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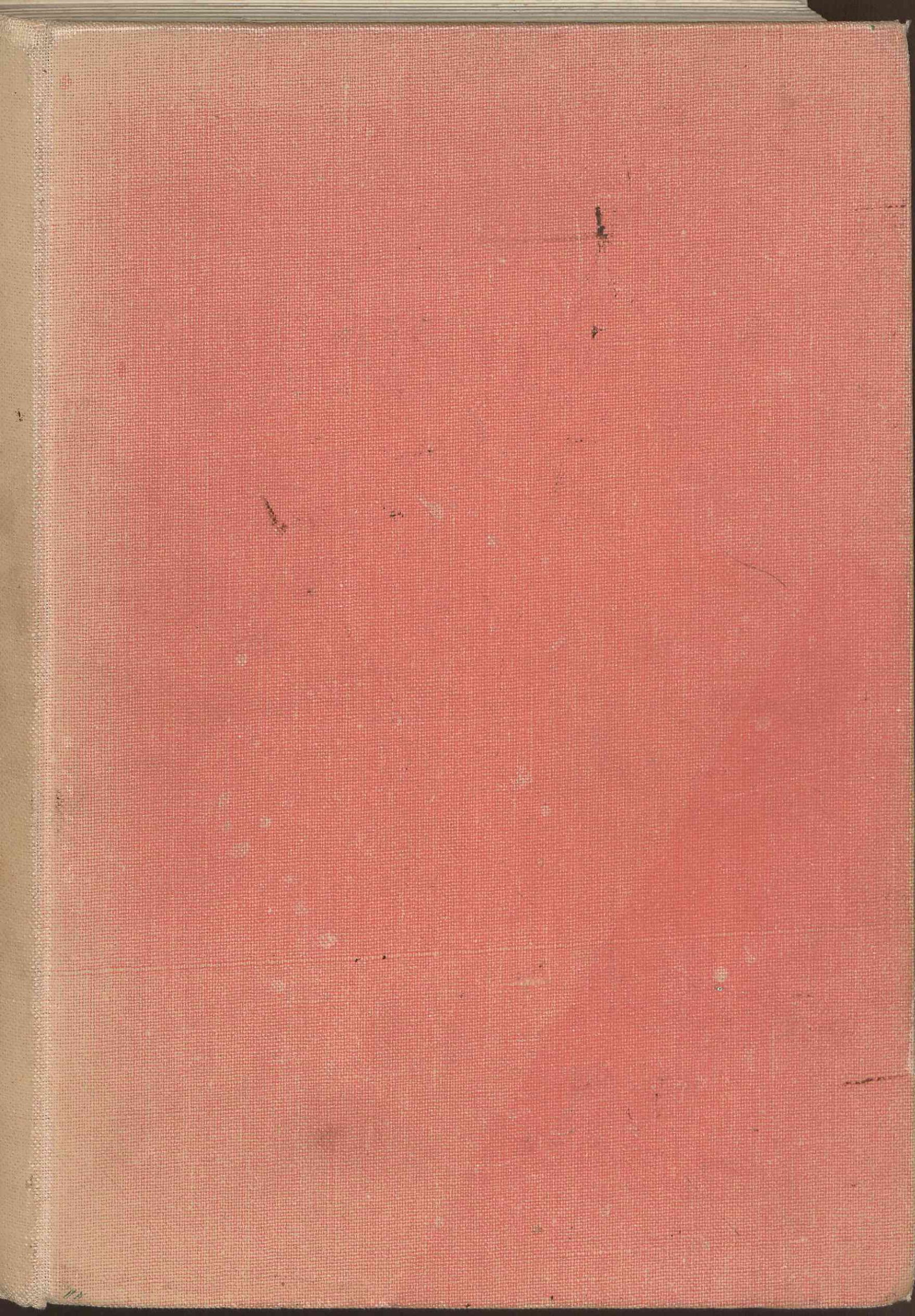
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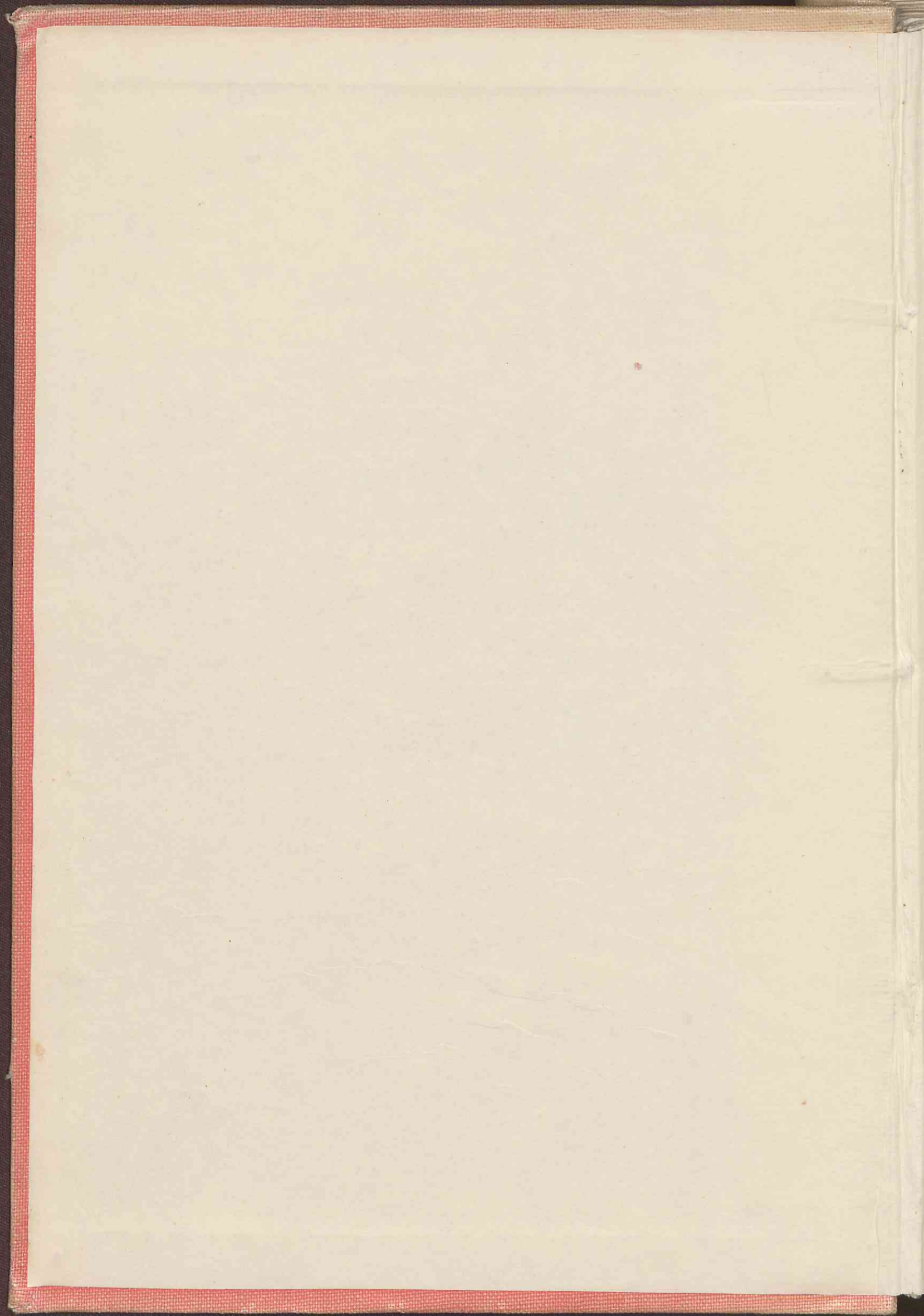
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G. GREER

1967

PH. D.





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PREFACE

THE ETHIC OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY COMEDIES

Dissertation submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Cambridge, 1967, by
Germaine Greer, M.A.

PREFACE

At the end of three years' study and many more thousands of words than appear in this typescript, I am aware that my self-imposed task of explaining the peculiar value of Shakespeare's first comedies in their cultural context is hardly begun. It will be clear from the bibliography, that I early resolved to go it more or less alone: that bibliography is strictly limited to works actually referred to in the thesis, and much general reading in modern renaissance scholarship underlies the thesis, unacknowledged, but nevertheless the impression that I sought to confront the source material directly, rather than to think in the cultural historians' generalisations, and to take issue with their theories, is accurate. The problem is that Shakespeare is not primarily a renaissance intellectual, but an English playwright, and although I am less likely than many other critics to find his abiding value in the sovereignty of stage and stageability in his plays, I have clung to the fundamental notion, that, notwithstanding his own prodigious intelligence, he wrote to be intelligible of men of little and limited culture, and strong convictions. So I have spent a great deal of time reading books printed in English in Shakespeare's lifetime; all books are relevant when it comes to attempting to recreate an intellectual climate, and all are potentially irrelevant. My reading was not exhaustive and it may have been haphazard, because one is so much at the mercy of capricious fate and the Elizabethan book-trade. As I went on I presupposed less and less about the circumstances of reading, for clearly

much that crowded the shelves in sixteenth century England was not read willingly by anybody. The demographic historians, in answer to my timid questionings about what I might assume about the Elizabethan household gave me the choice of examining parish registers in remote districts for an indefinite period, until the computers should enable me to infer anything at all, and minding my own litterateur's business. Dr. Righter bravely read the billions of words which streamed from my pen during this difficult period of my research, struggling through reams of ill-typed and presumptuous cultural anthropology, religious apologetics, and legal history, steadying my more riotous certainties, and perhaps she regrets more than I do that all that remains of it in this typescript is a bare page as well as a few hints in the Introductory section. All litterateurs who have confronted without a readymade methodology the problem of myth and society in the sixteenth century have come to a similar end, and the sociologists and historians become less and less interested in the problem. Now these researches serve I hope as a background to be exploited with tact, until out of our combined efforts emerges a clearer picture of ideology and reality in Shakespeare's England.

Doubtless there are many reputable critics who would maintain that the excellence and high seriousness of Shakespeare's work can be maintained without reference to a specific social commitment: without taking issue with them, for the question too often resolves into a matter of linguistics, I should point out that a playwright has more to do with the

social context than a contemplative poet, and that, if such a case can be made for Shakespeare, I should like to make it, regardless of whether it be the only or the ultimate case.

Because of the severe limitations on length, which I fear I have already defied to a small extent, I have quoted the full title of works cited only once in the footnotes, and from then on an abbreviated form has been used. If a reference proves difficult to remember, a glance at the Bibliography should clarify matters. In all cases of sixteenth and seventeenth century books I have quoted an abbreviated but exact version of the title as given by the titlepage, folio numbers where they existed and were not obviously irregular, likewise page numbers. Quotation of signature means that the volume is unpaginated. The plays have been arranged in chronological sequence but that is not a matter which I can pretend to know about: it may be that there is very little between The Two Gentlemen of Verona and The Comedy of Errors, for strictly speaking plays can develop through various stages over a period; all of them may be in a sense contemporary, and those finished first may not represent the oldest conception. My argument does not depend upon establishing the precedence, nor does it exploit the precedence claimed. This may be considered a serious defect: my ignorance is not borne with complacency, and the argument of the development of certain ideas from play to play could certainly be made, and even from my tentative indications it can be inferred, and I should like one day to make it, but it was not the business of this thesis. It may seem more original than it is,

in the sense that I have not acknowledged many a book which I have obviously read, because it is not actually referred to in the text: to list such works now would be invidious, for the selection would have to be arbitrary and misleading. The thesis is obviously a piece of original research, subject to the usual conditioning factors of which I am least capable in the world of giving a coherent account.

Among the factors which condition one's way of confronting a literary problem the most important and unassessable are the people who have taught and guided one. My deepest thanks are due to Doctor Righter, whose gentle rigour has, I hope, not been exercised in vain, and to Professor Bradbrook, whose seminars kept us embryo Renaissance scholars in touch with our subject and each other, and with her never-failing enthusiasm and her great learning. My thanks are also due to the staff of the Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian, the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and especially of the Marciana in Venice, for their unfailing cooperation and courtesy. None of my research would have been possible without the Association of Commonwealth Universities and The British Council who supplied the wherewithal to keep body and soul together, and Newnham College which accepted me as a member three years ago. My fairy god-mother, Mrs. Joy Tapply, must come in for her share of thanks, for without her help with the dreary wastes of typing, and her patience in allowing me to inundate her flat with papers, and rend the night with the clangour of the typewriter, and the

meals she forcibly administered when I had forgotten them, I doubt this volume would ever have materialised.

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Introductory.

May games and jests fill the World full
of mirth
but the feeling of Grace fills the soule
full of joy.

(Nicholas Breton, Wits private Wealth)

In our time the notion of an experimental drama has acquired respectability: the term, experimental, no longer implies an adverse criticism, but simply a breaking away from traditional forms in order to find one which will say a new thing. It is understood that the experiment may be successful. In every case the judgment of the success or failure of the experiment must be made vis-a-vis the work itself, for there is no sure external indication: some experiments are not repeated because they are successful, and their point is proved; others are repeated precisely because of the amount of success that they have in handling a certain kind of truth. In our age it has become necessary to experiment with the most basic rules of the theatrical experience. The audience has been incorporated and alienated, surrounded, ignored, jeered at, and even had to take responsibility for rupturing the dramatic situation when the actors refused to leave the stage. Actors may put paper bags over their heads, enact contemporary events to excite propagandist emotions, refuse to enact anything recognisable at all, or even to be anything but actors. All kinds of action have been seen, the stoning of babies in prams, mass masturbation, sex murders by infantile maniacs. Bowed with the weight of our rich theatrical inheritance, we run hither and thither to find a form that will embody our spiritual plight, so much more desperate than anything our forefathers can have envisaged for us. The action becomes every year more frenzied. The broad stream of dramatic poetry will not emerge from underground to carry us along, except in these muddled spurts which seep away almost at once. We have plundered time and the world; we see Noh plays, Siamese puppeteers, Bharata Natyam,

aborigine ritual, the dancing Mass, the corrido, everything but the public execution, which, with a sudden affectation of humanity, has been taken away from us, to be unsatisfactorily replaced by films from the Nazi archives.

It is time then to look with new humility at the experimental methods of the greatest dramatist. We are now fully aware of the kind of intelligence which may be brought into play when genius faces the tyranny of the theatre for the first time. A playwright is more likely to write the anti-play, the meta-play, the non-play when he is testing the dynamics of the theatrical situation, to see how far out and in deep he can afford to go. His governing ideas may prove less tractable, and their expression difficult to integrate artistically. The quality of his intelligence may be more clearly visible because the power of the imagination has not yet eclipsed it, because artifice has not yet overcome anxiety. The student of Shakespeare's theory of art will find more obvious evidence of his assumptions in these early plays, than he will in the whole of the rest of the canon.¹

It may be that the four plays I shall discuss are not the first plays that Shakespeare actually wrote, but I do believe them to be the first of his works to survive when all the prevailing pressures were either for

1. Love's Labour's Lost alone would suffice to justify this statement, for in it Shakespeare discusses a wide range of artistic problems, diction, communication, entertainment and structure, and we may add, moreover, the comments in The Two Gentlemen of Verona on acting (IV. iv. 170) and the power of poetry (III. ii. 67ff.) as well as the discussions in the Induction of The Taming of the Shrew of the nature of comedy, acting and the doctrine of imitation.

their total consumption or for their absorption into a system of promiscuous reworking to keep the cormorant public supplied with novelties. The first and most striking fact about these four plays is that they are very unlike each other. The Two Gentlemen of Verona is the elegant and romantic exploitation of a chivalric situation with a perverse and troubling ending. The Comedy of Errors is a Plautine comedy, more elaborately classical than its classical source. The Taming of the Shrew is a domestic comedy of the most unassuming and earthiest kind, mated with an insipid Italianate intrigue, while Love's Labour's Lost is Shakespeare's most original work, and unlike any other play ever written. Obviously these four plays are not four attempts to write the same play. Of all of them, only The Two Gentlemen of Verona contains elements which were reworked later, and those not central. Each play must have accomplished something that Shakespeare did not feel the need to try again, and that accomplishment we may see in two ways, as clearing the ground of forms and kinds that he was not to find useful, and establishing fundamental themes within his work, which are not stated again with such clarity and sweep until the last plays.

This thesis will end at the point at which it began four years ago, in a discussion of Love's Labour's Lost. Students were objecting that despite the play's superficial charm it was utterly conventional and basically uninteresting. A discussion of the function of the last song was enough to convince them that such a view was totally inadequate, and when challenged to identify and provide other examples of the convention of which Love's Labour's Lost is a part, not one example of

a genuinely comparable play was forthcoming, nor, I may now add, will it ever be. Slight traces of the Spanish Captain or the Pantaloon or of improvisation will not suffice to indicate a fruitful relationship with the commedia dell'arte, which is the antithesis of a poetic drama, and Shakespeare is always essentially the poet in the theatre. The commedia dell'arte is the entertainment offered to Caliban by Stephano and Trinculo, but Shakespeare claims the greater responsibility of Prospero. The less ephemeral commedia erudita left only the faintest of traces on Shakespeare, for The Comedy of Errors is more likely to be based upon the Menaechmi itself and modified by schoolboy knowledge of Terence. We can only rejoice that the conditions governing the development of English theatre precluded the crippling division of French comedy into the official comedy, pure, elegant and bitterly boring, innocent of vigour and moralism alike, and the robust native tradition of farce and morality, which was never allowed to pretend to respectability and only rarely to vivify the literary form. Spanish comedy resembles the English in some respects, but no significant interaction seems to have occurred. Bartolome de Torres Naharro's division of his work into commedias a noticia and a fantasia is an acknowledgment of the variety of sources that must feed a successful popular comedy, but the commercial troupe of Lope de Rueda abandoned it for the barrenness of the Italianate form, achieving immortality only through the one-act pasos. Lope de Vega does not seem to have had any significant influence on contemporary English theatre, probably because of the ephemeral nature of his work, and the delicate relations between Spain and England, which, while not affecting the transmission

of printed works like Montemayor's Diana, would have prevented the free intercourse necessary for the knowledge of Lope's eighteen hundred plays. The pragmatism of Lope's Arte nueva de hacer comedias en este tiempo certainly resembles Shakespeare's practical aesthetic more than anything produced by his own countrymen.

There is no lack of evidence that the Elizabethan dramatist followed a path quite deliberately differentiated from continental trends. Italian comedy, the model for most continental practice, was certainly known in England; many a playwright besides Gosson must have tossed off "a cast of Italian devices". The closet writers strove to satisfy the demands of Trissino and Castelvetro, to the extent of translating Italian works into Latin, as Abraham Fraunce did Pasqualigo's Il Fedeles, calling it Victoria (1580-3), but on the popular stage "Italian bawdry" did not prove successful. The comparative resistance of the English to the propaganda of the Italian pundits is yet to be fully explained, and it appears more remarkable when we remember that the most eminent French playwrights were proud to offer their cultivated audiences versions of thoroughly orthodox but totally undistinguished Italian works. Very few examples of this practice have survived in English, and there is no evidence that La Spiritata, in Jeffere's English version, The Buggbears (1563), met with more than token appreciation. As evidence that Italian comedy was known but unwanted in England, the criticisms offered by Gosson in Plays Confuted may serve, for the comedies whose groundwork

is loue, cosenedge, flatterie, bawderie, slye conueighance
of whordome. The persōs, cookes, queanes, knaues,
baudes, parasites, courtezannes, lecherouse olde men,
amoureuse yong men, ¹

are those written in "Latine, French, Italian, and Spanish". He can
only object to the naive comedy of the knight who defies "many a terrible
monster made of browne paper" to win his lady, on the grounds that it
is a trifle and teaches nothing. If Gosson was puritanical, Nashe
certainly was not, and yet not even the most virulent play-hater could
have condemned foreign comedy more bitterly.

Our Players are not as the players beyond sea, a sort of
squirting bawdie Comedians, that haue whores and common
Curtizens to playe womens partes, and forbear no
immodest speech or vnchast action that may procure
laughter; but our Sceane is more statelie furnisht than
euer it was in the time of Roscius, our representations
honourable, and full of gallant resolution, not consisting,
like theirs, of a Pantaloun, a Whore and a Zanie, ... ²

This is not simply the kill-joy's rejection of the comedy of amorous
intrigue, for the speaker has the courage to imply total irreverence for
the classical orthodoxy which so effectively strangled all creativity in
Italianate comedy. Whetstone on the other hand makes it a question of
decadence from the classical ideal, claiming that the

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1. Plays Confuted in fiue Actions, Prouing that they are not to be
suffred in a Christian common weale, ... By Steph. Gosson,
Stud. Oxon ... London Imprinted for Thomas Gosson ...
(1582), Sig. C5 recto cf. Sig. D5 verso.
 2. The Works of Thomas Nashe Edited from the original Texts by
R. B. McKerrow. Reprinted from the original edition with
corrections and supplementary notes. Edited by F. P. Wilson
(Oxford, 1958) (Hereafter referred to as McKerrow) Vol. I,
p. 215, Pierce Peniless his Supplication to the Diuell (1952),
Sig. F4 recto.

aduised deuises of auncient Poets, discedited (sic) with the tryfels of younge, vnaduised, and rashe witted wryters, hath brought this commendable exercise in mislike. For at this daye, the Italian is so lasciuious in his cōmedies, that honest hearers are greeued at his actions: the Frenchman and Spaniarde followes the Italians humor: ¹

In fact the amorality of Italianate comedy is rather a result of a more accurate understanding of the classics, but Whetstone remains loyal to the older learning, which treated all literature as allegory, and moralised Menander and Plautus without critical scruple. For the modern humanist who was also a moralist, there was only one course to take, to reject New Comedy as decadent, and seek to re-create the vetus comoedia. Machiavelli represents the half-way mark, for underneath the story of sly conveyance of whoredom flows the vitriolic stream of his satiric conscience. For Shakespeare the choice was open, either the old moralised classicism, or the scurrilous comedy of the satirists, or a rejection of all learned prescription for the living aesthetic of the theatre itself.

* * * * *

The native tradition unfortunately did not inspire an academicism of its own, and we must search for signs of an informed rejection of dry formalism in the implications of, say, Chapman's attack on Scaliger for

1. The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra: ... The worke of George Whetstone Gent. ... (Col. Imprinted at London By Richarde Ihones, ... 1578.), Sig. Aii verso.

his denigration of Homer.¹ Comic theory as it existed in Elizabethan culture is obviously inadequate to give any account of the actual phenomenon to which it ought to have relevance. Descriptive criticism is yet to be born; for the Aristotelians the principle exists first, and is sui generis eternal and immutable. If its terms are irrelevant to any work, it follows that the work must be chaotic and formless. For the practising playwright nothing can have been more evident than that academic orthodoxy is its own reward. Given the fact that the artist wishes to communicate, it is inevitable that he sacrifice the approval of the theorists for the chemistry of the theatrical situation, not considered merely in the crude terms of the box-office. Few things, however, are more fragile than the spontaneous receptivity of an audience. Nashe has an amusing story of a justice who,

having a play presented before him and his Towneship by Tarlton and the rest of his fellowes, her Maiesties seruants ... the people began exceedingly to laugh, when Tarlton first peept out his head. Whereat the Iustice, not a little moued, and seeing with his beokes and nods hee could not make them cease, he went with his staffe, and beat them round about vnmercifully on the bare pates, in that they, being but Farmers & poore countrey Hyndes, would presume to laugh at the Queenes men, and make no more account of her cloath, in his presence.²

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1. Achilles Shield. Translated as the other seven Bookes of Homer, out of his eighteenth booke of Iliades. By George Chapman Gent. London Imprinted by John Windet ... 1598, Epistle Dedicatorie, Sig. A.3 verso.
 2. McKerrow, Nashe, Vol. I, p.188, Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell (Sig. Di verso).

What snobbishness and pomposity did for the Justice's reactions was accomplished for the coterie audiences by sophistication and vanity. The story of the greatness of Elizabethan theatre is also the story of the greatness of the Elizabethan audience, with its strong admixture of farmers and poor country hinds. The audience which can welcome the comedy of which Sidney writes,

an imitatio of the comon errors of our life, which he representeth in the most ridiculous & scornfull sort that may be: so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. ¹

is already imposing demands of a sophisticated kind. This is the comedy that Jonson and his followers will offer the theatre of the coterie, theatre of satire dear to an in-group which will gain pleasure from recognising its neighbour in the glass thus held up to errant nature. The chastisement of folly is the particular vocation of the Stoic, whose arrogance and inhumanity draw Thalia's tears, for —

Fine Counterfesaunce and vnhurtfull Sport,
Delight and Laughter deckt in seemly sort.
All these, and all that els the Comick Stage
With seasoned wit and goodly pleasance graced,
By which man's life in his likest image
Was limned forth, are wholly now defaced;
And those sweete wits which wont the like to frame,
Are now despizd, and made a laughing game ...

In stead thereof scoffing Scurrilitie,
And scornfull Follie with Contempt is crept,
Rolling in rymes of shameles ribaudrie
Without regard, or due Decorum kept,
Each idle wit at will presumes to make, 2
And doth the Learneds taske vpon him take.

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1. Sir Philip Sidney, The Complete Works ed. A. Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1923), Vol. iii, p. 23, The Defence of Poesie.
 2. Edmund Spenser, Poetical Works ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London, 1965), p. 482, The Tears of the Muses, 11.211-6, 197-204.

Spenser, himself a formidably learned man, has the right to charge the university malcontents with assuming the duties of the scholar without the capacity to execute them. His own six comedies can hardly have been written on the Aristophanic pattern, for it seems likely that a poet so gratefully aware of his mediaeval inheritance would have written in the native natural form, with all its richness of allegory and gentleness of spirit. We may fill out Thalia's picture with Nashe's spirited defence of the fabulous. The Stoic dramatist ignores a whole dimension of poetry, that which makes it

a more hidden & diuine kinde of Philosophy, enwrapped in blinde Fables and darke stories, wherein the principles of more excellent Arts and morrall precepts ... are contained: ...

But graunt the matter to be fabulous, is it therfore friuolous? Is there not vnder Fables, euen as vnder the shaddowe of greene and flourishing leaues, most pleasant fruite hidden in secrete, and a further meaning closely comprised? ¹

All Elizabethan literary criticism is based upon the concept of the ethical function of delight, and delight must be raised in the beholder before edification can be accomplished. If scurrilous, biting comedy is to apprise the beholder of his own follies, then it cannot delight him, and so defeats its own purpose: if he delights in seeing the discomfiture of others, he is not edified in himself.

1. McKerrow, Nashe, Vol. I, p. 25, 27-8, The Anatomie of Absurditie, Sig. C1 recto.

The taproot of the spontaneous natural form, which combines the image of man's life with unhurtfull sport, "whose matter is good, simple, sweet and honest" is difficult to trace. If we try to reconstruct the internal conditions of its existence from the writings which have been preserved by tricks of fate and the bookselling industry, we are at once baffled by their curiously haphazard variety, and the evident polemic reasons for the publication of works which were not at the top of the popularity parade. Even the emergence of the kind, comedy, is strangely obscure, if the descriptions applied to the works by their publishers are anything to go by. Thomas Lupton's All for Money ends with Damnation driving Dives and Judas out before him "and they shall make a pitiefull noyse",

What heart but must lament,
To hear the rueful dolour of those two damned wights?

and yet it is called a "moral and pitieful comedie", perhaps because it is intended that the hearers "May rather amend their faults, then therewith be greeued".¹ The title-page of Wager's The longer thou liuest, the more foole thou art calls it a "very mery a. pitie comedie" although its flimsy morality types are created only to be destroyed.² The damnation of the protagonist of Inough is as good as a feast does not apparently provide cause to call it anything but a comedy.³

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1. A moral and pitieful comedie, intituled, All for Money . . .
Compiled by T. Lupton. At London. Printed by Roger Warde and Richard Munde . . . Anno 1578. t.p. cf. Sig. E iii recto, A ii verso.
 2. See titlepage of quarto of 1569 printed by N. How for R. Ihones.
 3. See titlepage of quarto of 1565 printed by John Allde.

Common Conditions (1576) is mysteriously called an excellent and pleasant comedy, although it ends with the death of the lovers, and the Prologue confesses the matter to be pitiful and strange.¹ The title of The Conflict of Conscience is almost absurd in its paradoxicality — An excellent new Commedie, Intituled: The Conflict of Conscience, contayning The most lamentable Hystorie of the desperation of Francis Spera.²

Mirth is all-pervasive, even in those works not called comedies, and the term it seems would account for all shades of reaction between the extremes of grave satisfaction and coarse hilarity, but it is of different stock from the scornful tickling of which Sidney speaks. Amusement at the antics of the abstract characters of the morality play arises from a detached assessment of the drollery of their motiveless actions, their clowning and horseplay, not from a feeling of condemnation and superiority. The stimulation of mirth can be brought about in widely different ways. The ambiguity of Gascoigne's statement at the beginning of his lamentable school comedy, The Glasse of Governement, that it is a "tragicall Comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices"³

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1. Common Conditions ed. Tucker Brooke, Elizabethan Club Reprints, No. 1 (London, 1915), titlepage and Sig. Aii recto.
 2. Titlepage of second issue of 1581 quarto reproduced in Malone Society Reprint ed. H. Davis and F. P. Wilson (1952).
 3. The Glasse of Gouvernment . . . Done by George Gascoigne Esquier, 1575 . . . Imprinted at London for C. Barker, t.p (Sig. Aii recto).

is genuine confusion, for it is not a simple matter of understanding the comic to be the part that deals with rewards and the tragic the part that deals with punishments. The Divina Commedia contains Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. Not only may punishment furnish material for comedy, but the reward of the virtuous may be visualised in the most austere terms. While salvation may bloom in some deeply satisfying way in an allegory of reviving the dead, bearing children, escaping from enchantment, or discovering lost kin, it may also be expressed with homilectic sobriety, as it is in Lewis Wager's Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene (1566).¹ All the versions of the prodigal son theme, ending with repentance and rectification of life follow an archetypal comic pattern. Everyman is a perfect example, for the death and the triumph of the protagonist are the same.

The psychomachia of the morality situations may be called comedy because regardless of whether the warring agents are damned or destroyed, we are satisfied that right rule has been reestablished in the soul, and the conflicts caused by Pride, Perverse Doctrine, Infidelity or the Vice in any of his guises, are over. The pathos of the individual fate is swallowed up in the adumbration of a larger justification. It is this principle of affirmation of the eternal scheme of things, the poet's attempt to create a parallel to the inscrutable master plan of God, and man's hope within it as the son of God and heir to Heaven, which explains why plays

1. Reprinted as No 1 of Series II of the Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago, ed. F. Carpenter (1904).

like Apus and Virginia can be called comedies in any sense at all.¹

The death of the protagonist is his entry into his inheritance, unlike the death of the unjust man in the de casibus tradition. The distinction is far from clear in practice, because we cannot assume damnation as a certainty, and because damnation is a part of the divine rightness of things. The death of Cambises is so inadequate to punish him for his manifold crimes, that there seems little or no reason for calling the play a tragedy, and on the other hand, death is so heavy a penalty for the idolatry of youthful passion in the Celestina that de Roja's coinage of the name tragicomedia for it is almost inexplicable.² The confusion is not simply the result of insular ignorance, for Arthur Golding does no more than follow his source, the Abraham Sacrifiant of Theodore de Beza, when he calls his play of Abraham's Sacrifice a tragedy,³ although the angel of God intervenes and the ending is happy.⁴ In every case we must understand the description of the work as partly publisher's blurb and partly a genuine attempt to describe it. All that we may safely claim for

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1. The titlepage and running title of Apus and Virginia (vide Malone Soc. Reprint of quarto of 1575, 1911) call it a tragical comedy, although it ends with the death of Apus in despair, and Virginia's decapitation by her father, leaving Doctrina, Memory and Fame to vindicate her memory.
 2. It is perhaps notable that Rastell tries to systematise his Calisto and Melebea by curtailing his source and ending it happily. (See Malone Soc. Reprint (1908), Sig. A1 recto.)
 3. See edition by Malcolm W. Wallace, Univ. Toronto Stud., Philological Series, No. 1, 1906. (Titlepage of 1577 reproduced.)
 4. The inapplicability of the title of The Tragedy of Frewyl may also be traced to the source play by Francesco Negri da Bassano.

the concept of comedy as it is revealed by actual usage is that it was broad, living and varied. Within it can be discerned the most fascinating sub-species, like the conceited comedies, themselves as diverse as How a man may choose a good wife from a bad,¹ with its odd blend of tear-jerking and moralism, and The Old Wives Tale.² When the plot bears the slightest resemblance to historical event, we have the comical history, which is the description favoured by Greene.³ The picture is not complete without a gesture towards the closet comedy, like Warner's acting version of the Menaechmi, or Gager's Rivales which was denounced by Rainolds as filth, and the pastoral, which contains both tragic and comic elements, while being clearly distinguished as a form unto itself.

It is interesting that Lyly should have refused to establish the kind of his comedies, calling Sapho and Phao "a Labyrinth of conceites",⁴ Endimion "neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie nor anie thing"⁵

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1. A pleasant conceited Comedie wherein is shewed how a man may chuse a good wife from a bad. As it hath bene sundry times Acted by the Earle of Worcesters Seruants. London Printed for Mathew Lawe ... 1602, t.p.
 2. The Old Wiues Tale. A pleasant conceited Comedie ... Written by G. P. Printed at London by Iohn Danter ... 1595, t.p.
 3. See titlepages of 1599 quarto of Alphonsus, of 1594 quarto of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, and of the 1594 and 1599 quartos of Orlando Furioso.
 4. The Complete Works of John Lyly ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford, 1902), (hereafter referred to as Bond) Vol. II, p. 416. The Epilogue, 1. 3.
 5. Bond, Lyly, Vol. III, p. 20, Endimion, The Prologue, ll. 8-9.

and Midas "a mingle-mangle".¹ Nashe would not even allow Summer's Last Will and Testament to be a play, which it certainly is. These disclaimers are designed to place the works outside the field of the formalist critics and invite judgment on their intrinsic merits. Behind them lies a living notion of decorum, for Lyly clearly established a genre of his own, although he was reluctant to give it a name. Some might choose to embrace variety, others to purify disparity, and others invent, as Nashe did, a form specially adapted to the exigencies of the situation for which it was composed. The characteristic of the Elizabethan form as Shakespeare inherited it was fruitful confusion. He was equal to its promise and did not abandon it for the smooth-trodden path of Italian formula.

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While it is misleading to trust to academic descriptions of comedy, because even as creative a mind as Sidney's is dealing with a sheer concept, unrealised in any significant way in his native culture, there is one point at which theory and practice coincide. The pseudo-Ciceronian doctrine of imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis was accepted by academicians and artists alike. It means more than the transmission of the superficial form and pressure of the time, the embodiment of the whole destiny of man, in the words of Spenser's Thalia,

1. Bond, Lyly, Vol. III, p. 115, The Prologue, Midas, ll. 18-19.

"mans life in his likest image". For the christian humanist the human career was protasis, epitasis and catastrophe, life, death and entry into life everlasting. At its profoundest level comedy is a metaphor of salvation. Its object is to increase faith and confidence both in our humanity and in our divine destiny. This is the point where scholarly theory achieves a valid relationship with the culture that it claims to represent, and implants at the heart of our idea of comedy the notion of wishfulfilment. The result is a principle that is genuinely vital. This is the mirth that the writer of sweet comedy seeks to excite, the deep, gentle joy of the child of God.

Our intēt was at this time to moue 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 haue sport mingled with rudenesse. ¹

This is the mirth that Shakespeare excites by the principal action of his plays, whatever sport he may introduce in the burlesque action of the subplots. It is of a different order from the high jinks that relieved the gloastliness of divine retributive justice in the old plays, for it is born of gratification and agreement, not inexplicable dumbshows and noise. The power of mirth to settle the spirits and purge melancholy is seriously maintained by many a sixteenth-century dramatist, and it is not the medicinal guffaw he means, but the warm smiling complicity that is

1. Bond, Lyly, Vol. II, p.371, Sapho and Phao, "The Prologue at the Black fryers", 11.7-11.

brought by the "base kind of poetrie which endeth troblesome matters merrilie".¹

What Creature is in health, eyther yong or olde,
 But som mirth with modestie will be glad to vse
 As we in thys Enterlude shall now vnfolde,
 Wherin all scurilitie we vtterly refuse,
 Auoiding such mirth wherin is abuse:
 Knowing nothing more comedable for a mā's recreation
 Than Mirth which is vsed in an honest fashion:
 For Myrth prolongeth lyfe, and causeth health.
 Mirth recreates our spirites and vnderpensueth,
 Mirth increaseth amitie, not hindring our wealth;
 Mirth is to be vsed both of more and lesse,
 Being mixed with vertue in decent comelynesse.²
 Which mirth we intend to vse, auoidyng all blame.

This is the mirth of the plays defended by Lodge, in which "the Poet on stages presenteth you a picture of his owne drawing, wherein you may behold the whole life of man".³ On the basis of such a conception works totally lacking in hilarity may be described as mirthful comedies, for the essence is the bringing of things with treble joy to pass.

Nowadays, as part of our unacknowledged inheritance from Shakespeare, we expect that the thing brought to pass will be a wedding, but for the Elizabethans it could have been almost any kind of resolution, the restoration of concord between man and wife, the death of the protagonist and end of his exile on earth, the recovery of the prodigal

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1. From the definition of comedy given in The Nomenclator or Remembrancer of Adrianus Iunus Physician . . . now in English by John Higin . . . Imprinted at London for Ralph Newberie and Henrie Denham. 1585, p.15.
 2. Nicholas Udall, Ralph Roister Doister (Malone Society Reprint, ed. W. W. Greg, 1934), Sig. Aii recto.
 3. Gosson, Plays Confuted (loc. cit.) characterising the staple of Lodge's argument, Sig. D1 recto.

son, reform and rectification of life, or the finding of Gammer Gurton's needle. Comedy affirms the logic of our existence, confirms us in the belief that all is for the best. It induces satisfaction, by exciting desires which it alone can gratify. Time and experience have proved that the most effective way of doing this is to create two people obviously meant for each other, and to bring them together after the pleasurable tension of confusions and delays, Lurewell and Captain Standard, Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy, Caroline Helstone and Mr. Moore. It proves to be one of the most soothing and salutary gratifications fiction has to offer, the vicarious pleasure of watching the triumph of true love, even when it is insipid and especially when it is not. The course of true love does not depend upon preposterous coincidence and ponderous machinery of intrigue outside the scope of the play: it is in the nature of human passion that it can grow complicated of itself, beyond our easy assumption of a solution. Our gratification at the happy outcome of Lovers' broils is selfless and tender, hopeful and humble. It is not after all a critical howler to say that it is the business of comedy to make us feel good: Shakespeare's comedies succeeded so well in making his audience feel good, that much of our popular literature is still based upon his formula.

* * * * *

Besides the formal advantages of stories of wooing and wedding as the basis of comedy, there is the largely unanswerable question of why that particular literary motif should have emerged in Shakespeare's time.

Whatever the old plays were that Berowne speaks of, where Jack had Jill and all went well¹ they have not survived except perhaps in ballads, whose origins are lost in antiquity. Because the joining of lovers after vicissitudes and confusion is the most common motif in our literature today we tend to think that it has always been so. There may be true grounds for such a feeling, for there has not always been a popular literature which was not of necessity ephemeral.

In our forefathers tyme, whan Papistrie, as a standyng poole, couered and ouerflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, sauynge certayne bookes of Cheualrie, as they sayd, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in Monasteries, by idle Monkes, or wanton Chanons: as one for example, Morte Arthure: the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest Knightes that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit fowlest aduolterres, by sutlest shiftes: as Sir Launcelote, with the wife of king Arthure his master: Syr Tristram with the wife of kyng Marke his vncke: Syr Lamerocke with the wife of king Lote, that was his own aunte.²

Stories of legitimate wooing and wedding had probably been sung and told since time immemorial among the humbler folk, but they did not interest the church or the aristocracy in an age when both controlled all book production. The connection that Ascham sees between popery and the mythology of illicit love may be unfairly but is nonetheless shrewdly observed. The Golden Legend is not the expression of a popular culture, but ecclesiastical hocus-pocus presented in a form easily purveyed by the

1. Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii. 864-5.

2. The Scholemaster ... By Roger Ascham. An. 1570. At London. Printed by Iohn Daye ..., fol. 27 verso.

semi-literate clergy, relying for its appeal on the sheerest sensationalism. Its sexual content, contained in the battles of incredibly seductive virgins to resist diabolically resourceful onslaughts upon their virtue, is high, but not one picture of godly matrimony is presented. Wives become saints, only when, like Margery Kempe, they renounce the connubial bed. The Golden Legend did not survive long after the printing of a vernacular version on Caxton's press, and by Shakespeare's time it only remained as a perennial joke against the papists, for its massive length and utter silliness.¹ While it cannot be argued that the Middle Ages opposed marriage, or deliberately excluded it from the body of motifs with which literature might with dignity deal, it must be admitted that works like The Franklin's Tale and The Kingis Quair are individual.

The Reformation can be regarded as the culminating expression of the mounting pressure to democratise religion, and therefore the whole culture. With the destruction of the hierarchy and the arcane language of religious observance, there came also the plea for the right of the clergy to marry, which involved endless arguments that marriage was no second class way of life, and the marriage bed perfect chastity. Genesis was reinterpreted to include the sacrament of marriage celebrated by God himself in heaven, so that the emphasis shifted to the view, still tendentious, that marriage was the vocation of every man, except he who found himself by some act of God, incapable of it.

1. Caxton printed the first folio of his own version in 1483 and Wynkyn de Worde the eighth and last in 1527.

The woman is made for the man to be his wife;
so that, according to the Hebrewe proverbe, Cui
non est vxor, is non est vir (sic), A man without
a wife is not a man. ¹

Following the general trend of protestant ideology we may observe
the Petrarchan ideal somewhat incongruously mated with the ideal of
chaste wedded love in the Amoretti, and more grotesquely in Habington's
Castara. ²

We may gain some evidence of the lower-class origins of this ideal
from the Elizabethans themselves, who often lamented the practice of
"the many parentes at this day, namely such as be of the nobility," who
"do so handel their children, as the Grasier doth his oxen and shepe". ³

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1. Vitis Palatina. A sermon appointed to be preached at Whitehall
vpon the Tuesday after the mariage of the Ladie Elizabeth her
Grace. By the B. of London. London, printed for Iohn Bill.
1614, p.4.
 2. Habington states with false tendentiousness, "And though I
appeare to strive against the streame of best wits, in erecting
the selfe same Altar, both to chastity & love; I will for once
adventure to doe well, without a president". (Castara, The
second Edition. Corrected and Augmented. London. Printed
by B.A. & T.F. for Will: Cooke ... 1635, Sig. A4 recto.)
 3. The worckes of Thomas Becon ... 1564 ... Imprinted at London
by Iohn Daye, Vol. I, fol. DCXVIII verso of. the golden boke of
christen matrimonye, ... newly set forth in Englysh by Theodore
Basille (Col. London ... by Iohn Mayler for Iohn Gough ...
Anno Dni 1542), Sig. Biv recto, and Holsome and Catholyke
doctryne concerninge the seuen sacramentes ... by ... Thomas
byshop of Lincolne. Anno 1558 ... Excusum Londini in aedibus
Roberti Caly ..., fol. CLXXX verso.

For the lower classes there were none of the pressing questions of wardship, patrimony and security of property which governed dynastic matches.

Bride and groom grew up in the same community, and when they mated it was a question of trust and familiarity, for they would have to live together and work together in the same one-roomed cottage for the rest of their days. The ideal wooing, described by Breton's countryman,¹ is like that of Erastus.

When did Perseda pastime in the streetes,
But her Erastus ouer-eied her sporte?
When didst thou, with thy sampler in the Sunne
Sit sowing with thy feres, but I was by ...
When didst thou goe to Church on hollidaies, ²
But I haue waited on thee too and fro ...?

Kyd has conceived the love that conquers Death and Fortune in terms that are starkly inappropriate to the setting and status of the protagonists, for it is the same as that which inspires Coridon's Commendation³, or Campion's praise of Joan who

... can call by name her Cowes,
And deck her windows with greene bowes,
She can wreathes and Tutties make,
And decke with plumbes a Bridale Cake ...

Ioane is of a louely browne,
Neate as any in the Towne;
Heaire as blacke as any Crow,
And doth nimbly trip and goe ...

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1. The Court and Country, or a Briefe Discourse Dialogue-wise set downe betweene a Courtier and a Country-man ... written by N. B. Gent ... 1618, ed. W. C. Hazlitt for the Roxburghe Society, among the Inedited Tracts: illustrating the manners, opinions and occupations of Englishmen during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1868), pp.183, 198.
 2. The Works of Thomas Kyd ed. F. S. Boas (Oxford, 1955), p.165. Soliman and Perseda, I.ii.11.6-9, 15-16.
 3. The Pepys Ballads ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), Vol.I, 1535-1625, p.79.

We conclude and all agree,¹
 Ioanes as good as my Ladye.

There are some points of resemblance between Joan and Katharine, the burgher's daughter, who is brown and straight as a hazel-twigg, and between Joan and black Rosalind, as Berowne seems ruefully to recognize. These are the new heroines of the blossoming love-stories, and they may claim their descent not from the white-handed, lute-playing loves of parfit knighthood, but from the Plowman's beloved -

Nay by cokke body I vse no sych lyfe
 For I am content with blak-maud my wyfe
 Trow ye y I care for these nise proude prīmys²
 These paityd popagays that hold vp their chynne

* * * * *

If we resort to the social historians for some explanation of the development of the Shakespearean concept of wedded love, we find little that is genuinely helpful. It is generally agreed that the sixteenth century opened a new era for domestic relations, but what the apostles of it accepted and preached is nowhere precisely stated. G. M. Trevelyan presents a dismal picture of child marriages and wives as breeding chattels or scolds, illustrating his argument from the Paston letters, but at the end of the chapter he adds,

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1. The Pepys Ballads ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), Vol. I, 1535-1625, pp. 156-161.
 2. Of Gentylnes & Nobyltye. A dyaloge between the marchaut the Knyght & the plowman . . . (Malone Society Reprint ed. A. C. Partridge and F. P. Wilson, 1950), Sig. C1 verso, 11.935-8.

When we reach the age of Shakespeare, literature and the drama treat mutual love as the proper, but by no means the invariable basis of marriage. The struggle of the children against the parents for matrimonial freedom has got hold of the sympathetic popular imagination and the commonest interest on the Elizabethan stage is the devotion of lovers aiming at marriage, and the adventures of runaway couples like Master Fenton and Anne Page.¹

This statement might seem to go a long way towards proving my case, but upon closer examination it is evident that it does not tally with the known facts. The nature of the mutual love which ought to form the basis of marriage, with its relation to sexual infatuation, was under question. The struggle of the children against their parents is an archetypal feature of Roman comedy, which deals as much with the right to sow wild oats, as to marry. It is simply not true that the Elizabethan stage was dominated by works with a love-interest. Master Fenton and Anne Page are not a runaway couple for their marriage is ultimately brought within the social canon and their parents shown to be at fault for opposing it.² Moreover these two are not typical of Shakespeare's most interesting lovers, who are self-determining individuals of adult age and discretion like Kate and Petruchio, Rosalind and Berowne, Beatrice and Benedick, Rosalind and Orlando, the real ancestors of so many lovers whose fortunes and developing relationships we follow on stage, screen, radio and television, and through millions of pages of

1. G. M. Trevelyan, Illustrated Social History (London, 1949), Vol. I, p. 64.

2. The Merry Wives of Windsor, V.v. 11. 245-255.

novels with unflagging interest. It is important not to assume too much about Shakespeare's interest in marriage, and more important not to assume the wrong things, as Trevelyan does. Shakespeare is interested in love within society, not destructive passion, which must be exercised and ritualised, as it is in A Midsummer Night's Dream. In Romeo and Juliet an innocent and creative love is turned to death and disaster because of the disrupted society in which it struggles for expression.

"The new and higher attitude towards marriage as taught by the reformers and their followers in England, particularly the Puritans"¹ existed in Shakespeare's time as a cause that might be espoused with passion and imagination. The reformers, not content with reformulating the theory of marriage, built it up as a cause, and by dint of imagining a controversy managed to create one. It was argued that the champions of monasticism had vilified marriage and placed the married faithful under limitations that induced guilt and fear. It is true that Augustine and the fathers of the church taught that the married state while not essentially sinful was very seldom in fact free from sin, but the church still teaches that married folk enjoy one-third of the privileges of virgins in heaven, and married Catholics nowadays do not seem unduly preoccupied about it. However the sixteenth century crusader was not troubled by the scruples which would beset a modern historian:

1. C. L. Powell, English Domestic Relations 1487-1653 (Columbia, 1917) p. 117, Cf. Hastings, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 8, p. 436.

Neuer reckened they wedlock anye godly estate of
 lyuīg, though it were an onlye ordre instytuted of
 god in y^e begynnīg, yea, for his prestes also.
 Cōmōly they haue dyswaden both men and womē
 frō it, as frō a most pernicious euyl, or frō a
 mischefe of all mischefes, calling it folishnes,
 fylthynes, beastlines, a walking in darkenes, a
 mayntenāce of lechery, a fulfillig of fleshly desyres,
 a grouūd of al vyce, an entraūce of death, a
 corruptinge of maydēhode, a lake of misery, a
 claye pyt of vnclenes, a thraldō of Egipt, a net of
 Sathā, a snare of y^e deuyl & a pōde of perdicō ... ¹

Thomas Becon, in addressing his Boke of Matrimony to King
 Edward, explained at length that it was necessary to write the praise of
 marriage because for many years it had been "greatly obscured and
 hyndred, yea, & almost vtterly defaced, thorow y^e wicked doctrine of
 certayn most wicked and most filthy hypocrites" who are blamed with
 having taught that matrimony was a "kynde of lyfe, base, vnperfecte,
 fleshly, troublesome, paynefull, vnquiet, carefull, vnrestfull, stuffed
 full of all sorowe, calamitie, misery, wretchednes, discorde, strife,
 contencion, debate and what not?" ² (There is of course evidence of
 the truth of Becon's contention in tracts like Hali Maidenhad ³ ~~or the~~

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1. The first two partes of the Acts or vnchast examples of the Englysh
 votaryes, gathered out of their owne legenades and Chronycles by
 Iohan Bale (s.d., s.t., Colophon gives date as 1550), Sig. A2
 recto. cf. A very godly defense full of lerning, defending the
 mariage of Preistes gathered by Philip Melancthon ... translated
 out of Latine into Englisshe by Lewes beuchame the yeare of the
 lorde. M. CCCC.xlj, Sig. A6 recto.
 2. Worckes, Vol. I, The Boke of Matrimonye, fol. cccclxvi recto.
 3. Reprinted by the E.E.T.S., Original Series No. 18, 1922,
 ed. F. J. Furnivall.

or the Quinze Joies de Mariage¹ and a host of sermons, exempla and fabliaux.) It is this feeling which is reflected in the oddly belligerent opening of the marriage service in the Edward VI prayerbook, with its reminders that marriage is "an honourable state". This propaganda does not flag throughout Elizabeth's reign, perhaps because she constantly refused to regularise marriage legislation, especially with respect to the clergy. On the lips of Protestant martyrs, it became a part of the new mythology: Robert Barnes prayed to the boy king from the scaffold, "that he wyl se that matrimony be had in more reuerence than yt is, and that men for euery light cause inuentyd cast not of theyr wyues and lyue in auoutry and fornycaciō." ² The married clerics arraigned under Mary were an articulate lot, and their dying words were immortalised in the Acts and Monuments.³

Another manifestation of the crusading spirit can be found in the frequently hyperbolic and irrational eulogies of marriage, which point forward to the development of the myth of living happily ever after, for which the Elizabethans cannot be blamed. The best examples are sober but exultant:

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1. This misogynist tract must have been known to the Elizabethans for it forms the basis of Dekker's Bachelor's Banquet.
 2. A lytle reatise composyd by Johan Stadysshe ... agaist the ptestation of Robert Barnes at the tyme of his death. in aed. R. Redmani, 1540, Sig. F.iii verso.
 3. E.g. Dr. Rowland Taylor, Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes ... Gathered and collected ... By Iohn Foxe ... Imprinted at London by Iohn Daye ... 1563, p. 1054.

Let other set forth syngle lyuyng with so many prayes ... yet wyll I for euermore commend the state of honourable wedlocke, which refuseth no kynde of payne and trouble so that yt may brynge any profite at all to the publique weal of Christendome ... that state of lyuyng whiche accordyng to the order of charite, is redy at all times to beare the burdens of other, and to seke the quietnes of other, no lesse then of it selfe. ¹

Similar manifestations can be found in secular literature. Pettie, in choosing his exemplary tales for gentlewomen, embarks on an odd panegyric in describing the marriage of Camma, who later poisons herself rather than marry her husband's murderer.

... in this stately state of Matrimonie, there is nothing fearefull, nothing fayned, all things are done faithfully without doubting, truely without doublyng, willingly without constraint, ioyfully, without complaint: yea there is sutch a generall consent and mutuall agreement between the man and wife, that they both wish and will, couet and craue one thing. ²

In 1598, within months of its appearance in Italy, the controversy between Ercole and Torquato Tasso on the merits of the married state was published in the translation by Robert Tofte. The bachelor poet replies to the married philosopher's compendiously misogynist arguments with total illogic and winning enthusiasm -

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1. Basille, The golden boke of christen Matrimonye, *op. cit.*, Sig. A2 verso.
 2. A petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure: Contayning many pretie Hystories by him set forth in comely colours, and most delightfully discoursed. (Colophon: Printed at London, by R. W. n.d.), p. 1.

O sweete conioyning of loyall hearts, O dulcet
 vnion of our soules together, O most louely
 and nuptial knot, O most chaste, pure and
 religious marriage yoake, who art rather a
 pleasing ease, and a most welcome delight to
 supporte and beare, then any hard weight or
 greeuous burthen to sustaine: ... ¹

In setting out the way in which the civil poet ought to celebrate marriages, Puttenham adopts a curiously polemic tone, as if defending the "match forsooth made for euer and not for a day, a solace provided for youth, a comfort for age, a knot of alliance & amitie indissoluble:" against "that other loue, whereof there is no assurance, but loose and fickle affection occasioned for the most part by sodaine sights and acquaintance of no long triall or experience, nor vpon any other good ground wherein any suretie may be conceiued." ² As if in response to the urgency of his recommendation, the epithalamium makes its appearance in the vernacular at about this time. Naturally in the hands of learned poets it was a form consciously adopted from Sappho and Catullus, but there is a strong native element, which is summed up in the Brides Goodmorrow, an almost universally known ballad, which illustrates the Elizabethan Protestant ideal so well that I shall quote it in full:

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1. Of Mariage and Wiuing. An excellent, pleasant, and Philosophical Controuersie, betweene the two famous Tassi now liuing, the one Hercules the Philosopher, the other Torquato the Poet. Done into English, by R(ober) T(ofte) Gentleman. London Printed by Thomas Creede, ... 1599, Sig. Kili recto.
 2. The Arte of English Poesie. Contriuied into three Bookes: The first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament. At London Printed by Richard Field ... 1589, p.40.

The night is passed, & ioyfull day appeareth
 most cleare on every side,
 With pleasant musick we therefore salute you,
 good morrow Mistris Bride:
 From sleepe and slumber now wake you out of hand
 Your bridegroom stayeth at home:
 Whose fancy favour, & affection still doth stand
 fixed on thee alone:
 Dresse you in your best array,
 This must be your wedding day,
 God almighty send you happy ioy:
 In health and wealth to keep you still!
 And if it be his blessed will,
 God keepe you safe from sorrow and annoy.

This day is honour now brought unto thy bosome
 and comfort to thy heart:
 For God hath sent you a friēd for to defend you
 from sorrow, care and smart:
 In health & sicknes for thy comfort day & night,
 he is appointed and brought,
 Whose love & liking is most constant sure and right,
 then love ye him as ye ought:
 Now you have your hearts desire,
 and the thing you did require,
 God almighty send you happy ioy:
 In health and wealth to keepe you still,
 And if it be your blessed will,
 God keepe you safe from sorrow and annoy.

There is no treasure the which may be cōpared
 unto a faithfull friend,
 Gold soone decayeth and worldly consumeth,
 and wasteth in the winde,
 But love, once planted in a perfect & pure mind,
 indureth weale and woe:
 The frownes of fortune come they never so unkinde
 cannot the same overthrowe.
 A bit of bread is better cheare,
 Where loue and friendship doth appeare,
 then dainty dishes stuffed full of strife:
 For where the heart is cloyd with care,
 Sower is the sweetest fare:
 and death far better then so bad a life.

Sweet Bridthen may you full well contented stay you,
 and in your heart reioyce:
 Sith God was guider both of your heart & fancy
 and maker of your choice.

And he that preferd you to this happie state
 will not behold you decay,
 Nor see you lack reliefe or help in any rate,
 if you his precepts obey
 To those that ask it faithfully,
 The Lord will no good thing deny;
 this comfort in the Scriptures may you finde,
 Then let no worldly grief and care
 Vexe your heart with foule dispaire,
 which doth declare the unbeleeuing minde,

All things are ready and every whit prepared
 to beare you company.
 Your friends and parents do give their due attendance
 together courtously:
 The house is drest and garnisht for your sake,
 with flowers gallant and green,
 A solem feast your comely cooks do ready make
 where all your friends will be seen,
 Youngmen and maids do ready stand,
 With sweet Rosemary in their hand,
 a perfect token of your virgins life:
 To wait upon you they intend,
 Vnto the church to make an end:
 and God make thee a ioyfull wedded wife. ¹

Nothing would be more different in spirit from the Latin epithalamia, with their motifs of defloration and the battle of love, which were commissioned for the weddings of the high-born. The whole matter is conceived in public terms, and the private ceremony of the thalamos is no concern of the singers, and yet the song is about love, in a way that Chapman's coldly erotic Epithalamium Teratos is not. Spenser's bride, like the heroine of the Goodmorrow, is married in the midst of her community, with her cortege of maidens and brideknights. To the elements of the popular public celebration, Spenser adds the classical

1. British Museum, Roxburghe i, 15.

chorus to Hymen, and the biblical echoes of the only other Epithalamium sung by the ~~spouse~~ spouse, the Song of Songs. The nuptial bed is shut away from prying eyes in Spenser's poem too, as he invokes the blessing of the old York and Sarum rites, instead of fescennine imagery. The love of Spenser and of the nameless groom of the Goodmorrow is based upon the desert of the party, except that for Spenser, the Protestant Platonist, her beauty is the outward concomitant of her virtue. We may complete this picture of exemplary marriage celebrations by adding the nuptials of the honest shepherds, who are more Protestant and civic-minded than any in the wilderness of Tasso and Sannazaro, in the third eclogues of the Arcadia.

At this stage in historico-sociological studies, it is impossible to give any accurate account of the ideology of marriage and its relation to general practice. The modern family unit, called the nuclear family by the sociologists, developed in Western society as the feudal system decayed¹, and it would seem logical that the change in ideology lagged far behind the event, especially as the structural change does not occur in noble dynasties. There is much more evidence of an intellectual ferment about marriage in the sixteenth century, especially in the fields of legal and liturgical reform, but as it is beyond the scope of this study, and I am unskilled to interpret it, it must await another time, and

1. The most important and reliable contribution in the sociologists' terms to the formation of such a view is contained in J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective", Population and History, ed. D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (London, 1965), pp. 101-143.

probably another hand. Perhaps when the sociologists have finished programming the data got from sixteenth century parish registers, the literary scholar may have some reliable information — perhaps. All that I have striven to establish is that for the Elizabethans the marriage motif was not a commonplace, and above all that Shakespeare's interest in it was questing and intelligent. In the early comedies the relationships of lovers are explored deeply and imaginatively, in a way that cannot be explained by reference to established convention. For Terence, the most influential dramatist before Shakespeare, it is not the union of lovers that is important, but the regaining of the rights of citizenship: the love affair is only a given element in a complex situation. European forms substitute for this serious interest the excitement of eroticism and intrigue within a vestigial discovery plot. Shakespeare develops the comedy of marrying as a genuine response to pressures arising in his own society. In The Comedy of Errors the disappointed wife is contrasted with the courted maiden and the thoughtless husband with the servile lover. The Taming of the Shrew is concerned with the equilibrium which must be established between man and wife, and the earning of love and loyalty within marriage considered as a fait accompli. We are deprived of marriage as the catastrophe in Love's Labour's Lost, as a lesson in how the winning and wearing of a wife should not be undertaken, and a different scheme of winning love by desert is adumbrated for a future outside the play's compass.

Within the central preoccupation with the relation of man and woman in society, Shakespeare also questions the nature of love, its means of expression, the power of man to determine and control his own development, the question of identity and the allied problems of security and trust, and the artist's dilemma, whether or not to accept criteria not ultimately governed by his artistic instinct, whether or not to accept the heavy responsibilities of the civil poet. His answers to these questions are by no means banal or predictable, and his means of answering may be of use to the man who seeks a way of talking to the audience of today, so much more literate and homogenous than anything Shakespeare could have hoped for. In a body of work as organic as the plays of Shakespeare, it would be too arbitrary a procedure to examine the plays under these headings, and I am anxious not to distort the plays by such blatant question-begging. The literary critic-cum-historian is always liable to the charge of special pleading, which I am at pains to avoid by discussing each of the plays in such a way as to release their inner preoccupations as naturally as they are present. I am aware that the tone of my discussion is solemn, and that I give no very good account of the theatrical charm of the plays. I cannot defend myself beyond saying that there has been no lack of criticism of that kind, and much of it may be found in the playbills of productions that have gingered the plays out of recognition. The ideas developed by Shakespeare are by no means trivial, and in order to express their complexities and the subtleties of their exposition, I am required to be more rigorous than impressionistic. The theatrical

character of each play is proved, and will always be proved more effectively by a production than by a dissertation. But it did not need Freud to tell us that laughter, like all other emotional responses, has motivation. I beg the reader to remember that Shakespeare's inquiry is prosecuted by delight and laughter, while I laboriously delineate that inquiry, and gravely marvel at the poise of the artifice that contains it.

Not in the flames which boyle th' friendly minde,
 Cruell the deere and dreadfull is the deede,
 Slippeth the hane which wast of cleane vergeth,
 Bolefall the lile and wintere were the worse,
 Blest were the day which might deneye each youth,
 And darst the worst that widdow to childe past youth.

Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

THE LEGACY OF FRIENDSHIP

In 1931 the current of criticism of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

was set off in a new direction by a remark of W. W. Lawrence's.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

The Two Gentlemen of Verona has been very generally held
to be a tale glorifying friendship.

In fact *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a play, in which we spend
a good deal of our time with Julia and Silvio and very little discussing

the claims of friendship. It seems to be doing something much more

complex than glorifying friendship at the expense of all else, and even so

criticisms of the 1880's must have regarded it as a play and literary art.

Voltaire's notion of friendship of Silvio. It bears the marks of the

Hot be the flames which boyle in friendly mindes,
Cruell the care and dreadfull is the doome:
Slipper the knot which tract of time vntwynds,
Hatefull the life and welcome were the toome.
Blest were the day which might devower such youth,
And curst the want that seekes to choke such trueth.

(Gascoigne: An Hundreth Sundrie Flowres.)

Grateful Deed because the play itself makes no use of the notion of friendship.

highly realistic narrative, but *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

establishes a world of a far more sophisticated and generally kept. It

is not merely a play about friendship, or about the right degree of

friendship and love. The conflict is not represented clearly in terms of

W. W. Lawrence, *Shakespeare's Problem Characters* (New York,
1931), p. 14.

THE THEORY OF FRIENDSHIP

In 1931 the current of criticism of The Two Gentlemen of Verona was set off in a new direction by a remark of W. W. Lawrence's,

The Two Gentlemen of Verona has been very generally and wrongly taken to be mainly a love-story, whereas it is really a tale glorifying friendship.¹

In fact The Two Gentlemen of Verona is a play, in which we spend a good deal of our time with Julia and Silvia and very little discussing the claims of friendship. It seems to be doing something much more complex than glorifying friendship at the expense of all else, and even an audience of the 1590's must have experienced surprise and dismay at Valentine's sudden relinquishing of Silvia. It bears the marks of its mediaeval inheritance, but in nothing more clearly than the manner in which a host of related ideas is kept in play, inviting a more complex response than wonder at heroic and hagiographic marvels of unmotivated behaviour. In The Old Wives Tale we may still accept the motif of the Grateful Dead because the play itself makes us aware of the action as an antiquely fantastic narrative, but The Two Gentlemen of Verona establishes a context of a far more speculative and demanding kind. It is not merely a play about friendship, or about the rival claims of friendship and love. The conflict is not expressed simply in terms of

1. W. W. Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies (New York, 1931), p. 24.

the nature of the love of man for man and man for woman, but in terms of friendship in both contexts. The real enemy of friendship is not love of woman, but time, change, mutability itself.

Some indication of the complexity of Elizabethan thinking about friendship can be gathered from Wits Theater of the Little World. All of the examples under the heading "Of Friendship" are culled from classical antiquity, and neither Amis and Amile nor any of their mediaeval counterparts appears. The spirit of Cicero broods over the whole. They are not the primitive allegiances of heroes or the misogynist alliances of saints which constitute the dual tradition of the stories of heroic friends described by McEdward Leach.¹ In no case does friendship conflict with virtue for it is the highest expression of it. No sons are sacrificed by fathers for their friends, although friends offer their lives for one another, and beg to be buried together so that their mingled dust may symbolise their united souls.² The chapter ends with a curious discussion about something which to a modern mind could hardly be called friendship at all.

There are inclinacions of friendship, vigetable and mineralls, as the Loadstone hath to yron, the Emperald hath to riches and fauours, the stone Iaspis to child-birth, the stone Achates to eloquence, and Naptha not onely draweth fire vnto it, but fire leapeth vnto it, where soeuer it is, the like dooth the roote Aproxes.

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1. Amis and Amiloun, ed. McEdward Leach (E.E.T.S., Orig. Ser. No. 203, Oxford, 1937), p. xviii. ff.
 2. Wits Theater of the little World ... Printed by I.R. for N.L. ... 1599, fol. 66ff.

Such friendship is betweene the male and female Date tree, that when a bough of the one shall touch a bough of the other, they fold themselves into a naturall embracing, & neuer doth the female bring forth fruit without the male.

Vines loue the Elme tree & the Oliue, the Mirtle likewise loueth the Oliue & the Fig-tree; and if the Almonde tree growe alone, it will proue vnfruitfull.¹

Friendship illustrated by such examples is the abiding union of two or more, governed by natural attraction, or by some function of co-operation or generation. It includes in the images of the elm and the vine, the myrtle and the olive, the fellowship of marriage.

On the other hand, the section "Of Loue" seems to duplicate much of the matter of the section of friendship, for most of the love is between men. These are examples of love in the body politic, and the collector moves on to demonstrate as many types of love as he can find, the love of kin, of servants, obsessions with women and catamites, examples of rare constancy and wild infatuations with animals and things. He finds no very hard and fast distinction between love and friendship, but is fascinated by both as phenomena of behaviour to be observed in all their particularity. His approach is analytical and encyclopaedic, notwithstanding that his examples are culled from literature rather than life. Here are no prodigies, no hypotheses, no extraordinary test cases, simply a list of examples from Xenophon, Plutarch, Seneca and Cicero, sources which any man bred to literacy would have known.

1. Wits Theater of the little World ... Printed by I.R. for N.L. ... 1599, fol. 69 recto.

J. W. Lever writes misleadingly of the Renaissance theory of friendship -

Friendship between young men of noble minds was a major theme of Renaissance literature and philosophy. With the new seriousness that characterised sixteenth-century Italy, this male relationship was more highly esteemed than at any time since the days of Pericles. Bembo and Castiglione extolled it as the ladder leading directly to the Platonic amor razionale ... As usual, life and literary patterns interacted, and so long as the culture of the Renaissance prevailed, this idea of friendship exercised almost as powerful an appeal to the imagination as the rival concept of Romantic love.¹

Romantic friendship and romantic love may both be opposed by a notion of Platonic and classic friendship and love. If the beloved is the incarnation of virtue, the closest approximation to the form of the good, which is the object of amor razionale, it is immaterial whether he be man or woman. The greater advantage of Platonic love is that it cannot involve the lover in any wicked action, and so the extraordinary moral confusion which makes the Amis and Amile stories tales of gothic horror cannot be tolerated by a Renaissance mind. The Renaissance man may be called upon to perform for a friend only that which is within the bounds of virtue, including the ultimate sacrifice of life itself, or of the woman loved. Even Elyot who chooses the Titus and Gisippus story to demonstrate the importance of friendship in The Governor, responds to the demand for clarity and equity by distinguishing between Titus's divinely inspired love for Gisippus' promised bride, and the more mundane

1. J. W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet (London, 1956), p.164.

fondness of the groom himself, minimising the deception by announcing the change of bridegrooms on the morning after the consummation of the match. The lady's feelings are of no consequence; Elyot does not even give her a name. Shakespeare does give Silvia a name, and a clearly delineated character; she is as worthy of love as the sole begetter of the sonnets, who ransomes the poet with precious tears,

Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
And they are rich and ransome all ill deeds. (xxxiv)

just as Silvia spends an ocean of pearl for Valentine (III.i.225).

It is truth which gives the rose its scent, and woman may equal man as the subject of amor razionale if she be free of what Shakespeare himself called "false women's fashion", "shifting change" (Sonnet xx). We may regard Silvia, the "sweeter friend" as a female version of the noble friend and patron who returns his vassal's love in the sonnets, excelling even him in the purity and steadfastness of her faith. The admission of women into the sacred league of friendship is by no means Shakespeare's invention. In the ballad, The Bride's Goodmorrow¹ the language of the classic panegyric of friendship is used for the relationship of man and wife. Her husband is called a friend, and his duties are the offices of a friend. The advice to love him as he deserves echoes the words quoted by Seneca from Hecaton, "if thou wilt be beloved, loue".² He will be

1. Vide supra p. 27 stanzas 2 and 3.

2. The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, both Morrall and Naturall. Translated by Th^o. Lodge, D. in Physike. London Printed by William Stansby. 1614, p. 174.

John Larke quotes Solomon at the beginning of his chapter Of the Loue of Compaginons (sic) and Fryendes, & how to entertaine it,

There bee three thynges that be verye pleasant and acceptable bothe to God and man that is to say, concord and amitie of bretheren, loue of neighbours, and the loue of the man and his wife, when they loue the one the other ... ¹

and it is this wedded friendship which he goes on to discuss at length.

Robert Greene's most popular novel, Ciceronis Amor. Tullies Loue, went through nine editions after its appearance in 1589. Cicero writes his friend Lentulus's love letters to Terentia, the diamond of chastity, which after shattering Cupid's dart into a thousand fragments, itself crumbles at the winning eloquence of Cicero's writing. She waylays him on his solitary walk from Arppinatum, but he, although himself a victim of Terentia's perfections, pleads his friend's suit. He reveals to her father that Lentulus lies ill for love of his daughter and it is decided to marry her to him perforce. In despair she declares herself to Tully, who argues quaintly:

Blame mee not (Terentia) if I pleade for Lentulus, seeing his sorow, and entring into mine owne promise. Than friendship, is no sweeter iewell, then howe can I but labour ere I loose so rich a prize? But seeing Terentia hath vouchsafed of so means a man as Tully, whose honours onely hangs in his studies: loue being the

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1. The boke of wisdome otherwise called the Flower of Vertue... Translated fyrst out of Italion into French, and out of French into English by Iohn Larke (Col: London, Thomas Col(well)) (1565), Sig. Diii recto.

strictest league of amitie, and no such friendship, as marriage: I vowe by the Romane Gods, euer to be a dutifull seruaunt vnto Terentia.¹

However the prospect of betraying Lentulus causes him such anguish that he decides upon death as a way out of his dilemma. The senate gets to hear of the matter because of a duel fought by Lentulus on Cicero's behalf with Fabius, another suitor for Terentia's hand, and the case is tried in an open tribunal. Terentia declares her love for Cicero to all, and pleads to be allowed to marry him or die. The people cry, "None but Cicero!". Doubtless the phenomenal sales were due to the value of this fantasy as an exemplary tale for the students of rhetoric and the wish-fulfilment factor of the ugly but gifted commoner who wins the first lady of his society, but so much of it is moralising about the central situation that that too must have had its peculiar fascination. Terentia is not a light woman: the activeness and resolution of her wooing of Cicero are of a piece with the firmness of her character and the particular force of her beauty, which so affects the noble idiot Fabius that his intellect is awakened and he is capable of taking his rightful place in society. The effect of the story is to show us the great champion of masculine friendship made to realise his error in exalting the love of fellows above that of man and wife.

Cicero regarded friendship as the foundation of the commonwealth, but Greene could defend his story on the same grounds for according to

1. Ciceronis Amor. Tullies Loue ... Robert Greene ... At London, printed by J. R. for Nicholas Lyng 1605, Sig. 12 recto.

Aristotle the family is the basis of all social structure, and the reciprocal, tried affection that holds it together is altogether worthy of the name of friendship. In his own version of the Titus and Gisippus story, Philomela (1592), Greene uses the latter part of the story, the part that provides the whole action of the first Italian verse comedy, Nardi's L'Amicitia, giving the part of Titus to the wife of the man accused of murder. Philippo, her husband, prepares a neurotic test of her fidelity by means of his bosom friend Lutesio. Philomela tears up his courting letter, and, like Julia, pieces it together to read it, but her constancy does not waver. Lutesio confesses that he is testing her, without betraying her husband, and abandons his suit, but Philippo is unreasonably convinced that she has cuckolded him, and himself suborns witnesses to swear to her adultery. Philomela's reproach to her husband, who has named Lutesio as correspondent so that he is banished, makes more of this betrayal, than of her own disgrace.

Yet Philippo, hast thou lost more in losing Lutesio, than
in forsaking mee, for thou mayest haue many honest
wiues, but neuer so faithfull a friend: therefore, though
I bee diuorced, bee thou and hee reconciled, lest at last
the horror of thy conscience draw thee into despaire and
paine thee with too late repentance. ¹

The rest of the story shows this remark to be no more than the measure of her own modesty. Lutesio vindicates her name, and Philippo is sentenced to seek her out and take his life in her presence. He is at

1. Philomela, the Lady Fitzvvaters Nightingale. By Robert Greene ... London, Imprinted by George Purslowe, Sig. G1 verso.

the end of his strength when he arrives at Palermo, where her son, Infortunatus, has been born, and takes refuge in a cave outside the city. One of the rivals in love of the young Prince of Palermo has murdered a servant dressed in the Prince's clothes. Philippo is discovered at the scene of the crime to which he confesses, "glad hee had so sweete an occasion to bee ridde of his life"¹. At his trial Philomela stands forth and confesses to the murder, calling to witness the very unlikelihood of her lying to shield a man who has treated her so infamously. The Prince, the supposed victim, appears unharmed, and Philomela's innocence is proved by her unperturbed reaction. Philippo dies in an ecstasy two hours later, but Philomela, although sought in marriage by the noblest men in Italy, does not remarry. Her loyalty far outdistances even that of Lutesio, Philippo's "Second self, his onely repositorie of his priuate passions": the spiritual amity of matrimony survives even when the natural friendship developed by long continuance and community of manners has been destroyed.

These examples will not suffice as evidence that the love-friendship conflict was outmoded: it survived, for example in the scenarii of the commedia dell'arte, but as a complication of the action, rather than a dramatic conflict.² Rather I should claim that there is no single, simple, coherent Elizabethan attitude to friendship. Instead, friendship,

1. Ibid., Sig. 14 recto.

2. Cf. L'amico infedele of Alessandroenzio (Macerata, 1617) and Panciatichi's L'Amicizia Costante (Firenze, 1600).

like other phenomena of human behaviour and potentiality, was studied from a variety of viewpoints, moral, historical, philosophical and psychological, so that we cannot be sure of identifying the view of any writer in any but a single context at a time. Spenser provides a case in point; in The Shepheards Calender he states clearly:

For who that hath red Plato his dialogue called Alcybiades, Xenophon and Maximius Tyrius of Socrates opinions, may easily perceiue, that such loue (of Colin Cloute and Hobbinol) is muche to be alowed and liked of, specially so meant, as Socrates vsed it: who sayth, that in deede he loued Alcybiades extremely, yet not Alcybiades person, but hys soule, which is Alcybiades owne selfe. And so is paederastice much to be praeferred before gynerastice, that is the loue whiche enflameth men with lust toward woman kind. ¹

By thus exalting the love of fellows above the love of man and woman Spenser would seem to be aligning himself with the old view expressed by the Tretyse of Loue,

Ther be four special louys in this worlde. e one is betwene ij good felawes; The tother betwene mother and chylde; The thyrde betwene body and sowle; And the fourth betwene man and wyf. ²

and yet he is the poet who celebrated the wooing and winning of his second wife in the Amoretti, with sonnets which sought to purify his nuptial passion from every taint of fleshly interest.

1. Smith and de Selincourt, Spenser, p.423, The Glosse to the first eclogue of The Shepheardes Calender.

2. The Tretyse of Loue ed. J. Fisher, E.E.T.S., Orig. Ser. No. 223, London, 1951, pp.16-7.

Let not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre
 breake out, that may her sacred peace molest:
 ne one light glance of sensuall desyre
 Attempt to work her gentle mindes vnrest.
 But pure affections bred in spotlesse brest,
 and modest thought breathd from wel tempred sprites
 goe visit her in her chast bower of rest,
 accompanyd with angelick delightes. ¹

This love of "onely that is permanent and free from frail corruption"
 is the same love as Socrates felt for Alcibiades, and as inspired by
 Silvia, who is depicted in a fashion less courtly and complimentary than
 genuinely Platonic.

Much of the literature of friendship of Shakespeare's time is
 concerned with aspects of friendship not at all represented in the
 mediaeval lore of heroic friendship. The great bulk of it is taken up
 with the question of choosing friends, often in a thinly veiled political
 context. ² Its complement is the literature of lament for friendships
 betrayed, understood as the discovery that he who had seemed a friend
 in time of prosperity was merely a fawning, feigning flatterer, as time
 and adversity proved. Thus it is that the knot of friendship is not broken,
 rather it is discovered never to have existed. This probably reflects
 the more hard-headed Roman concept, in which friendship was more a
 matter of faction and partisanship, friends tangible assets, insurance

1. Spenser, *Works*, op. cit., p. 576, *Amoretti*, Sonnet LXXXIII.

2. E.g. *The Triall of true Friendship: or perfit mirror, wherby to
 discerne a trustie friend from a flattering Parasite ... Soothly
 to say: Trie ere you trust; Beleeue no man rashly ...* By M.B.
 Imprinted at London by Valentine Simmes ... 1596, *passim*.

and political strength. We can perhaps contrast the two main founts of Renaissance friendship theory, the Roman stoical and the Ciceronian which merges with the Platonic, as we may contrast the earlier and later treatments of the theme by Bacon, although, as always the contrast is not clean.¹ Almost all of the poetry in The Paradyse of daintie Deuises, written by the Earl of Oxford, Lord Vaux, W. Hunis, Jasper Heywood, Francis Kinwelmersh, Saint Barnard, D. Sand, M. Yloop and Barnabe Riche, deals with the desolation of the man deceived by flatterers. All these gentlemen doggedly affirm, with all the weight, decorum and high sentence at their command, that

... nought but frowarde Fortune prooues, who fawning
faynes, or simply loues.²

Saint Barnard, whose motto is My lucke is losse, goes so far as to give instructions for the least painful loving and leaving of fickle friends.³ Thomas Howell and his friends collaborated on the volume, H. his Deuises,

1. The Works of Francis Bacon coll. and ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath (London, 1858), Vol. VI, Literary and Professional Works, Vol. I (Hereafter referred to as Spedding) "Of Friendship", the version of 1612 (p. 559) cf. that of 1625 (p. 439 ff.).

2. The Paradyse of daintie Deuises ... Deuised and written for the most part, by M. Edwards ... Imprinted at London, by Henry Dizle, ... 1580, fol. 1 recto.

3. Ibid., fol. 2 recto.

But this my fond aduise, may seeme perchaunce^c but vayne,
As rather teaching how to lose, then how a friend to gayne.
But this is not my intent, to teache to find a friend,
But safely how to loue and leaue, is all that I intend.

which is almost entirely concerned with the same stoic ^{maxims. 1} ~~stogans~~. So there would seem to be a solid contemporary precedent for an angry rejection of Proteus by Valentine, and the subsequent adoption of a malcontent attitude, living alone in a world which no longer knows the sun of friendship. The fiction that friendship had perished along with the dissolution of the forces of natural attraction in the Saturnine phase of the world's decay is by no means rare in Renaissance literature. It is, to quote one example, the stated justification for John Drout's ludicrous exemplary tale of "two louing Italians, Gaulfrido and Barnardo le vayne", which he mendaciously claims to have derived from an Italian source. W.W. congratulates him on the purity of his intentions in a commendatory sonnet.

This is thy minde, O Drout, I know
 this is good purpose thine,
 Of frendship true to make a shewe,
 in this vnfreendly time. ²

The welter of vindictive accident and hysterical suicide caused by the insane determination of the ^{heroes} ~~protagonists~~ to prove that their friendship

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1. H. his Deuises, for his owne exercise, and his Friends pleasure.
 (H. Jackson: London, 1581.)
 e.g. No assurance but in Vertue (Sig. Bi recto),
 Once warnde, twice armde (Sig. Bii recto),
 Flattery, the Vayle of Frawde (Sig. Bii verso),
 The best Natures, soonest abused (Sig. Biiii verso),
 Vnthankfulnesse of Minde, a monster in Nature (Sig. Di recto),
 Of Friends (Sig. Gii recto - Giii verso),
 They performe not best, that promise most (Sig. Hi verso)
 To a Flatterer (Sig. "Miii" recto) etc.
 2. The pityfull Historie of two louing Italians ... translated out of Italian into Englishe meeter by John Drout ... Anno. 1570, reprinted for private circulation by J. P. Collier (s.d., s.t.), Sig. A2 verso.

is of the highest order, leaves the reader somewhat relieved that such a rampant aberration has disappeared from the face of the earth. Barnardo kills himself for love of Charina, so Gaulfrido kills himself; Charina aghast at the slaughter she has "caused" throws herself from her tower window, so her father cuts his throat and her mother drowns herself, and the mariners on the boat that brought the friends to Greece perish as their ship inexplicably sinks like a stone minutes out of the harbour. W.W. may be William Walter, another purveyor of irrationally sentimental friendship for the ballad and broadside market.¹

If Valentine were to reject Proteus as the poets of The Paradyse of daintie Deuses were forced to do, there could be no comedy ending for The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and we would have a sort of precocious Timon of Athens: nevertheless there is evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with the notion of political friendship, for Proteus deliberately aligns himself with the Duke, having betrayed Valentine. He refers to the duty he has to reciprocate the Duke's favours (III.i. 8 and 17) and justifies his treachery by love for the Duke (III.i.46). He protests,

Longer than I prove loyal to your grace
Let me not live to look upon your grace. (III.ii.20-1)

The Duke takes upon himself the name of Proteus's friend (III.ii.45)

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1. Walter seems merely to have versified Elyot's account for his Ye History of Tytus and Gesyppus translated out of latyn into englyshe by Wyllyam Walter, reprinted in Early English Versions of the Tales of Guiscardo and Guismonda and Titus and Gisippus from the Decameron ed. H. G. Wright (E.E.T.S., Orig. Ser. No. 205, London, 1937).

in its political meaning. The cool, opportunist view of friendship in statecraft is known to Shakespeare then, as well as the idealist concept.

VALENTINE AND PROTEUS

All this has been cited to prove that reference to Renaissance theories of friendship will not suffice to explain away the oddity of Valentine's behaviour in the last scene, because there is no homogeneity in them. Moreover, friendship which conflicts with virtue, common sense, motivation, and credibility is by now typical of a debased tradition, revived now and then to appease the public appetite for sensationalism. The tradition which Shakespeare would have absorbed in his schooldays is fundamentally rational, be it stoical or idealistic. In any case, Valentine's ~~strange~~ behaviour must be explained in terms of the action of the whole play. "Perfection of friendship is but a speculation"¹ and its demonstration merely wonderful and curious. Shakespeare's understanding of the truth of human actions is more evolved than that of any courtesy book or collection of commonplaces; he is not interested in presenting one intense allegiance at the expense of coherence and sympathy. As well as the Titus and Gisippus story in several forms, he must have known the writings of Seneca, Cicero and Plutarch, and in some form, those of Plato and Aristotle, on the subject of friendship. Bacon's attempt to reconcile sententia and observation is a contemporary

1. Spedding, Bacon, Vol. VI(I), p. 559, "Of Friendship" (1612).

phenomenon. The poetry of The Two Gentlemen of Verona is the expression of the same mind that wrote Hamlet less than ten years later, and was probably already engaged in writing the sonnets. Certainly the play is closer ~~than~~ to both than it is to the hagiographic exaggerations of the stories of Amis and Amile.

Valentine and Proteus are indeed friends: they have grown up and studied together, and are of like age and social standing, similes inter pares. At the beginning of the play the audience assumes this from the way in which the characters are presented. Their assumption is later confirmed by Valentine's answer to the Duke's question, "you know him well?".

I know him as myself; for from our infancy
We have conversed and spent our hours together. (II. iv. 62-3)

and by Antonio's assurance that Proteus will be sent with a train exactly equal to Valentine's to Milan (I. iii. 68-9). Thus the two principal requirements of the theorists are supplied, equality of rank and condition and long continuance in intimacy. Baldwin quotes Plato:

Friendship ought to be engēdred of equalnes: for where equalitie is not, frendeship maye not long continue.¹

Elyot quotes Jerome and Ambrose:

1. Baldwin, op.cit., Sig. Kvii verso.

Amitie eyther taketh or maketh menne equall, and where inequalytie is, by preemynence of the tone, and moche basenesse of the tother, there is moche more flatteryeth an (*sic*) frendshyppe.¹

Thus their "inueterat & auncient loue"² is superior to the friendship of Euphues and Philautus, for Lyly warns us that it will come easily to Euphues to betray a friend whom he has taken up with such easily kindled fondness.

Valentine and Proteus give testimony to the warmth of their affection for each other in their mode of address. In the opening line of the play, Valentine calls Proteus, his "loving Proteus", and demonstrates his friendship by wishing his friend's greater good, as Aristotle would have him do (Rhetoric, II, 4), here conceived as his happiness in love (I.i.9-10). Proteus accepts the idea that he belongs to Valentine, and in asking to be thought of whenever he sees some noteworthy object in his travels, shows that they are

... such friends, with whom they may seeme beeing absent to be present, being a *sunder* to be conuersant, beeing dead to be alieue.³

In claiming^{ing} to be a sharer in Valentine's good fortune and in his perils, Proteus names the principal office of a friend, to partake of joys

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- †. The bankette of sapience, compyled by syr Thomas Eliot knyghte, and newly augmented with dyuerse tytles & sentences. (Col: Londini in aedibus Thomae Bertheleti ... M.DXXXXIX), fol. 3 recto.
 2. Politeuphuia Wits Common wealth. At London, printed by I.R. for Nicholas Ling, ... 1597, fol. 63 recto, *cf.* Contile, La Pescara (Milano, 1550), Fol. viii verso.
 3. Bond, Lyly, Vol. I, p.197, Euphues.

and thus double them, and of griefs, thus halving them ¹, for

Friendship in good men, is a blessing & stable connexing of sundry wills, making of two persons one, in hauing & suffering. And therefore a friend is properly called, a second selfe, for that in both men is but one minde, & one possession. ²

This description is a commonplace, originally from Cicero, and vulgarised by Elyot, Baldwin, Harxington, Bacon, and all those who sought to define friendship. Amicus alter ipse is one of Erasmus' Apothegmes ³, and John Charlton also treats it in The Casket of Iewels ⁴. In attempting to persuade his friend from the besotted pursuit of Julia, Valentine fulfils the function of friend as counsellor, which is the whole

1. Spedding, Bacon, Vol. VI (I), p.440, "Of Friendship" (1625).

2. Bodenham, Politeuphuia, op.cit., fol. 63 recto.

3. Apophthegmes, that is to saie, prompte, quicke, wittie and sentencious saynges, of certain Emperours, Kynges, Capitaines, Philosophiers, and Oratours, aswell Grekes, as Romaines ... First gathered and compiled in Latin by the ryght famous clerke Maister Erasmus of Roterdame. And now translated into Englyshe by Nicolas Udall. Excusum typis Ricardi Grafton. 1542, fol. 207 recto - verso.

4. The Casket of Iewels: Contaynyng a playne description of Morall Philosophie, diligently and after a very easie Methode declared by the well learned and famous Author Cornelius Valerius: Lately turned out of Latin into Englishe, by I. C. Imprinted at London, by VVilliam Hovv, for Richarde Iohnes. 1571, Sig. H1 verso.

basis of the first book of The Ephemerides of Phialo,¹ for the greatest good one friend can do another is to offer him good advice, the one gift that can never be corrupted. Moreover,

The fault which thou sufferest in thy frinde, thou
committest in thy selfe.²

The arguments put forward by Valentine resemble those of Ephues's cooling card to Philautus, except that they are not coloured with misogynist feeling, but by the concern that an unrequited passion will dissipate the energies which should be devoted to study and fruitful pursuits. Friendship in the humanist tradition is the special consolation and delight of the scholar, the young man not yet burdened with the responsibilities of marriage and social commitments.³

He that is a friend loueth, and he that loueth is not
assuredly a friend. For which cause friendship alwayes
profiteth, and loue sometimes hurteth.⁴

wrote Lodge, translating Seneca rather brutally, and Contile develops the idea in his comedy of the conflict of love and friendship, La Pescara.⁵ On these grounds, of the painfulness and waste of desire contrasted with the peaceful profit of friendship, Valentine remonstrates

1. The Ephemerides of Phialo, deuided into three Bookes. The first, A method which he ought to follow that desireth to rebuke his freend, when he seeth him swarue: without kindling his choler, or hurting himselfe ... by Step(hen) Gosson, Stud. Oxon. Imprinted at London by Thomas Dawson. Anno 1579, fol. 11 verso.

2. Bodenheim, Politeuphuia, op.cit., fol. 66 recto.

3. Vide Lo Scolare del R.P.M. Bartolameo Meduna Conuentale de San Francesco ... In Venetia appresso Pietro Fachinetti, 1588, fol. 100 "... non e maggior amore che quello, che si fa ne gli studi."

4. Lodge's Seneca, op.cit., p. 222.

5. Contile, La Pescara (Milano, 1550), fol. xiv verso.

gently with Proteus, who does not win the interchange, and, left alone, acknowledges Valentine in the right. He makes use of the concept of their friendship once more when he says falsely to his father that he has a letter from Valentine, expressing his wish that Proteus could be with him, "partner in his fortune", the third property of friendship distinguished by John Larke,

... that he woulde be all waies as one with hys fryende,
and partaker with hym in all thynges, for loue that he
oweth vnto him.¹

It would seem then that the friendship of Valentine and Proteus is exemplary. In their two bodies there is but one soul, as Bedenham's Belvedere chants tunelessly,

The summe of friendship is, that of two soules²
One should be made, in will and firme affect.

Friendship is one way in which we may surmount the isolation of the individual personality, and achieve some complete and stable communion, which alone can enable us to defy the tyranny of fortune, and yet the very Ciceronian tradition which centred ~~around~~ such a view also abounds in examples of the treachery of supposed friends and the triumph of cynicism. It is a feature of the friendship story that the equality and community of the two should manifest itself externally in a physical likeness: Shakespeare does not resort to such crude intensifications of the situation, which would

1. Larke, op. cit., Sig. Dii verso.

2. Belvedere or the Garden of the Myses ... Imprinted at London by F.K. for Hugh Astley ... 1600, p. 94.

move it into the realm of the marvellous, but he keeps the idea that there is an identification between the young men in the actual development of the situation. Silvia accepts Proteus as a fellow-servant because she judges him Valentine's peer. After Proteus's treachery the ideal friendship exists for him as a concept to defy and deny:

I to myself am dearer than a friend,
For love is still most precious in itself. (II.vi.23-4)

Proteus's scrappy reasoning negatively refers to the controversy whether or not a friend was dearer or as dear as oneself. Sir Thomas Elyot held both points of view at different times, quoting Augustine in The bankette of sapience,

I suppose this to be the very true law of amitie,
a man to loue his frende no lesse nor no more than
he loueth hym selfe.¹

while the Ciceronian view was that the friend was loved more than the self, for we would accept loss of reputation, humiliation and death for a friend. Shakespeare seems content with the notion that the friend is another self. In commiserating with the banished Valentine, Proteus apes the true friend, his old self, affecting a community of sentiment which he does not feel:

Val: My ears are stopt and cannot hear good news,
So much of bad already hath possess'd them.

Pro: Then in dumb silence will I bury mine. (III.i.205-7)

1. Elyot, The bankette of sapience, op.cit., fol. 3 recto.

Silvia rejects Proteus as much for his betrayal of Valentine as for his desertion of Julia: her reference to the many that he has deceived (IV.ii.97) places both treacheries on the same level, as Proteus himself does in the brief argument he has with himself (II.vi.1-24) before resolving upon a career of dastardliness. He acknowledges that some of the life of both Julia and Valentine resides with him, for when he decides to ~~forget~~[†] them he represents them both as dead (IV.ii.105-110). It is Silvia herself who, like Greene's Philomela, supplies one of the principal justifications for supposing that the play displays the superior claim of friendship, for it is she who upbraids Proteus:

Sil: Thou counterfeit to thy true friend!

Pro: In love

Who respects friend?

Sil: All men but Proteus.
(V. iv.53-4)

This could be the justification for Valentine's respecting his friend more than his love in the last scene, if it were not for the fact that throughout the play we are presented with complex claims for the nuptial passion which cannot be so lightly abandoned. It is true that Valentine's reaction to the discovery of Proteus's treachery discounts the value of Silvia's great love for him.

... now I dare not say

I have one friend alive; thou wouldst disprove me.

Who would be trusted now, when one's right hand

Is perjured to the bosom? Proteus,

I am sorry I must never trust thee more,

But count the world a stranger for thy sake.

The private wound is deepest: O time most accurst,

'Mongst all foes that a friend should prove the worst.

(V. iv. 65-72)

Poor Valentine is arrested at a point of development rather like that of Bacon (whose relations with women were always rather problematical):

A man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms: whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person. But to enumerate these things were endless; I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part; if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage. ¹

Like all the disconsolate gentlemen of the Paradyse of daintie Deuises, Valentine has no option but to renounce his friendship, because their trust has been destroyed. There is general agreement that life without a friend is not worth living, from Erasmus ², to E.S. of the Paradyse. ³ The most moving statement of the absolute necessity of friendship to life, is Cicero's,

They goe aboute to take the sōne out of the world, that would take frendship out of it. ⁴

Friendship was called by Aristotle "the chiefest good thing in a city", ⁵ which preserves and maintains kingdoms, without which "no

1. Spedding, Bacon, Vol. VI(I), p.449, "Of Friendship" (1625)
2. Apophthegmes, op. cit., fol. 151 verso.
3. The Paradyse of daintie Deuises, op. cit., fol. 24 verso.
4. The booke of freendeship of Marcus Tullie Cicero. Anno dni 1550. (Col: Imprinted at London ... in the hous of Tho. Berthelette.) Translated by Sir. John Harington, fol. 32 verso.
5. Baldwin, op. cit., Sig. Li recto.

house shall abyde standyng, no field shall be in culture".¹ Valentine sees the whole principle of gregarious, civilized existence destroyed by the discovery that his friend is no friend. If he rejects Proteus, he also rejects himself, by choosing to live like a beast in solitude.² The only alternative is to deny Proteus's offence, to satisfy his overwhelming desire, and thus to place him under a lifelong obligation to his self-sacrificing friend.

He is a very frende, that lightly forgetteth hys frendes offence.³

But so grave a crime as Proteus's can hardly have been included in Cicero's notion of offence. Even Oliver of Castile knocked his friend and saviour to the ground and broke both his legs, when he learned that he had slept with his wife, leaving him to die where he fell.⁴ Valentine and Silvia have plighted their troth, and Proteus has tried to rape not only his friend's beloved, but his betrothed. But if the good man does not show magnanimity and clemency beyond all reasonable expectation, the implications may be as grave as the chaos envisaged by Pandulpho in Philotimus:

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1. The booke named the Governour devised by Syr Thomas Elyot knyght. Londini. An. 1544, fol. 119 recto.
 2. See Bacon's version of Aristotle's argument, which begins the 1625 version of "Of Friendship", Spedding, Vol. VI (I), p.437.
 3. Baldwin, op. cit., Sig. Kviii verso.
 4. Oliver of Castile and Artus of Algarbe Written in French in 1511, translated into German by William Liely In 1521, and now done into English by William Leighton and Eliza Barrett (New York, 1903), p.85.

Friendship which hath bene, or should bee the Sun of all
the world, which should giue life and light to all good¹
minde, is now endarkened, or quite extinguished.

Did not Ovid, abandoned by his friends, screech and howl images
of fearful reversal,

that waters should giue heate, and fyre make colde,
and euery source and euery riuer runne backe to his
head, and flowe to his wellspringe, and all goe astray
with a contrary course, backward, preposterous, and
quite against nature?²

By his impossibly and unjustly generous action, Valentine brings
his world together again, although he must suffer atrociously in it.
Chaos has been avoided, and the comedy may continue. If this were a
play of the claims of love and friendship, we might expect something like
the injunction of Favio to Amico, when he gives his beloved up to his
friend and goes off to die in the wars.

E voi Amico caro mio godeteui la tãto da me desiderata
Flaminia ritendendola per cosa ben degna di voi (poi che
a me pareua degna di me,) & noi erauamo vn'anima in due
corpi: & immaginateui pure, che per ricompensa del
riscatto, e di tanti altri seruitii fattomi, habbiate hauuto
da me, quel piu che vi potea dare. E dite a vostra
consorte che resti contenta, & che non pensi d'hauer rotta
la fede, perche, se ha hauuto voi, ha hauuto vn Leandro
istesso.³

Or we might have had a tussle between friends to see who should
have the privilege of self-sacrifice (Proteus could have been stung by
Valentine's magnanimity to a recognition of his guilt) like that between

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1. Philotimus. The warre betwixt Nature and Fortune. Compiled by
Brian Melbancke ... printed at London by Roger Warde, ... 1583,
p.182.
 2. Philotimus, op. cit., p4.
 3. Sforza degli Oddi, L'Erofilomachia (Fiorenza, 1595), pp.135-6.

Lucio and Curzio in La Pescara, who, both contracted to Autofilonia, one privately and the other publicly, both renounce her, and defy the Pope's edict that both must be decapitated if one does not marry her. The stalemate is only resolved by the discovery that Autofilonia is Curzio's long-lost sister.¹ In Cucchetti's L'Amicizia the friends M. Ruberto and M. Claudio pass the lady back and forth like two punctilious gentlemen decorously disagreeing about passing through a door first.² We never discover what might have followed Valentine's masochistic generosity because Julia's swoon turns matters into a different channel, and the friendship theme is never developed into a final statement. We do not ever discover whether Silvia, until now no mere tool of others' will, would have complied with Valentine's award of her to Proteus. The very words in which Valentine celebrates the reunion of Proteus and Julia show up the deepest inconsistency in his own behaviour.

'Twere pity two such friends should be long foes. (V.iv.116)

It is a pity for the coherence of the play that the man who says these words is the same man who forgot that Silvia, who had risked her life to find him in the forest, could have made up for the loss of another friend forty lines before. Try as we may, we cannot find a real justification for Silvia's muteness in this scene, or, more importantly, for Valentine's failure to address a single word to her.

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1. The parallel with The Two Gentlemen of Verona is most tenuous except that Curzio is pursued by Lucio's sister Erminia (dressed as a boy) who had been privily contracted to him six months before.
 2. L'Amicitia Comedia di Gio. Donato Cucchetti ... In Ferrara, Appresso Vittorio Baldini ... 1587, V.v. passim.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF MAN AND WOMAN

Although at the end of the play Valentine terms Julia and Proteus "friends", when we first hear of Proteus's love, it does not resemble friendship in any respect, for it is of recent conception, unreturned and it causes pain. It is the canker that blasts the sweetest buds (I.i.42-4) and has metamorphosed him, divorcing him from his friends, and from himself.

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.67-9)

It is that love which may justly be contrasted with friendship, for it is harmful, unreasonable and unrequited. Proteus admits the justice of Valentine's upbraiding: he too would seem to feel that it is the tyranny of passion rather than amor razionale. Speed's witticisms on the subject of Julia meet with no protest from Proteus, even when they reflect most greasily upon his own intentions. Apart from calling her a laced mutton with impunity (I.i.99), Speed sees fit to counsel Proteus to stick her (104) and to "give her no token but stones", all the time puling for his fee, having performed the duties of a bawd. The opening passage of the scene removes the responsibility for this from Speed's shoulders to Proteus, in the protracted discussion of the relation of master and servant, who wear their horns in common. It is Proteus himself who admits how he has demeaned himself and his passion by using such a go-between.

I fear my Julia would not deign my lines,
Receiving them from such a worthless post. (I.i.152-3)

As for the lady herself, her first appearance has often been compared to Portia's, but the comparison is misleading unless a fundamental difference is noticed. It is Portia who disposes of her lovers as they are nominated by Nerissa, not Portia who invites her maid's judgment. The scene between Julia and Lucetta is played at fairly low pressure, but the indications are that Julia has more vivacity than wit or dignity. Portia would not lay herself open to her maid's disdainful comment upon her own unguarded mention of her fancy's name,

Lord, lord! to see what folly reigns in us! (I. ii. 15)

Julia tries vainly to resume her dignity but in the face of Lucetta's wiliness is forced to dissemble weakly. To credit her with the significance of the femme dangereuse seems to be wrong for this reason. She is clearly already over shoes in love herself, and coquettish enough to care for the preservation of her honour, but nothing afire with the pure flame of chastity. Her comments reveal that Proteus has not openly wooed her,

I would I knew his mind. (I. ii. 33)

which is a significant departure from the source, for in the Diana Felismena has already been obstreperously wooed for a considerable time: here the letter comes as Proteus's first overture. It is the same missive as that carried by the worthless emissary, whose name not accidentally is Speed. Alone, Julia reveals in her vexation, the phenomenon of the self divided against itself, or duplicity. She excuses her own inconsistency, if not dishonesty, on the score of the habitual silliness and perversity of virgins, in terms hardly flattering to herself.

She manages to twist the realisation of the guiltiness of her behaviour into a resolution to continue it, by deciding that she must further demean herself before Lucetta as a penance.

How angrily I taught my brow to frown,
While inward joy enforced my heart to smile!
My penance is to call Lucetta back,
And ask remission for my folly past. (I. ii. 60-63)

Julia continues to dissemble when Lucetta drops the letter, for to get it from her without betraying herself she is forced to tear it up. In her confusion she finds her right hand perjured to her bosom -

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. (I. ii. 106-8)

So she takes the pieces of paper that bear her name and tramples on them, addressing herself as her own enemy.

Unkind Julia!
As in revenge of thy ingratitude,
I throw thy name against the bruising stones,
Trampling contemptuously on thy disdain. (I. ii. 110-4)

In frightening terms she chastises herself, condemning herself to drown in oblivion, willing that some whirlwind should bear her name

Unto a jagged, fearful hanging rock,
And throw it thence into the raging sea! (I. ii. 122-3)

The only context in which she will allow herself henceforth to exist is, like her name, coupled to Proteus, folded one upon the other. So she abandons her own self, for the one self which love can make of her and Proteus. When next we hear of her, the hand that tore Proteus's letter

is the token of this union.

This is her hand, the agent of her heart;
Here is her oath for love, her honour's pawn. (I.iii.46-7)

Nevertheless, when his father questions him, Proteus says that her letter is from Valentine, forcing us to think of the friend and the beloved in contrast. The friend may be acknowledged, for the relationship is social in its essence, but the love must remain furtive, or at least we assume so, for Proteus's first instinct is to hide it. Thus Julia and Proteus are involved in a mutual duplicity, and as a result Proteus loses Julia, because friendship and love have been thrown into a false conflict. Again we find the language of the divided self - this time from Proteus:

Why this it is: my heart accords thereto,
And yet a thousand times it answers "no". (I.iii.90-1)

It fits with Julia's totally committed attitude that she suggests exchange of rings and kisses, thus sealing a trothplight, which is the only farewell that she makes to Proteus. He is all eloquence and once she is gone he reflects that her pledging herself with such solemnity is evidence of the truth and seriousness of her commitment. She has made of their love the fact of the union of their souls, which cannot be set aside.

Ay, so true love should do; it cannot speak;
For truth hath better deeds than words to grace it.
(II.ii.17-18)

In II.vii Julia speaks of Proteus in terms more befitting a god than a mortal, as her soul's food, her Viaticum, the Elisium where her soul

will rest, as the exemplar of divine perfection. Unlike other base men he is gifted with a divine intransigence:

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart;
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.

(II.vii.75-8)

Julia is sure that Proteus is no ordinary mortal, and that if he were he would partake of the fault she attributes to earth in the last line quoted. The audience on the other hand has watched him lie to his father, and treat with his dim-witted servant, and knows that he is very far from perfection. If Proteus is untrue to himself in succumbing to his passion for Silvia, Julia's idolatry has also confused the issue. Such spiritual pride is riding for a fall: she will eventually have to learn to love him as a mere mortal. Meanwhile Proteus, seeking to be free of his bond with Julia, unwittingly acknowledges their oneness by mentally murdering her to be free to love Silvia.

I will forget that Julia is alive,
Remembering that my love to her is dead. (II.vi.27-8)

Ironically the very next scene shows us the dead Julia undertaking her soul's pilgrimage to be united with her love in Elisium. Proteus clings to the notion that she is dead, invoking it again in his colloquy with Silvia,

I grant, sweet love, that I did love a lady;
But she is dead. (IV.ii.103-4)

As Sebastian, Julia achieves a new kind of relationship with her love. He looks at the same face that had infatuated him before, and chooses its owner for his friend and emissary. Julia may now perform for him the same office that he, feigning loyalty, offered to perform for Valentine. In her face he discerns "good bringing up, fortune, truth"; she is no longer a giddy girl gossiping with her maid, but a person who may be judged and accepted as an ally in her own right (IV. iv. 69-76). Once entrusted with the duty of wooing Silvia for her master, Julia reflects sorrowfully upon her own duplicity in deceiving her beloved, recalling the image that he and Speed had quibbled upon.

Alas, poor Proteus! Thou hast entertained
A fox to be the shepherd of thy lambs. (IV. iv. 96-7)

She cannot treat him unmercifully despite the great wrong that he has done to her, because she is a part of him. In being untrue to her he has betrayed himself, and therefore he has divided her in the same way as he has divided himself.

I am my master's true-confirmed love;
But cannot be true servant to my master,
Unless I prove false traitor to myself. (IV. iv. 108-110)

So she undertakes to share his dividedness, and keeps both her selves before the minds of the audience at once by speaking on her own behalf at the same time as she fulfils the suit that Sebastian has been bidden to perform. She thanks Silvia for her pity for Julia, and daringly describes her to the extent of a comparison with herself. The accidental revelation that ends her double existence assumed because of Proteus's

duplicity ends his doubleness as well. Once he is faced with the fact of her, alive and with his ring on her finger, Proteus cannot deny her. There is the relationship which Valentine dignifies with the name of friendship, and its restoration means the restoration of the old peaceful amity of Valentine and Proteus as well. The difficulty is that using the same criteria that we have established for the judgment of Julia's relationship with Proteus, Silvia would seem to be even more deserving of the title of friend, and nevertheless she is either bullied, or ignored, or lightly disposed of in the last scene, and never says a word for herself. The imagery of the single self in two persons is used most fully to describe the bond between Valentine and Silvia. At the first mention of her, Speed runs to Valentine with one of her gloves which she says is his, her intention being to demonstrate that what is hers is his.

Among frendes al thynges be comon.¹

She seeks this community of amity with Valentine, and chooses this way of indicating something which in any other circumstance would have been unthinkable. The keynote of all descriptions of Silvia has already been sounded; she is divine. (II.1.4-5) Valentine has assumed the excessively romantic posture of the servant worshipping his lady from afar and beneath, which she makes the more pointless by returning his affection in a spontaneous and egalitarian fashion, despite the inequality of rank. As Speed says, Valentine has deformed Silvia by gazing upon her so

1. Baldwin, quoting Aristotle, op.cit., Sig. Kviii verso.

dazzled by her pre-eminence, that he cannot see that she is a woman, not a flinty-hearted deity. Valentine is seen in lightly comic terms, slow, unassuming, painstaking, reliable and lovable. Throughout the play he is gulled in a manner ill-befitting a hero, but not ill-befitting the little man hero, who does not dare to grasp opportunity by the forelock until he is chosen by a burlesque group of outlaws as their chief, and discovers that he can get away with it. The device is so typical of a certain kind of popular comedy that I am surprised that its charm has never been detected in this play. As the deeply good ingenu whose real qualities are detected by the female lead, who is plotted against by the more glamorous and less ingenuous characters, surely Valentine is a familiar and successful figure. Terentia loved Cicero although he was poor and ugly and the novel went through nine editions. Proteus has the dark, compelling mystery of the city-slicker, and Valentine is the lovable good chap, about the only kind of lovable good chap. If the outlaw scene is played with Valentine deprecatingly shy and modest, and the outlaws grotesquely earnest and appreciative, it is not embarrassing, but uproariously funny and gratifying, as if Charlie Chaplin were to discover himself snatched from his bed in an empty lot to take over the empire of Al Capone.

Silvia gently mocks his faintheartedness and the unthinkingness of his servitude, while Speed comments with comic exasperation upon his master's lack of savoir faire (II.i. 110-121). The second ruse that Silvia tries is that of having Valentine write a letter in her name to an unknown lover, and then making him keep it himself: it makes it point

so clearly that Speed can spell it out -

Herself hath taught her love himself to write
unto her lover. (II.i.164)

For Silvia the identification is complete, although she mocks the backwardness of her lover, who must be loved the more for the lack of ambition and self-seeking in his love. Only she can have the temerity to court herself for him. When Proteus's well-designed stratagem succeeds, and Valentine condemns himself utterly before the Duke who sentences him to banishment, Valentine makes the fullest statement of the theme of one soul in two bodies:

To die is to be banished from myself;
And Silvia is myself: banished from her
Is self from self: a deadly banishment ...
She is my essence; and I leave to be,
If I be not by her fair influence
Foster'd, illumined, cherish'd, kept alive. (III.i.171-3, 182-5)

In The Comedy of Errors Shakespeare subjects the concept of the shared self to some critical scrutiny, but so far he is merely asserting it in several contexts which conflict, without actually resolving the conflict.¹ When Proteus comes to seek him, Valentine claims to be nothing (III.i.198) and Silvia cannot conceive of life without him either, for when Proteus says that Valentine is dead, she answers,

And so suppose am I; for in his grave,
Assure thyself my love is buried. (IV.ii.116-7)

Valentine, alone and passioning in the forest, struggles to keep their dual self alive, calling upon Silvia to repair him with her presence (V.iv.11), which she is already risking life and limb to do, crying that

1. Vide infra, pp.141 ff.

Valentine's life is as tender to her as her soul (V. iv. 37). Perhaps Shakespeare intended the finale to show that the doctrine of the shared self was false, that in the last analysis we are alone, by making Valentine consult his own integrity, and elect solitude, for the pressures seem to tend in some such direction. At all events no further claim is made for the togetherness of Silvia and Valentine, and we find ourselves all set for "One feast, one house, one mutual happiness" with no very clear idea of how such a resolution has come about. All the counter-divided and counter-allied selves would seem to have been amalgamated into one happy self, one tiny commonwealth, but this imaginative fusion has been rendered impossible by the tensions of the verse which describes the sufferings of the lovers before their arbitrary union: nothing on the same imaginative plane accomplishes the triumphant metamorphosis. Too much has happened to be obliterated by a word from the Duke, especially this Duke who is one of the most successfully human and least divine of Shakespeare's characterisations in this type. Somehow the audience remains uneasily aware that Proteus's inconstancy is a part of the pattern of life, but that his conversion is not.

* * * * *

And the base earth
Should from her barren womb
And of so great a treasure
Dissolve to rot the summer-swelling
And make rough winter everlastingly. (V. iv. 100-103)

Page 76 does not exist

THE ONLY BELOVED

Among the difficulties presented by the last scene is Proteus's feeble recognition of the truth and permanence of his first plighted troth:

What is in Silvia's face, but I may spy
More fresh in Julia's with a constant eye? (V. iv. 112-3)

We cannot be satisfied with this, especially as Silvia has been consistently represented as much more than a pretty face. In the poetic terms in which she is represented she is very different from Julia. Her rank entitles her to chivalric service, and not the traffic of Speed. In her first meeting with Valentine she demonstrates her spiritual wealth, as she effortlessly doubles the graces that Valentine wishes her.

He should give her interest, and she gives it him.
(II. i. 100)

He insists that she is a heavenly saint, which Proteus can only commute to heavenly paragon (II. iv. 145-6). Valentine will not mitigate his praise, and insists that she has the unmixed purity of spirit of an archangel or a principality (II. iv. 152). He will not even allow the claims of friendship to exalt Proteus's mistress to a level with his own, saying ecstatically that she is only worthy to bear Silvia's train,

lest the base earth
Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss,
And of so great a favour growing proud,
Disdain to root the summer-swelling flower,
And make rough winter everlastingly. (II. iv. 159-62)

He apologises for his rhapsodic hyperbole, explaining that everything he says must fall short of the reality.

She is alone. (II. iv. 167)

The Frontispiece to the 1589 quarto of The Arte of English Poesie is an engraving of Elizabeth, under which is written,

A colei che se stessa rassomiglia & non altrui.

This is the highest Platonic praise, for it confers upon the lady the ultimate perfection of the Form of Forms, which does not approximate anything, but comprehends all. In the possession of such a paragon (literally understood) Valentine is enriched almost

As twenty seas, if all their sand were pearl,
The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold. (II. iv. 170-1)

This pre-eminence is a quality of the soul, which Proteus has no chance to assess, and yet he accepts Valentine's judgment, because friends are "coupled together by a strict alliance, and uniformitie of will in desiring honest things"¹. Proteus admits in his soliloquy that he has allowed his imagination to be seduced by Valentine's praise, for her beauty he considers, as Julia herself does later on (IV. iv. 192-3), equal to Julia's. He is sure that his passion will intensify when he has an opportunity to observe the perfection of the soul, the substance of the shadow he has so far seen.

1. Lodge's Seneca, op. cit., p. 169.

His next monologue develops the argument broached in this one: he makes the comparison between Silvia and Julia a matter of sovereignty, and his images for Silvia are intensely platonic, unlike anything we have heard him say of Julia.

At first I did adore a twinkling star,
But now I worship a celestial sun. (II. vi. 9-10)

The image suggests that Proteus has lived all his life in the dark until now, when he has issued forth from Plato's cave and seen the sun. It is imaginatively possible that Silvia is more worthy of love than Julia, if a little repugnant. Julia is a mortal being, enmeshed in her trivial household in Verona, while Silvia occupies an inviolable tower in the Emperor's court in Milan. The Duke describes Valentine's presumptuous love of so supreme a creature as partaking of the nature of Phaethon's crime,

Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?
(III. i. 156)

The benighted savage must worship the sun, especially he sees it and its power after a lifetime in the darkness, but he cannot hope to clasp it in his arms. Silvia may be considered to exact love, as the sun draws sunflowers' faces to follow it: she is the incarnation of the Platonist-lover's dream, and the ultimate evidence of the folly of the notion understood so literally. If Valentine's hyperbole were fact, she would lay waste the world. Silvia is a woman, and men have made of her a symbol of ultimate perfection which they are compelled to love in defiance of common sense and morality. Perfect virtue is not a matter of taste:

all who have spiritual discernment must love it. Valentine and Proteus must have similar insights because they have developed together, and now they both love perfect virtue/beauty. The character of Valentine's love has been conditioned by Silvia's attempt to destroy wordless adoration and servile effeminacy by wooing him as a woman, but to Proteus she becomes even more lovable as she exercises her heartless chastity and indomitable virtue. For Valentine she becomes a wife, for Proteus she is Laura.

But Silvia is too fair, too true, too holy,
To be corrupted with my worthless gifts ...

Yet spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love,
The more it grows, and fawneth on her still. (IV. ii. 5-6, 14-15)

It is in the truth of such a statement that the difference between Silvia and the other ladies loved by two Renaissance friends can be found. Although the beloved of Titus and Gisippus is generally represented as inspiring the passion of Titus by the power of her virtue, the tradition seems generally to have been more nearly descended from the versions of the Amis and Amiloun story in which Belisaunt seduces Amis by blackmail and later drives him from home when he is leprous so that the noble friends must imprison her on bread and water.¹ Silvia's namesake in the Vitio Muliebre of Mariano Maniscalco da Siena is, like her, naturally irresistible, but in a way rather different from hers. Where Silvia's demeanour represents the harmony and grace which sustains the

1. See English version edited from Sutherland MS by McEdward Leach, op. cit.

the world, her ancestress manifests the highest form of voluptuous beauty.

pche ogniuno alla mia uoglia ceda
 ha mille reti in me natura estese
 Et spo un di quale Europa/ o Leda
 far trasformar del ciel li eterni dei
 ne torno I qua senza amorosa preda. ¹

Antilio, malcontent scholar and fugitive from the world, despite his scholastic training in misogyny, falls instant prey and is netted without a struggle. His bosom friend Ortentio dissuades him from this ruinous passion for an avaricious and calculating siren, but finds himself also seduced by the same charmer. Eventually, in the name of their undying friendship, they strip her naked and tie her to a tree in the depths of the forest. The original of Munday's Fedele et Fortunio is the Il Fedele of Luigi Pasqualigo, which presents us with another lady sought after by two gentlemen, the rapacious and unscrupulous Victoria, who does not baulk at the notion of murdering one lover to keep him quiet, and conjuring for the love of the other, who feigns indifference. Pasqualigo's address to the reader makes it clear that the play was written to revenge himself upon a lady who abandoned him after a long and faithful servitude for a known philanderer; it is crammed with bitter denunciations of the perversity and depravity of the less reasonable sex. ² Munday adapted it, making it less hysterical and more sententious, and ending it with a

1. Comedia del Vitio Muliebre. Composta p Mariano Maniscalco da Siena. Ad istantia di Miss Eustachio de Petrucci ... (Col: Impresso in Siena p Simione di Niccolo ... Ad: x di Agosto. 1519.) Sig. Bii. verso

2. Il Fedele. Comedia del Clariss. M. Luigi Pasqualigo ... In Venetia, appresso Bolognino Zaltieri. M.D LXXVI.

mass marriage grotesque in its fortuitousness. In the original *Victoria* is a married woman: this element is totally suppressed by Munday. His motives for adapting a work so little suited to English taste are mysterious, seeing that he saw fit to make so many changes that the plot is incomprehensible.¹ R. Warwick Bond has noted that there is a similarity between the episode of Lucilla in *Euphues* and the central situation in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*,² but the solution reached in the novel is not possible in the play because Silvia is the image of chastity and constancy, while Lucilla is lecherous and flighty, and on her way to the gutter any way. The friends may only too easily decide that their friendship is worth more than the carnal pleasures which are all they may expect from such a flibbertigibbet. In any case, the question is solved for them, for she has already passed on to another. In these cases the duel of love and friendship is only a cloak for donnish misogyny. The Euphuistic context is elegantly evoked in Gosson's *Ephemerides of Phialo* in which two young scholars make the acquaintance of the beautiful and witty Signora Polyphile, who is, as her name indicates, a courtesan. To protect his young friend from such a dangerous association, Phialo behaves like a perfect boor towards her at her own table: she is an Italian type, but the treatment that Phialo metes out to her is thoroughly English. In a coarser style, and devised for a different market are the efforts of

1. See the Malone Society reprint from the imperfect quarto at Chatsworth (London, 1909).

2. *Vide* the Introduction to his edition of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Methuen, 1906) in the series the *Arden Shakespeare*, pp. xxi-ii.

Fiorina to keep both her gentleman callers in Cucchetti's L'Amicizia and the grossness of the story of Claribel and Floradin in Wotton's Courtlie Controuersie of Cupids Cautels. It has been seriously argued that The Two Gentlemen of Verona is indebted for its central action to the latter¹ but in fact the position is untenable, for it is no more than an utterly flippant account of the way that Claribel and Floradin unwittingly cuckold each other, until they meet in the house of a miller's wife, and confess to each other

... how by a crosse blow they grew acquainted with the Cuckow, the one in the wood, the other in the field. Which was a newe confederation and establishment of their amitie, without any malice or yl wil: and from that time forward they concluded a perpetual brotherhood.²

Eventually they find their estranged wives hiding behind the lines during a battle, and decide to "redintegrate and newly confyrme the amities of wedlocke".³

It is a basis assumption in undergraduate literature of the Renaissance that women are changeable.

Wherefore be women compared to Proteus?⁴
Because of their great inconstancie.

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1. D. F. Atkinson, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona and Wotton's Courtlie Controuersie", Studies in Philology, vol.xli, 1944, pp.223-34.
 2. A courtlie Controuersie of Cupids Cautels ... translated out of French by Hen. Wotton ... At London Imprinted by Francis Coldock and Henry Bynneman. 1578, p.315.
 3. Ibid., p.319.
 4. Alain Chartier, Delectable demands and Pleasant Questions, with their severall Answers, in matters of Loue, Naturall Causes, with Morall and politique deuises. Newly translated out of Frenche into English ... 1566. Imprinted at London ... by Iohn Cawood for Nicholas Englande, fol. 14 recto.

The man who allows himself to suffer at their hands, despite his greater magnanimity and firmness of disposition, is a sensual and effeminate fool: for the cultivated mind only the conversation of his equals in virtue and wisdom can be deeply satisfying. Shakespeare tips the balance in the other direction: here it is the man who is called Proteus, and the women who are generous and stable. Where the ladies of the tales "glorifying friendship" seduce by their physical charms or the direct intervention of the blind god, Silvia compels love by her virtue. Proteus's sinful passion may be compared with Angelo's in Measure for Measure, in that he is seduced from virtue by the power of virtue. Angelo's dilemma is more movingly stated as the awful moral paradox that unregenerate human nature may make of the power of virtue itself the occasion of grave sin: Angelo's sin is clearly one of pride in his own steely virtue, and Proteus also commits a kind of hubris, in ^his overstated constancy at his parting with Julia (II. ii. 9-12). Proteus makes the fullest statement of the divinity of the power that has overthrown him in the song,

Who is Silvia? what is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be. (IV. ii. 38-42)

No other Shakespearean heroine is the subject of such religious rhetoric, which in its utter spirituality is almost genuinely Petrarchan.

L'alma, ch'e sol da Dio fatta gentile
che gia d'altrui non può venir tal grazia,
simil al suo fattor stato ritiene. (Canzoniere, XXXIII)

Love, the consequence of the heaven-sent grace which resides in Silvia, moving towards the eternal object of desire, the good, flies to Silvia and remains enthroned in her look, enslaving all. Like Valentine, Proteus sings the uniqueness of Silvia,

She excels each mortal thing,
Upon the dull earth dwelling. (IV. ii. 50-1)

The fact that she had united the substance of her truth, her soul, to Valentine's leaves Proteus in an intolerable dilemma, to which he finds an unsatisfactory answer, to beg her picture, and make love to that, which reflects back on the way that he first fell in love with her,

'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld,
And that hath dazzled my reason's light:
But when I look upon her perfections,
There is no reason but I shall be blind. (II. iv. 210-3)

He cannot have Silvia in her full truth and beauty, for in betraying Valentine she would have to sacrifice it. Proteus, unable to ^v~~vanish~~ⁿ his hopeless passion, must be content to worship a useless image because of the inward perfection of the thing portrayed. He becomes a superstitious idolator, gulled by a heretical cult. The possession of her picture is an analogy of his attempt to ravish her, which would place him in possession of the temple and alienate him forever from the spirit that dwells there. He knows that Silvia's real self cannot exist for him, and yet he cannot still his clamorous passion.

For since the substance of your perfect self
Is else devoted, I am but a shadow;
And to your shadow will I make true love. (IV. ii. 134)

Proteus considers himself destroyed by Silvia's intransigence, but his own mobility has transformed Julia into a wandering shade as well.

She comments bitterly on his asking for the portrait,

If 'twere a substance, you would, sure deceive it,
And make it but a shadow, as I am. (IV.ii.125-6)

reminding us that she has sacrificed her integrity to Proteus, who, in pursuing his criminal love, has destroyed her soul. If he win Silvia he will have destroyed her purity as well, making four souls destroyed and no souls mated: By sacrificing Silvia to Proteus, Valentine would perpetuate the world of shadows in which Proteus's treachery has compelled him to live, for this is Silvia's just description of his mental furniture:

your falsehood shall become you well
To worship shadows and adore false shapes. (IV.ii.129-130)

In naming the portrait of her rival, Julia denies that it has any greater beauty than hers, for the shape without the substance is the same as any other semblance. Proteus is right when he realises that there is nothing in Silvia's face that he might not spy more fresh in Julia's: what made his love in the first place, the symbolic nature of her beauty, outward sign of her virtue, is inaccessible to him; he may not woo it, and he cannot rape it. What makes for the truth of love is in fact its reciprocity; the persistence in unrequited passion is folly.

If a question might be asked, what is the ground in deede of reasonable love, whereby the knot is knit of true and perfect freendship, I thinke those that be wise would answer — deserte: that is, where the party beloved dooeth requite us with the like; for otherwise, if the bare shewe of beautie, or the comlinesse of personage

might bee sufficient to confirme us in our love, those that bee accustomed to goe to faires and markettes might sometymes fall in love with twentie in a daie: desert must then bee (of force) the grounde of reasonable loue; for to love them that hate us, to followe them that flie from us, to faune on them that froune on us, to bee glad to please them that care not how thei offende us, who will not confesse this to be an erronious love, neither grounded uppon witte nor reason? ¹

The sentiment can hardly have been unknown to Shakespeare, for it is thus expressed in the tale of Appolonius and Silla in Rich's Farewell to the Millitarie profession. One of the great differences between romantic and rational love (be it called friendship or no) is that the one may continue for years unrequited and the other comes into existence as requital. The just loves of Proteus and Valentine are the requited ones, for their ladies and for each other. Yet we cannot simply regard Proteus's betrayal of his two requited loves for one disastrous infatuation as an incidental aberration which may easily be righted, for it has been accomplished by that notorious thief called time, whose action can rarely be undone. Not only can we not accept Valentine's cruel generosity in the last scene, we cannot accept Proteus's factitious return to constancy either.

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1. Farewell to the millitarie profession in Eight Novels employed by English Dramatic Poets of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth published by Barnaby Rich, ... 1581, reprinted from the Bodleian copy, by the Shakespeare Society (London, 1846), p. 68.

THIS BLOODY TYRANT, TIME

If we argue that Silvia is more worthy of love than Julia, and that the passion that she inspires is the necessary tribute to her virtue, it would follow that Julia's claim to Proteus could be invalidated, if only she were not contracted to him, as the love of Romeo for Rosalind withers away before the passion inspired by Juliet.¹ In the first scene Proteus's tender days and utter lack of worldly knowledge are stressed by Valentine.

Homekeeping youth have ever homely wits. (I. i. 2)

As Julia's lover he is gentle but backward: the argument against this juvenile passion is that it will prevent him from enjoying the "fair effects of future hopes". When Philotimus insists on betrothing himself to Aurelia before going off to the university, she objects:

Alas Philotimus, why doe we reckon our chickens
before they be hatcht, and trouble our selues about
these matters, which maye time inough be talked on
seuen yeares hence? Wee are too little, & to yong,
for the delightes of marriage.²

The argument is carried on for many pages, but the lady eventually consents to betrothe herself. Later, having broken her troth she defends herself with an interesting argument which we might apply to Proteus:

1. With this distinction however, that Romeo exchanges Platonic infatuation for a requited and reasonable love, and Proteus does the exact opposite.
2. Melbancke, *Philotimus*, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Thou are like Menaechmus Subreptus his wife, who thinking an other had bene her husband for their like resemblance, falslie burdened him with her husbands knauerie: and I, bycause I am like my selfe, am slaundersouslye impeached of inconstancie. As the bragging ostentation, of thy accusation, seemes to importe, I now am an other then I was before. For then I was reputed of sufficient honestie, and now am descried of much cogging varlettrie ... If I am not as I was, as ye saiest I am not, but straungely changed, I cannot tell how, then praise Cornelius, whose credit is currant, and blame me no whit, for I am not the same. ¹

Conferring with Panthino about sending Proteus to see the world,

Antonio voices the principle which causes Proteus's tragedy:

... he cannot be a perfect man,
Not being tried and tutored in the world:
Experience is by industry achieved,
And perfected with the swift course of time. (I. iii. 20-3)

Proteus is unformed then, incomplete, like prime matter, of which Proteus was sometimes a figure, for example, in Francesco Cattani's discussion of love as the motivating force in the movement from element to element, which is taken largely from the *Timaeus*.² He is doomed and desired to change, for there is no point in sending him to Milan, to have him come home the same as he went. The danger inherent in the situation is clear:

... Simple friendship and amitie betweene twaine,
requireth a staied minde, a firme and constant nature,

1. Ibid., p. 160.

2. I Tre Libri d'amore di Francesco Cattani da Diaceto (Vinegia, Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, 1561), p. 9.

permanent and abiding alwaies in one place, and reteining stil the same fashions: which is the reason that a fast and assured friend is very geason and hard to be found.¹

Proteus's name signifies much more than inconstancy: besides prime matter,² it can be construed as signifying human fallibility, or the elusive truth of things.

Plato compareth him to the wrangling of brabbling sophisters: and some there be that thereby vnderstand, the truth of things obscured by so many deceauable apparances: Lastly there want not others, which meane hereby the vnderstanding and intellectual parte of mans minde, which vnles it seriously and attentiuely bend it selfe to the contemplation of things, shall neuer attaine to the truth.³

The most impressive account of Proteus is that given by Pico della Mirandola in the discourse De Dignitate Hominis which Raleigh used in his account of the power "which man had in his first creation, to dispose of himselfe",

... whereas beasts, and all other creatures reasonlesse brought with them into the world (saith Lucilius) and that euen when they first fell from the bodies of their Dammes, the nature, which they could change; and the supernall spirits or Angels were from the beginning, or

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1. The Philosophie commonlie called the Morals written by ... Plutarch ... Translated out of Greeke into English, ... by Philemon Holland ... At London Printed by Arnold Hatfield. 1603. p. 229, "Of the Pluralitie of Friends".
 2. Ibid., Plutarch uses the image of Proteus and of prime matter in the same context, to denote the man with many friends.
 3. The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuycburch: Entituled, Amintas Dale ... by Abraham Fraunce ... At London (sic) Printed, for Thomas Woodcocke ... 1592, fol. 23 recto.

soone after, of that condition, in which they remaine in perpetuall eternitie. But . . . God gaue vnto man all kinde of seedes and grafts of life (to wit) the vegetatiue life of Plants, the sensuall of beastes, the rationall of man, and the intellectuall of Angels, whereof which soeuer he tooke pleasure to plant and cultiue, the same should futurely grow in him, and bring forth fruit, agreeable to his own choyce and plantation. This freedome of the first man Adam, and our first Father, was aenigmatically described by Asclepius Atheniensis (saith Mirandula) in the person and fable of Proteus, who was said, as often as hee pleased, to change his shape. ¹

It is free will which distinguishes man from all other of God's creation, for he is created to love God, and love must be the result of a free choice. The cruel paradox is that only man can be damned, for his choice is subject to the conditions of his existence, and his imperfect knowledge of the universe and his place in it. For the humanists the variable nature of man implied his perfectibility, for the determinists it implied the opposite: all the examples of metamorphosis that Raleigh quotes are in fact cases of decline from the rational to the bestial. The connection of Proteus with Adam adds weight to the hint that his progress through the play is that of all men, from purity and ignorance, to sin and knowledge. Adam could have been neither constant nor unfaithful: Proteus has no such good fortune, he is faced with the test, which would have no meaning if failure were not possible. Man may have the power to change himself, but not to change himself back again nor to stay the same. Proteus's fault and Proteus's tragedy are those of all fallen humanity, for

1. Raleigh, The Historie of the World. At London Printed for Walter Burre. 1614, p. 32.

... nothing vnder heauen dooth ay in stedfast
state remayne.
And next, that nothing perisheth: but that
eche substance takes
Another shape than that it had ... ¹

This is the law of material existence propounded in Golding's Ovid. The complexions of man are the same in microcosm as the four elements of the earth, and his highest faculties are characterised by the most volatile.² Although the elements are arranged in perpetual friendship by the Almighty, they are not to be understood as constant, for the force of love, that controls them, is itself Protean.³

In all the world there is not that that standeth
at a stay.
Things eb and flow: and euery shape is made
too passe away.
The tyme itself continually is fleeting like
a brooke.
For neyther brooke nor lyghtsomme tyme can
tarrye still. But looke
As euery waue dryues other foorth, and that
that commes behynd
Both thrusteth and is thrust itself: Euen so the
tymes by kynd
Do fly and follow bothe at once, and euermore
renew.
For that that was before is left, and streyght
there dooth ensew
Anooother that was neuer erst. Eche twinling of
an eye
Dooth chaunge. ⁴

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1. The .xv. Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis translated ... by Arthur Golding ... 1567 Imprinted at London, by William Seres, Sig. aii recto.
 2. Cf. Shakespeare's Sonnet no. xlv.
 3. Cf. Meduna, Lo Scolare op.cit., fol.107
 4. Golding's Ovid, op.cit., fol.189

This view of living as dependent upon change and generation is not the *recherché* monopoly of the Pythagoreans, for it can be found in such unpretentious works as Politeuphuia:

The whole world is nothing but a shoppe of change ...
 nothing els but change, what-soeuer chaunceth vnto vs.
 Nature by change produceth her increase.¹

The very bias of existence pulls against the constancy without which we can have no spiritual life. The gravity of this vision of conflict in the soul of man, slave to time and lord of the angels, is too sharp a glance at the tragic fact of damnation to be dispelled by a word in the last scene. This is the corollary of the comic fact of salvation, the sad reality which the playwright's deus ex machine ought to banish from our minds: constancy ought to triumph in spite of the ever constant peril of engulfment in the surges of life.

The most ironic statement of the flux of time is that made by Julia, herself accepting a metamorphosis in order to enter that same river, in the search for her lover, carried away by time and his ally, distance. The audience listens with full awareness to her unconscious summary of what the current has done for her tranquillity: she describes her own love as a fire, which cannot be kindled with snow, invoking the whole irreversible dance of the elements, which words are powerless to halt (II. vii. 19-20).

1. Bodenham, Politeuphuia, op. cit., fols. 121 recto, verso.

Thus, all these fower (the which the ground-work bee
 Of all the world, and of all liuing wights)
 To thousand sorts of Change we subiect see.
 Yet are ~~they~~ chang'd (by other wondrous lights)
 Into themselues, and lose their natiue might;
 The Fire to Aire, and th'Ayre to Water sheere,
 And Water into Earth: yet Water fights
 With Fire and Aire with Earth approaching neere: 1
 Yet all are in one body, and as one appeare.

In seeing the progress of her love as a part of this ineluctable mechanism, Julia unwittingly provides the justification for her lover's inconstancy: she sees the inexorability of her love as a natural force like that which drives the waters of the earth towards the ocean that was never empty and will never be filled. The genuine power of an image playfully evoked implies much more than Julia wanted to say (II.vii.25 - 32)

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
 So do our minutes hasten to their end;
 Each changing place with that which goes before,
 In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
 Nativity once in the main of light,
 Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned
 Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
 And time that gave doth now his gift confound. 2

Julia's stream is domesticated in a world of artifice, where the laws of fancy have enamelled the stones, and the noise of waters is sweet music, but it is still Ovid's brook, and the sea it wanders so sportively and willingly towards is still the wild ocean, which Julia too trustingly takes for her Elisium. Her innocent water-picture carries the threat that she travels beyond her back-water into an upheaval. It is a one-way trip; what she

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1. Smith and de Selincourt, Spenser, p.402, The Faerie Queene, Canto VII St. 25.
 2. Shakespeare, Sonnet LX.

leaves behind will have to be sacrificed. Like Leander whose ghost broods over the opening of the play, she may drown, swept into the flood by Proteus's ocean of tears. She wished her name borne upon the whirlwind into the raging sea, and now she has her wish. Proteus used the same image when his lie caused his father to decide to send him to Milan:

Thus have I shunned the fire for fear of burning,
And drench'd me in the sea, where I am drowned. (I.iii.78-9)

The tide controls the lovers' travels, as many commentators have noticed, even at the expense of geography. Proteus finds that the love of Silvia has supplanted that of Julia as "one heat another heat expels" (II.iv.193), so that his old love is thawed "like a waxen image gainst a fire" until it "bears no impression of the thing it was" (II.iv.201-3) and so the see-saw dance of the elements continues. Thoughts are volatile, and travel like air and fire, or like air and fire may melt to water or cool to air, shadow. Solidity is only an illusion; the process is accepted, but only when, like the Duke, we think it works to our advantage.

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.
A little time will melt her frozen thoughts
And Valentine shall be forgot. (III.ii.6-10)

Despite the Cambridge editors, the metaphor is utterly consistent, and the extension of that used by Proteus for his progress in forgetting: in Silvia's heart Valentine's image is graven, but inevitably the figure will melt and soften to a new impression. It is ironic that the Duke should

assume such fluidity in his daughter, and yet trust to the firmness and constancy of Proteus's devotion to his Saint in Verona so that he may woo Silvia for Thurio (III.ii.56-61). So all of us rely upon the action of time to give us what we want, and forget how inexorably it has accomplished all that is accomplished. Proteus whom time has compromised in letting him meet Silvia after contracting himself to Julia, and after she has plighted her troth with Valentine, pleads the positive case for time in a traitorous context, when he exhorts Valentine to trust to "the nurse and breeder of all good" (III.i.243). We accept and welcome change as a function of time, and yet we struggle with religious fervour to establish something permanent, a basis for security and trust in a world that knows neither, by exchange of rings and kisses.

As the Duke so fatuously remarks, "Much is the force of heaven-bred poesy" (III.ii.72). In the Sonnets Shakespeare triumphantly asserts the power of the word to conquer time, but in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, it is the changeable man who trusts to poetry, while Valentine, himself a sort of dumb jewel, constant, gentle and relatively taciturn, counsels the Duke to woo with jewels, themselves not subject to change or destruction. Proteus expounds a Protean theory of poetry, to persuade, which is to change a state of mind, and to create, to generate, to metamorphose.

Write till your ink be dry, and with your tears
Moist it again; and frame some feeling line
That may discover such integrity:
For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews;
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands. (III.ii.75-81)

The comic poet can convince us of our escape from time into eternity, by a transformation of the accidental into the formal and assured, so that instead of watching the old bird consuming in its flames, we are aware of the eternal pattern of renewal of the same phoenix. Whether it be because he lacked confidence in the poet and eterniser, or for some reason connected with the sharpness with which he viewed human subjection to the laws of existence, Shakespeare does not manage to convince us of this in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. The last scene merely tries to convince us that we may return to the dilapidated status quo, and does not take us into a timeless dimension of symmetry and equity. Throughout the play a strong tension pulls against eloquence, from the torn letter which wins Julia so much more easily than the whole would have done, to Valentine's sword, which finally wins Silvia for him. Silvia is a poetical concept, an idea rather than a person: she struggles against this, insisting upon her natural role as a woman, wooing her man for herself like the Duchess of Malfi, until stripped of the hieratical finery of her court garments she follows him into the forest, and like some heretical idol, is finally degraded by Proteus's attempt to rape her. The imagery of the sun which caused the marigold of Valentine's love to flower at the same time as it bred maggots in the carcase of Proteus's perfidy is not used again, and Silvia, silent and unregarded, is given to Valentine by her father, as a reward for courage. He answers coolly,

I thank your grace; the gift hath made me happy. (V. iv. 145)

and immediately asks for the amnesty of his outlaw companions.

Silvia's mythical superbness has withered away into silence, and Julia is the heroine of the final scene. It is patently unsatisfactory, but it may demonstrate the poet's more or less articulate intention to show the illusory nature of platonic perfection incarnate in woman, and the irrelevance of such a concept to the exigencies of living. Men create such a myth, and then commit atrocities in its name, even to the vastest contradiction, that of forcing their lust, the ultimate evidence of the grossness of their animal nature, upon it.

The comic sub-plot places the main action in such odd relation to the practice of the common man that all the suffering caused by the sun-lady, Silvia, seems nothing but absurd and slavish adherence to an extravagant code of behaviour, estranged from moral and common-sense. Speed treats the passioning of Valentine and of Proteus whom he compares with him, as fearfully commonplace and unmanly

You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock;
when you walked, to walk like one of the lions; when
you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you
looked sadly, it was for want of money; and now you
are metamorphosed with a mistress, that, when I look
on you, I can hardly think you my master. (II.ii.25-31)

The comic parallels with the main action and their parodic effect have all been noticed by Harold Brooks, who sees their undercutting effect as evidence of immaturity in the playwright, who is sabotaging his own work.

Love in the courtly manner, partly because it is so stylised, is very liable, once we entertain an inadequate, every-day view of it, to arouse mere mockery and impatience. Aware of this, both Chaucer and Shakespeare embody the dangerous attitude within the play or poem itself, so as to control and place it; but they place it somewhat differently. In Chaucer the plebeian view, whatever sympathy he may have with it outside the poem, is introduced chiefly to be rejected ... ¹

But the acid action of the low-life characters on the main plot of The Two Gentlemen of Verona is not merely wanton. They make explicit pressures in the main action which we find troubling. We may give only partial assent to Speed's cynicisms about the loves of his masters, but the effect of the contraposition of Launce is more subtle, because it commands a warmth of response which will not permit of distancing or criticism. Speed and Lucetta both act and live according to their position in the network of relationships which is society, without examining them or allowing themselves to be deluded by fatuous idealism, but the real pith of the contrast between the thinkers and the doers is provided by the relationship between Launce and his dumb alter ego, Crab. The dog figures in many imprese as the emblem of silent constancy and loyalty unto death, but to plead this significance with any great fervour would be to invoke Launce's ridicule. ² Nevertheless the figure of Launce, always upstaged by his mute dependant, has something of the same kind of force as Will Kemp

1. Harold F. Brooks, "Two Clowns in a Comedy (to say nothing of the Dog): Speed, Launce (and Crab) in The Two Gentlemen of Verona". Essays and Studies, 1963, Vol. xvi, p. 95 ff.

2. See, for example, the figure of Fede nell'amicitia in Ripa's Iconologia (Padova, 1611), pp. 244, 245.

taking the child upon his knee at the end of Summer's Last Will and Testament. He glances most shrewdly at the emotional broils of his masters in his muddling of his and the dog's identity.

I am the dog: no the dog is himself, and I am the dog, --
oh! the dog is me, and I am myself. (II.iii.24-6)

Launce knows very well that he and the dog are separate, but also that they are inseparable. The whole joke of the dog's unkindness works by contrast with the moist dogginess of his visible demeanour: if the dog is of uncertain breeding and no elegance at all, it must work as an absolute coup de theatre. Friends have simple characteristics in Launce's world: they drink together like Christians (II.v.61). When a man claims that he is nothing, as Valentine does, Launce offers to prove the contrary by hitting him. He is shrewdly aware of Proteus's duplicity:

I am but a fool, look you; and yet I have the
wit to think my master is a kind of knave;
but that's all one, if he be but one knave. (III.i.261-2)

He understands his lady-love in terms of her useful accomplishments, and pays her the compliment of a favourable comparison with a water-spaniel (III.i.273). She is a human being, like he is, and not an ikon or an idea. Life with her will be life on earth, as would life without her. Crab provides a fearful parallel with Proteus's crime when he pisses on Silvia's skirts, and Launce Valentine-like, forgives the fault inherent in his nature by taking it upon himself.

Nay, I'll be sworn, I have sat in the stocks for puddings
he hath stolen, otherwise he had been executed: I have
stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise
he had suffered for it. (IV.iv.67)

The scene gains its whole point from Launce's jubilation at not having been able to give Crab away: as for the dog he never had any intention of being given away. Launce would have sacrificed him out of loyalty to his master, as Valentine would sacrifice Silvia out of loyalty to Proteus; neither wants to succeed, and neither does. It is one more thing to add to our uneasiness about the last scene. For all their rhapsodising, the lovers can do no more, and in fact do a good deal less, than Launce does unthinkingly for his mongrel dog. Well may Proteus cry in a pet,

A slave, that still an end turns me to shame! (IV. iv. 67)

Yet we know that Proteus cannot attain to Launce's solidity, for elemental feelings, the more real for their never being expressed, are beyond him, and he must reap the fruit of the whirlwind, confusion.

The tensions of the main action are real ones, although perhaps not fully developed and interrelated, and the demonstration that there is a life which does not concern itself with them does not dispel them. Launce's simplicity is partly the result of ignorance, and kin to the fatalism of the poor peasant everywhere. Nevertheless, the "everyday view" is more relevant to a playwright's work than a poet's, and the ultimate significance of the play relates to the whole audience and not only to the education of the courtier. The courtly ambient is no more than superficially evoked, by the presence of the olde worlde Eglamour, who presents an insuperable problem of characterisation, and the naively cursory mention of the exercises and recreations of the courtier. Silvia, despite the sovereignty that is attributed to her, lives in her tower without an entourage, serenaded

like any maiden of lesser station, bullied by a father more bourgeois than imperial, burlesquing her own majesty, by calling Valentine, "Servant". There is really less distance between Valentine and Launce than there is between Valentine and the inhabitants of the world of Castiglione, or even the coarser concept of Hoby. Despite his bookishness and introspection, Proteus's dilemma is the dilemma inherent in the dream of platonic love and his own helplessness against change, that of any man. Stanley Wells's arguments establish that we are dealing with an early play¹ and more grounds for the supposition may be adduced from the coyness of some of the staging, as characters marooned on the stage are called off by servants for want of some motivation of their own. It may be that the young playwright was confronting a problem too disturbing for him to resolve ~~the inherent conflict~~ with the requisite assurance. In his next comedy he attacks allied problems, with a firmer formal support, and brings them to the indispensable happy conclusion. John F. Danby has pointed out that the play shares the inscape of the sonnets² while maintaining that it has a great serenity. This would seem to involve a slight contradiction for the victory is not always assured in the battle with negative flux, even as it is waged in the sonnets: it is the stress of this battle within the play which ill prepares us for a facile ending. Under the smoothly mannered surface of this shallow story of deep love, the currents run strongly towards a sea

1. Stanley Wells, "The Failure of The Two Gentlemen of Verona", Shakespeare Jahrbuch, Band 99, 1965, pp. 161-173.

2. "Shakespeare Criticism and The Two Gentlemen of Verona", Critical Quarterly, Winter, 1960-1, Vol. II, p. 321.

Page 103 does not exist

of tragic possibilities, and not the artificial pool that the Duke creates by a word in the last scene. The imperfectly developed poetic instrument imposes an undramatic order upon the intellectual questings of the young poet, under which the strain of implications builds up, not to be released, but only denied, in the ending. The situation of the two gentlemen fires a train of associations, which we may trace to later plays, where they have a more successful expression, in Measure for Measure in the tragic swerving of Angelo, in The Comedy of Errors, in the treatment of the whole problem of the shared self, in Love's Labour's Lost, in the ladies' rejection of compromised wooing, in Twelfth Night, the contrast between Viola, the lover-friend, and Olivia, the beloved mistress. Although we must admit that the promise of one mutual happiness which closes the play draws a line across territory still unwon by the playwright, our very dissatisfaction with the trite comic denial of the issues raised by the play measures the depth to which they have stirred us.

THE PLANTIN TRADITION

The *Comedy of Errors* is generally supposed to be a Plautine play, not insofar as the plot is derived from the *Menachemae* of Plautus it is, but the adjective describes only the action of the play, considered in its most superficial aspect, and does not suggest any of the comprehensive

CHAPTER TWO:

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

not clear, in a discussion like Corbridge's *Comedy*,¹ whether we are to include the greater dramatist, Terence, in the Plautine tradition, and some of the parallels the poet has with some authors he claimed for quite different traditions. Terence and not Plautus is the focal point of the theory of learned comedy, which is not developed from any single source, but from an attempt to weld Roman types of dramatic comedy into a new form for contemporary entertainment and criticism. The remarks of Aristotle on tragedy were reversed and fitted with Horace's

A Comedie, I meane for to present,

No Terence phrase: his tyme and myne are twaine:

(single
space)

The verse that pleasse a Romaine rashe intent,

Myght well offend the godly Preachers vayne.

Deformed shewes were then esteemed muche,

Reformed speeche doth now become vs best, ...

(Gascoigne, The Prologue to The Glasse
of Gouvernement)

¹ Corbridge's *Comedy*, "The Plautine Tradition in Renaissance Comedy", *Journal of English and German Philology*, Vol. XXV, 1916, pp. 51-62.

THE PLAUTINE TRADITION

The Comedy of Errors is commonly supposed to be a Plautine play, and insofar as the plot is derived from the Menaechmi of Plautus it is, but the adjective describes only the action of the play, considered in its most superficial aspect, and does not suggest any of the comprehensiveness of the tradition to which it is a worthy heir. To begin with, it is not clear, in a discussion like Cornelia Coulter's¹, whether we are to include the greater dramatist, Terence, in the Plautine tradition, and some of the parallels she notices might with equal justice be claimed for quite different traditions. Terence and not Plautus is the focal point of the theory of learned comedy, which is not developed from any single source, but from an attempt to weld disparate types of theories to provide a norm for contemporary achievement and criticism. The remarks of Aristotle on tragedy were reversed and yoked with Horace's *Poetics* and the commentaries of Donatus and Servius to provide an authoritative statement of the business of comedy. What the Renaissance did with these ideas in its lust to normalise and establish its own principles of construction and criticism was more a reflection of Renaissance mentality and need than honest antiquarianism. Failure to keep in mind the complexity of the tradition of learned comedy and

1. Cornelia Coulter, "The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. XIX, 1920, pp. 68-83.

and trusting oneself to its deceptive appearance of regularity and homogeneity leads to acceptance of views like those expressed by Professor Coghill when he distinguishes two fundamental types of comedy, one romantic, mediaeval, creative, popular and hence good, which is called Shakespearean, and one classic, renaissance, critical, learned and hence inferior, which is called Jonsonian.¹ The sort of position that results from acceptance of such a view can be illustrated by a comment of Professor Bradbrook's:

Shakespeare finally evolved a stable form of Elizabethan comedy, first modelling himself with some strictness upon learned example and then rejecting the ingenious and overplanned pattern of his earliest attempts for a more popular style. His strength alone was capable of welding the two traditions firmly together, and his rejection of simple learning in favour of complex nature was a decisive step. Between The Comedy of Errors and The Merchant of Venice there is as great a distance as between Titus Andronicus and Romeo and Juliet. The development in each case is from a prescribed formula towards organised freedom of growth.²

The implication that there is a single prescribed formula simply requiring the following for instant though circumscribed success cannot be made to fit the facts. One has only to compare The Comedy of Errors with, say, Volpone, to see that the classical tradition is fruitful of many kinds of excellence. In order to arrive at his distinction Professor Coghill was obliged to assemble in two opposed camps elements which

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1. Nevill Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespeare's Comedy", Essays and Studies, 1950, pp.1-28. passim.
 2. M. C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy (Peregrine Books, 1963), p.15.

Mathieu de Vendôme and Vincent de Beauvais has presented as aspects of a single idea. It is up to us to remember that for the renaissance scholars who inherited their Latinism from the middle ages they were still mingled. If it is a matter of following the learned canons The Merchant of Venice may be as easily justified by reference to them as The Comedy of Errors.

Professor Bradbrook has indicated elsewhere that the situation may be more complex, by her remark that Mother Bombie is of the "English Plautine pattern of Gammer Gurton's Needle rather than the Italian Plautine of The Comedy of Errors".¹ Can we in fact distinguish two or more types of Plautine tradition, differing according to national or local taste and usage, and should we identify The Comedy of Errors with the Italian type rather than the English? I shall examine Italian treatments of the Menaechmi theme and Plautine plays in English, in order to arrive at a more informative description of Shakespeare's play, and a more committed estimation of its achievement.

The Menaechmi is a Plautine version of a New Comedy play, possibly by Posidippus, and utterly mediocre. It is notwithstanding central to Plautine culture, and survives in dozens of renaissance versions, mostly in Italian², some in French and Spanish, but only one,

1. Ibid. p.75.

2. E.g. As well as those discussed in detail, Gl'Ingamati, Gli Errori Incogniti (Pietro Buonfanti), Olimpia (G.-B. della Porta), La Prigione d'Amore (Sforza degli Oddi) L'Ipocrito, L'Anconitana (Ruzzante), and several scenari of the Scala.

apart from Warner's competent translation, and the mention of the Historie of Error (or fferrar) in English. The reasons for its survival have very little to do with its intrinsic merit or interest. The most persuasive is that it is a perfect school play, short, Latin, and makes absolutely no demands upon the actor, for no situation is explored in the more than a cursory way. The action pauses only to clarify itself, and moves on. The structure is a stark example of the five-act norm elicited from the unconscious Terence by Donatus and Evanthius. It obeys the unities to a fault, for the actual depicted incidents happen in too clipped a fashion; not a word is wasted, even for a laugh, except in the voluminous Prologue, which was added by the schoolmen in order that the play might satisfy their classical requirements. The more scrupulous renaissance versions, like William Warner's, omitted it. The little play is as simple, as functional and as basically uninteresting as a barrel vault, and stands in the same relation to the works inspired by it as that Roman invention does to the triumphs of classical architecture. Its function as a school play is not impeded by any scabrous material, but it is not in any sense morally improving, being essentially a tale of opportunism and deceit. Menaechmus Surreptus is a bully and a sensual fool, coarsely enamoured of a courtesan and crudely abusive to his wife who appears to merit no better treatment, and conspires with the resentful parasite against her lord. Menaechmus Sosicles, notwithstanding his search for his brother, is a cheat and a cynic. The courtesan is so honestly self-seeing that she appears if anything morally superior to the other characters. No judgment is meted out to the malefactors, except the

only one that our putative schoolmasters cannot have condoned.

Venibit uxor quoque etiam, siquis emptor venerit.
(V.v. 1160)

The scholars themselves must have found the Menaechmi wanting. It cannot provide the reverse of a tragical catharsis for it has no real catastrophe: the discovery is made in a thoroughly undramatic fashion, and merely puts an end to the complexities of the action, which has the disadvantage of being single and hence considered inferior to the double action of Terence. Moreover the mediaeval theorists were all agreed on the moral function of comedy: it cannot even be argued that the Menaechmi teaches us to shun vice by showing its true image, for vice is not recognised as such.

PLAUTUS IN ITALY

There could hardly be a play better adapted to illustrating Professor Coghill's basic distinction, than the Menaechmi, if the practitioners of learned comedy had in fact the slavish and uncreative attitude that they are commonly credited with, but even translators of Plautus allowed themselves a measure of liberty with the original. The adaptors did not hesitate to supply the deficiencies of the original in the most deliberate way. The fact that there are so many more adaptations of Plautus than of Terence may be the direct result of difference in the esteem they

enjoyed. It is Terence who supplies the precedent for combining the single Plautine action with another. The translators counted their allegiance to the pseudo-Ciceronian canon of speculum vitae more fundamental than fidelity to their original, and transplanted the Greek tale to their own social setting, replacing ancient properties with more familiar objects, with the result that the starkness and mannerism of the original is quite submerged in the vigour and vividness of the depiction of contemporary society.¹

Giangiorgio Trissino, whose Poetics were well known in England, does not hesitate to improve upon Plautus in his version of the Menaechmi. He is before all else a scholar and a theorist, and I Simillimi may well show us what we may expect of learned comedy. To begin with, he regards the moral function of comedy as of overriding importance. His way of formulating it provides us with a clear example of the reversal of the Aristotelian canon for tragedy, already perverted by a Christian emphasis.

E perché la Tragedia imitandw lauda, et ammira
 l'atti virtuosi, & la Comedia immitando dilegia &
 vitupera i viziosi, avviene, che a questw modw &
 l'una, & l'altra ci insegnanw la virtù; ...²

This is an assumption made by Trissino in the belief that it is no more than orthodoxy sanctioned by the most ancient precept and practice:

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1. E.g. Comedia di Plavto novamente tradotta, intitolata Menechini molto piacevole et ridicvlosa. M.D.XXVIII. (Col: ... Venetia per Girolamo pentio da lecco ad instantia de Cristoforo ditto Stampone de Milano e compagni ...)
 2. Comedia del Trissino Intitvlatw I Simillimi. (Col: Stampata in Venezia per Twlomew Ianiclw da Bressa Ne l'annw MDXLVIII ...), Sig. Aii verso.

in search of vetus comedia he proceeds much further from Roman example, and departs from contemporary convention as well. His Prologuw, in propria persona continues,

La wnde ha ndw tolta una festiva invenziwne de Plautw,
vi ho mutatw i nwmi, 2t aggiuntevi perswne, 2t in
qualche parte cambiatw l'wrdine, 2t appressw
intrwduttwvi il chorw; cosi hav>ndwla al modw miw
raccwncia, voljw mandarla cwn questw habitw nuovw
in luce. Il chorw veramente vi ho aggiuntw, percio,
che ne l'antiqua cwmædia si usava di intrwdurvelw;
il quale usw ne la nuova cwm dia fu lasciatw, forse per
fuggir la spesa; ... veggiw che tal cosa a Hwraziw
nostrw nwn piacque, il quale ne la pwætica sua dice ...
che fu brutta cosa chel chorw tacesse, 2 nwn vi fwsse;
... vi ho anchwra secwndw il cwstume de lj'antiqui
græci levatw il prolwgw, 2t ho fattw narrare lw argumentw
a le prime perswnw, che in essa parlerannw ... ¹

In his attempt to raise Plautus to the dignity of the lost old comedy, whose character was inferred from Greek tragedy, Trissino refurbishes the scene with Grex or Chorus, as Mitis would have done in Every Man Out of his Humour.² The Chorus makes it lugubrious comments on the action in six dismally moralistic choric songs which divide the action into seven sections, headed simply by a list of the personages appearing in each. The unknown Greek precedents he quotes in justification of this, can hardly be reconciled with Horace, and in any case, Trissino is not so foolhardy as to pursue either out of sight of Evanthius and Donatus. The construction follows the basic rule of protasis, epitasis and

1. Ibid., Sig. Aiii recto.

2. Every Man Out of his Humour, Induction, ll 245-8.

catastrophe. As the Prologue does not appear, the retrospective revelation is handled by Simillimo Salvidio, the equivalent of Menaechmus Sosicles, in the first scene, which is actually the beginning of Plautus's second act. Thus Trissino begins his play at the same point as Shakespeare turns to the Plautine material after his animated Prologue, the trial of Egeon. To supply the local specificity that speculum consuetudinis requires, the family is from Trieste, the child lost at Lanzano, and the setting of the present events in the wicked city of Palermo. The depiction of manners necessitates the presence of three servants, representing low life. Some attempt is made to treat the marital situation of Simillimo Rubato in depth, as we may gather from the discussion between Simillimo's servant, Folchetto, and the cook, Garofilo; their master is henpecked

Perché si vede fwrestierw, st ella
 E cittadina, altra s intwleranda,
 Cwme ssser suole ogni dwtata mwlje,
 Et elji e mansuetw, e liberale,
 E scherza vwlientieri, e burla sempre;
 E di cwstumi a lei mwltw diversi. ¹

In order to arrive at a catastrophe, Trissino must improve upon his source in yet another respect. In the Menaechmi the search for the lost twin is hardly important: only the confusion holds whatever interest is aroused, and the recognition scene slips past unnoticed. Trissino, although his play is by no means contemptible, cannot redeem the events from bathos. The chorus tries in vain to convince us that genuine suffering is going on —

1. Ibid., Sig. Aviii recto.

O che partitw durw
 Veder il male, & nwn saper schivarlw, ... ¹

But the echo of the Grex of tragedy does nothing but damage to Trissino's brittle fabric. He is reactionary in his care to use the variety of metres demanded by the most exacting learned opinion, for by now the battle was being won for prose, in the name of speculum consuetudinis, prose being considered closer to the actual speech of men. The chorus has the stipulated variety of lyric metres; the main body of the verse is the usual sdrucchioli, which break down for passages of low humour, for no Italian dramatist is so scholarly that he can fail to appreciate the swash-buckling rhythms of the speech of the common folk.

Trissino cannot be called typical of the writers of classical comedies in the sixteenth century because his fanatical search for ultra-orthodoxy itself renders his work idiosyncratic. If he were to justify his practice however, he would have recourse to the same authorities as his contemporaries, and have the same success that they do, in terms of valid argumentation. They may all alike be charged with welding disparate and incompatible ideas, even if the product may be rather different. Trissino's work is interesting precisely because it shows what latitude is possible within the convention even when it is followed with learning, zeal and scruple. In what he chooses to add to Plautus, we can determine what was regarded as indispensable to classic comedy, namely, a moral justification,

1. Ibid., Sig. Dii recto.

a comic peripeteia in which peril and suffering are turned to joy and peace, and, what is entailed by that, the imitatio vitae on the Dantean level, the happily ended story of salvation, as well as a more mundane kind of imitation of life, consisting in the specification of place and social circumstance and the depiction of genre scenes of low life, which was to become the principal virtue of the commedia dell'arte.

Contemporaneously with Trissino's version, Agnolo Firenzuola published a typically Florentine treatment of Plautus's play, called I Lucidi. This reduzione, which has no Prologue and no acknowledgment of its source until the plaudite, is a graceful adaptation which fills out Plautus's scheme into a lively picture of Florentine life. It is written in prose, swift and strong. The opening speech of Sparecchio, while still recognisably indebted to the Latin original, is brisk, direct and droll in the best Bernesque tradition. The endless joke of gluttony, taken over from the original, is revived by the native tradition which has not flagged in its appreciation of it since the Morgante Maggiore. The Greek slave, Erotium, of the original, has become the Signora, the mediaeval ideal debased in Renaissance practice to the role of courtesan. Mrs. Menaechnus is a coarse little shrew named Fiammetta, who taunts her husband by reminding him that she was a poor girl who married him for his clothes and jewels, and never loved him. Lucido Tolto is thus seen as the victim of two women, and the old motif of the vilification of woman, the obverse of

mediaeval lady-worship, is unhappily substituted for a real interest in the problems of Lucido's personal life.

Come e poconi da Chioggia sono tutte le donne.¹

The society mirrored by this comedy is tough and opportunist, recognisably that of La Mandragola, but despite the constant threat of violence, there are moments of a more innocent mirth, as when the doctor who comes to cure Lucido, expounds his theory of dealing with melancholics, by putting them inside a whale. The slave, Messenio, is transformed into the loyal servant, Betto, the only one to pass judgment on the actions of the play, and then only on the grounds of commonsense and expediency. The ingenuity of the transplantation from the ancient to the modern world, can be seen in the modification of the motif of freeing the slave to the cancelling of the debt incurred by Betto when he borrowed money to marry his sister. The play ends with a licenza, superficially based upon the Plautine plaudite, but with an illuminating difference.

Spettatori non ui partite anchora; stentate
un poco di gratia, che hor ne uiene il buono.
la Comedia non e fornita, che i nostri
Lucidi si uoglion portare piu da gētil'huomini,
che i Menemi di Plauto e mostrerro che gli
hano molto migliore conscientia i giouani dal
di doggi che quelli di tempo antico; ...
quelli scortesi di que Menemi non usarono
alcuna di queste gētileze, che lasciaron la
pouera Signora in asso, senza renderle niente.²

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1. I Lucidi comedia de Messer Agnolo Firenzuola fiorentino. In Firenze M.D.LII. (Col.: Apresso I Giunti), fol. 7 recto.
 2. Ibid., fol. 43 verso.

The licenza points out the absence of a moral in the play, and implies that it will remedy the deficiency, but the suggestion of paying the courtesan is all that is offered. The amorality of the original is affirmed by such an ironic anti-moral. Its cool cynicism is by no means diminished by Firenzuola's last words,

Io ui ricordo che son fanciugli.¹

The only interpretation of such an observation is that the actors of this piece were children, and that the *Menaechmi*, for all its sophisticated Machiavellian dress, and the insolence of its mock-moral has not broken its connection with the school-room. The general misogyny which pervades the play might be compared with that of John Lyly, another dramatist of the school-room.

Clearly neither of the plays I have discussed is at all like The Comedy of Errors in anything but the most superficial aspects of the action. In search of the Italian Plautine kind to which Shakespeare's play may belong, we take one step further away from the Latin source, to La Moglie, by Cecchi, contemporary of Trissino and Firenzuola. In his Terentian prologue Cecchi trumpets his indebtedness to Plautus, advertising it by affecting to apologise for it.

1. Ibid.

... Uoi deuete sapere che questa e la Citta di Firenze: qual parte di quella Citta questa sia uoi la deuete conoscere benissimo. In questa casa habita un certo giouane che si crede esser Sanese, benche inuero egli e Fiorentino, ilquale fu compro a Raugia com'udirete. Questo ui sara oggi con le sue molte sciagure, e con quelle d'un suo fratello molto a lui simigliante cagione di merauiglia e di riso. Ho ueduto uno tra uoi, che ha ghighiato, e detto guarti Plauto, che sara? hor oltre e uisi confessa che i duoi Menegmi di Plauto sono diuentati duoi Alfonsi nostri. ¹

At the same time as he is claiming to present a recognisable picture of his own society, he called attention to his classical connections, and flatters the learning, and perhaps the taste, of his audience. By acknowledging the simple Plautine play he may intend to make the complexity of his own work an occasion for admiration. In fact he has interwoven with the Plautine material the main plot of the *Andria*, which is if anything rather more easily detected, although unacknowledged. In the verse prologue to *La Dote* he distinguishes himself from those who steal "non gli argomenti, ma le commedie intere":² like Terence he prefers to be charged with taking liberties with his source, rather than uninspired plagiarism. As Terence often implies a favourable comparison of himself with Plautus, Cecchi also invites the comparison, and perhaps further with dramatists

1. *La Moglie comedia* di Giovanmaria Cechi fiorentino. In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari e fratelli. M D L, fol. 3 recto.

2. *La Dote Comedia* di Giovanmaria Cechi fiorentino In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari. M D L, fol. 3 recto.

like Firenzuola, who content themselves with the simple structure of the Plautine play, and do not use it as a basis for a fantastically complicated edifice of their own devising. The apologetic tone may not be entirely spurious, for it may be that out of the schoolroom Plautus was not invariably greeted with cries of joy: in the learned theatre, the *Menaechmi* were by now a dismally familiar spectacle.

In or out of the schoolroom, the misogynist ethic still prevents the development of any real interest in the emotions and relationships of the twins. Donne diavole and there's an end, even though we have a super-imposed love affair. The beloved, in accordance with the most rigid classical canons, never appears on the stage. Donna Margherita, as a disappointed wife bellicose to the point of incredulity, makes one speaking appearance. Cecchi changes the intercolonial setting that Plautus inherited from his Greek original to the interurban setting of his native Tuscany. Although the search of brother for brother is limited to the distance between Florence and Siena, he still explains their initial separation by a ship-wreck, as Shakespeare does. Like Shakespeare, Cecchi reverses the order of mistaking in his original to the false-true-false pattern noted by T. W. Baldwin.¹ Like *Antipholus of Ephesus*, Alfonso is imprisoned in his own house. In order to arrive at a more satisfactory catastrophe, Cecchi has their father discovered by their

1. T. W. Baldwin, Shakespeare's Five-Act Comedy (Urbana, 1949), p. 623.

uncle

who comes seeking his protege, Alfonso's brother, Ricciardo, detto Alfonso.

The addition to this plot of the main action of the Andria, involving a whole new set of characters, with only the uncle in common, is to be justified by the Terentian precedent, but Terence never attempts to combine two plots of such complexity. The taste for symmetrical complexity is essential to Renaissance ethics, despite the fact that it is the product of an older and less informed classicism. In Italy especially the complication of the action becomes an aesthetic end in itself.

Shakespeare doubles the action in his version of the Menaechmi but the result is genuine complexity and not only the efflorescence of detail, for his two plots are inextricably related mechanically and thematically.

Cecchi is unable to conduct his intricacy on the level of action, for the doubling of the action does no more than involve us in an interminable series of explanations. The two plots meet only in the recognition scene, and then in no specifically dramatic way. The burden of explaining must be totally borne by the actors, for Cecchi does not even allow himself the convenience of a Prologue. No complication of the action takes place: the one motif which might lead to a dramatic confrontation, the masquerade of Nibbio, never gets beyond the first appearance of the disguised servant.

Even as a finely wrought comedy of intrigue then La Moglie leaves much to be desired. As a picture of Florentine life and manners it compares badly with Firenzuola, for the classical elements are ill-digested, and the atmosphere of the cinquecento city state is simply not there. The didactic duty is performed by lumpish sententiae about the desperate

proclivity of children to deceive their parents, or deceit leading to further confusion, which have lost commonsense and conviction by their willy-nilly transplantation from Terence, and the Terentian commentators. The significance of the situations is totally unexplored. The characters worry rather than suffer, and their release is so mechanically managed that there is never a breath of joy. Any vitality that the piece can be said to have is supplied by the antics of the servi, and their survival in such a dreary work indicates the gradual tendency of the Italian comedy towards the eclipse of the dramatist and the sovereignty of the professional entertainer.

La Moglie cannot then be likened to The Comedy of Errors in any but the most inconsequential terms, but it has never been accounted a great, or even a good play, and justice can hardly be said to be done for the English or Italian tradition by the search for a relationship with material of this kind. The greatest of the Italian plays based upon the Menaechmi is La Calandra of Bernardo Dovizi, better known by his Cardinal's name, Bibbiena, for he was raised to the red hat for this very play. The Prologue usually affixed to the play in sixteenth century editions is attributed to no less^{er} than Castiglione, who argues coyly about the author's debt to Plautus:

De quali se sia chi dica, lo autore essere gran ladro di Plauto, lasciamo stare, che a Plauto staria molto bene l'essere rubbato, tenere il moccichone le cose sua senza una chiaue, e senza una custodia al mondo Ma lo Autore giura alla croce di Dio, che non gli ha furato questo (facendo un scoppio con le dita)

& vuole stare a paragone. Et che cio sia vero dice
che se si cerchi quanto ha Plauto, & troverassi che
niente gli manca di quello che hauer suole. Et, se
cosi e, a Plauto non e suto rubbato nulla del suo.
Pero, non sia chi per ladro imputi lo autore. ¹

This is nothing but a trifle apparently, based upon a predictable play on words. Castiglione assumes that the audience will recognise Bibbiena's specific debt to Plautus, although it is hardly more than a case of physical similarity as the turning point of the plot and they could certainly be pardoned for missing it. In this case the debt to Plautus is little more than a convention, as if many knew that Plautus wrote the first play of mistaken identity involving twins, and all others were to be ultimately attributed to him. On the other hand, Castiglione may by such a presupposition intend to imply mock respectability and ironic contrast. Bibbiena's Prologue is the recounting of a dream wherein he had Angelica's ring which enabled him to visit the houses of married folk in his town and see how they lived. In all cases he finds one partner who suffers and is put upon by the other. After a series of depressing depictions he awakens with the chamber pot in his hand; he turns to the ladies in the audience, among whom at one time or another would have been almost all the cultivated ladies of contemporary Italian society, of every court in the land, including the Pope's, and advises them:

1. Comedia di Bernardo Divitio da Bibbiena intitolata Calandra (Col: Stampata in Roma nell'anno M.D.XXIII, fol. II verso.

Di grazia, nobilissime donne, se pensate di far
 cose a lui e a chi l'ha a recitare, mostratevi loro
 (i. e. to their gallants) piu del solito favorevole e
 benigne, accio che la commedia quel manco gl'infastidisca.
 Che dite? Faretelo? Non bisogna storcere il viso:
 chi di voi non vuol far questo, o li paressi stare a
 disagio, se ne puo uscire a suo posta, che l'uscio e
 aperto. ¹

Shakespeare could never speak so impudently or so intimately,
 nor would he wish to address the small, fashionable, extraordinarily
 worldly coterie that would enjoy being spoken to in this way. The easy
 morality which Bibbiena's Prologue implies as a point of contact with
 his audience would never have been acknowledged even if it had existed,
 for the English dramatist's attitude to the vices of his audience is
 significantly different:

An Enterlude may make you laugh your fill,
 Italian toyes are full of pleasaunt sporte:
 Playne speache to vse, if wantone be your wyll, ²
 You may be gone, wyde open stands the porte ...

Gascoigne asks those intent upon diversion and amorous toys to
 leave, where Bibbiena wants only them to stay. The debased courtliness
 upon which Bibbiena's attitude is based is even more foreign to
 Posidippus' primitive world. In invention too Plautus has been left far
 behind. The two orphaned children of Demetrio of Modena were
 separated when the city was taken by the Turks. Licio, a boy, was saved

1. Printed in Classici del humorismo No. 26, Le Commedie Giocose
 de '500, p. 150.

2. The Glasse of Gouvernement, op. cit., Sig. Aiii verso, Prologue
 II. 9. 12.

with his servant Fessenio, whose name indicates how knowledge of the Latin source may be assumed. His sister, Santilla, escaped with the help of her nurse and Fannio, who have dressed her as a boy for her greater protection. Lidio is in love with the calandra of the title, the lusty and imprudent Fulvia, whom he visits disguised as his lost sister, thus attracting the concupiscent attentions of her senile husband, Calandro, whose name is evidence of the extent to which the novella has inspired the old learned form. Lidio uses his sister's identity without scruple, and only ever thinks of setting out to look for her as a ruse to tease Fulvia into more extravagant demonstrations of passion. Santilla arrives in Rome in her boy's disguise, in the train of a Florentine merchant who has adopted her, and now wishes to marry her to his daughter, Virginia.

The raw materials of the situation, a brother and sister, transvestites, and mutually cuckolded couple, are simple enough, but Bibbiena builds of them an intricate edifice of mistaking, with a frieze of brawling, bawdy servants, in five acts, fifty-nine scenes in all. The emphasis is all on movement, change, rough and tumble. The tendency is for the scenes to grow shorter and more numerous (La Talanta has eighty odd); it is easy to see how the new developments even in literary comedy will soon leave the dramatist without a function, except to plot exits and entrances, and approximate business. Bibbiena still has some measure of control and exploits every possibility of the situation that he has invented (despite red-herring references to Plautus). Fulvia, despairing at Lidio's sham coldness, instructs a charlatan to bring him to her in any form:

this results in her being visited by Santilla in her woman's weeds, and Fulvia's discovery, related in detail, that she is indeed a woman. This is put down to enchantment, and Ruffo, the charlatan who knows that he is incapable of any enchantment is fooled by the explanation that Lidio is a hermaphrodite, which he renders with representative humour as a merdafiorito. Meanwhile, of course, Calandro is attempting to make love to Lidio. In an amazingly tasteless scene, unredeemed by Santilla's subsequent monologue about how distressing it is, she is persuaded to go again to the raging Fulvia, and conduct the business as far as she can, calling in her manservant under cover of darkness at the crucial moment. Her motives are insubstantial, being principally fear that she will have to present herself as husband to Virginia, if she does not keep some safe cover. Before this plan can be carried into effect, brother and sister confront each other, fairly offhandedly because Lidio is concentrating on getting to his paramour. The last imaginative possibility is included when Lidio is discovered in bed with Fulvia and Santilla must take his place to save the life and honour of both, which she does, and everyone lives happily ever after.

The play satisfies only a very few of the requirements of the old commedia erudita: the unities are scrupulously observed; the staging required is clearly that of the three house doors; the characters are chosen from the middle walks of life, but they have very little social context at all. In its lack of concern for its personages it hangs close to the paucity of Plautus's little play. Santilla and Lidio are playing a

dangerous game, but they have no personality and no tender feelings, and so are hardly capable of reacting to their own peril or their own guilt. We are never meant to be concerned for them or about them, and so the play has no genuine protasis, epitasis and catastrophe, no movement from tribulation to joy. For this reason the play cannot partake of the element which, according to Coghill, distinguishes mediaeval comedy from renaissance comedy, the Dantesque metaphor of the dissolving of the travailed flesh and the journey into joy and understanding, but for this reason also it must be considered an imperfect example of learned comedy. It is an unmistakeably renaissance invention, but it is no less unmistakeably an un-classical one. The action is a beautifully fashioned symmetrical frame upon which is hung a tissue of fescennine possibilities. The pseudo-Ciceronian canon of imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis can in no way be applied. Bibbiena has defied the learned tradition, and one must agree with Castiglione's Prologue, more apt considered in retrospect that Bibbiena has not stolen from Plautus anything that he is poorer without.

Obviously we are now less than ever likely to find the precedent for The Comedy of Errors in this genre. This treatment of the Menaechmi theme is as far removed from Shakespeare's as it is from learned comedy. Departing from a common stock, the Plautine-Terentian canon with its accreted body of theory, the English and Italian forms pursued widely divergent paths: the Italian form became less and less literary, less and less verbal, until the playwright could be replaced by the stage manager.