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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.

(spaced as you think best)
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 renaissance scholarship underlies the thesis, 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 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, and 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 and 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 a clearer picture emerges 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 title page, 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 order of precedence, 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, not does it exploit the precedence claimed. This
It's not clear if this is an excerpt from a letter or a note related to a study or research project. The text is fragmented and lacks clear structure, making it difficult to extract meaningful information. It appears to discuss some form of analysis or planning, possibly related to a project or experiment. However, due to the nature of the text, it's challenging to determine the exact context or subject matter.
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
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 tough
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 Biblioteque 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 air with the clanger of the typewriter, and the meals she forcibly administered in extremis when I had obviously 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; certain kinds of experimental drama no longer imply an adverse criticism, but simply a breaking away from traditional forms in order to establish a new form 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-à-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 muddied 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 corrida,
everything but the public execution, which, with a sudden affection 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 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.

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 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

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.
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 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 Menæchmi 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 officially 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 comedias 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 Montemeyer'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 Fedele, calling it Victoria, 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 its English version, The Buggbeard, 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 louse, cosenedge, flatterie, bawdrie, sly conuainche of whordome. The persons, cooises, queanes, knaues, baudes, parasites, courtezannes, lecherouse olde men, amorouse yong men,

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.

1. Plays Confuted in Five Actions, Proving that they are not to be suffer'd in a Christian common weale,...By Steph. Gosson, Stud.Oxon.... London Imprinted forr Thomas Gosson... (1582.), Sig. C5 recto cf. Sig.D5 verso.
Our Players are not as the players beyond sea,
a sort of squifting baudie Comedians, that haue
whores and common Curtizens to play womens partes,
and forbear no immodest speech or vnchast
action that may procure laughter; but our Scene
is more statelye 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.

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
advised deuises of auncient Poets, discarded (sic)
with the trufels of yong vnaduised, and rashe
wrtyters, hath brought this commendable exercise
in mislike. For at this daye the Italian is so
lasciuious in his comedies, that honest hearers
are greued at his actions: the Frenchman and
Spaniards folowes the Italians humor:

In fact the amorality of Italianate comedy is
rather a result of a more accurate understanding of the
classics, but Whetstone remaining 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 comedia.
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

1. The Works of Thomas Nashe Edited from the original Texts
by R.H.McKerrow. Reprinted from the original edition with
corrections and supplementary notes. Edited by F.P.Wilson.
p.215, Pierce Peniless his Supplication to the Diuell(1592),
Sig. #4 recto.

2. The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and
Cassandra:...The worke of Whetstone Gent.... (Col.
Imprinted at London By Richard Thones,...1578) Sig.Aii verso.
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 his denigration of Homer. 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 it 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 Towne
by Tarlton and the rest of his fellowes, her
Maiesties servants... the people began exceedingly

to laugh, when Tarlton first peeped out his head.
Whereat the Justice, not a little mover, and
seeing with his backes and nods hee could not
make them cease, he went with his staffe, and
beat them roundly, mercifullly on the bare pates,
in that they, being but Farmers & poore countrey
Menes, would presume to laugh at the Queenes
men, and make no more account of her cloath, in
his presence.

1. Achilles Shield. Translated as the other seven Books of Homer out of his eighteenth Booke of Iliades. By George Chapman. Kent. London Imprinted by John Wildet... 1598

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 common 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.

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 Counterfesauence and vnhurtfull Sport, Delight and Laughter deckt in seemly sort. All these, and all that els the Comick Stage With seasoned wit abd goodly pleasance graced, By which mans 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, And doth the Learnds taske vpon him take.²


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 & divine kind of Philosophy, en-
wrapped in blinde Fables and darke stories, wherein
the principles of more excellent Arts and morrall
precepts... are contained:...

But grant the matter to be fabulous, is it there-
fore friuolous? Is there not vnder Fables, even
as vnder the shaddowe of greene and florishing
leaves, most pleasant fruite hidden in secrete,
and a further meaning closely comprised?

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.

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

1. The Anatomic of Absurditie (1599), sig. C1 recto. McKerrow,
Absurditie, sig. C1 recto.
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 pitifull noise",

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

and yet it is called a "moral and pitifull 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 livest, the more foole thou art calls it a "very merry a. pithie comedie" although its flimsy morality types are created only to be destroyed. 2

The damnation of the protagonist of Though is as good as a feast does not apparently provide cause to call it anything but a comedy. 3

Common Conditions 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. 4

The title of The Conflict of Conscience is almost absurd in its paradoxicality--
An excellent new Commedie Intituled: The Conflict of Conscience, containing The most lamentable Hystorie of the desperation of Francis Spera. 5

2. See titlepage of edition of 1569 printed by N. How for R. Homes.
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 grieved." 1

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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. 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 Govenement, that it is a "tragicall Comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices" 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 homiletic sobriety, as it is in Lewis Wager’s Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene (1566). 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.

1.  The Glasse of Govenement.... Done by George Gascoigne Esquier. 1575. .... Imprinted at London by C. Barker. 4° (Sig. Aii recto)
2.  Reprinted as No 1 of Series II of the Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago, ed. F. Carpenter (1904)
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 like Apius 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 tragicalmedia 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

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1. The titlepage and running title of Apius and Virginia (vide Malone Soc.Reprint of the edition of 1575, 1911) call it a tragical comedy, although it ends with the death of Apius 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.)

and the ending is happy. 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 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*, with its odd blend of tear-jerking and moralism, and *The Old Wives Tale*. When the plot bears the slightest resemblance to historical event, we have the comical history, which is the description favoured by Greene. The picture is not complete without a gesture towards the closet comedy, like Warner's acting version of the *Menæchmi*, or Gager's *Rialles* 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", *Endimion* "neither Comedie,

\[ \text{sources:} \]

1. The inapplicability of the title of The Tragedy of Frewyl may also be traced to the source play by Francesco Bessio da Basso.

2. A pleasant conceited Comedie wherein is shew'd how a man may choose a good wife from a bad: As it hath beene sundrie times acted by the Stage of Worcesters Servants. London printed for Mathew Lawre...1602. t.p.

3. The Old Wives Tales. A pleasant conceited Comedie... Written by G.P. Printed at London by John Dantar... 1595. t.p.

4. 1599 quartos of Orlando Furioso.

and the ending is happy. 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 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, with its odd blend of tear-jerking and moralism, and The Old Wives Tale. When the plot bears the slightest resemblance to historical event, we have the comical history, which is the description favoured by Greene. 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," Endimion "neither Comedie,"

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1. The inapplicability of the title of The Tragedy of Frewyl may also be traced to the source play by Francesco Begri da Bassano.


4. See title-pages of 1599 quarto of Alphonsus, of 1594 quarto of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, and of the 1594 and 1599 quartos of Orlando Furioso.


The Epilogue, 18.
nor Tragedie, nor storie nor anie thing" and Midas "a Nashe would not even allow Summer's Last Will and Testament to be a play, which it certainly is. The se 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, and he was equal to its promise. He did not abandon it for the smooth-trodden path of Italian formula.

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, "mans life in his likest image". For the christian humanists the human career was protasis, epitasis and catastrophhe, 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 intent was at this time to move inward delight, not outward lightness, and to breed (if it might be) soft smiling, not loud laughter: knowing it to be as great pleasure to hear counsel mixed with wit, as to the foolish to have sport mingled with rudeness.

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 ghastliness of divine retributive justice in the old plays, for it is born of gratification and agreement, not inexplicable dumb-shows 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 brought by the "base kind of poetrie which endeth troublesome matters merrilie".

What Creature is in health, eyther yong or olde, But som mirth with modestie will be glad to vs As we in thys Enterlude shall now vnfolde, Wherin all scurilitie we ytterly refuse, Avoiding such mirth wherin is abuse:


2. From the definition of comedy given in The Nomenclator or Remembrancer of Adrianus Iunius Physician... now in English by John Higgins... Imprinted at London for Ralph Newberie and Henrie Denham. 1585, p. 15.
Knowing nothing more comédable for a mas recreation
Than Mirth which is used in an honest fashion:
For Mirth prolongeth lyfe, and causeth health.
Mirth recreates our spirits and voydeth pensiuenesse,
Mirth increaseth amitie, not hindring our wealth;
Mirth is to be vsed both of more and lesse,
Being mixed with vertue in decent comelynesse.
Which mirth we intend to vs, avoideyng all blame. 1

This is the mirth of the plays defended by Lodge,
in which "the Poet on stage presenteth you a picture of
his owne drawing, wherein you may behold the whole life of
man". 2 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
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, Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy, Lurewell and
Captain Standard, 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

2. Gosson, Plays Confuted (loc.cit.) characterising the
staple of Lodge's argument, Sig.D1 recto.
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 audiences 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 well 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' tyume, whan Papistrie, as a standyng poole, couered and overflowed all England, fewe bookes were read in our tong, sauyng 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 poynetes, in open mans slaughter, and bold bawdry: In which booke those be counted the noblest Knightes that do kill most men without any quarell, and commit foulest aduoulteres, by sutlest shiftes: ad Sir Launcelote.

1. Love's Labour's Lost, V,ii.864-5
with the wife of King Arthure his master: Syr Tristram with the wife of Kyng Marke his uncle: Syr Lamerocke with the wife of King Lote, that was his own aunt.

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 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 semi-literate clergy, relying for its appeal on the sheerest sensationalism. Its sexual content, contained in the battles of incredibly seductive virgins to resist resourceful onslaughts upon their virtue, is by all accounts high, but not one picture of godly matrimony is presented. Wives become saints, like Margery Kempe, only when 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.

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 Cuair 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

1. The Scholemaster... By Roger Ascham. An. 1570. At London. Printed by John Daye... £1l.27 verso.
2. Caxton printed the first issue of his own version in 1483 and Wynkyn de Worde the eight and last in 1527.
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.

The woman is made for the man to be his wife; so that according to the Hebrew proverb, Cui non est uxor, non est vir; A man without a wife is not a man.

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 Amorett, and more grotesquely in Hablington'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 parents at this day, namely such as be of the nobility," who "doth handel their children, as the Grasier doth his oxen and shepe." 3 For the lower classes there were none of

1. Vitis Palatina. A Sermon appointed to be preached at Whitehall upon the Tuesday after the marriage of the Ladie Elizabeth her Grace. By the B.of London.London, printed for John 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 Worches of Thomas Becon... 1564... Imprinted at London by John Daye, Vol.I, fol. excusum verso. cf. the golden boke of christen matrimony,... newly set forth in English by Theodore Basille, (Col. London...by John Nayler for John Gough...Anno Dni 1542) Sig.Biv recto, and Holsome and Catholyke doctryne concerning the seaven sacramentes... by... Thomas bishop of Lincolne, Anno 1558... Excusum Londini in aedibus Roberti Caly,... fol. Cxxx verso.
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, is like that of Erastus: 

When did Perseda pastime in the streetes,
But her Erastus over-ede her sportes?
When didst thou, with thy sampler in the Sunne
Sit sowing with thy faces, but I was by:
When didst thou goe to Church on hollidaies,
But I haue waited on thee too and fre.

Kyd has conceived their perfect love 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 Commendation or Campion’s praise of Joan who...

There are some points of resemblance between Joan and Katharine, the burgher's daughter, who is brown and...
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, is like that of Erastus:

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But her Erastus over-estemed her sport?
When didst thou, with thy sampler in the Sunne
Sit sowing with thy feres, but I was by...
When didst thou go to Church on hollidays,
But I have waited on thee too and fro...

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

...can call by name her Cowes,
And deck her windows with greene boughs.
She can wreathes and Tutties make,
And deck with plumbs a Bridal cake...

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

There are some points of resemblance between Joan and Katharine, the burgher's daughter, who is brown and

2. Soliman and Perseda, I.i, II.6-9,15-16.
4. Ibid. pp.156-161.
and straight as a hazel-twig, 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 Flowman's beloved—

Nay by cock body I use no such lyfe
For I am content with blak-maude my wyfe
Trew ye y' I care for these nise proude prímys
These paityd popagays that hold vp thei ther chynn

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. C.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,

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. 2

1. O. Gentylnes & Nobylyte. A dyaloge between the Marchaut the Knight & the Flowman... (Malone Society Reprint, ed. A.C. Partridge and F.P. Wilson, 1950)

If you have already read the above text, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the main topic of the text?
2. What are the key points discussed in the text?
3. How does the text support its main arguments?

If you have not read the above text, you should read it now and then answer the questions above.
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 were under question. The struggle of the children against their parents is an archetypal feature of 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. 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 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 exorcised 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" existed in Shakespeare's

1. The Merry Wives of Windsor, V.V. 11.245-255.
The content of the image is not legible or contains no text that can be discerned.
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, but 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:

Never reckoned they wedlock anye godly estate of lyuing, though it were an onlye ordre instytuted of god in ye begynnig, yea, for his prestes also. Gomely they haue dyswaden bothe men and womes frō it, as frō a most pernicious eyyl, or frō a mischefe of all mischeifes, calling it folishnes, fylthynes, beastlines, a walking in darkenes, a mayntenance of lechery, a fulfylling of fleshly desyres, a groūd of al vyce, an entraūce of death, a corruptinge of maydēhode, a lake of mysery, a claye pyt of vnclenes, a thraldō of Egipt, a net of 6athâ, a snare of ye ṣathâ, a pode of perdiciō... 1

Thomas Becon, in addressing his Boke of Matrimony to King Edward, explained at length that it was necessary to write the -raise of marriage because for many years it had been "greatly obscured and hyndred, yea, & almost vtterly

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1. The first two partes of the Acts or vnchast examples of the English votaries, gathered out of their owne legenades and Chronicles 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 Preâstes gathered by Philip Melanchthon... translated out of Latine into Englisse by Lewes beuchame the yeare of the lorde. M.CCCC.xlj, Sig.A6 recto.
defaced, thro' ye wicked doctrine of certain most wicked and most filthy hypocrites" who are blamed with having taught that matrimony was a "kind of life, base, vnperfecte, fleshly, troublesome, paynefull, vnquiet, carefull, vnrestfull, stuffed full of all sorowe, calamitie, misery, wretchednes, discorde, strife, contention, debate and what not?"1 (There is of course evidence of the truth of Becon's contention in tracts like Hali Maidenhad 2 or The Quinze Jomes de Mariage3 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 matrymony be had in more reuerence than yt is, and that men for every light cause inuentyd cast not of theyr wyues and lyue in saucrty and fornycaciö." 4

The married clerics arraigned under Mary were an articulate lot, and their dying words were immortalised in the Acts and Monuments. 5

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3. This misogynist tract must have been known to the Elizabethans for it forms the basis of Dekker's Bachelor's Banquet.
4. A Lytle reatise composyd by Johan Stadysshe... against the ptestation of Robert Barnes at the tyme of his death. (See note 1.) Sig. G. ii verso. In ed. R. Redmane 1540, Sig. F. iii verso.
5. Acts and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes... Gathered and collected... by John Foxe... Imprinted at London by John Daye... 1563, p. 1054.
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:

Let other set forth single living with so many praises... yet will I for evermore commend the state of honourable wedlocke, which refuseth no kynde of payne and trouble so that it may brynge any profite at all to the publique weal of Christendome... that state of living which according 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 fearfull, nothing fayne, all things are done faithfully, without doubting, truely, without doubling, willingly without constraint, joyfully, without complaint: yea there is such 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—

O sweete conjoyning of loyall hearts, O dulcet union of our soules together, O most lonely


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 greevous 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 conceived." 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:

The night is passed, & joyfull day appeareth most cleare on every side,
With pleasant musick we therefore salute you, good morrow Mistris Bride:
Brom sleepe and slumber now wake you out of hand
Your bridegroome stayeth at home:
Whose fancy favour, & affection still doth stand fixed on thee alone:

1. Of mariage and Wiuing. An excellent, pleasant, and Philosophical Controversie, betweene the two famous Tassi now liuing, the one Hercules the Philosopher, the other Torquato the Poet. Done into English, by R(obert) T(oft) Gentleman. London Printed by Thomas Creede, 1599. Sig.Kiii recto.

2. The Age of English Poesie. Contributed 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.
Dresse you in your best array,
This must be your wedding day,
God almighty send you happy joy:
In health and wealth to keep you still!
And if it be his blessed will,
God keep you safe from sorrow and annoy.

This day is honour now brought unto thy bosom
And comfort to thy heart:
For God hath sent you a friend for to defend you
From sorrow, care and smart:
In health & sickness 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 joy:
In health and wealth to keep you still,
And if it be your blessed will,
God keep you safe from sorrow and annoy.

There is no treasure the which may be compared
Unto a faithfull friend,
Gold soome decayeth and worldly consumeth,
And wasteth in the winde,
But love, once planted in a perfect & pure mind,
Indureth weale and woe:
The frowmes of fortune come they never so unkinde
Cannot the same overthrowe.
A bit of bread is better cheare,
Where love and friendship doth appeare,
Then dainty dishes stuffed full of strife:
For where the heart is clouded with care,
Sower is the sweetest fare:
And death far better than so bad a life.

Sweet Bridth then may you full well contented stay you,
And in your heart rejoyce:
Sith God was guider both of your heart & fancy
And maker of your choice.
And he that prefered you to this happy state
Will not behold you decay,
Nor see you lack relief 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 bear you company. Your friends and parents do give their due attendance together courtously: The house is dress and garnaish for your sake, with flowers gallant and green. A solemn 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, Unto the church to make an end: and God make thee a joyfull 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 Teratoc is not. Spenser's bride, like the heroine of the Goodmorrow, is married in the midst of her community, with her cortège of maidens and brideknights. To the elements of the popular public celebration, Spenser adds the classical chorus to Hymen, and the biblical echoes of the only other Epithalamium sung by the 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 wilderesses of Tasso and Sannazaro, in the third eclogues of the Arcadia.

1. British Museum Roxburghe i,15.
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 decayed, 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 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.

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".
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 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.
CHAPTER ONE:

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Hot be the flames which Boyle in friendly minde,
Cruell the care and dreadfull id the doome:
Slipper the knot which tract of time vntwynds,
Hateful 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 Flowers.)
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 unmitigated 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 of woman. The conflict is not expressed simply in terms of 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 "Friendship" are culled from classical antiquity, and neither Amis and Amile nor any of their mediaeval counterparts appear. 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 inclinations of friendship, vegetable and minerals, as the Leadstone hath to yron, the Emerald hath to riches and favours, 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 soever it is, the like doth the roote Aproxes.

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, & never doth the female bring forth fruit without the male.

Vines love the Elme tree & the Oliue, the Mirtle likewise loueth the Oliue & the Fig-tree; and if the Almonde tree grove alone, it will prowe vnfruitfull.³

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² Wits Theater of the little World... Printed by I.R. for N.L... 1599, fol. 66ff.
³ Ibid., fol. 69 recto.
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 Love" seems to duplicate much of the matter of the section on 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. There 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.

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, he may be man or woman.

The great 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 friend may be called upon to perform that is within the bounds of virtue for a friend, 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 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 pearle 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". We may regard Silvia, the "sweeter friend" as a female version of man.
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 Goodmorrow* 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 Hacaton, "If thou wilt be beloved, love." He will be the greatest wealth that she will ever own: in Surrey's voluminous rendering of the Senecan precept:

> Of all the heavenly gifts, that mortall men commend, What trusty treasure in the world can counteruail a friend? Our helth is soon decayd: goodes, casuall, light, and vaine: Broke haue we sene the force of powre, and honour suffer stain.

The steadfastness of friendship despite the caprices of fortune was evidence of its realness. The knot of friendship

\[
\text{equalitie so bindes,}
\]
\[
\text{That to dissolve, in vayne may fortune sue,}
\]
\[
\text{Though malice helps which al glory grudges.}
\]
\[
\text{So strong his friendshyp, as no stormy windes,}
\]
\[
\text{Haue might to moue, nor feare force to subdue...}
\]

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1. Vide supra p.27, stanzas 2 and 3.
3. *Songes and sonettes, written by the right honorable Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other. Apud Richardum Tottel...1557, fol.114 verso.*
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The notion that God sends such a friend can also be regarded as having a classical justification:

First we sale with Socrates that true friendship cannot be framed but by the helpe and grace of God, who draweth like to the love of his like. 1

All this is presupposed in the little bridesong, with its ideal of love drawn by virtue, in which carnality is controlled by chastity and sanctified by the desire for issue. There is also the biblical justification, of course: John Darke 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 brethren, loue of neighbours, and the loue of the man and his wife, when they loue the one the other... 2

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

Robert Greene's most popular novel, Ciceronis Amor. Tullies Loue, went through nine editions after its appearance in 1589. Cicero writes his firend 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, father's friend, 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:


2. The boke of wisdome otherwise called the Flower of Vertue... Translated fyrst out of Italian into French, and out of French into English by Iohn Darke(1565). Sig.Diii recto.
Blame mee not (Terentia) if I pleade for Lentulus, seeing his sorrow, and entering into mine owne promise. Than friendship, is no sweeter ieweal, then howe can I but labour ere I loose so rich a prize? But seeing Terentia hath vouchsafed of so meane a man as Tully, whose honours only hangs in his studies: love being the strictest league of amitie, and no such friendship as is marriage: I vowe by the Romane Gods, euer to be a dutifull seruaunt vnto Terentia.

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.

The text on this page is not legible and cannot be transcribed accurately.
Cicero regarded friendship as the foundation of the commonwealth, but Greene could defend his story on the same grounds for according to Aristotle the family is the basis of all social structure, and the reciprocal, tried affection that holds it together altogether round the same circle of friendship.

In his own version of the Titus and Gisippus story, Philomela 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 hence, Philippo, thou hast lost more in losing Lutesio, than in forsaking mee, for thou mayest have many honest wives, but never so faith apprehensive a friend: Therefore, though I bee divorced, bee thou and bee reconciled, lest at last the horror of thy conscience draw thee into despaire and paine thee with too late repentance.

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 the end of his strength when he arrives at Palermo, where her son, Infortunatus, has been born, and takes refuge in a wave 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". 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 private 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 putmoded: it survived, for example in the scenarii of the commedia dell'arte, but as a complication of the action, rather than a dramatic conflict. Rather I should claim that there is no single, simple, coherent Elizabethan attitude to friendship. Instead, friendship, like other phenomena of human behaviour and potentiality, was studied from a variety of viewpoints, moral, historical

1. Ibid., Sig. I4 recto.
2. Cf. L'amico infedele of Alessandro Cenzio (Macerata, 1617) and Panciatichi's L'Amicizia Costante (Fiorenza, 1600).
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 Shepheardes 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 love (of Colin Cloute and Hobbinol) is muche to be allowd and liked of, specially so meant, as Socrates used it: who sayth, that in deed he loved Alcybiades extremely, yet not Alcybiades person, but hys soule, which is Alcybiades owne selfe. And so is paeder-astice much to be praefерed before gynesteristie, that is the loute 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 Love,

Ther be four special louses in this worlde. The one is betwene ij good felawes; The tother betwene mother and chylde; The thyrde betwene body and soule; And the fourth betwene man and wyfe. 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.

Let not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre breake out, that may her sacred peace molest:
One light glance of sensuall desyre Attempt to work her gentle mindes vnrest.
But pure affections bred in spotlesse brest,
And modest thoughts breathd from wel tempred sprites goe visit her in her chast bower of rest,
Accompanyd with angelick delightes. 3

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.

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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. 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 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. Almost all of the poetry in The Paradyse of daintie Deuises, written by the Earl of Oxford, Lord Vaux, W. Huns, Jasper Heywood, Francis Kinwelmersh, Saint Barnard, D. Sand, M. Yloop and Barnab'e 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

1. E.g. The Triall of True Friendship; or perfit mirror, whereby to discerne a trustie friend from a flattering Parasite...Sothly to say; Trie ere you trust; Beleeue no man rashly...By M.B. Imprinted at London by Valentine Simmes...1598; passim.
3. The Paradyse of daintie Deuises...Deuised and written for the most part, by M.Edwards...Imprinted at London, by Henry Bizele...1580, Vol.1 recto.
Saint Barnard, whose motto is *My lucke is losse*, goes so far as to give instructions for the least pain-
ful loving and leaving of fickle friends.¹ Thomas Howell
and his friends collaborated on the volume, *H. his Deuises*,
which is almost entirely concerned with the same stoic
slogans.² 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. ³ 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. ³

¹. Ibid., Vol.2 recto.
². H. his Deuises, for his owne examples, and his friends pleaure (4 Jackson: 1581.)
³. The pityfull Historie of two louing Italians...translated out of Italian into Englishe meter by John Drout...Anno. 1570, reprinted for private circulation by J.P. Collier (s.d., s.t.), Sig. A2 verso.
The welter of vindictive accident and hysterical suicide caused by the insane determination of the protagonists to prove that their friendship 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. 

If Valentine were to reject Proteus as the poets of The Paradise of daintie Deuises 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) 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" 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 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 engendered of equalnes: for where equalitie is not, friendship may not long continue. 1

Elyot quotes Jerome and Ambrose:

Amitie eyther taketh or maketh menne equall, and where inequality is, by *preemynence* of the tone, and moche *hasenesse* of the tother, there is moche more flatteryeth an (sic) frendshyppe. 2

Thus their "inueterate & auncient loue" 3 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", 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

2. The *bankette of sapience*, compiled by syr Thomas Eliot knyghte, and newly augmented with dyverse tytles & sentences. (Col: Londini in aedibus Thae Bertheleti... M.D.XXXIX), fol.3 recto.
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 seem be being absent to be present, being a sunder to be conversant, being dead to be alive. 1

In claimer to be a sharer in Valentines good fortune and in his perils, Proteus names the principal office of a friend, to partake of joys and thus double them, and of griefs, thus halving them2, for:

Friendship in good men, is a blessing & stable connexing of sundry wills, making of two persons one, in having & suffering. And therefore a friend is properly called, a second selfe, for that in both men is but one minde, & one possession. 3

This description is a commonplace, originally from Cicero, and vulgarised by Elyot, Baldwin, Harrington, Bacon, and all those who sought to define friendship. Amicus alter ipse is one of Erasmus' Apothegmes4, and John Charlton also treats it in The Casket of Jewels5. In

2. Speeding, Bacon, Vol VI (I), p. 440, "Of Friendship" (1625)
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
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4. Apophthegmes
5. The Casket of Jewels: Contayning 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 William
   Hovve, for Richarde Iohnes. 1571, Sig. H1 verso.
attempting to persuade his friend from the besotted pursuit of Julia, Valentine fulfils the function of friend as counsellor, which is the whole basis of the first book of *The Ephemerides of Phialo*, for the greatest good one friend can do another is to offer him good advice, the one gift that can never be corrupted. Moreover,

\[
\text{The fault thou sufferest in thy frinde, thou com-}
\text{mittest in thy selfe.}
\]

The arguments put forward by Valentine resemble those of Euphues'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 concomitant and delight of the scholar, the young man not yet burdened with the responsibilities of marriage and social commitments.

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

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

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1. *The Ephemerides of Phialo*, divided into three Bookes. The first, A method which he ought to follow that desireth to rebuke his friend, when he seeth him swane: without kindling his choler, or hurting himselfe... by Step(hen) Gosson, Stud. Oxon. Imprinted at London by Thomas Dawson, Anno 1579, fol. 44 verso.


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

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

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 would be all wales as one with his fryende, and partaker with him in all thynges, for louse that he oweth vnbo 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 Bodenham's Belvedere chants tunelessly, The summe of friendship is, that of two soules One should be made, in will and firme affect. 2

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 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 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

1. Larke, op.cit., Sig.Dii verso.
2. Belvedere or the Garden of the Muses...Imprinted at London by F.K. for Hugh Astley...1600, p.94.
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's them.

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

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.

¹ Elyot, *The bankette of sapience*, op.cit., Vol.3 recto.
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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' 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; it he have not a friend, he
may quit the stage. 1

Like all the disconsolate gentle[n_j 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 aboue to take the sone out of the
world, that would take frendship out of it. 4

4. The booke of frendeship of Marcus Tullie Cicero. Anno
dni 1550.(Col: Imprinted at London...in the hous of Tho.
Berthelet.) Translated by Sir John Harington, fol.32 verso.
Friendship was called by Aristotle "the chiefest good things in a city", which preserved and maintains kingdoms, without which "no house shall abide standing, no field shall be in culture". 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. 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.

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. Valentine and Silvia have plighted their troth, and Proteus has tried to rape not only his friend's beloved, but his betrothed. 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:

Friendship which hath bene, or should bee the Sun of all the world, which should give life and light to all good mindes, is now endarkened, or quite extinguished.

3. See Bacon's version of Aristotle's argument, which begins the 1625 version of "Of Friendship", Spedding, Vol.VI (I), p.437.
Friendship was called by Aristotle "the chiefest good things in a city", which preserves and maintains kingdoms, without which "no house shall abyde standing, no field shall be in culture". 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. 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. 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. Valentine and Silvia have plighted their troth, and Proteus has tried to rape not only his friend's beloved, but his betrothed. 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. Baldwin, op. cit. Sig. L irco.
6. Philotimus. The warre between Nature and Fortune... Imprinted at London by Roger Warde,....1583 p.182.
The method of determining the "true" position of a given body is
based on the fact that the intersection of two planes, each of
which is defined by a set of points, will determine a single point
that is common to both planes. In order to find the "true" position,
the following steps must be taken:

1. Establish a coordinate system for the given body.
2. Determine the coordinates of the points defining each plane.
3. Establish equations for both planes.
4. Solve the system of equations to find the common point.

This method is widely used in various fields, such as
geodesy, navigation, and computer graphics.
Ovid, abandoned by his friends, screech and howl images of fearful reversal.

that waters should give heat, and fire make cold, and every source and every river run back to his head, and flow to his wellspring, and all go astray with a contrary course, backward, preposterous, and quite against nature?

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 Fabio to Amico, when he gives his beloved up to his friend and goes off to die in the wars.

E voi Amico caro mio godetevi la tâto da me desiderata Flaminia ritendendola per cosa ben degna di voi (poi che a me parea degna di me,) & noi erauamo vn'anima in due corpi: & immaginatevi pure, che per ricompensa del riscatto, e di tanti altri servitii fattomi, habbiati hauuto da me, quel più che vi potea dare. E dite a vostra consorte che resti contenta, & che non pensi d'hauer rotta la fede, perchè, se ha hauuto voi, ha hauuto vn Leandro istesso.

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 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. In Cucchetti's L'Ami-

1. Philotimus, op. cit., p. 4.
2. Sforza degli Oddi, L'Erofilomachia (Fiorenza, 1595) pp. 135-6
3. 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 has been privily contracted to him six months before.
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. 1 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 who forgot that Silvia, who had risked her life to find him in the forest, and in resisting Proteus 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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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

1. L'Amicitia Comedia di Gio. Donato Cucchetti... In Ferrara, Appresso Vittorio Baldini... '1587, V.v.passim.
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 greasely 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 pulling 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 maids 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 Felisúena 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.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.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.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 altogether. 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.vii.27-8)

Ironically the very next scene shows us the dead Julia undertaking her soul’s pilgrimage to be
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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 had 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. 108-10)

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. Theirs 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 thnges be common. 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.i.4-5) Valentine has assumed the excessively romantic posture of the servant worshipping his lady from afar and beneath, which she makes 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 dazzled by her preeminence, 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 putlaws 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 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.110-21). 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, 183-5)

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. 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, which she is already risking life and limb to do, crying that 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

1. vide infrÉa, pp.
...
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 characterizations 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.

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.155-6). Valentine will not mitigate his praise, and insists that she has the unmixed purity of spirit of an arch-
...
angel 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 preëminence 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 uniformity of will in desiring honest things". 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.

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