hector's compromise and death destroy this ideal.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA 58

"What is value?" Troilus had questioned (II.ii.52). In the end he is a wiser man for having pondered the answers suggested by the words and actions of his associates and enemies and by his own experiences with life. Perhaps he knows that human concerns, behavior, ideals are not simple as he once professed himself to be (III.ii.169). Perhaps, too, he knows that infinity is not encompassed in time; that though desire is boundless, the act is slave to limit; that the designs begun on earth often fail in promised largeness. Perhaps he knows. Yet the closing lines of the play seem to indicate that he has yet to learn that just as the love of men is encompassed by time, so too is the act of men in battle limited by time and by strength. He may utter defiance to the gods, to the sun, to time and to the whole Greek army, yet he is only human, and vulnerable. He knows, even as he stands there alone, looking across the dark battlefield, that he too will meet his end and that the end crowns all. Yet must he strive, even as a man against the sky, or whatever other forces confront him. Man's will is indomitable -- while yet there is Time.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

59

In Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare studies the nature of value, testing it in the crucible of time. Love and honor, man's word and cherished goals -- nothing is impervious to vicissitude. Indeed, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin" (III.iii.174), as Ulysses pointed out, and man, like the whole universe, is in flux. Shakespeare shows that the flux is disruptive, chaotic, disordered. Una Ellis-Fermor,²² in her appreciative study of the play, says, "Not only is the objective universe,...the cosmos and society, found subject to this curse of disjunction; the universe of the imagination also is proved incapable of conceiving a stable value. Disjunction, chaos, discord in denial of absolute value..., is carried beyond the world of event within the play; casualty has replaced causality in the world of the imagination also."

To point out the tremendous negation one sees in nature, universal and human, is not to accept such a state and rest in it as the final lot, unchangeable though arrived at through and by change. In this play, Shakespeare has

22 The Frontiers of Drama, London, Methuen (University Paperbacks), 1964, p. 71.

TIME, LOVE, AND WAR IN TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

60

posed questions about values; in King Lear, he questions even more basic realities. What is man? he asks. What is he like? If romantic love is as Troilus found it, is there another love not subject to change? If so, how can it be attained? Who has it? By what traits can it be recognized?

These questions concerning man's nature and his highest good we find raised and answered, at least in some measure, by King Lear, the tragedy we shall presently consider.

CHAPTER THREE

PART 1

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

When King Lear and his court makes a ceremonious entry for the first time in the play, all the members of the royal family take part in the procession. Coming into the presence of the Duke of Gloucester with his son Edmund and the Earl of Kent, the entourage then includes all the important characters in the play except Edgar and the Fool.¹ All await the pleasure of the King. The tableau is a portrayal of the primary concern of medieval and Renaissance man: order. The King, primate among men in the great macrocosm, the state, that linked each man with his neighbor and all men together, is the symbol of the authority needed for preserving concord and administering justice. The cordial relations of subjects with their king, of children with their father, of man with man, and of all with higher powers, is mirrored in the protocol of the court.

1 Not all critical opinion considers these two characters important to the action. It is true that the two function as observers who through their utterances keep the reader in contact with reality; nevertheless, Edgar significantly contributes to the unfolding of the sub-plot, just as the Fool does to the understanding of the principal characters.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

62

The very existence of the ordered society derives from the nature of man and depends upon each man's recognition of his moral duty. It did not exist, however, apart from an acknowledged universal order embracing every level of creation from celestial beings to the lowest forms of inanimate nature in a ladder-like sequence of which God was the benevolent ruler. The commonly accepted belief in the controlling order was diversely reiterated from pulpit, throne, and chair.² Insisting on the divine ordination and human wisdom, the authorities cited also motives of prudence and custom to enforce recognition of duty. Thomas Wilson, writing at the time of Shakespeare, makes such an appeal:

. . . the wisdom of Princes, and fear of Gods threate, which was vttered upon his word, forced men by a lawe, bothe to allowe things confirmed by nature, and to beare with old custome, or els they should not onely suffer in body temporall punishment, but also lose their soules for ever. Nature is a right that phantasie hath not framed, but God hath graffed and given man power thereunto, whereof these are derived:

2 Several fine studies have been made within the past thirty years. In particular these should be mentioned: Hardin Craig, The Enchanted Glass, Oxford, Blackwell, 1936; E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, N.Y. Random House, 1943; Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, N.Y., MacMillan Co., 1942; J.F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature; London, Faber and Faber, 1949; Irving Ribner, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, Princeton, The University Press, 1957; M.M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty, London, Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1961.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

63

Religion, and acknowledging of God,
 Natural loue to our children, and other.
 Thankfulnesse to all men.
 Stoutnesse, both to withstand and reuenge.
 Reuerence to the superior.
 Assured and constaunt trueth in things.³

The statement and the enumeration of virtues emphasize many themes important in understanding Lear, all of which would make engaging studies. The emphasis placed on nature as the basis of law and as deriving from God is also shown to be the foundation, the human "right", upon which virtue stands. On this concept and its multiple convolutions and on the key-words in the second of the listed virtues, we will center our attention. We will thereby study nature and love within the context of the play in order to better understand its meaning. To do this is an arbitrary decision, in as much as each of the listed virtues is manifestly treated in King Lear. The play is, in fact, almost a dialectic on human morality.

We cannot read far into the first scene of Lear without being impressed by the frequency of the allusions to nature. Lear in open court declares that he will divide his kingdom and divest himself of the cares of state. Although

3 Arte of Rhetorique, edited by G. H. Mair, Oxford, The University Press, 1909, p. 32.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

64

it is not a secret that Lear loves his youngest daughter best and has already made division of the realm to accord her the largest share, he, nevertheless, proposes a love-test ostensibly to determine which of his daughters loves him most.

The largest portion he will award "where nature doth with merit challenge." The quoted words, according to Steevens in a note in the Arden edition, mean, "Where the claims of merit are superadded to that of nature, i.e. birth." According to Steevens another interpretation is also possible: "nature" may mean "natural filial affection." Muir's suggested reversal of "filial" and "paternal" gives the interpretation "Where paternal affection doth with filial affection challenge." The idea of paternal love vying with filial love is understandable enough. Still another interpretation makes nature along with merit incite the one so gifted to better things.

Dissatisfied with his youngest daughter's response and shamed by her reticence, and further excited by Kent's efforts to reason with him and prevent injustice, the King grows impassioned:

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

65

On thine allegiance, hear me!
 That thou hast sought to make us break our vow
 Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride
 To come betwixt our sentence and our power,
 Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,
 Our potency made good, take thy reward . . .
 . . . Away! (I.i.170-77, 81)

"Strain'd", while not a synonym for "unnatural," nevertheless suggests it. In the context, "nature" and its coordinate "place" are used to refer to human dignity and kingly authority. Lear says that he as a man and as a ruler will not allow interference from Kent. The words Lear uses to denounce Kent's action, "thou hast sought . . . / To come betwixt our sentence and our power," are strongly reminiscent of his previous warning to the Duke:

Come not between the Dragon and his wrath. (I.i.121)⁴

Lear summons the two suitors of the now disowned Cordelia, and, informing them that she is undowered, advises that they favor someone more worthy of their affection than "a wretch

4 These words are probably the best summary of the action of the play. J. C. Maxwell in the Arden note suggests "that the notion conveyed appears to be that of Lear's wrath, as an extension of his personality -- a sort of anthropologist's 'mana' -- his union with which must remain intact if he himself is to hold together. A dragon cannot be a dragon without his wrath. The kind of disintegration which Lear is afraid of is what actually takes place."

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

66

whom Nature is asham'd t'acknowledge hers " (I.i.215-6).

"Nature" here is not as before either paternal affection or human dignity but another productive force than Nature herself responsible for what Lear considers an aberrancy. The Duke of Burgundy retires his claim⁵, but the King of France respectfully demands to know what offence Cordelia is guilty of:

This is most strange,
That she, whom even now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favor. Sure, her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
Fall into taint; which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Should never plant in me. (I.i.216-26)

France uses "Unnatural" and "monstrous" as virtually equivalent and "monsters" in the sense of "to make unnatural." When Cordelia defends her honor by citing her inability

5 Shakespeare does not allow the princess to be rejected. He has her pronounce against Burgundy: "Since that respect and fortunes are his love/ I shall not be his wife " (I.i.251-2).

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

67

to use "the glib and oily art/To speak and purpose not," France presses the question further: "Is it but this? a tardiness in nature / Which often leaves the history unspeaked/That it intends to do? (I.i.238-40)⁶ France seeks beneath Cordelia's hesitancy for the reality and, finding it, delights to "take up what's cast away." Referring again to her being an outcast, he says: "Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind: Thou losest here, a better where to find" (I.i.263-4). The word "unkind" may refer to the sisters, obviously, and to Cordelia as well. He cannot, of course, mean that she is unkind in the sense of being unsympathetic, cruel, or harsh; Stauton, cited in an Arden reference, thinks that "unkinn'd" is intended and therefore the reference is to her being abandoned by her kindred. In another context, we will treat of the word "kind" and its significances.

6 Shakespeare dealt in Sonnet 23 with the inability to tell of love. There the excuse offered is fear and such deep affection that its "abundance weakens" the heart and causes the lover to "forget to say/ The perfect ceremony of love's rite. Here the motive that prompts Cordelia's silence is a natural reticence.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

68

The first scene comes to a close when King Lear leaves the stage, arm in arm with the Duke of Burgundy, having already dismissed his sons-in-law and banished Kent. The pairing off of the self-deceived King and the undiscerning Duke is a symbol of the subsequent action which brings together the blinded Gloucester and the unseeing King. Maynard Mack refers to the two as men who "put externals first."⁷ They leave the stage to the two elder daughters in collusion over ways to prevent the inevitable petulance of their father from striking out against them.

Within this one scene we have noted "nature" and "natural" used in several senses. Lear uses the noun to mean paternal love and humanity or human dignity. He furthermore makes it refer to the creative force. France echoes the word in his quest for the truth of Cordelia's offense: "her offence must be of ... unnatural degree" and he means it to mean "abnormal". When he refuses to impute a fault, he learns that Cordelia's natural hesitancy is the sufficient cause for the King's displeasure.

7 "The Jacobean Shakespeare" in Jacobean Theatre (Stratford Upon Avon Studies I) London, Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1960, p. 29.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

69

Moreover, further references add other levels of interpretation and still other meanings of the word. The division of the kingdom is to be made according to natural boundaries; physical features such as watercourses, meadows, and wooded areas are to be apportioned. Lear refers to the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy in a somewhat strained synecdoche that names the natural bounty of the respective dominions: "the vines of France and the milk of Burgundy" (I.i.86). Lear speaks of the celestial spheres of sun and moon and of light and darkness. He cites monstrosities of creation such as the "barbarous Scythian" who opposes natural tendencies by his cannibalism. Gloucester, as well as Lear, finds "natural" not far from his lips. However, instead of referring to his illegitimate son as "natural", he chooses to differentiate between his sons by saying that his elder son was born in the proper bond of wed-lock, that is, "by order of law."

In an attempt to "order" these diversified meanings of nature, we can categorize them thus:

1. the external world in its entirety
2. the inner force or the sum of such forces in man and the basic temperament in an individual
3. the creative or controlling force in the universe.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

70

When we speak of the Law of Nature we mean, as Thomas Aquinas did and as Shakespeare seems to have meant, the unrevealed law of God in which, by exercise of human reason, man might discover God's will and according to it govern his conduct. The word "God" is often replaced in the plays by some other word still understood to refer to the transcendental or almighty or provident being, such as divinity, gods, fate, fortune, the everlasting.

The fact that direct revelation did not disclose the precepts of nature led to multiple interpretations and even to contradictory ones. Exact agreement was not possible, however much philosophers and theologians strove for unanimity. Shakespeare was unwilling to present a one-sided version of the problem. In King Lear, the sympathetic characters embrace the orthodox view, but a strong statement of the liberal position (the one the twentieth century finds more compatible) is made by Edmund. Having made mention of his name, we can now appropriately consider Scene Two, which he dominates.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

71

As a votary of the goddess Nature, Edmund announces himself a heretic to the moral order and a licentious individualist, uncontrolled by any force except self-will. Having been born out of wed-lock and therefore a "natural son," deprived by law from hereditary dignity, he diligently seeks means to assert himself and become superior to the civilization that rejects him. He contemns the order which prefers his brother over him, and he uses his reason to formulate for himself an apologetic for bastards. His sophistic arguments develop to the conclusion that the very stealth connected with his conception added vigor and fierceness to his nature and made him thereby superior to a "whole tribe of fops" (I.ii.14) begotten legitimately. Having misused his reason thus, Edmund announces his intention of overthrowing his brother. This soliloquy classifies him as a lineal descendant of the Vice, commonly known to the audience from the medieval morality plays.⁸ Even Richard III was scarcely

⁸ John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 31-2.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

72

more emphatic in announcing his decision to play the villain. Edmund's rationale, as D. A. Traversi⁹ notes, sets up the second of the major interpretations of nature. The conflict between the two concepts is thematic. It elucidates phases of Lear's own belief of which he himself is unaware. He is not, unfortunately for him, an exemplar of the medieval dictum, Nosce teipsum. Even his daughters know that he has "but slenderly known himself." Even if his ignorance results rather from a "tardiness in his nature" than from wilful blindness to see himself -- and this is unlikely if we can judge from his outright rejection of Kent's efforts to help him "see better" -- it is none the less tragic.

Gloucester, like Lear, is easily beguiled. Caught in the machinations of Edmund, he is a mere dupe. His easy acceptance of Edmund's lies and "evidence" that Edgar is treacherous is unmatched in Shakespeare's greatest plays except perhaps by Othello's facile belief in Iago's "demonstration" of Desdemona's infidelity, and even in that instance Othello's lack of sophistication somewhat lessens his

9 D. A. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, N.Y. Doubleday Anchor, 1956, pp. 186-7.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

73

guilt. The techniques of the deceivers are similar: hinting, interrupted statement, "auricular assurance", insinuations, lies. Edmund attributes to Edgar a persuasion befitting his own revolutionary philosophy rather than Edgar's traditionalism. Edmund tells Gloucester that his brother maintains that fathers should, when they are past prime, hand over their properties and estates to their sons to be managed by them. Gloucester's enraged exclamations against the unnatural villainy of his son send the thoughts back to his docile acceptance of just this principle when it was practiced in regard not to just his own dukedom, but more -- the kingdom itself. Gloucester's reaction against the principle now puts the other in stronger light. If it was not right to divest oneself of a dukedom, the audience is forced to ask, was it nevertheless right to abdicate a throne? Unnatural is the strong epithet that Gloucester uses; the action of the King is then by the same standards equally unnatural.

The son who could devise such a treachery, as Gloucester easily understands it when his own powers and possessions are threatened, is, as he says, a monster, an

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

74

unnatural brute. But Gloucester is blind outside his own immediate concerns; he cannot see the implications of his own judgments on a larger plane. Accepting Edmund's suave behavior as filial orthodoxy, Gloucester expounds in some detail his own superstitious belief in the stars and portents in the sky.¹⁰ Trying to rationalize behavior, he resorts to an astrology that attributes to "heavenly compulsion" all moral evils -- mutinies, discords, treason, estrangement, villainy machination, hollowness, treachery, disorders. He regrets that the wisdom of nature, natural philosophy, can reach explanations of natural phenomena and yet not prevent repercussions in the world of men. With considerable irony, at the same instant that he remembers the banishment of "the noble and true-hearted Kent," he dispatches Edmund to find the likewise noble and true-hearted, yet maligned, Edgar to bring him to judgment and a similar doom.

10 R. B. Heilman, This Great Stage (Seattle, University of Washington, 1963, has an interesting discussion of Gloucester's addiction to superstition and astrology. P. 119

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

75

Edmund, left alone on the stage for a soliloquy, ridicules his father's pseudo-science and proclaims again his own independence of planetary influence. He rails against his father with a callousness that merits the epithet "unnatural" for him whom his father will shortly call "loyal and natural boy."

Edgar, almost as gullible as his father, listens to Edmund's cant about planetary influence resulting in the same disasters Gloucester has already mentioned; but the wording that Edmund uses is manipulated so adroitly that his enumeration is, in effect, a summary of the catastrophes of the play itself. Among the evils effected by the abnormalities in the skies is, Edmund says, unnaturalness between child and parent. Manoeuvring his hearer's judgment, he convinces him that their own father has murderous intentions against Edgar. The ease with which Edmund manipulates both father and brother causes him to be scornful:

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! (I.ii.194-5)

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

76

Now nature means to him simply the basic temperament that is characteristic of his kindly brother. Nonetheless, to the unsympathetic Edmund, his is a "foolish honesty" upon which to prey.

The abdication of the throne and division of the state, a son's plot to seize a dukedom from his father, the disinheriting of a loving daughter, the banishment of a loyal courtier, the contriving of a father to capture his innocent son, a daughter's order to a servant to dishonor her father -- to such a list what more unnatural thing could be added? One preposterous event follows another, and when we hear the Fool mocking the King for making his daughters his mother, by allowing them to take the rod into their own hands, we are not surprised at his little tale of a cuckoo that bit off the head of the sparrow that fed it, or at his question about the cart drawing the horse. But we are perhaps surprised when the unnatural events up until now are dwarfed by the monstrous curse Lear utters against his eldest daughter. The provocation too is monstrous: the ingratitude and unfeeling niggardliness of a daughter "Which, like an engine, wrench'd her father's". . . frame of nature/ From

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

77

the fix'd place." (I.iv.290-1). In the extremity of his anguish Lear prays:

Hear, Nature, hear! dear Goddess hear!

He is not invoking the spirit of undiscipline that Edmund calls upon, but the benevolent creative force of the universe. His curse asks, ironically, the antithesis of fertility, beauty, and blessing. Even for the second generation he asks deformity and monstrosity to torment with sorrow and distress its unnatural mother -- his unnatural child. Lear, still enraged with Goneril's actions, remembers his second daughter, "Who . . . is kind and comfortable." He adduces these very virtues which should prompt her to be loving and forgiving, as motives to cause her to wreak vengeance for him. She will, he knows, "with her nails . . . flay thy wolvisish visage." (I.iv.329-30). He is unconscious of the terrible irony of his statement.

Having dispatched Kent to notify Regan of his approach, Lear makes ready to depart and the Fool tries to prepare him for another hostile reception. Blind still, Lear can think only of Goneril's insults and what he is pleased to call his own generosity in giving her half of his kingdom.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

78

He mutters his resentment: "I will forget my nature. So kind a father" (I.v.34)! He will, he says, change his ways; he will no longer be the indulgent parent he has considered himself to be. He again uses the word "nature" to indicate his basic temperament. He would surely not recognize his disposition in Goneril's estimate of it: "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash" (I.i.298-9).

As the first act closes, we are aware that this evaluation of the old King is more nearly justified than his own. He rushes away from Goneril's palace muttering: "To take 't again perforce! Monster Ingratitude" (I.v.42)! Goneril, in his eyes, can be nothing now except unnatural. The thought of the divided kingdom that forces itself into his weary mind has nothing to do with re-establishment of social justice by the resumption of his kingly responsibility, but only with ways to even the score against his scheming daughter. The idea of filial ingratitude recurs to Lear so frequently that is almost a fixation and he begins to fear for his sanity. He himself utters the first intimation that madness will ensue: "O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven;/ Keep me in temper; I would not be mad" (I.v.50-51)! Concerning this pathetic exclamation, Hardin Craig remarks that "Lear

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

79

thinks of madness as the loss of the even balance of spirits, i. e., temper and as the forgetting of his nature." ¹¹ That he has frequently forgotten his nature already does not occur to the distraught King.

Act II repeats the theme of nature with the same meanings previously introduced. Both Gloucester and Lear, in that order, ponder the unnatural behavior of their children and disclaim the responsibility for their birth. Gloucester says emphatically of Edgar, "I never got him" (II.i.80) and then almost immediately praises the vicious Edmund as a "loyal and natural" boy. He promises to take measures to override social restrictions against illegitimacy and in-state him as his heir. Likewise Lear, confronted by two daughters who do not respect the "offices of nature" and who in Heilman's words "deny that age has dignity or deserts and that it has a place in Nature," ¹² does not repeat his former violent curses but deals more circumspectly with the offenders. To Goneril he makes a pathetic farewell:

11 "Introduction to King Lear, p.992.

12 Op. cit., p. 141.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

80

I will not trouble thee, my child, farewell.
 We'll no more meet, no more see one another;
 But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
 Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
 Which I must needs call mine; thou art a boil,
 A plague-sore, or embossed carbuncle,
 In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee.
 (II.iv.222-8)

To Regan, who has, Lear believes, "a tender-hefted nature", he looks for love and sympathy, and finding instead the same heartless repulse as Goneril's, Lear makes a plea for charity beyond the bounds of mere need. His frequent recourse to nature's norms makes the speech emphatic:

O! reason not the need; our basest¹³ beggars
 Are in poorest thing superfluous;
 Allow not nature more than nature needs,
 Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;
 If only to go warm were gorgeous,
 Why nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
 Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But true need, --
 You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
 As full of grief as age; wretched in both!

 . . . No, you unnatural hags,
 I will have such revenge on you both
 That all the world shall -- I will do such things,
 What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be
 The terrors of the earth. (II.iv. 267-75; 281-5)

13 The speech has ironic undertones: we have just witnessed Edgar's stripping himself of even necessities in order to assume the guise of the basest beggar. "Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all sham'd," the Fool significantly remarks.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

81

The three-fold use of "nature," while emphatic by repetition, adds no connotations beyond the previous ones, but "unnatural," associated as it is with "hags" to denounce two richly attired young women, causes the memory to revert to Lear's former reference to the "wolfish visage" and prepares the mind for Albany's subsequent denunciation: "Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame, / Be-monster not thy feature" (IV.ii.63-4). However, the force of Lear's statement lies rather in the recognition that nature does have needs. Raiment, a basic one, is an often noted theme in the play.

Another theme, not frequently noticed, is housing. To nature animal and human, a fitting habitation is important. In this respect we witness Lear's privation. Just as he will divest himself of clothing, so will he renounce his daughters' homes. Infuriated by Regan's rejection of half of his retinue and still trusting that he can return with all his men to Goneril's palace, Lear says that, rather than return, he would "abjure all roofs, and choose/ To wage against the enmity o' th' air;/ To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,/ Necessity's sharp pinch" (II.iv.211-4)! Anticipatory as the speech is, it brings into focus a theme which has relevance to our problem of nature.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

82

"Abjure all roofs" is precisely the language that befits the enraged Lear but it states what in milder tones all the important characters actually do. All either leave their homes voluntarily or are forced from them by circumstances.¹⁴ The two decreed banishments -- Cordelia's and Kent's -- are part of the pattern; so too is Edgar's escape from his father's injustice. Both the banishments and the flight suppose a permanent dwelling place from which departure is made. The nature of the dwelling is not emphasized. Goneril, however, makes explicit the kind of habitation hers is before it becomes degraded by the King's retinue: "our court" becomes now like "a riotous inn"; the "grac'd palace" is made a "tavern or a brothel." But it is the Fool who in his banter with Lear makes the dwelling place an issue:

Fool. I can tell why a snail has a house.

Lear. Why?

Fool. Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case. (I.v.29-33)

14 Maynard Mack calls attention to the journey motif "to enhance our impression that psychological changes are taking place." Op. cit., p.35.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

83

Immediately after this pointed raillery, Curan tells us that the Duke of Cornwall and his Duchess are leaving their home to claim hospitality with the Earl of Gloucester. Curan assigns no motive, but the audience knows that it is to avoid having the King claim hospitality of them. Other messengers arrive; Kent baits Oswald, "whose easy-borrow'd pride/ Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows," and Lear's messenger is condemned to the stocks for his action. He refers to his place of confinement as a "shameful lodging." Having come to Regan's palace, Lear thinks it "strange that they should so depart from home" (II.iv.1), and he goes to Gloucester's castle where he learns that it was not by accident that the palace was deserted and Kent punished. He tries to turn his thoughts away from disturbing thoughts of the neglect, but it soon becomes too evident that Regan is sending him back to Goneril's palace, where he must "Ask her forgiveness." Lear's awareness of the fitness of things causes him to take offence and assume a mocking pose:

Do you but mark /he says/ how this becomes the house:
 "Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;
 Age is unnecessary; on my knees I beg
 That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food."
 (II.iv.156-8)

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

84

His reference to "house" is pointed toward the kingdom and the royal family. He further protests Goneril's decision "to oppose the bolt/ Against . . . /his/ coming in." He has been locked, quite unnaturally, from the very dwelling he has given to his daughter. Indeed, before the scene is over, he has been bolted out from all shelter on the threatening night. Even Gloucester's castle is commandeered by the daughters and forbidden to him. The inhumanity of the daughters, their unnaturalness, has taken so firm a hold upon them that they subject their father to injuries that nature can scarcely endure.

Locked from their homes and their hearts, Lear encounters the storm.

The central act of the play compacts all the meanings of "nature" and presents them forcefully in the heath scene. Here is represented nature: the primary elements in their simple state and in all that they compose in creation, the animal world represented by the bear, the lion, and the wolf; man represented on the various social levels by an earl, a gentleman, a fool and a king. Here is creation, and at the center of it is Lear who "Strives in his little world of man

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

85

to out-storm/ The to-and-fro conflicting wind and rain."

The microcosm, like the macrocosm, is storm-tossed.

When the act begins, Kent and a Gentleman set the scene by pointing out the obvious parallel between the inner world of man and the external. They note a contrast, however; whereas "the cub-drawn bear would couch /and/ / The lion and the belly-pinched wolf/ Keep their fur dry" (III.i.12-4), the King, now barred from his home, exposes himself to the elements. With him on the unprotected heath, the Fool strives to mitigate the King's distress by joking. This is as the Gentleman reports it. That this result is effected is questionable when we weigh well the reaction of Lear to the barbs the Fool aims so dexterously. At any rate the Gentleman is able to convince Kent of his sincere concern for the unfortunate King and receives from him the commission to hasten to Dover to make a report to Cordelia "Of how unnatural and bemaddening sorrow/ The King has cause to plain" (III.i. 38-9).

The first scene prepares for the second. The accustomed order of the state, disrupted by the abdication of the King, complements the upheaval in the universe and the

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

86

wrenching of Lear's own soul. Addressing his griefs to the tempest, Lear asks a further, a more universal demolition. He prays that the whole world and the very seeds of matter be destroyed:

Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th'world!
Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man! (III.ii.7-9)

Irving Ribner comments aptly on the frenzied action:

Lear glories in the savagery of nature, not knowing that the storm is nature's reflection of his own sin. It is part of his tragic delusion that he sees the forces of nature as hostile to human life... In his delusion, Lear sees. . . /them/ as agents of the evil within man. . . . His own corruption, however, Lear still cannot perceive.¹⁵

He is, indeed, "A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man" (III.ii.20), enraged the more by the Fool who counsels him that "court holy-water /flattery/ in a dry house is better than rain-water out o' door" (III.ii.10-11). A house at any cost is better than none for

"He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-piece" (III.ii.25-6).

15 Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy, New York, Barnes and Noble, 1960, pp. 125-6. Perhaps Ribner's attributing to human cause the planetary effect is an instance of what Edmund calls "the excellent foppery of the world."

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

87

Kent comes upon the "wise man" and "the Fool" and urges the King to seek shelter: even the beasts "keep their caves" under such "wrathful skies" and "man's nature cannot carry/ Th' affliction nor the fear" (III.ii.48-9). The shelter Kent proposes is a hovel "hard" by that will afford some repose while Kent approaches the "hard house -- more harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised" to ask the aid he has already been denied. Before Kent sets out on his fruitless mission, we are given a glimpse inside the hard house to see the state of affairs there is also disordered. Gloucester, still gullible in his belief that Edmund is loyal, confides to him that Lear's daughters most unnaturally forbid, under pain of their perpetual displeasure, any efforts to relieve Lear's distress. The hypocritical Edmund agrees: "Most savage and unnatural" (III.iii.7).

Back on the heath where the storm still rages, Kent continues to urge Lear into the hovel, for "The tyrrany of the open night's too rough/ For nature to endure" (III.iv.2-3). Still wracked by the remembrance of filial ingratitude, Lear remonstrates that he is more at ease to have his senses buffeted by the wind and rain than with comfortable body to

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

88

allow this tempest in the mind "ponder / On things would hurt me more" (III.iv.24-5). Yet, he will go in after he has prayed.

Addressing the Fool as "You houseless poverty," he orders him in first. Then taking his cue from the disjointed words he has just uttered, he prays, not to the divinities or even to nature, but to the poor. He asks:

How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? (III.iv.30-32)

Here Lear links the necessities that nature demands even for the most destitute: food, clothing, shelter. For the first time in his life he has an inkling of the distress in the world -- and he has yet to encounter Edgar. When he does, he is so distraught that he identifies the cause of his own distress with that of the apparent Bedlam of whom he concludes, "nothing could have subdu'd nature/ To such a lowness but his unkind daughters" (III.iv.72-3).

Tom heaps up images of nature, blasted and destructive. L. C. Knights lists them and interprets their effect:

When within the space easily encompassed by the mind
in one act of apprehension we have fire and whirlpool,
bog and quagmire, whirlwinds and star-blasting, the
web and the pin (cataract), squint-eyes, hare-lip and

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

89

mildewed wheat, then our sense of natural calamity stretches on and on: behind the whirlpool is all shipwreck, behind the mildewed wheat is all failure of harvest and starvation.¹⁶

Lear's prayer of compassion becomes more poignant when we see it as a prelude to Edgar's recital of miseries inflicted on man by physical nature's snares and moral nature's temptations. Lear had ended: "Take physic, Pomp. . . And show the Heavens more just." The justice of the heavens must, he intimates, be reflected in man's justice. Tom ends by asking not justice but charity: "Do poor Tom some charity."

Edgar's enumeration of the vices of the imaginary man whom he professes to be perplexes Lear still further. His bewildered mind leaps from the sinner who is now poor Tom and seems to sense a reality in the unclothed beggar. He associates sophistication with clothing and divests himself of his garments in order to find out nature's true worth -- man in his primal state. Meanwhile Gloucester, in secret defiance of the threat made by Goneril and Regan, comes over the heath to the hovel to offer whatever comfort he can provide:

¹⁶ "King Lear as Metaphor," in Further Explorations, London, Chatto and Windus, 1965, p. 179.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

90

a warmer house and some food. But Lear's wits begin to unsettle and he must be cajoled. He wins his point and takes poor Tom with him. Gloucester tells the disguised Kent that Lear's daughters seek the King's life. The two old men are alike in grief: their lives plotted against by their children, their human endurance giving way to madness. As Gloucester prepares to conduct the poor mad King and the Fool, the disguised Duke and his own disguised son to the lodging, he interrupts his flow of ideas to remark on the inclemency of the weather, and thus he underlines once more the bonds of internal and external nature.

Inside the house from which the King has been locked out, Edmund, carefully disguising his true intention, approaches Cornwall to betray to him the benefactions Gloucester has given Lear. With practiced suavity, Edmund glosses:

How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O Heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!
(III.v.2-4;10-14)¹⁷

17 For convenience, I have run together two speeches Shakespeare has separated by a remark by Cornwall.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

91

With a pretense of loyalty, he betrays his father. Then in and aside so that we would not be misled by his pronouncement of heroic motivation, Edmund lets us know that his natural piety does not offer any obstacle to self-aggrandizement.

Indoors and sheltered from the inclemency of the sky, Lear is made aware by the chatter of the Fool of the injustice in the world of man. At the nadir of his own humanity, he appoints a court and before the judges arraigns his daughters. Justice and order have been so ingrained in his nature that even in his madness he strives to delve into the reasons for disorder. He would anatomize Regan to see what causes there are in nature that makes these hard hearts. The hearts are hard, like the house and the stones of which it was built. Wearied with his violent activity in the storm and having at last found some warmth and ease, Lear's oppressed nature gives way to sleep. In sleep he is borne off toward Dover, where he will be welcomed and can have protection against the unnatural daughters who plot against his life.

Gloucester does not meet with the same human sympathy that had moved him to befriend the King. Arrested for treason, he admits to Regan and Cornwall that he has sent Lear to

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

92

Dover "Because I would not see thy cruel nails / Pluck out his poor old eyes; not thy fierce sister/In his anointed flesh rash boarish fangs" (III.vii.58-60). He accuses them of an unnaturalness unwarranted in man's behavior even toward beasts. With an irony so fierce that it tingles our nerves, the cruel Duke and Duchess pluck out his eyes so that he would not see the vengeance he prophesied for them. Blinded, Gloucester calls upon Edmund to rouse his nature to avenge the deed. In his pain, he learns of the unnatural son's unnatural viciousness and his legitimate son's fidelity. The servants steadfast in their service to Gloucester comment on the diabolic deed: nature cannot bear so much brutality.

When the storm has subsided and poor Tom is welcoming calmer nature, his father is led across the heath toward him. The sight of the poor man benumbs him and makes him doubt that he can any longer play the fool. Gloucester asks him to lead him to Dover, which he had seen while he still had eyes. He pictures the external nature there as a great and noble personage who bends his head over the cliff and "looks fearfully down into the confined deep." The blind man and the now clothed poor Tom set out toward Dover.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

93

This pitiful couple is contrasted with Edmund and Goneril exchanging favors, but parting before Albany approaches. The "mild husband" reproves his wife for monstrous behavior toward her king and father:

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
That nature, which contemns its origin,
Cannot be bordered certain in itself;
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap, perforce must wither
And come to deadly use. (IV.ii.30-36)

In denying paternal demands, she has broken off from the family tree -- has severed the natural tie and made herself bestial. "Tigers, not daughters," Albany calls her and her sister. He concludes that unless heaven intervenes to prevent such barbarous deeds humanity, "like monsters of the deep," will prey upon itself. Goneril does not calmly receive the rebuke but becomes so depraved that her husband sees her as a fiend and charges her:

Thou changed and self-covered thing, for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature (IV.ii.62-3).

Goneril has time only to slur her husband's manhood before news comes forcing her to ready her army to meet the French attack.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

94

At Dover, Cordelia has heard of her father's distress. The messenger from Kent also reports back to Kent the Queen's reception of the news. The imagery he uses to describe the Queen's grief is that of the gentle exterior nature of trickling brooks, of sunshine and rain, of ripe fruits. When shortly she hears of the old man's presence near Dover, she exclaims with great pathos:

Alack! 'tis he: why, he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds
With hardock, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn. (IV.iv.1-6)

The deranged King has chosen for his coronet weeds that grow in the corn fields. The weeds and corn are symbols of the disturbing thoughts and the relevancies that mingle in his madness. The kinder aspects of nature fit the gentle speaker who would use all nature's remedies to restore her father's "bereaved sense." The doctor promises to use his skill and knowledge to induce repose, "nature's foster-nurse," to heal the afflicted mind.

The view we have had of Dover -- Gloucester's -- as a benignant giant looking over the cliff was only one aspect. Poor Tom holds up another for his blind father to see.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

95

It too shows nature in its grandeur, but it is an awesome grandeur that Edgar sees:

How fearful
 And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
 The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
 Shows scarce so gross as beetles: half-way down
 Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade!
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
 The fishermen that walk upon the beach
 Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark
 Diminish'd to her cock, her cock a buoy
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
 That on th' unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
 Topple down headlong. (IV.vi.12-24)

It is, of course, Edgar's purpose to convince his father that he really is standing on the verge of Dover's cliff and his minute description of nature gives him that assurance.

Gloucester's attempt against his life is his effort to keep his will in harmony with the "great opposeless wills" of the Gods to whom he addresses his prayer. His great affliction he can bear patiently up to a point, but then his nature can patiently endure no more and is sure to put him in opposition to the divinities. To prevent this mischance, he resolves on suicide. Edgar's quick and inventive mind averts the disaster and brings the balm of hope and comfort to the distressed old man. He convinces Gloucester that his desperate action was

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR 96

prompted by some fiend and he counsels him wisely: "Think thou the clearest Gods, who made them honors / Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee" (IV.vi.73-4). Gloucester is receptive to the lesson and resolves that nature herself will have to end by death his future affliction.

With the approach of Lear, Gloucester's own miseries diminish. His griefs, fierce as they are, have left him his senses. In Lear he recognizes humanity suffering and with swift movement of compassion, he embraces his woes: "O! let me kiss that hand" (IV.vi.134), and he continues to lament the common tragedy: "O ruin'd piece of Nature!" This was a King, "possessed of power, pre-eminence, and all the large effects that troop with majesty"; a father, head of a family; and a man, primate in the animal creation. He is now reduced to this state: deprived of kingship, rejected by his daughters, bereft of intellect. Yet the poor sufferer is worthy of compassion and Gloucester gives it. He sees the universality of human misery in Lear and prophecies: "This great world/ Shall so wear out to naught" (IV.vi.137-8). Gloucester has learned to bear his affliction in seeing another suffer, but when Oswald comes to kill him for the reward, he welcomes the promised blow as from a "friendly hand." When

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

97

it is deflected, he has pause to weigh his condition against the King's: "The King is mad: how stiff is my vile sense/ That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling/ Of my huge sorrows!" (IV.vi.286-8) In the care of his own dear son he leaves the battle area and rests under a tree to ponder human destiny: By natural design "Men must endure/ Their going hence even as their coming hither: Ripeness is all" (V.iii.9-10). The image of harvest with the ripeness of grain and fruit makes the lesson easy, and Gloucester is able to acknowledge its truth. We see him no more except in the story Edgar tells of his death. Armed for the hand-to-hand combat with Edmund, Edgar reveals himself to his father and asks his blessing. He tells him of their pilgrimage together -- the paths they have taken to reach this state; "but his flaw'd heart, / Alack, too weak the conflict to support! / 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, / Burst smilingly" (V.iii.196-9). Affliction had cried out, "Enough, enough," and so he died.

Lear has a longer journey to travel. He eludes Cordelia's century until after he has taught Gloucester something of endurance, has commented bitterly on the unnatural

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

98

behavior of women -- Centaur-like monsters, has delivered a tirade on the perversity of authority, and has lamented the common lot of men who "cry that we are come/ To this great stage of fools" (IV.vi.186-7). Then overtaken by Cordelia's guard, he vaguely recognizes his fate:

I am even
The natural fool of Fortune. Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;
I am cut to the brains. (IV.vi.194-7)

"Natural" is ambiguous: "born" the fool and "imbecilic play-thing of Fortune." "I am cut to the brains" is also appropriate. He is mentally disturbed and has need of a physician. He is indeed "A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,/ Past speaking of in a King" (IV.vi.208-9)! The Gentleman who came to find Lear at the request of Cordelia comments on the griefs of the King by noting that there is one daughter "Who redeems nature from the general curse/ Which twain have brought her to." (IV.vi.210-11). He refers obviously to the great sorrow that afflicts Lear because of the two monstrous daughters. But underlying meanings extend the statement to reach into the very duality in human nature -- inclined to evil and capable of good. Some critics go so far as to interpret

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

99

"twain" as, not Goneril and Regan, but Adam and Eve. This application then makes Cordelia a Christ figure -- a savior.¹⁸

Lear is brought into Cordelia's camp and is ministered to. Cordelia prays that the kind Gods will heal his abused nature and restore his mind torn in two by his anxieties. She offers the medicament, most calculated to heal of which he has been most deprived: human affection, filial devotion. She marvels at his resistance to the inclement weather. Exterior nature warred against him and yet he was able to stand against "dread-bolted thunder" and the "quick, cross lightning."

As the old King regains consciousness, Cordelia assures him of her love and asks his paternal benediction. Her naturally reticent speech is yet able to convey in the repetition of her simple answers, "I am", and "No cause," the fullness of her devotion, the fulfillment of her bond.

Lear's daughters, who have lived monstrous lives, die as they have lived. Edmund, despite his own nature, attempts to save the life of Cordelia and her father, whom he had

18 Danby makes this interpretation. Op. cit., pp. 124-5.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

100

condemned to death. His effort is only half successful. Lear's heart breaks as he embraces the body of his dear Cordelia.

To treat more in detail this magnificent finale will take us into the other themes which we will presently develop --, themes rich in meaning and effective in their interplay with nature. In observing the tensions set up between love, time, and nature we will necessarily see again some of the action we have already traced, and it is hoped that the resultant explorations will enrich the play.

CHAPTER THREE

PART 2

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

Precipitancy characterizes most of the action in King Lear. We have spoken of the journeys from home, the trips to Dover, the flights, the sending of messages -- all have been accomplished with undue haste. The pattern is traceable throughout. The opening scene begins in leisurely fashion. The old King will be content to "crawl toward death" when he has divested himself of responsibilities. The suitors for Cordelia's hand have long "made their amorous sojourn" in Lear's court. But the decision to divide the realm is almost instantaneous: "We have this hour a constant will to publish/ Our daughters' several dowers." The immediacy is prompted by the desire to avoid now "future strife". Disappointed in his expectations by Cordelia's niggardly recital of love, Lear deals rashly with her, with Kent, and with the kingdom. The rashness rebounds upon him to deprive him of future peace. His impetuous action is straightway questioned by France: "This is most strange/ That /Cordelia/. . . should in this trice of time/ Commit a thing so monstrous" (I.i.16ff.); and the action is later commented on by Gloucester: "All this done/ Upon the gad" (I.ii.25-26).

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

102

In contrast to the desperate action of Lear, his elder daughters comment calmly on his former behavior. Although he is an old man, they say, he has still not achieved self-knowledge: "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; such "imperfections of long-engraffed condition" holds out no hope for improvement in the future. He is likely, they realize, to continue acting with "such inconstant starts" as he displayed in this affair.

In Gloucester's castle, there is an air of calm. Edmund has time to contemplate his own condition and to plan an intrigue to better himself. He does not hesitate to put his plan to work. Feigning an urgency in pocketing a letter, he thereby causes his father to demand: "What needed . . . that terrible dispatch of it [the letter] into your pocket?" Edmund's trickery now calls for reluctance; with a show of regret, he hands over the paper which speaks of time and age - improprieties of and the oppression from age, of "oldness," and "aged tyranny," which embitter "the best of our times." Gloucester laments that the times are evil, wherein a son turns against his father. "We have seen" he says, "the best of our times." Edmund does not allow opportunities to pass.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR 103

He encounters Edgar and advises him to stay out of his father's presence until "some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure which at this instant . . . rageth in him" (I.ii.176-7).

Meanwhile the situation in the palace has fulfilled the daughters' expectations. Goneril finds her father unbearable: "By day and night, he wrongs me, every hour/ He flashes into one gross crime or other,/ That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it" (I.iii.3-5). When he returns from hunting/ I will not speak with him." As if in answer, horns announce his arrival and Goneril hurries to inform Regan straightway of the trouble and to solicit her cooperation. Lear, having returned from the chase, experiences the slights Oswald has just been ordered to give, and comments on the insolence as if it were of some duration: "I have perceived a most faint neglect of late" (I.iv.72), he says.

Moreover, we are given the impression that Lear has been long with Goneril and that Cordelia had departed long ago, for we are told that the Fool has mourned ever since Cordelia went away -- two days ago.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

104

Goneril returns to chide her father for being old and yet being given to "new pranks". The time of her father's stay with her, since the abdication -- just spoken of as being two days -- appears long and disorderly. Rushing away in anger, he leaves Goneril to dispatch her servant to Regan. Her order is peremptory: "Get you gone/ And hasten your return" (I.iv.362-63). The King too sends a messenger to Regan: Kent is to go quickly. "If your diligence be not speedy," Lear says, "I shall be there afore you" (I.V.4-5).

All things must be done expeditely. Time moves on. Curan reports to Edmund that Regan and her husband will be at Gloucester's castle "this night." Without allowing for time during which Cornwall and Albany could have communicated, the messenger reports of "likely wars" impending between them. Edmund pushes on with his plot against Edgar. Characteristically, he exclaims, "Briefness and Fortune, work" (II.i.20)! He warns Edgar of "dangers" and tells him that the Duke of Cornwall is "coming hither, now i' th' night, i' th' haste." He urges Edgar to "fly this place" under cover of night, and when he does, Edmund makes a convincing story for his father: "Full suddenly, he fled (II.i.58). Edmund's fortunes thrive:

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

105

he deceives his father to such an extent that he orders Edgar killed on sight; then the schemer manoeuvres into favor with Cornwall and Regan, who arrive, as they say, "Thus out of season, threading dark-ey'd night" to get "needful counsel" to business "which craves instant use" (II.i.129-30).

Lear arrives at dawn to find Kent in stocks. Lear hears a tale of breakneck speed: "Ere I had risen... a reeking post/stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth, delivered letters. . . which presently they read, straight took horse. . . commanded me to follow" (II.iv.29-36). Lear encounters his daughters and abruptly rushes out into the approaching storm. Night has come again.

The storm Shakespeare "immobilizes!" as Henri Fluchère¹⁹ says, to allow time in which Lear "can grow in stature to match the elements of Nature".²⁰ When the storm abates, he has learned the lesson of sympathy, and can sink into sleep. His rest contrasts with Kent's anxiety and haste to snatch the old man out of danger.

19 Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, N.Y., Hill and Wang, Inc., 1956, p. 106.

20 P. 229.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

106

In the castle there is turbulence still. Messengers are sent posthaste to make preparations for war; musters are hastily compiled, arms dispatched. All is in expectancy for the approach of the French forces. Cordelia's calm grief and quiet solicitude for her father has none of this reckless spirit. In her camp there is time for the old man to sleep, time for music to be prepared, time for clean clothing to be provided. All can wait upon his cure. "In mature time" other business can be dispatched. Cordelia takes the occasion to express her thanks to Kent for his services to Lear. "My life," she says, "will be too short/ And every measure fail me /to thank you adequately7" (IV.vii.2-3). The process of Lear's awakening is leisurely. He must make sure of himself experientially: he feels a pin prick; he examines his hands; he makes efforts to reverence the "spirit" who is Cordelia; he questions his existence; he comes to recognize his daughter; finally he asks that she "forget and forgive." Kent stands patiently by until the King is able to walk. Then, when recovery is sure, he recalls that the time has come to prepare to meet the approaching army.

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

107

Near the battle front Edgar has a final lesson to impart to his father. Rushing to take the old man to a safe position, he finds him again dejected. Pausing to comfort him, Edgar gives him memorable advice. He says, in effect, the grain must grow until harvest and in the fulness of time yield to the reapers. Haste or urgency produces only fruitlessness and annihilation. "In mature time" the harvest will be abundant. Out of suffering rightly borne, sweetness will come.

Shakespeare balances this short scene with another in which Lear comforts Cordelia with plans for wearing out their lives in prison in happy possession of each other and in the peaceful contemplation of the mystery of life and destiny. The span of years stretches before the old man in dreams even as the order for their death is given.

Events hurry on to the conclusion. Edmund with his last breath countermands the death sentence, but time rushes past. Even swiftest messengers cannot overtake winged time, and, necessarily, they arrive too late. Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms, cries out in grief: "She's gone for ever". Time has run out for the princess. Within a brief span, it

NATURE, TIME, AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

108

has ceased for a father and his three daughters and for another father and one son. Only Albany and Edgar -- these two -- are left to portion to "all friends . . . The wages of their virtue, and all foes / The cup of their deservings." (V.iii.302-4).

CHAPTER THREE

PART 3

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

Undoubtedly, King Lear is about love. Statistical analysis is of little value in literary study, yet the cumulative effect of the repetition of a word is undeniable. Iteration is perhaps so characteristic of Lear with its multiple "Nothing" and its five-fold "Never" that the reader is not surprised to hear within the first scene the word "love" used not fewer than 33 times and its synonyms at least a dozen times. Every variety of love is referred to: parental, filial, friendly, passionate.²¹

Love is rooted in the very nature of man; it is, according to O E D "that disposition . . . with regard to a person which. . . manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval." The definition is workable, and yet it needs the clarification and amplification

21 Long ago Ashley Thorndike noted, however, that Shakespeare did not permit the use of romantic love in his play of the estrangement of parents from children. Tragedy, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908, p. 168.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

110

that point out that it resides in the will and manifests itself in justice, service, loyalty, and attachment. It promotes solidarity among the persons sharing it and may involve pain as well as joy.

Since, indeed, "the distinctive Shakespearean structure" is the elucidation of the "meaning of the opening situation,"²² as Father Cormican writes in Scrutiny, we have not far to look before we have forced upon our attention this keyword as a clue to the situation and to the entire play. The very first line introduces the idea of love -- the King's predilection for Albany. Almost immediately, too, we have a reference to an aberration of love -- Gloucester's lust which he has "so often blush'd to acknowledge. . . that now /he is/ braz'd to 't." These two instances simply prepare the audience for the statement of the theme in unequivocal terms when Lear holds court to determine the measure of the love his daughters have for him. The love-test elicits from the two eldest daughters the exaggerated and basically untruthful expressions of affection which prompt Cordelia to

22 L. A. Cormican, "Medieval Idiom in Shakespeare," Scrutiny, XVII (1950-51), 188.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

111

"Love, and be silent," since her love is "more richer than . . . /her/ tongue" (I.i.80). The false avowals of love gain from the King handsome rewards; the truthful statement of the youngest daughter brings banishment. The statement that so enrages the King is an expression of the deep and enduring affection of child for parent and the recognition of his kingship: "I love your Majesty/ According to my bond; no more nor less." (I.i.94-5). Cordelia speaks of that elemental bond of charity and nature which for the Middle Ages and for Cordelia, as Danby emphasizes, means: "I love you as every normal girl loves her father -- naturally!"²³ For Cordelia, filial affection is a natural duty. Challenged by her father, she makes clear what she understands by bond. Deferentially, she explains:

Good my Lord,
 You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I
 Return those duties back as are right fit,
 Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
 (I.i.97-100)

She interprets bond as the recognition of the filial duties of obedience, love, respect, and gratitude, instinctively

23 Doctrine of Nature, p. 129.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

112

and innately due to parents as a part of the right ordering of things. Lear, now too distraught to think clearly, in fact, does later recognize the same terms that Cordelia is urging. Then, he enunciates them quite specifically:

The office of nature, bond of childhood,
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude. (II.iv.181-2)

Could he but "see better," as Kent remonstrates, he could evaluate more justly the relative merits of his daughters. Blinded by his own desire to be pampered, he renounces his bond:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever. (I.i.115-8)

The bond of love incorporates and makes one those whom it embraces. The family is its natural unit, and the unity effected is one of kindness, of kindred. Lear uses the word "kind" to refer to the treatment he expects from Cordelia: "I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest/ On her kind nursery" (I.i.124-5). He refers, not to a sentimental, shallow agreeableness, but to that specific and "continued exercise of the will and reason that are the attributes of

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

113

humanity."²⁴ He means that Anglo-Saxon synonym of "nature" which characterizes man as man and recognizes human bonds based on that nature. The expectation he had set on Cordelia was then the conviction that she would honor his paternity and all it implied by rendering him tenderness, comfort, generosity, courtesy, and charity. Love demands such concord. By refusing to understand Cordelia's intention, Lear disrupts the bonds of family, estranges its members, deprives them of the solidarity that love establishes, and brings about in his life, isolation, consequent loneliness, and exile. Her banishment brought about the disruption of the royal family and a corresponding breakdown within the state as such. With her banishment, Cordelia withdraws from the action of the play until the fourth act is half over, but her presence continues to dominate the scene.

Filial affection in its purest form is embodied by Cordelia. Of similar disposition and temperament is Gloucester's elder son Edgar. He too acknowledges the bond of

24 M. M. Reese, The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays, London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1961, p.113.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

114

paternity and is, as Cordelia was, loved by the father who breaks the bonds and enforces the exile. Edgar too is of a noble and open disposition as even his envious brother admits: "a brother noble/ Whose nature is so far from doing harms/ That he suspects none (I.ii.194-6). With banishment, Edgar, unlike Cordelia who withdraws, moves more into the center of the play and takes part in shaping the action. His necessary flight from his enraged father has caused him to disguise himself. As Tom the Bedlam, he encounters the King and forces the deranged monarch to come face to face with human misery. He becomes for the King the symbol of his own distress, and Poor Tom by his nakedness becomes the occasion for his most basic questioning about the nature of man:

Is man no more than this? Consider
Him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the
beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no
perfume. Ha! here's three on 's are sophisticated;
thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is
no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as
thou art. (III.iv.107-14)

Having already identified himself with Edgar as fellow sufferer at the hands of unkind daughters, Lear now attempts a further identification with natural man -- with humanity uncontaminated by the trappings of civilization. Lear, the

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

115

King, divested of all that troops with majesty, must seek a still more basic reality. He must fathom the depth of humanity itself.

At Lear's insistence on being with his "learned philosopher," Edgar comes to the notice of Gloucester who tells us later that he was reminded of his son (IV,i.32-4). He thus is put into the position of offering service to his own blinded father when he most needs help. Edgar has heard his father declare his love for him and explain the reason for his own banishment:

. . . I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,
But lately, very late; I lov'd him, friend,
No father his son dearer; true to tell thee,
The grief hath craz'd my wits. (III.iv.170-4)

The knowledge that he is loved makes it more difficult for him to continue his disguise when he encounters his suffering father and hears that his father has now learned the truth about his loyalty. It gives him the opportunity he has always desired -- to render service to his father -- to love by deeds. Poor Tom then leads his father to Dover Cliff. We have already seen the culmination of Gloucester's journey and the dropping of Edgar's disguise in order that he can ask his

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

116

father's blessing on the joust that is about to take place. Assuming the disguise again, Edgar encounters Edmund and conquers him. Just at the point of victory, Edgar reveals his identity to his brother and makes an effort to re-establish fraternal bonds:

Let's exchange charity.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
If more, the more th' hast wrong'd me.
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son. (V.iii.166-9)

For Edmund, the wheel is come full circle. His brother is up and he down -- for the last time.

Filial love and dedication as lived by Cordelia and by Edgar are supplemented by other kinds of love. Kent resembles Cordelia in his dedication to truth and in his silent dedication to King Lear. He is loyal, steadfast and loving, and his best expression of his personality is his service. He can love and be silent, but he cannot love and at the same time fail to serve. His understanding of his bond of allegiance to his king requires fortitude in the face of the unreasonable behavior of the King. He is sufficiently articulate when he must oppose the King -- articulate enough that there can be no doubt about what he means. To make his counsel more acceptable, Kent prefaces it by a deferential

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

117

address in which he assures "Royal Lear" of his habitual honor, love, obedience, and prayerful concern for him as King, master, and patron. Even at the risk of jeopardizing his own position, Kent speaks on. Allegiance demands frankness, and duty makes him bold:

be Kent unmannerly,
 When Lear is mad. What would'st thou do, old man?
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's
 bound
 When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state;
 And, in thy best consideration, check
 This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
 Reverb no hollowness. (I.i.147-56)

In defense of right and order and in behalf of Cordelia, Kent states the necessity imposed on him by duty or office to offer counsel in order to safeguard the state and to prevent injustice. Threatened, Kent does not retract or stint his duty:

My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies, nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being motive. (I.i.155-7)

For this courageous stand, Kent is ordered from the presence of the King. He makes one more attempt:

Revoke thy doom;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil. (I.i.167-9)

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

118

The wrathful King repays this selfless service with banishment. Of his courtiers, he exiles the most loyal, just as of his daughters, he disowns the most loving. The King is imposing upon himself the severest isolation.

Kent holds his bond of allegiance as not subject to time and favor. Allegiance calls for service and loyalty, and Kent's love finds a way -- a way of self-abasement. In disguise, he presents himself for service and earns a place in Lear's retinue. His decision is what Cordelia's has been: "Love and be silent." Disguised, he announces his intention:

Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st
Shall find thee full of labours. (I.iv.4-7)

Service, love, and labor -- these will be the proof of his observance of his bond. He characterizes himself accurately when he says, "the best of me is diligence" (I.iv.38). He is sure to have meant -- at least Shakespeare is sure to have intended -- in addition to the usual meaning of "steadfast earnestness," the more fundamental meaning of the root-word "diligere", to esteem, to love. Kent has already shown under trying circumstances a steadfast and unwavering love. His service continues to be such.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

119

Sent to Regan's palace with the news of the King's approach, Kent encounters Oswald whom he berates. When judgment is passed against him, he pleads immunity for the sake of the King whose service he is in, but Cornwall and Regan defy the King's name and condemn Kent to the stocks.

When Lear is locked out of doors in the approaching storm, Kent braves the thunder and lightning to find the King. He encounters a Knight whom he dispatches to Dover to acquaint Cordelia with her father's distress. Finding Lear buffeted by the storm, he persuades him to take shelter in the hovel while he again asks Cornwall and Regan, who have already denied it once, shelter from the storm for their father and King. Kent remains with the King during his mental waverings and finally prevails upon him to seek shelter. Kent's patience and understanding soothe the frenzied King enough that they can lead him to the farmhouse where the warmth soon induces sleep. Warned by Gloucester of the plot to kill the King, Kent, aided by the Fool, places him in a litter and accompanies him to Dover where he leaves him in the care of the Knight who had brought Cordelia the message of the King's grief. Kent, still disguised, makes himself

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

120

known to Cordelia. His short rehearsal of their difficulties prompts her to gratitude. But Kent dismisses the thought: "To be acknowledg'd, Madam, is o'er-paid." He is Cordelia's support when Lear is brought to her. When the King has regained his mental faculties after sleep, Kent leaves him to be about the business of war for the King's forces. He predicts that the day's battle will bring all to an end. Just as it is Edgar's duty to tell of Gloucester's sorrowful journey to Dover, so is also his duty to report what he had heard Kent tell of Lear's experiences and grief. Kent did for the King, Edgar recounts, "service improper for a slave." With the telling of the woes, Edgar recalls, Kent grew sad and his heart seemed almost breaking. Indeed, when he appears again just before Lear carries in Cordelia's body, he is a feeble, old man who makes this last effort to find the King to bid him farewell. Barely recognized, Kent, for all his love and service, suffers to be put off with a formal, meaningless phrase, "You are welcome hither." Seeing Lear die, Kent is content to set out on his last journey alone. It too is one of service: "My master calls me, I must not say no" (V.iii.322). Kent's life has been one of effective love -- "a love of the will

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

121

manifesting itself in allegiance, loyalty, obedience, service, irrespective of circumstances and feelings." ²⁵

Gloucester, as he appears in the first dialogue, is a man of the world hardened by circumstances and grown somewhat callous to finer sensitivities. He can now speak without blushing of his passionate love and refer to his natural son with but slight embarrassment. Yet his indelicacies of speech are not, as Speaight holds, "a flaunting of love" so much as they are a mask; he has maintained Edmund "away" for nine years and plans to send him away again.²⁶ He professes to love his sons and is unwilling to believe that they would turn against him. Yet he is too easily convinced by what is presented to him as Edgar's treachery, and he is too peremptory in his decision to punish Edgar without hearing him. Too credulous to be a reliable judge of men, he reacts against the King's abdication according to the usual traditional beliefs:

25 The definition is from Bede Frost, The Love of God, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1938, p. 189.

26 Robert Speaight, Nature in Shakespearian Tragedy, London, Hollis and Carter, 1955, p. 95.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

122

Kent banish'd thus! And France in choler parted!
And the King gone to-night! prescribed his power!
Confin'd to exhibition! All this done
Upon the gad! (I.ii.23-6)

The Earl receives the Duke of Cornwall and his Duchess with hospitality and willing acquiescence to their request for counsel. When Oswald rouses the household to take his side against Kent, Gloucester, in opposition to his royal guests, pleads for toleration and recognition of the dignity of the King's emissary:

Let me beseech your Grace not to do so /put Kent in
stocks/
His fault is much, and the good King his master
Will check him for 't: your purpos'd low correction
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses
Are punish'd with: the King must take it ill,
That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,
Should have him thus restrained. (II.ii.147-54)

Ordered to leave Kent alone in the stocks, Gloucester momentarily remains behind to offer him sympathy. When Lear arrives, the Earl still tries to allay the King's anger over Kent's disgrace and over what he knows to be an affront to himself in the refusal of Cornwall and Regan to present themselves. His rather platitudinous remark, "I would have all well betwixt you," is well-intentioned if inept. When the King withdraws in great fury, Gloucester, fulfilling the offices

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

123

of host accompanies him to the entrance, and returning to Cornwall and the King's daughters, reports the approaching storm. With reluctance, he locks Lear out. Throwing the bolt of the door seems to herald a new spirit in the old Earl. Up until now he has been little more than a worldly old man somewhat embarrassed by his own misdeeds. Brought into sympathy with the King by realizing the calculated cruelty his daughters exercise toward him in forcing him to battle the storm, Gloucester learns the value of love and sympathy. Hurt and shamed by the "knowledge" that Edgar has sought his life, he sympathizes with the King's suffering from a similar cause and has a greater understanding of all human suffering. Reporting to Edmund that he has been forced to bar the doors against the King, he confides:

I will seek him and privily relieve him; go
you and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity
be not of him perceived. If he ask for me, I am
ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, as no less is
threatened me, the King, my old master, must be
reliev'd. (III.iv.16-21)

True love must always be manifest in the deeds it prompts. Gloucester resolves even in the face of danger to be of service. Searching for Lear, he exposes himself to the storm and finding him in a hovel, he conducts the King to a farm-

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

124

house where fire and food offer some bit of comfort. Back in his castle, he learns of threat to Lear's life, and he hastily prepares a litter for Lear, and returning through the storm warns Kent of the danger and urges him to hasten to take the King to safety. The reward for his charity toward Lear is humiliation and insult at the hands of Regan and Cornwall, and as if that were not enough, the gouging of his eyes. As a final thrust, they tell him of Edmund's treachery. In his grief and pain, Gloucester is able to pray for forgiveness and for the welfare of the son whom he has abused. Led to the heath by an Old Tenant, Gloucester, while unable to forget his own grievous loss, still can think on the injuries he has inflicted upon his own son. Like Lear, he has not before known suffering and now that he is suffering, he looks back on his former insensibilities and he reasons that his own easy and comfortable life has been the cause of his previous unconcern with misery. Now in suffering, he remembers Edgar:

Oh! dear son Edgar
The food of thy abused father's wrath
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again. (IV.i.23-6)

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

125

Without his knowing it, he receives an immediate answer to his prayer. He meets Poor Tom on the heath and the memory of the naked beggar comes to his mind. In his charity, he asks the Old Tenant, for the sake of "ancient love", to bring clothing for Poor Tom whom he will ask to direct him to Dover. The happenings on the Cliff that G. Wilson Knight ²⁷ calls grotesque we have already seen, but it remains to be said that before Gloucester makes his "plunge", he prays and in what he would have to be the last words he would ever utter, he asks for blessings upon his wronged son: "If, Edgar lives, O, bless him!" (IV.vi.40) It is noteworthy that Gloucester does not blame or curse his treacherous son, as he does not bewail his own affliction. Meeting poor frenzied Lear, Gloucester, with a rush of sympathy, reaches out to kiss his hand in an act of identification in human misery. Winifred M. T. Nowottny writes understandingly of this scene: ". . . there is no greater moment in the play than this. Here Lear is seen with that profound humanism which recognizes man as being at once wondrous and frail: supreme object of love and reverence to whom one says, "O, let me kiss that hand!" ²⁸

27 The Wheel of Fire, London, Methuen, 1960, p. 172.

28 "Lear's Questions", Shakespeare Survey, X (1957) p. 95.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

126

Lear senses the meaning of the gesture and associating the blindness and the love pronounces against the ancient god of love in one of his outrageous irrelevancies: "No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not love." (IV.vi.39). Gloucester, having come through "menaces and maledictions," at last learns to endure.

Two other incidents related to Gloucester's welfare exemplify in a brief moment a wonderful fulness of love. Both concern nameless men who belong to the lower class in the social scale. When the cruel Cornwall and Regan are engaged in blinding Gloucester, a servant intervenes. He speaks to Cornwall: "Hold your hand, my Lord,/ I have served you ever since I was a child,/ But better service I have never done you/ Than now to bid you hold" (III.vii.72-5). Regan, in scorn that a peasant should so assert himself as to interfere with any action of a nobleman, slays him and returns to her other horrid task. Striking from behind was opposed to the code that protected nobles, not servants. A second servant and a third come to Gloucester's aid when he is thrust out the gates of his own home. One follows him and the other goes to bring back healing remedies for the poor blinded man. Their charity is, as they must know, a peril, to their very

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

127

lives; they had seen their fellow-servant slain. Yet their charity knows no hindrance. When we next see Gloucester, he is being led by an old man, a tenant to the family for generations. His charity prompts him to do what is in his power to help the Earl. Gloucester is aware of the evil that may befall the man if his charity is discovered. He would prevent further misfortune and so dismisses him: "Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone: Thy comforts can do me no good at all: Thee they may hurt" (IV.i.15-7). But refusing help for himself, he requests it for Poor Tom. It is for the poor Bedlam beggar that he asks clothing. Once, for an instant Gloucester lapses into a tone of command; but remembers his own plight and changes his approach:

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above all the rest, be gone. (IV.i.49-50)

The last petition is not prompted by annoyance or any other irregular passion but by a real concern for the safety of his benefactor. The Old Tenant cannot be outdone. "I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,/ Come on 't what will," he promises. (IV.i.51-52). Knowing the danger to himself and to his fortunes, he, like Gloucester, risks all for love's sake.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

128

The Fool's role is perhaps an important one, though beginning late in Act I and ending toward the middle of the play. In that short space, nevertheless, Shakespeare has allowed him to make a remarkably astute commentary on Lear's actions. The very first time the Fool is mentioned, he is shown to have loved the banished Cordelia: "Since my young Lady's going into France, Sir," a Knight tells Lear, "the Fool hath much pined away" (I.iv.79-80). Summoned by the King, the Fool with a surprising audacity speaks of Lear's foolishness. He alternates pertinent songs and riddles to help the King see himself in true perspective. The Fool never speaks of love -- never performs any charitable function except his daily buffoonery and his tireless tagging along after Lear. He leaves the play when Kent and Gloucester ask his help in bearing the sleeping King to safety. D. G. James says of him, "the Fool is at the center of the play's imagination: His virtue is pitiable in its helplessness; he, like others, is an image of helpless and suffering love."²⁹

²⁹ The Dream of Learning, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951, p. 116.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

129

Goneril and Regan talk of filial love, but they use words rather to disguise their thoughts than to reveal them. Speaight calls their profession of love "a mask for hatred".

30 Both the daughters make disgraceful advances to Edmund who leads them on by fair promises. They think of their passion as love, but their emotion is divisive, harmful, and violent. Both die violent deaths because of the envy one bore the other as in the case of Regan (poisoned by her sister) or because of the disgrace of being found out by her husband, as is the case of Goneril (suicide).

Edmund presents a particular case. Motivated through out by self-love and self-aggrandizement, he moves from one unnatural atrocity to another; then, having received a mortal wound, he speaks of forgiveness:

But what art thou
That hast this fortune on me?
If thou 'rt noble
I do forgive thee. (V.iii.166-8)

He says further that he is moved by his brother's answer and his father's piteous story. We find the incident almost unbelievable. Hamlet and Laertes may exchange forgiveness,

30. Op. cit., p. 95.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

130

but they were not, as Edmund is, an inveterate villain. One can scarcely forget that he is akin to the Vice of the morality plays; they were not forgiven even if they were laughed at. Edmund takes comfort in seeing the bodies of Goneril and Regan. To him their tragic deaths mean only: "Yet Edmund was belov'd." However mistaken he was in confusing love with a base passion, he is prompted to do some good despite his nature, but the very failure of the effort to save Cordelia is a commentary on his whole life.

Of these three, Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, we can agree with R. F. Hill, when he says of them: ". . . /Each shows an unusually great self-control itself related to a coldness of nature which may interest itself in lust but knows nothing of the generosities of love." ³¹

Lear's maturation and ripening into love is a basic concern of the plot. From self-centered demands for flattery Lear comes to see the needs of others and their miseries.

³¹ "Dramatic Techniques and Interpretation in Richard II, in Early Shakespeare: Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 3, Edward Arnold, Publishers, Ltd., 1961, p. 114.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

131

When he begins to see himself as sharing the plight of mankind, when he begins to realize that suffering is the common lot, then he can regret that he has taken too little care of this, that he has but one part in his heart that can sorrow for and with miserable man. In his frenzied state, he can insist on sharing with Poor Tom the comforts of the house Gloucester has provided. Rescued from threatened murder and safe in Dover, Lear regains his faculties at times but refuses to go to visit Cordelia. Kent explains his isolation:

A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness
That stipp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her
To foreign casualties, gave her rights
To his dog-hearted daughters, these things sting
His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia. (IV.iii.43-8)

He is prevented from going to Cordelia by his shame in remembering his rejection of her. He cannot forget that he has broken the bonds of nature by renouncing his paternal care for her and making her as a stranger to his love. His very compunction keeps him from the remedy Cordelia could apply: that kindness, that natural love which binds child to parent, parent to child, in the great ever-widening circle of human society. He has yet to learn what Edgar discovered in seeing the old King suffering of the heath:

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

132

Who alone suffers, suffers most i' th' mind,
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind;
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
 (III.vi.111-114)

The elemental bond of humanity, freely shared in, makes hard things easy. But the obverse brings isolation and self-centeredness.

It is Cordelia in the end who goes out to her father. Having found him and ministered to him, she watches while his senses come uncertainly and slowly back and make contact with reality. His first lucid thoughts are of his transgressions: "Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish" (IV.vii.84). "The real redemption of Lear comes," says Oscar J. Campbell who looks upon the play as a study in salvation, "when he awakens from the delusion of his frenzied mind to discover Cordelia and her unselfish enduring love."

³² If we substitute "recovery" for "redemption", the statement is no less true. The restoration of this natural, human bond is fittingly marked by music, fresh garments, and the beloved daughter's kiss upon his lips. There is talk of homeland, of forgiveness, and of love. The promise of peace

³² "The Salvation of Lear", English Literary History XV (1948) p. 106.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

133

and love in the close bonds of the family, held out by the recovery of Lear's faculties, and by his presence in Cordelia's camp, is shattered by the defeat of the French forces and by the capture of both Lear and Cordelia. When Cordelia can only lament the latest misfortune of the King, Lear, inured to adversity, can look upon the days to come as a time of happiness in the presence of his daughter. He can dream dreams and ponder the mystery of things, but Cordelia has more than her own happiness to think of. She has her father's also: "For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down,/Myself could else out-frown false Fortune's frown " (V.iii.5-6). They are led away to prison.

While the threads of the stories are being untangled, the stage fills up with those whose fortunes we have followed. Kent comes in to say farewell to the King; the bodies of Goneril and Regan are carried in; Albany comes as the representative of the victorious forces; Edgar makes his way in after the fatal encounter with Edmund -- all are there. Then Lear comes in with Cordelia dead in his arms.³³ Lamenting

³³ Granville-Barker is eloquent on this last scene. His treatment of King Lear is in volume I of Prefaces To Shakespeare, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1953.

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

134

now, not in the terms of cosmic turbulence, but in the calmer notes of everyday natural life that concentrate his grief with almost unbearable force, Lear tries to revive Cordelia, tries to make himself believe that she is alive. He begs, "Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little." Then he fancies he hears her voice. He strains to listen: "What is 't thou say'st?" Now, not even, "I am" escapes her lips. Nothing will ever again comfort him for his old heart has broken. Nature has taken its toll.

In the design of things, love is a natural reaching out to others. Innate and spontaneous, love propels us toward our good, toward happiness and fulfillment. But love can be shunted aside for more immediate, personal gain or what we take to be gain, and it can be denied. We have seen the ripening of love; for contrast, we need think only of the hatred of Goneril and Regan, of the loneliness and frustration of Lear without a Cordelia. In very fact, as Wilson points out, "The denial of love is unhuman and tragic, of universal concern, recognizable in its essential elements in every time and every place where men and women, parents and children are to be found. It is an offence against nature,

NATURE AND LOVE IN KING LEAR

135

a sin against God and man, It is one of the greatest of tragic themes and Shakespeare has fixed it here with unerring simplicity of genius." ³⁴ Love and nature are intertwined. The human craving for love can not be satisfied with any thing else than love. In this play, Lear, Gloucester, Cordelia, Kent, Edgar -- all except Goneril and Regan, and perhaps, Edmund -- all learn to love. They approach love slowly and with difficulty, but in the end they realize the value of selfless love, of giving without counting or weighing. There are no measures for love.

34 Harold S. Wilson, On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1957, p.196.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

In King Lear, Shakespeare seems to have opened out the universe at Lear's challenge: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" (III.ii.1). The sky in its frightening show of grandeur seems to answer to his summons as he stands defiant on the heath "And thou, all-shaking thunder, Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!" (III. v.6-7). The very elements that compose matter, Lear would have to dissolve so that he can determine the nature of man. He must probe the depths of his own nature so that he may sound the beings of others and arrive at some wisdom. His cosmic imprecations lend the sense of magnitude, a vastness to match his longings. His aspirations will find satiety in "the mystery of things". Yet with it all, his interests are tied to nature and his scope is man's world.

The vastness of scale of Antony and Cleopatra is somehow different from that of King Lear. The universe of the lovers is the whole world of politics, of government and ordered society. Yet it does not ignore the great stretches of the earth and sea, or the expanses of the sky. They are the proper arena of man's activity. The whole world of

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

political order is centered in Imperial Rome, the uncontested conquerer and ruler of nations. The triumvirate of Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus keeps the unity of the empire but divides its jurisdiction. To Antony, the eastern provinces with opulent Egypt are assigned; to Octavius the Western reaches, and to Lepidus Italy. In matter of fact, however, Lepidus is scarcely more than a puppet to be used as long as needed. As a result, power is in the hands of two men.

"Empire imagery" as G. W. Knights¹ so amply illustrates, serves an important function: it makes comprehensible the wealth and material grandeur which Antony commands, the magnificence of the love for which he barter it. Thus are introduced the themes of politics and love, poised in a world of time that reaches toward eternity - that would eternalize the moment in a way that Troilus would have opted if he but knew how.

The play opens according to the characteristic Shakespearean pattern, by presenting the situation from which the subsequent action develops. Antony's soldiers discuss the

¹ The Imperial Theme, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961, p. 205.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

polarity that racks the General. Love of discipline, order, precision, represented by Rome, and things military stand in opposition to passion, emotion, negligence, and ease, typified in Egypt. The two contraries meet in Antony's conscience but cannot fuse. For a time he can balance them, but he must in the end decide between them. It is the overbalance in favor of Egypt that Philo fears. He voices his concern when he says:

"Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
The office and devotion of their view.
Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gypsy's lust. (I.i.1-10)

The contrasting themes of empire and love, of Rome and Egypt, are set out boldly in the imagery.² Philo, a soldier, tips the balance in favor of Rome. He speaks of "our" general, not simply the general, the leader of the army; Antony has been admired and followed, has made himself worthy of a soldier's encomiums. He has reviewed the "files and musters"

2 For the discussion which follows I am heavily indebted to Rev. L. A. Cormican, O. M. I. for a course, Imagery in Shakespeare, which he gave at University of Ottawa, during the summer of 1961.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

of the war and the disciplined ranks of men have made him glow in masterly control. So valiant in war and devoted to his men that his heart "burst the buckles on his breast", he became for them the epitome of generalship. Now "dotage", not the feeble-mindedness of old age, but excessive fondness and undisciplined love, "o'erflows" the measure. Like the Nile, this passion goes beyond the ordinary limits. The eyes, formerly dedicated to the duties of military inspection, "now bend, now turn" to view the dark-skinned face of the "gipsy". "His captain's heart reneges all temper". "Captain" makes reference to his headship of the army and to his reasoned behavior as leader. The "heart," the seat of courage and the faculty of giving love to and inspiring the love of his soldiers, now reneges all temper. "Reneges" in its related forms of "renegade" - one who abandons or betrays what he should respect - has military or nationalistic implications. "All temper" emphasizes the blending of the total qualities proper to a general. "Temper" and "measure", ideals dear to the Renaissance mind, were terms to indicate proper proportion and balance. A further degradation to which the captain's heart sinks is that it becomes the "bellows" to heat, the "fan" to cool sensual appetite.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Philo's commentary continues. Antony, the triple pillar of the world, is "transformed" into a strumpet's fool". The word "triple" - 3-fold - implies strength, and Philo intends it to mean both power and prestige. "Pillar" indicates firmness and stability. "Strumpet" is a bitter and contemptuous comment on one whom he has formerly called "gipsy"; and "fool" echoes to the notion of "dotage" in the first line.

Philo's emotional tone leaves no doubt about what his reactions are, and because he is an objective observer (he disappears at the end of the first scene), he voices what the expected response of the audience is to be. He ends by inviting us to see for ourselves the mighty ones of Egypt at their "play".

It takes but a moment to see that Philo's evaluation has been nearly correct. Antony speaking of love to the Queen finds no words to express the passionate love that he claims to feel. His illusion of love makes it seem measureless - to transcend all limits. He is brought to an awareness of the immediate circumstances by the arrival of a Roman messenger whom he refuses to hear, although coaxed by Cleopatra.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony answers her cajolery by a denunciation of established order and government:

"Let Rome in Tiber melt; and the wide arch
Of ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay" (I.i.33-5).

Rome and its vast realms of law and control of civilization and culture held together under the imperium as if spanned by an arch -- all these are as clay to Antony when he is with Cleopatra. To him, in the toils of Egypt, nothing is important but the present instant in her presence. As he dismisses unheard the messenger from Caesar, Philo and his companion make a final estimate: "Is Caesar with Antonius prized so slight?" Demetrius asks. Philo answers, "Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony; he comes too short of that great property; which still should go with Antony" (I.i.57-9). Philo indicates the rent in the personality of Antony. Two phases are distinct: the Antony who is, and the Antony who was.

The Antony "who was" is the triumvir, the victorious general, never quite at ease in the presence of the Antony "who is." When he can forget, he does. But the tension draws tight and at times, he is struck by a Roman thought. It will be our effort to view the opposition between the Rome

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

of duty represented by Caesar, Fulvia, and later by Octavia, and the Egypt of Cleopatra, and ease and sensuality. To the Antony "who was," the man of government, and political realities and wide-ranging empire, we will turn our attention first.

Characteristic of this play are "images of the world, the firmament, the ocean and vastness generally", as Caroline Spurgeon tells us.³ Equally prominent, however, are earthy figures of farming, animals and food. The setting of the scenes themselves moves from Alexandria, to Rome and back in the First Act. The Second Act begins in Messina and moves to Rome, and then to Alexandria, to Misenum, and aboard Pompey's galley off Misenum. The locality of the third act fluctuates throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa: Syria, Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Actium, Egypt. The Fourth Act centers around Alexandria, yet the scenes change rapidly from one camp to another and from palace to monument. By the Fifth Act the plane of activity, with one brief stop in Caesar's camp, is confined to

3. Shakespeare's Imagery, Boston, Beacon Hill Press, (Beacon Paperback) 1958, p. 350.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

the monument in which Cleopatra seeks refuge.⁴ This shrinking of domain is symbolic of the waning of Antony's power and influence.

Before the diminution, however, the empire is made to seem formidable. G. Wilson Knight elaborates on the expansiveness of the imperial power.⁵ He notes that geographical and historical reference adds dimensions to the setting. A messenger reports to Antony:

Labienus --
This is stiff news -- both his Parthian force
Extended Asia: from Euphrates
His conquering banner shook, from Syria
To Lydia and to Ionia. (I.ii.96-100)⁶

4 Thomas B. Stroup, "The Structure of Antony and Cleopatra" in Shakespeare 400, Essays by American Scholars on the Anniversary of the Poet's Birth, edited by James G. McManaway, N. Y., Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p. 297. Stroup believes that the form of Antony and Cleopatra descended from the tragical-historical "kind" and so require a vast scene.

5 The Imperial Theme, London, Methuen and Co., 1951, p. 206.

6 I have adopted the punctuation of the Arden edition as being more logical than Craig's, which is the same as the New Cambridge. The Arden note quotes North's translation of Plutarch: "Labienus conquered all Asia with the armie of the Pathians, from the river of Euphrates, and from Syria into the countries of Lydia and Ionia" p. 264, post.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The messenger, by insinuation, charges Antony with neglect of duty in absenting himself when he should be controlling his domain and restricting the military actions of both his wife and his brother. Antony calmly receives what he knows to be common criticism, and comments in an image that counterbalances the cosmic ones: "O, then we bring forth weeds,/ When on quick minds lie still" (I.ii.13-14). He assumes his Roman character and resolves:

"These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,
Or lose myself in dotage" (I.ii.120-1).

Against Labienus, Antony sends Ventidius to recover his lost realms (III.i.).

When the break with Caesar is imminent, Antony provides kingdoms for Cleopatra and Caesarion and for his own sons:

"Unto her
He gave the establishment of Egypt; made her
Of lower Syria, Cyprus, Lydia,
Absolute queen . . .
His sons he there proclaim'd the kings of kings
Great Media, Parthia, Armenia,
He gave to Alexander; to Ptolemy he assign'd
Syria, Cilicia, and Phoenicia" (III.vi.8-16).

Shortly, the catalog of his empire indicates his strength in the approaching conflict with Caesar. Caesar reports to Octavia:

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

He hath given his empire
 Up to a whore; who are now levying
 The kings of the earth for war: He hath assembled
 Bocchus, the king of Libya; Archelaus,
 Of Cappodocia; Philadelphos, king
 Of Pamphlagonia; the Thracian king, Adallas;
 King Malchus of Arabia; King of Pont;
 Herod of Jewry; Mithridates, king
 Of Comagene; Polemon and Amyntas,
 The kings of Mede and Lycaonia
 With more larger lists of sceptres.
 (III.vi.66-75)

Such an array gives the impression of formidable strength and world-wide involvement. Charney thinks that Shakespeare, "appears to be trying to extend them his imaginative resources⁷ past the size of dreaming".⁷

The frequent references to the sea also contribute significantly toward rendering the scope of action all encompassing. The conquest of the world can not be accomplished by land battles only, for "Pompey is strong at sea" (I.iv.36). A messenger announces that Pompey's strength grows by the addition of defectors from Caesar's forces. Caesar combines images from the sea and from desertion and makes an engaging reply:

⁷ Maurice Charney, Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery In Drama, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 356.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

It hath been taught us from the primal state
That he which is was wish'd until he were;
And the ebb'd man, ne'er lov'd till ne'er worth love,
Comes dear'd by being lack'd. This common body
Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream,
Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide,
To rot itself with motion (I.iv.41-47).

The time sequences as in the second line we will treat later.

For now, we will say merely that the idea stated there is repeated in the following two lines. One is not loved nor desired until he is no longer present or deserving; his true worth is not known until it is missed. The deserters are then compared to a reed that, like a slave at his master's heels, follows the tide, to and fro, and rots away in the motion.

When Antony imprudently entrusts his warriors, excellent in land-battles, to unaccustomed sea-fights, he meets with defeat and disgrace. Canidius, one of the leaders, deserts. He rationalizes his action:

Our fortune on the sea is out of breath,
And sinks most lamentably. Had our general
Been what he knew himself, it had gone well:
O, he has given example for our flight,
Most grossly, by his own! (III.x.26-30)

Antony's fortunes are foundering, and in his flight from battle he has demoralized his forces.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Sadly, Enobarbus comes to the same conclusion.

Antony's cause is shipwrecked, and even the valiant may leave a sinking ship. He mutters to himself:

Sir, sir, thou art so leaky,
That we must leave thee to thy sinking, for
Thy dearest quit thee. (III.xiii.63-5)

The affairs of Antony have been misdirected although he had been given expert advice, and they cannot stay afloat.

Sea imagery is used in numerous other connections also. Cleopatra's frivolous attendants reading palms to predict the future, use the Nile ironically in an antithetical expression to denote something as sure:

"E'en as the o'erflowing Nilus presageth famine"
(I.ii.52).

Cleopatra's sighs and tears cannot be called winds and waters, Enobarbus jokes, because they are greater than storms and tempests (I.ii.153ff.). Antony most often refers to dangers connected with water for his images. He cautions the staggering Lepidus:

"These quicksands, Lepidus,
Keep off them, for you sink" (II.vii.65).

Antony sees Octavia's hesitancy as a floating swan's down-feather buoyed up by the wave (III.ii.56). It is quite

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

appropriate that Antony himself and his government should be likened to a sea voyage. Agrippa says of him: "A rarer spirit never Did steer humanity" (V.i.32-3).

The sea has, as we have noticed, an important part in the play. The great Mediterranean lies between the two main scenes of action and becomes the "field" of battle. It is crossed by both Antony and Caesar, and it is brought frequently to the mind by allusions and references, by metaphors of the sea and of navigation. It forms indeed a unit with the land in expressing the expansiveness of the world which Antony first "quartered" and then wagered and lost.

Yet the third great realm of the universe remains to be associated with play to complete the intricate pattern of magnificence. Like earth and sea, the sky, too, has prominence. Antony, again, is the one who names it most frequently. His apostrophes to the sun, moon, and stars indicate his consciousness of them and his relationship with them when his earthly domains is threatened.⁸ "Moon and stars", he ejaculates when outraged that Cleopatra would accept the courteous

⁸ Wolfgang Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1951) comments on this relationship. P. 163.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

kiss of Caesar's envoy. When he suspects that she has betrayed him, he exclaims: "O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more: / Fortune and Antony part here" (IV.x.18-9). Cleopatra makes apostrophe to the sun when the dying Antony is carried to her: "O sun, / Burn the great sphere thou movest in! darkening stand / The varying shore o' the world. O Antony, / Antony, Antony! (IV.xv.9-12) Her cosmic imagery calls for total destruction, much as did Macbeth's prayer⁹ and Lear's curse.¹⁰ In intense moments, he swears by "the fire / That quickens Nilus' slime" (I.iii.68-9). The sky in its calmer phases becomes a metaphor to present both Antony and Cleopatra. Lepidus thinks Antony's faults are but as "the spots of heaven, / More fiery by night's blackness" (I.iv.12-3). Cleopatra thinks him the sun that blesses by its shining: "He was not sad, for he would shine on those / That make their looks by his; he was not merry, / Which seem'd to tell them

9 "I conjure you... though the treasure of nature's germens tumble all together, / Even till destruction sicken; answer me." (IV.i.50, 59-60)

10 "Thou, all-shaking thunder, / Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world! / Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once, / That make ingrateful man!" (III.ii.6-9).

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

his remembrance lay / In Egypt with his joy; but between both: O heavenly mingle!" (II.v.55-9). Enobarbus sarcastically notes Antony's rebound after defeat. He comments: "Now he'll outstare the lightning" (III.xiii.195).

The vastness of the range is important as a fitting scene for the struggle for power between the two triumvirs; Lepidus need not be counted as we have already noted, because he is only a buffer dispensed with permanently after conflict begins. Harold Wilson says that the "magnitude of the stake for which Antony and Caesar struggle gives / grandeur and dignity to their conflict".¹¹ We are not allowed to forget that the stake is the world. Menas proposes to Pompey, aboard whose galley the triumvirs are celebrating the agreement reached with him, that he can become, if he but wishes, the "earthly Jove /and/ Whate'er the ocean pales, or sky inclips, / [his]" (II.vi.73-5). From this same celebration, Lepidus is carried out. Enobarbus comments: "A' bears the third part of the world, man; see'st not," And Menas in the

¹¹ On The Design of Shakespearian Tragedy, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 181.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

same vein answers "The third part, then, is drunk" (II.vii. 97-98). When strife begins between Antony and Caesar, Octavia asks to become the "reconciler". She estimates the destruction that would result should such a struggle grow:

"Wars 'twixt you would be / As if the world should cleave,
and that slain men / Should solder up the rift" (III.iv.30-32). Octavia foresees dread consequences. Hearing immediately afterward of Caesar's renewed wars with Pompey and of his casting off of Lepidus, Enobarbus in his customary sardonic tone, comments:

Then, world, thou hast a pair of chaps, no more;
And throw between them all the food thou hast,
They'll grind the one the other! (III.v.14-16)

Having engaged in naval battle, despite the advice of experienced soldiers, Antony suffers defeat at Actium. He blames Cleopatra for his disaster:

"Now I must
To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
And palter in the shifts of lowness; who
With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleased,
Making and marring fortunes." (III.xl.61-65)

Antony is disgraced in his own mind and putting off the blame for defeat, he hopes to find relief. Cleopatra for the moment does not reject it, but she goes to Enobarbus to clear

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

her own mind: "Is Antony or we in fault for this?" she asks (III.xiii.3). Enobarbus answers, as one who knows:

Antony only, that would make his will
Lord of his reason. What though you fled
From that great face of war, whose several ranges
Frighted each other, Why should he follow?
The itch of his affection should not then
Have nick'd his captainship; at such a point,
When half to half the world opposed, the being
The meered question: 'twas a shame no lest
Than was his loss, to course your flying flags,
And leave his navy gazing. (III.xiii.3-12)

Enobarbus used the same image for warfare that Antony has used before - playing. Enobarbus is more specific, however, than Antony. His terms "nicked", according to Craig's note, means "dicing", and Enobarbus means that Antony gambled and lost, to his own disgrace. Antony still tries to keep up his pretences. He can use exalted phrases only to see beneath them his own wretchedness: "I, that with my sword/ Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back / With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack / The courage of woman" (IV. xiv.57-60). This is the world which Antony lost. Miss Surgeon summarizes the effect of the repetitious references to it:

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

"This vastness of scale is kept constantly before us . . . and fills the imagination with the conception of being so great that physical size is annihilated and the whole habitable globe shrinks in comparison with them." ¹²

Miss Ellis-Fermor assigns a dramatic function to the perspective. It is "to evoke, by this secret impression, [she says] the sense at once of vastness, of coherence and of significance." ¹³ She sees a reciprocity: the universe is "intent on the action of the foreground figures", and in their turn the figures exercise their power even to the "border of invisibility."

It is in this universe that the duality of Antony's nature occasionally racks himself. Called by duty, he gives way to pleasure. But his neglect is not without remorse. He knows that disaster will result if he shirks responsibility, and when he forgets duty, some catastrophe occurs to remind him. His shifting disposition reveals his uneasiness. His ejaculation after Enobarbus' desertion "O, my fortunes have corrupted honest men!" shows his awareness of his responsibility. William J. Grace writes of this predicament in which

12 Op. cit., p. 352.

13 "The Nature of Plot," p. 72.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony finds himself: "Tension exists between the passionate private world and the public legal order, war, and politics.

Antony himself has an ambivalent attitude and at times shares the point of view that the official world holds of him. Shakespeare emphasizes the tension arising from the two levels of conduct."¹⁴ Unrest is his present status.

However, until his sojourn in Egypt, Antony had been a man of discipline and strenuous activity under harsh military codes. Even now the political reality of Roman government makes claims upon him. Caesar, desirous of his administrative energy and his military prowess for the maintaining and operating the Roman Imperium, addresses him in an apostrophe that recalls his accustomed behavior and his remarkable reputation:

Leave thy lascivious Antony wassails. When thou once
Wast beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
Did famine follow; whom thou fought'st against,
Though daintily brought up, with patience more
Than savages could suffer: thou didst drink
The stall of horses, and the gilded puddle
Which beasts would cough at: Thy palate then did deign
The roughest berry on the rudest hedge;
Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets,
The barks of trees thou browsed'st; on the Alps
It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
Which some did die to look on: and all this --

¹⁴ Approaching Shakespeare, N.Y., Basic Books, 1964, p. 115.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

It wounds thine honor that I speak it now --
Was borne so like a soldier, that thy cheek
So much as I lack'd not. (I.iv.55-71)

The pity of it all is evident to Caesar and to his auditor Lepidus. Antony was able to lead his men through direst circumstances; his ingenuity and hardihood in outlasting the famine distinguished him as a leader of men. The picturesque touch that the simile of stag adds reveals something of Caesar's admiration for Antony and his tenderness toward him. It is with regret that he must note that the times of such heroism in Antony are past and he invokes their return.

Antony, faced with the necessities of governing, fluctuates. At times, he makes an effort to return to duty. On such occasions, Cleopatra notes his resolution. She reports one occasion:

He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden
A Roman thought hath struck him (I.i.86-7).

A "Roman thought" is Cleopatra's expression for the remembrance of duty and need, of another way of life than his present one. Rome is for the embodiment of law and order, discipline and dominion. To a Roman soldier it was the object of allegiance. The Arden editor explains that the expression means "perhaps a thought such as a Roman virtue

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

would inspire, and not merely, as Schmitt explains it, "A thought of Rome". News comes from Rome and we watch Antony's reception of it. This time the reaction is different from the one we have already noticed. Instead of saying, as formerly, "Grates me" -- information from Rome is annoying; it vexes my spirit -- Antony listens to the news that his wife Fulvia and his brother Lucius are harassing the Empire. He reacts in Roman fashion - stoically - even when the messenger indicts him for neglect. He even completes the unspoken message: "Rail thou in Fulvia's phrase; and taunt my faults / With such full license as both truth and malice / Have power to utter. O, then we bring forth weeds, / When our quick minds lie still; and our ill told us / Is as our earring" (I.ii.111-15). Antony wants a truthful report even of the malicious and lying rumors that have currency in Rome. He glances at the value of such report. As weeds grow in fallow land, so evils grow in inattentive minds. As plowing the field uproots the weeds, so hearing of faults rids us of them. Receptive to the news, and benefiting from the rumors insinuated, Antony decides on a course of action: "These strong Egyptian fetters, I must break, Or lose myself in dotage."

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra's enticements are like manacles of iron from which he must break loose. He repeats the term Philo had previously used in connection with him -- "dotage". "To lose oneself" is to lose one's better or best self -- to sink to unworthy levels. Antony retains his practice of speaking in metaphors when he hears the report of a second messenger. This one tells him that Fulvia is dead. Struck by the news, he makes the resolution to break off "from this enchanting queen." Teased by Cleopatra, he shows some of that spirit that should be in a Roman and remains firm in his resolve to return to Rome, yet with a difference. He says, "Our separation so abides, and flies, / That thou, residing here, go'st yet with me, / And I, hence fleeting, here remains with thee" (I.iii.103-5). The ambivalence here might be confusing were we not accustomed to Donne's love poems or some of Shakespeare's sonnets. For example, Sonnet 109 makes use of this conceit:

O, never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seem'd my flame to qualify.
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

My heart remains with you, the poet says, no matter where I may be. The concluding six lines of the same sonnet also has interesting associations with the idea in Antony and Cleopatra:

Never believe, though in my nature reign'd
All frailties that beseege 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 call,
Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.

The poet begs his loved one not to believe that, although he erred deeply, he would ever desert her, who is to him the abstract of all virtues. She is, indeed, he reiterates, all the world to him; she is the very universe; besides her, there is nothing. Even the reference to the universe is appropriate in this context.

While Antony delays, we get two reactions to his tardiness. Caesar is peevish that Antony has not come. "Let his shames quickly / Drive him to Rome", he prays, for "Pompey / Thrives in our idleness" (I.iv.72-75). In Pompey's camp, the opposite and expected reaction is rejoicing in the delay. "Whiles we are suitors to their throne / the gods", decays the thing we sue for." He then cites the "decays" that profit his cause: Mark Antony / In Egypt sits at dinner and will

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

make / No wars without doors. Caesar gets money where / He loses hearts: Lepidus flatters both, Of both is flatter'd" (II.i.11-15). The situation Pompey pictures is not ideal. Wimsatt, in giving Antony his due, remarks that the "politics from which Antony recedes are not a noble Roman republicanism, the ideals of a Brutus or a Cato, but the treacheries and back-stabbing of a drunken party on a pirate's barge."¹⁵ When Antony first arrives in Rome, he goes to the home of Lepidus where he encounters Caesar. Both are ill at ease, each desirous to be the first to bring complaint. Caesar, in his formal manner welcomes Antony, who replies with equal formality. Caesar bids Antony sit down, but careful to maintain poise and assert equality, Antony remains standing and bids Caesar sit. Both then sit simultaneously and Antony takes control.¹⁶ His manner is surly: "I learn, you take things ill which are not so, / Or being, concern you not" (II.1.29-30). They level recriminations one against the other. Antony sidesteps and diverts the attack against any

¹⁵ W. K. Wimsatt, "Poetry and Morals", Thought XXIII (1948) p. 294.

¹⁶ D. A. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, N.Y. Doubleday & Co., Inc. (Anchor Books) 1956, gives an interesting discussion of this scene. P. 244-5.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

one on whom he can lay the blame: Fulvia, or his brother; neglect not malice, caused delay in answering messages. Finally, because Caesar needs Antony's help, he looks for a way to cement friendship between them: "If I knew / What hoops should hold us stanch, from edge to edge / O' the world I would pursue it" (II.ii.17-18). The hoops he refers to are the bands that hold firm the staves in a barrel. Here the image makes the world the container which would fall apart if not securely supported. The image differs from that of the triple pillar but the idea behind the two images is the same. Now Octavia, the sister of Caesar, is to become the hoop. The marriage is proposed "to hold you in perpetual amity, To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts / With an unslipping knot" (II.ii.27-9). That such an arrangement could hope for success is scarcely tenable. Especially is it doomed in view of the circumstances: "All little jealousies, which now seem great, / And all great fears, which now import their dangers, / Would then be nothing: truths would be tales, / Where now half tales be truths: her love to both / Would, each to other and all loves to both, / Draw after her" (II.ii.34-9). Such is the marriage of convenience. The

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

chief impediment is not mentioned: Cleopatra. Menas and Enobarbus, who have no cause to dissemble, discuss the marriage:

Men. "I think the policy of that purpose made more
in the marriage than the love of the parties.

Eno. I think so too, But you shall find, the band
that seems to tie their friendship together will
be the very strangler of their amity. (II.ii.124-8)

Enobarbus ends the conversation emphatically: "Antony will use his affection where it is: he married but his occasion here" (II.ii.38-9). Political realities demand hypocrisy, on occasion. Caesar fears disaster. Just before Antony departs for Athens with his new wife, Caesar cautions him:

Most noble Antony,
Let not the piece of virtue which is set
Betwixt us as the cement of our love,
To keep it builded, be the ram to batter
The fortress of it; for better might we
Have loved without this means, if on both parts
This be not cherish'd. (III.ii.26-33)

Antony is chafed by the warning and promises to vie with Caesar in cherishing Octavia. Caesar's speech sets her between the two world rulers. So, too, does the messenger to Cleopatra speak of her. At the Queen's insistence, the frightened messenger reports: "I looked her in the face, and saw her led / Between her brother and Mark Antony" (III.iii.12-13). When Octavia speaks of herself she makes reference

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

to her position between them. She says: "A more unhappy lady, / If this division chance, ne'er stood between, / Praying for both parts" (III.iv.12-4). The emphasis put on the position "between" the husband and brother, cited in successive scenes demands that we attach some symbolic significance to the fact. Politically, the position is, as we have seen, strategic, in as much as the wedding itself was for reasons of state, rather than mutual attraction. Psychologically, too, the position was effective. Caesar is cold, scheming, and cruel; Antony is warm, loving, negligent, but we must add, not absolutely so. Antony has a capacity for ambivalence that Caesar spurns. A mean set between these two extremes would necessarily have a temperateness and an impartiality, and must balance coldness and love, briskness and dilatoriness, qualities of Rome and those of Egypt. No wonder is it, that in such a position, Octavia cried, "no midway / 'Twixt these extremes at all" (III.iv.19-20).

During the festivities aboard Pompey's galley, as we have already seen, Lepidus is made the laughing stock of his associates in government and also of the lower military officers. The former bring him to intoxication; the latter mimic

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

his behavior. While this levity occupies both groups, a more obviously sinister threat almost ensnares them all. Menas, captain in Pompey's army, forces himself into the attention of his master and withdraws him from the group. He outlines a plan whereby Pompey could seize control of the government:

"These three world-sharers, these competitors / Are in thy vessel; let me cut the cable; / And, when we are put off, fall to their throats: / All there is thine" (II.vii.76-9).

Pompey prevents the action, but does not condemn it, in itself. Should Menas have executed it without first asking sanction, he would have done "good service"; the complicity of Pompey would make it villany. The ethics or code of "honor" to which Pompey appeals is rather pragmatic than noble. Menas deserts his leader as unworthy.

The drunken revelry continues on board the threatened ship until Caesar by bidding good-night halts "this levity" which almost "antick'd" all.

No intervening action separates this threat of villany and the drunken rollicking of the generals from an act of soldierly expediency. The scene changes and the characters do, but the less than noble action is almost a repetition of

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Menas': Ventidius has successfully waged war against Parthia to recover territory Parthians had taken from Antony's realm. Silius, another Roman officer, proposed that the army continue its march through the adjacent countries to make a still greater conquest for Antony. Ventidius rejects the proposal: "Better to leave undone, than by our deed / Acquire too high a fame when him we serve's away. / Caesar and Antony have ever won / More in their officer than person... Who does i' the wars more than his captain can / Becomes his captain's captain: and ambition, / The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss / Than gain which darkens him" (III.i.14-17:21-4). Such a commentary reflects on the character of the two generals and on Ventidius especially, but the honor of the whole army is indicted. The newly sworn fellowship with Pompey lasts scarcely beyond swearing. Soliciting the help of the subservient Lepidus, Caesar subdues Pompey, and then turns against Lepidus and imprisons him "till death enlarge his confine" (III.v.13). Thus the two powers are brought into competition for world domination.

The effect of presenting degeneracy on three levels in short sequence is compelling. It prepares for a

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

further dispute -- one between Caesar and Antony, and for Antony's withdrawal from Rome's political affairs and his return to Egypt. Perhaps he sees that "The world of the triumvirs, vast as it is and correspondingly opulent, is thoroughly mean and decayed."¹⁷ Yet this condemnation is too thorough-going; Rome still was able to maintain discipline and order. Caesar reports to Octavia that her husband and he have had a dispute over the division of conquered territories and Lepidus' revenues. Moreover, "Cleopatra hath nodded him to her" (III.vi.65-6), but the battle of Actium brings Antony and Cleopatra together in a naval battle. Cleopatra will fight despite Antony's and Enobarbus' objections. Enobarbus, astutely but vainly, argues against her taking part: "Your presence needs puzzle Antony; / Take from his heart, take from his brain, from's time, / What should not then be spared" (III.vii.11-3). The argument recalls Philo's regret that the "captain's heart reneges all temper". Enobarbus' words intend the same: heart, head, time - all are needful for success. The statement is, in fact, a prediction. Enobarbus protests "the absolute soldiership" he has

¹⁷ Traversi thus characterizes the Roman world;
Op. cit. p.242.

POLITICAL REALITIES , TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

on land. Enobarbus is so perplexed that Antony should relinquish reason to a woman's whim -- that he should allow "the itch of his affection" to "nick his captainship" (III.xiii.7-8) -- that he is tempted to cast his lot with Caesar. He resists the temptation until after the disastrous battle concerning which Antony had to admit: "I have lost my way forever" (III.xi.4). Enobarbus then deserting is received in the enemy forces. Antony immediately sends him all his possessions and some valuable gifts besides. By his kindness and bounty, Antony conquered Enobarbus who exclaims: "I am alone the villain of the earth" (IV.vi.30). Then resolving never to fight against Antony, he seeks a place to die. There he laments:

O Antony,
Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
Forgive me in thine own particular...
O Antony! O Antony! (IV.ix.18-20, 23)

The effects of war on men's characters is varied; some it ennobles.

Anthony begins the battle with two serious handicaps: soldiers unused to sea-fighting, and an army unproud to be led by a woman. Their most disturbing fears become reality; Cleopatra with her navy flees from battle and Antony "like a

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

doting mallard...flies after her" (III.x.20). The word "doting" reminds us once again of Philo's censure, and the choice of "mallard" for the image is derogatory. The "mallard" has none of the grandeur or nobility that befits a demi-Atlas. We have already glimpsed Antony's dejection after his military disgrace. He returns to Alexandria. There he makes efforts to restore his dignity: he challenges Caesar to a duel which he refuses, having "many other ways to die" (IV.i.5); he inspirits his soldiers for another combat and, elated by a little success, is badly defeated in the end. Characteristically, he lays the blame for defeat on someone else -- this time on Cleopatra whom he accuses of betrayal. In intense despondency, Antony comes to doubt even his own existence: "Eros, thou yet behold'st me?" (IV.xiv.1). He gazes into the clouds and in a brief moment of self-discovery sees the various shapes his life has taken. Sometimes he was "dragonish"¹⁸ imperial, wrathful; sometimes a "Bear or lion" -- fierce and sly; "a tower'd citadel, a pendant rock" -- staunch and firm, impregnable, "a forked mountain, or blue promontory" -- inaccessible, remote and

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that all the tragedies we have dealt with in this thesis, except Romeo and Juliet made reference to this mythical creature.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

mystics; a "horse" -- a warrior, fleet and sure. "My good knave Eros /he says/ now thy captain is such body; here I an Antony: yet I cannot hold this visible shape" (IV.xix.12-4). The clouds shift and become indistinct "As water is in water" (IV.xiv.11). Antony's career had been Protean, yet his nobility suffered no change. Now, he is as indistinct as water is in water; he is nothing of all that he was before. Nothing remains, he laments, except "ourselves to end ourselves". Even Antony's efforts to end himself are as unavailing as his life has become. Eros, constrained to hold the sword for Antony's death, slays himself in preference to slaying his master. In desperation, Antony falls on his sword and injures himself but he lives long enough to be borne to Cleopatra's monument, where she is in hiding. He reports his encounter with death:

The miserable change now at my end
 Lament nor sorrow at; but please your thoughts
 In feeding them with those my former fortunes
 Wherein I lived, the greatest prince o' the world,
 The noblest; and do now not basely die,
 Nor cowardly put off my helmet to
 My countryman, -- A Roman by a Roman
 Valiantly vanquish'd. Now my spirit is going;
 I can no more. (IV.xv.51-9)

Antony's final speech urges the world to remember he was a Roman, that he died not as cowards die but nobly, that his former fortunes had made him "the greatest prince of the world, / The noblest." Even his rival for world power laments his death: "The breaking of so great a thing should make / A greater crack: the round world / Should have shook lions into civil streets, / And citizens to their dens; the death of Antony / Is not a single doom; in the name lay / A moiety of the world" (V.i.14-19). Cosmic repercussion might be expected at the death of so great a man. Men and animals should change their natures when such calamities befall, Caesar realizes the greatness of his political enemy, realizes too that they "could not stall together / In the whole world" (V.i.39-40). The earth is not big enough to house them amicably. His encomium reaches its heights in the admission of equality, or less, with this rival:

thou my brother, my competitor
In top of all design, my mate in empire,
Friend and companion in the front of war,
The arm of mine own body, and the heart
Where mine his thoughts did kindle, /let me lament/--
that our stars,
Unreconcilable, should divide
Our equalness to this (V.i.40-8).

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The praise of Antony is a sincere and believable estimate of greatness; it leaves no need for Dolabella to keep our feet on the ground. Antony lives in Caesar's speech.

Caesar admits the polarity that prevented unity, but the irreconcilable differences do not hinder his admiration.

Such is the political scene which Shakespeare creates as the milieu for his story of the romantic love of the mature worldly-wise Emperor and Egypt's Queen. Decadence is evident in the very atmosphere. Civil war itself is one of its manifestations and the breeding plot for vice. Ambition, villany, treachery, betrayal, dissension, drunkenness -- all these affect the body politic. It is a world of "imperial pretensions, themselves laden with falsity"¹⁹ but of vast proportions. This world is the inheritance from a former Caesar's quest for world power. The spirit and fact of decadence followed in the wake of the civil revolt which aimed to make that man but a man when he would become a god. Even then, according to Shakespeare's earlier Roman play, Mark Antony had made prophecy: "Caesar's spirit,

19 The phrase is Traversi's. Op. cit. p. 247.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

ranging for revenge, / With Ate by his side come hot from hell, / Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice / Cry 'Havoc', and let slip the dogs of war, that this foul deed shall smell above the earth / With carrion men, groaning for burial" (Julius Caesar III.i.270-5). It may be that Shakespeare's remembrance of this prophecy suggested the writing of Antony and Cleopatra. The seeds of the present conflict sprang up from the soil made fertile by dissatisfaction and ambition. The triumvirate which replaced the older one of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus shared its failings. Equality can not remain equal when any member is grasping or treacherous.

From this world of corruption and dissolution, and at the same time of wealth, power, and influence, that Antony recedes, drawn by the allurements of luxury, ease and love. Like a Colosseus he bestrid the two worlds of politics and love. We have seen with what difficulty he balanced between the ordered world of "scarce-bearded" Caesar, "shrill-tongued" Fulvia and "Admired" Octavia on one hand and the emotional world of Egypt and Cleopatra on the other. The former world we have examined rather minutely. It remains to see the other world and its enchantments.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Before we undertake this investigation we will pause to catch up the references to time that have been shunted aside temporarily -- to prevent them from interfering with the sequence. Since both the world of politics and the world of love are concerned with time, we will let it stand between them -- perhaps like an Octavia, the mediator between the presiding spirits of each demi-Atlas.

CHAPTER IV

PART 2

173

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Troilus's yearning to make an eternity in time and to fix permanently his moment of rapture meets with frustration. He finds that the will that prompts a deed is not adequate to perpetuate it and that deeds will always fall short of desires. Lear seeks a permanency of joy in the presence of his newly discovered world of love. Romeo, prevented by time from the enduring presence of his bride, seeks an everlasting dwelling with her beyond the grave. All of those who love strive to make the succession of time a simultaneity. In other words, they want to have past, present, and future in an instant. Yet their concerns with the past are minimal. The "now" is what is important.

As with lovers so with the playwright. He tries to make a "now" which is both past and future. Actually, each moment in a good play has echoes of the past and possibilities of the future. More than that, the play as a whole work transcends time. Antony and Cleopatra is such a "now". Although this play shows considerable interest in the history of the persons and in past events, this is not to say that

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Shakespeare is trying for historical or chronological accuracy any more than he did in the English tetralogy. He is dealing with known events of history, and he seems to accept a responsible attitude toward them. Moreover, to narrate the historical events, he fits the bits of information to the speaker and to his mood on the occasion. For example, at the moment of great humiliation at defeat and of bitter dejection at realizing that he has fled from battle, and also, in a jealous fury incited by Cleopatra's easy manner with Caesar's messenger, Antony hurls at her his bitterest reproaches. He refers to her history of amorous episodes in terms of food. But it is because he is in distress that he condemns her. He himself would be "Upon the hill of Basan, to out-roar / The
(III, xiii, 127-8)
 horned herd! for I have savage cause." The bulls of Basan, according to Psalm 21, open their mouths against the psalmist (a figure of Christ) like ravening and roaring lions. Antony makes himself the victim.

The ordered sequence of the events of history is neglected. Shakespeare uses a technique of rapidly changing scenes to relate events that transpired in other places. For example, we have been present at the betrothal of Antony and

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Octavia. We have heard the statement of the motives that led to the wedding; we have seen Octavia and know her by sight as well as by repute. Suddenly, we are in Cleopatra's palace and hear her vigorous reactions to the events in Rome. We listen as her ranting subsides and as her jealous curiosity demands particulars. We hear her estimates of "admired" Octavia as each detail is enunciated. All judgments are made on the basis of Cleopatra's own person and attributes, and of course the Queen's picture differs markedly from the one we have received vis-à-vis.

Associated with this cinematic technique¹⁹ is that further technique of a shifting point of view resulting in an ambivalence that arises from just this device of having various evaluations of behavior or events presented by viewers at different times or under changing circumstances. In Troilus and Cressida we are challenged to consider what constitutes real value. We go along with Hector's logical presentation of values; then all of sudden we know with

19 John F. Danby, "The Shakespearean Dialectic", Scrutiny XVI (1949), 196, says we need to draw on the imagery of cinema to express the swiftness of the movement.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Troilus that we must in some way accept the responsibility of the decisions of our former rulers. We cannot repudiate our previous commitments. The play forces us to participate in the perplexities that beset the characters.

Similarly, in Antony and Cleopatra we are given the opportunity of judging a person in much the same way we would judge him were he our contemporary. We hear others evaluate his actions, and the judgments are diversified; some persons react favorably to what annoys others. We listen to the person discuss his motives and give his reasons. This process does certainly enlarge our range and gives scope to our own critical powers. The picture that results is rounded and always subject to shifting circumstances and the exigencies of time that beset the person himself. To be specific we can take the case of Antony. Caesar gives two distinct estimates of his life and character. He first tells us that he does not hate Antony, but has formed an objective evaluation of his behavior:

he fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamp of night in revel; is not more manlike
Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolemy
More womanly than he; hardly gave audience, or
Vouchsafed to think he had partners; you shall find
there

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

A man who is the abstract of all faults
That all men follow.

(I.iv.4-10)

The epitome that Caesar makes he is at pains to elaborate.

He continues:

Let us grant it is not
Amis to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy:
To give a kingdom for a mirth; to sit
And keep the turn of tippling with a slave;
To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet
With knaves that smell of sweat: say this becomes him;
As his composure must be rare indeed
Whom these things cannot blemish, --yet must Antony
No way excuse his soils, when we do bear
So great weight in his lightness.

(I.iv.15-25)

There is the essence of Caesar's grievance: we bear responsibilities we want him to share. It matters little what Antony's faults are if Caesar is not affected by them. However, Caesar does consider other times when Antony was a model leader of soldiers. His hardihood as a soldier which we have already referred to is Caesar's remembrance of Antony's former days. We have also noted Caesar's encomiastic eulogy at his competitor's death.

We know what Antony has done in battle in his youth by retrospect and of late before our eyes: then a man of bravery and endurance, now a fool who flees from battle. We

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

have the two evaluations by Caesar and can recall others by friends and enemies. We get a still further impression of him when we hear him talk. All these combine to create a person, knowable, reprehensible, loving. Let us consider his intimate communing with himself just after he has received news of Fulvia's death. He who wished her dead now would have her alive. He confesses, "There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it" (I.ii.126). Then almost immediately, as though he would have it, he reasons that it would be better were it not so. The process of the rationalization is interesting and somewhat intricate. Because it recurs throughout the play, and is always associated with the juxtaposing of the past on the present, we will examine it more minutely. Antony mulls over Fulvia's death and his own attitude toward her and towards things in general:

What our contempt doth often hurl from us,
 We wish it ours again; the present pleasure,
 By revolution lowering, does become
 The opposite of itself: she's good, being gone;
 The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on.
 (I.ii.127-31)

Antony, (or is it Shakespeare?) is generalizing. This seems to be Shakespeare's usual way of looking at time. The present possession of a good does not content us. The words

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

"what our contempt doth often hurl from us" fit Antony's behavior and attitude in regard to his generalship and his political rule. These are things which he takes such little care of that they seem to be held in contempt. Yet, taken from him, they become dear. "We wish it ours again." This attitude toward the present is a generally accepted truth. In this play about time the generalization is true and appropriate, independent of either Shakespeare or Antony. Richard II also came to recognize the truth of this predicament:

Whate'er I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.

(Richard II II.v.39-42)

Having had the kingship, he took such little care of it that he lost it. With or without it, he is "In humours like the people of this world, / For no thought is contented"

(Richard II V.v.10-11). Antony says in part that a present good by inevitable change loses value and lessens in esteem until it become the opposite of what it was. Such a depreciation occurs when, for instance, a young boy's prized collection of firearms, becomes, with the advancing maturity of the boy, a chest of items of indifferent interest; subsequent

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

to the young man's enlistment for military service and the possibility of actual warfare, the collection becomes an assortment of unwanted toys. The words of Antony, especially those near the end of the passage, offer some difficulty.

"The hand could pluck her back that shoved her on" gains in clarity if we note that "could" means as the Arden note suggests, "would be ready to" or, as Craig²⁰ glosses it, "would be willing to". Antony is, thereby, saying that, although he wished that Fulvia were dead, now that she is dead, he would like her to be alive again. Another interpretation - this one does seem out of harmony with Antony's prevailing attitude -- would have him wish merely that he had not formerly desired her death. The wonderful concentration of an idea into few words is one of the beauties of Shakespeare's style.

Shakespeare energizes characters by presenting a view of them from all sides. They must be like three-dimensional statues, giving distinct impressions when viewed from any angle. In this the characters differ from the painting, seen

20 Op. cit.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

from only one perspective and that that in repose; and they differ too from some statues in the tremendous energy by which they move. They are creatures of time as well as of space.

The time-space continuum in Antony and Cleopatra is one of its amazing properties. The vastness of the empire - this consideration has already engaged our attention - is traversed in the twinkling of an eye. We do not lack a Puck to "put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes."²¹ The characters move with great speed from Egypt to Rome and then to Athens. Occasionally they make comment on the rapidity of movement. One instance will illustrate this rapidity. We are in Rome in Caesar's home when Octavia comes to mediate a quarrel between her husband and her brother. Caesar welcomes her heartily and consoles her, bidding her not to be troubled with the time, but to "let determined things to destiny / Hold unbewail'd their way" (III.vi.84-5). The scene shifts and we are in Antony's camp near Actium with Enobarbus arguing with Cleopatra against her taking an active

21 Midsummer Night's Dream (II.i.175-6).

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

part in battle. As Antony comes in with Canidius, he is saying:

It is not strange, Canidius,
That from Tarentum and Brundisium
He could so quickly cut the Ionian sea,
And take in Toryne. You have heard on't, sweet?
(III.vii.21-4)

The news is correct; a messenger confirms the fact that Caesar has taken Toryne. Antony is again the one who admires the celerity as only the negligent can. Cleopatra had rebuked him in this fashion. Here again Shakespeare seems to comment on the general failure of those who forget "Time and the strong necessities." Antony marvels:

Can he be there in person: 'tis impossible;
Strange that his power should be.
(III.vii.57-8)

But the speed with which news travels in his own camp is unusual. On leaving the supposedly private discussion at which he announced his decision to fight at sea, a soldier encounters him and beseeches him not to trust to "rotten planks" (III.vii.63). There is no change of place but the action shifts from Antony's camp to Caesar's marching forces, and back to Antony's site where he gives his field marshal directions and departs. We stay and watch with Enobarbus while he tells us that Antony has turned and fled from

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

battle. The next thing we know we are in Alexandria with the dejected general. The dejection is the remorse that afflicts him for his negligence. He may seek a scape-goat to help him bear his defeat, but he must admit in his own way what Richard II had to admit: "I have wasted time and now time doth waste me" (Richard II V.v.).

Such techniques as cinema uses help to form in the unified mind of the viewer a somewhat/notion of events far removed from each other in time and place. Mr. Knight and Mr. Danby both refer to impressionism in painting to explain the technique each sees²² demonstrated in the play. The effect is best explained, perhaps, by noting the effect of rapidly shifting scenes and contrasting characters. Juxtaposition becomes commentary. Antony juxtaposed with Octavius is a comment on time. Octavius "possesses" by obeying the necessities; Antony tries to neglect them. To illustrate further, we will refer again to Antony's past. In making an effort to avoid repeating what we have already said, we will only allude to those passages formerly quoted. We know how

22 Independently of each other, they worked out the theory. This point is made in an exchange of letters published in Scrutiny XVI (1949) 318-323.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Caesar evaluates Antony's action with an army in a time of famine (I.iv.55-72). Antony meekly refers to himself, asking Octavia not to judge him by the rumors she hears. He admits that he "has not kept ... [his] square, but that to come / Shall all be done by the rule" (II.iii.210-1). Cleopatra tells of little episodes in Egypt -- stories of fishing, drinking and masquerading (II.v.). On the other hand, we learn that in the Syrian campaign, the serious Antony, jealous of the effectiveness of his own officer Sossius, rebuked him and withdrew his pleasure from him (III.i.15-26). This situation parallels that of Ventidius who tells it in support of his action. Agrippa tells of Antony's tenderheartedness: "When Antony found Julius Caesar dead, / He cried almost to roaring and he wept / When at Philippi he found Brutus slain"²³ (III.ii.11-3). Antony himself gives a different version of Brutus' death. He needs to buoy up his spirit after his dishonorable flight and recalling his past successes mentions them in disparaging Caesar:

23 The incomparable Enobarbus comments: "That year, indeed, he was troubled with a rheum."

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Yes, my lord, yes; he at Philippi kept
 His sword e'en like a dancer; while I struck
 The lean and wrinkled Cassius; and 'twas I
 That the mad Brutus ended: he alone
 Dealt on lieutenantry, and no practice had
 In the brave squares of war.

(III.xi.35-40)

"I slew Brutus", Antony says; Agrippa had said, "Antony found him dead". The versions of history are not always compatible in every instance. Such are the incidents in the previous life story of Antony. His present life is lived out before us; his future is glanced at before it occurs. The sooth-sayer in Rome warns that Caesar will rise higher than Antony and that even in games he will outplay him (II.iii). Enobarbus needed only a bit of psychology to predict that the marriage of Antony and Octavia would not last because he would return to "his Egyptian dish again" (II.vi.130-4). Antony himself predicts, perhaps more by resolution than by foresight that he with his sword would "earn ... his chronicle" (III.xiii.175). In the same way that we piece together the history of Antony, we can trace Cleopatra's, Pompey's and Caesar's. We learn also of Crassus' death, of Fulvia's life and activities. These chronicles have only indirect relationship to the plot of the play, but

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

they have importance in creating the sense of magnitude that characterizes the action and setting. We have seen how ^{to scene} Antony and Cleopatra rushes from scene/and telescopes time.

We also noted that the concern with the past is not an attempt at chronological accuracy. Chronology became the main absorption of the historian only in the eighteenth century. Shakespeare was interested in seeing how events from the past broaden the scope of the present and project themselves into the future. Although the word "time" occurs less frequently in this play than in Troilus and Cressida, there are, even here, significant repetitions of the word. To Antony, to hear reports from Rome is to "confound the time with conference harsh" (I.i.44), instead of passing it in revelry. Cleopatra, in Antony's absence, finds time heavy on her hands; she would drink of mandragora so that she "might sleep out this great gap of time ... Antony is away" (I.v.4, 6-7). Dreaming of her present lover, she is reminded of those of former times -- "My salad days / When I was green in judgement" (I.v.73-4). Antony belongs to another time of her life and her judgment is surer. His disposition is a "heavenly mingle" (I.v.59); he is "Like to the time o' the year between the extremes / Of hot and cold" (I.v.51-2).

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Caesar's preoccupations with time differ considerably from Cleopatra's. To him time is to be commanded, not submitted to. He rejects Antony's dictum, "Be a child o' the time" (II.vii.107), in preference to his own, "Possess it" (II.vii.108). To Antony time is for accomplishing affairs of state. With him there is present need to patch old quarrels (II.ii.101). There will be time "to wrangle in" (II.ii.107) when Pompey has been subdued, but now "Time calls upon's: Of us must Pompey presently be sought, Or else he seeks us out" (II.vii.160-2). With victory almost within grasp, Caesar predicts that "the time of universal peace is near" (IV.vi.5), but peace is not enough to satisfy him; he too wants an immortality, and Cleopatra's presence in his triumph would yield this joy. This hope he confides to Proculeius: "her life in Rome would be eternal in our triumph" (V.i.65-6), and he takes every precaution to prevent her from triumphing over him by taking her life. In this, Caesar is defeated.

A further complication with time is the futile effort of all the characters to recall it. Their desires form a pattern of speech and a pattern of action that is made highly significant by its persistence. The first time the device is used we have already glanced at: Antony, hearing that Fulvia

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

is dead; although he had wished her death, desires now to have her again alive. This forms the pattern: desire-fulfillment-regret. Antony notes the same logic in the people as that he finds in himself; they are "slippery" no less than he. Concerning Pompey, he remarks the fluctuating public opinion. The people did not esteem Pompey alive; dead, they want his benefactions, and so they endeavor to reincarnate him by substituting his son for him to fill the place (I.ii.192-5).

The pattern works out in the action of trusted soldier. Enobarbus as friend and advisor to Antony is loyal until he is forced to admit, "Mine honor and I begin to square" (III.xiii.40). Soon, he seeks an opportunity to desert. When he does desert, his conscience is uneasy and becomes turbulent when Antony sends him friendly wishes and the valuables he had left behind. Enobarbus wishes the desertion were all undone and, leaving the service of Caesar, seeks out a "ditch wherein to die" (IV.vi.38). Regret is unbearably acute. Cleopatra also experiences it. She wants Antony to believe her dead; Antony accepts the report as true and turns his sword against himself before the messenger arrives from Cleopatra and tries to undo the evil results. The pattern

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

also applies in the reversal of roles. Antony in his madness would kill Cleopatra. He hears that she has killed herself; he gives voice to his repentance: "Since Cleopatra died, I have lived in such dishonour, that the gods detest my baseness" (IV.xiv.55-7).

The fluctuation of will evident in each instance reveals a desire to eliminate the present and to restore the past. The changeableness indicates a "slippery people". That same "melting", deliquescence as Danby calls it,²⁴ noticeable in the characters is also on their tongues. "Let Rome in Tiber melt" (I.i.33), Antony exclaims. Cleopatra protests her faithfulness and repentance over the debacle at Actium in extravagant imprecations:

Let heaven engender hail...
Till by degrees the memory of my womb,
Together with my brave Egyptians all,
By discandying of this pelleted storm,
Lie graveless.

(III.xiii.159,163-6)

Antony likewise uses this image when he wishes to be emphatic:

24 "Shakespearean Dialectic" Op. cit., p. 198.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Fortune and Antony part here; even here
 Do we shake hands. All come to this? The hearts
 That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave
 Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets
 On blossoming Caesar.

(IV.xii.19-23)

"Discandying," according to William Whiter, an Eighteenth century critic interested at that early time in the imagery of the plays, "is the dissolving what is candied." Whiter notes these two instances of the word which we have quoted and others in Hamlet, Timon and Henry IV. He says of them: "These passages are very similar. The curious reader will observe that the fawning obsequiousness of an animal, or an attendant, is connected with the word candy."²⁵ Melting, changing, dissolving, things are not what they seem. No sooner does compromise between opposites promises some stability, when like the clouds, the "permanence" fades. What had seemed lasting dissolves. Constant flux is the lot of all things under the sun -- all things in time.

²⁵ A Specimen of Commentary on Shakespeare, London, T. Cadell, 1794. Whiter's printed text is hand-corrected in preparation for a second edition. Having mentioned these four passages, Whiter writes in yet another, one from Julius Caesar, evidently overlooked previously.

CHAPTER IV

PART 3

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

The changing, evolving, transforming action we have just observed is related by the love theme to characters who are themselves shifting and varying. There is about this theme, which centers almost exclusively in Cleopatra, an atmosphere of intensity that bespeaks purpose. Philo, the realist with no allusions, makes curt comments on the relationship that ignores the possibility of a greatness in love. This worldly-wise soldier has his commitments and sees the terrible consequence of his general's negligence and indulgence. To Philo such wantonness can result only in dangerous folly.

As if to allow the reader to evaluate for himself the estimate Philo has just made, Antony and Cleopatra approach with their retinues, and their talk is of love. The General is no young Romeo. At a later time in the play he tells that his hair is greying (IV. viii, 20), and we know he has come to Egypt to rule his third part of the world after a career of successful military and governmental activity. Egypt's Queen also has had a successful career. She was known to have commanded, in days gone by, the love of Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great successively. When

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

we see them in this perspective³⁰ which is, after all, historical fact, we are a little surprised at the frivolity of their public conversation. The Queen plays rather coyly. She demands to know how much Antony loves her. He has created a shiny illusion in which he moves and for which he picks hyperboles to charm the waiting Queen. Indeed, he who controls a third-part of the vast Roman Empire finds the boundaries too confined to furnish forth a metaphor to express the limitlessness of his love.

The phrasing of Cleopatra's question has a finesse about it that might be overlooked unless attention were directed to it. She says: "If this be love indeed, tell me how much." There is doubt, evidently, whether Antony's emotion is love. At least the present-day audience would detect in the use of "be" the uncertainty of the presence of love at all. Throughout the play, it is part of Antony's game to call his emotion love, just as it is part of Cleopatra's game to play all the tricks she knows to make Antony accept unchallenged the reality of her love and his. Regal and proud, she, nevertheless, teases, cajoles, uses

30 Mark Van Doren seems to deny that the play is a tragedy, for "tragedy works with delusions, and they have none". Op. cit.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

a wondrous diversity of moods and posturings to keep Antony "in her strong toil of grace" (V. ii, 351). The allurements she possesses are elaborately described by the matter of fact Enobarbus. For this occasion, he outdoes himself in vocabulary and style to represent to his marvelling Roman hearer the powerful seductions of the Rare Egyptian. When Enobarbus speaks, we expect realism or raillery. If either is present in the description of the barge on the Cydnus (II, ii, 195-240),³¹ it is of airy thinness. The five senses are assailed individually by the Egyptian extravaganzas: color, music, cooling breezes, perfume, feasting. Invited to dinner, Antony "pays his heart / For what his eyes eat only" (II. ii, 230-1).

Infinite variety exhibits many of its phases here. This is one of the tricks that makes Cleopatra so overwhelming. She uses all this and more against Antony, "Whom n'er the word 'no' woman heard speak" (II. ii, 229). And he responds willingly to the display and allows himself to be carried away into a dream world. But on occasion, when

31 I refrain from quoting the lengthy description which is none-the-less an important one, as R.A. Foakes reminds us, for the bearing it has on the action of the play, "Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare's imagery", Shakespeare Survey, 5(1952) 89.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

a "Roman thought" strikes him, he is forced back upon the present. Then he says, "I must from this enchanting queen break off" (I. ii. 132). He recognizes that his dalliance in Egypt is a compromise that expects no good: "Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know, / My idleness doth hatch" (I. ii, 134-5). With Enobarbus at his side to goad him into thought, Antony has all the help he should need. But Antony does to Enobarbus what he does with his own sense of responsibility: he imposes silence. Enobarbus has just offered Antony the opportunity of seeing his foolishness for what it is, by suggesting that his proposed departure to Rome would "kill all women: we see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death's the word" (I. ii, 137-40). Since Antony does not give any manifestation that he has understood the ridicule, Enobarbus does not stint. He presents a portrait of Cleopatra different in all details from the Queen afloat on the barge. The two have an element in common - both are past mistresses at the devices of witchery with a purpose. Enobarbus in his raillery says, "Cleopatra catching the least noise of the proposal of his departure for Rome/ dies instantly". With this start he introduces the love-death imagery that culminates in the last two acts in the separate deaths of the General and his lady. Enobarbus, with

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

design, tells Antony that death is a spirited lover who exercises such powers upon her that she responds with great "celerity in dying" (I. ii, 149).³² Enobarbus continues his cynical absurdities until Antony ejaculates: "Would I had never seen her!" (I. ii, 158). He suffers though a few more thrusts then assumes the Roman pose: "no more light answers." Enobarbus has won his point.

On another occasion, Enobarbus again has a word to say about love - brotherly love. Antony has apologized to Caesar "in so far as befits... his honor" (II. ii, 98-9), and although both of them are desirous of peace, and threatened political structure demands cooperation, they are reserved toward each other. Enobarbus interposes an expedient: "if you borrow one another's love for the instant, you may, when you hear no more words of Pompey, return it again: you shall have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do" (II. ii, 103-6). The wisdom is too blunt to leave Antony unmoved, and so he asserts his authority to silence the offender. Enobarbus complies, after he has made one last effort: "That truth should be silent I had

32 K.V. MacMullan calls attention to this initial image "Death Imagery in Antony and Cleopatra", Shakespeare Quaterly XIV, 1963, p. 403.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

almost forgot" (II. ii, 109). In mock obsequiousness, he turns to Antony: "You considerate stone" (II. ii, 112).

To return to Antony's Roman thought, we hear the triumvir announce to Cleopatra his decision to assume his responsibilities in Rome where "much is breeding, / Which like the courser's hair, hath yet but life, and not a serpent's poison" (I. ii, 199-201). Cleopatra enacts a changing role: frailty, moodiness, jealousy, dejection, righteousness, queenly reserve and poetic appeal. She climaxes the show by reminding him of the former enchantment of their infatuation:

Then was the time for words: no going then:
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor,
But was a race of heaven (I. iii, 34-8).

This varied and vigorous routine gives place to another: chiding, self-pity, feigned sadness over Fulvia's death. Her variety grows infinite. She charges him to take his turn and "play one scene / Of excellent dissembling; and let it look / Like perfect honour" (I. iii, 79-80). Cleopatra resumes her manifold role: mockery, then coquetry. Antony interrupts to say that if idleness were not her subject, he would take her to be idleness itself (I. iii, 91-2). The banter and play-acting are symptoms of the disease of idleness that seems to afflict Egypt.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony catches the disease from Cleopatra. His proves fatal. He wastes time that he should spend in political and military affairs until it is too late to cure his disease or make any recovery. Cleopatra's manner changes yet another time: "But, sir, forgive me; Since my becoming kill me, when they do not/Eye well to you" (I. iii, 96-7). Assuming regal dignity and aloofness, she bids him go:

Your honor calls you hence;
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,
And all the gods go with you! Upon your sword
Sit laurel victory! and smooth success
Be strew'd before your feet! (I. iii, 97-101).

Antony must make some return for such entertainment. He sends a messenger to Cleopatra with a gift. Presenting the pearl, Alexas says, "Last thing he did, dear queen, / He kiss'd, - the last of many doubled kisses, - This orient pearl" (I. v, 39-41). Alexas breaks off; the bearers of another's love can easily suffer embarrassment in giving utterance to what they may but half believe. He says, "His speech sticks in my heart" (I. v, 41). At Cleopatra's prodding, he stumbles on, and reports [with what joy, we have to depend upon the actor to convey] that Antony's horse "neigh'd so high, that what I would have spoke / Was beastly dumb'd by him" (I. v, 49-50).

Antony's absence puts a pall upon the Queen. She manifests an infinite variety of other moods: pettiness,

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

boredom, pensiveness. When the messenger announces Antony's marriage to Octavia, Cleopatra gives way to rage, jealousy, unreasonable regret, vengefulness, but whatever else, a strenuous vitality in all she does and says. Her only interest—we can judge only by what the play says of her—is Antony and his possible return. For one brief instant she says, "let him for ever go" (II. v, 115), but she interrupts herself: "let him not.../ Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, / The other way's a Mars" (II. v, 15-17). Antony in Rome treats of matters of state, feasts with governmental officials, marries the sister of his associate triumvir, dispatches an army to Syria, moves his household to Athens, quarrels with Caesar, allows his wife to return to her brother, and then goes to Egypt, where, "Contemning Rome" (III. v, 1-18), he and Cleopatra, enthroned on chairs of gold divide his empire. The quarrel with Caesar becomes acute. The subsequent war brings about his downfall; perhaps it is more exact to say, gives occasion for his downfall. Having made "his will / Lord of his reason" (III. xiii, 4), he submits his military authority to the control of Cleopatra and flees from battle when she does. His disgrace cuts him deeply. He tries to retaliate against Caesar for his defeat, and against Cleopatra for his humiliation. Momentarily appeased by Cleopatra's extravagant protestations, Antony determines to fight again: "The next time I do fight,

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

I'll make death love me, for I will contend / Even with his pestilent scythe" (III. xiii, 192-5).

Death and love henceforth are inseparably linked. The next encounter, a victory for Antony, is followed immediately by a defeat. Antony believes that Cleopatra has betrayed him. He laments in great bitterness: "tis thou / Hath sold me to this novice; and my heart / Makes only wars on thee. Bid them all fly; / For when I am revenged upon my charm, / I have done all (IV. x, 13-6). He is inconsolable in his rage and grief:

Betray'd I am: O this false soul of Egypt! this grave
 charm,-
 Whose eye beck'd forth my wars, and call'd them home;
 Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end, -
 Like a gypsy, hath, at fast and loose,
 Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (IV.xii. 23-8).

The inner core of his being and aspirations has been struck. What he took to be a real love, for which he had wagered his political and military career, seems now to be but a decoy for selfish ends. In being stripped of the illusion, the love is seen to be tragic and destructive.

Antony's uncontrolled ranting frightens Cleopatra, as well it might. In his fury, he threatens her. " 'Tis well thou'rt gone, / If it be well to live; but better 'twere / Thou feel'st into my fury, for one death / Might have prevented many... The witch shall die: To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall / Under this plot; she dies for't" (IV. xii. 39-42; 47-49).

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Cleopatra takes refuge in her monument, sends word that she has died, and waits. Antony's great fury subsides when he hears that Cleopatra is dead, he falls into desolation. He resolves: "I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and/ Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now / All length is torture: since the torch is out, / Lie down, and stray no farther" (IV. xiv. 44-7). His temporary dementia has taken a new turn. He feels that he is the one who must ask pardon; he equates her glow of vitality with a torch that now is black. As we have already seen, his faltering attempt to end life is like his dilatory efforts to be a Roman ruler once he had fallen into Cleopatra's toils... Life lingers. Carried to her monument, he tries to recreate the fantasy of former times. The couch heavy with the weight of Antony's helpless body is lifted up and received by the women. Cleopatra remarks on its heaviness: "How heavy weighs my lord! / Our strength is all gone into heaviness, that makes the weight" (IV. xv. 32-34). The image of heaviness is repeated over and over: the body is heavy, hearts are heavy, the times are grief-laden. "The crown o'the earth doth melt" Cleopatra says as she watches Antony die. Her image of deliquescence links the death of Antony with the other images of destruction wrought by time. Like his own ejaculation, "Let Rome in Tiber melt" (I, i. 33), and Cleopatra's quite

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME, AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

similar one, "Melt Egypt into Nile!" (II. v, 78), this image is a high point in the sequence which does not end until Cleopatra and her maids are all dead. When she sees Antony dead she makes a passionate outcry:

O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldiers' pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
Are level now with men; the odds is gone
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon. (IV. xv. 64-68).

War and victory have lost their appeal. All things have grown stale and dismal.

Cleopatra's flight to safety in her monument proves futile. The Roman soldiers enter without difficulty and set guards. Her attempt to turn her knife against herself is frustrated, and she grows increasingly apprehensive that she will be taken to Rome to be displayed in Caesar's triumph. She uses her charms against Dolabella in order to learn what Caesar plans for her. He is her sole hearer when in her attempt to regain the fantasy of her first days with Antony, she apotheosizes him. "Cleopatra's imagination" Fluchère says with enthusiasm, "borne along by the intensity of her feelings, burning with a passion purified at last by death, is bathed in the supernatural clarity of the starry universe where the hero now dwells."³³ M.R. Ridley is less enchanted by Cleopatra. He writes in the introduc-

33 Henri Fluchère, op. cit., p. 167

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

tion to the Arden edition of the play,³⁴ that in her first grief over the noble ruin of her magic, she impetuously decides to "rush into the secret house of death and make death proud to take" her (IV. xv. 88). But she pauses, takes time out to bury Antony and sends a messenger to Caesar to request an interview. When she is convinced, Ridley continues, that Caesar plans to lead her in triumph, she decides to die—no word about Antony since the first paean. She deceives Caesar by means of the Seleuceus episode,³⁵ into thinking that she is planning for a life of comfort and thereby she gains freedom enough to get admittance for the "rural fellow"^{who} comes with asps. It is then that she reverts to the fantasy that has beguiled her from the advent of Antony into her life. Antony will again be the lover who urges her on to meet him in an eternity. Immortal longings prompt her, to make earthy display of regality. Her last speech and the subsequent actions of Charmian, J. Middleton Murry appraises as great: "in the death scene of Cleopatra he Shakespeare achieves the miracle: he makes the language completely adequate to the emotions

34 London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1954, p.27-28.

35 Brents Stirling, "Cleopatra's Scene with Seleuceus," treats this episode fully in Shakespeare 400, op. cit., p. 299-311.

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

and yet keeps it simple."³⁶ Its close contact with the reality of womanliness is the quality of the poetry that gives it the power to communicate profundities in an understandable way. "Husband, I come: / Now to that name my courage prove my title" (V. ii. 290-1). In life she could not so address him; now by the fact of her being released from those bonds of society which have no relevance in the life after death, she can for the first time claim wifedom.

Our aim in this last discussion has been to investigate the meaning of love in the lives of mature lovers who have responsibilities and are not enthralled by the first intensity of romance as Romeo and Juliet were. We have seen the choice Antony makes and abrogates only to revert to it again. We have watched the disintegration of his personal, political, and military powers as he follows the way of luxury and lascivious living.

Critics hasten to tell us that the greatness of Antony lies in his love. His love is somehow ennobling. We do not doubt, both in the context of the play and out of it, that the love of Antony is opposed to the code. His are "Lascivious Wassails"; he is a "doting mallard"; he is given to amorous surfeiting. How does this truth affect our judgment of the drama? This question pushes us back

36 The Problem of Style, London, Oxford University Press, (Oxford Paperbacks) 1960, p. 36

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

to a more fundamental one. What is the truth of literature? Does the factual information -- much of it is fact -- provide the truth it is the business of literature to reveal?

To the problems posed, we can say that that is the truth of literature which presents man in situations which reveal the depths of the soul and lay open the motivating forces according to his true nature. It is the function of literature to present, not to judge. Consequently, the ambivalence we recognize in this play presented, for example, on the one side by Philo; and on the other by Charmian is part of the reality, or on a larger scale, on the one side by Caesar, and on the other by Antony, is part of the reality Shakespeare chose to present. Shakespeare does not pass moral judgment. He presents human realities and leaves the moral evaluation to others. Antony's choice of idleness in spite of his responsibility to Rome, is made, not once for all, but by a continual pushing aside the considerations which duty demands that he face. He tries to turn a love-affair into a private "realm" but he knows he cannot. Cleopatra forces him into combat by causing wars which she makes Antony accept as his own. Ranged against Caesar, he attempts to assume again his Roman demeanor, but Cleopatra follows him and insists on her place at the head of the naval contingent. Antony cannot put off what he has made of himself through idleness and irresponsible living, and

POLITICAL REALITIES, TIME AND LOVE IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

when the challenge to his military honor comes, he makes the wrong choice. His honor as a statesman and soldier sinks to a low point on the wheel. On his choice he had wagered his place in the chronicle against his love. He loses. His loss cost him his dignity, his self-esteem, his life and his love.

EPILOGUE

Each Age since Shakespeare has looked into his plays and poems and beheld there a reflection of itself. Four hundred years has left its mark on commerce, communication, cultural and social progress, and every other area of human activity. Likewise on this restricted sector of culture, Shakespearean studies, time has wrought changes. Indeed, T.S. Eliot, one of our great modern critics, playwright, and poet, has said with acuity, "Shakespeare criticism will always change as the world changes."

Our own age has come to discover the values of his poetic drama. We are pleased to speak of the structural values of the poetry and to define the heights of his art made possible by his command of these values. We also view the interests which must have occupied his mind in as much as they prompted his pen so unfalteringly. We are giving more concentrated readings to the poems as an aid to understanding the plays, and we trace the widening of his interests as they reveal themselves in recurrent themes. These, in turn, use poetic means to impress us with their significance. Imagery is such a means.

In this thesis I attempt to go along with the tide of contemporary criticism in being attentive to the poetic concerns of Shakespeare. I do this, for the purpose of

penetrating beyond the mere poetic devices into their meanings. Specifically, I am hopeful that my discussion of thematic imagery is a step not only toward fuller, more perceptive reading of the poetry but also toward an appreciation of Shakespeare's poetic drama.

This view, which I present, is unavoidably and undeniably a partial view. Even great critics, and how much more so amateurs, have to acknowledge their inadequacies when faced with Shakespeare's genius. If these studies afford any illumination I shall be grateful.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armstrong, Edward A., Shakespeare's Imagination: A Study of the Psychology of Association and Inspiration, Lindsay Drummond Limited, London, 1946, 196 p.

Linking of violets and stealing brings this comment from Armstrong: "Another possibility is that Shakespeare had stolen violets at same time or that they were associated in his mind with some other forms of theft, such as deer-stealing"; he goes on to add that he does not prefer this view. Interesting but slanted toward psychology.

Bayley, John, "Shakespeare's Only Play" in Stratford Papers, 1963, edited by B.W. Jackson, Toronto, W.J. Gage, Ltd., 1964.

Lectures from the performances. Popular approach.

Bethell, Samuel Leslie, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 1944.

Studies convention and Naturalism in levels of interpretation. Helpful commentary.

Bradbrook, Muriel Clara, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, Chatto and Windus, London, 1961.

A study of Shakespeare's early works in relation to the times and the other poetry being produced.

Cain, H.E., "Romeo and Juliet: Reinterpretation" Shakespeare Association Bulletin XXII, 1947, p. 163-92.

Detailed and scholarly article on Renaissance psychology, in particular the humors and the play. Professor Cain believes Romeo and Juliet is true tragedy and the hero's flaw is anger.

Campbell, Oscar J., "The Salvation of Lear" English Literary History, Vol. 15, 1948, p. 93-109.

Charney, Maurice, Shakespeare's Roman Plays; Harvard University Press, 1961, Cambridge, Mass.

Appraises the function of imagery in the Roman plays.

Chew, S.C., "Time and Fortune" English Literary History, Vol. 6, 1939, p. 83-113.

An interesting study of the connection of iconology and poetic imagery. Frequent reference to Shakespeare's images in plays and poems.

Clemen, Wolfgang H., The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1959, 236 p.

Relates imagery to the dramatic act and shows how Shakespeare used images to develop style and structure. A significant book.

-----, Shakespeare's Soliloquies, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964, 27 p.

The presidential address of the Modern Humanities Research Association. Informative address by an outstanding scholar in Shakespearean imagery and technique.

Coleridge, T.S., Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism edited by T.M. Raysor, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1930.

Seminal criticism, influential for two centuries.

Cormican, L.A., "Medieval Idiom in Shakespeare" Scrutiny XVII, publication of Autumn 1950 p. 186-202 and publication of March 1951, p. 298-317.

Important studies of the influence of medieval times on Shakespeare.

Craig, Hardin, The Enchanted Glass, N.Y., Oxford, Blackwell, 1963

Covers vast field of thought in the Elizabethan mind. Masterly coverage and compression.

Cruttwell, Patrick, The Shakespearean Moment And Its Place In The Poetry of the 17th Century, N.Y., Random House, 1960, 262 p.

A modern Library Paperback, the discussions center around both Shakespeare and Donne and tries to establish an affinity in their works. Use both the historical and the critical approach.

Daiches, David, Critical Approaches to Literature Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1956, 404 p.

An investigation into the nature of literature and the nature of criticism. "I am concerned with methodology, with the varyig ways in which the art of literature and works of literature can be profitably discussed; I am not here concerned with critics as such or with the history of criticism as such."

Danby, John F., Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of "King Lear", London, Faber & Faber, 1949, 3rd impression in 1958, 234 p.

Valuable discussion of the elements of reasonable and irrational Nature; communal values as opposed to an anarchic individual will. Vitally important.

-----, "The Shakespearean Dialectic, an Aspect of Antony and Cleopatra", Vol. XVI, no 3. Sept. 1949 of the Scrutiny, p. 196-213.

An interesting study to render the reputed "isolation" of the play from the canon meaningless.

Daniels, F. Quinland, "Order and Confusion in Troilus and Cressida I. iii", Shakespeare Quaterly XII, 1961, p. 285-291.

Agamemnon's generalship is wallowing and uncertain. So too is the body politic. "The two opening speeches are employed as dramatic rhetorical indications of this fact /the paralysis afflicting the Greek camp/" p. 291.

Dowden, Edward, "Atmosphere and Character in Romeo and Juliet" in Siegel, Paul, His Infinite Variety, p. 268-279.

Uses romantic contributions as bases of his own, but corrects and amplifies them. This essay was originally published in Shakespeare: His Mind and Art.

Ellis-Fermor, Una, The Frontiers of Drama, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1956, 162 p. University Paperback.

Some studies in the limitations of drama and the conflict resulting from the dramatists to submit to the limitations. Especially useful is "The functions of Image in Drama" p. 77-95.

-----, "The Nature of Plot in Drama", Essays and Studies, XIII (1960) p. 65-81, English Association, edited by Byrnes, M. St. Claire.

Discusses the relationship of plot to the other elements of drama with illustration from Shakespeare and Ibsen.

-----, "The Poet's Imagery" Broadcast, reprinted in The Listener, July 28th 1949.

Gives a bibliography of imagery.

Farham, Willard, "Troilus In Shapes of Infinite Desire" in Shakespeare 400. Essays by American Scholars on the Anniversary of the Poet's Birth, edited by James G. McManaway, N.Y., Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964, p. 257-264.

Troilus the lover and Troilus the Warrior as conflicting areas of personality.

Fluchere, Henri, Shakespeare, translated by Guy Hamilton, London, Longmans, Green and Co, Ltd., 1953, Reprinted by Dramabook 1956, 272 p.

Gives overview of Shakespeare's dramas, synthesizing critical and aesthetic points of view. Valuable commentary.

Foakes, R.A., "Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare's Imagery" Shakespeare Survey, 5 (1952), p. 85-91.

Assessment of prevailing modes; suggestion for more integrated application to plays.

Frost, Bede, The Love of God, N.Y., Harper and Brothers, 1938,
Anglican theological approach to love.

Grace, William J., Approaching Shakespeare, Basic Books, Inc., London, 1964, 248 p.

A readable and informative volume showing awareness of the poetic and the dramatic qualities; an aesthetics approach.

Granville-Barker, Harley, Prefaces to Shakespeare, London, Sedgwick and Jackson, Several volumes - First series 1927 contains Lear commentary - Second series, 1930 Romeo & Juliet and Antony & Cleopatra.

Halloway, John, The story of Knight, Studies in Shakespeare's Major Tragedies, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961, 187 p.

Heilman, Robert Bechtold, This Great Stage. Image and Structure in King Lear, 1948, State University Press, Louisiana, 339 p.

Admirable for treatment of language and theme. Especially good chapter on Edmund's prayer.

Henn, T.R., The Harvest of Tragedy, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1956, 304 p.

Hill, R.F., "Dramatic Techniques and Interpretation in Richard II", in Early Shakespeare. Stratford-Upon Avon Studies 3, E. Arnold Ltd., 1961, p. 101-121.

Hoy, Cyrus, The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation unto the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy and Tragicomedy, Chatto & Windus, London, 1964, 317 p.

James, D. Cr., The Dream of Learning, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951.

Important book.

Kaula, David, "Will and Reason in Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 12, 1961, p. 271-283.

Knight, G. Wilson, The Imperial Theme, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1961, 367 p.

-----, The Wheel of Fire, Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy with three new Essays, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960, A University Paperback; first published in 1930.

An early study of imagery.

Knights, L.C., Knight, G. W., and Danby, John, "On the Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra, Vol XVI, No. 4, Winter 1949 of the Scrutiny, a Quaterly Review, p. 196-312.

A correspondence exchanged to establish the mode of relationship between published studies by the scholars and to comment further on the dialectic approach Danby proposed. The first named scholar adds commentary on a previous Scrutiny article by Danby.

Knights, L.D., Further Explorations, Chatto & Windus, London, 1965, 204 p. "King Lear as Metaphor", p. 169-185.

Helpful distinctions on the role of poetry.

-----, Some Shakespearean Themes, Chatto & Windus, London, 1959, 183 p.

An attempt to follow lines of thought in the great tragedies, with a backward glance at the sonnets to find early development of the same interest.

Lawlor, John, "Romeo and Juliet" in Early Shakespeare, Edward Arnold Ltd., 1961, p. 123-143.

Begins with discussion of traditional concepts of tragedy and traces it into Shakespeare. It accepts the view that hero is the "unwitting author of his own undoing". Volume three of Stratford Upon-Avon Studies.

Leach, Clifford, "Ephesus, Troy, Athens" in Stratford Papers, 1963, edited by B.W. Jackson, Toronto, W.J. Gage Ltd., 1964, p. 151-169.

Mack, Maynard, "The Jacobean Shakespeare" in Jacobean Theatre (Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies I. London, Edward Arnold Ltd., 1960.

MacMullan, Katherine Vance, "Death Imagery In Antony and Cleopatra" Shakespeare Quaterly, Vol XIV of Autumn 1963, p. 399-410.

Sees links among all the tragedies of love, e.g., all die with a kiss upon their lips.

Mahood, M.M., Shakespeare's Wordplay, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1957, 192 p.

A study of the subtle and previously unnoticed quibbles and puns which function as a poetic device comparable to recurrent images in effectiveness.

Murray, J. Middleton, The Problem of Style, Oxford University Press, London & N.Y., 1925, Oxford Paperback, 1960.

Discusses the Nature of Metaphor, meaning, psychology of style and the creative process with illustration from Shakespeare and other great writers.

Nowotny, Winifred M.T., "Lear's Questions" Shakespeare Survey X (1957) p. 90-97.

Ornstein, Robert, editor, Discussions of Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, D.C. Heath Company, Boston, 1961.

Convenient handbook. Significant to this study for its essays on Troilus and Cressida.

-----, The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1960.

Reese, M.M., The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays, Edward Arnold, Ltd., London, 1961, 350 p.

Political theory and its popular acceptance in Elizabethan times.

Ribner, Irving, The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare, Princeton, The University Press, 1957.

One of the better discussions of the history plays of the Elizabethan period. Traces development of the genre.

-----, "The Gods are Just: A Reading of King Lear in Tulane Drame Review, Vo. 2, no. 3 (1957-8), p. 34-54.

Edmund's and Gloucester's place in orthodoxy.

Ribner, Irving, Patterns in Shakespeare's Tragedy, Barnes & Noble, N.Y., 1960, 205 p.

Traces history as writer from Titus Andronicus to Coriolanius.

Rosen, W.M., Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1960, 231 p.

Treats in four major tragedies two methods of characterization with special concern for point of view. Interesting insights on imagery.

Shakespeare, William, Antony and Cleopatra, edited by M.R. Ridley (Arden edition), Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1954.

-----, Antony and Cleopatra, edited by Alice Walker for the New Shakespeare edition, Cambridge University Press, 1947.

-----, King Lear, edited by Kenneth Muir, Arden Edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London.

-----, King Lear, edited by George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson, The New Shakespeare Edition, Cambridge, University Press, 1962.

-----, Romeo and Juliet, edited by George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson, Cambridge, University Press, 1963.

-----, Troilus and Cressida, edited by Dr. Alice Walker, The New Shakespeare Edition, University Press, Cambridge, 1937.

-----, Troilus and Cressida, edited by K. Deighton, Arden Edition, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1922.

Siegel, Paul N., His Infinite Variety. Major Shakespearean Criticism Since Johnson, J.B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1964, 432 p.

A valuable collection of important criticism, arranged by genre and with a useful historical introduction by the compiler and an annotated bibliography.

-----, "The Substance of Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise" in His Infinite Variety, p. 251-266.

The tragedies are expressive of Christianity in Elizabethan time.

Speaight, Robert, Nature In Shakespearean Tragedy
Hallis & Carter, London, 1955, 179 p.

Spencer, Theodore, "Troilus and Cressida as Dramatic Experiment" in Siegel, Paul His Infinite Variety, p. 193-202.

Studies foundations of the Elizabethan world of thought.

-----, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, N.Y., MacMillan & Co., 1942, 233 p.

Influential Lowell Lectures for 1942.

Stirling, Brents, "Cleopatra's Scene with Seleucus" in Shakespeare 400, p. 299-311.

Spurgeon, Caroline F.E., Shakespeare's Imagery, and What It Tells Us. Beacon Hill Press, Beacon Hill, Boston 1958, 408 p.

The study deals with the images and themes of plays as clues to Shakespeare's personality. Careful and minute tabulation of images.

-----, "Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery," in Aspects of Shakespeare, being British Academy lectures by L'Abercrombie (and others), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933, p. 255-286.

Lancet windows into the world Shakespeare saw and the figures that enchanted him gives also informations about himself. Proposes that imagery helps to establish authorship, and to characterize the author.

Stampfer, J., "The Catharsis of King Lear", Shakespeare Survey, Vol. 13, 1960, p. 1-10.

Fine study of natural bond in its social implications. Covenant made at birth cannot be broken without serious complications.

Stirling, Brents, "Cleopatra's Scene with Seleucus" in Shakespeare 400, edited by James G. McManaway, N.Y., 1964, p. 299-312.

Stratford Papers, 1963, edited by B.W. Jackson, W.J. Gage Ltd., Toronto, 1964.

Sewell, Arthur, Character and Society in Shakespeare, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1951, 149 p.

Stroup, Thomas, B., "The Structure of Antony and Cleopatra" in Shakespeare 400, edited by James G. MacManaway Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., N.Y., 1964, p. 289-298.

Tillyard, E.W.W., The Elizabethan World Picture, Random House, N.Y., 1943.

An early discussion of world order. Useful for theory of correspondences and treatment of primates.

Traversi, D.A., taken in Scrutiny, Vol XIX (1952-3) no. 1 "King Lear, October 52, pages 43-64, no. 2, Winter 52-53, p. 126-142, and no. 3 of Spring 53, p. 206-230.

-----, "King Lear" in Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, edited by B.W. Jackson, W.J. Gage, Toronto, 1925, 200 p. ref. p. 183-200.

-----, "Love and War in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida" p. 35-49 in Love and Violence, based on 1946 volume of "Etudes Carmélitaines," Amour et Violence, under editorship of Père Bruno de Jesus-Marie, ocd., Sheed & Ward, London, 1954, 260 p.

-----, An Approach to Shakespeare, Doubleday & Co. Inc., N.Y., 1956, 304 p.

A distinguished book with valuable commentary to all the plays. Published by chapters in Scrutiny.

Van Doren, Mark, Shakespeare, Henry Holt & Co. Inc., N.Y., 1939. (Anchor book 1953)

Watson, Curtis Brown, Shakespeare and The Renaissance Concept of Honor, Princeton University Press, Princeton New-Jersey, 1960, 471 p.

Detailed and careful study of honor. Scholarly.

Wells, Henry W., Poetic Imagery, illustrated from Elizabethan Literature. Russell & Russell, N.Y., 1961.

Whiter, W.M., A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare, T. Cadell, London, 1794.

An attempt to explain and illustrate various passages on a new principle of criticism.

Wilson, Harold S., On The Design of Shakespearean Tragedy, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1957, 256 p.

Wilson, Thomas, Arte of Rhetorique, edited by G.H. Mair, Oxford, The University Press, 1909.

Wimsatt, W.K., "Poetry and Morals" in Thought, Vol. 23, (1948), p. 291-299.

The whole problem of art and morality, illustrated by reference to Antony and Cleopatra.

SUMMARY

This study of thematic imagery in Shakespeare attempts to see in a few tragedies some particular interests which, if we may judge from their frequency in the sonnets and plays, absorbed Shakespeare's attention over a considerable span of years. As we have noticed, Shakespeare's mind seems to have found attraction in the impermanence and transience of all things and man's evident desire for stability and permanence, in the corruptive and destructive forces as well as in the creative and productive forces at work in all things and in man, and in the mingling and intertwining of these forces and in the human situations they create. The interests he found to be of a diversified and multifarious nature which prompted him to impose some form upon them. Their gravitation toward the two foci of time and love provided the coherence which made the interests manageable. In examining the four tragedies, we have concerned ourselves with these themes of time and love as they are revealed through imagery.

Through each of the four tragedies, we have seen the interaction of the themes, and we have observed their involvement with one other theme prominent in each play. To be specific, we have seen Shakespeare handle the themes in the early love tragedy, Romeo and Juliet. The most

energetic efforts on the part of the lovers to find permanence in life against the aggressive influences of fate and time end in failure. They come to believe that the only possible perpetuation of their love would have to come in death. The story of the star-crossed lovers ends in the tomb, but it brings about a peace in the social order, whether lasting or fleeting we can only guess. Social agitation, light, religion, navigation, banqueting, death as bridegroom, flint, the wheel of fortune, music - all these furnish images of love or time. At this early stage in his career Shakespeare had at his command poetic materials which he used vigorously and effectively.

In Troilus & Cressida, we look at the images of time and love interacting with themselves and with images of war. Here the prevailing tension is the between the desire for permanence and completeness and the overriding corrosive effects of time. Intense love, ideals of war and honor - the values man cherishes - all fall before the onslaughts of time and change.

In King Lear, the old King's inquiry delves into the very nature of man. Stripped of all things, his human promptings cause him to take note of the destitution and misery of others. From that point, his apprehension of the reality of things grows and he finds reconciliation with man and nature in the love of Cordelia. The healing power of her love restores the old King, but she herself is

caught in the web of war and treachery. This great play is the assessment Shakespeare makes of humanity itself.

At the beginning of his career Shakespeare undertook the tragic story of romantic love, fresh in youth and tenderness. At the end he turned, in contrast with Romeo and Juliet, to the tragic study of love in maturity.

Antony and Cleopatra unfolds the conflict between political realities of rule and war to which Antony has commitments and his love for Cleopatra. Neglect has brought his downfall. When the great general and ruler has to face his own humiliating flight from battle and his assurance of unfaithfulness of his loved one he takes the only course open to him - death with a hope of being united with her in an unchangeable eternity.