

SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY COMEDIES

Studies in

The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew,

and The Two Gentlemen of Verona

by

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Preface

This dissertation offers fairly full readings of three early Shakespearean comedies. Because these works are still partly misunderstood, it has seemed reasonable to lay the critical emphasis on explication, though a certain amount of judging has been inevitable. The aim has been to induce recognition of aspects of these plays to which much modern criticism has seemed opaque.

No writer on Shakespeare can contribute constructively to the critical dialogue without being indebted to those who have joined in the discussion in its earlier stages. The work of these scholars and critics is acknowledged in the footnotes and in the Select Bibliography.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.	Introduction : An Approach to Shakespeare's Comedies	1
CHAPTER II.	<u>The Comedy of Errors</u>	
(i)	Shakespeare and <u>The Menæchmi</u>	10
(ii)	Critical approaches to <u>The Comedy of Errors</u> : the play's "seriousness"	16
(iii)	Egeon and his "sad stories"	20
(iv)	Comic errors : some aspects	26
(v)	Errors and Time	33
(vi)	Human interest : domestic relations and romantic love	36
(vii)	Apuleian comedy of the grotesque	45
(viii)	The final act	60
CHAPTER III.	<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u>	
(i)	Introductory	69
(ii)	The Induction and Sly : the inset device	70
(iii)	Further use of the inset : Kate and the type of the shrew	85
(iv)	Kate and Petruchio : the taming datum	91
(v)	The transition from curst to tamed shrew	105
(vi)	The Bianca, or rival wooers, action	111
(vii)	Comic reversals	123
CHAPTER IV.	<u>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</u>	
(i)	The critical climate	132
(ii)	Elements in the literary milieu of <u>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</u>	137
(iii)	<u>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</u> : Love paradigms	153
(iv)	Further aspects of the early scenes	159
(v)	Launce	172
(vi)	Dramatic change and perspective in the central acts	182
(a)	Proteus' inconstancy - Mutability - Neoplatonism	182
(b)	Dramatic perspectives	192
(c)	The flat, linear mode of III.i	198
(vii)	The outlaw scenes and the dénouement	201
APPENDIX A.	A Note on an Aspect of Tudor Comedy	218
APPENDIX B.	Shakespeare's Shrew and the Popular Tradition : a Note	221
APPENDIX C.	A Note on Will Kempe	226
APPENDIX D.	A Note on Neoplatonic Imagery	230
A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	232

PLATES

- PLATE I. The dream of Scipio
(from J.A.W. Bennett, The Parlement of Foules:
an interpretation, facing p. 30) between pp. 80
and 81
- PLATE II. Chiang Yee : Cows in Derwentwater, 1936
(from E.H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion, p. 74) between pp. 139
and 140

CHAPTER 1

Introduction : An Approach to Shakespeare's Comedies

The Arnoldian view of poetry as "a criticism of life" has produced possibly the most significant literary criticism of this century; Eliot and Leavis may both be regarded as Arnoldians. But there is something suspicious about an approach to literature that, however much it might have done for Shakespearean tragedy and for the nineteenth-century novel, leaves the field of Shakespeare's comedies (from Errors to Twelfth Night) virtually untouched. Of course there have been discussions of these plays in periodicals of an Arnoldian cast, such as Scrutiny and Essays in Criticism, and Derek Traversi has recently included discussions of the comedies in the two-volume expansion of his seminal An Approach to Shakespeare. But (I shall develop this argument in ensuing chapters) Shakespeare's comedies are in a curious way opaque to the straight moral approach.

One of the best-known essays in this tradition is James Smith's on As You Like It.¹⁾ Cutting through Shakespeare's romantic-comic conventions to get at the moral centre of the play, Smith conducts his discussion largely by making moral discriminations regarding the characters. Rosalind is thus found to be "very obviously the superior" of Jaques (p. 191). Jaques "hopes to impress, perhaps to intimidate the youthful Rosalind. But she is intelligent enough to distrust originality" (p. 174). Smith doubts whether the travels "to which Jaques refers the origin of his scepticism" really were the cause; they are "equally likely to have been its consequences" (p. 176).

Smith seems very near to forgetting that Rosalind and Jaques are fictive characters who merely give the illusion of having human personalities. Thus he contrasts Jaques's scepticism with that of Hamlet and Macbeth who "lead a fuller, more complete life than that of Jaques" (p. 177). They see scepticism not as the solution to a problem but rather as "a problem which presses to be solved" (p. 177). They "agonize over the sort of reflections with which Jaques is lulled" (p. 177). Of course, Smith is using these distinctions to define a difference between tragedy and comedy, between their respective moral interests, and his essay is a model of its kind. But his straight moral discriminations in effect discount an important dimension of the play - its romantic-comic tone, the peculiar nature of Shakespeare's comic characterization (in particular, the use of the disguise-convention): what some might see as the central dramatic realities of the play. These are the features most likely to trouble the modern student, and no amount of exaltation of Jaques's and Rosalind's moral interest is likely to efface this. A student meeting As You Like It for the first time finds not a straight forward moral assessment of the cha-

1) Repr. in A Selection from "Scrutiny," ed. by Leavis, II, 172 - 191.

racters but an apparently dated play about a frivolous and selfish girl who is too busy covertly flirting in the most outrageously artificial manner with Orlando to inform her own father of her arrival in a forest peopled by absurd shepherds and shepherdesses and characters who all talk a great deal and never do any work; a play full of stereotyped tricks like Rosalind's unlikely disguise which is so impenetrable that it fools even her father; a play marked by shallow characterization (Celia who improbably falls in love with Oliver, without "any direct picture of the growth of love in her heart")¹⁾ and by sudden unconvincing repentances and conversions; play laced with a good deal of what Robert Bridges called "foolish verbal trifling."²⁾ Approaching the play from Smith's point of view, one must find it difficult to take seriously Shakespeare's singularly off-hand attitude to human motivation³⁾ and the endless "bad jokes and obscenities" which show his "desire to please a part of his audience with whom we have little sympathy".⁴⁾ How, it might seem reasonable to ask, can mature, responsible adults take this sort of thing seriously?

To this question the answer is: often they don't, simply because they have approached the play along "Arnoldian" lines - expecting it to be "a criticism of life." A more flexible approach is clearly needed. It is arguable that Smith started at the wrong end. After all, Shakespeare was writing a comedy before he was criticising life. From this one may infer that the critic's job is to uncover what the phrase, "writing a comedy", means in relation to a particular comedy. A difficulty arises from this - that one can never say definitively what a comedy is, because there are no norms or rules. One might, to adduce a Wittgensteinian example, just as well try to say what a face is. "I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently," writes Wittgenstein.⁵⁾ He continues: "what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object but an internal relation between it and other objects."⁶⁾

The reader, as he reads and ponders, is constantly noticing new aspects and making new comparisons. Thus, a study of Twelfth Night will affect his conception of As You Like It, and an understanding of the sources and analogues of both will probably suggest or highlight unnoticed "aspects" of the two plays. No absolute norms are created or established, but an ever-changing network of "internal relations" is set up between the various works and the reader, each

1) S.C. Sen Gupta, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 154.

2) The Influence of the Audience on Shakespeare's Drama, p. 2.

3) Ibid., p. 8.

4) Ibid., p. 2.

5) Philosophical Investigations, p. 193.

6) Ibid., p. 212.

affecting and redefining this reader's experience of the others. This is the case with Shakespeare's comedies as an oeuvre.

Criticism has often been bedevilled by rigid a priori notions of what comedy, tragedy, and so on ought to be. Thus, H.B. Charlton regards one of Shakespeare's comedies as

the first exhibition of [Shakespeare's] power to use comedy for its proper function, to show man encountering the real problem of the world in which he was really living - ... the first play in which he showed contemporary man buffeted by the power felt then to be the primary factor of his existence, his response to the quality and might of love. 1)

Here Charlton's a priori notion of comedy prevents him from grasping the dramatic realities of the play under discussion, which surprisingly enough turns out to be A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Furthermore, Charlton's preoccupation with that play's relationship to "life", with its relevance to our experience (all legitimate critical concerns), has led him into the elementary logical pitfall of mistaking the fiction for "the thing itself." As Northrop Frye has observed, an image is "not a verbal replica of an external object."²⁾ It is in other words remarkable not only for depicting "man encountering the real problem of the world" but for its own self-existent characteristics which assert themselves in their own right. Thus, argues J.M. Cameron in an invaluable lecture, "I could not give an alternative poetic description.... The poetic description has the form of a description; but it exists only as this description, these words in this order."³⁾ It is quite distinct from what is represented. For example, "a poetic account of a battle cannot be mistaken for a battle,"⁴⁾ and for the same reasons, a poetic lover should not be mistaken for a real lover. This is what Cameron means when he says that "in poetic discourse some of the entailments that belong to other kinds of discourse are cut."⁵⁾ Any literary work will discourage certain questions that will be obviously inappropriate - like, "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" or "What courses did Hamlet pursue at the University of Wittenberg?"⁶⁾

There are however other, less obvious, implications of Cameron's view - implications of which Cameron has perforce not taken account. Because a literary fiction is distinct from what is represented, it may depict human re-

1) Shakespearean Comedy, pp. 102 - 3.

2) Fables of Identity, p. 14.

3) Poetry and Dialectic, p. 20.

4) Ibid., p. 23.

5) Ibid., pp. 17, 23.

6) See ibid., p. 15.

relationships and modes of character that are essentially fictive - that are not likely to be taken for "real." As Muriel Spark has said, "I don't claim that my novels are truth - I claim that they are fiction, out of which a kind of truth emerges."¹⁾ A modern writer like Sartre admits the impossibility of ever containing "reality" within the confines of a literary work: "Adventures are in books";²⁾ they cannot be recounted; they have no shape of their own. Thus

when you tell about life, everything changes; only it's a change nobody notices: the proof of that is that people talk about true stories. As if there could possibly be such things as true stories; events take place in one way and we recount them the opposite way. 3)

The mere fact of a story's being a story, that is, fictive, confers on it its own existential status. But there is an inescapable tension between story and event.

In Shakespeare's comedies the fictiveness takes the form of a refusal to "enter into competition with reality."⁴⁾ Shakespeare cuts through what Raymond Williams has called "straight, truthful relationships" among characters⁵⁾ as we find them in more naturalistic fictive forms like the nineteenth-century novel. An example might make this point clear. In the second scene of Twelfth Night, Viola finds herself shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria. Spedding, as Dover Wilson points out, holds that she takes the only course open to "a beautiful high-bred girl, alone in a foreign country"; that is, comments Wilson,

she first enquires about the court as a place where she might look for protection, but a bachelor ruler might make things difficult; then she thinks of Olivia's service, but the Captain dashes her hopes there also; finally as a last resort, she falls back upon male disguise. 6)

Similarly, Sen Gupta writes of Viola's "self-control," of her "extraordinary intelligence and insight" and argues that her "sex-disguise" is "employed to reveal a many-sided personality."⁷⁾

But these real-life entailments are precisely what Shakespeare largely cuts. In his source, Barnaby Riche's tale of Apolonius and Silla, Silla's resort to disguise is justified, because she is known to Apolonius who has visited her father's court. In Twelfth Night however, this state of affairs simply does not exist, and nor does that described by Spedding, Wilson and Sen Gupta. The ship-wreck scene (I.ii) has some strange features. Viola accepts

1) Frank Kermode, "The House of Fiction : Interviews with Seven English Novelists", p. 80.

2) La Nausée, transl. by R. Baldick, p. 26.

3) Ibid., p. 62.

4) Robert Musil's phrase, cited in Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 127.

5) Modern Tragedy, p. 146.

6) Twelfth Night, NCS edn., p. 109.

7) Shakespearean Comedy, pp. 161 - 3.

32 and 35 bear out. Her role-playing clearly eludes comments of the kind made by Sen Gupta. Not even her consignment of the resolution of the muddle to Time is unequivocal. Here is the ironically tinged resignation of the helpless young girl; but she is not unduly "agonized" by her predicament. This blending of fictive and human interest is a pointer not only to the characterization of Viola but to the comic mode of Twelfth Night. Here story-pattern and not character is the determinant, and the cross-wooing paradigm at the basis of the comedy is worked out as a comic disguise-game which is at the same time in no way incompatible with interest in the human comedy.¹⁾

There is then in both these passages from Twelfth Night an obvious reluctance on Shakespeare's part to probe Viola's mind, to expose her innermost private feelings, or to make a dramatic crisis out of her emotions. These factors lead one to suspect that Shakespeare's comedies may have less to do with "the Human Condition... [which] implies a personal sense of where life is significant, of where humanity suffers especially or feels intensively" than with what has been called "Nature"²⁾ - the permanent, the universal, and the familiar. The comedies' reflection of "Nature" takes the shape of an "almost involuntary fidelity to what is constant in human types; to the repetition of birth and death, joy and sorrow; to the humours of men and women and the peculiarities that are at once recognized as universal".³⁾ Such an impulse, which "implies, above all, an absence of purpose, of insistence, and of individual insight" is embedded in Shakespeare's comedies. It is behind a speech like that of Jaques:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant....

This is the universal human predicament. Some of us are schoolboys, some lovers, and others "slipper'd pantaloons/s".

This is clearly the premise of the paradigm in Love's Labour's Lost and A Midsummer Night's Dream, both plays depicting typical victims of the universal malady. The comic irony in the former play is that each lover thinks his passion to be unique, only to discover he is one of the herd. Amor omnia vincit. Così fan tutte. So do all. Men are all alike and not easily distinguished in the woods on a moonlit night. Thus, in the scene in which each

-
- 1) This is but one manifestation of the kind of subtlety of which the romance form is capable - subtleties which, as Rosemond Tuve has observed, "other structures cannot provide" (Allegorical Imagery, p. 343).
 - 2) For this distinction ("obviously a real one, through equally obviously artificial"), I am indebted to John Bayley, The Characters of Love, pp. 268-9.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 269. Bayley's is a discussion of literature and what Johnson called "general nature", wide-ranging and full of nice discriminations.

of the lovers discovers his fellows' "perjury", Berowne "over-viewing" the others as they enter, one by one each betraying his fall, comments: "Now, in thy likeness, one more fool appear" (IV. iii. 44 - my italics). Like the King, Longaville enters "wearing papers" (46). The lovers are, says Berowne, "four woodcocks in a dish" - woodcocks being proverbially foolish birds (80). This state of affairs is also implied by Rosalind's observation that "men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them; but not for love" (As You Like It, IV. i. 94). Discussion of the characters in these plays will clearly have to proceed with caution, taking due cognizance of these cut entailments. It is generally the treatment - plot, diction, and above all comic perspective - that is paramount.

The sense in which comedy reflects the typical (as opposed to a tragedy like Macbeth which deals with the exceptional, the larger-than-life, the extraordinary) is borne out by the paradigm of the crossed lovers, as we have it par excellence in Book I of Montemayor's Diana and in A Midsummer Night's Dream.¹⁾ It is at the bottom also of Sidney's Arcadia and a commedia dell' arte scenario called Flavio Tradito, itself an analogue of Two Gentlemen. The basis of the paradigm is a muddle of identities or arbitrary transferences of lovers' affections or both. It takes the form of a series of reversals (which Kermode calls "disconfirmations") which lead to a final resolution (which Kermode, following Festinger, calls "consonance").²⁾ In the first book of Diana, the arbitrariness of the lovers' affections constitutes the germ of the main action. Alanius loves Ismenia, but then, to her grief, he falls in love with Selvagia. To win back Alanius' love, Ismenia feigns love for her admirer, Montanus. Alanius grows jealous, but no sooner has he renewed his love for Ismenia than she finds that she really does love Montanus. Montanus, however, now falls in love with Selvagia who is still languishing for Alanius. Montemayor sums up the situation as follows:

And it was the strangest thing in the world to hear
how Alanius sighing saide, Ah my Ismenia; and
how Ismenia saide, Ah my Montanus; and how
Montanus saide, Ah my Selvagia; and how
Selvagia saide, Ah my Alanius³⁾

Such a muddle of arbitrary cross-woodings provides the paradigm for the "fond pageant" of A Midsummer Night's Dream, in which "two will at once woo one" (III. ii. 118). Puck, whose comment this is, insistently draws attention to the paradigm, as does Berowne in Love's Labour's Lost. Here are their observations:

1) See Mary Lascelles on this in "Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy".
2) The Sense of an Ending, pp. 17 - 18.
3) Diana, ed. by Kennedy, p. 42.

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad.
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad. (437)

And a few lines later:

Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (461)

Puck is here placing the cross-wooings in terms of the Erasmanian "little, odd, ridiculous May-game"¹⁾ which all men play, the game of wooing, winning and wedding. "Couples take your partners..." Berowne confesses, after his three fellow "bookmen" have been exposed and he in turn is found "guilty"; and his confession draws attention to the inevitability of their perjury - an inevitability that has been apparent all along. He observes

That you three fools lack'd me fool to make up
the mess; (III.iii.203)

Dumaine. Now the number is even

Berowne. True, true; we are four. (207)

That this is an echo of Armado's "moral" and Moth's "l'envoy" seems not to have been noticed:

Armado. The fox, the ape, and the humble-bee
Were still at odds, being but three.

Moth. Until the goose came out of door,
And stay'd the odds by adding four. (III.i.83)

The "moral," by implication, places the uniformity of the loving in Love's Labour's Lost in the realm of the typical, of the unexceptional, of the natural. The "l'envoy" suggests the identification of Berowne with the goose and places the love-game of "Navarre and his bookmen" as Puck places the "pageant" of the two couples in A Midsummer Night's Dream. "Lord," exclaims Puck, "what fools these mortals be" (III.ii.115).

Shakespeare's refusal in his comedies to probe the soul of man, to concern himself with "the Human Condition," is reflected with particular clarity in the songs. These songs embody an impulse which is a feature of the Elizabethan lyric - the sense of time's passing, of mutability:

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end. (Sonnet, LX)

This is the pattern of life, viewed sub specie temporis, a pattern that reflects the normal and inevitable process of flux, of change. Because of its perpetual recurrence, this process, though set in time, is unchanging. Songs like

1) The Praise of Folly, transl. by J. Wilson, p. 17.

"Under the greenwood tree" (with Jaques's parody, "If it do come to pass,/ That any man turn ass - As You Like It, II.v.) and "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" (ibid., II.vii) which reflect this perennial process constitute a definitive dimension of Shakespeare's comic milieu. The lyric, "O, mistress mine," poses a question that is emphatically set in the here and now:

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure,
In delay there lies no plenty -
Then come and kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure. (Twelfth Night, II.iii)

Such are the joys of love; characterised by the uncertainty of the ever-changing, ever-vanishing moment. As in the songs of the owl and the cuckoo in Love's Labour's Lost, we are presented with a reality of which there is no doubt, a pattern of phenomena, that no amount of personal insight will change. "The cuckoo then on every tree/Mocks married men..." (Love's Labour's Lost, V.ii.885); the owl sings "nightly" while

...Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
and Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail. (V.ii.900)

- and so on. "For" as Feste puts it, "the rain it raineth every day." This refrain of Feste's suggests the recurrence of the pattern, the ages of man, who from being "a tiny little boy" comes to "man's estate,/With hey, ho, the wind and the rain" (Twelfth Night, V.i.379). Shakespeare sees his comic characters as a part of this process, and takes it that his assumption is shared by his audience:

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done
And we'll strive to please you every day. (Twelfth Night, V.i.391)

This is the context in which Shakespeare's comic characters, as well as the members of the audience (whom Feste is here addressing), move. It is the context of Nature, which embraces all, whether dukes, clowns, lovers, or members of the audience. In the sight of Nature all men are alike. They are born, they grow up, they fall in love, they grow old, and they die. Characters in Shakespeare's comedies don't so much reflect a personal as a typical world in which all men are willy-nilly embraced. On this idea Shakespeare rings the comic changes, as he imparts to it a comic perspective and shape.

CHAPTER II

The Comedy of Errors

(i) Shakespeare and "The Menaechmi"

In what may have been his first comedy,¹⁾ Shakespeare began at an obvious point, like Udall and the authors of the anonymous plays, Jack Juggler and Ralph Roister Doister, taking his cue from the New Comedy of Plautus, whose The Menaechmi he had probably read in the original Latin.²⁾ This point was the idea of a dramatic action centred in errors.

The idea of a lavish piling up of "error" seems to have been shared with Plautus by a number of Elizabethan Englishmen around about 1590, and W.W.'s reference to "Much pleasant error" (in the Argument of his translation of The Menaechmi, published in 1595) is a suggestive Elizabethan view of the Roman play.³⁾ A lost play, The Historie of Error, which was performed at court in 1577, is an instance of a pre-Shakespearean English drama on the subject of errors, as is "A history of fferrar," played in 1583. Gascoigne's Supposes (1566), which Shakespeare certainly knew, is another.⁴⁾ What is more, Gascoigne carefully draws his reader's attention to each error, each "suppose" (a "suppose" turns out to be a particular form of error that Shakespeare elsewhere termed a "misprision") as it occurs. Error proves to be a common datum in the literature of the time. Riche's story, Of Apolonius and Silla (1581),

- 1) As Foakes notes in his Arden edn. of The Comedy of Errors, there is no conclusive evidence to show how much earlier this play was written than its first recorded performance at Gray's Inn on 28th December, 1594, which is the performance referred to in Gesta Grayorum. All that is really clear is that Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and The Taming of the Shrew share many jests, phrases, themes, and devices, as Foakes points out (pp. xxii - xxiii).
- 2) T.W. Baldwin and R.A. Foakes discuss Shakespeare's use of the name, "Anti-pholus Sereptus," an obvious echo of the Plautine "puerum surruptum alterum" (1.38) and "qui subruptust" (1.41), which mean respectively "the other, stolen, boy" and "who was stolen." See Baldwin, On the Compositional Genetics of "The Comedy of Errors," pp. 95 - 105, and Foakes, ed. cit., p.xxvi for further discussion of this and kindred matters.
- 3) Notice that Bullough has misinterpreted Plautus' Prologue. The Latin reads as follows:

nunc argumentum vobis demensum dabo,
non modio, neque trimodio, verum ipso horreo
tantum ad narrandum argumentum adest benignitas.

Bullough's comment is that the "Latin Prologue to Menaechmi promised lavishness of plot, measured not by the peck or bushel, but by the barnful" (Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, I.5). But Plautus is here referring not to the plot but (as the third line in the Latin quotation makes clear) to the argument. Nixon translates as follows: "now I will give you your rations of the argument itself, not by the peck or three peck measure, but by the very granary - such is my generosity in giving arguments" (The Loeb Plautus, II.367).

- 4) The Supposes was a source for the sub-plot of The Taming of the Shrew.

which provided source-material for Twelfth Night, opens with this pronouncement:

There is no child that is borne into this wretched worlde,
but before it doeth sucke the mother's milke it taketh
first a soope of the cupp of errorr 1)

Later we are told that we "shall see Dame Errorr so plaie her parte with a leish of lovers" ²⁾ In his edition of The Menaechmi (which Baldwin insists Shakespeare used), Lambinus, like Gascoigne, labels each error in turn and discusses its significance:

Hic sunt erroris initia. Et coquus quidem,
primus errat, qui Menaechmum advenam, qui
Sosicles nominatur, Menaechmum surreptitium,
civem Epidamnum esse putat. 3)

This "coquus errans" causes Erotium to make the same error - and so on. ⁴⁾
The emphasis on error, to which Lambinus in his commentary and Shakespeare in his title draw attention, is reflected also in the account of the play's performance at the Gray's Inn Christmas revel in 1594, ⁵⁾ which records that as one of the "Sports" of the second "grand Night":

a Comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his Menaechmus)
was played by the Players. So that Night was begun,
and continued to the end, in nothing but Confusion
and Errors: whereupon it was afterwards called, The Night
of Errors. 6)

A point made in the account of the "Gesta" is how far this "Play of Errors and Confusions" reflected the "great Disorders and Misdemeanours, by Hurly-burlies, Crowds, Errors, Confusions" of that night. (Other aspects of The Comedy of Errors are mentioned here by implication, but these must be reserved for discussion in their place.)

That multiplication of error is at the heart of The Menaechmi was clearly Lambinus' view, of which The Comedy of Errors looks very like Shakespeare's endorsement. Indeed, in W.W.'s translation of The Menaechmi, the Printer's epistle to the Readers draws attention to the "publike recreation and delight" of these errors - the "harmelesse mirth and quicknesse of fine conceit" and the "meriment." This coincides with what was the orthodox critical view of The Comedy of Errors until fairly recently. Coleridge saw this play as a farce which he defined in terms of "the licence allowed, and even required,

1) In Bullough (ed.), op. cit., II. 345.

2) Ibid., p. 345.

3) "Here begin the errors. And indeed the cook makes the first error - thinking that the alien Menaechmus (the one called Sosicles) is the stolen Menaechmus, the citizen of Epidamnus."

4) Lambinus is quoted by Baldwin, op. cit., p. 77.

5) Gesta Grayorum, ed. by Bland, pp. 31 - 4.

6) Ibid., p. 32.

in the fable, in order to produce strange and laughable situations."¹⁾ This, according to Francis Fergusson, places a premium on "great, but essentially mechanical, ingenuity," which provides a "perpetual-motion machine of a good farcical plot."²⁾ In fact, Fergusson insists that:

We are not called upon for much sympathy or imagination: in fact we must not try to see through these characters' eyes, or feel what they feel. It would ruin everything to take the wife's troubles, or Dromio's many beatings, at all seriously. All we have to do is grasp the broadly absurd situation, and follow the ingenious fugue of the plot. 3)

F.P. Wilson, in the chapter on the Comedies for his unfinished magnum opus, is of the opinion that in Errors Shakespeare "is working to rule, the rule of Plautus."⁴⁾

A brief examination of The Menaechmi will not only throw Errors in relief, but will also serve as a point of departure for a modification of Fergusson's assessment and a redefinition of Errors as a comedy.

The casual, informal character of The Menaechmi is set by the Prologue, who is cast in the improvisatorial mould of a music-hall performer. He welcomes the audience - and himself. He jokes about conventions of place in terms of which "the podium with its back wall represented whatever the poet wished it to be."⁵⁾ Moving across the stage, he chuckles: "Now again I move to Epidamnus," and he promptly offers to execute commissions on behalf of any members of the audience requiring business to be transacted in Epidamnus - provided they supply the ready cash.⁶⁾ The Prologue's perky, slick quips - "It happened in the place where it occurred"; and "But, to get back to where I was, while remaining where I am" - prepare the audience, attune them, for the mode of the play which is essentially that of an expanded joke, acted out pretty well as far as ingenuity will take it. Plautus contrives not so much to simulate as to exploit a human situation, the condition of the exploitation being absurdity, nonsense, virtual impossibility. The entailments of ordinary life are cut.

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- 1) Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, ed. by Raysor, I. 85.
 - 2) "Two Comedies," in Shakespeare's Comedies, ed. by Laurence Lerner, pp. 34,35.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 36.
 - 4) "Shakespeare's Comedies," in Shakespearean and Other Studies, p. 56.
 - 5) Bieber, History of the Greek and Roman Theatre, p. 167.
 - 6) I have found it more convenient, for present purposes, to quote from E.F. Watling's excellent Penguin translation, The Brothers Menaechmus, than to quote the Latin and laboriously append translations in footnotes. See "The Pot of Gold" and Other Plays, pp. 103 - 46.

This is a feature of the world of farce. Even the laws of physics hardly apply there. In the silent movies, guns are fired at comedians and garden forks are jabbed into their bottoms; yells and grimaces may follow, but no first aid is called for. No one is injured. Oliver Hardy, sitting in the fireplace while heavy bricks rain on him from the chimney above, doesn't move until he is quite sure the last brick has fallen.¹⁾ This is not the "real" world. It is a realm that exists in its own right, and with its own laws and norms. So too, when servants are beaten in Amphitruo or in La Oui Simili di Plauto or in The Comedy of Errors, they are not depicted as suffering human beings. The reason why they are funny is that they are not living human beings but comic characters. We must not be allowed to identify ourselves with them, to sympathise with them, because, as Bergson affirms, "laughter has no greater foe than emotion."²⁾ The comic character par excellence, the clown, prevents our emotional involvement in his scrapes and dilemmas by the degree in which he has ceased to be fully human. His human body has been mechanised - "something mechanical encrusted on the living."³⁾ His antics draw our attention to the essentially physical aspect of his existence, although it is the moral side that is concerned.⁴⁾ Characters who are struck in anger, are merely being belaboured by the Plautine (or Shakespearean) equivalent of Arlecchino's "slap-stick" or the Vice's dagger of lath. Zanni and Arlecchino are conceived largely as recipients of "the lashes and the buffetings which [their] dull wits prompt [them] not how to escape."⁵⁾ Each must respond like a Jack-in-the-box, recoiling and rebounding every time he is struck and feeling not pain but a stimulus. Violence is transformed into a hilarious game.

When, in the climactic fight in The Menaechmi, the doctor's slaves try to carry Menaechmus off, the victim shouts, "I've got my fingers in this one's eye"; which Messenio caps with, "Leave him an empty socket in his head." Similarly, when Sosicles is accused of being mad, he mimes accordingly, "gaping and flinging himself about," raving and threatening with gay abandon: "Euhoe! Euhoe! Bacchus ahoy!...." The usual entailments of violence and madness are crowded out by the vigour of the farcical game.

At the opening of The Menaechmi, the parasite, Peniculus, is lying in wait for Menaechmus who is abusing his (Menaechmus') shrewish wife - variously referred to, after her silent withdrawal, as a "sharp-eyed wardress," an "enemy,"

1) In Dirty Work.

2) Laughter, in Comedy, ed. by Sypher, p. 63.

3) Ibid., p. 84.

4) Ibid., p. 93.

5) Nicoll, Development of the Theatre, p.108.

a "lioness." Menaechmus enters, wearing under his own cloak a garment of his wife's which he intends as a present for Erotium, his mistress - not the first of his wife's presents so to be used. The atmosphere is very illicit: "stolen goods," "secret amours," and Peniculus hoping for a "free lunch." The parasite's nasty yet ludicrous materialism offsets that of the other characters. Menaechmus has no sooner organised his affairs - given Erotium the garment and arranged for breakfast to be prepared for him and Peniculus - when his brother, Menaechmus Sosicles, arrives with his slave, Messenio, discussing their six-year-old search for the lost twin. Cylindrus, Erotium's cook, enters and mistakes Sosicles for his brother. Messenio's explanation - that the place is "swarming with swindlers" - seems the only reasonable one. Cylindrus leaves them to their conjectures. Then Erotium appears: "Darling! Why in the world are you standing out in the street, when the door's wide open for you?" Sosicles is thunderstruck. She must be "insane or intoxicated." Messenio cross-examines her: "Where have you seen this gentleman before?" She thinks they are having her on. When Sosicles at length emerges from his "entertainment" at her house, he meets Peniculus. Further "errors." Laden with the cloak and a bracelet which he has been asked to take for alterations and repairs, Sosicles is of the opinion that he's "captured a prize That woman is a fool, an ignorant fool; from what I've seen so far, there's booty waiting for us here." Peniculus now tells the Wife about her husband's theft of the garment. She reproves her husband, Menaechmus, and shuts him out of the house, pending the return of her garment. He goes off to beg Erotium to give it back, but she is indignant, as she has just given it to Sosicles. Then Sosicles, wearing the garment, meets the Wife who upbraids him and sends for her father. Sosicles' emphatic denial of everything convinces them both that he is mad: "Look at him, father! His eyes are turning green ..." The father-in-law goes to fetch a doctor. When he returns, however, he meets the right Menæchmus. Eventually the twins are brought face to face:

Messenio. Gods preserve us! What do I see?
Sosicles. What do you see?
Messenio. Your living image.
Sosicles. What do you mean?
Messenio. Your double. As like as two peas

This summary gives a fair reflection of what happens in The Menaechmi, but an inadequate account of the comic transvaluation that is achieved. In The Menaechmi, emphasis falls unequivocally on the mechanics of "error" and "mis-prision," which are worked out in terms of the simple incongruities and absurdities of jest. The avenues, which were later to tempt Shakespeare - the rich heritage of the romance tradition - were not available to Plautus. Although the Latin play is a highly successful one in its mode, this mode is a deliberately constricted one. In The Comedy of Errors, Shakespeare indicated some of the

directions in which classical comedy could expand, and it is not too much to say that a play like Twelfth Night is a romantic apotheosis of the "comedy of errors" situation as we find it in Plautus.

But the moral and poetic dimensions of Shakespearean comedy would be inimical to the comic ethos of The Menaechmi. The action of this play would to an Elizabethan seem to be cast in an immoral perspective - W.W. apologetically calls this the "least harmful" of the Roman dramatist's plays. But, the [redacted] entailments of the Great Moral Tradition that extends back to Socrates and Plato are as far as possible cut; and all the avarice, theft, anger, lust erupts in the verbal and physical verve. For instance, Epidamnus, the town in which the action of The Menaechmi is set, is (in a passage later to be adapted by Shakespeare) described as a haven for "drunkards and debauchees, sharks and swindlers, and as for the harlots" But Plautus is interested in the comic, as opposed to the moral, possibilities of the situation. Harlots are dangerous, but only because they tend to separate unwary men from their money. The comic challenge to Sosicles is to swindle Erotium, which is one reason why she too is portrayed as avaricious and grasping. Messenio's words about "sharks and swindlers" are less a moral indictment of sin than a warning to beware of swindlers.

Thus the treatment of roguery in The Menaechmi is "un-Elizabethan." Harry Levin has drawn attention to the "two gigantic protagonists, the rogue and the fool [who stride] across Europe, along the drift from Renaissance to Reformation."¹⁾ Renaissance comedy is largely concerned with folly or vice, either with redefining or criticising them. In The Menaechmi however, although almost everyone is a rogue and every rogue is made to look a fool, neither roguery nor folly is treated in moral terms. When Sosicles gleefully pockets his booty and prepares to make off, there is no hint of authorial disapprobation. In the words of Lamb, "we are spectators to a plot"; we must not yield to any temptation to "take it all for truth," to "substitute a real for a dramatic person."²⁾ If we do so yield, we yield in the face of the playwright's overt intention. Plautus gives us not a "drama of common life," in which "we recognize ourselves, our brothers, aunts, kinsfolk, allies, patrons, enemies, - the same as in life, - with an interest [that is].... hearty and substantial."³⁾ Plautus provides not people simply, but people taking on the condition of things, acting like puppets. Menaechmus is conceived in terms of doing his wife one in the eye and having fun with his meretrix; the meretrix is viewed in terms of greedily filling her pockets; Peniculus has one impulse - to get himself a free meal; Sosicles hopes to make

1) "An Introduction to Ben Jonson," in Ben Jonson: a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by J.A. Barish, p. 45.

2) "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century," in Essays of Elia, p. 196.

3) Ibid., p. 197.

a good thing out of other people's folly: "I never had a better time at less expense." These reflexes provide machinery for dramatic complications, for comic errors. Each of the characters is confined to his own partial view of things. As error is piled on error, misprision on misprision, absurdity on absurdity, the non-moral "up-so-down" perspective of farce grows increasingly dominant. Madmen, villains, fools appear absurd and are put through their farcical paces. The brashly materialist perspective of farce is clinched in the final lines, which provide no reconciliation, no festive conclusion, but a rejection of Menaechmus' wife that would in any normal context appear crude and brutal. Messenio speaks the plaudite:

Sale by auction - this day week in the forenoon - the property of Menaechmus - sale will include slaves, household effects, house, land, etc - and a wife, should there be a purchaser. All to be sold at an agreed price, cash down. And I doubt if the whole lot will fetch more than - fifty thousand. So farewell, friends; let's hear your loud applause.

This places the casual morality of Plautine farce. It doesn't much matter what happens to the Wife or what she suffers. She is the comic butt, the anti-comic figure who must therefore be excluded from the comic reunion. As in most jokes, nagging wives and interfering mothers-in-law must be ready for the roughest kind of victimisation. Here they cease to be human beings created in the image of God. In these literary and sub-literary climes, men are created (as Bergson, in effect, argued) in the image of machines.

(ii) Critical approaches to "The Comedy of Errors": the play's "seriousness"

As we have seen, there are critics who regard The Comedy of Errors as a simple farce, a mere pepping-up in Elizabethan terms of The Menaechmi. This conception persists in the theatre, where Errors "has too often been regarded as a short apprentice work in need of improvement, or as a mere farce, 'shamelessly trivial' as one reviewer in The Times put it, and not worth serious treatment."¹⁾ ^{Lately} there has been an apparent split between actors and academics, a split which draws our attention to features of the play which ~~criticism had~~ ~~largely overlooked~~ largely overlooked.

Recent studies in The Comedy of Errors have tended to argue the play's seriousness. The current view is that Shakespeare's use of Gower and St. Paul imparts to the Plautine errors action

1) See Foakes on the play's stage-history, ed. cit., pp. li - lv.

a serious turn, a touch of spirituality and of horror ...Shakespeare raised the moral tone, cleaned up the meretrix, introduced topics of marriage, courtship and providence, and developed the themes of madness and sorcery. 1)

T.W. Baldwin has thoroughly, even exhaustively, explored some of these strands and documented them.²⁾

Two important studies of Errors, one by H.F. Brooks and the other by R.A. Foakes, are very much concerned with the play's "serious elements, but not out of any desire to minimize its comic appeal" or "its clever exploitation of mistakes, of repartee, and talk at cross-purposes."³⁾ Foakes's solemn uncovering of the "serious concern for the personal identity of each of the main characters," "the serious force of the presentation of the Antipholus twins," the "disruption of family, personal, and social relationships," and the "language and action, which reinforce the serious undertones of the comedy" is a notable feature of this excellent New Arden edition of the play.⁴⁾ But, while one appreciates the force of Foakes's caveat - that his concern with the play's "serious elements" is to be seen as an effort to draw attention to what is "in some danger of going unobserved"⁵⁾ - one is disappointed to find that the essentially comic force of these "serious elements" is not duly defined.

Part of the reason looks like being a semantic muddle over the word, "serious," a neglect to insist that these "serious elements" are not "non-comic." In other words the statement, "Errors is a serious play," should be taken to mean not that it is an earnest or solemn play but that it is not simply a frivolous farce like the musical, The Boys from Syracuse. Errors has serious and thoughtful features, but criticism needs to show that these are comic features and not merely aspects of some modally neutral or indeterminate cognitive hinterland.

Like Foakes, Brooks eschews discussion of the "often uproarious comedy" (it is "not my immediate subject")⁶⁾ and prefers to view Errors in terms of its serious themes. Basically, it's all a question of how we should talk about literature. Graham Hough has drawn attention to one of the main difficulties in this kind of discussion. He notes that Malcolm Bradbury has analysed Emma with a total disregard for that work's mode. Bradbury sees Emma as offering a

1) L.G. Clubb, "Italian Comedy and The Comedy of Errors," p. 241.

2) On the Compositional Genetics of "The Comedy of Errors."

3) Foakes, ed. cit., p. lxix.

4) Ibid., pp. xliiii, xliv, xlv, xlvi.

5) Ibid., p. xlix.

6) "Themes and Structure in The Comedy of Errors," in Early Shakespeare, p. 59. Foakes acknowledges that he "benefited" greatly by the advice of H.F. Brooks, and points out that the argument of Brooks's essay "is in many ways complementary to what I have written." (ed. cit., p. li)

number of moral propositions: "We have been persuaded ... of the importance of true regard for self and others and to consider every human action as a crucial, committing act of self-definition."¹⁾ This critical procedure, argues Hough, does "some violence" to the book's "real nature." These are not "the reflections that impose themselves most strongly" on Hough after reading Emma. "This is not what the experience of reading the book feels like." Emma is a comedy. "In Mr Bradbury's summation, it might be a Christian - existentialist introduction to the devout life."

In their preoccupation with the identity imagery and the cognitive patterns of Errors, Brooks and Foakes are guilty of a similar disregard for that work's mode. There is, as we have seen, a marked (and freely acknowledged) tendency to pass over the play's comic conception.

Brooks's discussion of Antipholus' decision to "go lose myself" (I.ii.30) offers a representative example of this critical procedure:

The idea of "losing himself" is taken up in a profound sense and couched in a fine image commensurate with its thematic importance ... To seek reunion with the lost members of his family, Antipholus is risking his identity; yet he must do so, for only if the full relationship is restored can he find content 2)

Brooks insists that "However [the themes] are deepened and interconnected by Shakespeare's treatment, they are not recondite." But his formulation of them gives a queer impression of the play:

Mistakes of identity all but destroy relationship, and loss of relationship calls true identity yet more in question; the chief persons suspect themselves or are suspected of insanity, or of being possessed, surrounded, or assailed by supernatural powers - madness or demoniac possession would be the eclipse of the true self, and sorcery might overwhelm it Yet the hazard of metamorphosis and of the loss of present identity is the only way to fresh or restored relationship. Antipholus the bachelor desires that Luciana will transform him and create him new 3)

At the centre of the thematic pattern is

relationship: relationship between human beings, depending on their right relationship to truth and universal law: to the cosmic reality behind appearance, and the cosmic order. Trust in mere appearance results in illusion and mistakes of identity, thus dislocating relationship, and so disrupting

1) The Dream and the Task, pp. 44 - 5.

2) Op. cit., p. 58.

3) Ibid., p. 66.

order: blind conflict and disorder are inevitable
when men misconceive true identity and become
isolated in private worlds 1)

Whereas it is hardly a debateable point that these ideas are, so to speak, in The Comedy of Errors, it is at least questionable whether they are in the play as Brooks reflects them. In other words, Brooks's rationalization of what the play is "about" has, in effect, taken him a very long way away from the play itself. For instance, in the second of the three passages quoted, what Brooks says is that if Antipholus of Syracuse wants to find his brother, he must risk his identity. But the nature of this risk is inaccurately or misleadingly described as "eclipse of the true self," "hazard of metamorphosis." The whole point of these themes is their equivocal metaphysical status, like the theme of Viola's identity in Twelfth Night. These themes exist in Errors not as palpable objective realities but as appearances. They have the metaphysical status of comic delusions, though they are none the less "real" on that account. But their status, their mode of being, is comic error or misapprehension.

This is what demarcates the identity theme in Errors from that, say, in the Sonnets. Each context creates for the identity theme a different semblance and significance. Even though Brooks does acknowledge that Errors "appeals first and foremost to laughter,"²⁾ his solemn intellectual pronouncements effectually distort the work's semblance. Errors is not King Lear; nor is it "an early study in personal identity,"³⁾ as Hamlet may be a later study. A tragedy is a tragedy, a comedy a comedy, and a study a study - as John Holloway has demonstrated.⁴⁾ What Frank Kermode calls Shakespeare's "habit of curious brooding upon ideas"⁵⁾ manifests itself vigorously in comedy, tragedy, and history play alike. It is one important function of criticism to discriminate between one semblance of ideas and another. Shakespeare's use of ideas is basically unlike that of Sartre. Whereas the Frenchman occupies himself in genuinely involving and expounding his own thoughts, Shakespeare draws on a common stock of ideas, plays with them, inverts them, makes para-

1) Ibid., p.67. Critics of Errors seem to have mounted the cognitive bandwagon in force. Gwyn Williams's approach is couched in similar terms: "How soon does one's conception of oneself, the belief in one's own identity, break down before lack of recognition on the part of others? How far do we need others in order to have an identity at all? Is one's identity entirely dependent on the personal and social links and bonds, the ties of family, love, friendship and civic duty? In order that these questions might be tackled without in this case leading to madness and violent death, as they do in King Lear, Shakespeare added the twin servants." ("The Comedy of Errors rescued from Tragedy," p. 70)

2) Ibid., p. 69.

3) Gwyn Williams, "The Comedy of Errors rescued from Tragedy," p. 70.

4) The Story of the Night, p. 5.

5) "On Shakespeare's Learning," p. 212.

doxes out of them - in short, makes poetic capital out of them. In Errors, the treatment of these ideas constitutes an expansion of the comic milieu, and not a disguising or thickening of it, as Brooks's account might seem to suggest.

Gwyn Williams has carried the hidden premise of the Brooks-Foakes emphasis on the play's "serious themes" to its logical conclusion. To Williams, the Antipholus twins are not comic at all, and he sees Shakespeare's treatment as leading "headlong towards tragedy."¹⁾ He considers that the Ephesian Antipholus' "violent attack on his wife shows how dangerous [the] confusion of identities has become and how near to tragedy the central characters are brought."²⁾ Antipholus "might quite easily have killed his wife."³⁾ It falls to the Dromios "to save the play as comedy, to ensure, in fact, that there should be any fun at all."⁴⁾

This virtual identification of comedy with "fun" is a restricted conception of comedy which is just as harmful to Errors as the earlier tendency to regard that play as "unfeeling farce." The Antipholi may not be on the same comic level as the Menaechmi, but they are none the less comic characters. What criticism has failed to clarify, or even to recognize, is the sense in which the Antipholi (as well as Adriana and Luciana) are comic characters and the role of the play's "serious" cognitive concerns in defining their comic status.

(iii) Egeon and his "sad stories."

The opening scene reveals one side of the romance impulse that pervades Errors - an impulse that effectively demarcates the play from its Plautine original. In the opening words, spoken by Egeon, the solemn, quasi-tragic tones are insistent and unrelieved:

Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
And by the doom of death end woes and all. (I.i.1)

This is the immediate situation. Egeon, a "Merchant of Syracuse", is an innocent political pawn. The law which Solinus is "not partial to infringe" holds that "since the mortal and intestine jars / 'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us," Syracusans enter Ephesus on pain of death - "Unless a thousand marks be levied" as a ransom. Egeon has little money and is "Therefore by law condemn'd to die." He accepts the sentence with melancholy resignation:

Yet this my comfort; when your words are done,
My woes end likewise with the setting sun. (26)

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- 1) Op. cit., p. 69.
 - 2) Ibid.
 - 3) Ibid.
 - 4) Ibid., p. 64.

However, the atmosphere, for all its solemnity, is relatively informal, and the Duke invites Egeon to

say in brief the cause
Why thou departedst from thy native home,
And for what cause thou cam'st to Ephesus, (28)

It would be easy to be sarcastic at the expense of the convention here. Shakespeare does two things, in order to make this play a comedy in the mediaeval sense - in Vincent de Beauvais' definition, "poesis exordium triste laeto fine commutans" ("a poem that transforms a sad beginning into a happy ending").¹⁾ First he presents, in the protasis, a character who is in a state of wretchedness (which can later be transformed by changing circumstances into a state of joy). Second, he uses that character to supply, in answer to the Duke's request, an inset narrative which unfolds the events leading up to this sorry state of affairs - necessary information regarding the two pairs of twins with which the ensuing scenes are to be principally concerned.

This inset flashback is Shakespeare's invocation of a classical device, called by Renaissance commentators narratio - "in which the argument of the play is set forth" (Willichius).²⁾ In The Menaechmi, the corresponding information is offered by the jesting Prologue. The mode of the Egeon scene is, however, closer to that of the second scene in The Tempest or, to cite an example on a smaller scale, to Egeus' indictment early in A Midsummer Night's Dream. In all three of these narratives, the mode is that of a romantic tale. Certainly the mode does not lend itself easily to dramatic treatment, although in The Tempest Shakespeare was lavish in his admixture of varied textures and characters in the narratio scene - introducing the mysterious unearthly music of the Island, as well as the characters of Ariel and Caliban (both in argument with Prospero) and the "brave form" of Ferdinand, which so amazes Miranda. Set beside these richly poetic evocations, the Egeon scene seems almost oppressively lacking in variety. But it achieves what it sets out to do. It offers a strong and suggestive dramatic contrast to the errors action, and, as in The Tempest, it enables the dramatist, for the rest of the play, to devote his full attention to the drama of the present moment. For the inset narrative is primarily a window through which the attention of the audience is trained on the past in the context of the present, as Egeon turns his mind to the events leading up to his "doom of death":

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- 1) Cited by Nevill Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy," in Shakespeare Criticism, 1935 - 60, ed. by Ridler, p. 204.
 - 2) Cited by M.T. Herrick, Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century, p. 28.

A heavier task could not have been impos'd,
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable. (31)

Scene one reads like a mediaeval "tragedie" lacking only Fortune's last relentless stroke.

Egeon tells of his marriage "Unto a woman happy but for me," the "joy" of his early married life, his "prosperous voyages," the birth of his twin sons, the purchase of the twin attendants for the sons (36-60). All these are happy events. Then the chain of mishaps begins. The storm which sinks the ship carrying Egeon, his wife, their twin sons, and the twin servants is now described, but not in terms of the violence of the elements (as in Othello); nor is it enacted on stage (as in the opening scene of The Tempest). Egeon's narrative pointedly highlights the human implications of the storm: "our fearful minds," "the incessant weepings of my wife," the "piteous plainings of the pretty babes/ That mourn'd for fashion."¹⁾

The gods, apparently merciless to the end, go further and inflict an "unjust divorce" on husband and wife, parents and children - "burdening" father and mother alike with "sorrow and woe."

Thus [concludes Egeon] have you heard me sever'd from my bliss,
That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd
To tell sad stories of my own mishaps. (118)

Shakespeare insistently emphasises the unrelieved misery of Egeon's "mishaps." The language is redolent of the tones of doom and the fates: "doom of death," "woes" (1), "heavier task" (31), "griefs unspeakable" (32), "sorrow" (35), "had not our hap been bad" (38), "Hapless Egeon, whom the fates have mark'd/To bear the extremity of dire mishap" (140), "Hapless and hopeless" Egeon, who is merely procrastinating "his lifeless end" (157), and who is "doom'd to die" (154).²⁾

All this is in the true mediaeval vein. In fact, Boethius offers an instructive view of the philosophical attitude implicit in Egeon's "sad stories."³⁾

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- 1) In romance, the recurrent emblem of Fortune's blows is the storm: "the loud blastes of the wind ... [and] the see menasinge with flodes" (Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophie, transl. by Chaucer, in Chaucer, Complete Works, ed. by Skeat, pp. 130 - 205).
 - 2) Baldwin points out that the "cumulative significance of [these] terms ... may become clearer, if we permit Holyoke (1612) to define 'MISHAP, vide misfortune.' 'MISFORTUNE. 1 Infortunium, n. calamitas, miseria, infoelicitas, fatum, n. casus, m.' Misfortune, mishap, hapless, all end up as fatum and casus." (Compositional Genetics, p. 121).
 - 3) As C.S. Lewis attests, the De Consolatione Philosophiae "was for centuries one of the most influential books ever written in Latin. It was translated into Old High German, Italian, Spanish, and Greek; into French by Jean de Meung; into English by Alfred, Chaucer, Elizabeth I, and others ..." (The Discarded Image, p. 75).

Boethius regards Fortune as governed by "the resoun of god" (I. Prose vi. 98), to which "it bihoveth thee to ben obeisaunt" (II. Prose i. 122). The imprisoned Boethius' suffering is exacerbated by his failure to understand the nature of Fortune. Fortune hasn't changed towards him: "Alwey tho ben hir maneres" (II. Prose i. 57). She bestows happiness which is hers to take away. Man should not feel wretched on that account; "for thinges that semen now sorye, passen also" (II. Prose iii. 87). Boethius has merely discovered the "double visage" of the goddess. Her very mutability "yiveth thee rightful cause of hope to han yit beter thinges" (II. Prose. ii. 90). Because of the natural processes of flux and change, Boethius' very wretchedness is itself a premonition of "beter thinges." This is, very crudely, the philosophical basis of sixteenth century romance and of Shakespearean romantic comedy.

Such a paradigm is exemplified by Greene's prose romance, Menaphon (1589), a work that is explicitly invoked in the last scene of Errors.¹⁾ Greene's work embodies the main structural features of the Errors romance envelope, which were in any case the stock-in-trade of romance: separation of husband and wife in a storm at sea; a shipwreck; crossed loves; the wife's child carried off by a pirate and brought up by a king (similarly, the Duke of Ephesus has for twenty years been Ephesian Antipholus' "patron" - V.i.326); a drama of mistakings, leading to the entry of a mysterious Prophetess who reveals all in a climactic recognition scene, in which two characters are threatened with death by execution (like Egeon). The heroine of Menaphon is, like Egeon,

born to mishaps and foreappointed to sinister
fortunes, whose bloomes were ripened by mischance, and
whose fruite is like to wither with despaire2)

She finds that there is

no prevention to divert the Fates, nor no means to
call backe the balefull hurt of Fortune Chaunce
is like Janus double faced, as well full of smiles
to comfort, as of frownes to dismay..... Fortune
in her highest extreames is most unconstant: when
the tempest of her wrath is most fearfull, then
looke for a calme..... 3)

1) The name, Menaphon, occurs in Errors, V.i.368. T.W. Baldwin regards Menaphon as a source. See On The Compositional Genetics of "The Comedy of Errors," pp. 92 - 3.
2) Menaphon, in Greene, Life and Works, VI. 133.
3) Ibid., p. 45. S.C. Chew's discussion of the literary and iconographical tradition of the "bi-frontality" of the Goddess Fortune does not take Greene or Boethius into account: "Time and Fortune," pp. 86 - 8.

After the literal and metaphorical tempest of Fortune's wrath, the members of the shattered family groups in Menaphon are reunited: husband and wife with their son and the wife's father, who have been face-to-face for some time but unaware of one another's identities. Greene comments on the shape of the action: "The successe of the forerehearsed Catastrophe growing so comicall,"¹⁾ In all this "are deciphered the variable effects of Fortune, the wonders of Love, the triumphes of unconstant Time ..." (title-page). "Truth," as the title-page of Greene's Pandosto proclaims, may "by means of sinister fortune " be concealed, "yet by Time, in spite of fortune, it is most manifestly revealed."²⁾

The bases of this romance paradigm are thus the ambivalence of Fortune; and the classical sententia, Temporis filia veritas.³⁾ The second of these premises is just as firmly constitutive of the Errors paradigm as the first. Errors is, looked at from this angle, a romance about the "Thirty-three years" during which the members of Egeon's family have been separated, a time in which Emilia has "gone in travail" of her sons.

and till this present hour
My heavy burden ne'er delivered. (V.i.400)

Only in the final romantic-comic recognition scene will Time triumph:

After so long grief, such felicity. (406)

The central "errors" action, which is at the heart of this comedy (as its title rightly claims), is complementary to this. Here the place of Fortune is usurped by his less obviously threatening farcical cousin, Chance or Coincidence. Yet it is this Chance, this "sympathised one day's error" (V.i.398) that precipitates what Greene calls "the Triumph of Time,"⁴⁾ and exposes Time's daughter, Truth. The errors action, enclosed by the gloomy spectacle of Egeon's years of suffering, is at the same time the comic crisis of these thirty-three years of "travail."

Despite the undeniable romance seriousness of the Egeon scene, attempts have been made to farcify it. Its cavalier treatment in Clifford Williams's Royal Shakespeare Company production of 1965 is a case in point. According to J.R. Brown, Williams introduced a comic Vizier for the Duke and twisted some

1) Ibid., p.145.

2) Cited in The Winter's Tale, ed. by J.H.P. Pafford, p. xxvii.

3) See S.C. Chew's discussion of this figure in The Virtues Reconciled, pp. 69 - 88.

4) The sub-title of Pandosto.

of the earnest rhetoric into jokes: phrases like "The pleasing punishment that women bear" and "such as seafaring men provide for storms"

both raise laughter; and by breaking the sentence after "inquisitive" and stressing that word's twentieth-century connotations of mere impertinence to the exclusion of its usual Elizabethan ones of serious investigation, "became inquisitive after his brother" yields two rounds of laughter. 1)

Like Greene's narrative in Menaphon or Gower's in Confessio Amantis, Egeon's is unredeemed by subtleties and nuances like those of Prospero's story. Unwilling to accept the unrelieved gloom at face value, the actors attempt to inject life in the only way they know - by the introduction of crude stage business. By implication they classify this scene in Arnold's category of "situations from the representation of which no poetical enjoyment can be derived." These are

those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance, in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. 2)

Arnold finds them "painful, not tragic." Superficially, Egeon's looks like such a "situation." But it must be remembered that his story constitutes not the whole action of the play but only a local narrative inset. As such, it has about it, despite touches of stiltedness here and there, an almost stately impressiveness: this old man "severed" from his "bliss" and wandering over the face of the earth, telling "sad stories of my own mishaps." This unrelieved gloom supplies a strongly contrasted setting for the comedy of errors fantasy and the domestic ups and downs of the Antipholi. This is no ordinary prologue like that of The Menaechmi. It is a dramatic induction like that of The Shrew.³⁾ Like the latter play, Errors rests structurally on a relationship between two contrasted stories with related themes. Egeon and Antipholus of Syracuse are both looking for the lost Antipholus. Both are, nominally at least, exposed to the same dangers. But the treatment of each character is contrasted. The deliberate adoption of the mode of linear narrative, characteristic of romance, strengthens this contrast, which will only be dissipated by attempts to farcify the Egeon scene.

1) "The Royal Shakespeare Company, 1965," p. 112.

2) Arnold, Preface (1853), in Poetical Works, p. xviii.

3) See M.C. Bradbrook on the induction, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy, pp. 81 - 5.

(iv) Comic errors : some aspects

Although Egeon and his sons, the Antipholi, are alike the victims of "dire mishap," Shakespeare makes no sustained attempt to "inter-weave" the respective mishaps. The threat of death may apply theoretically to both father and son (Antipholus of Syracuse is warned of the danger to which his visit to Ephesus exposes him - I.ii.1-7); the sum of money (a thousand marks) needed to ransom Egeon may be exactly the amount that his travelling son entrusts to his Dromio to carry to the Centuar for safety; but Egeon's plight is all but forgotten as the errors action takes its course. It must not be criticised on that score. The Egeon-scene is a dramatic-narrative induction, not a sub-plot.

The play's second scene opens with Antipholus of Syracuse in conversation with his Dromio and First Merchant. The atmosphere is deliberately casual and matter-of-fact. The Merchant's warning to Antipholus to be careful, "Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate" (2) and lest he, like the Syracusan merchant, be condemned to die "ere the weary sun set in the west" (7), lacks urgency. The mood is reflective, as Antipholus prepares to see the sights, to

view the manners of the town,
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings,
And then return and sleep within mine inn,
For with long travel I am stiff and weary. (I.ii.12)

Antipholus is depicted as a tourist, soberly inspecting the customs of the Ephesians. This middle-class, mercantile world forms a marked contrast with the romantic milieu of the opening scene - the formal, elevated diction, the "mortal and intestine jars,"¹⁾ the high drama and adventure. This image of Antipholus is also a fitting contrast with what is to come. He is relaxed, assured, composed, completely at his ease, quite content to entrust all his money to his "trusty villain."²⁾ He comments good-humouredly, even affectionately, on Dromio's "merry jests" which "Lighten my humour," when "I am dull with care and melancholy" (20-1). It so happens that Antipholus is in just such a mood at this time. No sooner is he alone on stage than he is reflecting:

He that commends me to mine own content
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
(Unseen, inquisitive) confounds himself.
So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself. (I.ii.33)

1) Cf. Antonio's predicament in Twelfth Night.
2) Here "villain" means "slave" or "bondman" (NCS).

Shakespeare is carefully expanding the mood of the opening lines to set off the impending confusion. This is the dramatic force of this almost restful melancholy.

This soliloquy furthermore establishes links with Egeon's sad tale of how this very Antipholus, "My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care" (I.i.124), had set out five years earlier, "inquisitive/After his brother." The reflective melancholy of Antipholus' lines complements Egeon's "hopeless and hapless" feeling of despair (I.i.157). Morally, if not literally, father and son are in the same boat. H.F. Brooks, as we have seen, treats the soliloquy as a meditation on Antipholus' risking of his identity. Brooks makes a connection between this passage and the opening lines of the scene, where the Merchant warns Antipholus to "give out you are of Epidamnum." Both, argues Brooks, concern the "identity,"¹⁾ which Antipholus sees himself as risking, and the "idea of 'losing himself' is taken up in a profound sense."²⁾ Antipholus' point is that his wanderings over the face of the earth are like the movements of one drop of water seeking another in the ocean. Because the one drop cannot find the other, he "confounds himself" (i.e. mingles indistinguishably with the rest).³⁾ To find mother and brother, he loses himself, or moves in places where no one knows either who he is or what sort of person he is. This is the human angle of the situation - already broached in Egeon's narrative. Unlike Plautus, Shakespeare takes some account of the human predicament.

Because of its seriously meditative tone, this soliloquy may seem more weighty than it really is. But it must be viewed in context, the context of errors. Antipholus' cheerless reverie is abruptly interrupted by the entry of the Ephesian Dromio. It is his appearance, alternating with that of his twin, that not only qualifies but gives comic significance to Antipholus' musings. He greets the servant in casual confidence, with a jest about their birthdays: "Here comes the almanac of my true date" (41). This tone of casual confidence, by now firmly established, highlights the sense of comic shock which accompanies Dromio's reply to Antipholus' half irate, half enquiring greeting: "How now? How chance thou art returned so soon?" (42). It is this contrast, the relationship between Antipholus' initial assurance and his subsequent discomposure, that imparts to his error the character of a "gay mis-step."⁴⁾ These tones in turn prevent Antipholus' error from assuming a quasi-tragic character.⁵⁾

1) Op. cit., p. 57.

2) Ibid., p. 58.

3) Unions's gloss, cited by Foakes. I discuss the identity imagery in more detail below.

4) This is Julius Vexler's happy term: see his "The Essence of Comedy," reprinted in part in Theories of Comedy, ed. by P. Lauter, p. 444.

5) Cf. Gwyn Williams's view that Errors "was kept by Shakespeare on a comic level only by the introduction of the two Dromios" (op. cit., p. 71)

Dromio's giddy, effervescent blank verse (a notable advance on the verse of Jack Juggler and other of his ilk) together with its ironic overtones (this is "the almanac of [Antipholus'] true date"; but it is not Antipholus' own "almanac") shatters Antipholus' melancholy repose:

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell;
My mistress made it one upon my cheek;
She is hot because the meat is cold;
The meat is cold because you come not home;
You come not home because you have no stomach;
You have no stomach having broke your fast;
But we that know what 'tis to fast and pray,
Are penitent for your default to-day.(44)

Antipholus' response - "Stop in your wind sir ..." (53) - suggests that he is all but swamped by Dromio's turbulent rhetoric. The rest of the episode between the two of them is an expanded contrast to the earlier tones - Antipholus' composure and melancholy. It is furthermore a comic-ironic development of Antipholus' observation that Dromio "very oft .../Lightens my humour with his merry jests" (21). He thinks Dromio is jesting and tells him: "I am not in a sportive humour now" (58). He asks where Dromio has left the money. Dromio in turn asks him: "I pray you jest, sir, as you sit at dinner" (62). Antipholus tells him that "these jests are out of season" (68) and orders him to "have done your foolishness" (72).

Shakespeare plays skilfully and energetically with the comedy of cross-purposes, contrasting Antipholus' growing anger with the buoyant good humour of the jesting Dromio, whose command of comic rhetoric has echoes of the earlier clownish servant-Vice, the mischievous practical joker of which kind Jack Juggler and Common Conditions are exemplars. Mad wags, mischief-makers and buffoons they are in Later Tudor drama.¹⁾ When Antipholus threatens to "break that merry scone of yours" (79), if the "thousand marks" are not produced, Dromio's reply takes the form of a lively eruption of quibbles on "marks":

I have some marks of yours upon my pate;
Some of my mistress' marks upon my shoulders;
But not a thousand marks between you both.(82)

This speech complements on the verbal level the beating which Antipholus now administers. Dromio is verbally and physically tossed to and fro, as his comic rhetoric declares:

Am I so round with you, as you with me,

1) E.K. Chambers cites Cushman's hypothesis that "the term, Vice, came to be simply a synonym for a buffoon" (The Mediaeval Stage, II. 203). See also F.P. Wilson's discussion of the Vice in the Tudor Interlude, The English Drama, 1485 - 1585, pp. 59 - 66.

That like a football you do spurn me thus?
You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither;
If I last in this service, you must case me in leather. (II.i.82)

He describes to Adriana his dialogue with the alien Antipholus:

"'Tis dinner-time," quoth I; "my gold," quoth he;
"Your meat will burn," quoth I; "my gold," quoth he;
"Will you come?" quoth I; "my gold," quoth he,
"Where is the thousand marks I gave thee, villain?"
"The pig," quoth I, "is burn'd"; "my gold," quoth he. (II.i.60)

These lines reflect stylistically not only his bewilderment but his character as a "football," pitched to and fro between master and mistress. The implications of this comic rhetoric for characterization must now be considered.

As K.M. Lea remarks, the Dromios are the slaves of Latin comedy, but "in behaviour and misfortunes they are the servants of the commedia dell' arte. They are beaten as regularly as any Zanni and for the same reasons."¹⁾ Common confusions over messages or the delivery of articles are enough to provoke the most violent contradictions and misunderstandings. A marked feature of the beatings of servants which is not characteristic of a Latin play like Amphitruo (where Sosia is really afraid of Mercury's fists)²⁾ is the mechanical rigidity of the servants' reaction. This formalized conception of character, the response to a conventional type-situation, is obvious in Zanni, who as Nicoll points out usually made their appearance as pairs of servants.³⁾ The second of these Zanni is a ridiculous, dull-witted peasant, usually from Bergamo.⁴⁾ Although the early records of these characters' antics are scanty,⁵⁾ the ever-present wooden batte or slap-stick is suggestive of a formalized comic conception of beating, in which the normal entailment of pain is cut and replaced by a droll comic detachment. In the primitive Revesby Sword Play, the Fool has this kind of comically detached view of his predicament.⁶⁾ When his son, Pickle Herring, tells him they are going to cut off his (the Fool's) head, he responds in terms of wonder rather than anger: "My head? I never had my head taken off in all my life" (144). When told he will be buried, he replies in similar vein: "Churchyard! I never was buried there in all my life" (153). Like the combat between the Fool and the Hobby-horse, the execution of the

1) Op. cit., p. 438.

2) See their encounter op. cit., ll. 292 - 395.

3) Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 265, which cites Petrucci's distinction between the first, or "witty," and the second, or "foolish," Zanni.

4) Note Shakespeare's use of the term, "zany," in Love's Labour's Lost, V.ii. 463, and in Twelfth Night, I.v.84. In The Shrew, V.i.67, Bergamo is mentioned as the home of Tranio (presumably related to the type of the first Zanni, "clever, apt, witty, keen").

5) Ibid., p. 275; Nicoll is speaking particularly of Arlecchino, the most famous of the Zanni.

6) The text used here is that in Adams (ed.), Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, pp. 357 - 64.

Fool by his avaricious sons "seems to resolve itself into a dance."¹⁾ The victim makes his will and "falls on the floor." Then, when Pickle Herring "stamps with his foot," the Fool rises and speaks. "The dancers [his sons] put... their swords round his neck again"(S.D.). He falls, only to be recalled by Pickle Herring. All, as Chambers comments, "without the help of a Doctor."²⁾ Like Zanni, like the Dromios, he does not feel pain. This natural human entailment is cut. Shakespeare's strategy is less outrageously crude than that of the anonymous folk-dramatist. Dromio of Ephesus, for instance, is gifted with no ordinary head. When Adriana threatens to "break thy pate across," his reply is a punning verbalisation of the incongruous situation:

And he [Antipholus] will bless that cross with other beating;
Between you I shall have a holy head.(II.i.78).

Dromio of Syracuse responds to his Antipholus' threat to beat his "sconce" in similar vein:

Sconce call you it? so you would leave
battering it, I had rather have it a head;
and you use these blows long, I must
get a sconce for a head, and insconce it
too, or else I shall seek my wit in my
shoulders.(II.ii.35) 3)

Each Dromio is indeed, as Antipholus of Syracuse puts it, used "for my fool"; each is, as comic butt, something less than human - conditioned, in Bergson's words, by being "something mechanical encrusted upon the living."⁴⁾ The characterization of the Dromios is a refinement of a stereotype, of which Zanni and the Fool in the Ravesby Play are ruder examples.

The Dromios, then, are not servants (as Messenio and Sosia are servants); they are essentially actors figuratively wearing the comic masks of the clown. Their antics and their stock tic of unhuman, hollow-voiced, vacant puzzlement as errors crowd upon them are pure fooling: what Santayana calls the clown's "pure historic impulse."⁵⁾ The clown sees "everything in caricature," because he sees appearances only, and he sees them "with the lucid innocence of a child."⁵⁾ This is the tradition shared by the legendary Tarlton,

1) E.K. Chambers, The English Folk - Play, p. 121.

2) Ibid.

3) Onions notes that "sconce" is "a jocular term for the head"; Foakes adds that Dromio is "quibbling on the senses, 'head,' 'a small fort' ('so you would leave battering'), and a 'protective screen or shelter' ('I must get a sconce for a head')."

4) Op. cit., p. 84.

5) "The Comic Mask," in Theories of Comedy, ed. by P. Lauter, p. 414.

with his "happy unhappy answers" and "his very looks and actions" that did "make his folly excellent."¹⁾

Fused with the clowning are the earnest musings of the alien Antipholus, the "straight man" vainly (and hence comically) trying to use his intelligence:

They say this town is full of cozenage,
As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,
And many such-like liberties of sin:
If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner.
I'll to the Centaur to go seek this slave;
I greatly fear my money is not safe.(I.ii.97)

The moral world of comedy is set off against the non-moral world of farce, of men who function as "footballs."

Antipholus' soliloquy, like other lines in a similar vein, is not to be regarded simply as a "way of solving the problem of credibility,"²⁾ as Shakespeare's means of explaining the characters' general "lack of suspicion and rational inquiry."³⁾ The insistence of Quiller-Couch,⁴⁾ Bertrand Evans, and Cleanth Brooks and R.B. Heilman, that Shakespeare's main problem was to make the action "credible," seems to miss the comic centre of the play.

Antipholus of Syracuse rationalizes that the cross-purposes are easily explicable as Dromio's "merry jests" or that some "dark-working sorcerers" must have "changed" Dromio's mind. These rationalizations, which later take a quasi-metaphysical direction, are essentially dimensions of the comic errors. As the action proceeds, Antipholus' sense of being "confounded" (or mingled indistinguishably with all the other water-drops) will soon be heightened, when not only the particular person he is but also what sort of person he is will be called in question, as Adriana and Luciana mistake him for a would-be adulterer, for one who has "quite forgot/A husband's office" (III.ii.1). He becomes increasingly the victim of his resemblance to his twin brother.

It is the absurdity that Shakespeare high-lights - the absurdity of the various inferences that are rationally made. The central symbol of this absurdity is of course the inherent ludicrousness of identical twins - "two faces that are alike, although neither of them excites laughter by itself, make us

1) Fuller, Worthies, p. 517; ibid., p.518; Bastard, quoted in Shakespeare Jest-Books, ed. by Hazlitt, II.256.

2) Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies, p.6.

3) Cleanth Brooks and R.B. Heilman, Understanding Drama, Appendix, p.23.

4) N C S edn. of Errors, p. xxii.

laugh when together, on account of their likeness."¹⁾ At the end of the play Shakespeare is quite explicit about this. As the citizen Dromio looks at his twin, he observes,

Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother:
I see by you I am a sweet fac'd youth . (V.1.417)

The "glass" image recalls Messenio's speculum tuum ("your mirror") uttered when the two Menaechmi are brought face-to-face at the end of Plautus' comedy. More important, it also recalls the woodcuts illustrating Brant's Narrenschiff (or Ship of Fools) which repeatedly exploit the similar appearance of fools. The fools in Brant's piece are moreover "a mirror" for the fools to whom it is addressed, a mirror "Where each his counterfeite may see."²⁾ One of Holbein's illustrations to Erasmus' Moriae Encomium (or Praise of Folly) utilizes the device of a man and his reflection in a mirror to point his folly. This picture shows a man, his cowl with its ass's ears hanging down behind his neck, while he contemplates his reflection in a mirror. As he does so, this reflection, this image of himself, sticks out its tongue at him and mocks him.³⁾

What these four examples from Shakespeare, Plautus, Brant, and Erasmus share is the idea of mimicry. Because there is something inescapably absurd about man's likeness to his fellows, Horace can pose the question, Quis est non stultus?⁴⁾ The same notion lies behind the commonplace, recurrent in Erasmus and Shakespeare, of life as a comedy.⁵⁾ There is something inherently undignified about each man's unconscious mimicry of his fellows in this "fond pageant" of life. One man's indistinguishability from another is the point of Berowne's "four woodcocks in a dish."⁶⁾ Both Plautus and Shakespeare (as well as writers of commedia dell' arte scenari) seized on this comic datum: the absurdity of identical twins, each twin unwittingly mocking and burlesquing the other.

Far from being inclined to play down the "impossibility" or the "incredibility" of such a likeness, Shakespeare actually duplicates it by introducing a further pair of twins. Where Plautus in The Menaechmi had only one servant,

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- 1) Pascal's comment, cited in H. Bergson, "Laughter," Comedy, ed. by W. Sypher, p. 82, and H. Levin, Refractions, p. 130.
 - 2) I have used E.H. Zeydel's translation of the Narrenschiff. This quotation is from p. 58.
 - 3) Opera Omnia, IV. 422.
 - 4) Satirae, II.iii.158: "Who is not a fool?"
 - 5) Praise of Folly, transl. by Dean, p.66; and As You Like It, II.vii. 136-66.
 - 6) See pp. 6 - 7, above.

Sosicles's Messenio, Shakespeare, perhaps having Amphitruo in mind, supplies the Antipholi with twin servants.¹⁾ To assert that the improbability of such a situation is the price of our amusement is to miss the point. The alien Antipholus is not to be regarded as obtuse for not comprehending the truth of the situation. This entailment has, as we have seen, been skilfully cut by the introduction of tangential comic preoccupations - his concern for his identity, his suspicions that he and Dromio are being bewitched, and so on. The play is in a sense a reductio ad absurdum not merely of man's frequent and natural inability to see the truth, even if he be actually looking for it, but also of his perverse predilection for moral blind alleys and fools' paradises. The alien Antipholus, like his twin, is however progressively overwhelmed by the circumstances that seem to envelope him and his Dromio.

(v) Errors and Time

Reference has been made in chapter I to Shakespeare's comedies as reflecting a sense of time's passing, of the natural cycle which is crystallised in Jaques's seven ages of man. This is the concept of time implied in Charles's description of Duke Senior, who with "a many merry men" "fleets the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world" (As You Like It, I.i.108). The notion of time as an abstract sequence Cicero called tempus, and he contrasted it with time as occasio, that species of time which offers "an opportunity for doing something."²⁾ The latter is the conception behind Two Gentlemen, Richard II, and Henry IV - the conception of time as propitious moments either "lost" or "redeemed."

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- 1) Bullough sees in Errors "an attempt to outdo the Roman by a manifold complication of his effects" (op. cit., I.5), a view endorsed by Tillyard (Shakespeare's Early Comedies, p.47). W.H.D. Rouse bases his comparative analysis of The Menaechmi and Errors on the number of meetings each character has with a stranger. By this computation, the proportion of such meetings in Shakespeare and Plautus is 50:17, or nearly three to one. "This," argues Rouse, "was made possible by the invention of the second Dromio" (cited in Baldwin, Compositional Genetics, p. 83). But if one calculates, à la Lambinus or Gascoigne, in terms of the number of errors in each play, one finds that proportionately Shakespeare uses "fewer cases of error than Plautus" (A.C. Hamilton, The Early Shakespeare, p.92). Shakespeare, by introducing a second twin, increases the possibilities but not the proportion of error. He has not written a play like Locatelli's Li Dui Simili de Plauto, which is merely a farcical multiplication of Plautine errors (the scenario has been reprinted in Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, pp. 591 - 601).
 - 2) De Inventione, I.39,40. See also S.C. Chew, "Time and Fortune" and R. Wittkower, "Chance, Time, and Fortune" - both on the iconography of Time. Wittkower has wrongly and misleadingly translated occasio as "chance," instead of as "opportunity."

In Errors both these notions of time are not only implied by the dramatic construction but explicitly treated in the dialogue, where they are, however, given peculiar inflections.

The opening scene establishes a firm sense of time's passing. The Duke tells Egeon, "I'll limit thee this day" - a motif which is echoed in the first speech in the next scene, where Antipholus is told that the Syracusan merchant "dies ere the weary sun is set" (7) on "This very day" (3). Time is seen as moving onwards towards a particular point or goal. From the first, this factor is central in the dramatic progression. It was important enough for Komisarjevsky to use a large clock as the centrepiece of the set in his 1938 Stratford production.¹⁾ First Merchant makes an appointment to dine with Antipholus "at five o'clock" (I.ii.26), the scheduled time of the execution, as Second Merchant points out. (V.i.118).

Shakespeare develops this sense of time's passing in terms of time's pressure. Antipholus of Ephesus is late for dinner. Because of this unpunctuality, "the capon burns" etc. Dromio tells the alien Antipholus (in error) that "your maw, like mine, should be your clock" (I.ii.66). Adriana and Luciana are waiting for Antipholus (76). Adriana "doth fast till you come home to dinner" (89). She is very impatient: "how impatience loureth in your face" (II.i.86). As Luciana points out,

A man is master of his liberty;
Time is their master, and when they see time,
They'll come or go (II.i.7)

As we shall see, Luciana's meaning is, as it were, fulfilled in the action.

When Dromio of Ephesus enters (I.ii), the alien Antipholus asks him why he is "return'd so soon" Dromio is amazed: "Return'd so soon? rather approach'd too late" (I.ii.43). He then makes a number of jests about time (clock "strucken twelve"; his mistress "made it one upon my cheek"). Not only has Antipholus failed to "keep hours" (III.1.2); time is now proceeding to assert its comic mastery over him and the other characters as they repeatedly fall victim to errors of timing. Thus Antipholus of Syracuse asks his Dromio, "But say, sir, is it dinner-time?" (II.ii.54)

Here Shakespeare is making use of occasio, the propitious moment, but in an inverted form. Instead of depicting Occasio presenting herself with forelock dangling, ready to be grasped, the dramatist represents events happening fortuitously to people. This is the aspect of time called casus. Cicero

1) Foakes, ed. cit., p. liv.

sees casus as a manifestation of Fortune.¹⁾ In Errors, casus has to do with events happening before or after one another or simultaneously. Because these events happen either "too soon" or "too late (42,43), they are "errors." Hence Dromio's jests are "out of season" (68), and Antipholus tells his own Dromio to "learn to jest in good time; there's a time for all things." (II.ii.63)

This is the sententia that forms the basis of the forty-line duologue between the alien Antipholus and his Dromio. Foakes argues that this sententia "suggests how intimately proper timing is linked with good order "(note to II.ii. 54 - 109). While there is no denying the simple truth of Foakes's observation, it seems that the comic implications are more far-reaching than he would suggest. At the heart of the duologue is the connection that Dromio makes between this sententia and the image of "the plain bald pate of Father Time" (II.ii.69). The burden here is man's subjection to tempus: "There's no time for a man to recover his hair that grows bald by nature" (71), for "Time himself is bald, and therefore to the world's end will have bald followers " (105). Time is indeed man's master (8): both as tempus and as casus. The characters in Errors are literally victims of the comic "changes and chances of this mortal life,"²⁾ as Time moves inexorably onward from dinner-time, then to divers arranged meetings, variously frustrated or turned awry. Antipholus of Ephesus invites Balthazar and Angelo to his home to eat the much-discussed dinner, but they find themselves shut out. This Antipholus then sends Angelo to fetch the chain, and the dinner-venue is changed to the Porpentine "some hour hence." Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio emerge from the Phoenix, fully intending to leave that night: "If any ship put out, then straight, away " (III.ii.184). But Antipholus is accosted by Angelo who promises to visit him "at supper-time " (173). Angelo tells his creditor, the Second Merchant, that "at five o'clock" Antipholus will be settling his account (IV.i.10). "Both wind and tide stays" for this Merchant (46), and "the hour steals on " (52). His "business will not brook this dalliance " (59) It is not until "the dial points at five" (V.i.118) and "time's extremity" is revealed in the misery of old Egeon condemned and apparently disowned by his son that the true direction of the story becomes clear: what Robert Greene in Menaphon and Pandosto calls "the triumph of time."

The sense of time as tempus and that of time as casus are thus blended. The latter, however, turns out to be more than merely a matter of what Foakes calls "mistiming."³⁾ The hurly-burly and hustle of error and mistiming, of

1) Op. cit., II. 96.

2) Collect in the Book of Common Prayer.

3) Ed. cit., notes to I.ii.43,68, II.ii. 54 - 109, IV.i. 41 - 80, IV. ii. 53 - 62.

comic pressure and cross-purposes that thrust the action to the desired point in time are the subject of a comic theme and variations: as the alien Dromio tells Adriana how her husband has been arrested "Not on a band, but on /A chain, do you not hear it ring?"

Adriana. What, the chain?

Dro.S. No, no, the bell, 'tis time that I were gone

It was two ere I left him, and now the clock strikes one.

Adriana. The hours come back; that did I never hear.

Dro.S. O yes, if any hour meet a sergeant, 'a turns back for very fear.

Adriana. As if time were in debt; how fondly dost thou reason.

Dro.S. Time is a very bankrupt, and owes more than he's worth to season.

Nay, he's a thief too; have you not heard men say

That time comes stealing on by night and day?

If 'a be in debt and theft, and a sergeant in the way,

Hath he not reason to turn back an hour in a day? (IV.ii.51)

The comic rhetoric here presents a crazy impression of mistiming - a veritable comic transfiguration of mistiming. This indeed is what is to be found in the later scenes of the play as error, mistiming, delusion grow increasingly out of control in an apparently topsy-turvy world, a world conditioned at all levels, not merely by disorder but by comic chaos, the apotheosis of disorder.

This comic chaos, coupled with the sense of time as moving onwards, as pressing, is heightened by movement of the characters, all milling around as they are progressively driven to their wits' ends, victims of the events which happen to them. This is why Errors must be played at speed. As E.C. Bentley asks, "Why do directors of farce always call for tempo, tempo, tempo?"¹⁾ He cites the crazy chases of the Keystone Cops, men taking on the character of machines. In Errors, Shakespeare employs this farcical datum, but through the injection of insistent moral interest he employs it in the creation of comedy. The Antipholi, Adriana, and Luciana all transcend the Plautine-comedia dell' arte level of character as automaton. They display feelings distinctly above the behaviorist level of a mechanical response to a stimulus. In Errors, there are apparent the seeds of Shakespeare's later romantic comedy of character.

(vi) Human interest: domestic relations and romantic love

Errors, then, may be seen as exploiting or developing the farce data - dependence on the "long arm of coincidence," a mad plot which, gathering momentum, carries all before it, the spirit of mischief and fun. But the level of the merely physical discomforts and routine reactions to stimuli is built up to embrace ordinary human issues, like marriage and romantic love. The tonal

1) The Life of the Drama, pp.247 - 8.

range, furthermore, is distilled into a comical-fantastical dream world that in its way anticipates the world of A Midsummer Night's Dream. This section will be devoted to discussion of the former of these - the marriage and romantic love interest.

From her first appearance (in II.i), Adriana is represented as a shrew. She is a descendant of the shrewish wife in a broadside ballad called The Cruell Shrow - who accuses her virtuous and patient husband of meeting a whore;¹⁾ she is also a descendant of the shrew in Dekker's Raven's Almanac - to whom is administered "a medicine to cure the plague of her tongue";²⁾ she is a descendant of the many shrews of Tudor bourgeois literature and sub-literature.³⁾ But unlike these shrews and equally unlike the Wife in The Menaechmi, Adriana is no crude farcical butt. Whereas the wives in both Plautus' play and Dekker's tale are derided and held up to the mockery and scorn of the audience, Shakespeare's shrew in Errors moves on an altogether higher moral plane. In fact, her initial colloquy with Luciana has all the moral seriousness of Erasmus' corresponding colloquy, anonymously translated in 1557 as "A Mery Dialogue, Declaringe the Propertyes of Shrowde Shrewes, and Honest Wyves,"⁴⁾ an analogue, if not a source, of the Shakespearean episode. What is more, Shakespeare's, like Erasmus', colloquy is replete with allusions not only to the Bible but to the Homilies as well,⁵⁾ which further enriches the high-comic quality of the scenes.

In Erasmus' piece, the shrewish wife, significantly names Xanthippe (Socrates' wife, a byword in shrewishness), is reproved by her friend, Eulalia (or "sweetly speaking") for her militant intolerance of her husband's failings:

Eulalia. Doest thou not then take him up, wel favoredly for stumbling?
Xanthippe. As he deserveth, I spare no tonge. (p. 59)

This is because Xanthippe's husband is sometimes late in coming home "longe watched for." The burden of Eulalia's argument is St. Paul's injunction "that wives shoulde bee boner and buxome unto their husbandes with all humylytye, and Peter also bryngethe us an example of Sara, that called her husbande, Abrahame, Lord." (p.60) Eulalia cites examples of wives who have brought peace into their marriages by accepting this view: for it is "the highest dignitie that longeth to the wife to obsequyous unto her spouse." (p.87)

In Errors, Luciana tells Adriana that Antipholus "is the bridle of your will" (II.i.13) - a clear allusion to the warning in the Homily⁶⁾ that a root

1) The Roxburghe Ballads, I.129.

2) Selected Prose Writings, ed. by Pendry, pp. 149 - 52.

3) See Appendix B.

4) The Earliest English Translations of Erasmus, ed. by H. de Vocht, pp. 53 - 93.

5) See T.W. Baldwin, Compositional Genetics, pp.169 - 77, on the "three homilies" in II.i.

6) See "An Homily of the State of Matrimony," in Certain Sermons or Homilies, pp. 462 - 74.

cause of marital discord is "that wicked vice of stubborn will and self-love" (p. 463). Luciana observes that men are "more divine" than the "beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls," yet the latter are "their males' subjects, and at their controls." How much more so should men, "Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls/Be masters to their females and their lords" (II.1.16 - 25). Noble cites Psalms, VIII. 6 - 8 and Genesis, I. 26 as the passages to which Shakespeare is alluding.¹⁾ In the word of Ephesians, "Therefore, as the church is in subjection to Christ, even so let the wives be to their husbands in everie thing" (V.25).²⁾ The relevant words in the Homily bear directly on the action of Errors: "when the wives be stubborn, froward, and malapert, their husbands are compelled thereby to abhor and flee from their own houses" (p. 466).

Shakespeare actively resists any attempt on our part to inject inappropriate or disproportionate pathos into Adriana's predicament which is nevertheless depicted in terms of her anxiety and concern as well as her vexation and anger. Adriana, says her sister, does not realise the nature of the divinely created universe over which man is "Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas" (II. i.21). The objectivity of Luciana's speech (15 - 25) places Adriana's relationship with her husband in the universal pattern. "Headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe" (15) and, according to the Homily, will "weave the web of all miseries and sorrows" (p. 464); in marriage, women "relinquish the liberty of their own rule" (p. 467).³⁾

The drama of the first part of this colloquy between the sisters resides in the vigour and conviction with which Adriana resists the orthodox views of Luciana. "They [i.e. women like Luciana] can be meek that have no other cause" (33); but Adriana is "A wretched soul bruis'd with adversity" (34), "burden'd with ... pain," having an "unkind mate." In these circumstances, a quality like patience is "fool-begg'd" (41), and only "Unfeeling fools can with such wrongs dispense" (103).

Any possible suggestion that Adriana is a poor suffering soul is put squarely in the context: she doesn't accept her God-ordained subjection to

1) Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge, p. 107.

2) Quoted from the Genevan Bible (1601).

3) In this colloquy, the complex of ideas in Adriana's speeches takes on the logical force of "testimony." In the words of Thomas Wilson, "quick sayinges, Proverbes" and, as Raphe Lever put it, "Gods word, his wonders, his miracles and his message, sent to men by angels and Prophets" are all accepted as having "the character of witnesses and the force of argument." Luciana's views are thus not her merely private convictions but the great truths of the apostles et al., recorded in Scripture and propagated in sermons and homilies. (quotations from M. Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, pp. 309 and 92).

her husband - that it "is the hyghest dignitie that longeth to the wyfe to obsequyous unto her spouse," as Eulalia puts it. Hence Luciana's reprimands:

Fie, how impatience loureth in your face.(86)

The skill of Shakespeare's fusion of pathos and criticism in this scene has not been fully recognized.¹⁾ Adriana is no sixteenth-century suffragette. Luciana's admonishings place her too firmly for that. She is a deviant rather than a normative figure, too much a creature of her own emotions to be regarded without criticism.

It is Adriana's moral aberrations that give a further edge to the errors action. She is depicted as quite convinced that her husband's "company must do his minions grace,/While I at home starve for a merry look" (II.i.87 - 8). However, unlike his counterpart in The Menaechmi, the citizen Antipholus, far from betraying his wife, is shown going innocently about his business and actually ordering a gold chain as a present for her. Her impatience and arrogance have their symbolical reward in the "Amphitruo" scene. Here she is hoist with her own petard, as her husband, shut out of his own house, is all but driven to the Porpentine, into the arms of the Courtesan. Here, as a reprisal, he intends to "bestow" the carcanet "(Be it for nothing but to spite my wife)/ Upon mine hostess there"(III.i.117).

This woman that I mean,
My wife (but I protest, without desert)
Hath oftentimes upbraided me withal;
To her will we to dinner" (III.i.111)

Adriana's moral error provides a context for her physical error - her imposition of her husband's identity on his brother and her consequent entertainment of the latter to dinner.

It places Adriana at the centre of a subsidiary moral comedy in which all her intentions, all her suspicions, are ironically placed. Her shrewish impatience is a fertile datum for the ensuing comedy of errors. As she becomes the victim of the determinist practical joke played by chance and time, her emotions and moral attitudes provide a rich field for high comedy. She is never allowed to sink to the level of mere butt - any more than Olivia or Beatrice is. She is shown groping among the confusions, playing blind-man's buff with her married life.

The initial Adriana scene is juxtaposed with the scene in which the local

1) See, for example, Erma Gill's stressing of the "sympathy" which Adriana "calls forth"; she is "modern in her advocacy of the rights of woman" ("The Characters of The Comedy of Errors," p. 90).

Dromio proffers his helter-skelter verbal portrait of his mistress at home, waiting - "The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit" (I.ii.44). All told to the wrong Antipholus. On the one hand we have the flavour of homily, on the other that of jest-book or jig.

This juxtaposition is developed in the episode when Dromio returns to Adriana and interrupts the colloquy with a spate of puns:

Adriana. Say, is your tardy master now at hand?

Dro. E. Nay, he's at two hands with me, and that my two ears
can witness (II.i.44)

- and so on. This brings the element of popular merriment into closer proximity with the homiletic strain. It furthermore brings together the comedy of physical mistakings and the comedy of moral mistakings. Adriana's quasi-farcical non-communication with the increasingly bewildered Dromio is sandwiched between the two parts of the marriage colloquy, the second part now showing the effects of the impact of the errors. Dromio's feeding of Adriana's misery - "What ruins are in me that can be found/By him not ruin'd?" (II.i.96) - and of her "self-harming jealousy" (102) is qualified by the irony that Dromio's report of his master's denial of house, wife, mistress, etc. is a comic error, that this denial was not made by her husband at all.

This is more than a question of tone; it is a question of comic perspective, the perspective in which Adriana's emotions are caught. Whereas Plautus in The Menaechmi directs our attention to the spectacle of human anger, indignation, dismay, self-pity and so on, rather than what one might call the morality of the emotions themselves, Shakespeare places Adriana's shrewishness. While our sympathy with her and our simultaneous alignment with Luciana's critical assessment of her attitudes are in no wise excluded, our view of Adriana must be conditioned from the first by the neo-Plautine errors action into which both sisters are plunged. When Adriana grieves,

Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,
I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die (II.1.114),

this sounds very sad, on the surface. But we remember the comic cross-purposes, the promising muddle which is only just beginning, when Luciana in a riming line concludes the scene:

How many fond fools serve mad jealousy?

Adriana's emotions are seen to be emerging clearly enough as the stuff of high comedy.

This perspective is maintained partly by setting Adriana off against the Dromios and partly by exploiting her moral delusion (that her husband is un-

faithful) and her literal delusion (that the alien Antipholus is her husband). This is the dramatic strategy of the second Adriana scene (II.ii).

Dromio of Syracuse has returned from depositing the money at the Centaur. He is now being given a verbal and physical drubbing by his true master in the characteristic farcical vein. Adriana and Luciana enter. A deliciously promising comic situation is now created, in which all that was implicit in earlier scenes may be crystallised. Shakespeare makes full comic use of the colloquies' moral seriousness. Adriana is here doing exactly what the submissive wife avoids: upbraiding her husband and in public.¹⁾ But this man, ironically, is not her husband.

The episode harks back to the alien Antipholus' "drop of water" speech. His meeting with Adriana really does call in question who he is. The almost grimly earnest atmosphere of her homily on adultery is strongly contrasted with the comic context. Both she and he are perturbed and there are rich possibilities for actress and actor here to portray this episode in which her confident reproofs are administered to a dismayed Antipholus, "whose bewilderment [should be] pointed with every nuance of ... facial expression."²⁾ This miming will maintain the dramatic irony, even through Adriana's thirty-five-line-long speech.

Her words are redolent of comic implications: "I am not Adriana, nor thy wife" (II.ii.112), she tells him, reminding him with intensifying comic irony that

The time was once when thou unurg'd wouldst vow
That never words were music to thine ear

- "Unless I spake ..." (113-18). The comic pathos of these lines is complemented by her question, how is it that

..... thou art then estranged from thyself? -
Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
That undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better part.(120)

Ironically, her bewildered interlocutor is feeling "estranged" from himself; with a further irony, he certainly is "strange to" her. The effect of these ironies is set off and heightened by the seriously homiletic vein of the remainder of her speech³⁾ and of her appeal, a few lines later, to Antipholus

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- 1) According to Eulalia, a wife should weep in private rather than "crye in the strete as other women do" (op. cit., pp. 79 - 80). The "Homily of the State of Matrimony" exhorts wives to keep themselves "in silence in all things," like Sara (op. cit., p. 470).
 - 2) Robert Speaight, "Shakespeare in Britain," p. 428.
 - 3) See T.W. Baldwin on the relation of this speech to the "Sermon against Adultery," Compositional Genetics, pp. 173 - 6.

to allow her to

fasten on this sleeve of thine;
Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine. (173)

The homiletic-biblical overtones of the vine-image have been noted by scholars.¹⁾

Adriana's impassioned earnestness is by now a firmly established dimension of the comedy, always shaded or bolstered by the ever-present errors situation; as here by the alien Antipholus' start of surprise when she fastens on his sleeve. He is nonplussed: "In Ephesus I am but two hours old" (148). The ironic twists of the action pile up, but the dexterity and suppleness of the turns is remarkable. Antipholus is incredulous; Luciana reproves him; Adriana reminds him how he beat her Dromio who was sent to summon him to dinner; this Dromio insists that he "never saw Adriana till this time" (164); Antipholus accuses him of lying; and so on. Adriana thinks they "counterfeit" in order to "thwart me in my mood" (170). And firmly refusing any longer to "be a fool" (203), she carts the alien Antipholus off to "shrive him of a thousand idle pranks" (208).

Adriana, however, is more than a victim of the comic errors epidemic. As we have seen, her moral delusion exists over and above the mistakes of identity. The shrew is that rare thing, a female alazon.²⁾ From the broadside ballads to the anonymous The Taming of a Shrew and Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, the shrew exists to be exposed and put in her place. She is the victim of her own aberrations; she is "the biter bit." There is thus a certain comic poetic justice in Adriana's seizing on the wrong Antipholus and being drawn into the web of cross-purposes. The comedy of this poetic justice is heightened by her firmness, her self-assurance. Unlike the others, she allows no self-doubt: "No longer will I be a fool" (II.ii.203), she tells the bewildered Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio.

The comic upshot of all this takes place in the final scene, where Adriana faces the Abbess. Shakespeare shapes this confrontation as a neat ironic reversal. As Portia leads Shylock on, so the Abbess leads Adriana on:

Abbess. You should have reprehended him.
Adriana. Why, so I did.
Abbess. Ay, but not rough enough. (V.i.57)

Adriana, entirely taken in by the Abbess' encouragement, claims it was "the copy of our conference"; that her husband neither slept nor ate "for my urging it." The Abbess' reply is a final comic placing of the shrew as literally a

1) See the note in Foakes's Arden edn. The occurrence of this image in the "Homily of the State of Matrimony" seems not to have been noticed, op. cit., p. 467.

2) See Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 174 - 7.

victim of her own "self-harming jealousy":

The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing,
And thereof comes it that his head is light (V.i.69)

The Abbess has indeed betrayed Adriana "to her own reproof" (90). The comic wheel has, for the alazon, come full circle. But, as we shall see in the final section, Shakespeare does not stop here. The vein of compassion which is threaded through Shakespeare's characterization of Adriana cannot allow her to end up an outcast, rejected like Malvolio or Shylock. She must be absorbed into the happy society of romance, a society in which all impediments to human concord - like the Duke's arbitrary law that threatens Egeon - simply vanish. She must be embraced in what Greene calls the "Catastrophe so comically," the "extasie of sodaine joy" that fills everyone.¹⁾

The love action paradigm in Errors is unique among Shakespeare's comedies of the nineties in its blending of married and unmarried loves. Structurally, it is a variation of the paradigm common to Two Gentlemen, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Twelfth Night (to mention only three examples). A loves and is loved by B; C loves D; then for some reason B falls in love with or thinks she has fallen in love with C; D is upset; finally everything works out right and the initial pattern is re-established.²⁾

The solitary wooing scene (III.ii. 1 - 70) - this is not after all a wooing play - opens with Luciana's twenty-eight-line dose of moral counsel for the bemused alien Antipholus. In the midst of all this insistence that he is not who and what he is, he finds one truth, one certainty: Luciana is "more than earth divine" (III.ii. 32). He implores her to

Lay open to my earthly gross conceit,
Smother'd in errors, feeble, shallow, weak,
The folded meaning of your words' deceit. (34)

He asks her:

Are you a god? would you create me new?
Transform me then (39)

His identity is indeed being called in question. But here this is a pivot of his wooing-dance. It gives a romantic-comic twist to the conventional romance images - "wonder" (30,32), "divine" (32), "god" (39), "siren" (47). As Antipholus says, only "If that I am I," then Adriana is "no wife of mine" and "I will dote" upon Luciana (45 - 52). This calls attention once more to the

1) Menaphon, op. cit., VI. 145,144.

2) On this paradigm, see p. 7, above.

errors situation. Each Antipholus is himself, but because he is deemed otherwise by the other characters, he appears likely, in the Ephesian brother's words, "unhappy, [to] lose myself" (I.ii.40). The mutual resemblance of the two Antipholi is the comic datum that calls in question what sane men take for granted: who they are.

The stichomythia highlights this:

Luciana. What, are you mad that you do reason so?

Antipholus S. Not mad, but mated, how I do not know.

Luc. It is a fault that springeth from your eye.

Ant. S. For gazing on your beams, fair sun, being by.

Luc. Gaze where you should and that will clear your sight.

Ant. S. As good to wink, sweet love, as look on night. (53)

The romantic love springs from the errors: its "truth" is, ironically, tangential to its initial buttress, error. Antipholus is "Not mad but mated."¹⁾

This high comedy of truth and error takes two complementary directions. The first is in Antipholus' ecstatic address, full of romantic love figures. To him, Luciana is

mine own self's better part,
Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart,
My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim,
My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim. (61)

Second, both Antipholus and Luciana are still "smother'd in errors"; he is in danger of losing his identity in the helter-skelter of errors.

The force of the romantic imagery is more than that of a contrast. It recalls a recurrent figure of the comedies. In Love's Labour's Lost, the rationale of Berowne's sophisticated "affection's men-at-arms" speech is that we "lose our oaths to find ourselves" (IV.iii.358). In Two Gentlemen, Proteus justifies his "threefold perjury" on the grounds that if he doesn't love Silvia, "I needs must lose myself" (II.vi.20). Valentine argues that

Silvia is myself, Banish'd from her
Is self from self (III.i.172)

For a moment, we are in the world of the Sonnets - a world in which the mistress is paradoxically the lover's self, his light, his joy, his "essence."²⁾ Antipholus' insistence that "I am thee" (66), his romantic assurance that he has found his identity, is set in the context of accumulating errors. Ironically, Antipholus is making no error, and it is Luciana who is here deluded.

1) Foakes glosses "mated" as a quibble "on the senses, 'confounded, overcome' (cf. V.i.282 below), and 'partnered' (wedded)."

2) Two Gentlemen, III.i.170 - 187; see the discussion of the identity imagery in chap. IV, sec. (vi), below.

Thus Adriana is morally and literally deluded regarding her husband; Luciana is mystified about her suitor who woos her "with words that in an honest suit might move" (IV.ii.14); like the Antipholi, the sisters "wander in illusions"(IV.iii.41). The errors leave no one unscathed. The crossed-love situation, swallowed up in the errors, is in a state of impasse that can be resolved only by a "recognition" scene.

(vii) Apuleian comedy of the grotesque

The comedy of romantic love, domestic discord, identities, and "disordered tumult" (as Gesta Grayorum calls it) takes another significant direction upon which the present study has not yet touched. Although it was obviously apparent to the audience at the Gray's Inn revels in 1594, this feature of the play seems not to have been generally recognized until relatively lately, when G.R. Elliot drew attention to "weirdness" in The Comedy of Errors.¹⁾ Gesta Grayorum mentions "Disorders and Abuses lately done and committed especially by Sorceries and Inchantments." Particular stress is laid on "a great Witchcraft used the Night before i.e. when after dancing and revelling, 'a Comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his Menaechmi) was played by the Players'], whereby there were great Disorders and Misdemeanours, by Hurly-burlies, Crowds, Errors, Confusions, vain Representations and Shews."²⁾ All the blame, in the next-day's mock-serious charge, is laid at the door of "a Sorcerer or Conjuror that was supposed to be the Cause of that confused Inconvenience." Upon this and other indictments a prisoner is arraigned at the bar and the young lawyers' game of "mocking at our own Follies" is continued. The Prince of Purpoole is told how those things, done in "the Night of Errors," were "nothing else but vain Illusions, Fancies, Dreams, and Enchantments."³⁾

Gesta Grayorum effectually draws attention to distinctive features of Shakespeare's Errors that demarcate it from The Menaechmi and Amphitruo, or from a run-of-the-mill neo-Plautine comedy like Jack Juggler.

At the end of the first errors scene, Antipholus of Syracuse speculates on (Ephesian) Dromio's apparent "jest" - "The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit" etc. His conjectures clearly echo those of Messenio who warns Sosicles to beware because, in the words of W.W., the Elizabethan translator

this Towne Epidamnum, is a place of outrageous
expences, exceeding in all ryot and lasciviousness:

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- 1) In an article, "Weirdness in The Comedy of Errors," originally published in 1939 and reprinted in Shakespeare's Comedies: an Anthology of Modern Criticism, ed. by Lerner, pp. 19 - 31.
 - 2) Gesta Grayorum, p. 32.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 33.

and (I heare) as full of Ribaulds, Parasites,
Drunkards, Catchpoles, Cony-catchers, and
Sycophants, as it can hold: then as for
Curtizans, why here's the currantest stamp of them in
the world. Ye must not think here to scape with
as light cost as in other places. The verie name
shows the nature, no man comes here sine damno. 1)

Antipholus, however, feels threatened by something far more terrifying than coney-catchers and catchpoles; besides "cozenage," he fears "Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind" and "Soul-killing witches that deform the body" (I.ii.99). On top of this, he concludes: "I greatly fear my money is not safe" (105). This is the comic barb of his soliloquy, the touch that implicitly asserts the mode of comedy.

In the opening act of Aristophanes' The Frogs, the god, Dionysus, is on his way to Hades. During his journey, he is constantly inconvenienced by petty material factors, like lack of money, and by ordinary human (as opposed to god-like) feelings, like cowardice. When a god is embarrassed by lack of funds, we have the essential comic situation. When an ordinary middle-class tourist, faced with what is probably a servant's jest, is afraid he may have been robbed, we are in the realm of conventional farce. But when he begins to fear seriously the powers of "Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind, / Soul-killing witches that deform the body," we have moved into the realm of grotesque comedy - to which Shakespeare was to return in A Midsummer Night's Dream, in King Lear, and in Cymbeline.²⁾ Here, in a nutshell, Shakespeare awakens attention to what is to create the distinctive atmosphere of his Errors; here he seems to see a whole new fabric unfolding - the comic fantasy of witchcraft, sorcery, madness; the comic horror of illusions and metamorphosis.

The elements of the Shakespearean grotesque in Errors may be seen as harking back to the exaggerated comic masks of commedia dell' arte characters like Coviello,³⁾ to mediaeval Gothic drama, and to earlier Latin writers like

1) Bullough, op. cit., p. 17. W.W., like Shakespeare, was tempted to elaborate on Plautus' five types of corruption - voluptarii, potatores, sycophantae, palpatores, and meretrices (literally, debauchees, drunkards, swindlers sharpers, and harlots). W.W.'s translation of The Menaechmi was not published till 1595. Scholars are divided on whether Shakespeare knew it in ms. (Bullough and Foakes think he did) or whether W.W. was influenced by Errors (T.W. Baldwin's view - Baldwin cites Fripp and a thesis by R.G. Brooks, the latter offering "impressive evidence" of Shakespeare's influence on W.W.). See Foakes, ed. cit., pp. xxv - xxvi and Baldwin, Compositional Genetics, p. 35.

2) I have discussed this (neglected) aspect of Cymbeline in "The Love Scenes in Cymbeline : A Critical Note."

3) See, for example, the seventeenth-century engraving of Coviello singing, reproduced in A. Nicoll, The World of Harlequin, p. 62.

Ovid and Apuleius. In Errors, Shakespeare gives scant indication of the direction in which he was to develop this strain - the macabre tones of Imogen's mock-discovery in Cymbeline or the searing charades in Lear. The yoking together there of brutality and pathos is in the tradition of the mystery plays - the scourging of Jesus in the N-town Trial of Jesus, for example - and of Grünewald's Christ Mocked.¹⁾

The grotesque in Errors is, however, closest to that of Ovid and particularly of Apuleius. For this reason the oft-cited parallels with doubles in modern psychological fiction - "Poe's ghastly tale of a girl who turns out to be the re-embodiment of the mother who died in giving birth to her"²⁾ and the tales of Hoffmann and Dostoevsky or Heine's pallid ghost ("Du! Doppelgänger, du bleicher Geselle!")³⁾ - have "profound" connotations, inimical to the comic spirit of Errors, which is, in a peculiar way, a distillation of elements in Apuleius' The Golden Ass and certain passages in St. Paul's writings, as I shall endeavour to show.

The Golden Ass, centrally concerned with witchcraft and metamorphosis, was very likely familiar to Shakespeare.⁴⁾ It deals with "the mighty power of Witches."⁵⁾ Aristomenes' tale of Socrates and the sorceress, Meroe, is, as it were, an inversion of the grotesquerie of Errors. It savours so much of fantasy that one listener "laughed and mocked" the teller, saying "I cannot abide to have thee tell such absurd and incredible lies."⁶⁾ The chapter-headings in Aldington are suggestive: "How Apuleius told to strangers, what he saw a Jugler do in Athens" (chap. III); "How Socrates fell acquainted with one Meroe a Witch" (chap. III); "How Meroe the Witch turned divers persons into miserable beasts" (chap. IV); "How Socrates and Aristomenes slept together in one chamber, and how they were handled by Witches" (chap. V). The mingled horror and absurdity of the last-mentioned episode is set off against Aristomenes' sceptical listener's incredulity. But, as in Errors, the question arises: how, except by assuming the prevalence of witchcraft, can one explain this intrusion of the apparently inexplicable among the routines of everyday

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- 1) A.P. Rossiter discusses this painting as combining "the dramatic and the grotesque, the pathos of the victim and the gusto of his tormentors, whose savage delight is infectiously rendered" etc. See English Drama from the Early Times to the Elizabethans, p. 166. This work contains valuable analyses of "Ritual Comic Relief" (pp. 55-61) and "Gothic Drama" (pp. 62-75). See also T. McAlindon, "Comedy and Terror in Middle English Literature: the Diabolical Game."
 - 2) G.R. Elliott, op. cit., p.19.
 - 3) H. Levin, "Two Comedies of Errors," in Refractions, p. 150.
 - 4) See D.T. Starnes, "Shakespeare and Apuleius."
 - 5) From the heading to chap. I in Aldington's translation.
 - 6) Ibid., p. 16.

life? The notion of a comic hoax is the key to Apuleius' killing of three bandits, his mock-trial, and his final discovery that he has been the victim of a practical joke, on the occasion of the Festival of Laughter. At the same time, the joke - that he has killed three magically inflated goat-skins and not three men - is wrapped up with the enchantments of Pamphile, who is involved in some bizarre comic errors. Thessaly is regarded as "the birthplace of sorceries and enchantments." Apuleius' impulse on waking up in this strange environment anticipates that of the alien Antipholus: "neither was there any thing which I saw there that I did believe to be the same which it was indeed, but everything seemed unto me to be transformed into other shapes by the wicked power of Sorcerie and Inchantment."¹⁾

But Shakespeare's treatment of "Sorcerie and Inchantment" is very different from that of Apuleius. The symbol of the difference is Shakespeare's decision to set his play not in Plautus' Epidamnus (a town that is mentioned in Errors) but in Ephesus. In a well-known passage in Acts, to which Shakespeare's play obviously alludes,²⁾ Ephesus is associated not merely with the Temple of Diana but with "exorcistes" (XIX.13), the "curious artes" (ibid., 19), disorder ("the whole citie was ful of confusion" - ibid. 29) and riotous assembly in which "Some ... cried one thing and some another" (ibid., 32).³⁾ This chaos is caused by idolaters of the Temple of Diana who, according to a gloss in the Genevan Bible, resort not to "reason" but to "their owne madnesse and outcries." The gloss contrasts this behaviour with what "ought to be in all Christians," that is, "an invincible constancie." Christians, as the Epistle to the Ephesians makes clear, in a passage alluded to by the alien Dromio (to be discussed below, in its context), can withstand "the assaults of the devil" and "spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians, vi.11,12), because they wear "the whole armour of God" (ibid., 11,13); "the brest plate of righteousness," and "the shield of faith" (ibid., 14,16). In Dromio's words, "if my breast had not been made of faith, and my heart of steel,/She had transform'd me to a curtal dog" (III.ii,144). Shakespeare utilizes this Christian dimension, where man is a prey to what St. Paul elsewhere terms "the lustes of error" (Ephesians, iv. 22 - Bishops' Bible), as a moral context for his handling of the witchcraft theme. The sorcery that the alien Antipholus and

1) Ibid., p. 35.

2) See Bullough, op. cit., I. 9-10; Foakes, ed. cit., p. 113; T.W. Baldwin, Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure, pp. 681-5. See also below, p. 62 n., and pp. 62-3.

3) Biblical quotations are from the Genevan version, unless otherwise specified.

Dromio fear is thus far more sinister than that encountered in The Golden Ass. It savours of "the lustes of error" and quite clearly suggests what an Elizabethan statute warned against: to wit, those who "have personall conference with the Divell" (the Statute's definition of a witch).¹⁾

Like Antipholus of Syracuse, Apuleius is, at the opening of The Golden Ass, on a journey. Whereas Apuleius finds himself in a world that might appear ordinary but is really dominated by witchcraft, Antipholus is plunged into a world which seems enchanted but really is normal and ordinary. This contrast between the "illusion" of sorcery, of "the lustes of error," and of devils masquerading as people, on the one hand, and the routine ordinariness of the middle-class Ephesian way of life, on the other hand, is for Shakespeare a fertile comic datum. In Ephesus, everyone knows everyone else. Antipholus, the citizen, is as usual late for dinner and his wife is her customary shrewish self. The alien Antipholus suddenly finds himself enveloped in their mundane domestic affairs. All at once, by his mere presence, the milieu is transformed, not only for him but for everyone else as well. Obviously there will be a good deal of comic meat in the way the characters react to the changed situation.

Brooks and Heilman are right in their observation that in comedy we expect more from the characters than "merely getting knocked about by events towards which they can exhibit only a bewildered surprise."²⁾ We expect them, say Brooks and Heilman, "to attempt to use their intelligence."²⁾ But if the alien Antipholus were really to use his intelligence, he could arrive at only one conclusion - that he must have been mistaken for his long-lost brother. It must be observed that in poetic fictions, as J.M. Cameron has demonstrated, expectations that would be appropriately entertained in life or questions that might be asked are suddenly irrelevant.³⁾ Just as it is obtuse to ask if Hamlet or Macbeth is of a poetic turn of mind, it is beside the point to talk about the Antipholi's intelligence. But if this play is to be seen as moving in the realm of human experience at all, then some attempt must be made to explain the cross-purposes. Because this is a comedy and because of the peculiar direction in which Shakespeare clearly wishes to turn the comic representation, he eschews explanations of a straightforward psychological cast. Initially, as we have seen, Antipholus believes that it's only Dromio and one of his jests again. But before the second scene

1) Cited in Baldwin, Compositional Genetics, pp. 37-38.

2) Understanding Drama, p. 138. I am here continuing the discussion broached on p. 31 above.

3) Poetry and Dialectic, p. 5-20.

is out, Shakespeare has introduced another comic explanation: the sorcerers and witches. This is the crazy logic of comedy, the logic of the absurd. There is a dramatic revelling in the possibilities (or the impossibilities) of the situation.

The grotesque dimension of the comedy follows initially from the alien 'Antipholus' absurd conjectures. It takes its character from the juxtaposition of farcical business (like the Dromios' commedia dell' arte-like drubbings) with the shock-comic world of "soul-killing witches" and suspected madness. Here, interest is taken into the world of nightmare, ominous and potentially terrifying, but, because of the comic errors context, at the same time ridiculous. It is terrifying that there should be such a world, but it is ridiculous that its existence should be inferred from a mere case of mistaken identity when the truth is staring everyone, particularly the alien Antipholus, in the face anyway. ██████████ Whereas Plautus presents puppets caught up in the bustle and confusion of the nevertheless unequivocally "normal" bourgeois world of Epidamnus, Shakespeare distorts the simple farcical interplay of puppets into an Apuleian comic drama of men deluded to the point of suspecting madness, sorcery, metamorphosis. From the alien Antipholus' early conjectures about "dark-working sorcerers" and "soul-killing witches" (I.ii.99), the grotesquerie grows to comically overwhelming proportions.

By the end of the second act, both the alien Antipholus and his Dromio are reeling from their encounter with the sermonising Adriana and her sister. Adriana's own misprision assumes grotesque proportions as she bitterly charges the bewildered Antipholus with adultery:

I am possess'd with an adulterate blot,
My blood is mingled with the crime of lust;
For if we two be one, and thou play false,
I do digest the poison of thy flesh,
Being strumpeted by thy contagion. (II.ii.140)

The violently clashing images here anticipate effects which Donne, albeit more subtly, was to achieve in a poem like The Apparition, which deftly blends love, hate, lust, and death in a gruesome whole. But, whereas the context of Donne's poem, which also incorporates the realm of dream, is a real lovers' quarrel, that of the present scene is radically qualified by the farcical basis of cross-purposes - by jest. In fact, this - Adriana's second homily on adultery (II.ii.110-46) - is immediately preceded by Dromio's jesting exchange with his master on the subject: "learn to jest in good time; there's a time for all things" (63-107). The coldly puzzled response of Antipholus to Adriana's indictment clashes as violently with her ire and self-pity as do the alleged jests of Dromio who would "make a common of [Antipholus'] serious hours" (29).

So, the mental attitudes of Antipholus move into the realm of dream, a realm in which he is unable to orient himself because all seems to be absurd, confused, disintegrating.¹⁾ He "wants wit in all one word [of Adriana's speech] to understand" (151). Luciana reproves him:

Fie, brother, how the world is chang'd with you. (152)

The world is indeed "chang'd" with Antipholus. The Syracusans think Adriana must be possessed. How can she know their names "unless it be by inspiration?" (167). Antipholus, cut loose from his rational bearings, muses:

Was I married to her in my dream?
Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears amiss? (182)

Circumstance forces him to abandon the logic of his waking self for the absurd logic of dream. The enigma - that he is "Known^{un} to these, and to myself disguis'd" (214) - creates metaphysical chaos. He is enveloped in "this mist," this nightmare half-world:

Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advis'd? (212)

The metaphysical gap between this oneiric world of Antipholus' fantasy and our awareness of his obtuseness keeps the action within the bounds of high comedy.

Dromio's complementary reaction is a low-comic expansion of his master's Apuleian fantasy. When Luciana orders Dromio to "go bid the servants spread for dinner," he responds in rhyme:

O for my beads: I cross me for a sinner.
This is the fairy land; O spite of spites,
We talk with goblins, elves and sprites;
If we obey them not, this will ensue -
They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue. (188)

In early tragedies like Richard II and Romeo and Juliet, rimed verse is often used for ritualistic effects, as it is to "distance" the parting of Richard from his Queen (V.i.79 - 102). In Dromio's speech, Shakespeare is deliberately writing what Chaucer and Puttenham respectively called "ryme dogrell," a "manner of Poesie" that will be "tied to no rules at all."²⁾ The rime of "sinner" with "dinner" throws into relief Dromio's role as clown. His tongue-in-the-cheek bewilderment, together with the naïve conception of

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- 1) See W. Kayser, The Grottesque in Art and Literature, pp. 52, 185, on these as characteristic features of the grotesque.
 - 2) Prologue to The Tale of Melibeus, l.7, and The Arte of English Poesie, p. 89, respectively.



Apuleian sorcery as the malicious pranks of the Puck-like creatures of English folklore, is a wry comic bathos to the earnestness of the other three characters in the scene. Antipholus' wonder is, so to speak, committed, intense; Dromio's is mock-vacant, a nice parody of his master's. This comic anti-thesis is firmly settled in the last line, where the comic-sinister overtones of "suck our breath" (which recall the activities of Meroe and Pamphile in The Golden Ass) are balanced against the comic-bathetic "pinch us black and blue" from native folklore.¹⁾

In the ensuing dialogue, Dromio, upbraided by Luciana as "thou drone, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot" (194), introduces comic metamorphosis imagery, particularly the Apuleian idea of metamorphosis into an ass:

Dro.S. I am transformed, master, am I not?
Ant.S. I think thou art in mind, and so am I.
Dro.S. Nay, master, both in mind and in my shape.
Ant.S. Thou hast thine own form.
Dro.S. No, I am an ape.
Luc. If thou art chang'd to ought, 'tis to an ass.
Dro.S. 'Tis true, she rides me, and I long for grass (195)

Here jest and dream levels are yoked by comic violence together and Antipholus, as Dromio's momentary foil, is for a brief moment drawn into this droll world. But the comic point is made. Both go off with Adriana and Luciana, accepting the comic-grotesque irruption of the rational norms of behaviour. Their point won, the women fall into their customary ways:

Dro.S. Master, shall I be porter at the gate?
Adr. Ay, and let none enter, lest I break your pate.
Luc. Come, come, Antipholus, we dine too late. (217)

On this routine note, the scene ends.

The introduction (in III.i) of Antipholus the citizen - who together with his Dromio and his guests, the Goldsmith and Balthasar, the merchant, is like Amphitruo and Sosia, shut out of his own house, while his wife entertains his double and his servant's double - re-asserts this routine world. The shutting-out precipitates a variant of the knocking farce, characteristic of the commedia dell' arte,²⁾ and the episode is conceived in terms of the age-old device of the porter-scene.³⁾ This scene opens and closes in terms

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- 1) In Lyly's Endimion, the fairies pinch Corsites "black and blue" (Foakes); in The Tempest, Prospero's spirits "pinch" Caliban "as thick as honey-comb." (I.ii.329)
 - 2) See the "specimen scenari" in Lea, op. cit., esp. The Three Cuckolds, pp. 582 - 4, The Doubles According to Plautus, pp. 591 - 601, The Unbelieving Zanni and the Four Alike, pp. 602 - 9, etc.
 - 3) As Xanthias says at the beginning of The Frogs, "Comic Porter scene. There's one in every comedy." Cf. the porter scenes in Macbeth and in the mystery play, The Harrowing of Hell (Chester). See also Glynne Wickham, Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage, pp. 214 - 24.

of the everyday world of business lunches^{and} hospitality to guests; and Antipholus the citizen is confident that he will be able to bestow a "good welcome," "a table full of welcome" on the melancholy Balthazar. But - first comic reversal - they are shut out. Ultimately - looking forward to his second comic reversal - Antipholus goes off, fully resolved to be "merry" (III.i.108), even if "this jest [i.e. visiting the courtesan and giving the carcanet to her instead of to Adriana] shall cost me some expense" (123). The unconscious irony of this resolution prepares for his involvement in the errors.

Because of the local Antipholus' position as a citizen, known to all, he does not lend himself to the same varied grotesque comic treatment as his twin. The present scene thus marks a lower point in the Apuleian comedy than either the preceding or ensuing scene. What grotesque comedy there is is absorbed into the knocking farce. Shut out, Dromio is commanded by his master to "bid them let us in."

Dro.E. Maud, Bridget, Marian, Cicely, Gillian, Ginn!

Dro.S. Mome, malthorse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch,

Either get thee from the door or sit down at the hatch:

Dost thou conjure for wenches that thou call'st for such store
When one is too many? Go, get thee from the door. (III.i.31)

Dromio of Ephesus reproves the usurping Dromio thus:

If thou hadst been Dromio today in my place,
Thou wouldst have chang'd thy face for a name,
or thy name for an ass. (56) 1)

The base animal images recall the witchcraft of Meroe who transformed a straying lover into a beaver, a rival inn-keeper into a frog, an advocate who pleaded against her into a horned ram, and so on.²⁾ Coupled with this factor is the use of terms like "conjure," "chang'd," and "ass" - all terms characteristically associated with Apuleian sorcery.

This vein of the comic-grotesque is developed in the scenes that follow. After Antipholus of Syracuse has been claimed by Adriana, after he has wooed his sister in Ovidian-Circean terms, addressing her as "sweet mermaid," "siren," and imploring her to "Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs" (III.ii.45,46,48), his Dromio's entry gives the crossed-love situation a sus-

1) A much amended passage. But I have followed Alexander rather than Foakes here and have adopted the Folio reading, which seems to make excellent comical-grotesque nonsense.
2) Apuleius, op. cit., p.21.

tained low-comic twist. Just as Adriana claims Antipholus, so "a wondrous fat marriage," a "very reverend body" (88,91), claims Dromio. The parody relationship of Antipholus and Dromio echoes that of the preceding act (II.ii. 195 - 200). Again Dromio doubts his identity and in the same drolly grotesque manner:

Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man?
I am an ass (72)

But a new and Rabelaisian note is introduced here, as Shakespeare plays humorously with the device of the catalogue of a mistress' qualities.¹⁾ Dromio's description of the "kitchen wench" who "haunts" him is a grotesque low-comic complement to the high-comic depiction of the "siren," Luciana. The kitchen-wench is "all grease"; Dromio will "make a lamp of her and run from her by her own light"; the tallow in her rags "will burn a Poland winter" (93 - 7). Dromio's description of her is a caricature or "loaded portrait" of the ugly woman, a portrait charged with distortion, and harking back to the early identification of the grotesque with the Gothic gargoyle. Here the grotesque is both horrible and ridiculous, repulsive to the point of absurdity. This wench is no longer a human being but an object - a lamp. She is "swart like my shoe" (100); "spherical, like a globe" (112) and, as such, a convenient piece of apparatus for a mock-geographical catechism: her

Indies are upon her nose, all o'er embellished with rubies,
carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the
hot breath of Spain, who sent whole armadoes of carracks
to be ballast at her nose (132)

But the whole is transvalued by the clown's tones which have the effect of cutting the ordinarily human entailments. Shakespeare is, as it were, caught up in the comic possibilities of the grotesque, exploiting them as ends in themselves, rather than simply holding a mirror up to nature. Nell (or Luce, as she is variously called) is, like Dromio, something less than human. Both exist here in the shadow of jest-book bawdy. Dromio's description of their encounter works towards a comic - Apuleian climax: his clown's mock-horror, when she describes "what privy marks I had about me, as the mark of my shoulder, the mole in my neck, the great wart on my left arm" (140). "Amazed," he runs from her "as a witch" (143) or "a diviner" (139). He is aware that he is wearing the Christian's "breast-plate of righteousness" and "the shield of faith" (Ephesians, VI.14,16): without a "breast made of faith" and a "heart of steel," he would

1) Cf. Launce on his "maid" who is "not a maid" (Two Gentlemen, III.i.263 - 360).

have been "transform'd" into "a curtal dog" (144 - 5). For Dromio too, Ephesus means witchcraft, and witchcraft means the Devil, albeit a Devil implicitly transvalued into a comic figure, like Tutivillus in Mankind.

Dromio's drolly projected oneiric world is a caricature of Antipholus' absurd comic aberrations, of Antipholus' ludicrous inability to orient himself in the day-to-day world of Ephesus. The responses of the alien master and servant are insistently dramatised as complementary. Antipholus will "stop mine ears against the mermaid's song" (163); her "enchanting presence and discourse have "almost made me traitor to myself" (160); she is a witch who has almost tempted him to "self-wrong" (162). Both master and servant see themselves as exposed to "the lustes of error" (Ephesians, iv.22), as tempted by sin. These interpretations are, of course, placed as comic aberrations, as moral emblems of the physical errors.

In the climactic fourth act, two of these misapprehensions are put cheek-by-jowl. The second scene opens with the macabre transformation of Antipholus that has been wrought in Adriana's mind:

He is deformed, crooked, old and sere,
Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
Stigmatical in making, worse in mind. (IV.ii. 19)

This highlights the essentially human side of the comedy - the fury of the shrew and the pathos of her misapprehension. The speech is a comic-grotesque emblem of the moral dangers of error: that a man whose sole fault is a tendency to be late for dinner can be thus metamorphosed in his wife's mind. This passage is followed a mere ten lines later by a humorous-grotesque caricature, as a panting Dromio of Syracuse arrives with news of the local Antipholus' arrest: Antipholus is

..... in Tartar limbo, worse than hell. 32
A devil in an everlasting garment hath him,
One whose hard heart is button'd up with steel;
A fiend, a fury, pitiless and rough, 35
A wolf, nay worse, a fellow all in buff;
A back-friend, a shoulder-clapper, one that countermands
The passages of alleys, creeks and narrow lands; 38
A hound that runs counter and yet draws dry-foot well,
One that, before the judgment, carries poor souls to hell.(IV.ii.32)

This bizarre speech articulates the metaphysical ambivalence of the Ephesian world, where the difference between a devil and a constable is called in doubt, where appearances are increasingly unreliable. But all is conditioned by Dromio's tones of parody, by the low-comic incongruities, and the sense of bathos (especially strong at line 36).

In this speech, the symbolic attitude of comedy manifests itself in the

comic transvaluation of the citizen Antipholus' arrest: of the ill-feeling, the anger, and the acrimony which characterise his wrangle with Angelo (in IV.i). Shakespeare treats the arrest as a challenge to what Santayana calls the clown's "absolute histrionic impulse."¹⁾ The alien Dromio's grotesquely incongruous conception of what is going on is an overtly ridiculous version of the Antipholi's, Luciana's, and Adriana's misprisions. His "foolery" (his master's term) takes the shape of mock-awe and mock-innocence, which are highlighted by the ironic use of metonymy and quibbles on words like "everlasting" (also the name of a type of cloth), "wolf" (wolf of hell or fiend), and "hell" (= prison). The incongruous Biblical overtones are developed in the next scene (IV.iii), where Dromio congratulates the alien Antipholus on having "got the picture of old Adam new-apparelled" (13) - "Not the Adam that kept the paradise, but that Adam that keeps the prison he that came behind you, sir, like an evil angel, and bid you forsake your liberty" (16). The comic tone of the allusion to "the olde man, which is corrupt" (Ephesians, iv.22),²⁾ maintains, at a comic tangent, the sense of Ephesus as a place where men are exposed to "the lustes of errour."

The motif of spiritual peril reappears in IV.iii. Here, the alien Dromio enters bearing "the angels that you sent for to deliver you" (38). He is talking, however, not to the Ephesian but to the Syracusan Antipholus who is now convinced that

This fellow is distract, and so am I,
And here we wander in illusions -
Some blessed power deliver us from hence! (IV.iii.40)

The Courtesan now enters, greeting Antipholus courteously. He replies in the tones of one who has just prayed for deliverance:

Ant.S. Satan avoid, I charge thee tempt me not.
Dro.S. Master, is this mistress Satan?
Ant.S. It is the devil.
Dro.S. Nay she is worse, she is the devil's dam;
And here she comes in the habit of a light wench
It is written, they appear to men like angels of light. (46)

The Courtesan invites Antipholus to "mend our dinner here" (57). Dromio warns him to "expect spoon-meat, or bespeak a long spoon," for "he must

1) "The Comic Mask," in Theories of Comedy, ed. by Paul Lauter, p.414.
2) Further allusions are listed by Foakes, who also mentions Dromio's "misuse" of metonymy.

have a long spoon that must eat with the devil" (58,61). Again Antipholus addresses the Courtesan: "Avoid then, fiend," (63) and "Avaunt, thou witch" (76); calling her "a sorceress," he "conjures" her to be gone (64,65).

Dromio's pun on "angels" and "deliver" (38), his master's prayer to "Some blessed power" (42), the identification of the Courtesan with Satan, the echo of Christ's words ("Satan avoid" - Matt. iv.10), the allusion to 2 Cor. xi.14 ("Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light"), the Gospel tag ("It is written"): all this evokes, insistently enough, the Christian conception of sin and redemption ("Deliver us from evil") as a dimension of the absurd drama, the comedy of non-communication between Antipholus and the Courtesan. Neither he nor Dromio understands even her simple invitation to "mend our dinner here." She and they are not on the same level of existence. They really are wandering in illusions, in a Pauline-Apuleian comic world, as Dromio's topical jest implies. When she asks for the promised chain, Dromio quips:

Some devils ask but the parings of one's nail,
a rush, a hair, a drop of blood, a pin,
a nut, a cherry-stone; but she, more
covetous, would have a chain. Master, be wise;
and if you give it her, the devil will shake her
chain and fright us with it.(69)

The possible allusion to Revelation, xx.1-2, where the Angel binds the Devil with a chain, is incongruously blended with the Apuleian witchcraft imagery;¹⁾ and the sense of absurdity is, as elsewhere, heightened by the almost casual setting of these two strains in what the Courtesan began as a casual conversation. This absurdity is developed, as the alien Antipholus and Dromio become with increasing insistence victims of their own comic logic.

Throughout the action, the characters behave predictably and with ever-increasing lack of individuality. They are caught up in a comic continuum which, as Albert Cook remarks of comedy generally, "implicitly denies the individual soul of supraman."²⁾ Instead of revealing human souls of heroes, as do tragedies like Hamlet and Othello, Errors represents the all-too-human reactions of the Antipholi "under the rational subguise of beast or machine."³⁾ Shakespeare has his modes of treating such elemental comic data. In Love's Labour's Lost, as we have seen, he makes a series of comic games out of the

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- 1) Dromio's list recalls Pamphile's collection of human bones, "members of dead men lumps of flesh of such as were hanged, the blood of such as were slaine, and jaw bones and teeth of wilde beasts" (The Golden Ass, p. 65).
 - 2) Albert Cook, The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean, chap. II; reprinted in Lauter (ed.), Theories of Comedy, pp. 475 - 96.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 492.

four lovers' being forsworn: "four woodcocks in a dish" (Love's Labour's Lost, IV.iii.80). From the first, the main plot of that comedy rests on the essential predictability of the actions of "Navarre and his bookmen." The moral point of the dramatic movement is Amor omnia vincit, but the action is caught up in comic perspective as "a scene of foolery" (IV.iii.161), which in turn becomes an all-too-human sophisticated game in which "It is religion to be thus forsworn;/ For charity itself fulfils the law" (360). The characters' actions are predictable, because they represent, in burlesque form, "what is constant in human types and human affairs"; they portray Nature.¹⁾

If the characters in Errors reveal a similar predictability, it is however less because their reactions to events are manifestations of Nature in this sense, than because their behaviour is conceived as a reductio ad absurdum of the natural human capacity to draw the wrong inferences, to misjudge a situation. These characters make three main types of comic inference: (i) They think someone is "jesting" or being "merry." Thus, the alien Antipholus thinks Dromio is jesting (I.ii, II.ii); the local Dromio thinks the alien Antipholus is jesting (I.ii); the citizen Antipholus thinks Dromio (III.i) and later Angelo (IV.i) are jesting; Angelo thinks the same of each Antipholus in turn (III.ii, IV.i). (ii) They think the other characters, or some of the other characters, are mad. The alien Antipholus thinks Dromio is mad (I.ii and II.ii); the local Dromio thinks Antipholus is mad (II.i); Adriana and Luciana think Antipholus is mad (III.ii, IV.iv, V.i); so do Pinch and Angelo. The Duke thinks they are all mad (V.i). (iii) Some of the characters suspect witchcraft. The alien Antipholus thinks Ephesus is peopled by sorcerers (I.ii, III.ii, etc.) and that the Courtesan is one of them (IV.iii); he also thinks Luciana is a mermaid (III.ii); by the end of the fourth act, he is convinced, as is Dromio, that Adriana, Luciana, the Courtesan and Pinch are all witches.²⁾

By IV.iv, the effects of these reductiones ad absurdum and the sense of the characters as trapped on the farcical roundabout of their own predictable inferences are well-nigh overwhelming. At this stage, Antipholus of Ephesus in particular - who has been less fully enveloped in the fantasy than the other main characters - has ceased even to give the illusion of thinking. While his wife "longs to know the truth hereof at large" (141), Antipholus has very nearly moved on to the level of the Menaechmi. He screams at his

1) See chap. I, above.

2) Note: this does not claim to be an exhaustive summary of the characters' comic inferences. I have listed only their selected misprisions.

wife, calling her "Dissembling harlot" and threatens "with these nails [to] pluck out these false eyes" (99,102). The sense in which he is human is temporarily overshadowed by the sense in which he is a machine; his human qualities are largely swamped by the farcical momentum. In the comic clash between him and his Dromio, on the one hand, and Adriana and Dr Pinch, on the other, Antipholus' absurdity takes on the character of a mechanical reflex.

Dr Pinch is obviously intended to be a bizarre caricature, as the later description of him suggests:

a hungry lean-fac'd villain,
A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
A thread-bare juggler and a fortune-teller,
A needy-hollow-ey'd-sharp-looking-wretch;
A living dead man.(V.i.238)

This Pinch who, claims Antipholus, "with no-face (as 'twere) out-facing me/ Cries out, I was possess'd" (245) is described in terms that readily recall another living dead man: Socrates, Aristomenes' friend, as well as other Apuleian episodes.¹⁾

In IV.iv, however, the vein of grotesque fantasy is thin. For all the attempted jazzing-up of delusions - "how fiery, and how sharp he looks" (48), and "how he trembles in his ecstasy" (49), etc. - Pinch's absurd rite of exorcism remains on the level of farce. Here, Pinch is a purely farcical character, a puppet without moral interest; and T.W. Baldwin's discussion, "The Exorcised 'Eighties,"²⁾ in which he sees the Pinch-episode as a satirical attack on Roman Catholic exorcists and Pinch by implication as a sinister figure, is hardly relevant to the figure of the exorcist in Errors.

Furthermore, the element of human interest, of comic pathos, in this scene - Adriana's "O that thou wert not [mad], poor distressed soul" (57), "I did not, gentle husband, lock thee forth" (95), "O most unhappy day!" (121), etc. - is crowded out by the emphasis on tempo, by the speeding up of the momentum. Because of his position in the play, the local Antipholus has hardly lent himself to treatment in the vein of the comic-Apuleian fantasy. Shakespeare's confronting him with Dr Pinch is an unsuccessful attempt to expand the moral fantasy by embracing the local Antipholus in the Pauline witchcraft-exorcism milieu. But the farcical violence cannot at this point accommodate the moral fantasy. And no amount of Pinch's conjurations "by all the saints in heaven" or suggestions of possession

1) The Golden Ass, pp. 24 - 8. Another living dead man in Apuleius is the murdered husband who, in Threlyphon's macabre tale, is called back from the dead to give evidence against his murderer.

2) Compositional Genetics, pp. 37 - 46.

(48,49,90,105,125-6) can even qualify, let alone transvalue, the essentially farcical quality of this scene.

(viii) The Final Act

I have shown above that Shakespeare brings the errors action, which in Plautus savoured of farcical amorality, into a moral framework. Menaechmus' sexual immorality and Sosicles' deliberate pilfering of Erotium's goods, as well as Jupiter's adultery, are features of the two Plautine sources which Shakespeare transmutes. In Errors, as we have seen, Adriana's jealousy is groundless, and Antipholus visits the Courtesan only as a "jest" that "shall cost him some expense" (III.i.123). He will bestow the chain on her, "Be it for nothing but to spite my wife" (118). His is a comic error rather than a calculated moral transgression. Of a piece with this is Shakespeare's introduction of further characters not in The Menaechmi: particularly, a sister for Adriana, which gives scope not only for another comic error but for some romantic wooing; and a wife for the local Dromio, which accommodates a comic parody of the Adriana-Antipholus of Syracuse error.

These are non-Plautine tones. They are also an expansion of Plautus' elemental treatment of Menaechmus' and Amphitruo's domestic affairs - an expansion into the wider orbit of interest in the family. This is the family as we find it treated in such romances as Gower's Confessio Amantis, Greene's Menaphon and Pandosto, and Shakespeare's own Pericles, Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale. The notion of the family circle is particularly strong in Errors, where Antipholus of Syracuse intrudes into his brother's rather turbulent family life. But the point here is that he woos Adriana's sister, and she, taking him for her brother-in-law, is loyal to Adriana. This sense of the close family group is solidified by Egeon's and the alien Antipholus' search, which is the central interest in the opening scene, where Egeon narrates the sad story of his separation from wife and children. The family is regarded romantically, idyllically: Egeon's wife is the "joyful mother of two sons" (I.i.51), and the suggestion is that husband and wife have been (in Greene's words) "linked together in perfect love" and blessed by Fortune who "willing to increase their happiness, lent them twins son_s ..."¹⁾ Then by the conventional deus ex machina the bliss of a happy family is destroyed: a storm sinks their ship and the members of the family are separated one from another.

Errors is the most family-conscious of Shakespeare's comedies of the

1) Pandosto, repr. in The Winters Tale, ed. by Pafford, p. 184.

nineties. That this is so is at one with the Pauline-homiletic influence on the early Adriana scenes.¹⁾ In his Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul's emphasis, confirmed by the glosses in the Genevan and Authorised versions as well as by the "Homily of the State of Matrimony," lies on "unity," "mutual love" and "concord," to which Paul "exhorteth" the people of Ephesus.²⁾ This harmony within the family is attained by rejecting "the vanity of the infidels"³⁾ and by avoiding "fornication and all uncleannesse,"⁴⁾ on which Adriana lectures the alien Antipholus. What Shakespeare does is to take the family motif of romance and put it in a Christian framework, which unequivocally presupposes the Pauline-homiletic moral climate with its insistence on the bonds of the family - of "the particular dueties of wives and husbands," as well as of children.

This ethical framework is of a piece with recurrent suggestions in Errors of genuine suffering. As S. Wells points out, Adriana, Luciana, and the two Antipholi have their "moments of distress, real enough to them, even if comic in their effect upon the audience."⁵⁾ Their modes of existence embrace both a sense that they are "marionettes,/The wires of which are pulled by Chance"⁶⁾ and a sense that they are figments clearly suggestive of human suffering. There is a similar, if more sophisticated and refined, ambivalence in the characterization in Twelfth Night. In the first four acts, Viola, Orsino, and Olivia are depicted playing parts - page, lover, mourning sister - but at the dénouement their personae dissolve. Orsino's fine fury, Viola's profound devotion to him, the introduction of Antonio, and the passionate interplay of misprisions constitute the seriously romantic tones here. In Errors too, Shakespeare contrasts the hectic farce of the errors with the romantic-Christian overtones which reach their apotheosis in the romance confrontation in the final act. On the one hand, the Antipholi and their Dromios have been driven to increasing violence and disorder; on the other, Adriana's position as wife has become progressively less tenable, and her efforts to restore order appear comically futile. Antipholus' riotous violence, both verbal and physical, is manifested in his abuse of Adriana ("O most unhappy strumpet" - IV.iv.122, etc.) and in his treatment of Pinch

1) See section (vi), above.

2) The chapter-heading in the Genevan version: "He exhorteth them to mutual love" (Ephesians, iv); in the Authorised version (1611): "He exhorteth to unity" (Ephesians, iv). The homily insists that wifely obedience "surely doth nourish concord very much" (op. cit., p. 466).

3) Gloss to Ephesians, iv, Genevan version.

4) Gloss to Ephesians, v, Authorised version (1611).

5) "Happy Endings in Shakespeare," p. 104.

6) Sully-Prudhomme, cited by Bergson, op. cit., p. 112.

(singeing off his beard "with words of fire" and throwing on him "great pails of puddled mire to quench the hair" - V.i.171, etc.) These farcical impressions are juxtaposed with Adriana's serious concern for her husband's moral and mental well-being ("O, that thou wert not mad, poor distressed soul" - IV.iv.60) and with Luciana's compassion ("God help, poor souls, how idly do they talk" - IV.iv.130). Adriana's anger is finally softened by compassion and solicitude, and the impression of the sisters' genuine concern is one factor that almost succeeds in keeping the Pinch episode within the bounds of comedy.

Such human interest is essential in the dénouement, if it is to transcend the level of the recognition scene in The Menaechmi. One function of comic "recognition" is to make a transition "from ignorance to knowledge."¹⁾ This need not be moral knowledge; indeed in Shakespeare's comedies of the nineties, such knowledge is as a rule barely suggested. Nor, however, is it excluded. In Errors, the four main characters come in the first place to know who they are; but this necessarily entails discovery of what they are, discovery, for instance, of the truth about Adriana's husband, the alleged adulterer. This indeed is a part of the "truth" that Adriana "longs to know" (IV.iv.141).

But further human interest is required in order fully to engage the audience's sympathies in the "recognition." Now, at last, the rationale of the Egeon envelope begins to crystallize. Here is a character with even more than his fair share of pathos. If he can be brought in here and enveloped to some extent in the comic errors, he will not only moderate the tendency of the play's human appeal to be swamped by what has been called "unfeeling farce"; he will also expand the intimate family group without undermining its intimacy.

With the reappearance of this romance figure, when "the dial points at five" (V.i.118), on his way to "the melancholy vale, / The place of death and sorry execution" (120), we recall the circumstances surrounding his present woeful position, particularly the reason for his being in Ephesus. We remember that, like the alien Antipholus who is searching for "a mother and a brother," Egeon too has spent five summers looking for the same people. Egeon's sadly vain appeal to the local Antipholus (who of course fails to recognize his father) effectually links the comic errors with the sombre tones of the romance situation. These latter are the tones of romantic tragi-comedy, tones that, as I have said, anticipate those of the dénouement in Twelfth Night, where Orsino, Viola, Olivia, and Antonio engage in

1) See Aristotle, in The Art of Poetry, transl. by Bywater, chap. xi.

passionate accusations, appeals, and denials. In Errors, Antipholus "looks strange on" Egeon, denies his every assertion, knows neither his face nor his voice, and insists that "I ne'er saw Syracuse in my life" (V.1.325), which is confirmed by the Duke, Antipholus' patron for these twenty years (326 - 9). These rather sombre tones complement the hectic and furious accusations exchanged by the other characters - Antipholus of Ephesus, Adriana, Angelo, in particular - and, coming after them, provide a contrast, as well as an element of human solidity in this Apuleian world in which, as Adriana fears, Antipholus "is borne about invisible" (187): one moment he is "hous'd ... in the abbey here" (188), the next his approach from another direction is announced, and it is reported that he vows "To scorch Adriana's face and to disfigure her" (183). The Duke's comment on the muddle sets the seal on the comic errors action:

Why, this is stange : go, call the abbess hither.
I think you are all mated, or stark mad. (282)

Egeon's appeal to the citizen Antipholus prepares the way for the "recognition." But before this is discussed, there is another matter which demands attention: the implications, for the dénouement, of Shakespeare's decision to set Errors in Christian Ephesus - that is, to change both the place and the time of Plautus' action.¹⁾

As we have seen, Ephesus had a special Christian significance for Elizabethans. It was, of course, the location of the famous Temple of Diana, of which Apollonius' wife, Lucina, is "Abbesse."²⁾ But it is less Gower's Ephesus than St. Paul's that interests Shakespeare: the Ephesus of Acts xix - the haven of sorcerers and witches. St. Paul's Ephesus is however not merely a city of pagan practices. It is the city in which "Many of them which used curious artes, broght their bokes and burned them" (Acts xix. 19). Here, that is to say, "the word of God grewe mightily, and prevailed" (20). Because the pagan Temple of Diana is in danger of being replaced by the Gospel and because many believed and confessed (18), Demetrius and his silver-smiths throw the city into an uproar (Acts, xix). The gloss in the Genevan Bible associates this disorder and "confusion" with the "madnesse and outcries" of "idolaters." The glossator contrasts St. Paul's attitude to the confusion with that of the town clerk, "An example of a politike man who re-dæmeth peace and quietnesse with lies which Paul would never have done."

1) The Ephesian setting is discussed by Foakes, ed. cit., pp. xxix - xxx; by Baldwin, Compositional Genetics, pp. 37 - 72, 116 - 17, and Five-Act Structure, pp. 680 - 90. In the previous section, I discussed the Pauline dimension of the Errors comedy of the grotesque.

2) Gower, Confessio Amantis, viii. 1833 - 86, repr. in Bullough, op. cit., I. 50 - 4.

The town clerk's procedure here is that of "the princes of this world" who do not know "the hidden wisdom" of God (1 Cor., ii. 8,7 - A.V.).

Ephesus, then, emerges in Errors as more than just a place, like Venice or Milan or Verona. It begins to take on the character of a symbol of pagan values superseded by Christian ones.

In the final scene, this symbolic dimension is fairly strongly suggested, particularly by the character and dramatic function of the Abbess, by the alien Antipholus' and Dromio's use of her "priory" (V.i.37) or "abbey" (122,129, 155,188,264,279,394) as a place of "sanctuary" (94), and by Shakespeare's studied use of a Christian frame of reference and avoidance of a pagan one.¹⁾

The Duke's entry "with the Headsman and other Officers" and with "the Merchant of Syracuse bareheaded" (S.D. at l. 129) seems to constitute a forceful assertion of dignified authority in the face of the perpetual motion machine of errors. The appeals by Adriana and later by her husband for "Justice, most sacred duke" (133; cf. 190) confirm this. But the Duke turns out to be no less perplexed by the confusion than they are:

Why, what an intricate impeach is this?
I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup. (270)²⁾

The dramatic reason for the Duke's impotence, for the impotence of political power in the face of "Circean enchantments," is that like the town clerk, he embodies "the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor., ii.6), as opposed to "the hidden wisdom" of God. The Duke is not intended to be the deus ex machina, as Duke Vincentio is in Measure for Measure. This role is reserved for a character that before the final act has been known to the audience only by name: the Abbess, Emilia, wife to Egeon and mother to the Antipholi. Her two entries are clearly calculated to be the most commanding entries in the play. And in performance they should be made as gravely prominent as possible. Her first entry is made alone, at the height of the confusion which runs from IV.iv into V.i. without a break. (The editorial division here between scenes is utterly meaningless.) Her every word indicates her authority:

Be quiet, people; wherefore throng you hither? (38)

She must be contrasted with, even demarcated from, the other characters in every way. In her reposes Christian justice to which the Duke himself is

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- 1) There is, for instance, no mention of a temple or of the Temple of Diana in Errors.
 - 2) It is surely an allusion to Ovid, Metamorphoses, xiv. 248 - 415, rather than, as Foakes suggests, to the Ddyssey, x. The Ovidian passage recounts the effects of Circe's powerful cup - "tantum medicamina possunt!" (285) - the grotesque metamorphosis of Ulysses' men into pigs and the horrors of Picus' transformation into a bird.

subject. She and the abbey constitute a realm against which the errors, moral and physical, are set in relief. She is in effect the "blessed power" to whom the alien Antipholus has prayed to "deliver us from hence"; she is the "redemption" for which the alien Dromio asks Adriana, the "angels" that will "deliver" Antipholus from "the devil in an everlasting garment" who "carries poor souls to hell" (IV.ii,iii); in her reposes "the wisdom of God even the hidden wisdom Which none of the princes of this world knew" (1 Cor., ii. 7-8, A.V.), which will put the various errors in their true perspective.

Her actions imply this. She cuts through appearances and faces Adriana with the truth: it is "thy jealous fits/Hath scar'd thy husband from the use of wits"(85). Antipholus' "fit of madness" (76) is but one of "a huge infectious troop/Of pale distemperatures and foes to life" (81) that follow upon "unquiet meals" (74) and "sports hinder'd by brawls" (77).

The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth. (69)

The Abbess' method of curing Antipholus of his "madness" is radically unlike either Pinch's attempted exorcism or Adriana's "venom clamours." The Abbess will attempt "With wholesome syrups, drugs and holy prayers,/To make of him a formal man again" (104). She epitomises the healing powers of Christian love and prayer; her treatment is "A charitable duty of my order" (107). Shakespeare contrasts her loving firmness with Adriana's intemperate possessiveness.

The Abbess' second entry is staged after an absence of over two hundred lines (from her departure at 112 to her return at 329). While she is (presumably) busy ministering to the alien Antipholus within the Abbey, there are enacted on stage the climactic confusions that drive the bewildered Duke himself to appeal to the Abbess:

Why, this is strange: go, call the Abbess hither. (282)

Her entry is comparable in its suggestive power to the final scene, the "chapel" scene, in The Winter's Tale. Both the Abbess and Paulina transcend the level of mere romance figures, as say Egeon or the Prophetess in Menaphon¹⁾ is a romance figure. Both are more than deae ex machina. In Menaphon, Democles is "ravisht with an extasie of sodaine joye" and the other characters behave in like manner, so that the "newes spred through

1) Op. cit., VI. 143-4.

Arcadie as a wonder" (VI. 144,145). The dénouement in Errors and in The Winter's Tale provokes a similar feeling of wonder among the characters. In the latter play, the wonder is associated with the numinous. Paulina promises, as she calls Hermione to descend from the pedestal, that "her actions shall be as holy as/You hear my spell is lawful" (V.iii.104). She urges her companions to "Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him/Dear life redeems you" (102). This is no mere stage trick. It has what Auerbach calls a figural significance, a connection with some other, spiritual, part of "the divine plan"; it suggests forgiveness and redemption, following initial sin.¹⁾ Hence the setting of the dénouement in a chapel, the resurrection device, Paulina's insistence that "You do awake your faith" (95), and her use of terms like "redeems," "holy" and "lawful."

The Abbess' final entry, made from the Abbey and together with the alien Antipholus and Dromio, is calculated to make a strong theatrical impact. But it is more than merely a coup de théâtre, more even than a straightforward comic "recognition," more than a simple solution to the physical confusions. It is the moral climax to the pattern of Christian ideas that permeates the play. The Abbess appears as the deliverer from the bondage of error. And in the face of the clearly defined inadequacy of the Duke to dispense "justice" (both Adriana and her husband, as we have noted, appeal to him for "Justice") the Abbess takes on a figural significance. She is more than a wife and mother lost and found; more than a dea ex machina. She is an instrument of Heavenly Grace. She embodies the ethos of a Christian Ephesus, the spirit that will purge man from what St. Paul called "the lustes of error," the spirit that will dispel illusion and foster peace and concord. Truth has been concealed. Here it is revealed, but not merely (as in Pandosto) by "the Triumph of Time," although Egeon and his family have been victims of "time's extremity" (V.i.307), and now Veritas filia temporis has liberated them all from this bondage. More than this, however, the Abbess brings a new dispensation; she invites everyone not merely to a festive celebration, but to a "gossips' for baptismal feast" (405).

The theatrical cum moral frisson is sustained in the characters' expressions of wonder and anticipates that of the similar recognition scene in Twelfth Night. What meets the gaze of the characters in both plays appears to be, in Orsino's words, "A natural perspective, that is and is not"

1) See Mimemis, p. 490 and passim. This sacramental view of The Winter's Tale is developed by S.L. Bethell both in his study and in his edition of the play and by F. Kermode in his edition of the play.

(V.i.209).¹⁾ It looks like an illusion, it looks incredible. Thus, in Errors, Adriana sees "two husbands, or mine eyes deceive me" (331). The Duke is similarly puzzled:

One of these men is genius to the other
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? Who deciphers them? (332)

The alien Antipholus exclaims in a similar vein:

Egeon art thou not? or else his ghost? (337)

As Baldwin explains, Cooper in his Thesaurus (1565) defines genius as "Terent. The good or evil angell that Painimes thought to be apointed to eache man: the spirite of man."²⁾ The Duke doesn't know which is "the natural man" and which "the spirit" or "genius," just as the alien Antipholus, after wandering all day "in this mist" and "in illusions," wonders if he really is looking at his father. All (except Emilia) have lost their metaphysical bearings, and the Duke's temporary inability to distinguish between "genius" and "the natural man" is representative - the upshot of earlier imagery of metaphysical confusion: "sleeping," "waking," "dreaming," "mad," "well-advis'd" (II.ii.182 - 6, 212 - 13), reflected also in the alien Antipholus' aside, "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?" (212). In the final scene, the metaphysical uncertainties are resolved, as the dream imagery is given another inflection. Egeon speaks:

If I dream not, thou art Emilia. (352)

The alien Antipholus addresses Luciana:

What I told you then,
I hope I shall have leisure to make good,
If this be not a dream I see and hear. (375) ³⁾

So the "wonder" is gently resolved into a recognition of the nature of the errors. The characters are all awakened, as from a mad dream. Illusions are dispelled:

Here begins [Egeon's] morning story right:
These two Antipholus', these two so alike,
And these two Dromios one in semblance
These are the parents to these children,
Which accidentally are met together. (347)

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- 1) M.M. Mahood in her New Penguin edn. of Twelfth Night, p.182, notes that this "perspective" "could be a trick painting on a surface folded concertina-wise, so that it appeared to be two different paintings when viewed from two different angles. Or it could be a theatrical illusion of the Pepper's Ghost type, in which, by the use of mirrors, one figure was turned into two."
 - 2) Compositional Genetics, p. 61.
 - 3) The metaphysical confusion between dream and waking is further developed, with ever-increasing comic subtlety, in The Shrew and in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

From recurrent chance meetings "these errors are arose" (388). It has all been a "sympathised one day's error" (397), as the Abbess observes. The errors, whatever their comic or sometimes farcical semblance, have their serious romance tones. The comic catastrophe is dramatised as an awakening from dream, as a redemption, a baptism, and even as the effects of thirty-three years - "in travail" - and "till this present hour," says Emilia, "My heavy burden ne'er deliver'd" (400).

In the final lines, the comic confusions persist. The twins are so alike that their identities are still called in question. But now it is exclusively on the level of festive jest, as the Dromios quip:

Dro.S. I, sir, am Dromio, command him away.
Dro.E. I, sir, am Dromio, pray let me stay. (335)

This, together with a momentary confusion of masters by the alien Dromio, who asks the citizen Antipholus, "Master, shall I fetch your stuff from ship-board?" (408), is a final assertion of the play's comic spirit.

The Comedy of Errors has, in the preceding pages, been compared with Twelfth Night, a play with which it has some kinship. Such a comparison should not blind one to the obviously experimental qualities of the early comedy. In spite of the considerable degree of comic subtlety and dramatic expertness, Errors is a poor thing beside Twelfth Night. The weaknesses of Errors have been recounted, with varying degrees of justice, by critics from Coleridge onwards. The purpose of the present study has been to set the record straight, to say what Errors is, rather than to cavil at its obvious limitations.

CHAPTER III

The Taming of The Shrew

(i) Introductory

Because study of The Shrew has been dominated and up to a point limited by textual problems, the greater part of the literary criticism dealing with the play is either in the form of asides - as in Maynard Mack's valuable article¹⁾ - or of comparatively short chapters in books more largely preoccupied with the weightier plays - like H. C. Goddard's and Derek Traversi's studies.²⁾ Even Lerner, whose criterion of selection in his Penguin anthology is "choosing the best", elects to devote only six pages to The Shrew, as opposed to twenty-five to Errors. "Some plays", he remarks, "have drawn more good criticism than others."³⁾ Robert Heilman's selection of criticism contains not one specialist critical essay on the play - although he does perform the service of bringing Hosley's valuable "Sources and Analogues of The Taming of the Shrew" to a wider audience.⁴⁾ For textual reasons - his views on multiple authorship - Dover Wilson omits the play from his Shakespeare's Happy Comedies, and the problematical relation between Shakespeare's play and the anonymous A Shrew remains uncertain enough for Kenneth Muir to shelve discussion of The Shrew's sources.⁵⁾ But others, notably Hosley and also M. C. Bradbrook,⁶⁾ have usefully supplemented the basic accounts of sources and analogues offered by R. W. Bond and Geoffrey Bullough.⁷⁾

If the scholarly research of the latter four scholars has done anything, it has demonstrated in detail the extent to which The Shrew, like Errors, lies outside the main orbit of Shakespearean comedy. It is not merely that this play is a bourgeois comedy, in many ways nearer to The Shoemaker's Holiday than to Twelfth Night: this, I suppose, is generally recognized. What should be noted is the extent of the play's roots in the popular literary tradition of broadside ballads, jigs, jest-books, interludes, pamphlets, and so on.⁸⁾

These roots are enough to account for Quiller-Couch's hostility to "the whole Petruchio business":

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- 1) "Engagement and Detachment in Shakespeare's Plays."
 - 2) H. C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, I. 68 - 73; D. A. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, I. 83 - 9.
 - 3) Shakespeare's Comedies, an Anthology of Modern Criticism, pp. 13, 121.
 - 4) The Signet edn. of The Shrew includes a small anthology of criticism.
 - 5) Shakespeare's Sources, I. 259.
 - 6) "Dramatic Role as Social Image : A Study of The Taming of The Shrew."
 - 7) See Arden edn., pp. xiv - liii, and op. cit., I. 57 - 68, respectively.
 - 8) Sears Jayne has some suggestive asides on the play and the jig tradition in his "The Dreaming of The Shrew," pp. 46 - 7.

It is of its nature rough, criard: part of the fun of those fairs at which honest rustics won prizes by grinning through horse-collars. 1)

The pudent Quiller-Couch may be disapproving and may have misplaced the moral emphasis; but he was surely thinking in the right direction. The Shrew is often criard, but it is so with a rudely virile energy that harks back vaguely to Roman comedy and, more particularly, to lively academic interludes like Ralph Roister Doister and Gammer Gurton's Needle which in their way transform the criard merriment of broadside ballad, jest-book and jig.

This kind of rude energy, commonly a feature of farce, has already been transformed (admittedly with incomplete success) in Errors. In the later comedies it belongs properly in the low-comic sub-plots - The Merry Wives of Windsor is an obvious exception here. But in The Shrew, energetic merriment is a feature of the main wooing plot. This does not mean that The Shrew is as crude a work as those from which it partly draws its inspiration, that it is, as Quiller-Couch would have it, "tiresome....and offensive as well."²⁾ There is in this play an artistic awareness and, at times, a poetic vitality that more than compensates for any "loose ends and sentences which assume, in someone or other, acquaintance with information not previously imparted (indicative of 'cuts' and patching)."³⁾ Certainly the text of The Shrew is imperfect, but this does not put the play in a unique position among Shakespeare's works. The Shrew may not be one of Shakespeare's "great" comedies, but its years of success on the stage certainly demand some critical explanation. It is at least possible that criticism has imperfectly understood the play and that, even in trying to do The Shrew justice, critics have effectually distorted the play's peculiar qualities.

(ii) The Induction and Sly : the inset device

The Induction to The Shrew has been much applauded and equally much misunderstood. Goddard, for example, praises the Induction and detects an analogy between Sly and Petruchio. Sly is persuaded that he is a great lord; Petruchio is "likewise persuaded that he is a great lord - over his wife." The drunken Sly is "obviously in for a rude awakening when he discovers he is nothing but a tinker after all," Petruchio is also "a bit intoxicated, whether with pride, love, or avarice Is it possible that he too is in for an awakening that he is not as great a lord over his wife as he imagined?"⁴⁾

1) New Cambridge edn., p. xvi.

2) Ibid.

3) Ibid.

4) Op. cit., I. 73.

Goddard's equivocal use of terms like "great lord," "intoxicated," "awakening"- his failure to distinguish their literal from their figurative meanings - makes nonsense of the relationship between Sly and Petruchio as it is conceived in Shakespeare's play. Goddard, who recognizes that The Shrew is "a play within a play," nevertheless misses the dramatic point of the inset device and imposes a false analogy between the Sly and the Petruchio plots.

The Induction opens with Sly, the drunken beggar, who, ejected from the Tavern by the Hostess, is now engaged in an altercation with her. The "rogue," who has "burst" some of her glasses for which he refuses to pay, is threatened with "a pair of stocks" by the indignant Hostess, who goes off to fetch "the thirdborough." Sly falls asleep.

The diction of this passage and its treatment of the drunken beggar-tinker call to mind the milieu of jest-book and broadside ballad, sub-literary modes that were given some literary life in the non-dramatic works of writers like Greene, Nashe, and Dekker. Sly's drunken ejaculations are littered with tavern jargon and popular cant phrases like: "I'll pheeze you,"¹⁾ "paucas pallabris,"²⁾ "Go by, Saint Jeronimy" (a crass misquotation from The Spanish Tragedy),³⁾ and popular proverbial expressions like "let the world slide" and "go to thy cold bed and warm thee."⁴⁾

This low-comic, jest-book atmosphere is now qualified by the winding of horns and the entry of the hunting Lord and his train. Their (presumably) rich hunting accoutrements and their technical discussion of their hounds' points strike a note of contrast, which becomes meaningful in the Lord's proposed jest:

Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.

This practice is fundamental to the comic structure of the play, for several reasons.

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- 1) Bond refers to the English Dialect Dictionary which lists five surviving uses of "pheeze." The word is given an entirely different linguistic and social context in Troilus and Cressida, II.iii.199, where it is used by the blockish Ajax.
 - 2) "This expression formed part of the patter of the common juggler, and no doubt other rogues, of the period" (Dover Wilson).
 - 3) As Bond notes, Hieronimo's speech had "passed into a current phrase for contemptuous or impatient dismissal."
 - 4) The latter "may have had some proverbial association with beggars whose 'cold bed' frequently was the ground" (G. R. Hibbard, New Penguin edn., p. 163). Like "Sessa," this phrase is used also by Edgar in Lear. Note however that "Sessa" in Lear is an editorial emendation of F.'s "Sesey" and "sese" - both incomprehensible.

Primarily, it draws attention to the inherent comic absurdity of the whole set-up, to the Lord's jest and the consequent laughter both at Sly and later at the stage-antics of the players in the inset play. From the Lord's viewpoint, the Sly-jest and the stage-jests are parts of the same intention: his "practice."

The drunken tinker is to be plunged into an aristocratic world of magnificence, with pastimes like hunting, hawking, dancing, music and theatrical entertainments. Carried to the Lord's "fairest chamber," which is to be decorated with "wanton pictures," he is to be assailed by "a dulcet and heavenly sound" (of music) and every kind of servile attention. The highlight will be the "disguise" of the page, "dressed in all suits like a lady"; showing "her duty" and making "known her love....with kind embracements, tempting kisses"; displaying her joy "to see her noble lord restored to health" and recovered from his delusion that he is "no better than a poor and loathsome beggar." If the boy

have not a woman's gift
To rain a shower of commanded tears,
An onion will do well for such a shift. (i.122)

The comic possibilities of the situation are almost endless. The simple rustic beggar - "by birth a peddler, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bearherd, and now by present profession a tinker" - is, in all his crudeness, surrounded, even smothered, by wealth and elegance. But all is in the spirit of jest, which is well served by the introduction of pertinent details, like the disguised page's needing an onion to bring him to the point of weeping over this drunken sot. That the kind of "sport" intended is a trifle uncouth by the side of Shakespeare's later use, the other way round, of disguise - the disguise of female characters like Silvia, Viola, et al. as youths - is the measure of the play's unromantic comic mode. As the Lord observes,

I know the boy will well usurp the grace,
Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman;
I long to hear him call the drunkard husband(i.129)

The comic point of the practice is the bizarre and incongruous imposition.

Shakespeare's initial purpose in the Induction, then, is patently to create an atmosphere of practical joking, of homo ludens. But this is a ludus quite unlike those played out in Love's Labour's Lost and As You Like It, two comedies in which the lusory tends to dominate the comic mode. This ludus is basically the conventional play-action of

the beggar transported into luxury ... found in The Arabian Nights where Haroun Al Rascid plays the trick on a sleeper. Philip the Good of Burgundy repeated it, according to Heuterus.... Goulart put

this version into French ... translated into English in 1607 by Edward Grimeston. 1) But there is, as I shall show, a comic richness about the Shakespearean practical joking that is lacking in the analogues.

The Induction is built up through Shakespeare's play with traditional dream images that originate. [REDACTED] in that great storehouse of collective thinking on dreams that is epitomised by Macrobius' Commentary on The Dream of Scipio,²⁾ "one of the basic source books of the scholastic movement ... [and] the most important source of Platonism in the Latin West in the Middle Ages."³⁾ Many of the doctrines in the Commentary became "commonplaces in the Middle Ages."⁴⁾ Thus, in the area of Neoplatonic thinking most conveniently represented by Macrobius. is to be found, if not the source, then at least a representative, [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] the commonplaces about dreams and dreaming to be found in works like The Parlement of Foules, The Romaunt of the Rose, as well as The Shrew and A Midsummer Night's Dream.

In The Shrew Shakespeare is concerned with a peculiar form of this Neoplatonic dream tradition : the waking man's dream. As far as modern scholarship has been able to ascertain, Shakespeare's source was Heuterus' account of a trick played by the Duke of Burgundy on a drunken man in Brussels.⁵⁾ No other possible source has survived.

The dream imagery is very important. The Induction to the anonymous play, The Taming of a Shrew, which will be discussed below, contains no dream images. There, the action is restricted to the simple literal level of the Lord's jest and the attempt, upon which criticism of The Shrew has recently capitalized, to delude Sly into the "suppose" that "I am a lord indeed."⁶⁾ This is straightforward farce. In The Shrew, on the other hand, the Induction fits squarely into the dream complex of the Heuterus story and its later, post-Shakespearean, versions, all of which bear witness to the strength of the Neoplatonic dream

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- 1) Bullough, op. cit., I. 58 - 9, who mentions five other analogues besides A Shrew. The Waking Man's Dream, one of the later versions, is reprinted in Hazlitt's Shakespeare's Library, IV.407 - 14.
 - 2) Translated with the Introduction and Notes by W. H. Stahl.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 10.
 - 4) Ibid., p. 40.
 - 5) Heuterus, De Rebus Burgundicis, Lib. iv, p. 150 (1584); reprinted in Bond's Arden edn., pp. xlvi - xlvii.
 - 6) See Goddard's comments quoted above, p. 4. Further discussion must be postponed till later.

tradition which left few serious mediaeval or renaissance writers untouched.¹⁾

Grimeston, in his version of "the waking man's dream," sees the purpose of the Lord's jest as: "to make triall of the vanity of our life."²⁾ Heuterus, however, puts it thus: "experiri quale esset, vitae nostrae ludicrum."³⁾ Now, Heuterus' "ludicrum" is quite without the didactic overtones of Grimeston's inept translation of the word as "vanity." In its adjectival form (ludicer, -era, -crum), the word is associated by Suetonius with partes, that is, "parts" in a stage-play; and Julius Paulus calls actors those "qui artem ludicram faciunt."⁴⁾ The substantive form (ludicrum) means "show" or "stage-play." There is thus an approximation to Erasmus's "riduculus lusus," which all men play, "histrionum more."⁵⁾ ^{here} Heuterus' tactful moral conclusion - Quid interest inter diem illius et nostros aliquot annos?⁶⁾ - is put by Grimeston in the form of an intransigent statement on morals: "his goodly day and the years of a wicked life differ nothing but in more and lesse."⁷⁾ The emphasis in Grimeston, who adds discussion of matter from Seneca and Virgil that is not in Heuterus, is directed against the vanity of this world's sensual pleasures. "No man," says Seneca, "can rejoyce and content himself, if he be not nobly minded, just and temperate."⁸⁾

The overt moralizing in Grimeston's version is alien to Shakespeare's comic mode, which is frankly attuned to "ludicrum vitae nostrae" rather than to its "vanities", in the Puritan sense of a writer like Stephen Gosson.⁹⁾

- 1) As J.A.W. Bennett has noted, there were 35 editions of Macrobius' Commentary published between 1472 and 1628 (The Parlement of Foules: an Interpretation, p. 32ⁿ). Bennett continues: "For Skelton [Macrobius] is still the authority 'that did treat of Scipions dream what was the true probate'; and Ben Jonson refers to the Commentary in his Notes to the Hymenaei, 137 ff.: v. Works (ed. Herford and Simpson), vii. 214, 216, 221. Neither Boswell nor Malone thought it necessary to explicate the reference at the passage in the Life of Johnson cited at the head of this chapter" - viz., a casual quotation by Johnson of Macrobius. See also Stahl's account of Macrobius' influence in the introduction to his translation of the Commentary, pp. 39 - 55.
- 2) "Vanity of the World as represented in State," in Bullough, op. cit., I.109.
- 3) "To test what this stage-play of our life is like" (Heuterus, op. cit., p. xlvi).
- 4) "Those who make stage-plays."
- 5) "Ridiculus lusus" is translated by Wilson as "little, odd, ridiculous May-game" (Praise of Folly, p. 17); "histrionum more" means "after the fashion of actors."
- 6) "What difference is there between his single day and our several years?" (op. cit., p. xlvi).
- 7) Bullough, op. cit., I. 110.
- 8) As cited by Grimeston, ibid., I. 110.
- 9) Gosson attacks the "vanity" of the public stage, where the Devil "sendeth in Gearish apparell maskes, vaulting, tumbling, daunsing of gigges, galiardes, morisces, hobbihorses; showing of iudgeling castes, nothing forgot, that might serve to...ravish the beholders with variety of pleasure" (Plays Confuted in Five Actions, cited in Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jiq, p. 95).

Shakespeare's play with the dream motif suggests less the idle vanity of worldly pursuits than the commonplace that "man is but the dream of a shadow or the shadow of a dream, [for] who can ... distinguish the things that have been done from those that have been dreamed? vanities, delights, riches, pleasures, and all are past and gone; are they not dreames?"¹⁾ The unknown author of this passage cites the beggar's cry, when he is awakened out of his "dream" : "What have you done? you have rob'd me of a Kingdom..,"²⁾ and he refers to the case of the mad Athenian who "imagined that all the riches that arrived by shipping in the haven of Athens to be his." Later he reviled the friends responsible for his cure, saying, that "whereas he was rich in conceit they had by this cure made him poore and miserable in effect."³⁾

There are two fundamental sorts of dream at issue here. First, there is the literal dream of the sleeper. Then there is the sense in which this dream is an allegory of human life, of Nature. This allegory is of a distinctly Neoplatonic cast and views sub-lunary Nature as ephemeral and transient, compared to the immutable, transcendent, eternal Reality.

In his three dream comedies - Errors, The Shrew, and A Midsummer Night's Dream - Shakespeare makes a good deal of fanciful, even whimsical, and yet serious comic play with this complex of ideas and the inflections to which they lend themselves. The alien Antipholus' loss of his metaphysical bearings is a case in point. The mutually exclusive viewpoints of Theseus and Hippolyta in A Midsummer Night's Dream might be a partial gloss on "dream." On the one hand there is Theseus' sceptical notion that the lovers' "dream" is

More strange than true

How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear. (V.i.2, 22)

On the other hand there is Hippolyta's view that their "dream"

More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy. (25)

This, ironically, is in tune with the foolish Bottom's reverence for his dream,

1) "The Waking Man's Dream," Hazlitt's Shakespeare's Library, IV, 407 - 14. H. G. Norton, who discovered the tale as a mere fragment of a book, conjectured that this might be a reprint of the story in a collection by Richard Edwards which Thomas Warton described (Hazlitt, op. cit., pp. 406-7). C. C. Mish has noted, however, that "The Waking Man's Dream" is "one of the 12 stories in the first part of a collection of pious anecdotes translated by S. Du Verger from the French of J. P. Camus and published in 1639 as Admirable Events." (TLS, 28 Dec., 1951, p. 837). H. G. Norton's text, reprinted by Hazlitt, apparently corresponds verbatim with the original 1639 text of Du Verger.

2) "The Waking Man's Dream," op. cit., p. 412.

3) Ibid., p. 413.

which is

...past the wit of men to say what dream it was. Man is but an
ass if he go about to expound this dream. (IV.i.202)

Bottom - who is clearly conceived on the lines of St Paul's "If any man among
you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise"
1 Cor., iii. 18) - is clearly an anticipation of Shakespeare's later wise fool,
here used to give yet another meaningful comic nuance to the dream image-complex.
At the heart of the comedy, however, are images of metaphysical doubt that re-
call the alien Antipholus' confusion in Errors. Antipholus speaks:

What, was I married to her in my dream?
Or sleep I now and think I hear all this? (II.ii.182)

In the later play, Demetrius asks the other lovers:

Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Did not you think
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him? (IV.i.189)

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the various dreams and their interpretations are
counterpointed and then discussed by Theseus and Hippolyta in the final act.¹⁾

In The Shrew, ██████████ Shakespeare restricts the dream motif to the Sly-
scenes, where he uses it, together with theatre imagery, for altogether novel
dramatic purposes. Initially, the dream image-complex works as a poetic ex-
pansion of the jest milieu. Thus:

Lord. Would not the beggar then forget himself?
1 Huntsman. Believe me, Lord, I think he cannot choose.
2 Huntsman. It would seem strange unto him when he waked.
Lord. Even as a flattering dream or worthless fancy. (i.41)

But, even here, the ironies are patent. The Lord's intention is none other
than to

Persuade him that he hath been lunatic,
And when he says he is, say that he dreams,
For he is nothing but a mighty lord. (i.63)

The two "dreams" are in effect balanced against each other: (1) the practical
jokers will persuade Sly that he is indeed "a mighty lord"; his protestations
that he is "old Sly's son of Burton-heath" are to be dismissed as memories of
erstwhile lunatic dreams to which he has been subject; (2) when Sly ultimately
awakens in his natural environment, the metaphysical boot will be on the other

1) See Frank Kermode's discussion of the dreams in A Midsummer Night's Dream,
"The Mature Comedies," in Early Shakespeare, esp. pp. 214 - 20.

foot : then all will "seem strange" to the drunken beggar, who has been persuaded to "forget" himself. The Lord's practice will confuse Sly's simple metaphysic. This is the initial comic basis. Later, I shall discuss how the jest confuses Sly's relations with his wife, which is the comic upshot of the play.¹⁾

The second scene of the Induction introduces the topsy-turvy world of Sly's dream. Incongruously greeted as "your lordship" and "your honour," Sly emphatically denies the titles. The aggressively homely vein of his utterance evokes the jest-book milieu once more:

Ne'er ask me what raiment I'll wear, for I have
no more doublets than backs, no more stockings
than legs, nor no more shoes than feet. (ii.8)

But the counterfeiters persevere, in contrasting vein:

Heaven cease this idle humour in your honour!

He has, they allege, been "infused with so foul a spirit." What L. C. Knights, in another context, calls a "kind of metaphysical pitch and toss"²⁾ is here beginning to erode Sly's sense of identity in a way that recalls what happened to the Antipholi in Errors:

What, would you make me mad? Am I not
Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath.....?
What! I am not bestraught. (ii.16)

The proffered explanation, that he has been mad, that his "wit" is now "restored," that he is "a lord and nothing but a lord," embodies the basic metaphysical inversion here:

These fifteen years you have been in a dream;
Or, when you waked, so wak'd as if you slept. (ii.17)

What Sly sees before him now is truth; Cicely Hacket, old John Naps of Greece, Peter Turph, and Henry Pimpernell are "abject lowly dreams," manifestations of Sly's "strange lunacy." These "dreams" are incongruously juxtaposed with what is now offered: the music of Apollo and a couch,

Softer and sweeter than the lustful bed
On purpose trimmed up for Semiramis (ii.36)

Riding, hawking, and hunting are similarly glamorized for his benefit (ii.39 - 46). The deliberate element of Marlovian-Ovidian pastiche in these lines imparts an added high-comic piquancy to the situation:

1) This point is developed in the final section of the present chapter, where I discuss the hypothetical lost epilogue of The Shrew.

2) Explorations, p. 18.

Dost thou love pictures? We will fetch thee straight
Adonis painted by a running brook,
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath
Even as the waving sedges play wi' th' wind.
We'll show thee Io as she was a maid
And how she was beguiled and surpris'd
As lively painted as the deed was done. (ii.47)

The rich Ovidian imagery here heightens the comic irony of Sly's bewilderment which in performance should be mingled with fascination. For a man who "ne'er drank sack in his life," this can only be a dream - a comic dream that draws its essential life from the context of the Lord's jest. The comedy of his metaphysical confusion is ^{pointed} by his sudden use of blank verse:

Am I a lord and have I such a lady?
Or do I dream? Or have I dream'd till now?
I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak;
I smell sweet savours, and I feel soft things.
Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,
And not a tinker, nor Christopher Sly. (ii.66)

This passage, in which Sly echoes the metaphysical bewilderment of the alien Antipholus and of Demetrius, is also a comic variation on the ~~confusion~~ confusion suggested in "The Waking Man's Dream": which is "real" and which is "dream"? Sly's bewilderment is comically set over against his ready acceptance of the identity which is imposed on him. He slips easily into the use of the royal "we", when he commands his "wife's" presence and orders "a pot o' th' smallest ale." The sense of absurdity is everpresent and reaches its ripest, most criard moment, when lewdly ogling the Page, his supposed wife, he commands her to "undress...and come to bed." The Page is however solicitous for her "lord's" health, which, she fears, will not bear the exertion:

I hope this reason stands for my excuse.(ii.122)

Her excuse is met with Sly's bawdy puns on "reason"-"raising" and "stands":

Ay, it stands so that I may hardly tarry so long.

These old jokes are however given new life by their context.

The question now arises: how is this Sly action related to the main actions of The Shrew? This question, as we shall see, raises a number of tricky textual issues, on which literary interpretation may be seen to hang.

Some scholars are of the opinion that the text of The Shrew is, as far as the Sly action is concerned, an accurate enough reflection of Shakespeare's copy. Richard Hosley argues that:

The Shrew was designed without a dramatic epilogue in part because of the desirability...of doubling parts of the induction with parts of the play proper.....

The last scene....requires actors for thirteen (or twelve) parts in addition to those of Servants.... 1)

which would make the hypothetical interludes and epilogue impossibly expensive to stage.

Hosley's point was adequately dealt with by Dover Wilson who suggested that the excision of the original Sly scenes in The Shrew "may have been carried out for the Pembroke men in 1592,"²⁾ who were "either bankrupt or near to it by September, 1593."³⁾ And if the copy for the Folio was the acting text used by a "remnant" company on tour in the provinces while the theatres were closed most of the time from June, 1592 till May, 1594,⁴⁾ it is very likely that any Sly scenes which would render players "incapable of taking any part in the main play" would be cut.⁵⁾ Whoever cut them made "no provision for getting Sly off the stage."⁶⁾

Peter Alexander's theory, which harmonizes with Wilson's, is that A Shrew is a "bad" quarto of The Shrew. This is not a precondition for arguing the sometime existence of the lost Sly scenes. Duthie's hypothesis of a lost source-play common to both shrew plays is not incompatible with the hypothesis that Shakespeare's Sly scenes were lost, as Greg's discussion bears witness. If, however, it is accepted that A Shrew is a "bad" quarto of The Shrew, the case for the sometime existence of the lost Sly scenes is greatly strengthened, because

it would be surprising to find the pirate of A Shrew completing the scheme

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- 1) "Was there a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to The Taming of the Shrew?" p. 29. The opinion of textual scholars is evenly divided on this score. Those in support of Hosley are: R. Warwick Bond, The Taming of the Shrew (Arden edn.), p. 33; R. A. Houk, "The Evolution of The Taming of the Shrew"; G. I. Duthie, "The Taming of a Shrew and The Taming of the Shrew"; T. M. Parrott, Shakespearean Comedy, p. 147. Textual scholars who believe that Sly scenes have somehow been lost are: Dover Wilson, New Cambridge edn., pp. 123-4; E. K. Chambers, William Shakespeare, I.328; Hardin Craig, An Interpretation of Shakespeare, pp. 94 - 95; W. W. Greg, The Shakespeare First Folio, pp. 212, 215 - 16; Peter Alexander, "The Taming of a Shrew," "A Case of Three Sisters," "The Original Ending of The Taming of the Shrew," and Introductions to Shakespeare, pp. 73 - 4.
 - 2) New Cambridge edn., p. 124.
 - 3) Ibid., p. 104.
 - 4) Ibid., pp. 111 - 13; also E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, IV.347 - 8.
 - 5) New Cambridge edn., p. 124.
 - 6) Fleay, quoted in New Cambridge edn., p. 123.

Shakespeare abandoned and so making his only original contribution to the version. 1)

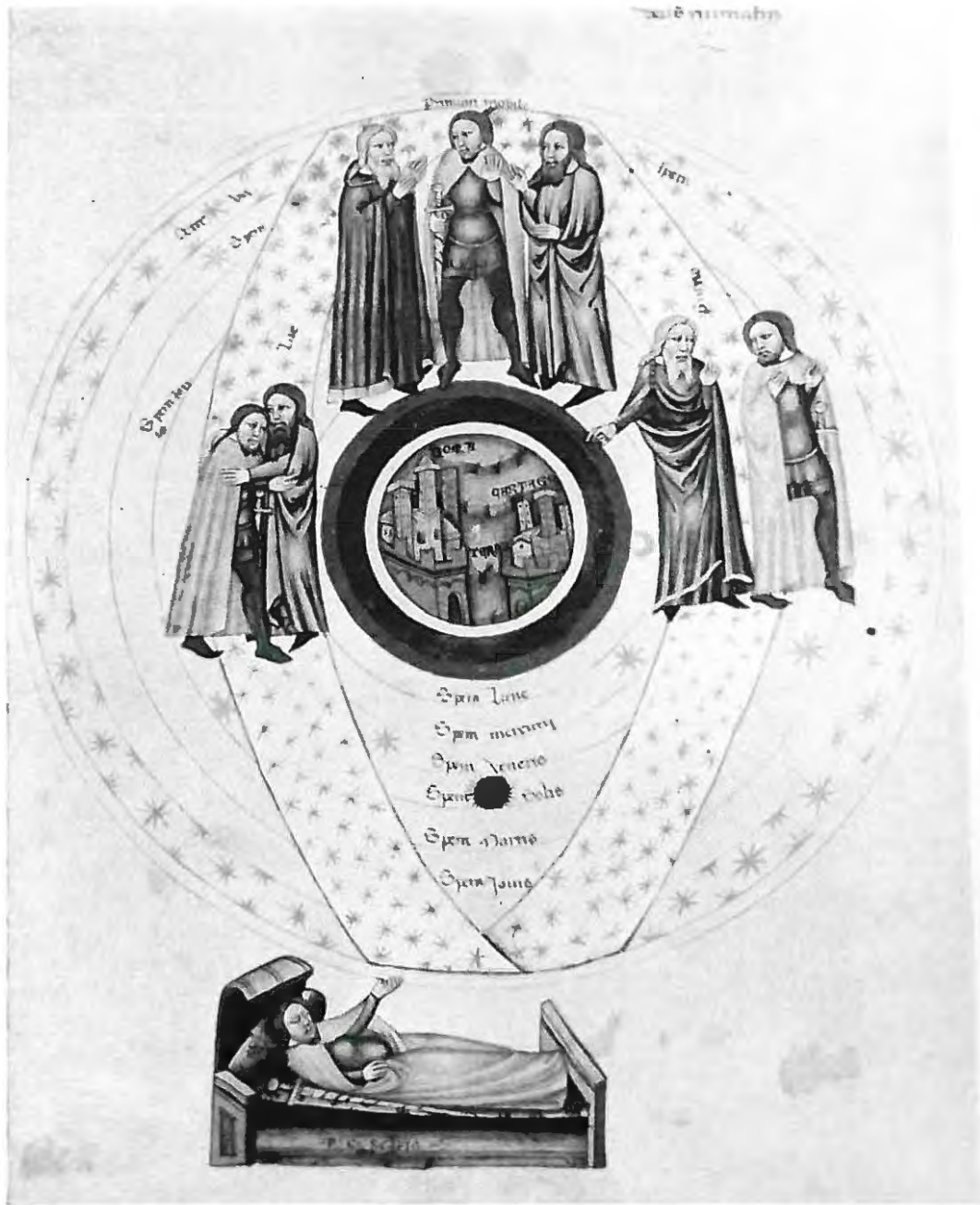
This point appears to have been ignored by those who, like Hosley, support the "bad" quarto hypothesis, while denying that the lost Sly scenes ever existed.²⁾

Whatever opinion on the textual relations of the two shrew plays may be, one thing is clear: the Induction to The Shrew is no mere prologue, simply there to introduce the play or outline the dramatist's intentions. It is specifically designed to "lead into" the play, and T. N. Greenfield is right to say that "the Induction to The Shrew marks a departure from the Induction as it was usually conceived."³⁾ Further, the tricking of Sly does not merely constitute an incident, but implies what is to be found in A Shrew and in the analogues: a story-form, with a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning we have; the middle is Sly's reaction to the acted play; and the end is his re-awakening in his original identity and going off to tame his own shrew.

Looked at without prejudice but in the light of analogues and the other early comedies, the essential point of the Induction, which distinguishes it radically from that in A Shrew, is not that "Sly has been persuaded to accept a new personality,"⁴⁾ nor that the "supposes" theme has been extended to embrace him,⁵⁾ but that his fortunes are comically developed in terms of the dream and play motifs. Thus, in the hypothetically lost interludes and epilogue (the "middle" and "end"), Shakespeare would have developed the Lord's jest in relation to the play's main actions, filling out both dream and play motifs in preparation for the "awakening" of Sly.

What is more, the Induction is, as a mimetic action, related to the two

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- 1) "The Original Ending of The Taming of the Shrew," p. 115.
 - 2) Hosley's position here is awkward. If he rejects the "bad" quarto hypothesis, he complicates his problems regarding the sources of Shakespeare's play - problems which have bothered scholars for many years and which he appears largely to have solved, as Alexander points out ("The Original Ending of The Taming of the Shrew," p. 113). If he accepts the "bad" quarto hypothesis, he must logically accept the Wilson-Alexander position on the Sly scenes, which he cannot.
 - 3) "The Transformation of Christopher Sly."
 - 4) R. Hosley, "Sources and Analogues of The Taming of the Shrew," p. 307.
 - 5) This is the view of a number of critics, notably: Hosley, "Sources and Analogues of The Taming of The Shrew"; D. Stauffer, Shakespeare's World of Images; M. Mack, "Engagement and Detachment in Shakespeare's Plays"; C. C. Seronsy, "'Supposes' as the Unifying Theme in The Taming of the Shrew." My contention is not that these critics are "wrong" but that in pushing their argument they have misplaced the comic emphasis. The Sly action is more than a simple analogy of the other two actions.



The dream of Scipio

main wooing actions as a frame is to an inset. An example will make this clear. In a mediaeval illustration of Scipio's Dream, Scipio is represented at the base of the picture, as asleep in bed; above him is the created universe of nine spheres, the outermost occupied by the fixed stars and the centre by the earth; the earth however takes the form of a round window looking on Carthage; above and on either side of this window are superimposed the figures of Africanus, Aemilius Paulus and the young dreamer himself, ranged about the city that was the pivot of their fortunes. In this manner a pictorial relationship is set up not only between dreaming Scipio and his deceased father and grandfather, but between each of them and Carthage.¹⁾ The relation between the Sly action and the two inset actions is a similar one and just as the various elements in the mediaeval illustration reflect on one another, so the waking man's dream (Sly's) is related to the Kate and Bianca actions which constitute the inset play.²⁾

The Kate and Bianca actions are firmly placed as insets and would almost certainly have been more insistently put in this perspective, if the interludes and epilogue had survived. In the Induction the Lord decides that he and his servants should, in their jest, disguise themselves: "My lord, I warrant you we will play our part (i.67; my italics). Because the Lord has "some sport in hand/wherein your cunning can assist me much," he involves the visiting players in the jest too. They will play literal stage parts in "a pleasant comedy" (the Induction to A Shrew actually names the play: "The taming of a shrew" - i.63). Both kinds of part-playing or disguising are vehicles of the Lord's "sport" (see i.88 - 99), his "pastime passing excellent", (i.65), his "ridiculus lusus."

Thus, almost everyone is playing one kind of "part" or another: (1) the Lord and his men are pretending to be Sly's servants and pretending that Sly is their Lord; (2) Sly, albeit unwittingly, is playing the part of that Lord; (3) the players are playing their parts in the inset play - Petruchio, Kate, Bianca, et al.; (4) added to this is a feature to be discussed in some detail below: that the characters in the inset play are themselves playing parts - Petruchio's persona as heroic tamer, Lucentio's disguise as Cambio, etc.

On the literal level, the stage-players' performance is but another disguising, further to delude a Sly who is reluctant to "fall into his dreams

1) This illustration, reproduced from J.A.W. Bennett, op. cit., is printed in the present work as Plate I.

2) See Francis Berry, The Shakespeare Inset for various useful discriminations of kinds of insets. But, apart from a few pages on the first scene of Errors and some discussion of the owl and cuckoo songs in Love's Labour's Lost, this excellent book says little about the early comedies per se.

again" (ii.124) i.e. his "dreams" that he is Christopher Sly. He is comically anxious to accept the proffered therapy and heal his melancholy, "the nurse of frenzy," by framing his mind to comic "mirth and merriment" (ii.126 - 33). In the hypothetical lost Sly scenes and in A Shrew, this literal level is developed to its logical "comic catastrophe" in the Epilogue. The general outlines of how Shakespeare might have developed the Neoplatonic moral dimension of the dream and theatre imagery, as it is found in Heuterus and "The Waking Man's Dream," are suggested by Sly's early metaphysical confusion (part of the Lord's "jest") of dream and conscious experience.

At the same time, the Sly interludes and epilogue in A Shrew offer some simple hints as to how Shakespeare might have exploited the inset device. As Sly contemplates the comedy, he drinks and keeps dropping off to sleep. At one point however, he shows indignant concern when the Duke of Castus (= Vincentio) threatens his son, Aurelius (= Lucentio), and his servants with prison:

Sly. I say wele have no sending to prison.
Lord. My Lord this is but the play, theyre but in jest.
Sly. I tell thee Sim wele have no sending,
To prison thats flat : why Sim am I not Don Christo Vary?
Therefore I say they shall not go to prison. (xvi.45)

Here are the germs for a possible development of the dream motif in terms of a comic enactment of the theatrum mundi motif: Sly's metaphysical confusion expanded through his inability to distinguish between the literal theatre and the theatre of life in which all men play, "histrionum more" (as Erasmus puts it). The situation furthermore recalls Heuterus' words: that the Lord's jest was an opportunity "experiri quale esset, vitae nostrae ludicrum"- "to test what this stage-play of our life is like,"¹⁾

The epilogue, as it survives in A Shrew, offers obvious opportunities for development of this strain. Here, when Sly is awakened by the tapster, he is, as in the analogues, agog with his "dream." The tapster tersely warns him of impending domestic ructions:

I marry but you had best get you home,
For your wife will course you for dreeming here tonight.

But Sly replies confidently:

Will she? I know now how to tame a shrew
I dreamt upon it all this night till now..... (xix.15)

This is no "anticlimax," no naïve "point/ing of/ the moral of shrew-taming,"

1) Op. cit., p. xlvii.

no merely "didactic ending," as Hosley has held it to be.¹⁾ It is rather a logical development of the dreaming comedy, as well as a comic-ironic reflection of the wager-scene, with which it is juxtaposed. Sly's clownish confidence in his own ability to "tame a shrew" is based on Petruchio's recipe and is qualified by Hortensio's failure, even in the face of the latter's attendance at the "taming school." When Sly awakens, he is full of his "dream," which he regards as what Macrobius calls a "somnium" or "an enigmatic dream."²⁾ Bottom's dream, which "hath no bottom," is a comic "somnium," and he regards it with appropriate awe. Sly treats his "somnium" as a common recipe.³⁾

The argument in the two preceding paragraphs is obviously hypothetical, but it does indicate the relevance of the recent tendency to perform The Shrew together with the anonymous play's interludes and epilogue.⁴⁾ The aptness of this procedure is all the more remarkable when the absence of stage-metaphors in A Shrew is borne in mind. One can only conjecture how much more richly comic Shakespeare's own interludes and epilogue would have been, with their presumably sustained development of the theatre and dream images from the Induction to The Shrew.

Criticism has been slow to recognize the structural implications of this dream and theatre imagery, which are altogether more far-reaching in their effects than the merely incidental use of them in, say, Supposes: Pasiphilo's comment on the discovery of Cleander's long-lost son - "a man might make a comedy of it."⁵⁾ In The Shrew, this image-complex is associated with Shakespeare's employment of a peculiar comic perspective, by means of which the dramatist points the kind of mimesis this play is and thus contrives to prevent the play from falling into the simple naturalistic mode into which the Zeffirelli film forced it. The Shrew is anything but what Brecht, albeit inaccurately, called "Aristotelian drama" - drama that offers an illusion of real people and real events into which the audience is drawn by their identification with hero or heroine or both.⁶⁾

This dramatic strategy is no innovation on Shakespeare's part. We need to be constantly reminded that what Brecht calls "Aristotelian drama" is only one of many stage conventions and that pre-Shakespearean English drama is remarkable for its varied use of dramatic perspectives. In the Mysteries,

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- 1) "Was there a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to The Taming of the Shrew?" p. 29.
 - 2) Op. cit., pp. 87 - 90.
 - 3) Cf. the last part of section (vii) below.
 - 4) Cf. ibid.
 - 5) Gascoigne, Supposes, V.vii.49.
 - 6) See Brecht on Theatre, transl. by John Willett, pp. 70, 87, 182-3, 203-4, etc.

on the one hand, there is no apparent barrier between play-world and audience-world. In ritual dramas like these, actors and audience share the relived experience of the Crucifixion or the Harrowing of Hell. These enacted experiences, like the ritual of the Mass, partake of a Platonic Reality that transcends the illusions besetting mere mortal lives. In this kind of dramatic perspective, there will inevitably be no theatrical metaphors, because Reality is concentrated on the stage. In the Moralities, on the other hand, Everyman or Mankind is depicted making his way through an illusory world, constantly being ensnared by the deceits or false appearances of the Devil. The audience, though identified with Everyman, at the same time holds what B. Evans calls "an advantage in awareness" over him and can perceive the illusions and imperfections to which Everyman is subject. Thus, ^hwhereas Reality is, in the Mysteries, identified with the stage action and illusion with the audience, Morality writers reverse this relationship. However, in the academic comedies of Udall and others, as well as in the later comedy of Lyly, drama comes increasingly to offer a self-contained, autonomous poetic realm:¹⁾

We must tell you a tale of the Man in the Moone, which
if it seeme ridiculous for the method, or
superfluous for the matter, or for the meanes incredible, for
three faultes wee can make but one excuse. It is a tale
of the Man in the Moone (Prologue to Lyly's Endimion).

In The Shrew, however much it might have been influenced by Lyly, there is no simply self-contained poetic world. There is too much overt play with the idea of disguising, masks, and playing parts. The play is an elaboration that amounts to the overthrow of what has been described as "the theatrical situation reduced to a minimum....[i.e.] A impersonates B while C looks on."²⁾

In Medwall's Fulgens and Lucrece, the two servants, A and B, step as easily from the world of the audience into that of the play as does Ralph in The Knight of the Burning Pestle. When Publius Cornelius turns to the audience and asks for a volunteer to help him to Lucrece's love, B exclaims

Now have I spied a meet office for me,
For I will be of counsel, an I may,
With yonder man -

But A interrupts:

Peace, let be!
By God, thou wilt destroy all the play. (ll.360 - 3)

Attention is drawn to the lusory nature of the main action which is an inset

1) This paragraph is indebted to Anne Richter's valuable discussion in Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play, esp. pp. 14 - 63.

2) E.C. Bentley, op. cit., p. 150.

to the servant's dialogue. The servants are from the first presented casually talking to the members of the audience, probably even mingling with them. In The Shrew, Petruchio's comic-ironic appeal to the audience to let him know if they have a better method of taming a shrew is a development of the Medwall perspective. Whether he is addressing Sly or the real audience is left deliberately ambivalent. Sly's confusion of drama and real life (in A Shrew) is another comic exploitation of the ambivalence of the stage world. As the Lord tells Sly, the inset play is "a kind of history."

The actions of The Shrew, then, are neither a simple extension of the audience's world nor a self-contained, autonomous poetic realm. Initially, Sly is the simple victim of a practical joke. But, as the various factors which I have discussed come into play, the dramatic situation becomes complex, and we have the progressive creation of insets (or fictive regressions) which I have described: actor playing Sly, Sly playing a lord, and this lord watching strolling players playing parts in the inset play, and so on.¹⁾

The general effect of the Sly scenes (those from A Shrew included, as in most modern performances) is a Brechtian verfremdungseffekt or alienation effect. The possibility of any overpowering illusion that the audience is contemplating "actual" events is largely eliminated by the strategy of distancing the action. Shakespeare works at this in various ways during the course of the play. But most important is the manner in which the inner and outer levels of the play, Induction and Inset, reflect on each other. By depicting a group of strolling actors putting on their play, in which they portray what are sometimes ballad, sometimes commedia dell'arte types, Shakespeare effectually distances the stage-world of the inset play. This tends to discourage simple audience identification with Kate or Petruchio - identification of the kind exemplified by Sly himself. Of course, the efficient performance of the play would necessitate emphasis not on life-likeness ("what a life-like portrayal of a man or woman!") but on role-playing. For The Shrew is full of characters who play recognizable fictive roles, as I shall now try to demonstrate.

(iii) Further use of the inset; Kate and the type of the shrew

Any approach to The Shrew should, in view of the placing of the inset play

1) The structure of the Elizabethan theatre lent itself particularly well to these fictive regressions. The real audience would be variously disposed about the theatre; Sly et al. would be in the gallery; the players would be using the stage. See G.R. Kernodle, From Art to Theatre, pp. 140-2, on the staging of "dual scenes" in Elizabethan drama.

as an expansion of the Lord's jest, proceed from the starting-point that Petruchio, Kate, Lucentio and the rest are "parts" that the strolling players of the Induction actually play before Sly. It appears nearly always to be forgotten that the Kate and Bianca plots together constitute a play within a play.

Recent critical work on The Shrew has been largely preoccupied with the alleged moral and psychological significance of the taming. It has proceeded from the assumption (implicit or explicit) that this play is designed to depict its characters' innermost being and to assess the quality of their lives. This approach is adopted generally by those who wish to deny that the play is something more than a vulgar wife-beating farce. As a result the sense in which the inset action is a "jest" or "practice" tends to be ignored or even forgotten.

One critic admits "the impression of barbarism which the 'shrew' story may initially make upon us."¹⁾ Another points out that The Shrew "has often been read and acted as a wife-humiliating farce in which a brute fortune-hunter carries all, including his wife's spirit, before him."²⁾ And a third opines that "to any modern civilized man, reading A Shrew or The Shrew in his library, the whole Petruchio business.....may seem, with its noise of whip-cracking, scoldings, its throwing about of cooked food, and its general playing of 'the Devil among the Tailors,' tiresome - and to any modern woman, not an antiquary, offensive as well."³⁾

The first two of these critics, together with a fourth, ask why Kate should be a shrew. The diagnosis is unanimous. Her shrewishness is "the inevitable result of her father's gross partiality towards her sister and neglect of herself If her sister is a spoiled child, Kate is a cross child who is starved for love."⁴⁾ She is "a girl of spirit, forced to endure a father who is ready to sell his daughters to the highest bidder ... and who has made a favourite of her sly little sister." Her shrewishness is a "defensive technique" developed to cope with her "horrible family."⁵⁾ Petruchio's role is to "reveal the real Kate to herself, showing what she is -

1) D.A. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, I.85.

2) N. Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy," in Shakespeare Criticism 1935-60, ed. by Anne Ridler, p. 207.

3) Quiller-Couch, The Taming of the Shrew, NCS edn., p. xvi. It is worth noting that Quiller-Couch fails to make any distinctions in this passage between dramatic effects in A Shrew and The Shrew.

4) H.C. Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, I.69.

5) Coghill, op. cit., pp. 207-8, Traversi similarly regards Bianca as "worthless" (op. cit., p. 85) and "an idealized coquette" (ibid., p. 88).

although she does not yet know it and her behaviour has so far seemed to belie it - her true nature to a girl who has been systematically belittled by all around her."¹⁾ Kate "is dying for affection. He keeps calling her his sweet and lovely Kate. What if he is ironical to begin with. The words just of themselves are manna to her soul,...."²⁾ And indeed Kate is lovely and sweet by nature. (She is worth a bale of Biancas.)"³⁾

Further quotation is not required to display the introverted, psychological description of character and the emphatic moral preference of Kate to Bianca.⁴⁾ What is being attempted in this criticism is hardly less than a surreptitious transformation of Shakespeare's play into a psychological drama. The Shrew has had its adapters in the past.⁵⁾ The twentieth-century method is subtler: it entails not rewriting the play but reworking its "subtext." But to regard Kate as merely "a cross child" is to underplay her egregiously violent handling of Bianca in II.i. To regard Bianca as "sly," "worthless," or "a coquette" is to have an erroneous idea of Shakespeare's comic characterization. She is no Rosamund to Lucentio's Lydgate. Shakespeare's comedies, whatever else they might be, do not fit happily into Leavis's "great tradition." Kate and Bianca are what the play says they are: a "curst shrew" who has to be "tamed" and a mild maid who turns out to be "froward" when put to the test.⁶⁾

The Kate and Bianca plots are placed from the outset as the entertainment staged by the strolling players at the Lord's request. This entertainment is properly an expansion of the Lord's "practice." It is conceived as no mere "Christmas gambold" but "more pleasing stuff": "a kind of history." As such it is "a pleasant comedy," but one not without serious comic implications. There are therefore two factors here that will receive attention in the ensuing pages: the serious comic interests of the play and the use of the inset idea, the fictive regressions, which deter the shrew action from becoming a straight-

1) Traversi, op. cit., p. 87.

2) In Shakespeare's World of Images, p. 45, however, D.A. Stauffer calls them "exasperating to the accused" and, rightly noting how "Kate winces under awareness of the treatment," he quotes her words:

And that which spites me more than all these wants -
He does it under name of perfect love. (IV.iii.11)

3) Goddard, op. cit., p.70.

4) To account fully for the latter preference would involve writing the history of twentieth-century taste, from the fashionable denigration of Dickens's virtuous heroines onwards.

5) See H. Child's account of the stage history, NCS edn., pp. 181 - 86.

6) In any case, Shakespeare would hardly muddle his audience by concealing what his characters are. This is why so many people in his plays - Iago, Richard III, Edmund, Othello, Jaques, Orlando, et al. - actually identify themselves to the audience.

forward comic mimesis of the audience-watching-an-actor-playing-a-part type.

The inset play opens on a conventional enough note - a note sounded again in the first scene of Two Gentlemen. Lucentio's father has sent him to Padua, "nursery of arts," to "institute/A course of learning and ingenious studies," exactly as Valentine is sent to Milan. Lucentio's forty-line discussion with "his man, Tranio," is entirely conventional in its elegant blank verse. The romantic Italian atmosphere of their speeches is offset by Sly's Warwickshire idiom. Their attractive portrayal of the gentle life is disturbed by the entry of Baptista, Kate, and Bianca with the latter's rival suitors, Hortensio and Gremio.

This ushers in a further contrast, but it is more than a contrast. It is another expansion of comic perspective. Tranio's remarks on the newcomers' entry make this clear:

Lucentio. But stay awhile; what company is this?

Tranio. Master, some show to welcome us to town. (46)

Tranio's comment is obviously made in jest, but its tenor is confirmed by what follows. In the Induction, Sly is promised "mirth and merriment," and Kate's entry brings exactly this. Gremio caps Baptista's offer to let them "court" Kate with:

Cart her rather. She's too rough for me. (55)¹⁾

Hortensio admonishes Kate:

No mates for you,
Unless you were of gentler, milder mould. (59)

The encounter between Bianca's suitors and the shrew is a piece of recognizable "merriment." As Tranio says to Lucentio,

Husht, master! Here's some good pastime toward;
That wench is stark mad or wonderful froward. (68)

Her role in the "pastime" is set off by Bianca's "Maid's mild behaviour and sobriety" (71).

This "pastime" or "show" is a further fictive regression. As such it has the double effect of distancing the Kate action which impedes our easy identification with the characters and accentuating the absurdity of Sly's later identification (in A Shrew anyway) of himself with Petruccio.

Kate is the central figure in the "show." Her ill-temper demarcates her

1) Gremio's "cart her" is a biting reference to the standard Elizabethan punishment for prostitutes. Note that this as a "show" image.

from all the other characters. She upbraids her father:

I pray you, sir, is it your will
To make a stale of me amongst these mates? (57)

She threatens violence to any suitors:

To comb your noddle with a three-legg'd stool,
And paint your face, and use you like a fool, (64)

She scorns the mild Bianca:

A pretty peat! it is best
Put finger in the eye, an she knew why. (78)

This demarcation of Kate from the other characters in the "show" is significantly bolstered by her use of recognizably popular catch-phrases from the domain of jest-book and jig. Of her four short speeches in the "show" (only twelve lines in all), three of them contain four such catch-phrases.¹⁾

This "placing" of Kate's violent humour has the effect of cutting certain entailments. Her abuse is to be played as boisterous fun. There is nothing "nasty" here; none of the paternal repression alleged by some critics. The idiom of Kate's outbursts, of the exchange of abuse, harks back to the rough popular pleasures of the sixteenth century and earlier, that crystallised in such festivities as the Lord of Misrule and the Feast of Fools. One sub-literary direction in which these popular impulses found expression was the broadside ballad and the jig. These reflect what C.R. Baskervill calls "life among the uninhibited masses," especially one aspect of that life - the practice of personal abuse known as "flyting," a practice that was popular enough in Shakespeare's time to take on "the colour of recognized pastime."²⁾

At this point in the play, it is hardly too much to insist that Shakespeare's placing of Kate as a player in a "show" is complemented by her having being assigned an easily recognizable ballad role. In the sub-literary realm of ballad and jig, the shrew was an ever-popular figure. Like the Wife in

1) To "comb your noddle with a three-legged stool" occurs in Merie Tales..... made by Master Skelton, in Shakespeare Jest-Books, ed. by W.C. Hazlitt, II.9, and also in the ballad "A Merry Dialogue betwixt a Married Man and his Wife," in Roxburghe Ballads, II.490 (only the first of these sources is listed in Tilley, Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, henceforth referred to as Tilley). To "use you like a fool" occurs in Ralph Roister Doister, II.vii.85 (not listed in Tilley). "Put finger in the eye" is to be found in Heywood, in Phillip's Patient Grissell, in a ballad called "Good Counsel for Young Wooers," and in Errors (all listed in Tilley, except the ballad which is in Roxburghe Ballads, II.40 - 4).

2) The Elizabethan Jig, p. 68.

The Menaechmi and like Noah's wife in the Wakefield Cycle, she has to be put in her place. But in the broadside ballads, the shrew is essentially a farcical butt (as she is in Plautus' play).

In "The Cucking of a Scold,"¹⁾ the shrew has a tongue "as nimble as an eel," and "faster you shall have it run/Than any ambling nag." The tamers' encounter with her is referred to as "the sport" and "the game," by implication full of mirth and laughter. Similarly (to move from the realm of sub-literature), the shrew in Dekker's tale²⁾ makes such a palaver when her husband carries her by force to the doctor that the neighbours are aroused to "behold this scene of mirth." When the doctor prescribes his "salve" - "Beat her/Till she swears to scold no more," - "the audience gave a plaudit." And so on.³⁾

In these domains is to be seen in its rudest form the spirit of mirth that lies behind the characterization of Kate, the shrew. The taming action undeniably has its roots in these criard literary and sub-literary realms. To invoke the spirit of popular merriment is clearly the force of terms like "show," "pastime," "sport," "jest," "mirth," and "merriment" as Shakespeare employs them in The Shrew.

This spirit of mirth pervades the taming action. It manifests itself further in Shakespeare's merrily non-moralizing employment of devil and hell imagery, which is of jig and broadside ballad origins. To Gremio, Kate's temper is so violent that only "a devil" would marry her: "Think'st thou, Hortensio,... any man is so very fool to be married to hell?" (121). Petruchio is just such a one. And all the native glee erupts in Gremio's description of Kate's wedding-ceremony. Petruchio turns out to be "curster than she".

Tranio. Why 'tis impossible.

Gremio. Why, he's a devil, a devil, a very fiend.

Tranio. Why, she's a devil, a devil, a devil's dam. (III.ii.150)

But the Shakespearean comic nuances in the dramatist's treatment of stock characters and images are ever-present. Thus, Hortensio's ironic echo of a response from the Litany caps one of Kate's outbursts in the opening "show"-scene:

From all such devils, good Lord deliver us. (I.i.66)

This complements Gremio's expostulation with Baptista in the same scene:

1) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 72 - 7.

2) "A Medicine to Cure the Plague of a Woman's Tongue, Experimented on a Cobbler's Wife," from The Raven's Almanac, in Dekker, Selected Prose Writings, ed. by E.D. Pendry, pp. 149 - 52.

3) See Appendix B for a fuller account of the shrew in popular literature.

Why will you mew her up,
Signior Baptista, for this fiend of hell,
And make her bear the penance of her tongue? (87)

The religious tone of the penance metaphor gives a novel comic inflection to the "fiend of hell" figure, besides anticipating, however unobtrusively, later comic incidents - particularly Kate's moral transformation.

The "mirth and merriment" which Sly is promised proceeds initially from the "show" scene in I.i. Here the shrew is firmly placed as a fictive character. In the first two acts in particular, Shakespeare invokes continually another strategy - that is, to represent Kate as a recognizable jig type of shrew. So, initially at any rate, the part of Kate in the inset-play, is an impersonation of the shrew-type familiar from popular literature. She is thus a dextrously portrayed fictive type before she is "a real person." So, as we shall see in the next section, is Petruchio.

(iv) Kate and Petruchio : the taming datum

Like Kate, Petruchio is represented in essentially fictive terms - by means of recognizable literary sign-posts. He takes shape less as a personality with a psychological and moral history than as a literal impersonation. Whereas the characters of, say, Adriana and the Antipholi or of Valentine and Silvia invite more or less straightforward impersonations on the part of the actor, the character of Petruchio is an impersonation of a more complex sort. It is not, like the character of Richard of Gloucester or Iago, an impersonation within an impersonation. It is rather, like the part of the clown or the wise fool - though Petruchio is emphatically neither of these - a recognizable stage role, a stage role apparently conceived for the most histrionic of leading actors.¹⁾

For the basic incidents, for the images that invite histrionic treatment, Shakespeare looks to the lore of shrew-tamers that is extant in the realm of the folk-tale, rather than to any known ballad or jig.²⁾ The relevant folk-

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- 1) T.W. Baldwin, in his controversial The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company, argues that the part of Petruchio was played by Thomas Pope, whose "line" as a principal actor is known "by direct evidence" to have been that of "a gruff soldier and a comedian," one of the "two principal comic lines in the Shakespearean plays before 1600." This "line" "started as Armado....; but ... ended as Oldcastle and Toby. This is the line of the jolly roistering soldier, the miles gloriosus." Baldwin assigns Pope the parts of Petruchio, Falstaff (in Henry IV), Shylock, and Benedick, among others (op. cit., pp. 231 - 2.)
 - 2) Hosley's argument (in his "Sources and Analogues of The Taming of the Shrew") that Shakespeare used A Merry Jest of the Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin as a source is based largely on the presence of a few verbal echoes, some of them clearly part of the ballad shrew-complex, e.g. the devil imagery, which I discuss above and in Appendix B.

motifs have been recently collected by J.H. Brunvand, although they were first noted many years ago.¹⁾ Brunvand has compiled a composite version of the folk-tale versions of the shrew-taming from the 308 literary and oral texts which he has collected. This composite version shares many features with Shakespeare's version. Brunvand lists the following inter alia: the shrew is the eldest of three daughters; no daughter is to be married before the other two; people warn the shrew's suitor of her frowardness; the bridegroom arrives late at the wedding; he is riding on an old nag, a gun over his shoulder and a lean shaggy dog following him; he is wearing old clothes; after the ceremony he insists against his wife's wishes that they leave at once; when the bride's horse sinks in the quagmire, he cuts its throat and makes his wife carry the saddle all the way home; once home, they sit down to a sumptuous repast of which the bridegroom partakes alone; when he has finished, he strikes all the utensils from the table to the floor; he subjects his wife to fasting and waking; their visit to her father's home becomes contingent on her submitting to his whims - agreeing with him that ravens are doves, foxes lambs, etc.; finally there is the wager as to which of the three daughters is the most obedient.²⁾

All this provides Shakespeare with an image framework in terms of which his tamer might be portrayed, a series of acts whereby Petruchio might be made known to the audience as a tamer of shrews. These acts, verbal and physical, constitute Petruchio's "reality," his "world," that embraces Kate, the other "actor" in the "show."

Thus, the basic datum of the shrew action is the histrionic image of the tamer confronting the shrew. Shakespeare's choice of these two roles clearly cuts certain entailments. The question whether Kate is "a cross child starved for love" or whether her final long speech is "not really meant" or whether her "shrewishness is superficial, not ingrained or congenital"³⁾ completely side-steps the details of Shakespeare's conception and substitutes the silent assumption that all Shakespeare's characters are "real men and women, fellow humans with ourselves."⁴⁾ This kind of talk ignores that Shakespeare

1) "The Folktale Origins of The Taming of the Shrew." R.W. Bond notices Köhler's discussion in 1868 of the Jutland tale's correspondence to Shakespeare's shrew-taming action, op. cit., pp. 1 - lii.

2) The Shrew significantly contains four folk-lore motifs not present in A Shrew: the warnings to the suitor about the shrewish girl, the bridegroom's arrival at the wedding on an old nag, his outrageous behaviour on the way home (especially the episode of the horse in the mire), and the wife's kissing her husband as a proof of her taming. See J.H. Brunvand, op. cit., p. 349.

3) Goddard, op. cit., pp. 69 - 71, passim. See above, pp. 86-7.

4) R.G. Shahani, quoted in L.C. Knights, Explorations, p. 2.

offers not a straight wooing-play about "real people" with histories, like characters in the modern psychological novel or even in the picaresque novel, but a taming play conceived as a "merriment."

Petruchio's very first words and acts in the knocking farce (I.ii.1-41) are straight out of the commedia dell' arte - an inescapable impression confirmed by the sprinkling of Italian tags like "Con tutto il cuore ben trovato." Petruchio's behaviour when introduced to Baptista is dictated by his role as tamer. Shakespeare cannot allow him to be "gentle" and courteous. The demands of the part are that he will carry all before him. Hence his immediate, unceremonious question on being presented to Baptista:

Pray, have you not a daughter
Call'd Katherina, fair and virtuous? (II.i.42)

The inurbanity of this question is pointed by Gremio's reproof:

You are too blunt; go to it orderly. (45)

But Petruchio is brusquely impatient:

Signior Baptista, my business asketh haste,¹⁾
And every day I cannot come to woo. (113)

Such are the first impressions of his "wooing dance" (I.ii.66), of his role as prospective tamer.

Thus, Petruchio's initial "Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife" (193) soon gives way to "I am born to tame you, Kate" (268). The histrionic-lusory aspect of the taming is constantly brought to our attention: for example, by Hortensio's reference to the "taming school" whither the latter repairs, pending his marriage to his "lusty widow." Here, the expert tamer

teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long
To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue.(IV.ii.56)

Petruchio's proceeding is depicted from first to last as a literal taming-course, a "reign" (IV.i.172). Kate is seen as a haggard falcon, that may be manned only by watching and hunger. The imagery of fasting and waking recurs in the taming scenes of the fourth act, especially in Petruchio's falcon soliloquy. Kate must learn to come to the lure - "come and know her keeper's call" (IV.i.178). Although this is all part of Petruchio's performance, Shakespeare's effects do not savour of the coarseness that such a précis might suggest. The uncouthness of the ballad and jig milieu is subtly transformed in The Shrew.

1) A catchphrase common in the broadside ballads. See Appendix B.

The tamer in Brunvand's composite version, as well as in the Jutland tale, tames the shrew by frightening her. Shakespeare is not so crude. Even before Petruchio has set eyes on Kate, the spectacle of Hortensio, ruefully picking himself up from an encounter with the shrew, prompts the tamer's outburst of mock-admiration, part of the ironist's elaborate game of pretence:

Now, by the world, it is a lusty wench;
I love her ten times more than e'er I did.
O, how I long to have some chat with her! (II.i.159)

The amused understatement of "chat" is matched with another device, his ironic insistence that her father "and all the world" are mistaken about her nature: "If she be curst, it is for policy" (II.i.284). Her outraged reaction to his arbitrary announcement that "Sunday is the wedding day" is excused as a private arrangement between the two of them that "she shall still be curst in company":

'Tis a world to see
How tame, when men and women are alone,
A meacock wretch can make the curstest shrew. (II.i.303)

She is "tame"; he is "a meacock wretch." To consider his behaviour in terms of his acute psychological insight is to miss the point. Similarly, if we insist on peering behind the ironies, searching for her sweetness, their love at first sight, etc., we shall miss the boisterous comic impact of the taming. Petruchio is playing a part and has donned a breezily ironic mask, not to hide what he is but to tame a shrew.

Early on in the wooing, Shakespeare's tamer is depicted uttering Ovidian commonplaces:

Did ever Dian so become a grove
As Kate this chamber with her princely gait?
O, be thou Dian, and let her be Kate;
And then let Kate be chaste and Dian sportful. (II.i.251)

The dramatic point here is not that "these words are manna to [Kate's] soul What girl would not like to be told that she sings as sweetly as a nightingale?"¹⁾ Petruchio's irony is not something casual or incidental, to be brushed off or seen through. Edward Reyner's formula fits it exactly: "An Irony is a nipping jeast, or a speech that hath the honey of pleasantness in its mouth and a sting of rebuke in its taile."²⁾ When Petruchio tells Baptista that Kate is "not froward but modest as the dove," "not hot but temperate as the morn," and that "For patience she will prove a second Grissell" (II.i.285-7); when after the wedding he refers to Kate as "this most patient, sweet and

1) Goddard, *op. cit.*, I.70.

2) Rules for the Government of the Tongue.... (1656), quoted in N. Knox, The Word Irony and its Context, 1500 - 1755, p. 33.

virtuous wife" (III.ii.191), he is not telling her that she is "lovely and sweet by nature" (as Goddard argues); he is making a "nipping jest." Petruchio is here depicted as playing the role of ingénu, as wearing the mask of the simple idealist. The ironies are handled with remarkable sureness and admirable control of tone.

It is his virtuoso role-playing that makes Petruchio, as it makes Richard of Gloucester, such a fascinating character. As a mode of characterization, it is at one with the perspective of the inset play as a performance, as "a scene of mirth," staged for the benefit of an audience. The placing of the Kate and Bianca actions as an inset to the gulling of Sly has been discussed, as has the use of a further inset device when Lucentio and Tranio witness the merry "pastime" of Kate performing. Shakespeare uses other devices to maintain this feeling of pastime, to foster the histrionic image of tamer and shrew. The whole business of the taming, for example, follows on Hortensio's original suggestion that is "broached in jest" (I.ii.82). Petruchio's characteristic mode of expression is a flamboyant blending of jest and earnest, as are Grumio's complementary humorous quips.

Thus Petruchio's outspoken interest in Kate's dowry is not to be read as a sign that he is a crude fortune-hunter.¹⁾ Apart from the fact that it places him socially - to "wife and thrive as best I may" - this apparent materialism on his part is, if not a "nipping jest," then essentially a dimension of his comic performance, of what he calls his "wooing dance":

..... if thou know
One rich enough to be Petruchio's wife,
As wealth is burden of my wooing dance,
Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xanthippe or a worse - /She moves

1) It is possible to refute the allegation that Petruchio is a calculating fortune-hunter by referring to the nature of sixteenth-century marriage arrangements. "The amorists liked to argue against the whole system of dowry as the certain prevention of love in marriage, for by reducing marriage to a cold, commercial proposition, it provided a justification for supplementing the husband with a lover. In general, serious advice urged both the need of the dowry to help support a greatly increased household, and the justice of having the wife share the financial burden not merely of supporting, but of enhancing the prestige of the family in whose welfare she had an interest equal to her husband's" (R. Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance, p. 80). See also W. Notenstein, "The English Woman, 1580 - 1650," and G.R. Hibbard, "The Taming of the Shrew: A Social Comedy." But, as I shall argue, the boisterous, if matter-of-fact, treatment of dowries in The Shrew hardly suggests the "misery of enforced marriages" theme.

She moves me not, or not removes, at least,
Affection's edge in me, were she as rough
As are the swelling Adriatic seas,
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua. (I.ii.64)

This detachment, which takes the form here of a brutal frankness, is dictated by Petruchio's comic role. The extreme types of female repulsiveness that he cites are not to be read literally as evidence of his heartlessness or moral brutality.¹⁾ Life as Hamlet or even Adriana knows it may be a grimly serious matter; but to Petruchio it is a challenging and exhilarating game, as it is to Jack Juggler, Matthew Merrygreek and the other Vice-figures - all obviously type parts - in pre-Shakespearean comedy. Mirth and the idea of a comic performance with all its consequent rhetorical fascination are central here. The brief preoccupation with dowry and talk of Florentius' love are not so much literal references to a moral Jonsonian world, not so much revelations of Petruchio's moral character, as hyperboles that create Petruchio's comic world. Shakespeare uses Grumio to elaborate this world, to give it body, in a manner largely impossible outside comedy:

Why, give him gold enough and marry him to
a puppet or an aglet-baby, or an old trot
with ne'er a tooth in her head, though she
have as many diseases as two and fifty horses. Why,
nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal. (I.ii.76)

A similarly outrageous use of hyperbole distinguishes Petruchio's role as hero - a comic version of Northrop Frye's third heroic type: "He has authority, passions, and powers of expression greater than ours..."²⁾

This is a condition to which Ralph Roister Doister, that latter-day miles gloriosus, aspires: "he that killed the Blue Spider in Blanchepowder Land he that beat the King of Crickets on Christmas day.... Why, he wrung a club/ Once in a fray out of the hand of Belzebub" (Ralph Roister Doister, I.iv.64). Ralph, like his prototype, Pyrgopolynices, is a comic butt, and his heroic pretensions are a ludicrous attempt to hide his blatant cowardice. His whole wooing enterprise is based on an absurd delusion, cheerfully fostered by Matthew Merrygreek, the Vice figure, all in the interests of "sport and pastance," to "make us mirth" - as Tristram Trusty remarks. This "pastance" proceeds as the dramatist exploits the irony of the absurd, the contrast between

1) Tillyard argues that the Florentius-Sibyl allusions are "real pointers to farce." Had Shakespeare intended otherwise, "he could so easily have shown Petruchio demanding in his shrew health at least as well as wealth" (Shakespeare's Early Comedies, p. 87). This argument completely misses the point of the characterization, the virtuoso effect of Petruchio's role-playing.

2) Anatomy of Criticism, p. 34.

the hero Ralph pretends to be and the coward he really is. Because he so blatantly falls short of his figment, he is an easy victim for the Vice's comic deflation.

If Ralph is one kind of caricature-hero, Petruchio is another. Petruchio is a caricature of a hero in that the field of operations in which his heroic qualities are put to the test is not that of Othello's "tented field,.. broil and battle" but that of marital relations. Marriage has always been a natural comic subject, with its jokes about horns and shrews and cuckolds. But Shakespeare transfers the action to quite a different plane when he provides not an ordinary man, but a man of quasi-heroic stature to tame this "irksome brawling scold."

The irony is many-edged. The provision of a hero, a "Hercules," to do the taming is a reductio ad absurdum of mere man's inability to cope with the likes of the Wyf of Bath. Only a hero will be unafraid of "a little din" (I.ii.196). However, while Petruchio has no truck with other people's nonsense (witness the knocking farce in I.ii), he is almost dedicated to enacting nonsense of his own, as Grumio points out to Hortensio:

I pray you, sir, let him go while the humour
lasts. O' my word, an she knew him as
well as I do, she would think scolding would
do little good upon him (I.ii.105)

Petruchio is insistently depicted as above deflation. This marriage is a contest which he will win. No matter how raging the fire, how rough the seas, or how loud the thunder of Kate's scolding, he will have her and he will tame her. This is a further direction in which Shakespeare develops Petruchio's histrionic role. He must be a tamer. Shakespeare not only makes him an efficient one, a tamer par excellence; he makes him a flamboyant, "humorous" swashbuckler of a comic kind, clearly descended from the breezy characters of broadside ballad and jig, suffused with their "mirth" and "immoderate joy,"¹⁾ but also a comic hero.

Petruchio's imagery, which patently echoes the hyperbole of Tamburlaine and anticipates that of Othello and Antony, bears this out, as he orates on the subject of "a woman's tongue":

1) This term is one used by Thomas Lodge in an attack on the popular literary tradition in which he condemns "Immoderate and Disordinate Joy." See Appendix 8, below.

Think you a little din can daunt my ears?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea puffed up with winds
Rage like an angry boar chafed with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in a pitched battle heard
Loud 'larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets' clang?
And do you tell me of a woman's tongue,
That gives not half so great a blow to hear
As will a chestnut in a farmer's fire?
Tush! tush! fear boys with bugs. (I.ii.196)

Petruchio is here virtually contemplating his own comic predicament, an actor half-humorously inspecting his part, with a cheerful detachment that distinguishes his use of hyperbole from the tragic hero's intensifying use to point involvement in a crisis. Instead of the comic deflation which dogs the braggart soldier, we have Petruchio, the heroic comedian, recognising the shrill clamour of the shrew for what it is - something far less formidable than "the great ordnance of the field." But the "nipping jest" is that men will not recognize the logical fallacy here - that "great ordnance" may be literally noisier than the "din" of a shrew, but that there is a moral power in a shrew's tongue that will make mere men like Hortensio and Lucentio, as opposed to heroes like Petruchio, justifiably quake. To Petruchio with his sangfroid, the thrill of the contest is as natural as breathing:

Grumio. But will you woo this wildcat?
Petruchio. Will I live?
Grumio. Will he woo her? Ay, or I'll hang her. (I.ii.193)¹⁾

One of the manifestations of his heroic stature is his use of rhetoric not to heighten feeling but, as a juggler uses billiard balls, for display. This essentially comic perspective is firmly provided, above all by Grumio:

And he begin once, he'll rail in his rope-tricks.
I'll tell you what, sir, and she stand him
but a little, he will throw a figure in her face and
so disfigure her with it (I.ii.108)

Petruchio's "figures," his "rope-tricks" (with a quibble on "rhetoric") are no mere affectation on his part, but a defining feature of his comic stature - like his concern with Kate's dowry or his arbitrary decision to marry her even before he has seen her. He lives in hyperbole: "I will not sleep, Hortensio, till I see her" (I.ii.101); he is Prometheus: "Why this gallant will command the sun" (IV.iii.192); he is Hercules: "I'll buckler thee [Kate] against a million" (III.ii.235). To him this is no ordinary courtship of a shrew:

1) Hibbard compares Feste's remark, "Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage," in Twelfth Night, I.v.18 (New Penguin edn., p. 193). Tilley lists the Twelfth Night passage but not Grumio's allusive pun.

Baptista. But be thou armed for some unhappy words.
Petruchio. Ay, to the proof, as mountains are for winds,
That shake not though they blow perpetually. (II.i.138)

Hortensio elaborates on this military image:

I think she'll sooner prove a soldier:
Iron may hold with her, but never lutes. (II.i.144)

Shakespeare's dramatisation of the "lovers'" first meeting is similarly hyperbolic. Kate is no mere foil to Petruchio. The two of them are veritably the "fell incensed points/Of mighty opposites" (Hamlet, V.ii.60); theirs is a burlesque of the romantic-heroic lover taking the lady by storm and carrying her off to his castle. Kate, who will

..... scold and raise up such a storm
That mortal ears might hardly endure the din (I.i.170),

is confronted with the "mad" Petruchio who will

..... board her though she chide as loud
As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack. (I.ii.93)

The romantic-tragic grandeur which characterises the hyperbole of an Antony or an Othello is here replaced by a patent comic gusto. What we have here is a calculated comic travesty of the Hegelian "mighty opposites" - a comic spectacle of a flyting match conceived, in mock-elevated terms, as "two raging fires met together," a "peremptory" man wooing a "proud-minded" "wildcat" and presented as a "great Hercules" faced with a "labour" that is "more than Alcides' twelve" (I.ii.254).

Shakespeare's almost lavish use of the figure, hyperbole, which Petruchio, in the initial scenes at least, tosses about with such abandon, is outrageously indecorous - and deliberately so. This very indecorum is a definitive feature of Petruchio's comic world.

Petruchio takes shape then neither as a tough and overbearing young man nor as insensitive and a loud-mouth, or a braggart. It is virtually a rejection of Shakespeare's comic mode to view the tamer in this way at all. Whereas Sly reflects common experience, as do Hortensio, Lucentio and the rest, Petruchio transcends it in his ironic, boisterous, yet serious, ludus. Like Petruchio, Richard of Gloucester plays ironic roles, but they are the roles of "the formal Vice, Iniquity" (Richard III, III.i.82), roles in a moral history play. Richard's game may be a fascinating one, but it is hedged about with moral horror. Petruchio's game, however, is coloured with "mirth" and "merriment"; its fascination is gratuitous and does not moralize. This is not to say that it is a strictly "aesthetic" matter, a mere question of verbal texture, for Petruchio's (and Kate's) antics certainly appeal to the "moral"

emotions.¹⁾ But there is a sense in which these antics arrest attention intransitively on themselves and do not point admonishingly to life. They are "something we contemplate, not contemplate through."²⁾ Their "meaning" is, as should become progressively clearer, essentially a part of the luscious merriment.

From the first, Shakespeare is alert to the human implications of the taming, of Petruchio's treatment of Kate. When the tamer seems likely not to turn up for his own wedding, Shakespeare handles the situation in simple, direct human terms. Here Petruchio's role as "one half-lunatic,/A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack" (II.i.279), as "a frantic fool,/Hiding his bitter jests in blunt behaviour" (III.ii.12), as "a merry man" or joker who little cares whom he hurts or offends, is subjected to brief moral scrutiny. This involves Shakespeare's introducing a touch of pathos inherent in this "mockery" of "poor Katherine" (III.ii.4, 18). As Baptista observes,

.....such an injury would vex a very saint,
Much more a shrew of thy impatient humour. (III.i.28)

But Shakespeare stops this tendency short with Tranio's reassurance:

Upon my life, Petruchio means but well....
Though he be blunt, I know him passing wise;
Though he be merry, yet withal he's honest. (III.ii.25)

Tranio's speech preserves the comic balance. Petruchio's behaviour may be "blunt" but he is playing a serious game rather than inflicting brutal moral (or physical) injuries.³⁾

The comic dramatization of the wedding and of the subsequent journey to Petruchio's home poses problems. The folk-tale complex offers Shakespeare a series of images, all suggestive of the brutal humour of the broadside ballads, a humour that Shakespeare is clearly at some pains to refine and transform from "unfeeling farce" into moral comedy. These images may be recalled: the bridegroom arrives late at the wedding; he is riding on an old nag, a gun over his shoulder and a lean shaggy dog following him; he is wearing old clothes; after the ceremony he insists against his wife's wishes that they leave at once; when the bride's horse sinks in the quagmire, he cuts its throat and makes his wife carry the saddle all the way home; once home, they sit down to a sumptuous repast of which the bridegroom partakes alone; when he has finished, he strikes all the utensils from the table to the floor; and so on.⁴⁾

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- 1) "Moral" is, as John Casey has recently demonstrated, a highly equivocal word. It is used here in the wide sense of "the human situation." See Casey's The Language of Criticism, *passim*.
 - 2) Margaret Macdonald, review of S. Langer's Feeling and Form.
 - 3) The human implications of the taming will be further discussed in sections (v) and (vii).
 - 4) A paraphrase of Brunvand, op. cit., p. 358. See p. 92 above.

This is clearly the farcical stuff of broadside ballad rather than the characteristic material of moral comedy.

However, Shakespeare does not attempt to excise the criard elements. If he did, there would be nothing left. These are the terms of Petruchio's "act!" When the tamer does eventually appear, his accoutrements are even more eccentric and his behaviour more execrable than in the folk-tale complex. Shakespeare must make Petruchio behave outrageously or the wedding-scene would be an anti-climax to the previous Petruchio scenes. In any case, comic interest or "mirth" must be kept up. Shakespeare's problem is this: how to make moral comedy out of the very qualities that in life (or art) repel us - brash, coarse, overbearing arrogance, a nasty irreverence on a religious occasion, all adding up to the kind of behaviour no civilised man could stomach.¹⁾ In earlier scenes, Shakespeare has had recourse to the role-playing device. In the wedding and journey scenes his folk-tale material proffers him stuff too strong to be transvalued by such strategy. It is the measure of the dramatist's art that he manages, even in terms of these criard incidents, to maintain the essentially comic drama. He does so by "break[ing] down our stereotypes and enforc[ing]..... the perspectives [of art]."²⁾

Shakespeare's method is to invoke once again the inset-device, this time in a narrative form, employing the convention of the messenger. This is no defeatist compromise. Just as Dickens often confers their full comic stature on his characters by means of the narrator's weighted descriptions - Mr Gradgrind with his "square wall of a forehead," Mr Chadband "wiping the oily exudations from his reverend visage" and adjusting himself "like a lay-figure" - so Shakespeare here turns a routine device to advantage, using it not only to keep Petruchio's histrionic acts within the realm of comedy but to confer a further comic dimension on the taming action.

Earlier on, Kate has described Petruchio as "a mad-brain rudesby" (III.ii,10) and so forth. What ensues in the wedding scene is in elaboration of this image which in "messenger" Biondello's sportive description acquires all the comic "copie" Shakespeare's burgeoning imagination can produce. The bridegroom, says Biondello,

is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin; a
pair of old breeches thrice turned; a pair of
boots that have been candle cases, one
buckled, another laced.....his horse /hipp'd,

1) The point here is not that Shakespeare is conforming to Elizabethan tastes, whatever these may have been, but that he has taken over traditional incidents for his own use.

2) W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel, p. 54.

hipp'd, with an old mothy saddle and stirrups
of no kindred; besides, possess'd with the
glanders and like to mose in the chine, troubled
with the lampass, infected with the fashions, full
of windgalls, sped with spavins, rayed with
the yellows, past cure of the fives, stark
spoil'd with the staggers, begnawn with the
bots (III.ii.41)

His "lackey," Grumio, is "for all the world caparison'd like the horse a very monster in apparel" (III.ii.61). Not only Petruchio, but also his servant and his horse are made parts of this weighted portrait, intentionally ludicrous. Servant and horse are absorbed by Petruchio and become metonymic features of him as the waggish Biondello establishes the scene as a comic one. Shakespeare is here elaborating on a method already used in Errors to place Dr. Pinch - the "hungry, lean-faced villain,/A mere anatomy...." - and earlier in the present play to describe Hortensio "as on a pillory, looking through the lute" (II.i.155). Whereas these two characters are treated as foils, Petruchio, as I have already insisted, is not. Instead the range of his antics is given further definition, and his ploys are suitably distanced and set in the realm of "mirth." The audience or reader is nudged into being amused at a situation that in real life would cause moral concern: a bridegroom who has no respect and hence no love for his bride. But the perspective of comic fooling, of "show" or "pastime," excludes such moral overtones as these.

Shakespeare skilfully blends the narrative inset devices with the comic drama of Petruchio's personal presence in his bizarre attire. The tamer is in his histrionic element when he appears and asks, "where is my lovely bride?" He evinces some (mock-) puzzlement because "this goodly company" gaze

As if they saw some wondrous monument,
Some comet or some prodigy. (III.ii.91)

Gremio's narrative inset of the wedding ceremony expands this sense of comic wonder which is itself a mirror of Petruchio's outrageous behaviour and appearance. Coming from the ceremony, Gremio is almost speechless with incredulity. Beside Petruchio, Kate is "a lamb, a dove, a fool" (153):

when the priest
Should ask if Katherine should be his wife,
"Ay, by gogs-wouns" quoth he, and swore so loud
That, all amaz'd, the priest let fall the book;
And as he stoop'd again to take it up,
This mad-brain'd bridegroom took him such a cuff
That down fell priest and book, and book and priest. (154)

While Kate "trembled and shook," Petruchio "stamp'd and swore/As if the vicar meant to cozen him" (163). The bridegroom

calls for wine: "A health!" quoth he, as if
He had been abroad carousing to his mates... (168)

The inset device keeps this behaviour in the realm of caricature and discourages audience-identification with priest or Kate, as well as allowing, through transvaluation, incidents that would be impossible in straight-forward enactment. Petruchio's swearing, his cuffing of the priest, his stamping and calling for wine become not disgraceful and embarrassing irreverence but further hyperboles of this "mad-brain'd bridegroom." They are like the kiss: after Petruchio has thrown the sops in the sexton's face,

he took the bride about the neck,
And kissed her lips with such a clamorous smack
That at the parting all the church did echo. (173)

Richard Burton's cinematographic kiss, though tremendous, was a poor enactment of this comic image. In this inset the impression of the comic hero is preserved in all his flamboyance. In Gremio's mouth this incident is less a burlesque of a religious ceremony than a climactic performance, still in the spirit of "jest," but suitably distanced and suitably weighted to keep it fairly well within the confines of comic caricature and to suspend untoward moral inferences. In the treatment lies the mode. Change the treatment and the comic effect is lost.¹⁾

These inset devices have a structural purpose too, in that they highlight Petruchio's actual appearances. Thus the entry of the bridal pair, hard on Gremio's narrative of the wedding ceremony and to the accompaniment of minstrelsy, not only offers variety but shows us once again the histrionic Petruchio, set off against the Petruchio of the insets. Here once more is Petruchio the ironist, the actor, giving voice once again to praise of his "patient, sweet, and virtuous wife" (191) as well as courteously expressing mock-concern for Kate: "O Kate, content thee; prithee be not angry" (211),

1) The full import of Shakespeare's insets of the wedding and the journey scenes is further clarified by Zeffirelli's disastrous attempt, in his Italian-opera-flavoured film of The Shrew, to dispense with messengers and insets and to show the wedding-service and the journey home. Any "straight" presentation of Petruchio's horseplay, brutal and coarse as this is, can only arouse what Samuel Alexander has called "material passion" (Beauty and Other Forms of Value, p. 55), i.e. feelings that are in the main similar to environment feelings, feelings of loathing, hatred, fear, etc., "kinetic" feelings. Zeffirelli made no apparent attempt to transmute Petruchio's vulgar horseplay into art. Consequently, the film audience was puzzled about how to react, even embarrassed by the absence of artistic perspective. This criticism of course applies to the film as a whole, for Zeffirelli dispenses with much of the dialogue as well as with the Sly-plot. The taming thus becomes what Brecht calls an "Aristotelian" action. It must be admitted however that Zeffirelli's adaptations are necessitated by the change in medium - from stage to screen. But if they demonstrate one thing, they demonstrate the identity of the play with its dramatic perspective.

and insisting that

Fear not sweet wench; they shall not touch thee, Kate;
I'll buckler thee against a million (234)

- as he carries her off with him. This is the comic climax of the wedding scene. Here the lusory element is finely blended with the human interest: Petruchio's peremptory treatment of Kate, under the ironic veil of concern and protection, mixed with the literal emphasis that she is "my goods, my chattels" and so forth (226 - 8).

The comments of the witnesses emphasise the sense of merry pastime once again:

Baptista. Nay, let them go, a couple of quiet ones.
Grumio. Went they not quickly, I should die with laughing.
Iranio. Of all mad matches, never was the like. (236)

Kate is "madly mated" and "Petruchio is kated."

The same spirit conditions Grumio's narrative inset of the homeward journey. Here, all the vulgar slap-stick of the folk-tale - Kate's horse's falling on her in the mire, Grumio's beating, Petruchio's swearing, etc. - is enveloped in Grumio's "coney-catching," his bawdy jests ("Am I but three inches? Why thy horn is a foot..."), his quips and quibbles, as he chaffs his fellow-servant, Curtis. To a clown - and Grumio is essentially a clown, just as Dromio and Launce are clowns - all things are touched by the spirit of jest. Whatever he lays hands on is transvalued and enters the realm of burlesque:

But hadst thou not cross'd me, thou shouldst have
heard how her horse fell and she under her horse; thou
shouldst have heard in how miry a place, how she was
bemoil'd, how he left her with the horse upon her,
how he beat me because her horse stumbled, how she
waded through the dirt to pluck him off me (IV.i.63)

Whatever the limitations of Grumio's comic rhetoric here, this is inalienably the realm of jest, of pastime, of merriment.

Petruchio's dramatic appearance in The Shrew is, then, a deft blending of traditional motifs transvalued and of lusory yet virtuoso role-playing. Shakespeare realises the tamer's antics as a moral comedy which displays an impressive command of dramatic devices and perspectives.

(v) The transition from curst to tamed shrew

Management of the transition from curst to tamed shrew poses problems for the comic dramatist, as do moral or psychological changes in Shakespeare's other comedies. Sometimes, as in the case of Demetrius in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Shakespeare accounts for psychological change in terms of the play's milieu - the fantasy of the fairy world: Oberon's and Puck's use of the magic love-juice. In the case of Duke Frederick in As You Like It, Shakespeare invokes "the psychology of the confessional,"¹⁾ the kind of conversion that overtook some Christian converts - "at once, as once at a crash Paul." A further kind of conversion - that from contemner of Cupid to worshipper at his shrine - will be discussed in the next chapter.

In The Shrew, Kate has to learn obedience and patience. Some critics have seen the process of learning as "the basic pattern of Shakespearean comedy... a movement from the artificial to the natural, always with the object of finding oneself."²⁾ Traversi puts it thus: "what Kate has learnt in the course of her knockabout tribulations is precisely neither more nor less than to be 'natural.'³⁾ What these critics have done is to recognize an aspect of Shakespeare's comic paradigm, but they have ignored the fictive context, the comic delineation which Shakespeare gives to Kate's "discovery."

The transition from curst to tamed shrew is managed by means of a series of artifices. From the first, Shakespeare juxtaposes the image of Bianca's "mild behaviour and sobriety" with that of Kate's shrewishness - "stark mad or wonderful froward" (I.i.69-71). This simple antithesis is expanded through Petruchio's ironic insistence that Kate is "modest as the dove temperate as the morn a second Grissel" (II.i.285); through his comments on her "bashful modesty and mild behaviour" (II.i.49), her "mildness" (II.i.191), and so on. These figures have been discussed in another connection above. As they and others like them accumulate, they begin to make what Maurice Morgann called "secret Impressions on us."⁴⁾

So the action is developed, and Shakespeare begins to ring ironic changes on this simple antithesis. Early on, Baptista has called Kate the "hilding

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- 1) This term was used by F.G. Butler in a conversation during 1967.
 - 2) Cyrus Hoy, The Hyacinth Room, p. 22; the notion of nosce teipsum as Shakespeare's basic comic pattern is also voiced by Harold Jenkins, "Shakespeare's Twelfth Night," in Shakespeare: the Comedies, ed. by K. Muir, p. 73; by Muir himself in the Introduction to that work, p. 7; and by M.C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy, p. 79.
 - 3) Op. cit., p. 89.
 - 4) "An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff," in Shakespeare Criticism, ed. by D. Nichol Smith, p. 161.

of a devilish spirit" (II.i.26). In the wedding scene, Tranio says that she is "a devil, a devil, the devil's dam," after Gremio has described the bridegroom, Petruchio, as "a devil, a devil, a very fiend." This the pantaloon caps by insisting that, compared to Petruchio, she is "a lamb, a dove, a fool" (III.ii.151-3). The irony of this last label is complemented later in the wedding scene by Baptista's ironic observation that bride and groom are "a couple of quiet ones" (236). This comment is set off against the festivities that follow - festivities in which the supposed Lucentio (really Tranio in disguise) "shall supply the bridegroom's place" and the "mild" Bianca "take her sister's room" and "practise how to bride it" (III.ii.245-7). All these "impressions" take on their full comic significance only in the inset play's last scene, the wager scene, where it is finally revealed who the "quiet ones" really are.

This pattern is further bolstered by the taming imagery itself. From the play's very title, it is apparent that the taming action itself can have only one end - the curst shrew tamed. No falsification of this ending is possible within the given set of conventions. Like the "fond pageant" in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the taming action is a charade that has to be played out to its logical end. To clarify this end is one function of Petruchio's "falcon" soliloquy - a passage to which reference has already been made:

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And 'tis my hope to end successfully.
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorg'd,
For then she never looks upon her lure.
Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come, and know her keeper's call,
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient. (174)

This soliloquy makes a "logical" point. Falcons are tamed. There are prescribed methods which have predictable results. Kate must and will be tamed, and there's an end on 't.

The first taming episode (IV.i.104-62) could, with Petruchio's choleric beating of his servants, his throwing about of food and plates, etc., easily degenerate to the merely physical level of knockabout farce. But whereas the knocking scene (I.ii.1-19) is a purely physical encounter of this kind, the first taming scene is a moral confrontation. Kate, who is almost timid in her appeals to Petruchio to be patient, maintains the human level. They are no longer comic "mighty opposites"; she is no longer depicted as a ballad-type character in a "show." Instead, there is about her predicament a simple pathos, directly expressed in her gentle and temperate requests to Petruchio: "Patience,

I pray you; 'twas a fault unwilling" (140); "I pray you, husband, be not so disquiet" (152). This is a dramatic moral contrast to Petruchio's "politic" part-playing (172 - "politic" here being suggestive of his artful stratagem) which takes the form of an incongruous mixture of blustering expostulations with the servants and solicitous invitations to Kate: "be merry"; "kiss and be acquainted with...our cousin Ferdinand"; "Come, Kate, and wash, and welcome"; "Come, Kate, and sit down"; "Will you give thanks, sweet Kate, or shall I?" Interlarded with this "kindness" is Petruchio's abuse of his servants: "You whoreson villain!" (as he strikes one); "A whoreson, beetle-headed, flap-ear'd knave!"; "What dogs are these? Where is the rascal cook?"; "You heedless jolt-heads and unmanner'd slaves!" etc. On the one hand, there is Petruchio revelling in the bravura of his part; on the other, there is a Kate transformed into a timid shadow of her former self. Touches of pathos are skilfully blended with the boisterous humour of pastime.

The comic pastime is extended into the second taming scene (IV.iii). Here Grumio's "coney-catching" mock-offers of food to the famished Kate provide not only an occasion for the eruption of her former fury but a framework in which to hint her misery. Here, as is often the case in Errors, the farcical level of slap-stick (Kate's furious beating of Grumio) is kept within the confines of comedy by the moral interest of the episode. The falcon-taming pattern is maintained, as Kate's quasi-choric diagnosis makes plain:

I, who never knew how to entreat,
Nor never needed that I should entreat,
Am starv'd for meat, giddy for lack of sleep;
With oaths kept waking, and with brawling fed;
And that which spites me more than all these wants -
He does it under name of perfect love. (7)

The last line provides a mirror of Petruchio's behaviour, and he now enters to find her "all amort" (36). Kate's distress must be registered, but her predicament must not be allowed to become pathetic. Petruchio's ready sympathy and prompt offer of meat and her reluctance to thank him keep alive the taming context. Her distress is essentially comic distress, a dimension of her own moral aberrations as shrew, which justify and make relevant Petruchio's maintaining his performance.

In the tailor and haberdasher charade (IV.iii.63-164), the taming issue is made quite plain. Petruchio's "rope-tricks" (which is what Grumio has punningly called his master's rhetoric) are here "railed in" with gay abandon, as the tamer plays his comic game of insistent and wilful misprision, complemented by Grumio's "coney-catching" jests. This is an elaborate part of the openly confessed design to tame Kate, to teach her true wifely submission. As

usual there are no half-measures. Hortensio's words aptly reflect Petruchio's hyperbolic proceeding:

Why so, this gallant will command the sun. (192)

But, as I have said, Kate is no longer a "mighty opposite." She is near submission to Petruchio's "reign." He notes that "'tis now some seven o'clock"; she assures him, "'tis almost two."

Petruchio. Look what I speak or do or think to do,
You are still crossing it(188)

In this comedy, marriage is dramatised as a game of which Petruchio dictates the rules that Kate has yet to learn. Not until she recognizes them will there be "quiet in the match." It on this lusive level rather than in any "profoundly" psychological way that her change of attitude is motivated. She has to learn to play Petruchio's game rather than to realise with conviction that she has erred. There is no penitence; there are no explanations of her change. She has simply to grasp, in terms of the game, the nature of the "ideal" marriage relationship.

The overall ethical viewpoint of The Shrew is the desirability of obedient wives. All the wooers admire Bianca's "mild behaviour." In the taming and wager scenes, the criard falcon-taming idea is given overtly moral treatment. The taming play is after all not merely a "Christmas gambold or a tumbling trick" but "a kind of history" - as Sly has been told.

Shakespeare presents Petruchio as showing Kate relevant moral truths. In a speech alluding to the Tenth Commandment, Petruchio tells everyone, including Kate, that:

I will be master of what is mine own -
She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything. (III.ii,225)

Because Kate obviously wishes to be none of these things, because she is in the Aristotelian sense "intemperate" and will, as Aristotle would have said, become temperate only by performing temperate actions, Petruchio "makes a sermon of continency at her" (IV.i.166). This "sermon" ironically takes the form of intemperate railing and swearing and rating (167). Against this, there is set in relief the contiguous irony of Kate's actually urging Petruchio to "patience" and begging him to "be not so disquiet" (140, 152). At the same time, Petruchio's insistence that since all the meat is burnt, since burnt meat "engenders choler, planteth anger," and since they are both "choleric," then "better 'twere that both of us should fast" (57) constitutes yet another ironic variation on the temperance theme.

Petruchio's "sermon of continency" is full of ironies. He intends "That all is done in reverend care of her" (188). This is his ironic role; but it is also an emblem of the virtuous husband's attitude towards a recalcitrant spouse. When he "kills her in her own humour" (164), he also "kills her with kindness" (192). The quibble on "kindness" points Shakespeare's irony nicely: first, "kindness" means "natural affection"; second, it means "being like her, i.e. of her kind or sort." Petruchio is at once behaving humanely and affectionately, and offering Kate a mirror of herself, a mirror of her "kind" or nature.

Another dimension of the taming charade is the use of clothes imagery. Petruchio has pointed out earlier on that:

To me she's married, not unto my clothes. (III.ii.113)

And Tranio sees the bridegroom's "unreverent robes" as more than a mere whim or eccentricity:

He hath some meaning in his mad attire. (120)

Petruchio notably avoids the lamely farcical explanation given by Ferando in A Shrew:

Shееle pul my costlie sutеs over mine eares,
And therefore am I thus attired awhile. (vii.31)

In The Shrew, clothes are much more than mere props for farcical goings-on. They have the status of moral emblems. In the world of the play, "silken coats and caps," "ruffs and cuffs and farthingales," "scarfs and fans and double change of brav'ry" (IV.iii.55) are for "gentlewomen" only - gentlewomen, as defined, not by Kate, but by Petruchio:

When you are gentle, you shall have one too. (IV.iii.71)

The moral upshot of the comic tailor scene is that they will visit Baptista -

Even in these honest mean habiliments;
Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor;
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit.
What, is the jay more precious than the lark
Because his feathers are more beautiful?
Or is the adder better than the eel
Because his painted skin contents the eye?
O no, good Kate; neither art thou the worse
For this poor furniture and mean array. (IV.iii.166)

It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare is not here alluding to the "lilies of the field" passage in St. Matthew's Gospel. This passage begins:

Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?
Behold the fowls of the air
And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.
And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not
arrayed like one of these. (Matt. 6.25ff)

The idea to which Shakespeare gives comic currency is an Elizabethan common-
place. The Homilies give it a slightly different inflection from that of St.
Matthew's Gospel:

St. Peter saith that holy matrons did in former time deck
themselves, not with gold and silver, but in putting their whole
hope in God, and in obeying their husbands; as Sarah obeyed
Abraham, calling him Lord; whose daughters ye be, saith he, if ye
follow her example. 1)

Erasmus in his Colloquy, Marriage, conducted between Eulalia ("sweetly speaking")
and Xanthippe (the type of the shrew) also refers to St. Peter's words:

Eulalia. The apparell of honest wives is not in the aray of the
body ... as saynte Peter the apostle teacheth us but in
good lyving and honest conversation and in the ornamentes of the²⁾
soule we are trîme ynough if we please our husbands only.

Kate's acceptance of Petruchio's decision to visit her father "Even in these
honest mean habiliments" reflects her growing acceptance of his "right supre-
macy," her growing humility.

On the lusory level, Kate's understanding of the tamer's conditions is
registered in their encounter with the right Vincentio. Petruchio's tests have,
in accordance with the convention, become increasingly outrageous, increasing-
ly exaggerated. But, as has already been argued, they are no less morally
relevant for all that. The comic spirit unobtrusively embraces the homileti-
cally tinged ethic - the need for women to "put their whole hope in God" and to
obey their husbands. If Shakespeare's treatment appears one-sided to us, in
that, unlike the homiletic writers, he appears to ignore the duties of the
husband to the wife, then we must realise that the dramatist's chosen subject
is not the "he-shrew" of the ballad³⁾ but the female shrew. Kate, not
Petruchio, is the deviator from the moral norm.

In the scene with Vincentio (IV.v.), Shakespeare skilfully maintains the
comic mood. The first-twenty five lines are devoted to Kate's final recognition

1) Certain Sermons or Homilies, p. 467.

2) A Mery Dialogue, Declaringe the Propertyes of Shrowds Shrewes and Honest
Wyves, in Earliest English Translations of Erasmus' Colloquia, ed. by
H. de Vocht, p. 58. In More's Utopia, the same cut of dress is decreed
for all women: see E.L. Surtz, The Praise of Wisdom, p. 234.

3) "A He Divell," A Pepysian Garland, ed. by H.E. Rollins, pp. 332 - 6.

of the rules of Petruchio's game. When he says the sun is the moon, it is so; and vice versa. Kate humorously accepts this for the game it is - accepts that "the moon changes even as your mind." This is well. As Petruchio replies,

Thus the bowl should run
And not unluckily against the bias. (IV.v.24)

The frisson of Hortensio's battle image crystallises the comic moment:

Petruchio, go thy ways. The field is won. (23)

The serious matter of Kate's obedience has been comically worked through.

The encounter with Vincentio is, so to speak, a stabilization of Kate's wifely obedience. When Petruchio instructs Kate that old Vincentio is a radiant young woman, refers to the "war of white and red in her cheeks" and orders Kate to "embrace her for her beauty's sake," Kate does so with comic relish:

Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and sweet ... (36)

The mode of the comic game, essential to the Shakespearean conception of the taming action, could so easily be shattered. In A Shrew, the Duke of Castus (Vincentio's counterpart) is indignant:

I thinke the man is mad he calles me a woman. (xv.34)

When in A Shrew Kate continues in Ferando's vein, the Duke is initially puzzled and then departs in disgust. In The Shrew however, Vincentio is introduced as an extension of the game, and the ordinary entailments of insult and anger are cut. Vincentio takes the jest in good part - this "strange encounter" which has "much amazed" him. He addresses Kate as "my merry mistress" (52) and refers to the couple as "pleasant travellers" who are pleased "to break a jest/ Upon the company [they] overtake" (71). Petruchio describes their jest as a "merriment" (75).

The lusory moment in the taming scenes is strong. Complemented by hypothetical Sly interludes, it would be inescapable. It is this perspective, shaped by the mode of pastime and merriment, that discourages simple audience-identification with Kate as well as consideration of her as a total personality inviting "profound" scrutiny. Shakespeare's departure from the norms of what Brecht calls "Aristotelian" drama, the direct audience-watching-actor-playing-Kate mode, has radical implications for the characterization of the shrew.

(vi) The Bianca, or rival wooers, action

The Bianca action is usually regarded as "of secondary interest," albeit

"full of theatrical life."¹⁾ It "does not canvass attention, though it can spring surprises."²⁾ Tillyard refers to the play's "agreeable" contrast of styles: "While Biondello's words work neatly and quietly, Petruchio's fairly advertise their propagation" - and he remarks on the "similar lack of ostentation in the frank conventionality of the characters of the sub-plot."³⁾ Criticism seems to have settled into the view that the Bianca action is "subsidiary."⁴⁾ This view requires qualification.

Shakespeare's confrontation of the initial dramaturgical problems posed not only by the Bianca action but by its relation to the taming action shows a considerable degree of skill. Johnson was surely right to note that:

Of this play the two plots are so well united, that they can hardly be called two without injury to the art with which they are interwoven. 5)

Possibly the first decision Shakespeare had to make was whether to include three sisters (as in the folk-tale outlined by Brunvand) or only two (as in A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife, Lapped in Morel's Skin). The dramatist appears to have turned at this stage to Gascoigne's Supposes (1566), a translation of Ariosto's I Suppositi. This play provided material for the Bianca action. Whereas the folk-tale complex offered a shrew, the Italianate Supposes supplied a "mild ... maid." Shakespeare's decision to use Gascoigne's play as a source also presented Shakespeare with a number of choices. These may be summed up as follows:

- (1) He removes the third sister and replaces her with the rich widow, who is however not mentioned until the fourth act and not introduced until the last.
- (2) He nevertheless retains the third sister's suitor (i.e. Hortensio) using him as one of several rivals for the hand of the remaining younger sister (i.e. Bianca); this transforms a simple wooing paradigm of a play like A Shrew into a rival ~~wowers~~ paradigm.
- (3) Shakespeare further complicates this pattern by introducing, from Gascoigne's Supposes, another rival in the shape of the elderly Gremio, the "pantaloon."
- (4) Also from Supposes (and common to Roman comedies like Plautus' Captivi and Terence's Eunuchus) he borrows the idea of the young master's disguising himself as a servant. As in Supposes and A Shrew this disguise entails an

1) Robert Heilman, Introduction to Signet edn., p. xxiii.
2) E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Early Comedies, p. 91.
3) Ibid., pp. 91, 92.
4) H.B. Charlton, Shakespearean Comedy, p. 77.
5) Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. by Raleigh, p. 96.

exchange of roles between master and servant.

(5) Shakespeare further develops the latter device by means of twin parallels. While Tranio keeps Lucentio's "house and port," he (Tranio) also offers himself as yet another candidate for Bianca's hand. This provides a rival for Gremio in the bidding contest. Meanwhile, Lucentio (disguised as Cambio, a pedant) and Hortensio (disguised as Litio, a musician) conduct their wooing underground. Shakespeare thus avoids the confusion of four lovers in simultaneous mutual rivalry by dividing them into two groups of two each, coherence being maintained by the collusion of Lucentio and Tranio, scheming together to a common end.

(6) This scheming comes to a head with the introduction of yet another "seemer," the elderly Pedant (common to Supposes and A Shrew), who is deceived into impersonating Lucentio's absent father in a plot to delude Baptista and obtain Bianca for the right Lucentio.

The above outline suggests Shakespeare's ability to deal with several things at once. It also indicates that the origins of the rival suitors action lie in a provenance that would seem radically incompatible with that of the taming action. Shakespeare's skill in blending the two actions, one of them complicated enough to pose considerable dramaturgical problems, is synonymous with his transmutation of both of the actions into "mirth and merriment."

Shakespeare in effect begins with two sets of characters. On the one hand, there are the father and his two daughters, both of marriagable age, the one a shrew and the other mild and tractable. On the other hand, there are the suitors: Petruchio, the shrew-tamer, a noted contrast to Bianca's three admirers, Lucentio, Hortensio, and Gremio.

Seen in terms of this pattern, the inset play's first scene appears to concentrate on two key dramatic impressions: the Kate-Bianca contrast and Lucentio's admiration for Bianca. This is all managed simultaneously in the "show" inset, where Lucentio is represented reeling not from the shock of Kate's performance as a shrew but from his first view of the "mild" Bianca:

Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
If I achieve not this young modest girl. (I.i.150)

Lucentio's rapturous outburst has the effect of heightening the contrast between Kate and Bianca. In this scene, Kate's curst qualities - "devil," "fiend of hell," etc. - supply a contrasting setting for Lucentio's romanticisation of Bianca's "sweet beauty":

Such as the daughter of Agenor had,
That made great Jove to humble him to her hand
When with his knees he kiss'd the Cretan strand. (I.i.163)

Lucentio "saw her coral lips to move," while "with her breath she did perfume the air." Where Kate is "curst and shrewd," Bianca is "sacred and sweet." Lucentio's every romantic gesture is in its own way as hyperbolic as Petruchio's later ironic use of similar figures of speech:

Did ever Dian so become a grove
As Kate this chamber with her princely gait. (II.i.251)

Shakespeare, in the early scenes, makes a point of establishing this. Lucentio's almost aromatic intoxication is really no straight forward romantic ardour but a comic exaggeration. He thinks of Bianca in romantic, idealising terms that invite a subsequent ironic reversal or peripeteia.

Lucentio's specifically romantic postures are, however, only briefly developed. As early as in Tranio's speech to his rival suitors, Gremio and Hortensio, complicating dramatic factors intrude. Tranio reminds his rivals that Baptista is a noble gentleman and that it is therefore fitting that Bianca "may more suitors have, and me for one":

Fair Leda's daughter had a thousand wooers;
Then well one more may fair Bianca have. (I.ii.240)

With this allusion to Ovid's Heroides,¹⁾ to the impassioned exchanges there between Paris and Helen, to the power of love, to the irresistible attractions of both - as Paris puts it, utque ego te cupio, sic me cupiere puellae - a world of idyllic romantic love is invoked, as idealising as Lucentio's worship of Bianca's "coral lips" etc. in I.i. But the dramatic situation is itself unromantic. Tranio is playing a part in Lucentio's comic intrigue, and he is only a "supposed" suitor anyway. His "brave" appearance (S.D. at I.ii.214) is mere outward show.

The Bianca action fairly rapidly takes on the semblance of a rival suitors' intrigue with marked luscious moments. The mood is suggested by the scheming Tranio and to a lesser extent by Biondello. Note how effectively the latter's jaunty quips shut off any romantic avenues that Lucentio with his romantic effusions may have opened. When Biondello enters to find that Tranio is wearing Lucentio's "colour'd hat and cloak" ^{and} that they have exchanged identities, his waggish tones suggest the spirit of "pastime" that conditions the disguising.

Master, has my fellow Tranio stol'n your clothes
Or you stol'n his? or both?..... (I.i.218)

1) This allusion is not, as R.K. Root mistakenly supposes, to Heroides XVI but to Heroides XVII. See Root's Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, p. 71.

Apart from this lusory vein, another unromantic impulse conditions the atmosphere. This is the bourgeois social setting that soon absorbs even the smitten Lucentio. All the talk of dowers and dowries has the effect of establishing a milieu of middle-class citizens and their mercantile transactions - even though the only business transacted is matrimonial:

Baptista. Faith, gentlemen, now I play a merchant's part
And venture madly on a desperate mart.
Tranio. 'Twas a commodity lay fretting by you;
'Twill bring you gain or perish on the seas.
Baptista. The gain I seek is quiet in the match. (II.i.318)

The italicised words reflect the social milieu, but they also reflect the spirit of play - of the gamble or the wager. Even the suitor Grumio's exotic catalogue of "hangings all of Tyrian tapestry," "cypress chests" containing "arras counterpoints,/Costly apparel, tents, and canopies,.... Turkey cushions bossed with pearl,/Valance of Venice gold in needlework...." (II.i.341) is conditioned by the spirit of the intrigue pastime. Here Gremio's rival who confidently insists that "I am my father's heir and only son" (356) and offers as tokens of the family wealth "three great argosies, besides two galliasses" (370) etc., is none other than that heir's servant, "facing it with a card of ten" (397).

This competitive, businesslike attitude on the part of several of the characters draws attention to the unromantic mode. H.B. Charlton has said that to "these Anglo-Italian lovers love remains more an intrigue than a religion."¹⁾ Nevertheless, like other critics, he ignores the lusory vein which demarcates not only the taming action but the rival suitors action from the traditional mode of classical and Italian intrigue comedy. Certainly, The Shrew does manifest some of the expected features of commedia erudita and commedia dell' arte alike: hoodwinked parent (Baptista and Vincentio), zanni (Grumio and Biondello), pantalone (Gremio), innamorati (Lucentio and Hortensio), innamorate (Bianca), pedant (the stranger who impersonates Vincentio is so called).²⁾ In the case of Gremio, the label, "pantaloon," is twice appended (in a stage-direction at I.i.46 and also at III.i.36 - "we may beguile the old pantaloon"). As Allardyce Nicoll has indicated, the commedia dell' arte plot tends to depend on two themes: love and comic intrigue. "The incidents and intrigues [in such a plot] are various, until we reach a series of weddings at the close." Plots are often filled out with "disguises and tricks," as well as the jests of "the clever Pedrolino and the foolish Arlecchino" (both stock

1) Shakespearean Comedy, pp. 94 - 5.

2) Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 233, refers to Mic's list of commedia dell' arte characters, but there was no standardized pattern, as Nicoll himself points out. See also ibid., pp. 347 ff., and Nicoll's later The World of Harlequin, p. 60, as well as C. Coulter, "The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare," pp. 66 - 9.

figures).¹⁾ All this applies mutatis mutandis to the rival suitors action in The Shrew.

Tranio outlines the paradigm, when he tells Lucentio:

We'll over-reach the greybeard, Gremio,
The narrow-prying father, Minola,
The quaint musician, amorous Licio -
All for my master's sake, Lucentio. (III.ii.141)

But as Shakespeare executes it, the action is so much more than a conventional intrigue. An earlier speech of Tranio's, delivered in soliloquy immediately after the bidding contest, begins to make this clear. As Gremio departs, Tranio exclaims to himself:

A vengeance on your crafty withered hide!
Yet I have fac'd it with a card of ten.
'Tis in my head to do my master good:
I see no reason but suppos'd Lucentio
Must get a father call'd suppos'd Vincentio;
And that's a wonder - fathers commonly
Do get their children; but in this case of wooing
A child shall get a sire, if I fail not of my cunning. (II.i.396)

Apart from the pungent opening couplet and the allusion to Supposes, what is noticeable is the Shakespearean version of the clever servant. Tranio's last five lines have all the detachment and poise, not of ^{Gascoignes} Dulippo who is not characterized in this way at all, but of Vice figures like Merrygreek, Jack Juggler and Politic Persuasion. To make this connection is to insist that the popular native impulses of the taming action are present in the rival wooers action too. One does not need here to make tenuous connections with the rival wooers of ballad and jig.²⁾ The salient point is that Tranio's reflections or "wonder" and his witty inversion in the procreation figure place his speech in the lusive mode and also provide an apt indication of the nature of the comic intrigue. Disguise is not here, as in Supposes, a straight-forward matter of wiliness and cheating, of merely doing the pantaloons out of the young girl; it is conditioned by the idea of pastime that links the rival suitors action not only to the "pastime" inset in I.i, but brings this action within the provenance of "pleasant comedy" that is offered to Sly.

This game may be witnessed in Tranio's "over-reaching" of Hortensio in

1) Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, pp. 228, 294.

2) Sears Jayne, in "The Dreaming of The Shrew," points out how a "triple wooing, often including an old man among the suitors" was "a stock subject, not only of classical and Italian comedy, but also of English jigs." Jayne refers to Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 247 - 88, esp. 247 - 50. But the rival suitors action of The Shrew is undeniably closer to Ariosto than to The Wooing of Nan.

IV.ii. This is the only wooing in the rival suitors action besides that in the lesson scene. But there the wooing, although conducted for over forty lines on stage, is inset to Tranio's duping of Hortensio and thus given the luscious perspective of jest, as Hortensio in high indignation "firmly" vows

Never to woo her more, but [does] forswear her...

Tranio, hidden behind the mask of Lucentio, takes

..... the like unfeigned oath
Never to marry with her though she would entreat.
Fie on her! See how beastly she doth court him. (IV.ii.32)

The jesting irony of "unfeigned" is further highlighted by the spectacle of the lovers' courting as Hortensio reacts:

See how they kiss and court!

Tranio merrily pulls the strings and Hortensio goes through the prescribed motions. At the same time, Hortensio's resolution to look elsewhere for a wife maintains the perspective of jest:

Kindness in women, not their beauteous looks,
Shall win my love.

He resolves:

I will be married to a wealthy widow
Ere three days pass. (IV.ii.37)

These lines are full of ironic possibilities, particularly evocative to the mediaeval and Elizabethan mind. Apart from the numerous proverbs about the dangers of marrying in haste, widows were proverbial shrews.¹⁾ "Beware of taking a widow woman for thy wife," wrote a fourteenth-century bourgeois, "because thou wilt never be able to satisfy her...."²⁾ According to the sixteenth-century proverb, "it is dangerous to marry a widow, because she has cast her rider."³⁾ It is hardly necessary to refer to that proverbially shrewish widow, the Wyf of Bath. The irony is expanded by Hortensio's naïve confidence that in his widow he will find "kindness," - the ambiguity of this word is another joke at Hortensio's expense.⁴⁾

1) E.g. "he that marries a widow and three children marries four thieves"; "he who marries a widow will often have a dead man's head thrown in his dish" (Tilley, W 335, W 336).

2) Paolo di Certaldo of Florence, quoted by G.C. Coulton, Mediaeval Panorama, p. 424.

3) Tilley, M 700.

4) Kind = (1) affectionate, considerate (Hortensio's meaning), (2) natural disposition (which, of a widow, would be shrewish).

The joke is dwelt on by Tranio, Lucentio and Bianca, after Hortensio's departure. They refer to the latter's "lusty widow" (whom he in turn styles his "wealthy widow") and to his visit to Petruchio: "he is gone unto the taming school"; Bianca's prayer that God may "give him joy" is capped by Tranio's "Ay, and he'll tame her"; and all works towards the climactic jest, the ironic reversal in the recognition scene. Intrigue of the Italian comic kind is thus transmuted into jest which is finally a dimension of the Lord's "pastime."

This sense of jest is kept up with the entry of Biondello, followed by the Pedant "from Mantua." Tranio smoothly dons another mask:

Of Mantua, sir? Marry, God forbid,
And come to Padua, careless of your life. (IV.ii.78)

The Pedant is easily duped into impersonating Vincentio, all with the relish of the game:

Tranio. He [Vincentio] is my father, sir; and, eooth to say,
In count'nance somewhat doth resemble you.
Biondello. As much as an apple doth an oyster, and all one. (IV.ii.99)

Biondello's quip keeps the straight deception of Tranio's remark on the lusive level. With the Pedant's aid, all - Vincentio, Gremio, and Baptista - can be gulled, as they are in the scenes that follow.

Shakespeare is explicitly careful about the nature of the deception. Unlike the clothing emblems of the taming plot, the disguise convention¹⁾ is overtly joked about in a sustained exchange between Biondello and disguised Lucentio (IV.iv.73 - 103). More than this, the moral implications of disguise - the hypocrisy which was signified by the Vice's disguise as Virtue, by Archimago's disguise as a venerable religious hermit²⁾ - are slighted, as Biondello expounds the moral significance of Tranio's winking and laughing to the puzzled Lucentio (i.e. Cambio):

Biondello. he has left me here behind to expound
the meaning or moral of his signs or tokens.
Lucentio. I pray thee moralize them.
Biondello. Then thus : Baptista is safe, talking
with the deceiving father of a deceitful son
they are busied about a counterfeit assurance (IV.iv.73 - 103)

Shakespeare perversely indulges in a joke at the expense of the moral emblem tradition, not only to distance the situation but to show what the present use

1) M.C. Bradbrook has analysed some of the meanings of "disguise" in her "Shakespeare and the Use of Disguise in Elizabethan Drama." She observes that "for the Elizabethans 'disguise' still retained its primary sense of strange apparel, and 'disguising' was still the name for amateur plays" (p. 160).

2) Spenser, The Faerie Queene, I.i.

of disguise is not and to weave the "counterfeit supposes" (V.i.104) overtly into the fabric of the Tranio-Biondello pastime.

The upshot of all the comic intrigue is a brief "comedy of errors" episode in the first hundred lines or so of V.i. Here there are temporary confusions which faintly resemble those of Errors: the exclamations - "Help! ... Here's a madman will murder me!" and "is the man lunatic?" - are complemented by words like "villain," "mad ass," "mad knave," and "dotard," as an Officer is called to put the real Vincentio in jail. Shakespeare makes unobtrusive use of the inset device as Petruchio and Kate "stand aside and see the end of this controversy."

The "coney-catching" fades off into a recognition scene as father and son, right Vincentio and right Lucentio, face each other, the latter with his new bride. The mystery is resolved in terms of lusory metamorphosis imagery:

Baptista. Why, tell me, is not this my Cambio?

Bianca. Cambio is chang'd into Lucentio.

Lucentio. Love wrought these miracles. Bianca's love
Made me exchange my state with Tranio (V.i.108)

But there is no attempt to work these images up with any fulness. All resolves, at the end of this scene, in "pardon him sweet father, for my sake" (116) and "kiss me, Kate" (128), as the characters exeunt severally. Vincentio's expressed desire to "be revenged for this villainy" (122) and Baptista's to "sound the depth of this knavery" (123) are set in relief against the assurance of reconciliation. Lucentio insists that Bianca's "father will not frown" (124), and Petruchio and Kate follow "to see the end of this ado" (127) - the "ado" being implicitly placed as a further "show" or "pastime" which tamer and tamed shrew will enjoy watching.

Shakespeare, in blending the two main actions of the play, has transformed the rival suitors action from the straight intrigue of Italian comedy into a comic intrigue with markedly lusory features. As will become clear, this blending of the actions held further dramatic possibilities for Shakespeare - possibilities that have not been generally recognized.

The interweaving of the two actions begins then at the level of simple

contrast: Kate as "stark mad and wonderful froward," as a "fiend of hell," and Bianca as "Minerva," as "mild," and so on.

With Shakespeare's introduction of the suitors, it becomes inevitable that characters who rightly "belong" in one action will be engaged in conversation with characters from the other. This is entailed by the datum itself. Petruchio's introduction is part of an intrigue on the part of Hortensio and Gremio to find someone to remove Kate from the scene, because Baptista will not "bestow my youngest daughter/Before I have a husband for the elder" (I.i.50). Thus, Bianca's suitors are actively associated with Petruchio's "wooing-dance." The converse is also the case.

These factors offer possibilities for expanding comic-dramatic interest in a way that seems not to have been possible in, say, Two Gentlemen, a play marked, as S. Wells has shown, by Shakespeare's apparent inability "to manipulate more than a few characters at once."¹⁾ This interest is marked in the first inset scene of The Shrew (I.i), where there are no less than seven actively participating characters on stage at the same time, excluding the deluded Sly and his attendant or attendants. It is a notable feature of this play that Shakespeare is able to deal simultaneously with characters in this way. The ensuing scene (I.ii) also features seven different characters, some now disguised.

In the third scene (II.i), all five suitors (including Hortensio disguised as Licio, Lucentio as Cambio, and Tranio as Lucentio) are admitted to Baptista's presence. Here Petruchio is nominally involved in the rival suitors action, when he is employed to present the disguised Hortensio - "a man of mine,/ Cunning in music and the mathematics" (55) - to Baptista. Petruchio's addresses are not however allowed to proceed uninterrupted, and Gremio twice reproves him ("You are too blunt; go to it orderly"; and "Bacare! you are marvellous forward"); on the second occasion the pantaloon engages in a brief diversionary altercation, which is followed by Gremio's introducing his man (really Lucentio, although Gremio does not know this) to Baptista. Then Tranio ("supposed" Lucentio) presents himself as a further suitor for Bianca's hand. While Petruchio and Baptista are discussing dowries, Hortensio enters comically framed in the broken instrument - "As on a pillory, looking through the lute" (155).

These are representative enough examples of Shakespeare's dramatic procedures in The Shrew. Not even in the shrew-taming scenes are the characters presented à deux. As has been noted, the taming process embraces not only

1) "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p. 165.

Grumio but Hortensio, the Haberdasher, the Tailor, and even Vincentio. What this suggests is that Shakespeare is, Kate and Petruchio apart, less interested here in comedy of character than in comic ensembles, like those in Love's Labour's Lost and As You Like It. This preoccupation manifests itself constantly from the first "pastime" episode (I.i.46 - 140) onwards, in Shakespeare's use, Sly apart, of eavesdroppers, messengers, and spectators within the confines of the inset play itself. There is a frequent sense of the characters as playing their parts while another character watches and comments.

Failure on the part of textual scholars to understand this has led to some extraordinary hypotheses. Chief among these is the "problem" of Hortensio. For a long time, it has been generally held that "the character and personality of Hortensio present certain remarkable features which seem difficult to account for except on the theory that in a pre-Shakespearian form of the play his rôle... comprised a good many of the speeches which are now assigned to Tranio."¹⁾ In other words, Tranio's part in the wedding scene (it is alleged) is inappropriate to "his character and the part he plays elsewhere in the play"²⁾; certain speeches of his, "of and to Petruchio, should be in the mouth of Hortensio,"³⁾ on the grounds that they imply in Tranio an intimacy with Petruchio which would be appropriate only in Hortensio. But Hortensio could not be introduced in the wedding scene, because, disguised as Licio, he has left the stage right at the end of the preceding scene, the music-lesson scene.⁴⁾ This disguise accounts also for his absence from the bidding contest between Gremio and supposed Lucentio (III.i.325 - 96). Here Tranio assumes the part of counter-bidder which (it is alleged) either the absent Hortensio or the absent Lucentio ought to have played. Looked at in this realistic perspective, the treatment of Hortensio appears to be a fine muddle, a clear indication of Shakespeare's inability to reconcile the needs of the disguise intrigue with those of the admitted suitor's duties. Wouldn't Baptista wonder what had happened to Hortensio? etc.

Looked at from another point of view, these problems almost entirely disappear. In the taming action, Shakespeare is engaged in composing a comedy of character, a comedy in which the main impression is of Kate's and particu-

1) Dover Wilson in NCS edn., pp. 124 - 6. Cf. Duthie, "The Taming of a Shrew and The Taming of the Shrew", pp. 346 - 52; Houk, "The Integrity of Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew" and "Strata in The Taming of the Shrew."

2) Houk, "The Integrity of Shakespeare's The Taming of The Shrew," p. 223.

3) P.A. Daniel, cited in Houk, "Strata in The Taming of the Shrew," p. 291.

4) NCS edn., p. 125.

larly of Petruchio's singularity. In their parts they are both demarcated from the other characters in the play, as I have tried to demonstrate. In this respect, Kate and Petruchio are not typical Shakespearean comic characters in the sense defined in chapter I. Other players in the "pastime" are Bianca, Lucentio, Tranio, Hortensio, and Gremio but they are not really conceived as individuals. This is no Sartrean rejection of the individual but a logical entailment of the commedia erudita - commedia dell'arte origins: the obvious type parts of pantalone, innamorati, and so forth.¹⁾ These parts here reflect quite unambiguously a conception of character that is more explicit in a play like Love's Labour's Lost: a preoccupation with "what is constant in human types and affairs."²⁾ These characters are all players in the "ridiculus lusus," that "little, odd, ridiculous May-game" which all men play. Shakespeare doesn't see Hortensio and Lucentio as individuals any more than he sees Navarre, Longaville and Dumain as individuals. What moral significance any of these figments might have lies less in any personal characteristics than in what might be called the general moment that they embody or reflect. Hortensio and Lucentio as the two recognizable innamorati of Italian comedy represent everyman as lover - the general rule, to which Petruchio is the exception. This being so, these two innamorati are characterized not as persons with histories, like characters in the modern novel, but as players in the "ridiculus lusus," in what Puck calls the "fond pageant."

It follows that in the allegedly problematical scenes of The Shrew - like the bidding, wedding, and "taming school" scenes - characterization might have more licence and fewer restrictions than would be the case in the treatment of the protagonist in a tragedy - a character with a moral self. Criticism should recognize that differences in dramatic conception between say Richard II and Hortensio would involve cutting of different entailments. Basically, Hortensio is a friend of Petruchio's and an ordinary suitor. Tranio is Lucentio's man posing as an ordinary suitor, accepted as Lucentio himself by virtually everyone, and hence an acquaintance of Petruchio's. These are among the "secret impressions" made during the first two acts.

In the bidding episode, what Shakespeare requires is a contestant to take on Gremio. Tranio is available to play his part in the ensemble, with the addition of dramatic ironies inherent in his disguise as Lucentio - as I have shown. In the wedding scene, Shakespeare, as I have tried to show, expands the comic milieu in a variety of ways including the use, first of Biondello, then of Gremio as "messengers." He furthermore requires a character to fill

1) See p. 115, above.

2) Bayley, op. cit., p. 269.

the role of family friend. Tranio, as Bianca's accepted suitor, is surely a fitting and inevitable choice. In the three taming scenes, Shakespeare continues to use the dramatic ensemble rather than a simple duet. One of Hortensio's functions is to keep the action on the level of moral comedy, to prevent it from degenerating into "unfeeling farce." Here, Hortensio's reproof ("Signior Petruchio, fie! you are to blame" - IV.iii.48) as he comforts Kate ("Come, Mistress Kate, I'll bear you company" - 49) maintains the human drama, as does Petruchio's employment of him to "see the tailor paid" (IV.iv.160) and reassure the bewildered tradesman by asking him to "Take no unkindness of his hasty words" (163). Hortensio's quasi-choric asides, coupled with Grumio's lususy "coney-catching" help maintain the sense of "pastime," the sense of Hortensio's watching a "show": "I see she's like to have neither cap nor gown" (93) or "That will not be in haste" (72).

Although Shakespeare may have failed to "tie up the loose ends so perfectly as to hide the knots,"¹⁾ he shows a measure of comic-dramatic skill and resourcefulness not only in his mere blending of actions but in his modification of Italian intrigue comedy by the prevailing mode of "pastime." Furthermore, instead of being cramped or thwarted by the comparatively large cast, he finds in this apparent stumbling-block an opportunity for dramatic ensembles that he puts to fruitful comic use.

(vii) Comic reversals

Before the final scene of the inset play, there are indications that the "comical catastrophe" has been reached. Kate has been tamed, Hortensio has gone off to his "lusty widow," and Lucentio has married Bianca. At the comparable point in A Shrew, Sly has been removed from the stage in preparation for the epilogue. If the Sly scenes are included in a performance of The Shrew, Sly's departure is generally managed after the penultimate scene. He must have witnessed the success of the taming ("Petruchio, go thy ways, the field is won") as well as Hortensio's departure to wed his widow ("And if she be froward,/ Then hast thou taught Hortensio to be untoward").

The wager scene is ushered in by feelings of harmony and love evoked in both main actions. Petruchio has proposed that he and Kate return to her father's house to "revel it as bravely as the best" (IV.iii.54), to "feast and sport us" (IV.iii.179). Lucentio's reunion with his father and the recognition of the "counterfeit supposes" leads directly on to the feast of the final scene - a feast in which even the pantaloon is included although his "cake is dough"

1) Houk, "Strata in The Taming of the Shrew," p. 298.

(V.i.125).¹⁾ Kate has kissed Petruchio ("First kiss me, Kate") - the emblem at once of tamed shrew and mutual love. The scene's opening lines register the resolution of moral discord, of Vincentio's and Baptista's anger at having been "coney-catched":

At last, though long, our jarring notes agree;
And time it is when raging war is done
To smile at scrapes and perils overblown.
My fair Bianca, bid my father welcome,
While I with self-same kindness welcome thine.
Brother Petruchio, sister Katherina,
And thou, Hortensio, with thy loving widow,
Feast with the best(V.ii.1)

The tenor of Lucentio's words - "smile," "kindness," "feast with the best," "welcome," "banquet," etc. - is complemented by that of Petruchio's "Nothing but sit and sit, and eat and eat." This looks like the conventional "comic catastrophe" of love, harmony and festivity: "Jack hath his Jill."

But, as in Love's Labour's Lost, Shakespeare views the orthodox romance ending ironically. The all-pervasive harmony is a delusion, a further "suppose." The final resolution, the ultimate comic "recognition," has yet to come. The moral issue which will precipitate this "recognition" is now introduced:

Baptista. Padua affords this kindness, son Petruchio.
Petruchio. Padua affords nothing but what is kind.
Hortensio. For both our sakes I would that word were true.
Petruchio. Now, for my life, Hortensio fears his widow. (V.ii.15)

The shrew motif has not been forgotten. The very love and "kindness" which conventionally represent the comic ending here precipitate a miniature comic drama which can be resolved only by recognition of the true state of affairs.

The question posed before the assembled people is whether either Hortensio or Petruchio is "afraid of" his wife. Petruchio is married to a recognized shrew and Hortensio to a widow - a potential shrew, as I have shown above. Shakespeare now expands the scope of the question to take in Lucentio and the "mild" Bianca too.

The allegations that Hortensio "fears his widow" and that Petruchio measures Hortensio's "sorrow by his woe" ("He that is giddy thinks the world turns round") precipitate a brief interlude marked by the use of varied game figures. Kate objects to the Widow's open hint that she (Kate) is a shrew.

1) This is Shakespeare's substitution for the reunion in Supposes of Cleander and his long-lost son, Dulippo, who are the counterparts of Gremio and Tranio respectively. Introduction of similar material in The Shrew would simply dissipate attention which is rightly concentrated now on the issues of the wager scene.

Their altercation takes the form of a burlesque contest, like a cock-fight, in which each of the two contestants has her supporters:

Petruchio. To her, Kate!
Hortensio. To her, widow! (V.ii.33)

The contest is seen as a "butting":

Gremio. Believe me, sir, they butt together well.
Bianca. Head and butt! An hasty-witted body
Would say your head and butt were head and horn.

The dramatist puns on "butt" as "striking with the head," as "tail," and as "cuckold's horn." Petruchio, entering into the lusus spirit, challenges the "mild" Bianca:

Have at you for a bitter jest or two.

She replies with an allusion to the sport of hunting:

Am I your bird? I mean to shift my bush,
And then pursue me as you draw your bow. (V.ii.46)¹⁾

She discreetly withdraws, before Petruchio can "hit" her. He develops the figure implied in her couplet as he jests about Tranio's "failure" to win Bianca for himself:

Here, Signior Tranio,
This bird you aim'd at, though you hit her not;
Therefore a health to all that shot and miss'd.
Tranio. O sir, Lucentio slipp'd me like his greyhound,
Which runs himself, and catches for his master(V.i.49)

The hunting imagery is further expanded in the ensuing dialogue.

Everyone is certain that Petruchio, in Baptista's words, has "the veriest shrew of all": that he "hunted for himself" and that his "deer" holds him "at bay," as Tranio puts it. Petruchio admits that this "gird" of Tranio's has

a little gall'd me, I confess;
And, as the jest did glance away from me,
'Tis ten to one it maim'd you two outright. (60)

So Shakespeare firmly establishes the dramatic situation. He has in earlier scenes made the impression that Petruchio has "tamed" Kate. Now, within the inset play, he presents a group of characters who are blissfully unaware of what has happened at the "taming school" and who are confident, in the words of the proverb, that "scolds and infants never lin bawling."²⁾ The laugh will clearly

1) As the NCS editors note, "Birds were only shot sitting in a bush or a tree; if therefore the bird shifted its bush, the fowler had to follow" (op. cit., p. 177).

2) Tilley, S 146. The word, "lin," means "cease."

be on this group of characters.

Shakespeare builds up to the final moment of "recognition" in three ascending steps. The three husbands agree to test their respective wives' obedience by summoning each of them in turn. Bianca is "busy" and "cannot come." The Widow "says you have some goodly jest in hand" and "will not come." Where Lucentio has "bid" his wife and Hortensio has "entreated" his to come, Petruchio "commands" Kate. The dramatist contrasts the expectations of the other characters in the scene with those of the audience. The former are confident in one direction, the latter are informed to the contrary. The overtones of Petruchio's "command" are briefly dwelt on, as Hortensio roundly claims:

I know her answer She will not. (97)

To this Petruchio replies, with more than a touch of emotion, which keeps alive the human implications of the episode:

The fouler fortune mine, and there an end.

Upon which Katherina meekly enters. The contrast between the tamer's moment of doubt and the tamed shrew's prompt obedience is coupled with the further contrast between the disconfirmation of Hortensio's and the other characters' expectations and the confirmation of those of the audience. These contrasts create the climactic comic frisson.

The disconfirmation of Hortensio's and Lucentio's expectations in particular constitutes more than a simple ironic reversal in which the "biters," or intriguers, are "bit." It partakes of the sense of revelation common to the comic catastrophe in both Errors and The Winter's Tale. The climactic moment of revelation is sustained, as Lucentio, Hortensio, and Baptista give vent to expressions of wonder:

Here is a wonder, if you talk of a wonder (106),

and

... she is chang'd, as she had never been. (115)

Baptista is so overcome that he adds "Another dowry to another daughter" (114). Hortensio, in his amazement, "wonders what it bodes" (107). Petruchio replies:

Marry, peace it bodea, and love, and quiet life,
An awful rule, and right supremacy;
And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy. (V.ii.108)

Kate is, for a brief moment, transformed into a moral emblem of the dutiful wife : for Petruchio insists on showing

..... more sign of her obedience,
Her new-built virtue and obedience. (V.ii.117)

The serious tones here are a development of the moral emblems in the taming scenes. In this "recognition" episode, moreover, Petruchio and Kate both, so to speak, emerge from their set parts in the "merriment." Sly and the disguised practitioners have left the stage. Here, at last, tamer and tamed are represented in a direct relationship with the theatre audience. The latter are firmly but unobtrusively encouraged to identify with these two characters who now show signs of taking on the semblance of "real people," as these appear in what Brecht inaccurately calls "Aristotelian drama."

This encouragement is further fostered by Kate's set speech which begins as a reproof to the two shrews, Bianca and the Widow, and develops into a virtual answer to Hortensio's "wonder what it bodes." The two central emblems of her "new-built virtue and obedience" (118) are her compliance with the arbitrary command that she remove her cap and "throw it underfoot" (122) and her voluntary offer to "place her hands beneath her husband's foot" (177). These acts are hyperbolic emblems of wifely submission; they are not the literal acts of what H.C. Goddard would call "a cowering slave."¹⁾ Kate is, in the homiletic phrase, showing herself "tractable to her husband,"²⁾ as Sara was to Abraham.³⁾

Kate's hyperbolic emblems are ballad-type analogies of the views expressed in the Bible and the Homilies. She insists, in her address to the other two women - given in compliance with Petruchio's request that she tell "these headstrong women/What duty they do owe their lords and husbands" - that

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign. (146)

This is an allusion to the scriptural notion that "the husband is the head of the wife" (Ephesians, V.23). A "froward, peevish, sullen, sour" wife (157) is "a foul contending rebel/And graceless traitor to her loving lord" (159);

Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
Even such a woman oweth to her husband. (155)

In the words of a passage from Ephesians, V, quoted in the Homilies,

Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the
Lord: for the husband is the head of the woman,
as Christ is the head of the church. 4)

Women should not, insists Kate,

seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
When they are bound to serve love and obey. (163)

1) Op. cit., I.71.
2) Op. cit., p. 468.
3) Ibid., p. 469.
4) Op. cit., p. 467.

These orthodox views express the moral rightness of Kate's change and give substance to the "wonder" expressed by the three men.

Kate's set speech is however no straight homily on matrimony. Here, possibly more than anywhere else, the human implications of the taming legend are apparent. The speech is the rationale of her submission, complementing her two emblematic gestures. It reflects not base slavishness but peace and mutual love: "what not that's sweet and happy." Thus, when Kate "in token of her duty" offers in a hushed voice to place her hand below Petruchio's foot - "My hand is ready, may it do him ease" (179) - her tones of deep affection and devotion evoke from Petruchio a response in kind, a frankly admiring, ardent, heart-felt echo: "Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate" (180). This line has been travestied in the past by vulgar, boisterous, wife-beating Petruchios, as in the American musical, Kiss Me, Kate. Petruchio's last words in the play are a statement of the conjugal love which he and Kate have found, and this love is contrasted with the marital fortunes of Lucentio whose "loving voyage" is destined to be less peaceful:

Come, Kate, we'll to bed.
We three are married, but you two are sped. (184)

The touch of what is almost rapture behind Petruchio's two brief speeches addressed to Kate (180 and 184) suggests a resolution in which "earthly things, made even,/Atone together" (As You Like It, V.iv.103).

But this is no simply idyllic comic resolution like that of The Merchant of Venice. It is full of ironic implications which embrace, in the first instance, the other two couples, especially Lucentio and Hortensio, both of whom are hoist with their own petard and "sped." Hortensio has attended the "taming school" where Petruchio, the master, "teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long,/ To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue" (IV.ii.57). His parting words, spoken in soliloquy, as he goes off to "Have to his widow" were: "and if she be froward,/Then hast thou taught Hortensio to be untoward" (IV.v.77). Hortensio is a would-be tamer, but he is a failure. He, as I have pointed out, is everyman as lover. He represents the general rule, to which Petruchio is the exception. He cannot be a tamer, because he lacks the "heroic" stature of the true tamer. He is just one more player in the "fond pageant," the "ridiculus lusus."

To bring this comic irony fully home, the play needs the Sly epilogue, which has in the truncated form in which it exists in A Shrew been borrowed by recent producers of The Shrew. Sly's re-introduction here gives a fine comic edge to the wager-scene reversals, besides bringing the inset play back into its structural framework.

In A Shrew, Sly returns four times to the action, between Induction and Epilogue.¹⁾ In the hypothetical uncut version of The Shrew, he might have been given even more scope. Recent productions have by all accounts successfully involved Sly in the stage business of the inset play. Recently in San Diego, Craig Noel directed a Petruchio who, "momentarily wilting with exhaustion, gratefully accepts Sly's bottle for a quick pick-me-up."²⁾ In Tyrone Guthrie's Canadian production,

the actors in the central play [constantly] showed that they were acting for Sly; all the asides were addressed to him, small gestures reassured him as he followed anxiously the fortunes of the lovers, and when, at the end of Act III the crowd left the stage to enjoy Baptista's feast, Sly, to the consternation of the Lord, dashed off with the rest of them." 3)

This is surely the way to produce the play. It begins to make real sense of the Induction. When Petruchio appeals to the audience,

He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak: 'tis charity to show (IV.i.194),

the possible echo of the tamer in A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin is only superficial. That tamer's epilogue to the reader is in apparently similar vein:

He that can charme a shrewde wyfe
Better than thus,
Let him come to me and fetch ten pound,
And a golden purse. 4)

But Petruchio's should not be regarded as a simple extra-dramatic address like that of the ballad tamer. Petruchio is performing for Sly. What is more inevitable and logical than for Shakespeare's tamer to direct his appeal directly not merely to the theatre audience but to another character in the play: Sly himself, who is by this time agog with admiration for Petruchio's technique.

The finer points of Shakespeare's possible development of the Sly action are debateable. We have seen how in the Induction the comedy rests at bottom on Sly's loss of his metaphysical bearings - he cannot distinguish dream from waking experience - and we have seen how this dream motif is unnoticed in

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- 1) Sly thus has seven verbal appearances in all, but is presumably on stage all the time, except between the two Induction scenes and during the wager scene while his metamorphosis to pedlar is being effected.
 - 2) Eleanor Prosser, "Shakespeare in San Diego: the Thirteenth Season," p. 530.
 - 3) Peter D. Smith, "Toil and Trouble : A Review of the 1962 Season of the Stratford, Ontario, Festival," p. 522.
 - 4) Op. cit., IV.44B.

A Shrew. Possible avenues for development of this in the prison interlude have also been noticed above.¹⁾ The inter-relation between dream and theatre motifs has been discussed too.

When in the Epilogue Sly emerges from his role as Lord, he imagines that he has dreamed it all. Like Bottom's "dream," Sly's is a comic "somnium" or "enigmatic dream" which requires interpretation. In Heuterus, the Lord's jest is, it will be remembered, calculated "experiri quale esset, vitae nostrae ludicrum."²⁾ Like Hortensio, Sly views Petruchio's success as a fool-proof recipe for taming a shrew. The theatre audience (but not Sly) has seen what happens to Hortensio in the wager scene and they are therefore in an excellent position to appreciate the dramatic irony of the situation as Sly departs to tame his shrew:

I know now how to tame a shrew
I dreamt upon it all this night till now (xix.15)

The men in the audience have in the wager scene been encouraged to identify themselves with Petruchio. Hortensio has done the same. So has Sly. This is Sly's interpretation of his "somnium"; and it offers to the theatre audience the absurd spectacle of the clown identifying himself with the hero. To Sly, this is "what the stage-play of our life is like." But, as I have argued, Lucentio and Hortensio are the ordinary men, the men who reflect Nature. Petruchio is the exception. Logically, Sly ought to have identified with them. As he does not, the joke is on him. But the men in the theatre audience who have identified themselves with the "heroic" Petruchio have also by logical implication identified themselves with the clownish Sly. As Sir John Harington put it in a work published in 1596,

For the shrewd wife, reade the booke of
taming a shrew, which hath made a number of
us so perfect, that now everyone can rule
a shrew in our countrey, save he that hath her. 3)

The last laugh is on the men in the audience. Theirs is, in Bullough's words used in another connection, "the last (and richest) 'Suppose' of all."⁴⁾

This, as I have said, is no "anti-climax," no naïve pointing of "the moral of the shrew-taming in a didactic ending."⁵⁾ It is rather a clinching of the dream and theatre imagery; an astute playing with Brechtian verfremdungseffekte and with the implications of the play's lusory mode; and a final exploitation of the significant relationship between the taming and the rival

1) See p. 82, above.

2) Op. cit., p. xlvi ("to test what the stage-play of our life is like").

3) The Metamorphosis of Ajax, ed. by E.S. Donno, p. 153.

4) Op. cit., I.68.

5) "Was there a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to The Taming of the Shrew?" p. 29.

suitors actions.

Criticism might hold that the hypotheses on which these views are based are too imaginative and that one cannot discuss scenes that are in fact not there. What I have tried to do is to offer a rationale of an obviously growing theatrical practice - the incorporation in The Shrew of the interludes and epilogue from A Shrew; and to work out some of the literary-critical implications of the notion, held by many textual scholars, that Shakespeare's interludes and epilogue have been lost and that the nearest we shall get to them is the comparable scenes in A Shrew. Study of the two actions of the inset play seems to confirm the scholarly hypothesis on which some of the above analysis of the Sly interludes and epilogue is based.

CHAPTER IV

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

(i) The critical climate

To assert that Two Gentlemen of Verona is the least successful of Shakespeare's romantic comedies is simply to echo a judgment on which there is general agreement.¹⁾ It is also to make a useless and potentially misleading point. Shakespeare's other romantic comedies are so fine that for one of them to be inferior to the rest might not necessarily entail its virtual dismissal. As has often been noted, Two Gentlemen is Shakespeare's first venture in a new mode, and apart from being demonstrably superior to any earlier non-Shakespearean comedy, it is arguably the "earliest surviving romantic comedy of England, and almost of Europe."²⁾ Although there is romantic interest and machinery in Errors, The Shrew and Love's Labour's Lost (whatever the dates of these plays might be), it is in Two Gentlemen that Shakespeare is to be seen working unequivocally in the vein that was to culminate in A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It and Twelfth Night.³⁾ Two Gentlemen is nothing if not characteristically Shakespearean, as one of the play's most sympathetic critics - none other than the stern reprover of the romantic artifices of Twelfth Night and Cymbeline - has found:

When I read this play, I cannot but think that I discover both in the serious and ludicrous scenes, the language and sentiments of Shakespeare. It is not indeed one of his most powerful effusions, but it abounds in γυνώματα beyond most of his plays, and few have more lines or passages which, singly considered, are eminently beautiful. 4)

There are other γυνώματα too, other features that were to become characteristic. For the student, their interest outweighs the play's obvious flaws.

Until the advent of the fashionable notion that Shakespeare was a parodist, that a writer of his intelligence couldn't have taken romance seriously, criticism tended to hold on to the idea that the play fitted, or was meant to fit, conventionally into the "pattern of the ancient debate of chivalry and of the Court of Love, the debate of Friendship against Love."⁵⁾ Critics

1) E.M.W. Tillyard calls it "one of the least loved of Shakespeare's plays" (Shakespeare's Early Comedies, p. 112); M.C. Bradbrook: "The earliest and most colourless of Shakespeare's romantic comedies" (Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, p.147); E.K. Chambers: "No play of Shakespeare bears upon it such obvious marks of immaturity" (Shakespeare: a Survey, p.44); Norman Sanders: "Alone in the canon, it has afforded critics a relief from bardolotry" (Introduction to New Penguin edn., p.7).

2) R.W. Bond, in his Arden edn., p.xxxii.

3) See Chambers, op. cit., p. 44; B. Evans, Introduction to Signet edn., p. xxiv; and especially H. Jenkins, "Shakespeare's Twelfth Night," in Shakespeare: the Comedies, ed. by Kenneth Muir, pp. 73,74,76,78, etc.

4) Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. by Raleigh, p. 74.

5) C.J. Sisson, William Shakespeare, The Complete Works, p.28.

like Dover Wilson, Geoffrey Bullough, and M.C. Bradbrook cite analogues and argue, or at least suggest, that Shakespeare's treatment of the friendship motif is akin to that of Elyot, Boccaccio, the Gesta Romanorum, Damon and Pithias, and so on, "a theme not fully understood by critics [though] almost a literary commonplace at the time of the Renaissance."¹⁾ To Wilson, "Valentine the perfect friend is also the perfect lover," while "Proteus is the traitor to love."²⁾ Apart from "the incident of the attempted violation [which] is managed with a crudity we do not expect from Shakespeare,"³⁾ the play poses no problems for Wilson. Indeed he is one of the few critics who show enthusiasm for anything in the play beyond Launce and his dog. He contrasts the rough technique of the dénouement "with the rest of the play which, if less subtle than As You Like It or Twelfth Night, is constructed with considerable skill and gives an effect of great charm when well produced"⁴⁾ - a viewpoint that might prove more rewarding to criticism than the sneers or condescension of some critics.

However, the simple appreciation of Two Gentlemen represented by Wilson's pages has itself proved a problem for some critics. H.B. Charlton who, like Wilson and Bradbrook, approaches the play through analogous literature - in this case, mediaeval romance - finds "in the story [of the play] ... all the main marks of the mediaeval tradition as that tradition has been modified, elaborated and extended by the idealism of Petrarch and by the speculations of the Platonists."⁵⁾ In much the same way as M.C. Bradbrook was later to do, Charlton indicates the conventional romance features of the play - "religious cult of love" etc;⁶⁾ but unlike either Bradbrook or Wilson, he recognizes the problems that faced a Shakespeare trying to turn romance into romantic comedy. In Errors, romance is fused (incompletely, thinks Charlton) with the classical errors action.⁷⁾ In The Shrew, the romance spirit is soon swallowed up in the rival suitors intrigue.⁸⁾ However, in Charlton's view, Two Gentlemen was Shakespeare's earliest comedy - a view for which there is persuasive internal evidence⁹⁾ - and in the dramatist's attempt to

1) Dover Wilson, Shakespeare's Happy Comedies, p.43. Tillyard, in Shakespeare's Early Comedies, pp.114 - 17, and Hamilton, in The Early Shakespeare, pp. 114 - 127, have argued the "radical differences" in Shakespeare's treatment of the friendship theme.

2) Op. cit., pp. 45,46.

3) Ibid. p.46.

4) Ibid.

5) Shakespearian Comedy, p.27.

6) Ibid., pp. 23 - 34.

7) Ibid., p. 70.

8) Ibid., pp. 79, 94 - 5.

9) See S. Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," pp. 165 - 6.

adapt "the world of romance" to the services of stage comedy, "something went wrong."¹⁾ As Charlton sees it, the problem is that, whereas in Latin comedy "the hero is simply the protagonist, here the protagonist is the upholder of the faith on which the play is built."²⁾ Yet, in Two Gentlemen, "the story renders him a fool." Charlton refers to Valentine's "helplessness and impenetrable stupidity [which] amount to more than the traditional blindness of a lover. Even the clown, Speed, can see through Silvia's trick, when she makes Valentine write a letter to himself"³⁾ It will thus be "extremely difficult to make a hero of a man who is proved to be duller of wit than the patent idiots of the piece." His adherence to the romance code makes of Valentine first a liar - when he tells the outlaws he has killed a man etc. - and then "a nincompoop" - in his resignation of "his darling Silvia to the traitor."⁴⁾ On this matter Charlton's comment is indeed revealing:

Even Valentine must have seen that his gesture was a little odd, because he quotes the legal sanction. It is the code..... But it makes a man a nincompoop..... He has proved himself so true a son of romance that he can never again be mistaken for a creature of human nature. 5)

It has been argued that literary works

cannot reveal any special intelligible characteristics - cannot yield "interpretations" at all - except in the light of the special concepts which the interpreter himself, with whatever degree of consciousness, brings to bear on them. Stated in another way: as all inquiry and instruction must proceed in terms of what is already known or understood, no verbal structure is ever understood or explained except in terms of what one is already equipped, conceptually, to understand and explain. 6)

What Charlton brings to bear on Two Gentlemen is his own theory of comedy. Where in terms of romance (which suggests allegory, idealised characters, and so forth) the play might pass, in terms of comedy (which demands true-to-life characters who yield to naturalistic readings), the play fails. Charlton's strictures on Valentine presuppose expectations of quasi-naturalistic characterization, although the play is openly committed to romance paradigms and stylized effects. Charlton's conception of comedy is essentially classical and hence empirical in its assumptions. But Two Gentlemen, like Shakespeare's other romantic comedies, is only tangentially related to New Comedy, and it is opaque to the theories of Meredith and Bergson - theories conditioned by New Comedy and its offspring, Comedy of Manners. Charlton's

1) Op. cit., p.33.

2) Ibid., p.35.

3) Ibid., p.36. This view is echoed in Sen Gupta, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 98 and in Wells, op. cit., p.167.

4) Op. cit., p.37.

5) Ibid., p.37.

6) Marsh, "Historical Interpretation and the History of Criticism," p.5.

description of Portia as "a callous barrister"¹⁾ reveals his partial imperiousness to the artificial literary realm of Shakespearean romance, in which allegiance to story pattern and to poetic justice tends to be dominant. There is a constant intrusion in Charlton's mind of the quasi-naturalistic norms of classical comedy - a preoccupation with what Kellogg and Scholes call "truth of sensation and environment."²⁾ This is apparent when he complains that, unlike Launce, Valentine and Proteus are not "men like other men" and that Valentine is not "a creature of human nature."³⁾

This concept is the corollary to Charlton's criticism of Valentine as stupid, a liar, and so on. The question, Is Valentine stupider than Launce or Speed? is the kind of response invited by a comparison of Bertie Wooster with Jeeves. This kind of naturalistic comparison, as between Lear and his Fool, Corin and Touchstone, Orlando and Jaques, or Olivia and Feste is exactly what the works in which these characters occur are calculated to avoid.⁴⁾ Like Erasmus in The Praise of Folly, Shakespeare transcends the simple antithetical categories of wise man and fool. This is the obvious point of Feste's request for "leave to prove Olivia a fool." Criticism of the romantic comedies has been slow to recognize the nature of Shakespeare's critical interest in his characters. Valentine, Orlando, Jaques, and Orsino are no mere humours or manners characters. Yet criticism persistently approaches them as though they were.

H.C. Goddard's chapter on the play reveals a clear preference for naturalistic characterization. Hence, like Charlton, he favours Launce, who "has more sense, humour, and intelligence in his little finger than all the other men in the play have in their so-called brains combined"; he is "a masterpiece of characterization."⁵⁾ Like Charlton and Wells, Goddard questions Valentine's "intelligence." He calls the other "gentleman," Proteus, every kind of derogatory name and notes that Launce sees through both "gentlemen." Goddard's way out of this puzzle is the hypothesis that Shakespeare wrote the play "with his tongue in his cheek":

.... it is no strain on the imagination to fancy him saying to himself, as he observed some of the "gentlemen" who frequented the contemporary theatres with their everlasting

1) Op. cit., p. 159.

2) The Nature of Narrative, p.13.

3) Op. cit., pp. 42, 37.

4) See my discussion of James Smith's remarks on Hamlet and Jaques: chap. I, above.

5) The Meaning of Shakespeare, I. 43, 42.

talk of "love" and "honour": "I will create a compendium of all the fashionable vices, give him a running mate devoid of sense, call the two gentlemen, and palm them off on their English counterparts as the genuine article." What sport! 1)

Goddard presents his case persuasively, and on the surface it certainly looks like a possible answer to Charlton, as well as to Quiller-Couch's disgusted comment on the play's dénouement - "there are, by this time, no gentlemen in Verona."²⁾ Like Sir Eglamour, that other "parfit gentil knight" who runs away, Valentine and Proteus are "counterfeits," while ironically Launce and Speed are the "two gentlemen of Verona."³⁾ The only way Goddard can read romance is ironically: "Either this is excellent burlesque or the young author fooled himself as well as the rest of us by swallowing such silliness because it was sweetened by melodious verse."⁴⁾ Goddard chooses the first alternative, Charlton the second. Both treat the characters as "real people" and implicitly (or explicitly) reject romance conventions as silly or implausible.

Goddard goes further and rejects the romance world, dominated as this is by the aristocratic social code:

if in Romeo and Juliet [Shakespeare] shows us to what tragedy the code of the gentleman may lead; if in The Merchant of Venice he exposes the hollowness, and even cruelty, lurking under the silken surface of a leisured society, he does all these things at once in Twelfth Night. 5)

This brand of criticism sees no moral difference between Castiglione's literal prescription of the aristocratic code and its fictive use as a romance paradigm.

The critical picture should now be clear enough in its outlines. Literature must, as Traversi puts it, "assert permanent truths about life"⁶⁾ - which truths will of course coincide with the critic's own notion of the good life.⁷⁾ If this is what is wanted, then, it is inferred, Shakespeare must provide it, even if his plays have to be distorted to do so, even if we have to make the clown (Launce) or the villain (Shylock) the hero, even if we have to read

1) Ibid., p. 44. Cf. H.T. Price, "Shakespeare as a Critic," pp. 397 - 8, who adopts a similar approach.

2) NCS edn., p. xiv.

3) Op. cit., p. 45.

4) Ibid., p. 46.

5) Ibid., p. 296.

6) An Interpretation of Shakespeare, I.286.

7) See C.S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, p.126, on the critic as sage.

parable or folk-tale structures as literal portraits of life.¹⁾

It is not without reason that J.F. Danby, in a valuable article, described Two Gentlemen as "a good test of our ability to read," particularly so since like "almost all Shakespeare's [other] early comedies [it tends] to attract the wrong kind of attention."²⁾ This comedy is no "museum-piece." Nor is it of interest simply as Shakespeare's "dramatic laboratory,"³⁾ or as the "most important source for Twelfth Night."⁴⁾ Without what Stanley Wells calls "over-interpretation," it is possible to see in Two Gentlemen a poetic-dramatic skill that has not been duly appreciated and which at least makes the play of singular interest beside the comedies of Greene and Peele. In Danby's words, "By those in his own day properly equipped to understand him, and not hampered by coming to him with the wrong expectations, [Shakespeare] certainly was enjoyed. I think he still can be - even in Two Gentlemen."⁵⁾

(ii) Elements in the literary milieu of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona"

We have seen how some critics of Errors have regarded as "the severest problem of the dramatist" the challenge to make the action "credible - at least sufficiently credible for farce," to make "credible the continued obliviousness of participants."⁶⁾ I have referred to Brooks and Heilman who meet a similar problem in their study of The Menaechmi. In his lecture on Two Gentlemen, H.B. Charlton detects another instance of the early Shakespeare's inability to dramatise unawareness on the part of his characters without turning them into puppets. Thus, Valentine is labelled obtuse, "a nincompoop," a "fool," "a puppet." Charlton admits that this impression is unintentional, and he attributes it to Shakespeare's failure to master his conventions.⁷⁾ But is this the whole answer? In Errors and

1) The view of Shakespeare as defining and asserting certain values and obstinately questioning "all that is most deeply disturbing in human life" has been subjected to a scrupulously sane but devastating analysis by J. Holloway. See The Charted Mirror, pp.212-26, and The Story of the Night, pp.1-20. It is the a priori notion of the dramatist as Arnoldian moralist that is responsible for turning Peele's The Old Wives' Tale, into a satire or burlesque of romance conventions. This view of Peele's play - held by H.T. Price ("Shakespeare as Critic"), by E.C. Pettet (Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition, pp.103-4), and by C. Leech (Arden edn. of Two Gentlemen, p.1x) - has been erroneously described by M.C. Bradbrook as "now fairly generally discarded" ("Peele's Old Wives' Tale, A Play of Enchantment," p. 324 n.).

2) "Shakespeare Criticism and The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p.313.

3) Bullough, Shakespeare's Sources, I. 210.

4) Jenkins, "Shakespeare's Twelfth Night," p. 74.

5) Op. cit., p. 321.

6) Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies, pp. 4,5.

7) Charlton, op. cit., pp. 35-7.

The Menaechmi there is a special dramatic purpose behind the characters' "obliviousness," might there not be a similar intention in Two Gentlemen? Possibly Speed's description of Valentine as "exceeding puppet" has implications of a sort that have eluded both those who would see the characterization of this romance hero as a total or almost total flop and those who would try to redeem the characterization by regarding the play as an "excellent burlesque on gentlemanly manners and morals."

It is clear that the strictures on Valentine's character - his "impenetrable stupidity" and so on - proceed from a modern positivist conception of man. Iris Murdoch has cited Stuart Hampshire as giving "a refined picture" of this man:

He is rational and totally free, except in so far as, in the most ordinary law-court and commonsensical sense, his degree of self-awareness may vary. He is, morally speaking, monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him. His moral language is a practical pointer, the instrument of his choices, the indication of his preferences His moral arguments are references to empirical facts backed up by decisions. 1)

No conception of man could be further from the transcendentalist-Christian-Platonist metaphysical assumptions of the Tudors, with their objectivist ethic. It would be tedious to argue this point.

In Shakespeare's world, as scholars like Tillyard, Hardin Craig, and C.S. Lewis²⁾ have amply shown, all things were part of God's design, and man's moral decisions were uniformly made by referring to the will of God, or to non-naturalistic criteria such as magnanimity, courtesy, temperance, greed, and so on. Furthermore, renaissance theory of literature, for all its limitations, was also keyed to a scheme of non-naturalistic norms, as Polonius' parody of genre ramifications implies.³⁾ Such schemes of non-naturalistic criteria were conducive to a literature utterly unlike that advocated by modern writers of a positivist cast - like Sartre, for instance, who regards literary form as mauvaise foi in that it distorts man's existential freedom.⁴⁾ This "dissidence between inherited forms and our own reality"⁵⁾ is all the more noticeable in a genre like romantic comedy,

1) Murdoch, "Against Dryness," p.17.

2) In The Elizabethan World Picture, The Enchanted Glass, and The Discarded Image, respectively.

3) Cf. Lyly, Prologue to Midas; and Sidney, Apologie for Poetrie, in Smith (ed.), Elizabethan Critical Essays, I.199.

4) See La Nausée for Roquentin's distinction between the real life that the Marquis de Rollebon lived and the story which Roquentin is piecing together from letters and papers. See also Sartre's Literary and Philosophical Essays, pp.7-23, on Mauriac and Freedom.

5) Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p.130.

where the power of the inherited forms is at its strongest and the individual significances tend to be diluted for absorption into the genre.

The power of inherited forms in mediaeval and renaissance literature manifests itself in the tendency of poets and painters to "follow their imagery rather than their percepts."¹⁾ A.D. Nuttall and E.H. Gombrich have in their separate if related fields shown in what sense "the realm of the sensuously imaginative" is not "exactly coextensive with the realm of the actual and particular."²⁾ The four-legged bee on the title-page of Cutwood's Caltha Poetarum (1599) and the horses with human eyebrows in the plates to Harington's Ariosto are not evidence of crass carelessness but of the domination of art by the schematic and the emblematic. To adapt a pronouncement of C.S. Lewis who cites these two examples, the poets of the sixteenth century were full of reverence - for God, for kings, for fathers, and for literary authority and precedent - but not of our reverence for the actual.³⁾ Thus, poems of this period might be said in a very peculiar sense to owe at least as much to other poems as they do to the "facts" of experience. Readers might often though not exclusively be encouraged to recognize not so much what was going on in, say, contemporary London, as forms and types shared with or adapted from literary or artistic sources.

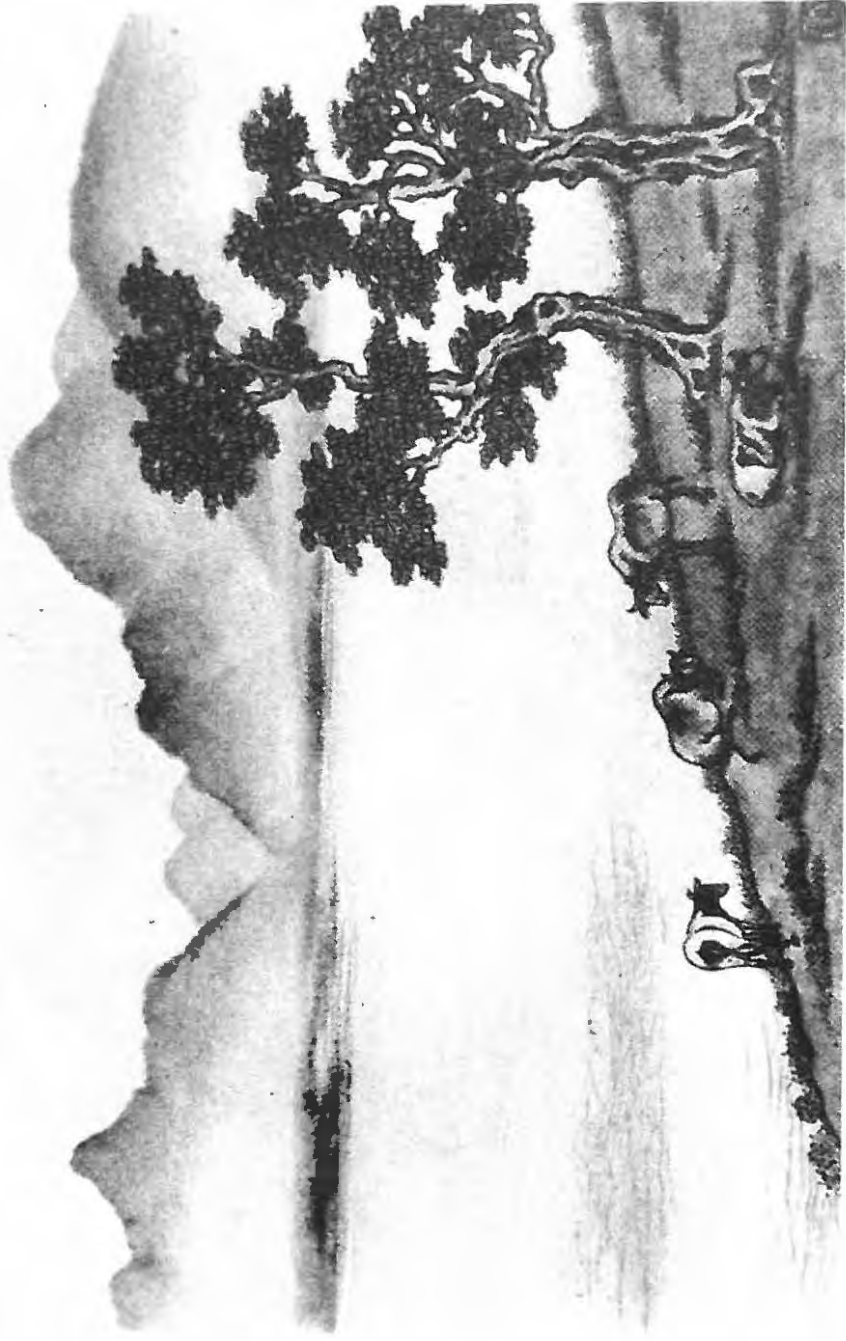
E.H. Gombrich has a valuable discussion on convention and types in the graphic arts. He reproduces an engraving that purports to depict a whale washed ashore at Ancona in 1601, "drawn accurately from nature" ("Ritratto qui dal naturala appunto"). But what the draughtsman has done, instead of offering an eye-witness illustration, is meticulously to copy a Dutch print of three years earlier which reported a similar incident in Holland. Gombrich cites other similar examples, including an anonymous woodcut from a sixteenth-century German news-sheet reporting a flood when the Tiber burst its banks. This too is clearly copied from or adapted from another drawing. These artists were learning from other artists, learning to work within the established conventions.⁴⁾ A particularly instructive example is a modern one - that of the Chinese artist, Chiang Yee, who has adjusted "the traditional vocabulary of Chinese art to the unfamiliar task of topographical portrayal in the western sense." His

1) Nuttall, Two Concepts of Allegory, p.92

2) Ibid., p.81. For Gombrich, see below.

3) See Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, p.332 and note; also Nuttall, op. cit., pp.77-8.

4) E.H. Gombrich, Art and Illusion, pp.60-1, 69-73, and Meditations on a Hobby-Horse, p.9.



CHIANG YEE: *Cows in Dereenteater*, 1936. Brush and ink

Plate II

painting of Derwentwater illustrates the power of the artistic conventions which he has inherited.¹⁾

So too in the field of Shakespearean romantic comedy does one need to recognize not only the degree in which Two Gentlemen is original - "the earliest surviving romantic comedy"²⁾ - but the extent to which it presupposes and alludes to literary precedent: how Shakespeare follows his imagery rather than his percepts, as he organizes the course of the action.

One orthodox view, as we have seen, insists on the centrality of the Friendship Cult, of the play's romance conventions.³⁾ Another view is that Two Gentlemen has the features of an "Italianate comedy."⁴⁾ "The plot-structure of Two Gentlemen is modelled on that of a typical Italian comedy": the love of the two friends for the same girl; the father's preference for a third wooer, a sort of braggart captain; the rescue, penitence, and forgiveness of the faithless friend; the presence of his first love who, disguised as a page, has followed her betrayer; and the intermezzi of verbal wit and horseplay carried on by two clowns who interrupt "various scenes in this double story."⁵⁾ Another "Italianate" feature is the love-friendship debate, "a subject [which] naturally became the intellectual substance of comedies performed by the Gelosi troupe."⁶⁾

On the face of it, both these views are irrefutable. The play appears to embrace the salient features of Italian comedy and of romance. A bare outline of the plot confirms this. Proteus loves Julia. Valentine, who contemns love, departs for the court of Milan where he meets and falls in love with Silvia, the Duke's daughter. She however is intended for the clownish Thurio. When Proteus arrives, sent by his father to be "tutored in the world," he too falls in love with Silvia, betraying both his own mistress and his friend. He furthermore reveals Valentine's planned elopement to the Duke. Valentine is banished to "the green world." Proteus courts Silvia who disdainfully rejects him. Julia turns up, disguised as a page and so on. This undeniably looks like a typically lame romantic tale - the "pure sentimental romance" that Mincoff, following Charlton and D.L. Stevenson, suggests as the play's distinguishing trait.⁷⁾ As in The Shrew, the usual Italian comedy characters are present.

1) See fig. II, reproduced from Art and Illusion.

2) Bond, ed. cit., p. xxxii.

3) The most balanced account of this aspect of the play is M.C. Bradbrook's in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, pp. 147-54. See also Kermode, "The Mature Comedies," pp. 220-1.

4) Quiller-Couch, NCS edn., p. vii.

5) O.J. Campbell, "Two Gentlemen of Verona and Italian Comedy," p. 54.

6) Ibid.

7) Marco Mincoff, "Shakespeare and Lyly," p. 20; Charlton, op. cit., pp. 27-33; and Stevenson, The Love-Game Comedy, pp. 4, 188-9.

But, like Errors and The Shrew, Two Gentlemen is far from being a straightforward dramatic version of this source material. ██████████ Shakespeare's conception of the play, his representation of the above outline, offers a pattern of impressions very different from any précis, however much the latter may resemble a commedia dell' arte scenario like Flavio Tradito.¹⁾ Indeed, one has only to read a work like Flavio Tradito to realise the extent to which Shakespeare, so to speak, employs convention to surpass the merely conventional.

Elyot's version of the Titus and Gisippus story is a useful initial example of a conventional narrative of the sort that Shakespeare transforms in Two Gentlemen.²⁾ In this work, Titus is shown suffering agonies, "tormented and oppressed" with love for the betrothed of his friend, Gisippus. Weak from "lack of sleep and other natural sustenance," he is unable to move from his bed.³⁾ He is a victim of what Lawrence Babb has termed "the lover's malady."⁴⁾ Orthodox belief at the time held that "lovesickness might be a very critical malady. Literary characters affected by it are physically disordered and mentally unbalanced. Some of them go mad. Some of them die."⁵⁾ The mode in Elyot's story is relatively naturalistic in its bias. The "fiery dart of blind Cupid" and "the power of Venus" are mere figures of speech rather than concretely realised metaphysical forces. Similarly, Lyly in his Euphues turns his back on the pastoral enchantments which sustain Sidney's Arcadia, for instance. The treatment of Euphues and Lucilla, as they fall victim to the lusts of the flesh, faces in the direction which the novel was later to take. In his romantic comedies, Shakespeare was looking the other way. The world of these plays is a latterday offshoot of the courtly love milieu so superlatively analysed by C.S. Lewis in The Allegory of Love. In other words, these comedies are conditioned by paradigms and conventions that hark back to Chrétien de Troyes, to Chaucer and others.⁶⁾ A central datum here is the prescribed behaviour pattern of the lover: the conventional Love Rituals.⁷⁾

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- 1) Flavio Traditio is reprinted in translation and only slightly abridged in Bullough's Shakespeare's Sources, I. 256-60.
 - 2) Elyot's version of this story, drawn from the Decameron, X.viii, is generally regarded as a source for Two Gentlemen. See Leach's New Arden edn., pp. xxxvi-xxxvii, Bullough, op. cit., I.203-4, and R.M. Sargent, "Sir Thomas Elyot and the Integrity of The Two Gentlemen of Verona."
 - 3) The Book of the Governor, p. 138.
 - 4) The Elizabethan Malady, pp. 128ff.
 - 5) Ibid., p. 143.
 - 6) See The Allegory of Love, pp.23-32 on Chrétien, whose Arthurian poems have been translated by W.W. Comfort.
 - 7) E.C. Pettet discusses the later history of the courtly lover in Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition.

Chaucer, in The Parlement of Foules, draws attention to one form of these rituals and contrasts them with the practical approach of the unlettered and the unsophisticated. The opening line of the poem draws attention to the intricacies and artifices of courtly wooing practices as opposed to more straightforward modes of wooing: "The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne." When the debate among the three tercel eagles for the formel's hand threatens to be endless, then the two opposed conceptions of courtship are brought face to face. The goose reasons:

But she wol love him, lat him love another! (567)

To this shocking heresy, the sparrowhawk replies:

Lo here! a parfit reson of a goos! (568)

and the "gentil foules alle" laugh merrily at the goose's foolish proposal.

"Nay, god forbede a lover shulde change!"
The turtel seyde and wex for shame al reed;
Though that his lady ever-more be straunge,
Yet him serve hir ever, til he be deed (595)

The duck's realistic view is equally unacceptable to the eagles. To him, the idea that "men shulde alwey loven, causeles" is absurd;

Who can a reson finde or wit in that?
Daunceth he mury that is mirtheles?

Duck and goose, for all their "reson" and "wit," are openly ridiculed:

The day hem blent, ful wel they see by night;
Thy kind is of so lowe a wrechednesse,
That what love is, thou canst not see ne gesse. (602)

Both are "cherls" and ignorant of courtly ways.

The point of this part of The Parlement is that the higher birds are acting out prescribed courtesy rituals, which themselves define the birds' aristocratic status. Courtly love has its pre-ordained rules with which every courtier must be familiar. Although the view of life implied by this may have lost touch with what Leavis calls "direct vulgar living and the actual,"¹⁾ although the courtly sentiment is a "truancy," a "flight from vulgar common sense" and a retreat from reason and wit (as the duck makes clear), yet this truancy "is felt to be, in some flawed and fragile way, a noble thing."²⁾ To miss the delight in the inflexible minutiae of

1) The Common Pursuit, p. 215.

2) The Allegory of Love, p. 171.

the wooing ritual is to miss the poem. C.S. Lewis appreciated this when he noted that it "would almost be better to miss every joke in Chaucer than to believe that the Goose and the Duck are his spokesmen and the Turtle and the Eagles his butt."¹⁾ Neither group is "right" and Nature herself is mediator and peacemaker.

The Chaucer of the romances, like the Shakespeare of the romantic comedies, is a long way from the naturalistic point of view even as this is reflected in Boccaccio's or Elyot's version of the Titus and Gisippus story or in the psychological analysis of Bright's and Burton's treatises. Nothing could be further from the romance milieu than a rationalist evaluation of the romantic lover's ecstasies like that of Bacon:

as if Man, made for the contemplation of heaven
and all noble objects, should do nothing but kneel
before a little idol [i.e. 'image', as well as 'false god']
and make himself a subject, though not of the mouth (as beasts
are), yet of the eye which was given him for higher purposes. 2)

The strain of Elyot-Burton-Bacon is the strain of Ben Jonson, with his outright rejection of "some mouldy take/Like Pericles";³⁾ of the romantic type of plot - "a duke in love with a countess, and that countess in love with the duke's son [and] some such cross wooing, with a clown to their serving-man";⁴⁾ and so forth. This is the strain that finds its later development not merely in the comedy of manners but in the naturalistic drama of Ibsen and Shaw and in the Great Tradition of the English novel.

An essential point to grasp regarding the courtly and the later romantic lover, whether he be the young man in the Romaunt or Chaucer's tercel eagle or Shakespeare's Valentine, is that the delineation of his character "from within" is not the poet's chief purpose. His nature can to a certain extent be taken as "given." He will in all likelihood be put through the prescribed paces, which is one reason why those who do not appreciate Shakespeare's romantic comedies (and do not accept the conventions) say that the comic heroes are all the same.⁵⁾ In one sense they are; for they are all conceived as acting out the same kind of ritual formula. Their fascination will not be in their moral and psychological individualism so much

1) Ibid., p. 172.

2) "Of Love," in Essays, p. 36.

3) "Ode (To Himself)," in Plays, II. 497.

4) Everyman out of his Humour, ibid., I. 105.

5) Northrop Frye's point, A Natural Perspective, p. 5.

as in the comic representation of the expected - what Chaucer conventionally calls "loves peyne."¹⁾ It is this "imagery" (as opposed to "percepts") that the poet elects to "follow."

Bound up with the Love Rituals is another aspect of the "given" imagery: what C.S. Lewis called "the Religion of Love."²⁾ The terms in which the latter finds representation are determinist and dualist. The lover is depicted as having a close relationship with the transcendental - with Love or Amor. He is a worshipper at Amor's shrine. In The Romaunt of the Rose, for instance, the lover has "to complisshen and fulfille" Love's "comaundementis" and "kepe him." Lest he may "sinne unwittingly," he "prays" Love to teach him so that he will "trespasse in no manere." Love and the lover are referred to as "maister" and "disciple" respectively.³⁾ A conception of this kind is obviously inimical to the modern positivist notion of man as outlined by Iris Murdoch, the notion of man as free and as transcended by nothing.

Shakespeare's source, the story of Felix and Felismena (in Montemayor's Diana), is set in a determinist religious context.⁴⁾ Felismena's mother, Delia, provokes the wrath of Venus by rashly criticising Paris's choice of the goddess of love before "the goddess of battles." Venus then appears to Delia in a dream, telling her that

thou shalt bring forth a sonne and a daughter, whose
birth shall cost thee no lesse than thy life and
them their contentment,.....both which shall be as
infortunate in their love as any ever were in all their
lives. 5)

Delia's daughter is Felismena, whose life is depicted - initially at any rate-as the enactment of Venus' will. A little later in the story Venus' place is taken by "that cruel tyrant who absolutely commands so many liberties to his service," the "tyrant whom so unjustly they call Love."⁶⁾ This "Love" (or Amor, as Ovid and the Italian Neoplatonists called him) is all-powerful, and his actions are classed with "the blowes of Fortune [and] the mutabilities of time."⁷⁾

1) Troilus and Criseyde, 508. The point made in this paragraph has already been argued in chaps. I and III.

2) The Allegory of Love, pp. 18-22 and passim.

3) There is little need to develop this point comprehensively here. Lewis has presented the material and analysed it as only he could. Mediaeval poetry abounds in loci classici.

4) This story is generally regarded as a source for Two Gentlemen. For discussion of problems of date, etc. see Leech, New Arden edn., pp.xli-xliii, Bullough, op. cit., I.205-6, and T.P. Harrison, "Concerning Two Gentlemen of Verona and Montemayor's Diana."

5) Diana, in Bullough, Sources, I. 228.

6) Ibid., p. 248.

7) Ibid.

This dualist and determinist milieu in which Love, far from being a mere personified abstraction, takes on the character of a transcendental power is part of the renaissance's Neoplatonic heritage. The Neoplatonic reverence for universals like Love and Fortune is particularly strong in pastoral and romance which tended to regard these universals as existing in their own right, and not as the Thomist Dante saw them - mere "accidents" in a "substance."¹⁾

The force of the concrete universals is central to the convention of the lover's sudden, supernaturally induced conversion. S.L. Wolff, following K. Brunhuber, calls this "das Eros Motiv,"²⁾ but his discussion ignores the religious nature of such conversions. When Troilus scorns lovers and then falls himself, this is not merely an ironic reversal, a conventional piece of story-telling machinery. Troilus is depicted as tempting Cupid by defying the Love-god. His fall is also akin to that of Pride on Fortune's wheel. As Chaucer puts it in The Romaunt of the Rose, "The God of Love maken folkes pryde fallen" (881). Chaucer's Troilus, like the young man in The Romaunt, is depicted as the victim of Fortune and the Love-god - Troilus who "wolde smyle and holden it [i.e. Love] folye" (194):

O blinde world, O blinde entencioun!
How ofte falleth al th'effect contraire
Of surquidrye and foul presumpcioun;
For caught is proud, and caught is debonaire. (214)

Whether Love is one of the dramatis personae (as in the Romaunt or in Lyly's Gallathea) or a sort of supernatural intruder (as in Diana or Troilus and Criseyde), he is invariably the transcendental force that shapes lovers' ends.

Robert Greene's romances, because of their utter conventionality, are useful documents here. In Euphues his Censure, Maedyna, enamoured of Vortymis, is presented as Love's victim; and Love is treated as a divine being - "Love is devine, feared of men, because honored of the Gods."³⁾ In Morando, Panthia's

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- 1) Dante uses these Aristotelian terms in his discussion of Love in La Vita Nuova, xxv, where he explains that he regards Love as a mere personification, a figure of speech, like the Roman convention of making their gods and oracles ("things which do not exist") speak. C.S. Lewis cites this passage with approval, which, A.D. Nuttall observes, is "unfortunate," because it is exactly this "impossibility of demythologizing the allegory of the soul that deuterio-Lewis [i.e. the Lewis who sees allegory as "originally forced into existence by a profound moral revolution" and rejects the notion of allegory as a toy - Allegory of Love, p.113/ brought to light." In any case, argues Nuttall, "Dante remains of all poets the one whose theory is hardest to square with his practice" (Two Concepts of Allegory, p.23). When later on I quote from La Vita Nuova again, it is with Nuttall's argument in mind. See below, p.156.
 - 2) The Greek Romances in Elizabethan Fiction, p. 413.
 - 3) Life and Works, VI. 178. This passage from Euphues his Censure is repeated verbatim in Metamorphosis, ibid., IX. 32.

opinion is

That Love, being no mortall passion, but a supernatural influence allotted unto everie man, by destinie charmeth and enchanteth the minds of mortall creatures, not according to their wits but as the decree of the fates shall determine, for some are in love at the first look.

There follow exempla of Perseus and Andromeda, Venus and Adonis, etc. Panthia concludes

that men or women are no more or lesse subiect unto love, respecting their naturall constitution but by the secret influence of a certain supernaturall constellation.

Thus, replies Peratio,

you will appoint love to be some metaphysicall impression that exceedeth nature and that affection is not limited by the motions of the mind according to the complexions, when it is incident 1)

In this romance milieu then, falling in love is not a simple psychological matter or moral decision; nor is it "a lust of the blood and a permission of the will"; it is virtually determined by supernatural powers.

Thus Babb's naturalistically oriented account of the lover's malady is only half the story. Even Sidney, whom Babb (rightly) cites for his naturalistic treatment of Amphialus' love-melancholy,²⁾ changes his convention to suit his own ends. Musidorus, who was "the last day so hie in the Pulpit against lovers," becomes all of a sudden "transformed" by love.³⁾ The scene is a delightful miniature comedy in which Zelmane (really his friend, Pyrocles, disguised as an Amazon) pulls his leg, reminding him of his earlier assertion (made in ch. XII) "that a worthie man's reason must ever have the masterhood":

I recant, I recant (cryed Musidorus) and withall falling doune prostrate, O thou celestial, or infernal spirit of Love or what other heavenly or hellish title thou list to have (for effects of both I find in myself) have compassion on me. 4)

Also in the Arcadia is the inset story of Erona, who affronts Cupid by destroying all pictures and images of him. Within a year "she was stricken with most obstinate Love, to a man but of mean parentage."⁵⁾ With Philoclea too, "Love puld of his maske, and told her plainly, that shee was his

1) Morando, ibid., III. 108.
2) The Elizabethan Malady, p.160.
3) Arcadia, in Works, ed. by Feuillerat, I.113.
4) Ibid., p.114.
5) Ibid., p.232.

prisoner."¹⁾

As Greene points out in his Metamorphosis, the lover, when assailed by this "supernaturall influence," is quite helpless. Reason and "wit" are of no avail:

can wisdom win the field where love is captain?
No, no, love is without law, and therefore above all
lawe Bow then unto that, Telegonus, where-
unto lawlesse necessity doth bend: be not so fond
as with Zeuxes to bind the Ocean in fetters: fight
not with the Rascians against the wind 2)

Here Telegonus tells Alcida that "him whom no mortall creature can controll, love can command: no dignity is able to resist Cupid's deitie." Exempla of Achilles, Hector, et al. follow. The irresistible power of love emanates from its transcendental nature:

Love is not onelie kindled in the eye by desire
but ingraven in the minde by destinie, which
neither reason can eschew nor wisdom expell. 3)

This unequivocally determinist world is of course a typical feature of romance literature, which conceives of man as at the mercy of forces that transcend him, whether they be those of Fortuna or Amor, and though man is involved, his part tends to be a passive rather than active one, strapped as he is to Fortune's wheel. ⁴⁾

But this is by no means the whole story, although the literary scholar, usually slow to catch up with historian and iconographer, has tended, possibly inadvertently, to suggest that it is.⁵⁾ Ernst Cassirer has ██████████ drawn attention to "the transformation undergone by the Fortune symbol in the visual arts." As he says, "Warburg and Doren have shown that the rigidified mediaeval forms of Fortune were maintained for a long time,"⁶⁾ but with the "new liberation," the old image of Fortune with a wheel raising men or throwing them down gives way to the depiction of Fortune and a sailing boat. "And this barque is not controlled by Fortune alone - man himself is steering it."⁷⁾ In thinkers like Machiavelli, Leon Battista Alberti and Poggio -

1) Ibid., p.171.

2) Op. cit., IX.32.

3) Ibid., IX.37. This passage is repeated in Arbusto, the Anatomie of Fortune, ibid., III.213.

4) See various discussion of Fortune in mediaeval and renaissance literature: H.R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature, pp. 90-98, which gives hundreds of examples, nearly all of them drawn from French and Italian sources; G.R. Elton, "King Lear" and the Gods, pp. 9-33.

5) Apart from the works already mentioned, see Willard Farnham, The Mediaeval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy.

6) The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, p.75.

7) Ibid., p.77.

and Cassirer might well have added Erasmus - there is discernible a growing reliance on man's virtus and studium, even in the face of the heavens. Cassirer cites Pico's exaltation of man - "The wonders of the mind are greater than the heavens"¹⁾ - and later quotes from the Oratio de hominis dignitate at some length. The Creator is speaking:

We have given you, Adam, no definite place, no form proper to you, no special inheritance, so that you may have as your own whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may choose, according to your wish and your judgement. All other beings have received a rigidly determined nature, and will be compelled by us to follow strictly determined laws. You alone are bound by no limit, unless it be one prescribed by your will, which I have given you. I have placed you at the centre of the world, so that you may more easily look around you and see everything that is in it. I created you as a being neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, so that you may freely make and master yourself and take on any form you choose for yourself. You can degenerate to animality or be reborn towards divinity

2)

As Erasmus makes clear, if we deny free will, then we implicitly reproach God with all the world's cruelty and injustice. Even in The Romaunt of the Rose, the dreamer makes his own decision to enter the garden. It is only after he has entered that he is assailed by Cupid. This freedom to choose Erasmus regards as a condition of man's value, and he exclaims: "Of what value is man as a whole, if God works in him as the potter does in clay"³⁾ "Of all God's creations," writes Pico, "man is

the most free."⁴⁾

In his Genealogia Deorum Boccaccio calls this man "Prometheus."⁵⁾ This is man whose self-awareness has been awakened, man whom, in Alberti's image, the current of Fortune will not drag away, for trusting in his own strength this man makes his way in the current as an able swimmer.⁶⁾

A conception of man's freedom something like this one is arguably what demarcates plays like Hamlet, Othello and Lear from the tragedies of the fin de siècle, like Richard III and Richard II. ^{Even} in an early play like Two Gentlemen, probably written after Richard III but before Richard II, Shakespeare appears to be aware of, if not struggling with, what Warburg calls "this new state of equilibrium," as he endeavours to catch that balance between the "mediaeval faith in God and the self-confidence of renaissance

1) In Astrologiam, quoted by Cassirer, op. cit., p.77.

2) Cassirer, op. cit., p.85.

3) Sections from De libero arbitrio are reprinted in G. de Santillana (ed.), The Age of Adventure, pp.135-43.

4) Cassirer, op. cit., p.94.

5) Ibid., p.95.

6) Ibid., p.77.

man,"¹⁾ between man as Erasmian "fool," subject to ordinary human limitations and foibles and man as idealistically aspiring to transcend "The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks/That flesh is heir to" (Hamlet, III.i.62). It is surely to the modern critic's failure to see this that a measure of the critical misunderstanding of the play must be attributed. Once the peculiar nuances of Shakespeare's treatment of romance determinism are grasped, then perhaps an aspect of his characterization that Charlton for one failed to comprehend will reach clarification.

This will seem all the more likely if Shakespeare's treatment of love in its essentially mediaeval ramifications is recognised. The courtly love tradition tended to depict the lover with all his pre-ordained torments and so on as foolish, but foolish in a particular and unique sense. It must be recognized that folly meant one thing to Guillaume de Lorris and quite another to, say, Sebastian Brant. Love's Folly, the third aspect of Shakespeare's inherited imagery or paradigm, must be analysed before we can proceed to discuss Two Gentlemen per se.

Mediaeval literature characteristically took a stern view of man's folly. Sermons and morality plays alike warned against it. Perhaps the most sustained admonition was Brant's in his Ship of Fools, which was Englished by Alexander Barclay in 1509.²⁾ Willeford notes that Brant and Barclay regard folly as the Eighth Deadly Sin.³⁾ According to the Prologue, Brant's work was written "For profit and salutary instruction, admnition, and pursuit of wisdom, reason and good manners: also for contempt and punishment of folly ...". Follies which are assailed include: ignoring good advice(8); failure to use "a little wit" and forethought (12); Love's folly - Dame Venus "makes a fool of whom [she] will" and then "this dunce's cap [is] pasted to his hide" (13); the man who thinks himself wise but is a fool (34); and so on. The tone is derisive and critical. "Fool" and "folly" are terms of simple opprobrium used by a moralist concerned to castigate fallen man, ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~. The moralist has cast himself in the role of scourge of folly. Wisdom is unequivocally set over against folly. Thus, on the title-page of The Scourge of Folly (1610) by John Davies of Hereford, Folly, mounted on the whipping-stool of Time, is chastised by Wit. In Dekker's and Ford's play, The Sun's Darling, Time enters, "whipping Folly before him."⁴⁾

1) Ibid., p.76.

2) Sebastian Brant, Narrenschiff (1494). I have used Zeydel's English translation of this work.

3) The Fool and his Sceptre, p.115

4) Both these last examples are cited in S.C. Chew, The Virtues Reconciled, pp. 90-1.

Compatible with this moralistic view of folly are the attitudes of Jonson and the Restoration comedians. In the works of these dramatists, wisdom is associated with good sense and decorum and contrasted with folly, which is seen as synonymous with indiscretion, immodesty, and what Etherege calls "the counterfeit of the age" (The Man of Mode, I.i). The attention of these writers is turned towards contemporary society. Like the rogue-literature of Greene and Dekker, Jonson's plays, written in "language such as men do use," set out to anatomize or "strip the ragged follies of the time/Naked as at their birth," employing for this purpose "a whip of steel" (Induction to Every Man Out of his Humour). Jonson objects to those poets who "serve the ill customs of the age" (Prologue to Every Man in his Humour) and assails the romantic drama of the fin de siècle (Every Man Out of his Humour, III.i). The modern critic will logically discuss Master Stephen, the foppish gull in Every Man in his Humour, or Sir Politic Wouldbe in Volpone as dramatic persons reflecting contemporary social aberrations. In The Man of Mode, Sir Fopling Flutter, with his affectation of the latest French fashions and phrases, is described as "the freshest fool in town. As Etherege observes in the Prologue,

'tis not so wise an age
But your own follies may supply the stage;

for

among you there starts up every day
Some new unheard-of fool for us to play.

The literary principle here is an empirically oriented moral disapprobation, essentially "a practical pointer" to the dramatists' ethical preferences. Folly is assailed as the antithesis of good sense and even of "humanity": Stephen's "unseason'd quarrelling, rude fashion" is "as void of wit as of humanity."

The opposing tradition of folly literature runs from Guillaume de Lorris and the Chaucer of the romances through Castiglione and the early Shakespeare to Erasmus and the Shakespeare of the later romantic comedies (As You Like It and Twelfth Night) and King Lear.¹⁾

1) I have discussed the Erasmian paradoxical conception of folly in my "Twelfth Night" and Shakespeare's Comic Art, pp. 34 - 41. These paradoxes are at most marginal in the early comedies and will not be discussed here.

In the romance tradition, [REDACTED] a work like The Romaunt of the Rose thus betrays an altogether different conception of folly - in this case, the folly of loving. Criticism has tended to proceed as if the folly of Orlando, Orsino, or Valentine is the same sort of representation as the folly of, say, Sir Pol - only more delicately and evocatively set. But Shakespeare deliberately invokes the Love Rituals, the Love Religion and the Love's Folly themes as vouchers or insignia of a different type of representation. The criteria of a different genre are different conventions and artifices which are reflected in character, characterization, action, and here above all in weltanschauung. This weltanschauung manifests itself partly in the meaning of folly. In a largely non-empirical mode like romance, folly will, like the Love Rituals and Love Religion, betray an allegiance not to the world of fact but to the story world itself, to imagery rather than percepts.

We have considered the irrelevance of reading The Parlement of Foules from the empirical viewpoint that might suit Jonson or Etherege or Fielding. The Eagles' love rituals transcend Brant's vulgar distinction between wisdom and folly. Folly here is hardly a term of opprobrium at all, though in the literature of this tradition it is set over against Reason. In the Romaunt, Reason warns the dreamer that Folly will ruin him (3220). At this stage, he has been routed by Daunger, which has, as Reason states, given him a chance to "amende what so be mis" by forgetting the god of Love, and "From these folk away to fare."

This is the yvel that Love they calle,
Wherein ther is but foly alle,
For love is foly everydel. (3269)

But the lover is characteristically uninterested in Reason's "sermoning" and he "forwandred as a fool" (3336).

But it is made quite clear that he is not a fool in the way that Etherege's deviators from the norm of good sense might be. The lover is a fool. Love is associated, even identified, with folly. But not in any simple literal way. Thus, when Chaucer stresses Troilus' folly - Troilus who, hoist with his own petard, "shall bi-japed been a thousand tyme/More than that fool of whos folye men ryme" (I.531) - it is evident that nothing more or less is expected of him. This is no criticism of his departure from a norm of reason or good sense. He is not held up for critical inspection and found wanting. Chaucer does not in his romantic works inveigh against Love's Folly or point warning fingers at his readers. Troilus' folly is a measure of his being human. Thus, when in the last lines of the poem, he looks down from heaven on "this litel spot of erthe," and seeing this mortal life

in perspective for the first time, he laughs at "the woe" of those who mourn him and at the petty lusts of mortal man (V.1821-7).

Chaucer is, unlike Brant, moving towards the Erasmian position: a modified ironic praise of folly. In the Romaunt and in Troilus, most of the entailments belonging to Brant's use of the term, folly, are cut, and the expected pejorative denotations all but disappear. We have all, as Lord Cesar Gonzago notes, "felt some privie operation of folly";¹⁾ this is among the "sundry imperfections" of our mortal lot. That this is not a matter for dejection or sorrow is borne out by the sudden brightening of faces and the new gaiety which greets Stultitia's appearance at the opening of Erasmus' Praise of Folly. As Stultitia asks, "can you think of anything in the whole world that is not full of folly, that is not done by fools among fools?"²⁾ This is the notion of life as a comedy in which each man has his part.

To sum up: Shakespeare appears to have found his inherited imagery or paradigms in certain tracts of literature rather than in his percepts, rather than in what he observed in the social world about him. In this he was like the Chaucer of the love-romances and unlike the Chaucer of The Canterbury Tales, unlike the empirically oriented "tribe of Ben."

In so far as this is so, the terms in which Dr. Johnson saw fit to praise Shakespeare have an oddly perverse ring. Johnson insists that "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men.....," that his plays are "not in the rigorous and critical sense comedies or tragedies but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature," and that he is "above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature," who holds up "a faithful mirrour of manners and of life."³⁾ Of this order are the assumptions of Goddard and Charlton. This is why these critics have misunderstood Two Gentlemen. What has to be grasped is that the characters in Shakespeare's romantic comedies may reflect "what is constant in human types" - a point argued in chapter I - but that they do so only by being what they are. Just as Chaucer in his Parlement gave us "foules," so Shakespeare in his romantic comedies gives us primarily romantic lovers, pastoral lovers, and clowns. They may (and do) resemble men and women, they may reflect "the real state of sublunary nature," but they inhabit a distinct if related

1) Castiglione, The Courtier, p.24.

2) Praise of Folly, transl. by Dean, p.63.

3) Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. by Raleigh, pp.11,12,14,15.

realm. Men and women we meet in life and, arguably, in novels and in the comedy of manners, to cite only two literary realms. In Shakespeare's romantic comedies we meet romantic lovers and clowns: figures who belong essentially to literature - to "the realm of the sensuously imaginative," before they are "coextensive with the realm of the actual and particular."¹⁾ However much they, like the pictures of the whale washed ashore at Ancona, might claim to be "drawn accurately from nature," they demonstrably draw their inspiration largely from literary and theatrical forms and types.²⁾ If we miss this distinction, we miss an essential Shakespeare datum. If we fail to grasp the nature of the particulars, if we refuse to admit the strange "historical garb" and the "momentarily forbidding temperament,"³⁾ we will thereby not merely miss a dimension of the play but distort its very character as a universal - its character as reflecting Nature.

(iii) "The Two Gentlemen of Verona": Love paradigms

It is then important both to recognize the extent to which Two Gentlemen presupposes and alludes to the literary tradition and to understand the significance for Shakespeare of the renaissance doctrine of imitation. Like Vergil and Spenser before him and Pope after him, Shakespeare subscribes to Ascham's view of poetic imitation as exprimere or effingere (to mould or to fashion).⁴⁾ By imitation Ascham means not a "faire livelie painted picture of the life of everie degree of man,"⁵⁾ but an awareness of literary models and precedents. Cinthio describes his own experience of this kind of imitation:

It has many times happened to me that when I had no thought of composing anything, by the reading of some poet I have been forced in spite of myself to seize my pen and write out the things that have come into my soul. 6)

This is strongly suggestive of Shakespeare's relation to romance precedent, suggestive of the manner in which he makes the best of what other poets have done - refining, developing, and enriching the paradigms. Part of Shakespeare's perennial interest for the student lies paradoxically in the degree in which his originality presupposes an acute awareness of literary precedent. Criticism's failure to take account of this is a major factor behind modern misunderstanding of Two Gentlemen.

1) Nuttall, op. cit., p.81.

2) See particularly my discussion of Petruchio, Kate, Grumio, and Launce in this and the preceding chapters.

3) The two latter phrases have been adapted from a passage in A.G. Woodward, Aspects of Literary Experience, p.17.

4) "The Scholemaster," in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. by G.G. Smith, I.18.

5) Ibid., p.7.

6) "On the Composition of Romances," in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. by A.H. Gilbert. p. 265.

The first two acts of Two Gentlemen are shaped largely in terms of the "given" imagery of love. This imagery is to a considerable extent the determinant of the play's particular romantic vein.

In the opening scene, Proteus bids farewell to his friend Valentine who is off to "see the wonders of the world" (I.i.6). Valentine's mockery of "loves peyne" introduces an element of caricature. He tells the lover, Proteus:

it boots thee not
To be in love - where scorn is bought with groans,
Coy looks with heart-sore sighs; one fading moment's mirth,
With twenty watchful, weary tedious nights. (I.i.29)

This is the romance lover's traditional predicament, described by Pettet as "the Cult of Dejection."¹⁾ Proteus is, like Titus, "all tormented and oppressed with love." Shakespeare decorously patterns Proteus' predicament in terms of a series of devotional reversals. His groans buy not sympathy but "scorn," his sighs buy not welcome but "coy looks," and so on.

If Shakespeare's deft touch of caricature prevents Proteus from sinking to the prosaic level of straight romance lover, it also places him as enacting the prescribed Love Rituals in a high-comic perspective, as Valentine dilates on his friend's predicament in a series of paradoxes on love:

If haply won, perhaps a hapless gain;
If lost, why then a grievous labour won;
How ever, but a folly bought with wit,
Or else a wit by folly vanquished. (I.ii.32)

This is the "privie operation of folly" which Castiglione observed about him and in which he found "marvellous great pastime."²⁾ But by the side of the boisterous "pastime" of The Shrew, the terms of Love's Folly are decorous, elegant, and essentially courtly. Proteus' "folly" is his ardent devotion to Love, a devotion that is rewarded ironically by "a grievous labour won." His is "a folly bought with wit." This is less a moral criticism of Proteus' behaviour than a mock-indictment of love, the universal folly, the foolery

1) Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition, p.19.

2) The Courtier, transl. by Hoby, p.24.

that "does walk about the orb like the sun - it shines everywhere" (Twelfth Night, III.i.36).

Proteus' denial of his "folly" is spoken as part of a luscious debate rather than as an impassioned refutation of Valentine's allegations:

Proteus. 'Tis Love you cavil at, I am not Love.
Valentine. Love is your master, for he masters you. (38)

The spectacle of Love's Pilgrim exchanging banter with Love's Heretic is strongly suggestive of the romantic-comic-ritualistic perspective which discourages a purely naturalistic view of character. This impression is confirmed by Shakespeare's treatment of folly, which recalls the ambivalence of Love's Folly in love romances like the Romaunt and The Parlement of Foules.

The two gentlemen's duologue continues:

Valentine. Love is your master, for he masters you;
And he that is so yoked by a fool
Methinks should not be chronicled for wise.
Proteus. Yet writers say: as in the sweetest bud
The eating canker dwells, so eating Love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all.
Valentine. And writers say: as the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so by Love the young and tender bud
Is turn'd to folly, blasting in the bud,
Losing his verdure, even in the prime,
And all the fair effects of future hopes. (39)

Proteus' speeches are balanced against Valentine's. To Proteus, the fact that he is in love is a criterion of the fineness of his "wit," a notion that is given ironic support by its proverbial quality.¹⁾ Valentine's retort proceeds from the latent ambivalence of Proteus' analogy. To Proteus, the logical point of the analogy is that if Love masters him, he is wise; to Valentine it is logically apparent that because Love masters him Proteus is a fool.

The argument insistently looks two ways here. Valentine detects Proteus' "folly," but Valentine's own impending fall into the selfsame "folly" is witness that it is virtually a condition of being a young "gentleman" in a love romance. This is the paradigm; thus does Nature take her course. Like Proteus' fall, Valentine's is no mere reversal; his contemning of Love has been no petty truancy:

1) Cf. Pettie, A Petite Palace: "The finer wit he was endued withal, the sooner was he made thrall and subject to love" (cited by Tilley, W576).

I have done penance for contemning Love,
Whose high imperious thoughts have punished me
With bitter fasts, with penitential groans,
With nightly tears, and daily heart-sore sighs,
For in revenge of my contempt of Love,
Love hath chas'd sleep from my enthralled eyes,
And made them watchers of mine own heart's sorrow.
O gentle Proteus, Love's a mighty Lord,
And hath so humbled me, as I confess
There is no woe to his correction,
Nor, to his service, no such joy on earth. (II.iv.124)

Love is here presented as a force that there is no resisting. He who falls victim to this "mighty lord" is no straightforward alazon, no comic butt. Yet there is a sense in which Valentine, like Proteus, is a victim; but in so far as he is, he is a victim of "no mortal passion but of a supernatural influence" - as Robert Greene puts it.¹⁾ The "two gentlemen" are no ordinary lovers but worshippers at the shrine of Love, initiates in Love's Religion. As Proteus puts it, "I leave myself, my friends, and all for love/Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphos'd me" (I.i.65,67). All this is no mere comic aberration; Love has made of him a different person; it really is, as one critic put it, "the supreme emotional expression of his Proteus existence."²⁾

This is made clear in Valentine's "I have done penance" speech. Consider the terms: "penance," "punishment," "penitential groans," "bitter fasts," and so on, all at the shrine of the "mighty lord," Love himself, whom Valentine, like Proteus, now devoutly serves. The expression, "Love's a mighty lord," is more than a variation on the proverbial Amor vincit omnia.³⁾ It echoes a host of images of Love's transcendental ~~omnipotence~~. There is Ovid's passage in the Amores - "haeserunt tenues in corde sagittae/et possessa ferus pectora versat Amor" (II.7)⁴⁾ - which calls attention to the power of Love. Later versions are to be found in Dante, who setting eyes on Beatrice for the first time, "uttered these words: Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi."⁵⁾ On another occasion, Dante dreams that "a lordly figure" in a cloud addresses him in these words: "Ego dominus tuus." In the sonnet that is virtually a gloss on this occasion, Dante writes of this "Love who is every lover's Lord." Perhaps more explicitly than any of these analogues, Robert Greene's phrase anticipates Shakespeare's: "Venus is your chief goddess, and love is the lord, whose livery you weare."⁶⁾

1) Morando, op. cit., III.108.

2) D.L. Stevenson, The Love-Game Comedy, p.4.

3) See Tilley, L527.

4) "The subtle arrows are rooted in my heart, and untamed love torments my breast where it has command" (or - less literally - "where it is lord").

5) "Behold a god more powerful than I, who is coming to rule over me" (i.e. Love) - La Vita Nuova, II.

6) Metamorphosis, op. cit., IX.37, Cf. pp.145-7, above.

Here Shakespeare, by virtual allusion to a literary tradition, suggests a comic parallel with the exalted and solemn love of, say, Dante and Beatrice. In this framework, Valentine's comic fall becomes more than a psychological volte face: it is a religious conversion that involves penance, "bitter fasts," ~~■~~ humbly accepting Love as Lord (131) and serving him in penitence and joy (132-5). Proteus' recollection that "my tales of love were wont to weary you ... " gives the context of Valentine's fall some immediacy, contrasting his lapsed with his pre-lapsarian state. Valentine's reply quietly registers the metamorphosis that has taken place: "Ay, Proteus, but that life has altered now" (123).

Similarly, Proteus' mistress, Julia, is depicted not as a love-sick young woman pining nor simply as one of Shakespeare's charming transvestite heroines, but as "a true-devoted pilgrim" like Petrarch who saw himself as a pilgrim to Laura:

Da lei vien l'animosa leggiadria
Ch'al ciel ti scorge per destro sentero.¹⁾

In Two Gentlemen, the Petrarchan religious idealism is insistently expressed. Julia doesn't mind if "the way is wearisome and long," for she "hath Love's wings to fly" to one of "such divine perfection as Sir Proteus." (II.vii.8-13).

This romantic religious dimension is expanded by the introduction of other conventional imagery. One image that recurs is that of love as food. Valentine declares that:

Now can I break my fast, dine, sup, and sleep
Upon the very naked name of Love. (II.iv.136)

Clifford Leech cites two parallels to this image: one from Euphues and the other from Damon and Pithias. The Euphues passage - "they all sate doune, but Euphues fed of one dish which ever stode before him, the beautie of Lucilla" - is of a fundamentally different kind, though verbally similar to Valentine's lines, as will become clear. Earlier in Two Gentlemen, Valentine tells Speed, "I have dined"; to which Speed replies:

Ay, but hearken, sir: though the chameleon Love
can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by
my victuals (II.i.161)

Later, (in II.vii) when Lucetta advises Julia not to pursue Proteus to Milan,

1) "And from her comes the loving noble ray
Which leads you to the sky on the right way" (Sonnets and Songs, xiii,
transl. by A.M. Armi).

but to "forbear, till Proteus make return," Julia's reply echoes Valentine's words and at the same time firmly supplies the implied religious framework:

O, know'st thou not his looks are my soul's food?
Pity the dearth that I have pined in
By longing for that food so long a time. (II.vii.15)

So, when Valentine comes to speak of "feed^{ing}" upon the shadow of perfection" (III.i.177), the quasi-mystical implications should be apparent.

These passages must be rigorously distinguished from Lyly's relatively secular sentiments, as well as from other superficially similar lines like Hermia's - "we must starve our sight/From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight" (A Midsummer Night's Dream, I.i.222). In Two Gentlemen, Shakespeare gives the image an altogether different significance, which criticism appears to have missed. The image is a Neoplatonic one, popular in renaissance literature. In Castiglione's The Courtier, Bembo uses it in a context markedly similar to Julia's. Bembo, considering the affliction of enforced physical separation of lovers, regards their reunion in these terms: after a period of constant pain and turmoil, the soul is calm again and "is nourished with most daintie food."¹⁾ In Donne's The Relique, a poem full of Neoplatonic imagery - the sanctity of the speaker's relation with his mistress is worked up into a series of conceits about miracles, relics, Mary Magdalene, and so forth - a kiss is seen as the soul's food:

Coming and going, wee
Perchance might kisse, but not between those meales.

Here significantly the setting is once again one of salutation and departure. As Grierson points out, this was one of the uses of kissing sanctioned in the Bible. The religious overtones are inescapable, and there is no need to introduce further evidence, which might include the supreme food of the soul and argue that Shakespeare's image also reflects the Holy Eucharist - the "bread of heaven" on which Christians "feed" (in the words of the hymn).

As the presence of these several paradigms is appreciated, it should become increasingly obvious that what Shakespeare is concerned to depict is no mere English version of an Italian comedy, as Campbell has held Two Gentlemen to be. Instead, by exploiting and building on the traditional idea of Love as Religion with its appropriate theology, sanctions, and rituals, the dramatist gives to the characterization in Two Gentlemen a perspective totally new

1) The Courtier, trans. by Hoby, p. 317.

in English drama - a perspective that has not been duly appreciated by criticism.

One important implication of this perspective is that Valentine's love for Silvia emerges paradoxically as both "the supreme emotional expression of his existence" and the measure of his folly. But as should become progressively clearer, this folly does not make him a "nincompoop," whose "stupidity is impenetrable" (Charlton). In this play, the lovers' "folly" is paradoxically the criterion of their "wit" - though Shakespeare does not systematically develop this motif as he does in As You Like It and Twelfth Night. Thus, Two Gentlemen celebrates, after his trials in adversity, Valentine's ultimate joyful union with the "earthly paragon," Silvia - a union that at once expresses and transcends his "folly."

(iv) Further aspects of the early scenes

At the heart of Two Gentlemen, then, is the dramatic spectacle of the lover conceived in terms of Love's Religion and Love's Folly. This spectacle offers, in Castiglione's phrase, "marvellous great pastime."¹⁾ But it is pastime unlike that of The Shrew. In the romantic comedy, the pastime resides in the almost ritualistic movement and gesture of the lovers, who move "in set ways, according to the rules and exaggerations of decorum."²⁾ The characterization of Valentine, Silvia, and Speed in particular suggests a relationship to the courtly love and romance traditions that has not been fully argued. But any hint of mere passive elegance of a Lylian kind Shakespeare transforms into a gaily decorous game.³⁾

A scene with which criticism has experienced difficulty is the first representation of Valentine with Silvia (II.i).⁴⁾ Throughout the play, she is depicted as "the idol" that Valentine "worships," a "heavenly saint" of whom he requests Proteus: "Call her divine." When Proteus refuses to acknowledge her divinity, Valentine asks that she be recognised as at least "a principality" - one of the nine orders of angels (II.iv.139-48). Later, Proteus acknowledges to himself that she is "too fair, too true, too holy" (IV.ii.5), and "Love bids [him] forswear" Julia (II.vi.6). Both "gentle-

1) The Courtier, transl. by Hoby, p.25.

2) J. Arthos, "The Forming of the Early Comedies," pp.2-3.

3) G.K. Hunter's fine book on Lyly offers some account of court drama as a part of court ritual (ch.III), as well as a searching discussion of Lyly's plays and of Shakespeare's debt to them.

4) See Charlton, op. cit., pp.35-6 (discussed above); and S. Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," pp.166-7.

men" become worshippers at Silvia's shrine.

This paradigm must not be discounted as a collection of mere figures of speech. The imagery which embodies the paradigm is part of the semblance of the play, a semblance characterised by peculiarly Shakespearean inflections. In previous chapters, there has been some discussion of dramatic perspectives in comedy; of how the dramatist employs certain devices to place his scenes, incidents, characters and so on, in order to establish a certain relationship between his play and the audience. The shrew-tamer is one thing in the broadside ballads, the jest-books and A Shrew on the one hand and quite another in The Shrew on the other hand. The reason is not that the plots differ from one another, as a tragic might differ from a comic plot. In such a case, the roles of the characters will differ too, as Elder Olson points out.¹⁾ The difference lies in the perspective in which character is viewed, the angle from which the character's acts and speeches are contemplated.

In Two Gentlemen, "loves peyne" is, as we have seen, put in the perspective of a comic ritual which is itself a dimension of Love's Folly. This perspective pervades the two brief courtship scenes (II.i and II.iv). When Valentine offers Silvia the letter she has asked him to write, Shakespeare is working for an effect that modern criticism has consistently failed to grasp. In his stimulating discussion of the play, Stanley Wells admits that we should not expect realism here. Nevertheless (he adds), Valentine's failure to recognize "that the letter he is writing on Silvia's behalf is addressed to himself," which "might perhaps have been acceptable as a tenderly absurd illustration of the lover's traditional blindness," succeeds only in making Valentine appear "downright stupid." The reason is that Speed ■■■ "shows much more intelligence than his master."²⁾ But Wells has surely missed the point that Speed here is no Jeeves to Proteus' Bertie Wooster. Shakespeare is not here concerned with Jamesian discriminations regarding the qualities of their respective intelligences. Furthermore, Speed is, as a Lylian page, "outside" the duologue between Valentine and Silvia.

On Silvia's entry, the dialogue runs as follows:

Speed. O excellent motion! O exceeding puppet!

Now will he interpret to her.

Valentine. Madam and mistress, a thousand good-morrrows.

Speed. (Aside) O, 'give-ye-good-ev'n! Here's a million of manners.

Silvia. Sir Valentine and servant, to you two thousand.

Speed. (Aside) He should give her interest; and she gives it him. (89)

1) Tragedy and the Theory of Drama, p.82.

2) "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p.167.

The extravagance of the courtly ceremony and the exaggerated use of love jargon ("mistress," "servant," "duty," "command") are set over against Speed's jesting comments. This is no straightforward burlesque of the romance Love Rituals. Valentine's rhetoric, it must be remembered, is "the supreme emotional expression of his existence," as well as the measure of his "folly."

Speed's remark (89) which accompanies Silvia's entrance draws attention to the episode as a comic charade. His imagery ("motion," "puppet," "interpret"), as editors have noted, consists of "successive references to the puppet-show" (Leech). The "motion" has been taken to be the puppet-show itself (Leech, Sanders, Evans, Wilson), and the puppets whose ritual antics Speed glosses for the audience are the lover and his mistress. Speed's function here is to construe the lovers' "excellent motion." He is required not to join in the comic game, but to open up the comic cross-purposes by sharing the pastime with the audience. Like the Lord in the Induction to The Shrew, like Rosalind and Corin watching the "pageant" of Silvius and Phebe "truly play'd," Speed belongs here outside the world of the puppet-show.

In this charade Silvia plays the roles of coy mistress and riddling jester. Her "jest" entails a fair deal of playfully coy banter, of coquettish paradoxes, which are balanced against Valentine's straightforward hyperbole:

Valentine. so it stead you, I will write
(Please you command) a thousand times as much.
And yet -
Silvia. A pretty period. Well, I guess the sequel;
And yet I will not name it; and yet I care not.
And yet take this again; and yet I thank you,
Meaning henceforth to trouble you no more.
Speed. /Aside/ And yet you will; and yet another 'yet.'
Valentine. What means your ladyship? (106)

The "given" parts of "servant" and "mistress" are sustained in an ironically poised love-game, in which are highlighted the bewilderment of the devotee at Love's shrine, who fails to perceive her "jest," her "excellent device," although, as Speed puts it, this "jest [is] unseen, inscrutable, invisible,/ As a nose on a man's face or a weathercock on a steeple" (132).

The charade is however no merely gratuitous game. As Speed implies when he asks Valentine, "do you not perceive the jest? did you not perceive her earnest?" (145,148), the puppet show has its serious implications.¹⁾ Yet the mode of game is insistently registered. As Speed

1) The jest-in-earnest motif lies behind the waking man's dream, Petruchio's taming, and even the confusions of identity in Errors. The image occurs once in Errors (II.ii.24) and twice in Two Gentlemen (II.i.145-8, II.v.11-12).

merrily observes to the audience:

My master sues to her and she hath taught her suitor,
He being her pupil, to become her tutor.
O excellent device, was there ever heard a better?
That my master being scribe, to himself should write the letter. (II.i.130)

The tone of merriment, couched in old-fashioned fourteeners (132-3), faintly recalls that of the waggish Vice, the most gamesome of Tudor comic-dramatic commentators.

Valentine's role in the charade is a predetermined one. Speed has, earlier in this scene (17-31), commented on Valentine's display of the romance lover's "special marks" (17) and noted punningly that "you are so without these follies that these follies are within you, and shine through you like the water in a urinal" (36). As Valentine's "follies" are comic emblems of his subjection to Love, so his apparent obtuseness is the comic emblem of blind Love. Shakespeare introduces the latter motif explicitly and immediately before the puppet-show episode:

Speed. You never saw her since she was deformed.
Valentine. How long hath she been deformed?
Speed. Ever since you loved her.
Valentine. I have loved her ever since I saw her, and still I see her beautiful.
Speed. If you love her, you cannot see her.
Valentine. Why?
Speed. Because Love is blind. O that you had mine eyes, or your own eyes had the lights they were wont to have, when you chid at Sir Proteus for going ungartered.
Valentine. What should I see then?
Speed. Your own present folly, and her passing deformity (60)

Because "Love is blind," Valentine must be obtuse. This is a condition of his part in Silvia's comic charade. This blindness is a datum, like Petruchio's bizarre appearance and conduct at his wedding. Although there is no sharp-shooting Cupid here (as there is in Lyly's Gallathea), no magic love-juice (as in A Midsummer Night's Dream), Valentine must be represented as no less blind Love's helpless victim than either Lysander or Demetrius. This datum is here as in A Midsummer Night's Dream a condition of the ironic comedy of cross-purposes:

Silvia the lines are very quaintly writ,
But (since unwillingly) take them again.
Nay, take them.
Valentine. Madam, they are for you.
Silvia. Ay, ay. You writ them, sir, at my request,
But I will none of them; they are for you. (115)

Compared with the delicately balanced dramatic irony of the Rosalind-Orlando love scenes (which this episode clearly anticipates), the irony here may be a

trifle crass, but it is well enough sustained by the luscious mode of the puppet-show, in which Speed's humour, Silvia's jest in earnest and Valentine's bewilderment are comically set off against one another.

Valentine's obtuseness is thus an entailment of his role as Love's Fool as well as his role in the "excellent motion." Shakespeare is not striving for verisimilitude.¹⁾ What we have here is another way of transvaluing Valentine's folly - by merging it into a gaily ironic pastime that eludes the straitjacket of Stoic disapproval and austere moralism.²⁾ Valentine's romance wooing is given the dramatic semblance of a comic charade. It is from this point that criticism must start: the decorous yet exaggerated rules of the "excellent motion" (89).

Apart from the dénouement, these two lovers appear together in only one other scene: II.iv. This scene, for the first forty lines, sustains the charade mode, which would probably have been more overt, had the Folio text been in certain ways more perfect.³⁾

This scene opens as though it is going to be developed on the lines of the puppet-show scene:

Silvia. Servant.

Valentine. Mistress. .

But after succinctly telling his master that "Sir Thurio frowns on you" and recommending that "'Twere good you knocked him," Speed is not heard again in this scene. Shakespeare appears to have changed his mind in midstream, possibly because he is "still a tyro in dramatic craftsmanship" and "has not

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- 1) H.F. Brooks's explanation seems to be beside the point: "The dullness which prevents his understanding is a perfectly orthodox effect of love-melancholy" (op. cit., p. 95). This recalls Babb's discussions of love-melancholy: see above, p.146.
 - 2) See Erasmus, Praise of Folly, transl. by Dean, p. 48, for a scathing exposure of the Stoic disapproval of folly.
 - 3) E.K. Chambers regards Two Gentlemen as an example of "hasty composition" (William Shakespeare, I. 331). Dover Wilson notes that "No company could have acted the play as it stands," though he retracts his "theory of assembled texts" in the 1955 reprint of his edition. T.M. Parrott conjectures that either the play was cut by "some playhouse hack," or "the young playwright invented a situation in the final scene which he was incapable of handling" (Shakespearean Comedy, p. 113). See Leech's account of the scholarly debate and his own excellent rationale of the textual state of affairs.

yet learned how to manipulate more than a few characters at once."¹⁾ It is also possible that Shakespeare does not need Speed here, as I shall argue below.

Speed's advice to Valentine to "knock" Thurio precipitates the following brief exchange:

Silvia. Servant, you are sad.
Valentine. Indeed, madam, I seem so.

Valentine's melancholy reply marks the turning from the puppet-show mode of II.i. to that of the luscious verbal duel, reminiscent of the play's opening scene. To Valentine's "Indeed, madam, I seem so," Thurio retorts:

Thurio. Seem you that you are not?
Valentine. Haply I do.
Thurio. So do counterfeit.
Valentine. So do you.
Thurio. What seem I that I am not?
Valentine. Wise.
Thurio. What instance of the contrary.
Valentine. Your folly (IV.iv.8ff)

The comic structure rests here on a series of inter-connected puns, which develop from "seems": "counterfeit" - "wise"-"folly"-"jerkin"-"doublet"-"double." Silvia's role, apart from being the "giver" of all this verbal "fire," is to keep the duel on the purely verbal level, as opposed to the physical encounter recommended by Speed and indulged as a farcical feature in Errors and The Shrew. By this is meant not that either Valentine or Thurio is on the point of drawing his weapon but that the mode of comic game is maintained. Silvia laughingly pulls Thurio's leg:

What, angry, Sir Thurio? Do you change colour? (23)

- which provokes the inevitable chameleon image, which has already been used in another connection:

Valentine. Give him leave, madam, he is a kind of chameleon. (24)

The climax of the verbal bout is reached in Silvia's appreciative pointer to

1) This is a reason given by Wells for dating the play earlier than Errors and The Shrew: "I find it difficult to imagine how a dramatist with a technique of character-manipulation as limited as this play reveals ... could, unaided, have plotted, for instance, the last scenes of The Comedy of Errors and The Taming of the Shrew and much of Richard III" Wells at the same time admits that the "impression of sketchiness" which this "limited technique" produces "does not ruin the play: along with, and partly because of, the sketchiness, there is a wholly charming simplicity and directness" ("The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," pp.165-6).

the verbal comic mode:

A fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly shot off.

Silvia, "the giver" of "the fire," also preserves the comic equilibrium, the feeling of game, interrupted only by the Duke's entry.

Valentine's and Thurio's luscious verbal duel looks towards those "disputations" and "jeastings with prompt inventions" which Castiglione extols.¹⁾ The verbal exchanges between Proteus and Speed (I.i. 70-141) and between Valentine and Speed (II.i. 1-87) are in the same mode. The chop-logic of these episodes is largely without the boisterous liveliness that marks the clown dialogue in Errors and The Shrew. This is less because Speed is a Lylian page and not a clown at all, than because the mode of this play looks in the direction of wit rather than rude horseplay - in the direction of the "kind of talke and debating of matters" in which Castiglione found "there was wonderous great pleasure on al sides."²⁾

Thus, when Speed, looking for his master (I.i.70), is brought face-to-face with Proteus who earlier has entrusted the page with a letter for Julia, here is a tempting opportunity for a gratuitous verbal game which will further define the luscious dimension of the play - the dimension that also reflects the human side of man, which Castiglione and Erasmus celebrate as "folly." Shakespeare is progressively cutting naturalistic entailments, for the dialogue of Speed and Proteus has as its raison d'etre that autonomous sporting with words that reaches its apotheosis in Love's Labour's Lost: "Not a word with him but a jest. And every jest but a word" (II.i.216). This is that disinterested, voluntary activity that Huizinga has found to mark "play."³⁾ This it is that effectually distinguishes comedies like Two Gentlemen and Love's Labour's Lost (to go no further) from naturalistically oriented works like the tales of Boccaccio or Cinthio on the one hand, and from morally purposeful tragedies like Hamlet or Macbeth on the other.

Speed, in answer to Proteus' question, "Gavest thou my letter to Julia?" replies,

Ay, sir; I (a lost mutton) gave your letter to her
(a laced mutton) and she (a laced mutton) gave
me (a lost mutton) nothing for my labour. (I.i.95)

1) Op. cit., p. 21.

2) Op. cit., p.21. This "kind of talke" is apotheosised in the mature comedies.

3) Homo Ludens, pp. 1-27 and passim.

The mutton figure continues a twenty lines long "mock-academic disputation" (Leech) on whether Speed is a sheep or not.¹⁾ Dover Wilson finds it hard to credit "that Proteus should tolerate such language from a servant in reference to his lady,"²⁾ while R.W. Bond considers that "this broad jest ... might well be ventured by a page of 1590."³⁾ As has been noticed, critics have experienced similar problems with Biondello in The Shrew.⁴⁾

But these scholars have clearly missed Shakespeare's point. Speed, as his name suggests, is less a human page than a comedian playing with words - although no one would want to deny that Speed is in his particular way a character mimetically conceived, as are all the other characters in this play. But the context radically qualifies the sense in which they are "human beings." Speed's "insolence" is a feature of his role, just as Harlequin is expected to be "insolent, mocking, inept, clownish, and emphatically ribald."⁵⁾ Dramatic decorum requires that Grumio, Biondello, Speed, et al. be "indecorous." Thus, Speed's quip about his horns' being Valentine's horns (79-80) is not an insult to his master so much as a challenge to the wit of Proteus, his opponent in the game. The chain of puns to which the mutton-sheep figures give rise leads through: insufficient pasture - therefore "stick her" (slaughter the "laced mutton" - with bawdy pun) - pound the sheep, Speed - less than a pound will serve, and so on. Speed's mimed pun, in answer to Proteus' question, "What said she? -

Speed. /first nodding/ Ay.

Proteus. Nod - ay: why, that's "noddy" -

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- 1) Such an access of purely verbal merriment reflects an aspect of Elizabethan taste that is perhaps most fully embodied in the works of Lyly. Copious treatment of this subject is to be found in the detailed discussions of elocutio or style in non-Ramistic treatises on rhetoric. Rhetorical theorists like Sherry and Peacham were openly committed to elocutio as the central part of rhetoric, more important even than inventio (the discovery of matter and ideas). Sherry stresses the difference made when "a word, sayynge, or sentence /is/ otherwyse wrytten or spoken then after the vulgar and comen usage" (Treatise of Schemes and Tropes, sig. B5r). He compares "Scheme" to "the maner of gesture that dauners use to make, when they have won the best game" (ibid.). The value attached to artifices of style is obvious, though these canons did not escape attack or at least ridicule in works like Love's Labour's Lost and Jewel's Oratio contra Rhetoricam (1548). See W.S. Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700, pp. 123-4.
 - 2) Ed. cit., p. 85.
 - 3) Ed. cit., note to I.i.99.
 - 4) See J.D. Wilson, ed. cit., p. 171.
 - 5) Enid Welsford, The Fool, p.294. Cf. Talbert, Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays, p.7, and Doran, Endeavours of Art, p.217.

sets off a brief burst on the theme, who is nobby? Proteus' outspoken admiration - "Beshrew me but you have a quick wit" - indicates Shakespeare's intention here. The prevalence of stock quibbles, like those on "bearing" and the "sheep"- "ship" homophones, as well as worn jokes, like Proteus' conviction that if Speed does reach the ship in time he will save it "from wreck/Which cannot perish having thee aboard" (142),¹⁾ does not diminish the exhilaration of this passage when deftly acted.²⁾ Although these lines tend to look pale beside the saltier verbal games of Touchstone and Feste, they have more than a taste of the characteristic Shakespearean gaiety. There is certainly more to it than Pope, who regarded this dialogue as "compos'd of the lowest and most trifling conceits," was able to see.³⁾ And to consider these "conceits" as "foolish verbal trifling," shamelessly pandering to "a part of [Shakespeare's] audience with whom we have little sympathy" - as Bridges did - is to do less than justice not only to the young Shakespeare's exuberant comic fancy, but more importantly to his control of his medium.

To stress the game perspective of these parts of Two Gentlemen is not to argue that the play was acted "formally." This study does not take the view that Elizabethan acting was "fundamentally formal,"⁴⁾ and that Elizabethans went to the theatre to "hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation."⁵⁾ In The Return from Parnassus, Part II, the popular actors, Burbage and Kempe, mock the formal acting of the university men:

.... 'tis good sport in a part, to see them never speake in their walke, but at the end of the stage, just as though in walking with a fellow we should never speake but at a stile, a gate, or a ditch, where a man can go no further. 6)

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- 1) This chestnut recurs in The Tempest, I.i.54-6. See also Tilley, B139.
 - 2) J.R. Brown, reviewing Peter Hall's Stratford production of 1960, praises the producer for seeing "point and humour in much of the dialogue," but complains because it is stressed "so broadly." The qualities of the play that Brown rightly notices - "the grace, clarity, wit, sentiment, excitement and fluency of the early romantic Shakespeare, - the poet whom his contemporaries called 'gentle' and 'honey-tongued'" - are not revealed in Hall's "heavy and unsophisticated" treatment of voice and setting.
 - 3) Pope's comment is cited by Leech, ed. cit., p. 6n.
 - 4) S.L. Bethell, "Shakespeare's Actors," p. 205.
 - 5) Dr. Johnson, cited in J.R. Brown, Shakespeare's Plays in Performance, p.27.
 - 6) The Return from Parnassus, Part II, IV.iii. (l.1757).

In The Shrew and Two Gentlemen, the mode is jest in earnest, executed in the conventions of the day. Obviously the actor's part would be shaped by the stylistic artifices of the text. Petrarchan rhetoric would lose its force if uttered in a merely conversational style, and Bertram Joseph is right to insist on the importance of the rhetorical structure so that, in the words of Fraunce, "In the particular applying of the voice to several words, we make tropes that be most excellent plainly appear."¹⁾ Valentine and Silvia may be playing a stylized comic charade, yet it is a challenge to their skill, their sprezzatura (to use Castiglione's term), as well as to their ability to "maintain" their parts with "looks and gesture."²⁾ Each must be, as Burbage was reputed to be,

a delightful Proteus, so wholly transforming himself
into his part, and putting off himself with his clothes, as
he never assum'd himself again until the play
was done. 3)

Each must "come over," within the framework of the puppet-show, as "delightful" persons playing a graceful game.

Structurally, nearly the whole of the first act of Two Gentlemen, as well as the first scene of the second act, is given over to the building up of a comic perspective by the use of lusive representation. The romantic core of the three scenes in this act may be seen to be Proteus' soliloquy, in which the key lines are:

Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphos'd me;
Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
War with good counsel, set the world at nought;
Made wit with musing weak, heart sick with thought. (I.i.66)

The tone here recalls the romantic ardour of the lovers in "Titus and Gisippus." But this is a partial impression, for the context insistently qualifies Proteus' dejection. The play's comic mode is given further definition in Julia's monologues and her duologues with Lucetta (in I.ii).

The latter scene revolves round the letter device, a well-established convention which J.A. Guinn has traced back to De Duobus Amantibus (1444)

1) Cited in B. Joseph, Elizabethan Acting, p.26.

2) Richard Flecknoe, A Short Discourse of the English Stage (1664), praising Richard Burbage; cited in Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, IV.370 and in J.R. Brown, Shakespeare's Plays in Performance, p.29.

3) Flecknoe, op. cit., cited in Brown, op. cit., p.29.

by Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini.¹⁾ Shakespeare's representation of this letter-scene differs from Montemayor's in ways that have not been adequately recognized. In Diana, Rosina's delivery of Don Felix's letter is described in retrospect by the bereft and grieving Felismena.²⁾ This first-person rendering is full of romantic sentiment: Felismena's initially "angry countenance" soon gives way to a mental conflict between her "certaine desire to see the letter" and her "modestie and shame [which] forbad me to ask it of my maide." Felismena spends "that night onely with my desire, and with occasion of little sleepe." Rosina's "counterfaite smiling" and Felismena's "fained anger and ill-opinion" are as straightforwardly depicted as are the "dolour and anguish" that assail Titus, "all tormented and oppressed with love" for his friend's mistress. The romantic vein is qualified by a sense of simple mimetic realism.

This is not the case with the corresponding scene in Two Gentlemen. Here Shakespeare dramatises Julia's "fained anger" as another comic charade. Julia's ironic role - which involves her in reproving Lucetta, "the broker" who harbours Proteus' "wanton lines," while all the time she (Julia) is beside herself with eagerness to read them - is depicted in terms of a comic part:

And yet I would I had o'erlook'd the letter.
It were a shame to call her back again,
And pray her to a fault for which I chid her.
What fool is she that knows I am a maid,
And would not force the letter to my view!
Since maids in modesty say "no" to that
Which they would have the profferer construe "ay."
Fie, fie; how wayward is this foolish love,
That (like a testy babe) will scratch the nurse,
And presently all humbled kiss the rod! (I.ii.50)

This is no straight portrayal of conflicting emotions as in the case of Felismena in Diana. Shakespeare delicately represents Julia's vexation at Lucetta's perverseness in terms of her (Julia's) ironically blended detachment (she is playing a role in this comic charade) and concern (she is a young woman, after all). The gap between actress and impersonated character (more pointed if Julia is played by a boy-actor, as in the Elizabethan theatre) is skilfully exploited. In the consequent distancing effect we detect Shakespeare's characteristic comic tones. The comic-religious note which gently insists on Julia's helplessness as Love's victim (who is also Love's Fool)

1) "The Letter Device in the First Act of The Two Gentlemen of Verona."

2) Diana, ed. by Kennedy, pp. 83-5.

is developed as Julia reflects almost detachedly on her own paradoxical behaviour:

How churlishly I chid Lucetta hence,
When willingly I would have had her here!
How angerly I taught my brow to frown,
When inward joy enforc'd my heart to smile. (60)

This soliloquy is resolved in religious images which become a dimension of Julia's essentially comic predicament:

My penance is to call Lucetta back
And ask remission for my folly past. (64)

But the by-now-established mode has its requirements. Any straightforward delivery of the letter would be a lost dramatic opportunity. So Shakespeare takes advantage of the comic deadlock to precipitate a prolonged punning exchange which over twenty lines uses some twenty-six verbal counters, including: "rhyme"- "sing"- "tune"- "Light o'Love"- "heavy"- "burden"- "melodious"- "high"- "keep tune"- "sharp"- "flat"- "harsh descant"- "mean"- "unruly bass"- "bid the base." These are the main terms. This verbal game keeps Julia's anger firmly within comic perspective. When it finally erupts in her tearing up the letter and striking Lucetta,¹⁾ the latter's comments maintain the comic-ironic frame:

She makes it strange, but she would be best pleas'd
To be so anger'd with another letter. (103)

Lucetta is also a player in this charade; what is more, she sees through her mistress' role:

Ay, madam, you may say what sights you see;
I see things too, although you judge I wink. (138)

Between these pairs of unrhymed couplets comes Julia's lyrical soliloquy:

O hateful hands, to tear such loving words;
Injurious wasps to feed on such sweet honey,
And kill the bees that yield it, with your stings.
Look, here is writ "kind Julia" : unkind Julia!
As in revenge of my ingratitude;
I throw thy name against the bruising stones,
Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain (106)

The rich rhetorical effects and the fine artifice have here the effect of maintaining the play's romantic vein. This contemplation of "loves payne," which is to be echoed in later scenes, suggests a spirit that Shakespeare might have sustained, alongside the lusory vein. That he did not do so is a possible reason for the incomplete success of Two Gentlemen, as comparison

1) Hanmer's S.D., followed by Leech and exuberantly by J.D. Wilson, is unmistakably implied in the text; see 1.90.

with As You Like It or Twelfth Night might suggest.

Another dimension of the play that is modified by the romantic-comic impulse is Antonio's and Panthino's Castiglione-like discussion of Proteus' education (in I,iii). The first half of this scene consists of an outline of orthodox ideas on the subject of educating young gentlemen.¹⁾ Fathers must "Put forth their sons to seek preferment out" (7), for a son "cannot be a perfect man,/Not being tried and tutor'd in the world" (20). If Antonio sends Proteus after Valentine to attend "the Emperor in his royal court,"²⁾

There shall he practice tilts and tournaments,
Hear sweet discourse, converse with noblemen,
And be in eye of every exercise
Worthy his youth and nobleness of birth. (30)

This serious discussion by two elderly men provides an ironic context for the entry of the love-lorn Proteus, in soliloquy:

Sweet love, sweet lines, sweet life!
Here is her hand, the agent of her heart;
Here is her oath for love, her honour's pawn. (45)

The conspicuously formal Petrarchan style offers a strong contrast to the matter-of-fact parental talk. Consider its artifice. The apostrophe (or ecphronesis) and anaphora (repetition of "sweet") in the first line have a powerfully heightening effect, as John Hoskyns recommends that ecphronesis should have. This figure, writes the rhetorician,

is not lawfull, but in extremity of mocion, as in the beginning of the second book of Arcadia, in the person of Gynecia tormented in mynd, oh Sun, o your heavens, deserts, o virtue, o imperfect proportion. 3)

The rhetorical artifice insulates Proteus from the ordinary day-to-day world of his father. But there is more to this than a simple stylistic contrast. Shakespeare is here exploiting "discrepant awarenesses."⁴⁾ Proteus absorbed in his letter, is happily unaware that his future has been settled. The contrast of febrile Petrarchism and business-like attitudes creates a gently

1) There is little point in trying to trace the ideas here. They are common to Elyot, Peacham, Castiglione, and Romei (see works listed under their names in the Bibliography). Ruth Kelso usefully outlines the main points in her The Doctrine of the English Gentlemen in the Sixteenth Century, esp. chaps. VI - VIII.

2) There has been much scholarly discussion of Shakespeare's inconsistency in one moment referring to an Emperor, the next to a Duke, as well as in calling what is evidently the same place alternately Verona, Milan, and Padua. For a convenient summary and ingenious solution to the problem, see Leech, ed. cit., pp. xv-xxxv.

3) Direccions for Speech and Style, in Life, Letters and Writings of John Hoskyns, by Osborn, p.147.

4) B.Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies, p.viii.

comic-ironic interaction, which places Proteus once more in the realm of truancy to honour and duty, of "losing time."¹⁾ He is the captive of Love, the victim of Love's Folly. Antonio's almost immediate intrusion into this world clinches the incongruity:

How now! What letter are you reading there? (51)

Proteus' response to this peremptory approach must avoid any temptation to farcify the situation. The hint of comedy in the dramatic irony must not be overplayed. All must lead towards Proteus' soliloquy which moralises his ironic predicament:

Thus have I shunn'd the fire, for fear of burning,
And drench'd me in the sea, where I am drown'd. (78)

But this is more than simply a comic-ironic situation. The folly of the lover has its pathos, as was evident in Julia's "O hateful hands" soliloquy. In a key passage, Proteus reflects on "loves peyne":

O, how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away. (84)

The ironic pointers to Proteus' own future behaviour apart, this passage suggests another "star-crossed" lover. The lines impinge obliquely on the comic Love's Folly motif and develop it in a purely romantic direction. This is the pattern of life, the pattern of love, viewed sub specie temporis. Such nostalgia for the ever-changing, ever-vanishing moment is a characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, a mark of their reflecting Nature.²⁾ This romantic, non-lusory dimension of Two Gentlemen and its relation to the comic ludus must be discussed. But first, there is another pressing topic, the role of Launce and his clowning as a further determinant of the play's comic mode.

(v) Launce

One feature of Two Gentlemen that has puzzled many is Shakespeare's treatment of Launce. Not only is Launce introduced comparatively late in the play (II.iii), but he makes only four appearances, and "all but one

1) Cf. "Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphos'd me;/Made me neglect my studies, lose my time ..." (I.i.65). The opposite of "losing the time" is "redeeming" it. This is what Hal undertakes to do: "I'll so offend to make offence a skill,/Redeeming time when men least think I will" (Henry IV, I.ii.209). Cf. St. Paul's directive to the Ephesians to "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. V.15). See Jorgensen, Redeeming Shakespeare's Words.

2) See chap. I, above.

of them are easily detachable from the text."¹⁾ These four appearances are: at II.iii (a monologue with Crab, followed by a duologue with Panthino); at II.v (a duologue with Speed); at III.i.188-374 (a brief exchange with Proteus and Valentine, a monologue, then a duologue with Speed); and at IV. iv.1-61 (a monologue with Crab leading to a related conversation with Proteus). Of these appearances, three could be additions, as "could the later section of his third appearance" (i.e. III.i.261-374). In the earlier part of this third appearance, he sounds "oddly like Speed Launce's speeches in this section have a brevity, a simple playing with the word or a mistaking of the word that we can find in Speed, especially in II.i."²⁾ - i.e. a segment of Speed's part has been handed over to Launce. Leech considers that the case for seeing the Launce section of the play as a result of second thoughts seems considerable."³⁾ Once decided on, Launce's part was built up by giving him Speed's lines (III.i.188-260), to which Shakespeare then added a Launce soliloquy and a Launce-Speed duologue (III.i.261-374).⁴⁾ Thus, it is contended, Launce's is a super-added part, separate from both the faithless friend and the faithless lover actions. Leech's argument is expertly conducted and seems in the main to be irrefutable.

But, as is often the case in scholarly debate, some of the evidence Leech cites is susceptible of another interpretation. Launce may not appear until well on in the second act. Dogberry and Verges, however, don't appear until the third scene of act three in Much Ado, because they are not needed until then. To the probable objection that this doesn't apply in the present instance - because Launce is needed in the very first scene of Two Gentlemen to carry messages for his master to Julia, for which Shakespeare has had to make shift with Speed⁵⁾ - there is an obvious answer, Launce is to be used as messenger in the fourth act (the episode of Crab's fouling Silvia's farthingale occurs there). Speed's employment as Proteus' messenger in the opening scenes looks as if it were in the interests of dramatic variety. If Launce is to be used as messenger in later scenes, why not use Speed, the other (contrasting) comedian of the play, in the earlier scenes? Such an explanation is lent support by the view, fairly generally

1) Leech, ed. cit., p. xxvi.

2) Ibid., p. xxvii.

3) Ed. cit., p. xxviii.

4) Ibid.

5) Shakespeare's use of Speed as messenger in I.i. has puzzled Leech, ed. cit., pp. xviii, xxviii, and G.B. Parks, "The Development of The Two Gentlemen of Verona." p.7.

held since Capell corrected the Folio description of Speed,¹⁾ that Launce and Speed are contrasted comedians.

Leech's hypothesis that the Launce part is "a result of second thoughts" could moreover be an interpretation of certain features that are partly explicable in different terms. The unknown authors of The Pilgrimage to Parnassus draw attention in the late nineties to the tendency (noted ten years previously by Sidney) to thrust clowns "into plays by head and shoulders."²⁾ Clowns' parts like those of Launce and Launcelot Gobbo betray certain features of the interpolated comic interlude - features which are at least partly attributable to the conception of the clown in the theatres of the eighties and early nineties.

One theory is that the clown parts from Dromio to Dogberry were all written specifically to accommodate the peculiar talents of Will Kempe.³⁾ Kempe was a foundation member and "sharer" in Strange's Men, an acting company that was absorbed into the Chamberlain's Men in May, 1594.⁴⁾ He was certainly the chief clown, and it is therefore highly unlikely that clown parts like those of Grumio, Launce, and Launcelot were not written for him.

If it is admitted, as scholars like Baldwin and David have argued, that when writing a play Shakespeare had to take some account of the acting talent available in the company and that the plays "were more usually fitted to the companies than the companies to the plays,"⁵⁾ then it may be seen that

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- 1) The Folio describes Speed as "a clownish servant to Valentina" and Launce as "the like to Proteus." Capell corrected this by transferring the Folio description of Speed to Launce and characterising Speed as "page to Valentine." This change has been followed by few modern editors; critics have seized on the distinction. See Parrott, Shakespearean Comedy, p.114 and Leech, ed. cit., p. xxvi.
 - 2) See Appendix C.
 - 3) See T.W. Baldwin's theories on the casting of Shakespeare's plays expounded in The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company. If, as Beckermann and Bethell have argued, Baldwin is inclined to overplay his hand, there is nevertheless some undoubted justification for his theory of "two principal comic lines in Shakespeare's plays before 1600" which was the dramatists' way of keeping Kempe and Thomas Pope busy. See Baldwin, op. cit., pp.229-49; B. Beckerman, Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599-1609, pp.132-7; S.L. Bethell, "Shakespeare's Actors," pp.194-7; R. David, "Shakespeare and the Players," pp.33-55. Dover Wilson sees the Folio substitution of Kempe's and Cowley's names for those of Dogberry and Verges as evidence that Shakespeare saw the clown's parts so entirely in terms of the actors that he forgot the name of the characters or "could not be bothered to recall them" (NCS edn. of Much Ado, pp.92, 95-7).
 - 4) See David, op. cit., pp.35-6.
 - 5) G. Wickham, "Actor and Play in Shakespeare's Theatre," pp. 1-5.

the influence of the actors on the drama was greater and more far-reaching than in say, the serious drama of today. The relationship between actor and dramatist was possibly more like that between a modern script-writer and a variety comedian.

It is therefore arguable that Kempe's own particular talents, the characteristics of his clowning act, would very likely influence any dramatist writing a part for him. If this is so, one is prompted to enquire what sort of clown Kempe was and to try to uncover the features of his "act." Such factors must have had more than a little influence on Shakespeare's conception of Launce's part.

Kempe appears to have been the traditional Tudor popular clown, radically unlike the later and more sophisticated Armin who belongs in the great tradition of wise fools descending from Erasmus and More. On Kempe descended the mantle of the inrepressible Dick Tarlton, maker of fun.¹⁾ In his Nine Daies Wonder, Kempe appears as an exponent of "blunt mirth,"²⁾ as "merry Cavaliero Kemp, head-Master of Morrice-dancers, high-Head-borough of heighs, and only tricker of your Trill-lilles, and best bel-shangles between Sion and mount Surrey,"³⁾ and as an adept at Launce- or Grumio-like comic rhetoric.⁴⁾ Like Tarlton, he is an expert mime, quick with repartee and ready for every kind of extemporizing. He may perhaps be remarkable for the vigour of his performances rather than for his finesse. Kempe's tendency to extemporize moreover might well be the "pitful ambition in the fool" that Hamlet castigates on the grounds that it sets on

some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in
the meantime some necessary question of the play be
then to be considered. (Hamlet, III.ii.39)

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare, fresh from As You Like It and Twelfth Night, was apparently in a position to insist that "those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them" (37). But such does not seem to be the attitude behind Two Gentlemen.

The first Launce scene (II.iii) has the appearance of an interpolated comic interlude. It is only loosely connected to the main interest of the play and seems designed to give Kempe scope to exercise his talents. As Brown notes, Launce's entry is characteristic of the Tudor clown's role which "will often begin with a solo entry without much reference to the existing dramatic situation and often without reference to any other character."⁵⁾ Of Shakespeare's ten comedies, Two Gentlemen and The Merchant of

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- 1) See Appendix C for development and documentation of the points made in this paragraph.
 - 2) Kemps Nine Daies Wonder, p.4.
 - 3) Ibid., pp. 4-5.
 - 4) See Appendix C.
 - 5) Shakespeare's Plays in Performance, p.93.

Venice are the only ones containing a solo entry like this. Such an entry and the performance it allows would clearly be at one with the peculiar talents of Kempe. The mere appearance of the clown in what is virtually an interlude would be as welcome as that of Stultitia: "I am the only one whose influence makes Gods and men cheerful." As soon as she appeared, "all frowns disappeared."¹⁾ Thomas Nashe and Henry Peacham describe the analagous effect on the audience of a mere glimpse of Tarlton: how "the people began exceedingly to laugh when Tarlton first peeped out his head."²⁾ For further comic scope, Kempe, in Two Gentlemen, has a live stage "prop," the famous "dog."

The primary element in the situation - a clown who is weeping and wailing - constitutes a comic inversion of normal audience expectations. Coming immediately after Proteus' parting from Julia - a "parting [that] strikes poor lovers dumb" - the continuation of the mood of sorrow in such a different context highlights the absurdity of Kempe's spiel. Instead of peering mischievously, like Tarlton, between tire-house door and tapestrie, this clown is grieving. But his sorrow is transvalued from the first by the fact that it is mimed by a clown. The clown's own identity as comedian must be ironically present, possibly in "grins" or "grimaces" or even in "peeping out his head." The two levels - Launce is both stage clown and Proteus' servant - must be simultaneously present. Their presence is maintained by the comedian's rapport with his audience, as he proceeds drolly to wring pathos out of his sad farewell to his family. His sorrow is ludicrously profound - "All the kind of the Launces have this very fault." He compares his departure to that most portentous of all departures - that of "the prodigious son" - and the stock comic trick, the cacozelon (or Malapropism)³⁾ preserves the milieu of absurdity. The description of Crab (a name which, Leach notes, is derived from "crab-apple" and "means a sour person") as "the sourest-natured dog that lives" is further offset by the beast's classification along with mother, father, sister and maid: "all our house

1) Praise of Folly, transl. by Dean, p.43.

2) Nashe, Selected Works, ed. by Wells, pp.47-8. Peacham records that "Tarlton, when his head was only scene/The Tire-house doore and Tapestrie betweene,/ Set all the multitude in such a laughter/They could not hold for scarce an hour after" (Thalia's Banquet, cited in Shakespeare Jest-Books, II.258). Joseph Hall has a passage in his Virgidemiae or Toothless Satires, in which he exposes the clown - the "selfe-misformed lout" who "laughes, and grins, and frames his Mimik face," as the theatre echoes "With gladsome noyse of that applauding croud" (Collected Poems, ed. by Davenpart, p.15).

3) Peacham defines cacozelon as "an ill imitation or affection, that is, when words be used over-thwartly, or contrarily for want of judgment, used of foolish folk, who coveting to tell an eloquent tale, doe deface that which they would fainest beautifie" (The Garden of Eloquence, 1577, sig. G ii^v, quoted in M. Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, p.304).

in a great perplexity." Even the cat is "wringing her hands" and "my grandam having no eyes [has managed to weep] herself blind at my parting." The naïve yet tender classification of man and beast, blind and seeing, in the category of seeing human beings is the basic absurdity here. It is this absurdity, as well as the overtness of the clown's patent impersonation that transvalues the pathos.

Kempe [redacted] is obviously not set to impersonate a man who is really grieving. The monologue is an act written for a clown. The act will convince in terms of its comic artifice and not by being realistic. Launce must not convince as a human being but as a clown. The essential datum of this game, played by a star comedian with the participation of an eager audience, is that both accept the rules: that here we have not a dejected human being but a clown very patently impersonating a dejected man. The monologue eclipses the routine jest-book stories in Tarlton's Jests, not because it is theatrically relevant and not because it avoids stock gags (which it does not), but because it is a deftly worked comic act.

The clown's use of properties to re-enact the drama of the leave-taking exploits comic incongruities to the full. The muddle about which shoe is his mother and which his father leads to a fertile piece of comic by-play as he bawdily identifies his mother as the "shoe with the hole in it" which "hath the worser soul"¹⁾ - the latter phrase being an irreverent allusion to the controversy about the relative worth of male and female souls.²⁾ He holds the shoes up to his face and gently kisses his "mother" whom, after vulgarly sniffing her, he recognizes - "here's my mother's breath up and down." The tenderness and simple piety which pervades the monologue is always yoked with absurdity, as when he selects his (presumably) hefty and knobbly staff to be "my sister; for, look you, she is as white as a lily, and as small as a wand." Suddenly he realizes that the dog is present in propria persona and recognizes the irrelevance of his casting himself to play "dog" in the charade: "I am the dog. No, the dog is himself, and I am the dog. O the dog is me, and I am myself" The whole passage rests on a clown's confusion in the classification of humans, animals, and inanimate objects. The dog is treated as a human being while his mother is an old shoe with a hole in the sole.

Panthino's entry and the subsequent cross-talk act between clown and foil constitutes the second half of the scene. It is as comic foil that

1) Eric Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, p.128.

2) Tillyard, Shakespeare's Early Comedies, pp. 125-6.

Panthino is brought on, although the ostensible and naturalistic reason - the message to "post after [thy master] with oars" - gives the illusion that the episode is part of the action. The warning that Launce will "lose the tide, if you tarry any longer" also precipitates the old game of comic cross-purposes, basic to Errors and much used by Grumio in The Shrew. The pivot of the game, when it does not rest on confusion of identities, is the clown's "old vice" of "mistake the word." The chain of puns on "tide" - "tied" and "tale"- "tail" culminates in the mock-heroic hyperbole of Launce's piled-up rhetorical question which resolves itself into a pair of "comical-pathetical" conceits:

Lose the tide, and the voyage, and the master, and the
service, and the tied? Why, man, if the river
were dry, I am able to fill it with my tears; if
the wind were down, I could drive the boat
with my sighs. (II.iii.50)

The gentle sentiment of this lyrical touch, with Kempe relishing Launce's droll naïveté, is clearly an essential aspect of the conception, and it is a major factor in raising the scene above the crude horse-play of, say Tarlton's Jests and the broadside ballads.

Thus, Launce's tears are defined by their context and are transvalued not only by the nature of the impersonation but by the contrast with Proteus' sincerely sad parting from Julia in the preceding scene. The effect of the contiguity of the two scenes (II.ii and II.iii) is to reflect specifically on the clown's act rather than to qualify the romance qualities of the Proteus-Julia farewell. Analogically, one might think of the circus clown who enters the arena immediately after a balancing act. The clown tries with patent clumsiness to balance some eggs in egg-cups on a plate on the end of a stick. He makes a deal of comic business out of this, always on the brink of tripping over his own feet and so on. Eventually he falls, revealing wooden eggs glued to egg-cups which are in turn glued to the rest of his apparatus. The clown's deliberately inept performance, his assumed naïveté, can hardly deflate the skill of the experts, which is in any case not open to deflation. Rather, their balancing skill exposes the clown's comic ineptitude, the planned absurdity of his attempts to emulate their practised dexterity. In Two Gentlemen, the unqualified pathos of the Proteus-Julia farewell is placed squarely as straight dramatic romance, which in contrast to the charade mode of the preceding puppet-show scene (II.i) and the ensuing Launce "act" (II.iii) encourages direct, expressive portrayal by the actors (or actor and actress) concerned.

The parallels which modern criticism since Bond has detected between the

two parting scenes are of course undeniable and certainly strengthen the play's impression of coherence:

On the one hand, we witness the silent Julia whom Proteus rebukes for weeping and who leaves without a word; and, on the other hand, the clown depicts mock-epically the laments of his father, mother, and sister, and the heartlessness of his recalcitrant cur In ironic contrast also are the talkative and soon-to-be false Proteus who defines the wordlessness of true affection, and the loquacious and sincere Launce who describes the heartless silence of his dog. Verbally, too, echoes abound 1)

This is a representative view, representative in its uncovering of parallels as well as in its simplification of Launce's characterization. But characteristically, it does not attempt to understand the mutual effect of the parallels, beyond saying that the Launce scene "is clearly a parody of" the Proteus-Julia scene. Brooks, like Weimann, uses the term, burlesque, noting however that "burlesque need not mean belittlement of what is burlesqued."²⁾ What none of these critics have noted is that in these scenes the burlesque parallelism reflects on Launce's own act rather than on Proteus' and Silvia's parting.

This first Launce scene is complementary in its mood and conception to the fourth Launce episode (in IV.iv). But the latter episode, as well as the two other scenes in which Launce appears, impinges more directly, even if still superficially, on the main romance actions.

The Launce and Speed interlude (in II.v) which is set between Proteus' two dramatic soliloquies is calculated not only to assert the jesting aspect of the comedy but to echo the main plot. Brooks relevantly notes that

The reunion of Launce and Speed in Milan immediately succeeds that of the friends, their masters; and their dialogue comments on the love-theme. 3)

Similarly, "the episode of Launce and his letter (which ends III.i) affords even more striking parallels with the love and friendship themes."⁴⁾ Each

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- 1) Norman Sanders, in the Introduction to his New Penguin edn. of Two Gentlemen. Similar views are adopted in H.F. Brooks, "Two Clowns in a Comedy", pp.96-7, and Tillyard, Shakespeare's Early Comedies, pp.125-6. On the general question of sub-plots and parody, see Dean Frye, "A Question of Shakespearean 'Parody'," and Richard Levin, "Elizabethan 'Clown' Subplots." An early view that the clownage is a "comic parody" of the main romance plot is Bond's, in the introduction to his Arden edition of Two Gentlemen (1906). He argued that "Such comic parody in a measure compensates us for the want of an essential share by these servants in the plot" (p.xxix).
 - 2) Brooks, op. cit., p.96; R. Weimann, "Laughing with the Audience ..," p.40.
 - 3) Op. cit., p.97.
 - 4) Ibid.

of these episodes has the semblance of a Lylian comedians' cross-talk act.¹⁾ The "striking parallels" that criticism has noticed, though they are undeniably there, do not redeem these two run-of-the-mill cross-talk episodes, the second of which (III.i. 295-360) consists almost entirely of routine Lyly pastiche.²⁾

The fourth Launce episode (IV.iv 1-61), like the first, merits critical scrutiny; it also deserves its share of critical tact. Discussing this "act" of Launce's, H.F. Brooks perceives in it "a comparison of Proteus with Crab" and finds "reflected in Crab the transgressor in Proteus." Brooks notes five main points of similarity between Proteus and Crab: (i) their "want of sensibility to old ties"; (ii) "As a present for Silvia, Crab resembles the love that Proteus offers her"; (iii) both are "unfit for Silvia and offensive where true courtliness should rule"; (iv) like Proteus, Crab "gets his friend into trouble"; (v) both Crab and Proteus are "saved" by the "extremes" to which their respective friends are prepared to carry their friendship. For all his reservations that "Crab is a clown's dog and not a symbol or a piece of allegory," Brooks seems to assign to the incident of Crab's lifting his leg on Silvia's farthingale a serious moral significance quite out of keeping with its frankly low-comic mode.³⁾

Brooks, if challenged, could doubtless justify his interpretation, although it appears to bear little direct relation to the dramatic semblance of the Launce episode - to what seizes our attention as we read the play or witness a performance of it. Furthermore, criticism has to be careful lest it give the impression, as Brooks's essay is in danger of doing, that Two Gentlemen has the unity and coherence of a work like Twelfth Night.

What is striking about the farthingale episode is not its oblique comment on Proteus' relationship with Silvia but its development of the droll clownage of the first Launce scene. Here again is Launce, the clown - a clown being less a kind of human being than a stage part. Again he is playing his ludicrous charade. He repeats his earlier droll trick of treating Crab as a person with human attributes, and he reproaches the dog for having fallen short of the standards of polite society:

1) Cf. the page scenes in plays like Campaspe and Sapho and Phao, both of which have low-comic subsidiary actions unconnected with the respective main actions; cf. also Mitis' comment on the business of romantic comedy - "some such cross wooing, with a clown to their servingman" (Every Man Out of his Humour, III.i).

2) See Leech, ed. cit., pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

3) All the quotations in this paragraph are from op. cit., p.99.

..... did I not bid thee mark me and do as I
do? When didst thou see me heave up my leg and
make water against a gentlewoman's farthingale? (36)

This datum is full of hilarious possibilities for the deft comic mime that Kempe apparently was.

There is however a notable difference between this and the first Launce scene. The later one reflects inescapably on the main action - on the character of Proteus in particular. Launce is here being employed as a go-between. He has obtusely lost the lapdog (the "squirrel") which Proteus has entrusted to him to deliver to Silvia. Launce has with absurd logic substituted Crab, and this monologue which opens the scene is another of the clown's earthy reproaches, addressed to the cur who has let his devoted master down once again. In the atmosphere of "jest," Launce's clownish, deadpan demeanour is incongruously at one with his action of having seriously offered the cur to Silvia. The incidents - Crab's stealing of the capon's leg, his incontinence beneath the table, and his fouling of Silvia's farthingale - also reflect inescapably on the would-be courtly Proteus. Together, Launce and Crab have succeeded in showing him in a foolish light. The comic reversal of Proteus' intention to present Silvia with a dainty lapdog makes of him an undignified figure indeed.¹⁾

Whereas none of the four Launce scenes is integrated with the play's main actions as are the passages in which either the Dromios or Grumio appear, it is nevertheless possible to see the Launce role not as a falling-off on Shakespeare's part but as an attempt (which Shakespeare made again with Launcelot in The Merchant of Venice) to accommodate romantic comedy to the peculiar talents of the clown, Kempe. If this is so, then these scenes - certainly the first and the fourth - are integral to Shakespeare's original intentions, and in their episodic features may be detected the effects of the Tudor popular clown tradition. Criticism should not be deluded by any a priori notions of the superiority of "organic" over "mechanical" art, of "imagination" over "fancy," into trying, as Brooks does, to postulate here an organic form which has little relevance to the place of the Launce scenes in Two Gentlemen. Leech's theory of revision may well be a valid account of Launce's part in the play, and by implication it certainly corrects Brooks's

1) It is one of several devices that Shakespeare employs to prevent Proteus from seeming too much of a ruthless, intriguing villain. Cf. the discussion of the Julia scenes in Act IV, below.

over-subtle account of the "parallels."¹⁾ It does not however appear to tell the whole critical story.

(vi) Dramatic change and perspective in the central acts

We have seen that Valentine's psychological volte face is wrought by "Love," that "mighty lord" (II.iv.131), who has "metamorphosed you, i.e. Valentine with a mistress, that when I Speed look on you, I can hardly think you my master" (II.i.29). Proteus has been similarly transformed: "Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphos'd me" (I.i.66). Julia, once so efferrescent, is also changed by Love. She departs from Proteus "without a word. /Ay, so true love should do; it cannot speak" (II.ii.16). The characterization of Proteus, Valentine, and Julia is wrought, in the first two acts, largely in these terms. With new dramatic developments like Proteus' "perjury," Valentine's banishment, and Julia's pursuit of Proteus and her arrival at the Duke's "court," Shakespeare expands his comic mode. Although the straightforward, linear mode of romance conditions most of III.i, as well as IV.i,iii, and V.i,ii,iii, Shakespeare displays in some parts of the central acts (II.iv-IV.iii) a command of a wide range of dramatic strategies that is marred only by his inability, most marked in III.i, IV.i,iii, and the final act, to assimilate the dramatic modes that he employed with such dexterity in The Shrew to the services of his romance materials in Two Gentlemen.

(a) Proteus' inconstancy - Mutability - Neoplatonism

At the heart of the play's romance crisis is the figure of Proteus. Interpretation of his characterization is clearly a fundamental matter if the play is to be understood.

When Proteus joins Valentine at the Duke's "court" (II.iv.98), he is still the true friend and ideal courtier of the opening scenes. Shakespeare is careful to register this impression here. Despite Panthino's and Proteus' own earlier opinions that he (Proteus) has been "losing the time" (I.iii.14 and I.i.67 respectively), Valentine is made to claim that his friend has

1) Note however that Leech, in the critical part of his Introduction, supports Brooks's argument, describing his article as "perceptive" (ed. cit., p.lv).

Made use and fair advantage of his days:
His years but young, but his experience old;
His head unmellow'd, but his judgment ripe;
And in a word

He is complete in feature and in mind,
With all good grace to grace a gentleman. (II.iv,63)

The stage is clearly set for a dramatic complication which will take the shape of an ironic reversal.

Earlier, Valentine's position as Love's heretic has invited a similar reversal: he must become Love's votary. In the present scene, Proteus' moral change is the centre of interest. He has, significantly, been portrayed as noble and virtuous - true friend and true lover. This is the impression Shakespeare has insistently given till now. Proteus is not seen as a villain (although criticism often forgets this). He is morally nearer to Claudio than to ~~Don John~~ ^{Don John}. That is to say, he is conceived as a fallible mortal, from the first. He has been Love's victim once. What is more inevitable than that he should be Love's victim again? Tillyard's charge that Shakespeare has failed to "make" the moral change "credible" is beside the point. To accuse Shakespeare here of "missing the dramatic conflict"¹⁾ is rather like objecting to the absence of internal action - of a kind appropriate in a play like Macbeth - in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream Shakespeare manages the characters' moral transitions in terms of the fairy-tale world which the play reveals: a green world in which magical transformations are almost as inevitable as they are in Ovid or Apuleius. This together with the Blind Cupid motif, is enough to account for the switches in the affections not only of that "spotted and inconstant man," Demetrius, but also of the constant Lysander.

In Two Gentlemen, Shakespeare introduces the power of Love a good deal less tangibly than in A Midsummer Night's Dream. In the former play, he does not rely on the green-world magic of fairies. Instead of this, he has resort to the conventional romance notion of Love's mighty power, with which he couples a number of complementary ideas that help give body to the play's romantic-comic world.

Proteus' arrival at the Duke's court (II.iv) not only precipitates the romance crisis; it also interrupts Valentine's and Silvia's comic charade. After briefly joining in the ritual observations (II.iv. 95-110) and engaging

1) Shakespeare's Early Comedies, pp. 115,116.

in a duologue with Valentine on the subject of Love (120-73), Proteus takes shape as a disruptive intruder in the charade, a player who breaks the rules. The mode of the comedy changes as the tenor of the representation turns in the direction of romance intrigue and complication, punctuated by the luscious irruptions and comments of Launce and Speed and later by the disguise-playing Julia.

Behind the part of the representation that depicts Proteus' moral change are the two inter-related ideas of Love and Mutability. Together these ideas are largely constitutive of the determinist-tinctured milieu in which Proteus moves. Here, however, Mutability is not conceived (as it is in Errors) as a sinister threat to a man's sanity and to orderly social relations. Mutability in Two Gentlemen is akin to that so well defined in The Faerie Queene: it is a condition of man's earthly existence. It reflects the universal pattern of life in which "Everything that grows/Holds in perfection but a little moment" (Sonnet XV). Fallen man is a "thrall" to Mutability who plays "Her cruel sports to many mens decay" (Spenser, Mutability Cantos, vi.1).¹⁾ This "decay" is not only physical but - far more sinister - it embraces the moral change of

..... your owne natures for, each of you
That vertue have, or this, or that to make
Is checkt and changed from his nature trew
By others opposition or obliquid view. (vii.54)

In such a world, people are not either good or evil as in the Moralities. Being tainted is here a natural human hazard. As one commentator on the Mutability Cantos put it, in the mutable world

the drive to satisfy human aspirations leads to the loss of humanity. Love of beauty, the necessary motive to generation, turns instead to agony and sterile lust. The union of friends and lovers is rooted in antagonism, and the bond so formed arouses the fear and jealousy which tend to disrupt it. 2)

In a set-up like this, Protean inconstancy is almost inevitable. The situation is not a mere matter of good (Valentine, Silvia and Julia) versus

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- 1) The source of this renaissance sententia is probably Ovid's "Tempus edax rerum, tuque, invidiosa vetustas/Omnia destruitis" (Metamorphoses, XV. 234). The idea recurs in Sidney's "With how sad steps, O Moon" and his "Leave me, O Love, that reachest but to dust." See chap. I, above.
 - 2) Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, p.303.

evil (Proteus), so much as of Proteus' almost recurrent tendency to fall victim to Love - a tendency to which the constant Lysander and the "spotted and inconstant" Demetrius alike are prone. By Mutability is man's "vertue checkt and changed from his nature trew."

Proteus' first soliloquy (II.iv. 188-210) opens with imagery of Mutability: "one heat" expelling another, "one nail by strength" driving out another (188-9). His notion of his love as "thaw'd" so that "like a waxen image 'gainst a fire it/Bears no impression of the thing it was" (196) confirms the mutability idea here.¹⁾ The Mutability imagery symbolises Proteus' helplessness. He is absorbed into the determinist world which is dominated by Mutability:

If I can check my erring love, I will;
If not, to compass her, I'll use my skill. (209)

His love now "bears no impression of the thing it was" (198). He has fallen in love with Silvia "without advice" (or consideration). He has so far beheld only "her picture," has only a very superficial acquaintance of the real Silvia (a Neoplatonic image):

'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld,
And that hath dazzled my reason's light;
But when I look on her perfections,
There is no reason but I shall be blind. (II.iv.205)

Shakespeare uses different grammatical forms of the word, "reason," no less than five times in this twenty-three-line soliloquy and is clearly alluding to the romantic Love-Reason debate in which Reason is the inevitable loser. Proteus asks himself:

Is it mine eye, or Valentinus' praise,
Her true perfection, or my false transgression,
That makes me reasonless to reason thus? (192)

1) Cf. the "uncertain glory of an April day" image (I.iii.84-7), which has already been mentioned, p.172 above. The Duke later uses a similar image to refer to Valentine:

This weak impress of love is as a figure
Trenched in ice, which with an hour's heat
Dissolves to water and doth lose his form. (III.ii.6)

But Shakespeare is being ironic here. These words really apply to Proteus, the Duke's interlocutor, and not to Valentine.

The answer to this question lies in Proteus' own words - the four lines just quoted: "when I look on her perfections,/There is no reason but I shall be blind." This reference to blind Love is of a piece with Julia's later realization that "this fond Love [is] a blinded god" (IV.iv.194). In Diana, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, this blindness is seen as a condition of all human love. This is because Love is "void of all reason." Even "perfect love (though it be the sonne of reason) is not governed by it." ¹⁾

To argue thus is not to whitewash Proteus, but to point the representative nature of his moral deviations. The blindness of Love means more than its irrationality. Blindness in renaissance as opposed to classical and mediaeval thought has peculiar moral overtones. In his Dictionarii sev repertorii moralis, Berchorius' gloss on cecus, cecitas reads as follows: " cecitas dicit mihi proprie aliquid negativum et nihil positivum. Nota igitur generaliter per cecum intelligitur peccator"²⁾ Mutability, Blind Love, Sin: all are inter-related here. They are complementary aspects of fallen man's inheritance, of sublunary Nature.

The moral overtones of these three themes are developed in Proteus' second soliloquy (II.vi.1-32):

To leave my Julia, shall I be forsworn;
To love fair Silvia, shall I be forsworn;
To wrong my friend I shall be much forsworn.
And ev'n that power which gave me first my oath
Provokes me to this three-fold perjury. 5
Love bade me swear, and Love bids me forswear.
O sweet-suggesting Love, if thou hast sinn'd,
Teach me (thy tempted subject) to excuse it.
At first I did adore a twinkling star,
But now I worship a celestial sun: 10
Unheedful vows may heedfully be broken,
And he wants wit that wants resolved will
To learn his wit t' exchange the bad for better.

At first, Proteus is depicted in a moral dilemma, fully cognisant of his betrayal. The opening antitheses express this pointedly enough. But

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- 1) Diana, in Bullough, op. cit., I.249. The idea of blind Cupid seems to have fascinated Shakespeare. In Two Gentlemen, it appears in a number of guises or light variations on the Blind Cupid theme: as when Valentine and Thurio debate whether Love "hath twenty pair of eyes" or "not an eye at all" (II.iv.88-93), and when Speed quips - "If you love her, you cannot see her" (II.i.65). In connection with Valentine's and Thurio's debate, it might be mentioned that there were "two differing currents of opinion" regarding Cupid's blindness; some of the "'idealistic' fourteenth-century poets emphasize the fact that the Love God's sight was 'ryghte-clere'" (Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, p.108).
 - 2) I.e. "blindness conveys to me personally something negative and nothing positive Note therefore that by the blind man is generally understood the sinner (quoted by Panofsky, op. cit., p.109, n.47).

there is a sense in which what has happened is seen as not merely his responsibility. As Greene puts it,

him whom no mortall creature can controll, Love can
command: no dignity is able to resist Cupid's deitie
.... Love is ingraven in the mind by destinie, which
neither reason can eschew nor wisdome expell. 1)

It is Love, that "mighty lord" (II.iv.131), who "bade me swear and Love bids me forswear" (II.vi.6). This is why Proteus prays to "sweet-suggesting Love," imploring him to "Teach me (thy tempted subject) to excuse" Love's sin (7-8). But, more than this, Proteus is now calling Julia "bad" (13); his values are beginning to resemble those of Spenser's Mutability who "wrong of right and bad of good did make." Proteus argues that "I cannot now prove constant to myself, / Without some treachery us'd to Valentine" (31). This inversion of values is explicitly traced back to Love, whom Proteus petitions to

lend me wings to make my purpose swift
As thou hast lent me wit to plot this drift. (42)

Love is by now clearly positioned on "the wrong side of the moral world," as Panofsky puts it in his discussion of blind Love.²⁾ And this shadowy concrete universal is detected looming behind Proteus' inconstancy, behind his inversion of values, and behind his sophisticated paradoxes.

Proteus protests: "I cannot leave to love; and yet I do" (17). It is only by "losing" Valentine, his friend, and Julia, his mistress, that he can "find" himself and Silvia. In any case,

I to myself am dearer than a friend,
For Love is still most precious in itself. (23)

Proteus' moral volte face is treated, significantly, less as a dilemma through which he works - like Macbeth - than as a change naturally embraced and then justified in the language of fallen man - which is the language of man living in a world where Mutability plays "her cruell sports." Proteus' "true and honest" love for Julia has been assailed by forces greater than himself; "because excesse and force is no lesse proper to dishonest than to honest love."³⁾ This it is that makes Valentine's "virtue the greater" and "doth the more increase [Proteus'] vice."³⁾

Proteus' falling "thrall" to Mutability - for "we are all subject to the curse" (Mutability Cantos, vi.6) - is thrown into ironic relief against the

1) Metamorphosis, op. cit., ix.37.

2) Op. cit., p.109.

3) Felicia's terms in her discussion of Love and Reason. See Diana, in Bullough, op. cit., I.249.

Duke's (and Valentine's) assumption that he is "Love's firm votary" who "cannot soon revolt and change his mind" (III.ii.58). Proteus' role as both the Duke's and Valentine's confidant reinforces the irony of this image. This irony is suggestive of Shakespeare's dramatic intention here. Proteus is not a straightforward villain like that other "seemer," Don John, in Much Ado. Proteus is no Machiavel. Rather, he is a representative moral deviant whose aberrations (as will become increasingly clear in the discussion of his role in the fourth and fifth acts) are put in an ironic perspective.

Shakespeare is less interested here in viewing his characters from within, in rendering the hurly-burly of internal drama, than in giving them ethical and metaphysical definition. This is a dimension of the dramatist's employment of the paradigms to impart a peculiar fictive semblance to the world of the play. Shakespeare's expansion of the image patterns of Proteus' two soliloquies embraces not only Valentine's soliloquy (III.i.170 - 87), but many of the utterances of Proteus, Silvia, and Julia in the fourth act.

In his soliloquy (III.i.170 - 87), uttered immediately after his planned elopement has been discovered and sentence of banishment passed, Valentine like Proteus identifies himself with Silvia. Proteus' paradox, in which his apparent dilemma finds its formulation, was:

Julia I lose, and Valentine I lose;
If I keep them I needs must lose myself;
If I lose them thus find I by their loss:
For Valentine, myself; for Julia, Silvia. (II.vi.19)

Valentine's lot is couched in similarly metaphysical terms:

To die is to be banished from myself,
And Silvia is myself: banish'd from her
Is self from self. A deadly banishment. (III.i.171)

Valentine's banishment doesn't merely entail separation from the girl he loves. It involves the rupture of his own personality or self. Silvia, it is maintained, is essential light and joy - the Platonic *ιδέα* of which phenomenal experience is a mere "shadow" or imitation:

What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?
Unless it be to think that she is by
And feed upon the shadow of perfection.
Except I be by Silvia in the night,
There is no music in the nightingale.
Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
There is no day for me to look upon.
She is my essence, and I leave to be,
If I be not by her fair influence
Foster'd, illumin'd, cherish'd, kept alive.
I fly not death to fly his deadly doom:
Tarry I here, I but attend on death,
But fly I hence, I fly away from life. (III.i.174)

Words like "shadow," "essence," "influence," "illumin'd," are technical terms drawn from renaissance Neoplatonism and from poetry inspired by or alluding to that body of thought - poetry such as the Sonnets and The Phoenix and the Turtle.¹⁾

Valentine's soliloquy, which is his reaction to the Duke's sentence of banishment, takes the form of a definition of his relationship with his beloved, a relationship which is threatened by the Duke's action. Silvia, claims Valentine, is: (i) "myself"; (ii) his "light" and his "joy"; (iii) his "essence." In Christian thought, the notion of Christ as "the essence and life of the Church" suggests the usage Shakespeare had in mind: the conception of Silvia as that by which Valentine subsists, the foundation of his being.²⁾ As his "essence," Silvia will "influence" and "illumine" him (astrological metaphors), constituting his "light," "joy," "music," and "day." She is essential perfection; anything else is but "the shadow [or pale imitation] of perfection." But, more than that, his separation from her will entail not merely a watered-down existence, but "no music," "no day," etc. Such separation will logically entail his flight from life, his death, as the quibbling paradoxes of the three final lines suggest.

These are the implications of Valentine's "faith," of his religious conception of love as "the supreme expression of his existence." As such, this is a transfiguration of the earlier notion of Valentine as Love's Fool, although the two conceptions are not incompatible. This shift in perspective looks towards Shakespeare's romantic solution of the dramatic crisis which has now been precipitated by the two anti-comic figures: the Duke and the scheming Proteus.

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- 1) See Appendix D for a note on this particular tract of Neoplatonic poetic imagery.
 - 2) See ibid. for the sources of the ideas and quotations in this paragraph.

Shakespeare gives an original dramatic twist to the Neoplatonic shadow-substance antithesis by using it as a framework in which to view Proteus' treacherous courtship of Silvia in the fourth act, the first scene of which has shown Valentine in the forest, safely out of his rival's way.

In the second scene, Proteus who is now pretending to woo Silvia on Thurio's behalf asks her for a literal (as opposed to a Neoplatonic) "picture" of herself:

Vouchsafe me yet your picture for my love,
The picture that is hanging in your chamber:
To that I'll speak, to that I'll sigh and weep;
For since the substance of your perfect self 120
Is else devoted, I am but a shadow;
And to your shadow will I make true love.
Julia. /*Aside*/ If'twere a substance, you would sure deceive it,
And make it but a shadow as I am.
Silvia. I am very loath to be your idol, sir; 125
But since your falsehood shall become you well
To worship shadows and adore false shapes,
Send to me in the morning, and I'll send it. (IV.ii.117)

The "picture" for which Proteus asks is to be given him in lieu of "the substance of your perfect self." Because this "substance" is "else devoted," Proteus is "but a shadow" and only to her "shadow" can he "make true love." He insists in terms that recall Valentine's soliloquy that he subsists only in relation to her. To him she is his "essence," as she is Valentine's.¹⁾

At once, both Julia and Silvia invert this imagery of eternal and immutable constancy and Proteus' subjection to Mutability is evident once more. When he humbly admits that in the face of Silvia's rejection he is a "shadow" and must make love to her "shadow," Julia who is eavesdropping comments punningly:

If'twere a substance, you would sure deceive it,
And make it but a shadow as I am.

Silvia caps this by further insistence on his subjection to the inverted values of a world dominated by Mutability by which, in Spenser's words, "each of you .../Is chekt and changed from his nature trew," and she neatly turns his shadow-substance imagery:

..... your falsehood shall become you well
To worship shadows and adore false shapes.

This reminds us that Proteus' mode of constancy is inconstancy: "I cannot now prove constant to myself/Without some treachery us'd to Valentine"

1) Hooker uses the term, "substance," as a synonym of "essence." See Appendix D.

(II.vi.31). This "treachery to Valentine" manifests itself here in worship of "shadows" and adoration of "false shapes." This "worship" becomes an apt emblem of his "falsehood." Shakespeare quibbles on this metaphysical term: "shadow" as "falsehood" or "treachery": as the imitation of "essence," e.g. a "picture"; and as "disguise" - Julia is disguised as a youth and is thus a "shadow" of her true self. Both Proteus and Julia have been metamorphosed into different sorts of "shadows" (121,124) - and all because of the natural power of Love (see II,vi.6) and Mutability.

Julia's soliloquy over Silvia's picture (IV.iv.177-203) offers further variations on these themes:

Alas, how love can trifle with itself! 181
Here is her picture: let me see

What should it be that he respects in her 192
But I can make respective in myself,
~~If this fond Love were not a blinded god?~~
Come, shadow, come, and take this shadow up,
For 'tis thy rival. O thou senseless form,
Thou shalt be worshipp'd, kiss'd, lov'd, ador'd;
And were there sense in his idolatry, 198
My substance should be statue in thy stead.

The picture is a "shadow" of Silvia, just as Julia in her disguise is a "shadow" of her former self, that is, when Proteus loved her (195). Because he now worships Silvia's mere "shadow," a "senseless form," he is guilty of "idolatry." He should rather be adoring Julia's "substance": "My substance should be statue in thy stead." The image of "fond Love" as "a blinded god" occurs, once more associated with "shadow" and moral mutability. So Silvia tells the disguised Julia to

Tell him from me,
One Julia, that his changing thoughts forget,
Would better fit his chamber than this shadow. (116)

Proteus, she says, is "full of new-found oaths which he will break" (130), and "his false finger" has "profaned" the ring which Julia gave him as token of their "true constancy," as they "seal^{ed} the bargain with a holy kiss" (II.iii).

All this emphasises the irony of Proteus' temporary delusion and the pathos of Julia's predicament which is the dramatic centre. Shakespeare has used Silvia to point this dramatically in the fourth act, taking care here not to make of Silvia herself a subject deserving of our pity.¹⁾ Already,

1) Cf. the discussion of III.i.222-236 on p. 200-201, below.

the characterization of Silvia anticipates her dramatic treatment in the final scene. She is beginning to look like a figurehead, an idol, a character in a tableau - and all because Shakespeare wants to direct our interest towards the other two lovers, Proteus and Julia.

Proteus' moral fall has commenced with his misapprehension (IV.ii.120) that Silvia is his "essence" or "substance," and it reaches an unsatisfactory climax in the final scene, where to her outburst, "O miserable, unhappy that I am!" he replies,

Unhappy were you madam, ere I came;
But by my coming I have made you happy. (V.iv.29)

Proteus is represented moving blindly in a mutable, evanescent, shadow world in which he will remain lost until he is re-united with his true "essence," Julia. Only when there is "One feast, one house, one mutual happiness" (V.iv.173) will he emerge from this shadow world of deceptions, misapprehensions, "false shapes," "changing thoughts," disguises, chameleons, and metamorphoses which envelops and undermines in varying degrees the fortunes of each of the four main characters. Rather than exploring the self and setting the spotlight on consciousness in some post-Jamesian way, Shakespeare creates this poetic world, in which natural mutability is, as in Spenser, a reinforcing emblem of man's moral mutability. Neither Proteus nor Valentine is a "real" man, conceived "in the round." They are not depicted, as Hamlet is, with Shakespeare unremittingly probing the moral crisis of the hero's self. Valentine and Proteus are courtiers and they are romance lovers. And in terms of their communal literary conventions, they reflect the recurrent patterns of sublunary Nature.

(b) Dramatic perspectives

This generalizing tendency is characteristic of Shakespearean romantic comedy, as I have already argued. But Shakespeare qualifies it dramatically by his avoidance, more notable in The Shrew and Love's Labour's Lost than in Two Gentlemen, of presenting his characters in a simply natural relationship vis-à-vis the audience. None of these three comedies is what Brecht would have called an "Aristotelian" drama. Even in the structurally relatively unsophisticated Two Gentlemen, which with The Merchant of Venice is possibly the most "Aristotelian" of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, we find Shakespeare employing dramatic perspectives which discourage simple audience identification with the characters as well as straight moral diagnosis of the characters' "personalities." We have seen how Shakespeare does this in the puppet-show scene. Elsewhere, he may work more unobtrusively, but what he does is none-the-less significant on that account.

An example of Shakespeare's unobtrusive dramatic strategy is Julia's "pilgrim" scene (II.vii). Like the letter scene (I.ii), this has the appearance of a straight dialogue between Julia, a representative young lady in love, and her confidant, Lucetta. Julia is depicted discussing her projected pursuit of her "loving Proteus." Julia's starry-eyed idealization of the lover she is about to pursue is put in ironic perspective by the placing of this scene immediately after Proteus' second betrayal soliloquy (II.vi). The ironies proceeding from the contiguity of these two scenes are enriched by the religious aura with which Julia's expression of her love is suffused. The sustained devotional imagery places Julia in a conventional as opposed to a naturalistic setting. She sees herself as a "true-devoted pilgrim" who has "Love's wings to fly" to "one so dear,/Of such divine perfection as Sir Proteus" (II.vii.9). The "fire of her love" cannot be "quenched with words" (20). Lucetta does not "seek to quench" this "love's hot fire," however, but to "qualify the fire's extreme rage/Lest it burn above the bounds of reason" (23). But as usual, reason's is a lost cause: "The more thou damm'st it up, the more it burns" (24). Shakespeare develops from this mixed metaphor a nine-line analogy of the river's course to "the wild ocean" (24-32). When the current (emblem of love) is "stopp'd," it "impatiently doth rage"; but when its "fair course is not hindered," it

... makes sweet music with the enamell'd stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage

to "the wild ocean." Similarly, if she leaves unhindered, Julia will be "as patient as a gentle stream," until she finds her love, and then she will rest, "as after much turmoil/A blessed soul doth in Elysium" (38).

Fused with the pathos and the dramatic irony of this almost mystical conception of her love is the playful banter of the two girls as they discuss Julia's disguise as a youth: the quips about cutting her hair, about her wearing breeches and even a codpiece. This luscious element is an expansion of the dramatic irony of Julia's confident, religious devotion to the man who a few lines earlier has called her "a swarthy Ethiopie," "bad" (II.vi.26,13) - the very man who with a "thousand oaths" and "ocean of his tears" has earlier consecrated himself to her. She innocently thinks:

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles,
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate. (75)

Set over against this is Lucetta's conviction that such oaths are "servants to deceitful men" (73). But most important of all is the lightly playful ploy of the disguising, of Julia's spirited decision to simulate the appearance

of "some well-reputed page" (43). This is itself structurally a luscious variation on Proteus' moral "disguising," on his deception of Valentine and the Duke.

The double irony of Julia's and Proteus' "disguising" is a fertilising dramatic centre to the Proteus-Silvia-Julia action in the fourth act. Proteus has advised the dull Thurio to court Silvia by laying

.... lime, to tangle her desires
By wailful sonnets
Say that upon the altar of her beauty 72
You sacrifice your tears, your sighs, your heart
For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews, 77
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps, to dance on sands.
Visit by night your lady's chamber-window
With some sweet consort; to their instruments 82
Tune a deploring dump: the night's dead silence
Will well become such sweet complaining grievance. (III.ii.68)

This fine and melodious eloquence imparts an idyllic and nostalgic note to this part of the action, a note that finds its apotheosis in the golden song which is at the heart of the first Proteus-Silvia-Julia scene (IV.ii). Against this song, which supplies a vein of melancholy beauty, the double irony is set in relief. The Silvia whose "beauty is exquisite," whose "favour infinite" (II.i.52), that "heavenly saint" (II.iv.140), that "principality" whom Valentine "worships" (147): this Silvia is here worshipped by the false Proteus in the delicate song, "Who is Silvia?" The religious idealising attitude of earlier scenes finds full expression here. The Silvia whom Proteus in his soliloquy at the beginning of the scene finds "too fair, too true, too holy" (IV.ii.5) is exalted for these very qualities:

Holy, fair, and wise is she,
The heaven such grace did lend her (IV.ii.40)

The song celebrates her virtually transcendental moral and physical beauty:

She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling.
To her let us garlands bring. (50)

Shakespeare does not allow this scene to take on the semblance of a straightforward celebration of beauty. The opening lines - Proteus' soliloquy, "Already have I been false to Valentine,/And now I must be as unjust to Thurio" - point the initial conditioning irony. Proteus has deceived not only Valentine but also Thurio and the Duke. Further ironies emerge from Shakespeare's use of an inset structure. Before the music begins, Julia (disguised as a page) enters with the Host who has brought the "allicholy"

young page "where you shall hear music, and see the gentleman that you asked for" (IV.ii.30). She, the deserted mistress, will witness Proteus' "perjury." This is the dramatic perspective in which the exquisite song is set. On the one hand, the Host appreciates the song, taking it at face-value as an evocative piece of music, and he is disappointed when it fails to make the "allicholy" page "merry." On the other hand, Julia sadly recognizes the implications of what she witnesses. Her response brings out the pathos of the situation:

Julia. the musician likes me not ... He plays false.

Host. How, out of tune on the strings?

Julia. Not so; but yet so false that he grieves my very heart-strings.

Host. You have a quick ear.

Julia. Ay, I would I were deaf: it makes me have a slow heart.

Host. I perceive you delight not in music.

Julia. Not a whit, when it jars so (55)

Julia's seriously lusuory quibbles (on "likes" = (i) pleases; (ii) loves; on "plays false" = (i) plays out of tune; (ii) plays an actor's part - like Julia herself; on "strings" = (i) strings of the instrument; (ii) "heart-strings") precipitate a series of verbal mistakings, which heighten the pathos of the situation. The obliquity of Julia's remarks to the Host (who provides an admirably neutral foil) is reinforced by the pregnant ironies.

Through the introduction of the disguised Julia, the full ironic significance of the song is realised within the framework of the play. B. Evans has noticed how throughout the third act Proteus "over-peers, deceives, and manipulates Valentine, the Duke and Thurio [and] rides high over the others, exulting in his position." Julia's entry, in the "Who is Silvia?" scene, "makes his villainy laughable rather than dangerous,"¹⁾ as "Proteus the practiser has become Proteus the practissee he is under her eye, his waywardness observed, his duplicity exposed."²⁾

In the balcony wooing that follows the departure of Thurio and the musicians, the contrapuntal, inset structure is maintained. Unknown to Proteus, Julia witnesses his addresses to Silvia and comments ambiguously on them to the Host. But the situation is more than merely "laughable." Here there are overtly tender, reflective overtones largely lacking in the similarly structured scenes in The Shrew - where the inset scenes are qualified by the sense of popular pastime - and in Love's Labour's Lost - where

1) Shakespeare's Comedies, p. 15.

2) Ibid., p. 17.

these scenes are courtly games in which the emphasis is on what Harington called "A spending of the tyme eyther in speeche or action, whose onely end ys a delight of the mynd or speryt."¹⁾ Thus when Silvia reminds Proteus of his broken vows to Julia, Julia in turn plays cheerlessly reflective variations on them in touching asides:

Proteus. I grant, sweet love, that I did love a lady,
But she is dead.
Julia. /Aside/ 'Twere false, if I should speak it;
For I am sure she is not buried. (102)

- and so forth. This pathos-laden irony finds further development as Proteus, à la Orsino, engages Julia as his page and messenger.

Here the romantic-comic cross-purposes which are so central a datum in A Midsummer Night's Dream come briefly to the fore. When Proteus engages the disguised Julia as messenger to replace Launce, she tells her erstwhile lover that:

She dreams on him that has forgot her love,
You dote on her that cares not for your love.
'Tis pity love should be so contrary,
And thinking on it makes me cry 'Alas.' (IV.iv.81)

This suggests the situation at the beginning of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the germ of which may have come from the first book of Diana. In Two Gentlemen however Shakespeare is obviously not ready for the structural complexities of either A Midsummer Night's Dream or Twelfth Night. The paradigm is that of Greene's James IV which could have preceded Two Gentlemen by a year or two:²⁾ A loves B and C loves D; then A woos D who rejects him; B grieves; finally A returns to B. The ironies here are less elaborate than in the two later comedies cited. But they are none the less important.³⁾

These ironies are neatly mustered by Julia, following her engagement as Proteus' page. She soliloquizes:

Alas, poor Proteus, thou hast entertain'd
A fox, to be the shepherd of thy lambs.
Alas, poor fool, why do I pity him
That with his very heart despiseth me? (IV.iv.91)

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- 1) A Treatise on Playe, sig. B²r.
 - 2) James IV is usually dated 1591, although T.W. Baldwin assigns it to 1590. See the New Mermaid edn., ed. by J.A. Lavin, pp.xi-xii, where it is noted that the first mention of this play is in an entry in the Stationers' Register (May, 1594) and that there is no record of a performance during this decade.
 - 3) Note Shakespeare's avoidance, possibly through lack of complete control over his materials, of complications like those of Diana and Twelfth Night. To have Silvia falling in love with the disguised Julia, as Olivia does with Viola and Celia with the disguised Felismena, would in the prevailing dramatic circumstances of Two Gentlemen be merely embarrassing. See my discussion of the paradigm in chap. I.

In both these speeches of Julia's, the irony is redolent of romantic pathos: the pathos of the whole situation of crossed loves, in which Julia and the wronged Valentine are seen to be suffering, as is the would-be intriguer, Proteus, who has in the true romance style retired to his chamber, "Where thou shalt find me, sad and solitary" (89). Proteus is called "poor," because his schemes are doomed from the start. Silvia, as he recognizes, is "too fair, too true, too holy." At once despised by Silvia, pitied by Julia, tempted by "sweet-suggesting Love" and, "like a waxen image 'gainst a fire" (II.iv.197), "subject to the curse" of Mutability (Mutability Cantos, vi.6), this would-be schemer cannot be a villain. The sense of comic play is latent too, as when Julia mixes up the letters and nearly gives the wrong one to Silvia. But this free luscious impulse is momentary and immediately gives way to Silvia's earnest game of "disguising":

Julia. Poor gentlewoman, my master wrongs her much,

Silvia. Dost thou know her?

Julia. Almost as well as I do know myself. (IV.iv.139)

The dramatic irony here is a dimension of Julia's poignant jest in earnest, centred in her disguise. The point is not only that Proteus "supposing himself the master practiser sends as love envoy his own mistress,"¹⁾ but also that the differences between the two personae - Proteus' moral counterfeit ("men change their minds") and Julia's merely physical disguise ("It is the lesser blot, modesty finds/Women to change their shapes" - V.iv.106) - invite the complicity of the audience, as in the puppet-show scene. In the jest in earnest, Shakespeare finds a finely balanced "objective correlative" for Julia's sorrow that might so easily have collapsed in sentimentality.

A similar type of effect is apparent in Julia's reply to Silvia's question, "How tall was she?" Here Shakespeare is to be seen, so to speak, savouring a delicious situation, revelling in the ironies inherent in Julia's poignant game:²⁾

About my stature: for at Pentecost,
When all our pageants of delight were play'd,
Our youth got me to play the woman's part,
And I was trimm'd in Madam Julia's gown,
Which served me as fit, by all men's judgments,
As if the garment had been made for me;
Therefore I know she is about my height.
And at that time I made her weep agoon,
For I did play a lamentable part.

1) Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies, p.17.

2) Cf. my discussion of Viola's ironic game, chap. I, above.

Madam, 'twas Ariadne, passioning
For Theseus' perjury, and unjust flight;
Which I so lively acted with my tears,
That my poor mistress, moved therewithal,
Wept bitterly, and would I might be dead,
If I in thought felt not her very sorrow. (IV.iv.156)

Shakespeare is here playing ironically with fictive regressions, playing with his literary form, much as he did in The Shrew. To begin at the beginning, here is a boy-actor playing Julia who is now pretending to be a page; the page is recounting how he once played a woman's part dressed in Julia's clothes, as if they "had been made for me." Ironically, these clothes were made for her, and not for the fictive page who could wear them only if "disguised" as Julia. Furthermore, Julia's "pageant" part reflects her predicament at the moment, for Ariadne too was deserted by her lover.¹⁾ No wonder "my poor mistress, moved therewithal, / Wept bitterly"; no wonder "I in thought felt ... her very sorrow." These fictions offer a multi-faceted mirror of Julia's predicament, full of the pathos of her intensely serious game.

By this use of dramatic perspectives - from the puppet-show scene to Julia's "pageants" speech - Shakespeare discourages simple audience-identification with his romantic characters. He also suggests the irrelevance of a critical approach that looks upon all literature as uniformly co-extensive with life.

(c) The flat, linear mode of III.i

By the side of the artifice of the scenes just discussed, the episode of Valentine's betrayal is thin and inept. It is clear from the first that here all is not well dramatically. The puzzling entry and immediate dismissal of Thurio at the commencement of the scene does not auger well (III.i. 1-2).²⁾ The ensuing conversations, first Proteus' feigned scruples and his betrayal of Valentine's confidences under the guise of "love of you [i.e. the Duke], not hate unto my friend"; then the Duke's elaborate pretence to Valentine that he is "full resolv'd to take a wife a lady in Verona here" (76,81); the whole business of Valentine's enthusiastic offer of assistance, although he himself intends to elope that very night; the details of the Duke's feigned difficulties (the locked doors, the tower "built so shelving that one cannot climb it"); the clumsily baited trap into which Valentine readily falls: all these may be "stock properties of romantic drama," as J.G.

1) Theseus and Ariadne, in Ovid's Metamorphosis, VIII, 174-79, are the types respectively of faithless lover and deserted mistress.

2) See NCS edn., p. 93; S. Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p.164.

Wales has shown.¹⁾ The trouble is that they remain nothing more than "stock properties," trivial, and because of their triviality a little bit ridiculous.

According to Muriel St. C. Byrne, Michael Langham in his 1957 production at the Old Vic tried to inject some life into the scene by playing it as deliberate burlesque, as Goddard recommends. The Duke was portrayed not as "a heavy father but [as] the dramatist's humorous comment upon that conventional figure."²⁾ Unlike Byrne, Richard David takes a highly critical view of this interpretation:

The actors guyed love, the politic duke was more foxy than Ulysses, the brigands were by Gilbert and Sullivan, not by Schiller. Of course the Elizabethans laughed too at the excesses of loverly behaviour but not at love.... Unless these things can be taken seriously, there is no point in putting on Two Gentlemen at all. 3)

David is right. This scene is seriously meant. A comic operetta Duke makes nonsense of the Phaëton speech as well as of the last part of the dénouement. Tillyard's frankly eulogistic view of this scene may be nearer the truth than this kind of farcifying of the romance crisis. To Tillyard, this is "a big scene superbly dramatic" in which "a Valentine of schoolboy aspect" gives himself away, with "the Duke glowering ferociously behind a superficial mask of good humour."⁴⁾ This moderate view is fairly unexceptionable, compared to the insensitive interpretation of Bonazza who would emphasize the "suspense" of this "climactic rope-ladder scene" which, following G.P. Baker, he prefers to the "pedestrian clarity" of the first two acts.⁵⁾

The notion, "suspense," is hardly germane to this play or to Shakespearean romantic comedy at large. In Two Gentlemen, almost as openly as in As You Like It, Shakespeare tends to ditch the potential excitement and adventures of romance with their openings for climactic scenes, in favour of leisurely wooing scenes and love-games, as well as all kinds of comic play with "disguising." What happens in the third act of Two Gentlemen is that these, the definitive preoccupations of romantic comedy, are crowded out by the romantic intrigue

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- 1) "Shakespeare's Use of English and Foreign Elements in the Setting of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," pp. 97-8.
 - 2) "The Shakespeare Season" p.471.
 - 3) "Actors and Scholars," p.85.
 - 4) Shakespeare's Early Comedies, p.133.
 - 5) Shakespeare's Early Comedies, pp. 93-5.

action, which is allowed to assume disproportionate importance, instead of being firmly kept in its place as in As You Like It. But what is wrong with the rope-ladder scene in Two Gentlemen is not only that it upsets the balance of the play right up to the controversial dénouement, but that in the absence of the characteristic Shakespearean artifice, there is nothing to veil or transmute the blatantly stock properties, nothing to demarcate the creaking machinery of the betrayal and detection of Valentine's plan from the similar devices used with mechanical regularity by writers like Greene and Montemayor. It is not that all this "deflates our confidence in Valentine" by making him out to be "downright stupid";¹⁾ nor is it true to say that it detracts from the dignity of the Duke.²⁾ Valentine's plan has to be exposed and the Duke has to detect the projected elopement. What really breaks the first 150 lines of the scene is the wooden verse:

Nay then, no matter. Stay with me awhile.
I am to break with thee of some affairs
That touch me near; wherein thou must be secret.
'Tis not unknown to thee (III.i.58)

The crassly handled dramatic irony does nothing to redeem the dramatic situation. Yet, this is the turning point of the play, and it is in itself as flat and inert a piece of linear writing as Shakespeare is capable of.

It is indeed difficult to imagine a clumsier way of getting Valentine off to the forest and ingratiating Proteus with the Duke. Valentine's eloquent soliloquy- "And why not death rather than living torment?" (170-87) - and the Duke's fine fury - "Why Phaëton, for thou art Merops' son, /Wilt thou aspire to guide the heavenly car?" (153 - 60) - only begin to redeem the play from the effect of the 150 plodding lines of pseudo-intrigue that make up the first half of this scene. The entry of Launce with Proteus does little to rescue the dramatic situation. By this time Valentine is acutely dejected. Each of Proteus' questions he answers in the negative - "No," "Neither," "Nothing." Launce, who has been indulging in verbal (and probably physical) horseplay ever since he entered, now comes out with: "Master, shall I strike?" When Proteus asks, "Who wouldst thou strike?" Launce answers, "Nothing." The silently despairing Valentine is for the moment a mere comic butt. There is no fragile comic poise to redeem his dramatic position here.

In this scene, Silvia emerges as a pitiable figure. To hint her misery

1) Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p.167.

2) Leech, ed. cit., p. lxiv.

is the point of Proteus' quasi-choric lyric poem, contrasting the helpless girl with her father. Here the emphasis falls on the harshness of the latter, not because he is harsh (he has been, unlike Duke Frederick, represented as kind and hospitable), but because the harsher he appears, the more apt to excite pity will her predicament be:¹⁾ Silvia has "offered to the doom" (or sentence)

A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears;
Those at her father's churlish feet she tender'd ... (III.i,222 ff.)

This fifteen-line speech does lend some pathos to the enforced separation of Valentine from Silvia by setting them off against the Duke. But Shakespeare again significantly declines to make too much of this "heavenly saint's" sorrow. He determinedly avoids the temptation to make of her a romantic-comic Juliet and prefers to sustain the impression of Silvia as aloof and removed, indeed a goddess-like figure, quite unlike Julia or any other of his romantic-comic heroines in conception. The rationale of this treatment will emerge in the following section.

(vii) The outlaw scenes and the dénouement

The outlaw-scenes have troubled critics of the play, particularly since Charlton's contemptuous dismissal of the outlaws as Gilbertian brigands who "enter with metaphorical daggers in mouths bristling with black mustachios and with deperate oaths."²⁾ Charlton's is the cheap sarcasm of an after-dinner speech and cannot be taken as serious criticism. Clifford Leech's remarks however merit serious attention. Like Charlton, Leech regards these outlaws as "figures of fun" but insists that they are "meant to be ... paste-board figures like the Duke himself."³⁾ Leech's view of the play as burlesque has been rejected above. It is the view behind Peter Hall's Stratford production of Two Gentlemen in 1960, which, according to J.R. Brown, "missed the romantic climax of the play" for this very reason:

The last scene was dominated by laughter - at Silvia's 'Ooh!' as Proteus unblindfolded her (an interpolated incident), at the trotting Julia's comic faint, at Proteus' high-pitched 'were man But constant, he were perfect,' at the outlaws' routine pranks..... The threatened rape of Silvia was a broad joke: Valentine's embarrassing, impossible, generous,

1) For a similar contrast, exploited to the hilt, see Brooke's Romeus and Juliet, 1931-90, as well as the slightly more "domestic" scene in Romeo and Juliet, III.v, which is of course enacted, not reported.

2) Op. cit., p. 38.

3) Ed. cit., p. lxxv.

'All that was mine in Silvia I give thee,' was spoken so that it was hardly noticed; Proteus' repentance was a sentiment to laugh at. 1)

Brown rightly objects to this treatment of the romance purely as a burlesque game, in which "the conflict of love and friendship, and the manifestation of generosity, faithfulness and truth went unheeded."²⁾

The final act appears to be full of puzzles, and Hall's interpretation may be looked upon as one way of getting over them. Leech finds three puzzling features in the first outlaw scene (IV.i): "the outlaws' reason for choosing Valentine as their king"; "the Third Outlaw's reason for banishment is similar to Valentine's, and the Second Outlaw's similar to the offence that Valentine claims was his"; and their "ready promise, so at odds with their account of past practices, to do 'no outrages/On silly women and poor passengers.'"³⁾

It is strange that critics, puzzled by these alleged oddities, have been so slow to consult analogues, especially The Tale of Gamelyn and also possibly A Gest of Robyn Hode.⁴⁾ The outlaw scenes in Two Gentlemen reflect the milieu of these works - the popular outlaw tradition - in a way that a later, more sophisticated comedy like As You Like It eschews. In Two Gentlemen, the outlaws are men like Gamelyn, who have been "cryed ... wolves-heed" (700). They are not idealized as in romance but belong to the realm of popular ballad and interlude, as do the Robin Hood plays of which only fragments survive.

In The Tale and A Gest, the milieu is a simple naturalistic one. In A Gest, Robin is depicted as robbing two monks of "Eyght hondred pound and more" and treating them in his usual cavalier manner. In The Tale, Gamelyn, after breaking the porter's neck, beats up some clergy, all of whom are associates of his lying and grasping eldest brother. Fleeing to the forest, Gamelyn is made first the outlaw-king's deputy and then king of the outlaws. The rest of The Tale deals with Gamelyn's abolition of the unjust lordship of "the false knight his brother" (784) by neatly turning the tables and hanging him who would have hanged Gamelyn. The Tale ends with Gamelyn's pardon by the King who awards him his brother's office of sheriff.

1) "Three Directors: a Review of Recent Productions," p. 132.

2) Ibid.

3) Ed. cit., p.lxv.

4) I am indebted to H. Ruthrof's unpublished Rhodes University thesis for drawing my attention to these two works.

Shakespeare's outlaws enter making rough verbal gestures. They are on the look-out for "passengers" and "If there be ten, shrink not, but down with 'em." (IV.i.2). Speed's terror does not belittle Valentine's sang-froid but high-lights it. The confident Valentine is here playing, with appropriate courtly modifications, Gamelyn's part - Gamelyn who said he would be ashamed to yield, "They ye fette to your five, thanne ye be twelve" (652);¹⁾ the outlaws in A Tale are suitably impressed by Gamelyn's coolness and by his physique:

Tho they herde by his worde that might was in his arm,
Ther was non of hem alle that wolde do him harm (653)

The reaction of Shakespeare's outlaws, though less uniform, is on similar lines. Valentine's ringing address, "My friends - " is rudely interrupted by First Outlaw's literal-minded correction, that they are his enemies, which with its unfortunate overtones of potential absurdity must be spoken with dour deliberation and not with confident sophistication. But Second and Third Outlaws are most impressed by Valentine's bearing and want to hear him, "for he's a proper man." The word, "proper," here is usually glossed "handsome"²⁾ and Charlton, clearly coupling the word with First Outlaw's later "seeing you are beautified/With a goodly shape (55), goes so far as sarcastically to call these outlaws "connoisseurs of masculine beauty."³⁾

But this is not the whole matter. As has been apparent from the beginning, Valentine's courtesy, revealed in his physical appearance and in his manners, is, like Sir Calidore's, a quality of character and indicates strength of mind, firmness of purpose, as well as kind and generous impulses. This is the ethical point of his constancy as friend and lover. If Proteus shows fallen man's capacity for corruption, Valentine reveals his potential for manly virtue in terms of the romantic love code. Valentine's reception here as one "beautified/With goodly shape" is akin to Miranda's wonder at Ferdinand's "brave form" which she (Neoplatonically) takes for "A thing divine; for nothing natural/I ever saw so noble" (The Tempest, I. ii.418). There could be no better reason for deducing Ferdinand's superior moral qualities, for "There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple" (457).⁴⁾ Similarly, the outlaws rightly infer that Valentine is "a man of such perfection/As we do in our quality much want" (57). Like Gamelyn, he is taken

1) That is, "Though you fetched an additional five, then making you twelve (in number)."

2) As in the Pelican, the New Penguin, and the Signet Classic Shakespeare.

3) Op. cit., p. 39.

4) See Kermode's Introduction to his New Arden edn. of The Tempest, pp. xliii-lxix and my "The Cave Scenes in Cymbeline: a Critical Note."

to have the leadership qualities expected in one of noble birth and bearing - as Henry Peacham affirmed when he noted that there are "certain sparks and secret seeds of virtue innate in princes and children of noble persons"; that nobility is "inherent and natural Honours and titles externally conferred are but as apparel and drapery to a beautiful body."¹⁾ This aspect is of course reinforced by discussion, elsewhere in the play, of Valentine's "descent." From the conversation of Antonio and Panthino and from the play's title, it is clear that he is a gentleman and a courtier. Later, when he discovers Valentine's "proceeding," the Duke abuses him by comparing him to Phaëton and calling him a "base intruder and overweening slave" (III.i.157), but Valentine's offence is so clearly not identical with that of Third Outlaw who basely practised to "steal away a lady,/An heir, and near allied unto the Duke" (IV.i.48). Valentine's motives are unquestionably virtuous. When Thurio offers to "slander Valentine /With falsehood, cowardice, and poor descent" (III.ii.31), these terms are considered slanderous. When Valentine is finally accepted by the Duke, he is applauded for his "spirit," his "unrivall'd merit" and accepted once more as "a gentleman and well deriv'd" (V.iv.138,142,144), as the explicit antithesis of the "degenerate and base" Thurio (134). The criteria of Valentine's nobility are his actions, his "spirit," just as in the outlaw scene the criterion is the Neoplatonic one of his "goodly shape."

When, coupled with this, it is discovered that, just as Gamelyn "moste needes walke in woode that may not walke in toun" (672), so Valentine is "crossed with like adversity," First Outlaw applauds in significant phrase:

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

What Charlton refers to as Valentine's "lying brag" - that he "kill'd a man" (27) - is nothing of the kind. It is rather an obtrusive fiction like Julia's account of the "pageants of delight" in which she played Ariadne dressed in "Madam Julia's gown" (IV.ii.156). Shakespeare's apparent carelessness there is a manifestation of the Elizabethans' opacity to "the actual" and their respect for the schematic and the emblematic.²⁾ Valentine tells the outlaws that he has been banished

For that which now torments me to rehearse:
I kill'd a man, whose death I much repent,
But yet I slew him manfully, in fight,
Without false vantage, or base treachery. (26)

1) The Complete Gentlemen, ed. by Heltzel, pp. 3,13.

2) See above, p.139.

This act, together with his knowledge of "the tongues," is an emblem of his manly virtue, just as Julia's fiction reflects in a more complex way what she is and what she is suffering. Valentine's lines function in miniature like Gamelyn's rough treatment of the treacherous clergy, like his killing of the porter, like his hanging of his brother, the sheriff, and the twelve corrupt jurors - actions which reflect Gamelyn's sterling if rough sense of justice and fair play. In the face of this evidence, Valentine would indeed make "a king for our wild faction."

Leech's puzzlement over the "oddity" of the parallels ("It is odd that the Third Outlaw's reason for banishment is similar to Valentine's" etc.) raises an important issue. Shakespeare's point however is that they are less parallels than contrasts. Valentine's attitude to the shared acts of fighting and eloping is an essentially honourable one, whereas all three outlaws adopt a free-and-easy position with regard to their misdemeanours. The moral framework implied by their utterances is clear. Unlike Robin Hood and his merrie men and unlike Gamelyn, they are not the innocent victims of cruel injustice. Whereas Valentine slew his fictive opponent "manfully, in fight/Without false vantage, or base treachery," Second Outlaw casually admits that he was banished "for a gentleman/Who in my mood, I stabb'd unto the heart" (50). Third Outlaw observes that they are gentlemen

Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth
Thrust from the company of awful men. (44)

They regard their misdemeanours as "petty crimes." What Leech takes for a "burlesque touch"¹⁾ is simply a manifestation of their moral irresponsibility, of their difference from Valentine. This contrast in moral attitudes is complemented by a contrast between Valentine's poised eloquence and their almost brusque utterances - a contrast particularly strong in the early part of the scene, where his boldly confident explanation of his predicament is punctuated by their terse questions:

My riches are these poor habiliments,
Of which if you should here disfurbish me,
You take the sum and substance that I have. (13)

What is noticeable in this scene is the absence, among the outlaws, of the Robin Hood ethic, so strong in both A Tale and The Gest. Valentine later has occasion to complain that they "make their wills their law" and that

1) Ed. cit., IV.i.52,n.

although

They love me well; yet I have much to do
To keep them from uncivil outrages. (V.iv.16)

This may sound odd beside Valentine's apologia for these "banish'd men" spoken less than 150 lines later in the same scene. But, like Antonio and Sebastian in The Tempest, the outlaws, whatever their past crimes, must be embraced in the comic reconciliation and pardon. For this reason, the entailments of ordinary life are suspended and the outlaws are suddenly seen to be

reformed, civil, full of good,
And fit for great employment (154)

The purpose of their contrast with Valentine has been served, and they must now, as we shall see, be absorbed through him into the festive ending, the social integration, which marks Shakespearean romantic comedy.

Because of this explicit contrast, there is never any suggestion that Valentine is involved in their boisterous rough-and-tumble. In fact, his remarks on hearing their "halloing" and their "stir" implicitly insist on his moral separateness. In the light of this, it is not strange that the dénouement scene (V.iv) should open with Valentine meditating, like the Duke Senior in As You Like It, on the virtues of the pastoral life. His melancholy tone, his impassioned apostrophe to Silvia ("O thou that dost inhabit in my breast, / Leave not the mansion so long tenantless" - 7), his gentle pastoral appeal to her ("Thou gentle nymph, cherish thy forlorn swain" - 12): all this supplies an apt "green world" setting for the recognition scene, a setting suitably cut off and isolated from the two earlier locales (Verona and Milan)¹⁾ and constituting an environment that readily accommodates moral metamorphosis and conversion, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream and As You Like It.

1) See Leech on Shakespeare's confusions concerning place, ed. cit., pp. xv-xviii.

Valentine's pastoral meditation is succeeded by the entry of Proteus, Silvia and Julia (the latter still disguised as Sebastian). In the ensuing hundred lines, Shakespeare - having, unknown to themselves, isolated the two pairs of crossed lovers in the "green world" - proceeds to unravel the complications.

Shakespeare's methods in these hundred lines have been endlessly discussed. The New Cambridge editors regard the dramatic climax, where Proteus repents and Valentine offers him "All that was mine in Silvia" as a "crude and conventional coup de théâtre," probably written by another dramatist to replace Shakespeare's own version "which at the first performance was found to be ineffective."¹⁾ The text, it is alleged, is corrupt, being full of "muddled versification in the shape of short lines, doggerel, jingles and nonsense." These editors overstated their case, and it is significant that the famous "rend thy faith Descended into perjury," which puzzled both them and editorial predecessors (such as Daniel, who emended "descended" to "discandied"), has not troubled more recent editors.²⁾ However, most readers have agreed that this one-hundred-line passage is "unskilful."³⁾

The view of the scholars has been presented by Thaler, Asa Small, J.D. Wilson, and M.C. Bradbrook. Fundamentally, as Small remarks, "Valentine's abandonment of Silvia [to Proteus] is based on the simple idea of friendship, which has nothing to do with Silvia's character."⁴⁾ This "idea of friendship" is conveniently expounded in Sonnet 40: "Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all....." Bradbrook argues that

In releasing Silvia, Valentine was displaying in
transcendent form the courtly virtue of Magnanimity,
the first and greatest virtue of a gentleman. 5)

Bradbrook's, like Wilson's view that the love-friendship conflict is "a theme not fully understood by critics," may sound persuasive in the abstract. But does either theory explain away the difficulties? John Danby's nice refine-

1) Ed. cit., p. xvi.

2) See C.J. Sisson, New Readings in Shakespeare, who notes that "the passage in fact offers no difficulty" (I.61). Cf. notes on the passage (ll.47-9) in editions by Leech and Sanders.

3) Neilson, cited in A. Thaler, "Shakespeare and the Unhappy Happy Ending," p.744. Shakespeare has made rather heavy weather of getting Silvia to the forest, invoking that unsatisfactory piece of machinery, Sir Eglamour, who almost immediately has to be got rid of. That he is no more than an incidental device is borne out by the casual use of his name in I.ii. Cf. the entry of Jaques du Bois, at the end of As You Like It, to announce Duke Frederick's conversion.

4) "The Ending of The Two Gentlemen of Verona," p. 775.

5) Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, p. 151. See also J.D. Wilson, Shakespeare's Happy Comedies, pp. 42-6.

ment of the scholarly view provides a useful basis on which to carry forward the discussion:

Proteus' conversion is effected by the shock of self-realisation, and by the realisation of the boundlessness of Valentine's friendship. Valentine's is the achieved 'freedom' of Love:

And that my love may appear plain and free,

All that was mine in Silvia I give thee.

Finally he sees again his "first best love," Julia, and the turn is completed:

O heaven, were man,

But constant, he were perfect

The forgiveness of Proteus is spontaneous, immediate, and totally effective. But, the moral optimist would say, that is what forgiveness has to be, if it is to be at all. 1)

With this view in mind, let us now consider what criticism has largely ignored: the dramatic perspective in which these hundred lines are cast.²⁾

With the entry of Proteus, Julia and Silvia, the representation assumes the form of a three-level eavesdropping scene, in which Valentine (who has appropriately "withdrawn") and Julia (still disguised), independently and oblivious of each other's presence, overhear Proteus' shameful speeches. Here Proteus' subjection to sin is complete. He can fall no further. To Valentine, looking in on the inset scene between Proteus and Silvia, the prospect is "like a dream" (26). The shock, the horror, of his discovery throws the moral emphasis on the contrast between the two "friends."

This contrast is developed in the dialogue between Silvia and her would-be lover. Here the stress falls unequivocally on Proteus' infidelity, on his betrayal - "false Proteus," "false perjur'd Proteus," who

didst ... rend thy faith
Into a thousand oaths; and all those oaths
Descended into perjury ... (47)

- on Proteus, who has "no faith left now," "Thou counterfeit to thy true friend!" "Rather than have false Proteus rescue" her, Silvia would have been "seized by a hungry lion" and "been a breakfast to the beast." She contrasts her love

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- 1) "Shakespeare Criticism and Two Gentlemen of Verona," pp.319-20. I am here passing over the ironists who insist that the dénouement maintains the comic burlesque of earlier scenes like Valentine's wooing scene, the banishment scene, etc. (Leech). H.C. Goddard's observations on the present passage read like something by Thurber: see The Meaning of Shakespeare, I. 44-7.
 - 2) A notable exception is B. Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies, p.19.

for Valentine, "Whose life's as tender to me as my soul," with the degree in which "I do detest false perjur'd Proteus."

Because of the obvious absence of real danger to Silvia, interest is focussed without strain less on her than on Proteus himself, on the utter baseness of his conduct. This is the low-water mark of Proteus' deviation from the ideal of true friendship and love. But in the context, Proteus tends to appear less of a sinister or menacing figure (a sort of romantic-comic Richard of Gloucester) than a "poor fool," as Julia has called him in an earlier scene. His fond assumption that he and Silvia are alone but for the "boy," Sebastian, and that he therefore has Silvia in his power makes his resolute nastiness almost pitiable. He is so utterly deluded. Julia, in a previous scene, reflects:

Alas, poor Proteus, thou hast entertain'd
A fox, to be the shepherd of thy lambs.(IV.iv.91) 1)

Now, here, where he thinks he has Silvia at last at his mercy, not only is the fox (Julia) herself present, but the threatened lady's true shepherd (Valentine) is in the wings, watching and waiting.

Critics have tended to ignore this ironic perspective. Shakespeare deserves credit for it. It is evidence of the "considerable skill" which Dover Wilson rightly but vaguely observes in Two Gentlemen. There is a significant difference between the present ironic depiction of Proteus' vain attempts which reveal him moving blindly in a dimly comprehended shadow world, on the one hand,²⁾ and a "straight" drama with Proteus and Silvia alone in the greenwood and with her entirely at his mercy, on the other hand. Shakespeare carefully steers clear of the latter method.

The ironic perspective has the further effect of cutting the entailments of Proteus' threats. This challenge to producers is easily overlooked, because Shakespeare largely eschews asides by either Julia or Valentine, who are allowed only one brief utterance apiece, which does little more than register their presence.³⁾ The reason is not far too seek. An excess of asides by these two involved characters (both of whom must lack the ironic detachment of, say, Puck) could distort the precarious balance of tone, transforming this romance scene into either sentimental melodrama or the burlesque which some critics have diagnosed. As the passage stands, Proteus' four

1) Cf. pp. 196-7, above.

2) See see section (vi)(a), above.

3) It is, of course, possible that the text of Act V is corrupt, as Wilson argues; in which case there may have been further asides allotted to Valentine and Julia in the author's "foul papers."

speeches are transvalued by the simple presence of the two people to whom he rightly owes friendship and love:

What dangerous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo for one calm look? (41)

and

In love
Who respects friend? (53)

and

Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words
Can no way change you to a milder form,
I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end,
And love you 'gainst the nature of love: force ye; (55)

and

I'll force thee yield to my desire. (59)

Their ironic context here transmutes Proteus' first desperate vaunt (41), his overthrow of humanist values (53), and his violent threats (55,59) into unwitting charades, vain, unreal, insubstantial.

When Proteus recognizes "the curse of love/When women cannot love where they're belov'd," Silvia caps this with the inevitable retort: "When Proteus cannot love where he's belov'd" (45), and launches into an eloquent reproach to him to "Read over Julia's heart," whose love he has betrayed in perjury and faithlessness (46-53). The mood of this exchange, of these references to Julia, must be affected by the form: by the ironic presence of Julia herself, Julia who is here under discussion.

The text throughout these hundred lines invites what have been called "unspecified gestures and movement."¹⁾ Julia must draw attention to her painful position by unobtrusive movements which will anticipate the swooning towards which all this leads. In earlier scenes, she has registered the pathos of her predicament verbally.²⁾ It is important for Julia to draw active interest away from Silvia. Valentine is similarly drawn in. Each of Proteus' four speeches, quoted above, affects him in one way or another. He must, as unobtrusively as Julia, mime his participation in this ironic drama.

In this passage (19-81), Proteus is at the centre. He stands revealed

1) J.R. Brown, Shakespeare's Plays in Performance, p.45.

2) See IV.ii and IV.iv, discussed above.

not only to Silvia but also to Julia and Valentine (whom he has betrayed and slandered) in all his moral turpitude. His subjection to mutability or inconstancy is absolute. He is a true friend and lover metamorphosed by sin. Only, his is a moral metamorphosis, whereas that of, say, Fradubio (in The Faerie Queene) - "whose nature weake" is "transformd" into a tree, emblem of his fall into sin - is physical.¹⁾ Proteus' fall is pinpointed here by the three other characters. When Silvia has left off reproaching and reviling Proteus, Valentine makes a strongly dramatic entry:

Ruffian! Let go that rude uncivil touch,
Thou friend of an ill fashion. (60)

Proteus is aghast and can utter only one word: "Valentine!" Valentine proceeds to heap coals on his head: "Thou common friend, that's without faith or love," "Treachorous man," my "own right hand perjured to the bosom." Valentine's outburst reaches its climax in the paradox that "'Mongst all foes a friend should be the worst" (72).

The shock of Valentine's appearance is a "recognition" for which the audience is waiting, tensely expectant. His nobly commanding entrance, which at once puts the inconstant Proteus in his place, can, properly produced, excite that frisson, that tingling, ravishing shock to the feelings which is characteristic of "recognitions" in Errors, The Shrew, Much Ado, and Twelfth Night, to mention only four of the comedies. This is no merely vulgar coup de théâtre but a carefully prepared romantic revelation, which is briefly sustained in Proteus' next metamorphosis. We have considered the transvaluation of Proteus' threats - how the presence of Valentine in the wings gives them a semblance of unreality, and almost makes of them a foolish delusion rather than dire villainy. When these factors are coupled with Valentine's impressive and commanding appearance, Proteus' repentance has all the inevitability that story-logic can confer. The reversal is necessary. It is also part of the logically precipitated action. Proteus repents, and Valentine as his true and noble friend naturally forgives him.

But it is not so much Proteus' repentance or Valentine's forgiveness that has upset so many readers; it is Valentine's romantically extravagant manner of demonstrating that his renewed love for Proteus is "plain and free" (82). Not even Bradbrook's appeal to Valentine's magnanimity or Danby's explanation that "Valentine's is the achieved 'freedom' of Love" will suffice alone here.

1) Faerie Queene, I.ii.31-44.

The rational objection is that Valentine is offering Silvia to the very man who, however profoundly repentant he may now be, was only a few moments earlier trying to rape her. There the matter has seemed to rest.

But there are features that either have not been noticed or, if they have been, have not been fully understood.

First, there is Silvia's silence. A.C. Hamilton points out that in Boccaccio, from whom Elyot derives his Titus and Gisippus story, the bride objects to Gisippus' arrangement:

Whereat she, after glancing from one to the other somewhat disdainfully, burst into a flood of tears, and reproached Gisippus that he had so deluded her. 1)

"She even complains to her father."²⁾ Silvia's silence in Two Gentlemen has been seen as a sign of Shakespeare's dramatic immaturity, of his early inability to handle more than two speakers at a time, like Speed's silent withdrawal from an active part in the dialogue of II.iv.³⁾ It is a strange state of affairs when the romantic heroine remains silent, although on stage, for the most important hundred lines of the play. She doesn't even greet her lover when he appears at what cinematograph fans would call the "psychological moment." The reason for this is patent. This moment is too fully absorbed by the dramatic confrontation of Valentine and Proteus to be dissipated by a sentimental reunion of Valentine and Silvia. And the present context hardly lends itself to the luscious forms of earlier Valentine-Silvia scenes.

But there are further reasons for Silvia's silence. M.C. Bradbrook has indicated that there is a significant sense in which she is expected to remain silent:

Clearly [Silvia] should not react at all. She is the prize, for the purpose of argument, and must not call attention to herself, but stand like the "mistress" in Cynthia's Revels before whom the courtiers conduct their amorous verbal duels, a lay figure. Leading ladies may not relish this, but leading boys would have been more tractable. 4)

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- 1) Note that Elyot's bride does not so object.
 - 2) The Early Shakespeare, p. 120.
 - 3) Shakespeare "has not yet learned how to manipulate more than a few characters at once ... And it is this more than anything that gives the impression of sketchiness" (Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona"). Wells cites as examples the failure of both Sir Eglamour and Thurio, as well as the failure in the last scene, to achieve "a fully articulate emotional resolution" (p.165). These negative points are of course irrefutable, but it is nevertheless instructive to discover what Shakespeare did positively achieve.
 - 4) Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, p.152.

This, it must be remembered is Silvia, the "goddess," the "idol," Silvia who has been "worshipped" and "adored," Silvia who is both Valentine's and Proteus' "essence," Silvia to whom the song, "Who is Silvia?" is addressed. This is Silvia who is "Holy, fair, and wise" and to whose eyes "Love doth ... repair/ To help him of his blindness." This Silvia "excels each mortal thing," and so on. And here, after Valentine's irruption, she stands, properly a little way upstage, but between Valentine and Proteus: a romantic goddess-figure, "in a mimic theocracy" - as Richard Cody puts it. There is "nothing for her to say."¹⁾ Sanders has called this "a Romance tableau."²⁾ He clearly intends this phrase in a pejorative sense, but there is a strong dramatic reason that far outweighs his naturalistically inclined expectations.

The ritual perspective of the tableau reduces the purely personal dimension of Silvia, the sense of her as a human being susceptible of distress and suffering - a dimension that Shakespeare has fairly systematically played down from the first.³⁾ Silvia is the goddess; Julia is the Shakespearean heroine. It is noticeable that Julia and not Silvia is the one to swoon. The latter's expression of suffering does not exceed a routine "O heaven!" when Proteus threatens her. To allow her more would be to invoke the very entailments which Shakespeare is at pains to cut. From the moment of Valentine's entry, human interest is centred in the two gentlemen, in Proteus' repentance and in Valentine's magnanimity, and even these are registered as eloquent dramatic emblems and not as reflecting states of mind which we are invited to probe.

This strategy undoubtedly throws interest forward to Julia, who is in any case firmly established as a character deserving of our sympathy. It is strange that critics should have almost uniformly directed our attention to Shakespeare's cavalier treatment of Silvia and should have ignored his disregard for Julia. The dramatic irony here is central and is explicitly brought to our attention by the swoon on which Valentine's "magnanimous" gesture now focuses attention:

Valentine. All that was mine in Silvia I give thee.
Julia. O me unhappy!
Proteus. Look to the boy.
Valentine. Why, boy!
Why, wag; how now? What's the matter? Look
up; speak. (83)

1) The Landscape of the Mind, p.103.

2) New Penguin edn., p.39.

3) With the notable exception of Proteus' description of her distress, III.i. 222-36.

This efficiently diverts attention from the implications of Valentine's romantic gesture, which we are no more invited to probe than we are Othello's neglect to discuss Desdemona's alleged infidelity with her. The trend of the dialogue - everyone "looking to the boy" - thrusts the action back into the realm of mistakings and disguisings. Julia refers to her "disguise of love" and draws attention to that dimension of Two Gentlemen, where "Women change their shapes [and] men their minds" (106,108), a premonition of the world of Orsino whose lover's mind "is a very opal" (II.iv.73). This is the world of the transvestites, Portia, Rosalind, and Viola, as well as a world of Ovidian changing shapes, of shadows, and of delusions, of errors and mistakings which disturbed the Antipholi and their Dromios and afforded Bottom his "most rare vision."

This is the world in which Proteus and Julia move in Two Gentlemen, from the moment when he announces that she has "metamorphos'd" him and when she fancifully asks Lucetta to "fit me with such weeds/ As may beseem some well-reputed page" (II.vii.42). Metamorphoses, disguisings and seeming are Shakespeare's preoccupation here; not psychological analysis. Through the play, Proteus is put through the whole gamut of metamorphoses which culminate in this scene with Julia's heart "cleft" to the "root" (102) and his recognition of his "error":

O heaven, were man
But constant, he were perfect. That one error
Fills him with faults; makes him run through all th' sins;
Inconstancy falls off, ere it begins.
What is in Silvia's face but I may spy
More fresh in Julia's, with a constant eye? (109)

Charlton has ridiculed what he calls Proteus' "fatuous self-conceit," and "unintended complacence."¹⁾ From a naturalistic point of view, it certainly looks as if Proteus is justifying his inconstancy on the grounds that this "one error" is common to all men. But in the present context Proteus is not speaking in propria persona. These lines are choric and momentarily transcend Proteus' character. They express moral truths that put Proteus' behaviour in perspective - identifying him not as a typical villain but as a typical man. We are all fallen and hence all potentially "Protean."²⁾ This outlook, akin to that of Erasmus and Chaucer, is characteristic of Shakespearean romantic comedies which tend to celebrate man's follies rather than scourge them after the Jonsonian manner. Shakespeare is not

1) Op. cit., p. 38.

2) See the discussion of Mutability in the previous section.

so much probing Proteus' arrival at self-knowledge as bringing the comic wheel full circle. Proteus is here realising his final metamorphosis at Julia's hands, his changing back into her true lover and Valentine's true friend. Here at last is the very Proteus who gave her the very ring that has now "discovered" her, the Proteus who gave her "my hand, for my true constancy" (II.ii.8). Valentine's words stabilize this final revolution of the wheel, already implicit in Proteus' last rhyming couplet (113-14, quoted above):

Come, come; a hand from either;
Let me be blest to make this happy close:
'Twere pity two such friends should be long foes. (115)

With the entry of the outlaws who have the Duke and Thurio in tow, the determinist comic plot has almost reached its period. Yet, more changes ensue. Thurio, the rival lover, cravenly backs down when Valentine sternly orders him to resign his claim to Silvia "or else embrace thy death" (124). This change precipitates another. The Duke upbraids Silvia's sometime favoured suitor as "the more degenerate and base" (134) and "applaud^s" Valentine's "spirit."

Shakespeare's motive here is hardly to expose the Duke's fickleness or even Thurio's baseness. Rather, the dramatist is asserting the inevitability of the comic pattern - the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Early in the play, Proteus has wished that his and Julia's fathers would "applaud our loves" (I.iii.48). That these two fathers are not even mentioned in the dénouement is an irrelevant circumstantial detail - the obverse of Valentine's fiction about the man he "kill'd" and of Julia's about the Pentecostal "pageants of delight," in which she wore "Madam Julia's gown" and so on. The important thing is that Valentine should be reconciled with Silvia's father, the Duke, the formerly anti-comic figure who is now embraced in the festive reconciliation. Furthermore, the outlaws - those "banish'd men" - are abruptly transformed in this generous glow of reconciliation. One moment these are men who "make their wills their law," men who are prone to "civil outrages" (14,17); the next, they are, like Robin Hood and his followers, "men endu'd with worthy qualities" (151), "reformed, civil, full of good, / And fit for great employment" (154). They cannot, like Sir Eglamour, simply be forgotten. Nor can they, like Thurio (or Pyrgopolynices or Malvolio), remain anti-comic characters, unabsorbed in the comic society. They loom too large. Like Antonio and Sebastian in The Tempest, they must be embraced. As in Cymbeline and in A Gest of Robyn Hode, "pardon's the word for all."¹⁾ Here, in defence of Shakespeare, it must be noted that, despite

1) Cymbeline, V.v.422; cf. A Gest, st. 409-17.

critical allegations of sketchiness (which are not altogether unfounded), the drama here is less casual, less arbitrary in the means of reconciliation than it is in a contemporary work like Greene's James IV. There the King of Scots, it turns out, who has "sought sinister loves and foreign joys," has merely been misled by "the fox Ateukin, cursed parasite" (V.vi.141). Being penitent, he is forgiven by his generous-minded, loving wife, Dorothee:

Youth has misled: tut, but a little fault,
'Tis kingly to amend what is amiss (160)

The morality reference to Youth hardly redeems the banality of the great moment.¹⁾ In contrast, the Duke's reply to Valentine is redolent of royal magnanimity and almost eloquent:

Thou hast prevail'd, I pardon them and thee:
Dispose of them as thou know'st their deserts.
Come, let us go, we will include all jars
With triumphs, mirth, and rare solemnity. (156)

"Jars" must be "included." The play ends with the forecast of a jest. Valentine tells the Duke that

as we walk along, I dare be bold
With our discourse to make your grace to smile.
What think you of this page, my lord?

The play's "mingled web of joy and woe" is resolved in a jest:

Duke. I think the boy hath grace in him, he blushes.
Valentine. I warrant you, my lord, more grace than boy.
Duke. What mean you by that saying?
Valentine. Please you, I'll tell you, as we pass along,
That you will wonder what hath fortun'd.

This is the spirit of the play: jest as gentle laughter qualified by affection and sympathy, all incorporated in a fictive framework of festive love and friendship. Once Proteus' story has been told, affirms Valentine,

our day of marriage shall be yours,
One feast, one house, one mutual happiness.

Any final estimate of this play should proceed from an understanding of the sort of play Two Gentlemen is. If the romance love paradigms, the Neoplatonic imagery, the employment of varied dramatic perspectives, etc. remain unidentified; if criticism insists on proceeding from the naïve standpoint that Two Gentlemen is a drama about "straight, truthful relationships"

1) Valentine's offer has a simple fluency, poise, and almost eloquence in comparison with Dorothea's bathetic gesture.

between Valentine, Silvia, Launce, et al.; if the work's nature as a fiction is unrecognized and criticism insists on falling into the logical pitfall of mistaking the fiction "for the thing itself;"¹⁾ then there will be little growth in our understanding of this play.

Two Gentlemen may well be the least successful of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. But there is no need for it to be regarded as more blemished than it really is. Looked at afresh, this play has a genuine literary and dramatic interest that far outweighs its undeniable imperfections. The Shakespearean γνῶμαι are unmistakable.

1) See chap. I for a discussion of the critical premises implied in this paragraph.

APPENDIX A

A note on an Aspect of Tudor Comedy¹⁾

In a seminal essay, Nevill Coghill contrasts the Jonsonian or Satiric and the Shakespearian or Romantic as "the two theories of Comedy that twinned out of the late Latin Grammarians to flower in Tudor times."²⁾ Willard Farnham, in an equally valuable paper, refers to the Erasmian conception of folly which he regards as constitutive of "one side of Shakespeare's many-sided genius."³⁾ This is an aspect of the mediaeval comic spirit of which Coghill takes no account, and it constitutes an important, if largely unrecognized, dimension of plays like As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and King Lear.⁴⁾

There is a further aspect of Tudor comedy that has received little attention from Shakespeare critics. This is the conception of comedy as popular merriment and pastime, a conception that pervades The Shrew, where it draws its spirit largely from the realm of broadside ballads and jigs.⁵⁾ The major conditioning factor of this comic mode is a feeling of "mirth" and boisterous jest:

My masters, all attend you,
if mirth you love to heare⁶⁾

This vein is a feature of the popular comic drama of the period. Here it is deliberately introduced as the salient comic feature, as an inspection of title-pages and Prologues reveals. Both the title-page and the Prologue of Common Conditions promise "mirth and pleasant shewes." The title-page of Mucedorus describes that play as "Very delectable and full of mirth," and key terms of the Induction are "mirth," "make merry," "joy," and "laugh." Comedy is seen as "Delighting in mirth." Other title-pages confirm that the dramatists of the time regarded their comedies in these terms. Here is a selection, taken almost at random: Gammer Gurton's Needle - "A right pithy, pleasant, and merry comedy"; New Custom - "A new and merry Interlude"; and Jacob and Esau - "A new merry and witty comedy or interlude."⁷⁾

This vein of "mirth," characteristic of broadside ballad and comic drama alike, was described by Thomas Lodge as "Immoderate and Disordinate Joy."⁸⁾

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- 1) This Note is supplementary to chap. III.
 - 2) "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy," p. 206.
 - 3) "The Mediaeval Comic Spirit in the English Renaissance," p. 435.
 - 4) See my "Twelfth Night" and Shakespeare's Comic Art, pp. 34 - 41, for further treatment of this subject.
 - 5) See Appendix B on these.
 - 6) "Turners dish of Lenten stuffe," in A Pepysian Garland, ed. by Rollins, p. 31.
 - 7) Cf. the titles of broadside ballads, listed at the end of Appendix B.
 - 8) "Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse," in Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, IV.90.

It was clearly bound up with tavern revelling, as the settings of many ballad actions imply. In stage comedy, an attempt appears to have been made to moderate the rough boisterousness of the ballad type of mirth and to induce an aura of moral respectability, in the face of Puritan attacks like those of Lodge, Gosson, et al.

The Prologue in Jack Juggler advises: "Among thy careful business use sometime mirth and joy"; "some quiet mirth and recreation" are needed for mental relaxation; "honest mirth and pastime is requisite and necessary"; it is natural "To have at times convenient pastance, mirth, and pleasures,/So they be joined with honesty and kept within due measures." So said not only Cato, "But also the philosophers, Plutarch, Socrates, and Plato." Cicero, it is asserted, was of the opinion that "to hear interludes is pastime convenient/For all manner men, and a thing congruent." The anonymous author draws attention to how he has followed the example of Plautus, "for to make at seasons convenient pastimes, mirth, and game." But there is little that is "quiet" and much that is not "kept within due measures" in Jack Juggler. Jack's comic jesting, which is as may be expected the comic pivot of the play, is hardly "quiet." Instead, his antics and activities confirm the generally pervasive intention of this species of comedy - to provide "mirth" and "merriment." The title-page describes Jack as the comic Vice, and in the true style he promises the audience that since "of my mother I have been taught/To be merry when I may, and take no thought,/You shall see as mad a pastime...." He continues

I am called Jack Juggler of many an one,
And in faith I woll play a juggling cast anon.

In Ralph Roister Doister, the comic Vice, one Matthew Merrygreek, guarantees that "such sport have I with Ralph as I would not lese." When Ralph enters, in love, Matthew promises "We shall have sport anon." This play is notable for its milieu of rollicking fun, for its "paetance," "sport and pastime," "dalliance," "gauding and fooling," and "mirth." These terms are used to characterize the central comic intrigue, which takes the form of an elaborately sustained practical joke, played on Ralph (a tall-story-telling, comic-hyperbole-uttering, comical-heroic wooer) by Matthew Merrygreek, the mischievous and witty joker who poses as "Roister Doister's champion" but "He doth it for a jest" (V.v.58). The play is a self-confessed game, a "sport and pastime."

This is the comic tradition to which The Shrew belongs, the tradition to which Sidney and Lyly objected. It was Lyly whose intent was

to move inward delight, not outward lightnesse, and to breede (if it might bee) soft smiling, not loude laughing: knowing it to the wise to be as great pleasure to heare counsell mixed with witte, as

to the foolish to have sporte mingled with rudenesse.¹⁾

Sidney expresses his views in markedly similar terms:

the whole tract of a Comedy shoulde be full of delight²⁾
But our Comedians thinke there is no delight without laughter.

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- 1) Blackfriars Prologue to Sapho and Phao, in Lyly, Complete Works, ed. by Bond, II.371.
 - 2) "An Apologie for Poetrie," in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. by Smith, I.199.

APPENDIX B

Shakespeare's Shrew and the Popular Tradition : A Note

Scholars such as C.R. Baskervill, L.B. Wright and H.E. Rollins have written informatively on the subject of the broadside ballad and the jig.¹⁾ A broadside ballad, as opposed to a traditional ballad (like Sir Patrick Spens), has been defined as "a song (usually written by a hack-poet) that was printed on a broadside and sold in the streets by professional singers."²⁾ A jig is "a miniature comedy or farce, written in ballad-measure, which, at the end of the play, was sung and danced on the stage to ballad-tunes."³⁾ Of these ballads and jigs, Rollins remarks,

Shakespeare knew dozens of ballads by heart:
he and his fellow-dramatists quote from ballads in nearly every
play Nothing brings one so close to the mass of people for
whom Shakespeare wrote as do these songs from the street. 4)

This sub-literature might have been despised by Nashe (in Pierce Penniless), Jonson (Everyman in his Humour, II.i end Induction to Bartholemew Fair), Dekker (A Strange Horse Race) and others.⁵⁾ That it was nevertheless a potent force is nowhere more unambiguously implied than in The Shrew, a comedy that is more intimately related to this popular tradition than any other Shakespearean play. This has been briefly argued in chap. III. The present purpose is to demonstrate the intimacy of the connection by detailed quotation.

Petruchio quotes from four ballads, two in the form of allusions ("I cannot come every day to woo" and "We will be married o' Sunday") and two in the form of snatches sung ("Where is the life that late I led?" and "It was the friar of orders grey,/As he forth walked on his way"), while Grumio alludes to another ("Jack boy, ho boy news")⁶⁾. Gremio's description of the betrothal of Petruchio and Kate as "clapp'd up" (II.i.317) is a probable allusion to the provenance of ballad and jig; the phrase recurs in The West-Country Jig.⁷⁾

The Shrew abounds in incidents and images drawn from the milieu of ballad and jig. One example is Kate's reference to a "rush-candle," which, like her offer to place her hands below her husband's foot "in token of duty,"⁸⁾ alludes to the provenance of the ballad. In "A pleasant new Ballad, both merry

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- 1) Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig; Wright, Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England, chap. XII; Rollins (ed.), A Peepysian Garland.
 - 2) Rollins, op. cit., pp. ix - x.
 - 3) Ibid., p. xiv.
 - 4) Ibid., p. xii.
 - 5) Cited in ibid.
 - 6) Three of these allusions are listed in C.R. Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 193-4, 214, 68.
 - 7) Printed in Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 407-9.
 - 8) The Shrew, IV.v.14, V.ii.177.

and witty/That showeth the humours of the wives of the city,"¹⁾ the tamed shrew offers: "To do whatsoever may give [her husband] content." He immediately puts her to the test:

Husband. Well that I will try ere you part from my sight,
Fetch up all the candles and see you do light
Every one of them, even at the wrong ends,
And then pin the basket, and so we are friends.

Wife. All this I am willing and more I will do,
To show my respect, thus I stoop to your shoe.

Husband. Why, that's a good wench, now come kiss & be friends
Put out all the candles, I'll make thee amends. 2)

As Rollins, the editor, observes, "shrewish wives were often chastened by being forced to light the wrong ends of candles and by 'pinning the basket'" and he cites as literary example an early Elizabethan ballad by T. Rider, "A merry new ballad entitled, the Pinning of the Basket."³⁾

The devil and hell imagery in The Shrew is another ballad feature. In "A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin....," the shrew is "most like a fiend," "such a devilish Fiend of Hell," "Our dame the devil"; she "played the devil" and "did abide in the devil's name."⁴⁾ In "Clods Carroll," a jig, the man talking of his "testy" wife remarks: "The devill is not so waspish." To this his female interlocutor replies:

Canst thou not tame a devill?
lies it not in thy power
Alas [answers the man] I cannot coniure.⁵⁾

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- 1) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 207-11.
 - 2) Ibid., p. 211. The penultimate line is probably an echo of Petruchio's speech, "Why, there's a wench! Come on and kiss me, Kate" (V.ii.180).
 - 3) Ibid., p. 207. "Pinning the basket" was apparently a simple form of penance meted out by husbands to shrewish wives. It entailed the laborious process of plaiting the rushes and fastening them together by means of pins. From this practice, the phrase assumed figurative force and came to mean "to conclude the matter." See OED.
 - 4) Reprinted in Hazlitt's Shakespeare's Library, IV, 415-48. Neither Hazlitt nor Bullough found "A Merry Jest" to be any more than evidence of "the interest taken in unusual methods of taming" (Bullough, op. cit., I.63). R. Hosley ("Sources and Analogues of The Taming of the Shrew," op. cit., pp. 296-8) argues the importance of "A Merry Jest" as a source, but he has examined neither the relationship between the milieu of The Shrew and that of the non-didactic broadside ballad, nor the fairly general provenance in ballad and jig of the boisterous comic spirit that looms large in The Shrew.
 - 5) Reprinted in Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 389-93.

The Roxburghe Collection includes a ballad "Which proveth that women the best Warriors be,/For they made the Devill from earth for to flee."¹⁾ The implication here is inescapable. It is hardly too much to say that this association, whether equation or comparison of the shrew to the Devil (who may of course have been the original "shrew")²⁾ is more than merely metaphorical. As one ballad writer puts it, "Those women that in blood delight/Are ruled by the Devil." The shrew in this ballad ("A Warning for Wives")³⁾ is aided by "Satan who then lent her power" to assault her husband physically. "The He-Devil,"⁴⁾ sung to the tune of "The She-Devil" deals with a male shrew who is virtually identified with the devil: "She that weds such a knave as I/were as good to marry the Devil" etc. In The Shrew, Gremio questions whether "any man is so very fool to be married to hell?" (I.i.122) and diagnoses that Kate needs not a husband but a devil, "I say, a devil" (I.i.121). Baptista, after Kate's violent treatment of the demure Bianca, addresses Kate as "thou hilding of a devilish spirit" (II.i.26). There is more than a touch of that native glee, common in ballads celebrating shrewishness, drinking or cuckoldry,⁵⁾ to be found in Gremio's description of the strangely conducted wedding ceremony:

Why he's a devil, a devil, a very devil;

to which Tranio replies,

Why she's a devil, a devil, the devil's dam. (III.ii.152)

The spirit of Shakespeare's play appears to be rooted then, not merely (as has been alleged) in "the non-theatrical merriment" of Shakespeare's audience,⁶⁾ but in the popular art-forms which habitually and conventionally make use of it:⁷⁾ in song and dance dramas like jigs which constantly celebrated

1) Roxburghe Ballads, I.423-8.

2) The OED cites Middle High German schröuwel, devil, and of course Middle English calls the Devil "that ilke shrew" (Chaucer, The Chanouns Yemannes Tale, G 916).

3) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 301-4.

4) Ibid., pp. 332-6.

5) See a ballad like "The Famous Ratcatcher," Pepysian Garland, pp. 61-5, or an interlude like Heywood's Johan Johan.

6) E.W. Talbert argues that Shakespearean comedy is "rooted firmly in an audience's non-theatrical merriment" (Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays, p. 28); see the whole of chap. II of this work. C.L. Barber also locates the origins of Shakespearean comedy in folk festivals, as Cornford does of ancient Greek comedy. Strange as it may seem, Barber hardly mentions The Shrew in his book which is subtitled "A Study of Dramatic Form and its relation to Social Custom." This omission is remarked on by Bernard Harris in Shakespeare Survey 14 (1961), 147.

7) See Frank Kermode's important discussion of relations between poetic and non-poetic sources, "The Argument of Marvell's Garden," pp. 225-41.

the male and female shrew. Here parodies of wooing and of marriage centre on brawling and flyting, scolding and vicious scurrility,¹⁾ all presented in the boisterous idiom of tavern merriment which is a feature common enough to have been frequently noted by hostile Elizabethan critics. Thomas Lodge, for instance, condemns "Immoderate and Disordinate Joy" whose "studie" is "to sing brawdy sonnets and ballads he [*i.e.* Joy] laughs intemperately at every little occasion and dances about the house"²⁾ Stephen Gosson, in one of his attacks, aptly captures the spirit of mirth which lay behind this realm of Tudor popular comedy:

For the eye he (the Devil) sendeth in gearish apparel,
masks, vaulting, tumbling, dencing of jigs, galliards, moriscoes,
hobby-horses; shewing of juggling casts, nothing forgot that
might serve to ravish the beholders with variety of
pleasure. 3)

By the time that Shakespeare wrote his first comedies, this vein of "Immoderate and Disordinate Joy" was a conditioning feature of popular literature, particularly comedy. To appreciate this is to be well on the way to grasping the comic mode of The Shrew.

In "The Cucking of a Scold,"⁴⁾ the curst young woman who "would scold with any one/From twenty to Threescore" has a tongue "as nimble as an eel" and "faster you shall have it run/Than any ambling nag." The encounter with her is referred to as "the sport" and "the game":

She was a famous scold
A dainty scold in grain
A stouter scold was never bred
Nor born in Turn-gain Lane.

Her shrewish behaviour is regarded as an entertainment, a performance. Like Kate, she is a "Devil"; her railing terms are conventionally strong: "beastly knave," "filthy Jack." And her punishment takes the form of a ritual public ducking involving a parade of "an hundred archers good," "an hundred armed men.../With piercing pikes and spear:/And trumpets sounding sweet," not to mention "pleasant fifes and drums" and forty parrots. A "mighty wisp" (or handful of straw) is "borne before her face/The perfect token of a scold," and neats' tongues are hung about her neck. The ducking, which continues until she holds her peace, is rough, essentially criard (to use Quiller-Couch's epithet), but it has a poetic justice residing in the ironic reversal pattern. Above all

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- 1) See especially the collections of broadside ballads: The Roxburghe Ballads and A Pepysian Garland.
 - 2) "Wits Miserie and the World's Madnesse," Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, IV.90.
 - 3) Plays Confuted in Five Acts, cited in M.C. Bradbrook, The Rise of the Common Player, p. 97.
 - 4) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 72-7.

the whole incident is placed as an entertainment, "a merry sport," full of mirth and laughter.

Titles of ballads in the great Roxburghe and Pepys collections are revealing: "A merry new jest of a wife that threshed her husband with a flail"; "A pleasant ballad of a combat between a man and his wife";¹⁾ "A Country New Jig between Simon and Susan, to be sung in merry pastime by Bachelors and Maids";²⁾ "A Merry New Jig./Or the pleasant wooing betwixt Kit and Peg,"³⁾ The epigraph to "The West-Country Jig" invites us to watch "A merry making" where "lads and lasses flock together" and have "store of mirth and mickle laughter."⁴⁾ In "A pleasant new ballad, both merry and witty,/That showeth the humours of the wives in the city," the pleasant and merry wit takes the form of a froward wife's vilely abusing her patient husband as "a blockheaded clown," "a fool," and "a base rascall ... not worthy to empty my close stool" or "to kiss where I sit."⁵⁾ The "pleasant jesting" frequently takes this form. In "The Merry New Jig," the "pleasant wooing" involves Peg's abusing Kit as "blind fool," "cow," "sot," etc.⁶⁾ In "A merry discourse 'twixt him and his Joan...," the wife responds to the husband's affection by upbraiding him as "dissembling varlet," "drunkard," "deboist and drunken sot," etc.⁷⁾

The force of terms like "show," "pastime," "sport," "jest," "mirth," "merriment" etc., as Shakespeare employs them in The Shrew, could hardly be more suggestively indicated.

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- 1) From Baskervill's list of early shrew ballads, quoted from the Stationer's Register, The Elizabethan Jig, p. 169, n.6. In these and the following titles, italics are mine.
 - 2) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 132-8.
 - 3) The Roxburghe Ballads, II.405-7.
 - 4) Text repr. in Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 410-12.
 - 5) A Pepysian Garland, pp. 207-11.
 - 6) Text repr. in Baskervill, op. cit., pp. 387-8.
 - 7) Ibid., pp. 423-7.

APPENDIX C

A Note on Will Kempe

What sort of clown was Will Kempe and what sort of performance did Shakespeare have in mind when he composed the part of Launce in Two Gentlemen?

It is hardly too much to affirm that Shakespearean clowning was at first conceived in the shadow of the famous Tarlton - "the first English actor to achieve a fame that lived and to exert an influence that was recognized for generations."¹⁾ There is plenty of contemporary and near-contemporary support for this view. John Davies of Hereford proclaimed Tarlton "lord of mirth" and declares that "all clowns since have been his apes."²⁾ This testimony often reveals what this clowning was like. Significantly, Tarlton's Jests, a collection of stories purporting to recount Tarlton's exploits, was made up in jest-book form. For the connections between tavern-revelling, popular merriment, clowning and the sub-literature of broadside ballads, jigs, and jest-books is central here, as it is for The Shrew. In the jests, features of Tarlton's clowning are: his comic miming (pretending to be drunk),³⁾ his chop-logic (arguing that oysters are "ungodly meat, uncharitable meat, and unprofitable meat"),⁴⁾ his lack of reverence for persons,⁵⁾ his felicitous comparisons (soldiers in peace are like chimneys in summer),⁶⁾ his merry, quick ripostes to barracking and missiles,⁷⁾ his extempore verses,⁸⁾ and so forth. There are also jests told at Tarlton's expense - for instance, how an honest woman left him stranded on the bed, both his boots half on and half off ("in the shoemaker's stocks") while "she got her to London."⁹⁾ Although Stowe remarks on Tarlton's "wondrous plentiful pleasant extemporall wit,"¹⁰⁾ the consensus of opinion seems to be that it was less his "happy unhappy answers"¹¹⁾ and his "fine conceit"¹²⁾ than "his very looks and actions"¹³⁾ that did "make folly excellent."¹⁴⁾ Fuller testifies that "the self-same words, spoken by another would hardly move a merry

1) Baskervill, The Elizabethan Jig, p. 96.

2) Cited in Shakespeare Jest-Books, ed. by Hazlitt, II.258.

3) Ibid., pp. 191-2. Bradbrook quotes a contemporary description of "how the Queen had them take away the knave for making her laugh so excessively as he fought against her little dog, Perrico de Faldas, with his sword and longstaff and bade the Queen take off her mastie" (The Rise of the Common Player, p. 163).

4) Shakespeare Jest-Books, II.193.

5) Ibid., pp. 197-8, 202, 247-8.

6) Ibid., p. 201.

7) Ibid., pp. 204-6.

8) Ibid., pp. 206-7.

9) Ibid., pp. 240-1. See also "Tarlton deceived by a country wench," pp. 238-9.

10) Quoted in ibid., p. 254.

11) Fuller, Worthies, p. 517.

12) Humphry King, quoted in Shakespeare Jest-Books, II.257.

13) Fuller, op. cit., p. 518.

14) Bastard, quoted in Shakespeare Jest-Books, II.256.

man to smile; which uttered by him would force a sad soul to laughter."¹⁾

Tarlton was a master of "activities": his antics incorporated the skills of dancer, juggler and fencer.²⁾ In Bartholemew Fair, the stage-keeper vividly recalls "Master Tarlton's" antics:

You should have seen him come in, and have been cozen'd
in the cloth-quarter, so finely! and Adams, the rogue, have
leaped and capered upon him, and have dealt his vermin
about, as though they had cost him nothing! and then a substantial
watch to have stolen in upon them, and taken them away, with
mistaking words, as the fashion is in the stage-practice. 3)

This kind of comic play was apparently encouraged in works like Famous Victories, to which Jonson is probably alluding. The role of Derick in the anonymous play is one of Tarlton's few known dramatic roles.⁴⁾ And a stage direction like that at ii.122 - "Enter Dericke roving" - invites comic miming of the sort in which Tarlton evidently specialised.

Tarlton died in 1588. According to Thomas Heywood, Will Kempe succeeded him "as well in the favour of her majesty as in the opinion and good thoughts of the general audience."⁵⁾ After Tarlton's death, Kempe is addressed as "Jestermonger and Vice-gerent generall to the Ghoste of Dicke Tarlton."⁶⁾ This seems likely, for Kempe himself recorded that he "hath spent his life in mad jigs and merry jests,"⁷⁾ as was characteristic of the leading English comedians at the end of the sixteenth century.⁸⁾

It is not until the advent of Robert Armin as a member of the Chamberlain's company at the end of the nineties that any radical change in Shakespeare's attitude towards the clown is evident. Hamlet's attack on extemporizing clowne who "speak/More than is set down" corresponds in time with the change of principal clown.⁹⁾ The roles in which Armin was to be cast hardly permit lively and individualistic solo work. These parts - Touchstone, Feste, and the rest - require something very different from the "interlocutions with the

1) Fuller, op. cit., p. 518.

2) See Bradbrook, The Rise of the Common Player, p. 164.

3) Jonson, Bartholemew Fair, Induction.

4) See Baskervill, op. cit., p. 98; Bradbrook, The Rise of the Common Player, p. 164; Shakespeare Jest-Books, II.218-19.

5) T. Heywood, cited in Sidney Lee's "William Kemp," DNB, X, 1279. Jest-book tradition has it that Tarlton nominated Robert Armin his "heir" - the Armin for whom Shakespeare wrote the parts of Touchstone, Feste, and the Fool in Lear.

6) Baskervill, op. cit., p. 96.

7) In his Nine Days' Wonder, quoted by Baskervill, op. cit., p. 110.

8) Baskervill, op. cit., p. 111.

9) Percy Simpson supports Collier's conjecture that this protest is levelled against Kempe: "Actors and Acting," in Shakespeare's England, II.259.

audients" that were the common practice "in the days of Tarlton and Kempe/ Before the stage was purg'd from barbarism."¹⁾ Bradbrook rightly aligns Armin with the great tradition of learned fools descending from More and Erasmus, rather than with "the boisterous clowns of the countryside and the playing place."²⁾

Will Kempe's act looks back to the tradition of popular clowning represented by Tarlton. Peacham describes how Tarlton, dressed as "a rogue, in a foul shirt without a band, and in a blue coat with one sleeve, his hair full of straw and feathers," played the role of son to a miserly old father, who said he had nothing to bequeath such a knave but the gallows and a rope: "Tarlton, weeping and sobbing upon his knees (as his brethren) said O father, I do not desire it, I trust in God you shall live to enjoy it yourself."³⁾ This is clearly the kind of comic act that lay behind Kempe's parts as Launce and Launcelot Gobbo,⁴⁾ and it may even be seen as an anticipation of Launcelot's meeting with his old father in The Merchant of Venice, II.ii.

Such a view of Kempe's act is supported by Henslowe's mention, in his Diary, of "a payer of gyents hose" for Kempe. As Willeford notes,

these trousers or 'slops' are often mentioned by Shakespeare's contemporaries. A German description of the 'English clown' dating from 1597 mentions his 'shoes that don't much pinch the toes' and his breeches that 'could hold two or more.'⁵⁾

Kempe's Nine Daies Wonder gives a further account of this clown's apparently characteristic "blunt mirth" and "merry heart."⁶⁾ This work also offers examples of Kempe's comic rhetoric:

.... it did him good to have ill words of a hoddy doddy,
a habber de hoy, a chicken, a squib, a squall ..."

and

I met a proper upright youth, onely for a little stooping in
the shoulders: all heart to the heele⁷⁾

All in all, Kempe probably illustrated "the traditional traits of absurd mentality, grotesque physical appearance, familiarity with spectators, and partial independence of the plot," that Welsford traces back to the Vice.⁸⁾ Working from primary sources, Edgar Fripp has compiled a conjectural description of Kempe as:

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- 1) Richard Brome, The Antipodes, II.ii.45-8.
 - 2) Shakespeare the Craftsman, p. 52.
 - 3) The Truth of Our Times, ed. by Heltzel, p. 211.
 - 4) See chap. IV, section (v), above, on casting and actors' "lines."
 - 5) The Fool and his Sceptre, p. 241.
 - 6) Nine Daies Wonder, pp. 4,5.
 - 7) Ibid., pp. 31, 30.
 - 8) The Fool, p. 288.

a little man, slight if strong of limb, stout with padding on occasion /"bombasted," if he played Costard and Gobbo/, nimble on his feet, famous for his leg-play, a morris-dancer and "instrumentalist," shag-haired and uncultivated but kindly and honest, with boundless impudence (of course) and a gift of extemporaneous speech which sometimes held up the play. 1)

It was very likely the Kempe-as-Launce kind of role that the authors of The Pilgrimage to Parnassus had in mind when they depicted Dromo "drawing a clowne with a rope" (S.O. 661). When the clown objects, he is told:

Dost thou not knowe a playe cannot be without a clowne? Clownes have bene thrust into playes by head & shoulders, ever since Kempe could make a scurvey face Why if thou canst but drawe thy mouth awrye, laye thy legge over thy staffe, sawe a piece of cheese asunder with thy dagger, lape up drinke on the earth, I warrant thee, theile laughe mightilie.(664-73) 2)

It is not unreasonable, after examining the clown parts in, say, Two Gentlemen and The Merchant of Venice, to infer that some of their less "organic" features may be attributed to these Elizabethan stage conditions.

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- 1) Shakespeare, Man and Artist, I.207.
 - 2) In the note on this passage in his edition of the Three Parnassus Plays, J.B. Leishman compares Sidney's criticism of those who would "thrust in Clownes by head and shoulders" ("Apology for Poetry," in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. by G.G. Smith, I.199).

APPENDIX D

A Note on Neoplatonic Imagery

This Note is a brief documentation and development of ideas broached on pp. 189 ff. above. It relates particularly to Two Gentlemen, II.vi.19-22; III.i.170 - 84; IV.ii.117 - 28; IV.iv. 182 - 99.

Words like "shadow," "essence," "influence," "illumin'd" are technical terms drawn from renaissance Neoplatonism and the poetry inspired by or alluding to that body of thought.

In the Sonnets, the friend is asked where his "substance" is, for "millions of strange shadows" are "counterfeit," having been "poorly imitated after you." In Adonis' and Helen's cheeks, "you in Grecian tires are painted new." Even "the spring and foison of the year" reveal "shadows of your beauty" (Sonnet 53). Hooker uses the term, "substance," as a synonym of "essence" ("one indivisible essence or substance").¹⁾

As far as the renaissance tradition is concerned, this Neoplatonic imagery of shadows, substance, imitation, etc. has strong religious overtones that derive not only from the currency of these terms in theological discussion and debate but also from their use in religious poetry. The obvious poet to cite here is Henry Vaughan, although his important poems were not written until the middle of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless he is, in the fullest sense of the word, a traditional poet. At the heart of many of the poems published in his Silex Scintillans is a cluster of terms - "influence," "ray," "beam," etc. - which are used to depict the "commerce" between sublunary and supralunary worlds. Just as Valentine regards Silvia as his "essence," so that there is no light, no joy, no music, no day, unless she is near; so Vaughan, in his version of Psalm 121, looks upon God as "alone my help and hope":

The glorious God is my sole stay,
He is my Sun, and shade

The idea is the same in both cases, although Vaughan does not employ the Neo-

1) Quoted by J.V. Cunningham, Tradition and Poetic Structure, p. 87. In Sonnet 109 the idea of two selves as one is central, but absence is approached from the viewpoint of Donne's A Valediction: forbidding mourning. Whereas absence from his beloved means separation to Valentine, the speaker in the sonnet finds separation from his beloved an impossibility because "my soul ... in thy breast doth lie." Cf. also Sonnets 27, 37, 43, 44, 98, 99, 113 which offer variations on the identity motifs; and The Phoenix and the Turtle, 25-8, 41-8.

platonic term, "essence."¹⁾ He does use "essence" elsewhere, but not as far as I know, in this sense - "That by which anything subsists; foundation of Being" (OED, Essence, 5). The OED quotes The Answer to Cartwright (c.1585): "Christ being the essence and life of the Church." This is the use Shakespeare had in mind; only, Valentine is using the conception metaphorically. In another poem,²⁾ Vaughan employs the astrological metaphor, "influence," just as Shakespeare does in Valentine's lines. The poem opens:

And do they so? have they a sense
Of ought but Influence?

Both Vaughan and Shakespeare are using the astrological notion that a fluid flowing from the heavens acts upon the character of men. Vaughan is using the notion literally. In Shakespeare, it has become metaphorical, suggestive of the exercise of personal power by Silvia (Valentine's "essence") on Valentine (who subsists by her).³⁾ In Sonnet 32, Shakespeare writes that "I make my love ingrafted to this store" - of beauty, birth, wealth, and wit which "Intituled in the young man's parts do crowned sit." In this sonnet, the addressee is the speaker's "essence."

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- 1) The idea may be regarded as harking back to classical literature. Lucretius' De Rerum Natura opens with an invocation to Venus, "quae rerum naturam sola qubernas/nec sine te quicquam dias in luminis oras exoritur neque fit laetum neque amabile quicquam" (I.21-3); "you alone guide the universe, and nothing without your help comes forth into the bright realms of light nor becomes glad or lovable"; in his Tristia Ovid addresses his absent wife: "nulla venit sine te nox mihi, nulla dies" (III.iii.18): "no night comes to me without you, no day." In 2 Henry VI, Suffolk tells the Queen: "...where thou art, there is the world itself" (III.ii.362). Banished Romeo exclaims: There is no world without Verona walls,/But purgatory, torture, hellitself./Hence banished is banish'd from the world./... heaven is here/Where Juliet lives" (III.iii.17 - 33).
 - 2) This poem is a reply to Romans, 8.19: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (A.V.).
 - 3) The OED has valuable articles on both "essence" and "influence," to which I am indebted. Oddly enough, Vaughan is mentioned in neither article. See especially "Influence," 2 and 2b.

A Select Bibliography

The purpose of this Bibliography is to list the works referred to in the text as well as those works to which I am conscious of being indebted.

The Bibliography is divided into two parts: (i) lists the editions of the three Shakespeare plays which have been consulted, as well as any other Shakespeare editions to which reference has been made; (ii) lists other sources, primary and secondary.

For convenience, the following abbreviations have been used:

<u>CQ</u>	<u>Critical Quarterly</u>
<u>EC</u>	<u>Essays in Criticism</u>
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association</u>
<u>PQ</u>	<u>Philological Quarterly</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>SJb</u>	<u>Shakespeare Jahrbuch</u>
<u>SP</u>	<u>Studies in Philology</u>
<u>SQ</u>	<u>Shakespeare Quarterly</u>
<u>SS</u>	<u>Shakespeare Survey</u>
<u>TLS</u>	<u>Times Literary Supplement</u>
<u>TSE</u>	<u>University of Texas Studies in English</u>

In the case of non-serial publications, the place of publication is London, unless stated otherwise.

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