THE ETHIC OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

IN SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY COMEDIES

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PREFACE

At the end of three years' study and many more thousands of words than appear in this typescript, I am aware that my self-imposed task of explaining the peculiar value of Shakespeare's first comedies in their cultural context is hardly begun. It will be clear from the bibliography, that I early resolved to go it more or less alone: that bibliography is strictly limited to works actually referred to in the thesis, and much general reading in modern renaissance scholarship underlies the thesis, unacknowledged, but nevertheless the impression that I sought to confront the source material directly, rather than to think in the cultural historians' generalisations, and to take issue with their theories, is accurate. The problem is that Shakespeare is not primarily a renaissance intellectual, but an English playwright, and although I am less likely than many other critics to find his abiding value in the sovereignty of stage and stageability in his plays, I have clung to the fundamental notion, that, notwithstanding his own prodigious intelligence, he wrote to be intelligible of men of little and limited culture, and strong convictions. So I have spent a great deal of time reading books printed in English in Shakespeare's lifetime; all books are relevant when it comes to attempting to recreate an intellectual climate, and all are potentially irrelevant. My reading was not exhaustive and it may have been haphazard, because one is so much at the mercy of capricious fate and the Elizabethan book-trade. As I went on I presupposed less and less about the circumstances of reading, for clearly
much that crowded the shelves in sixteenth century England was not read willingly by anybody. The demographic historians, in answer to my timid questionings about what I might assume about the Elizabethan household gave me the choice of examining parish registers in remote districts for an indefinite period, until the computers should enable me to infer anything at all, and minding my own litterateur's business. Dr. Righter bravely read the billions of words which streamed from my pen during this difficult period of my research, struggling through reams of ill-typed and presumptuous cultural anthropology, religious apologetics, and legal history, steadying my more riotous certainties, and perhaps she regrets more than I do that all that remains of it in this typescript is a bare page as well as a few hints in the Introductory section. All littérateurs who have confronted without a readymade methodology the problem of myth and society in the sixteenth century have come to a similar end, and the sociologists and historians become less and less interested in the problem. Now these researches serve I hope as a background to be exploited with tact, until out of our combined efforts emerges a clearer picture of ideology and reality in Shakespeare's England.

Doubtless there are many reputable critics who would maintain that the excellence and high seriousness of Shakespeare's work can be maintained without reference to a specific social commitment: without taking issue with them, for the question too often resolves into a matter of linguistics, I should point out that a playwright has more to do with the
social context than a contemplative poet, and that, if such a case can be made for Shakespeare, I should like to make it, regardless of whether it be the only or the ultimate case.

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

Among the factors which condition one's way of confronting a literary problem the most important and unassessable are the people who have taught and guided one. My deepest thanks are due to Doctor Righter, whose gentle rigour has, I hope, not been exercised in vain, and to Professor Bradbrook, whose seminars kept us embryo Renaissance scholars in touch with our subject and each other, and with her never-failing enthusiasm and her great learning. My thanks are also due to the staff of the Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian, the British Museum, the 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 with the clangour of the typewriter, and the
meals she forcibly administered when I had forgotten them, I doubt this volume would ever have materialised.
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Introductory.

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

(Nicholas Breton, Wits private Wealth)
In our time the notion of an experimental drama has acquired respectability; the term, experimental, no longer implies an adverse criticism, but simply a breaking away from traditional forms in order to find one which will say a new thing. It is understood that the experiment may be successful. In every case the judgment of the success or failure of the experiment must be made vis-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 affectation of humanity, has been taken away from us, to be unsatisfactorily replaced by films from the Nazi archives.

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

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

1. Love's Labour's Lost alone would suffice to justify this statement, for in it Shakespeare discusses a wide range of artistic problems, diction, communication, entertainment and structure, and we may add, moreover, the comments in The Two Gentlemen of Verona on acting (IV. iv.170) and the power of poetry (III. ii.67ff.) as well as the discussions in the Induction of The Taming of the Shrew of the nature of comedy, acting and the doctrine of imitation.
their total consumption or for their absorption into a system of promiscuous reworking to keep the cormorant public supplied with novelties. The first and most striking fact about these four plays is that they are very unlike each other. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is the elegant and romantic exploitation of a chivalric situation with a perverse and troubling ending. *The Comedy of Errors* is a Plautine comedy, more elaborately classical than its classical source. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a domestic comedy of the most unassuming and earthiest kind, mated with an insipid Italianate intrigue, while *Love's Labour's Lost* is Shakespeare's most original work, and unlike any other play ever written. Obviously these four plays are not four attempts to write the same play. Of all of them, only *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* contains elements which were reworked later, and those not central. Each play must have accomplished something that Shakespeare did not feel the need to try again, and that accomplishment we may see in two ways, as clearing the ground of forms and kinds that he was not to find useful, and establishing fundamental themes within his work, which are not stated again with such clarity and sweep until the last plays.

This thesis will end at the point at which it began four years ago, in a discussion of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Students were objecting that despite the play's superficial charm it was utterly conventional and basically uninteresting. A discussion of the function of the last song was enough to convince them that such a view was totally inadequate, and when challenged to identify and provide other examples of the convention of which *Love's Labour's Lost* is a part, not one example of
a genuinely comparable play was forthcoming, nor, I may now add, will it ever be. Slight traces of the Spanish Captain or the Pantaloon or of improvisation will not suffice to indicate a fruitful relationship with the commedia dell'arte, which is the antithesis of a poetic drama, and Shakespeare is always essentially the poet in the theatre. The commedia dell'arte is the entertainment offered to Caliban by Stephano and Trinculo, but Shakespeare claims the greater responsibility of Prospero. The less ephemeral commedia erudita left only the faintest of traces on Shakespeare, for The Comedy of Errors is more likely to be based upon the Menaechmi itself and modified by schoolboy knowledge of Terence. We can only rejoice that the conditions governing the development of English theatre precluded the crippling division of French comedy into the official comedy, pure, elegant and bitterly boring, innocent of vigour and moralism alike, and the robust native tradition of farce and morality, which was never allowed to pretend to respectability and only rarely to vivify the literary form. Spanish comedy resembles the English in some respects, but no significant interaction seems to have occurred. Bartolome de Torres Naharro's division of his work into 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 Montemayor's Diana, would have prevented the free intercourse necessary for the knowledge of Lope's eighteen hundred plays. The pragmatism of Lope's Arte nueva de hacer comedias en este tiempo certainly resembles Shakespeare's practical aesthetic more than anything produced by his own countrymen.

There is no lack of evidence that the Elizabethan dramatist followed a path quite deliberately differentiated from continental trends. Italian comedy, the model for most continental practice, was certainly known in England; many a playwright besides Gosson must have tossed off "a cast of Italian deuces". 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 (1580-3), but on the popular stage "Italian bawdy" did not prove successful. The comparative resistance of the English to the propaganda of the Italian pundits is yet to be fully explained, and it appears more remarkable when we remember that the most eminent French playwrights were proud to offer their cultivated audiences versions of thoroughly orthodox but totally undistinguished Italian works. Very few examples of this practice have survived in English, and there is no evidence that La Spiritata, in Jeffere's English version, The Buggbears (1563), met with more than token appreciation. As evidence that Italian comedy was known but unwanted in England, the criticisms offered by Gosson in Plays Confuted may serve, for the comedies whose groundwork
is loue, cosenedge, flatterie, bawderie, slye conueighance of whordome. The persës, cookes, 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.

Our Players are not as the players beyond sea, a sort of squirting baudie Comedians, that haue whores and common Curtizens to playe womens partes, and forbearre no immodest speech or vnchast action that may procure laughter; but our Scane is more statelye furnisht than cuer 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

1. *Plays Confuted in fliue Actions, Proving that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale, ...* By Steph. Gosson, Stud. Oxon ... London Imprinted for Thomas Gosson ... (1582), Sig. C5 recto cf. Sig. D5 verso.

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

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

* * * * * * * * * * *

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

1. The Right Excellent and Famous Historve of Promos and
Cassandra: ... The worke of George Whetstone Gent. ... (Col.
Imprinted at London By Richarde Ihones, ... 1578.), Sig.
Aii verso.
his denigration of Homer. 1 Comic theory as it existed in Elizabethan
culture is obviously inadequate to give any account of the actual
phenomenon to which it ought to have relevance. Descriptive criticism
is yet to be born; for the Aristotelians the principle exists first, and is
sui generis eternal and immutable. If its terms are irrelevant to any
work, it follows that the work must be chaotic and formless. For the
practising playwright nothing can have been more evident than that
academic orthodoxy is its own reward. Given the fact that the artist
wishes to communicate, it is inevitable that he sacrifice the approval of
the theorists for the chemistry of the theatrical situation, not considered
merely in the crude terms of the box-office. Few things, however, are
more fragile than the spontaneous receptivity of an audience. Nashe has
an amusing story of a justice who,

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

1. Achilles Shield. Translated as the other seven Bookes of Homer,
out of his eighteenth booke of Iliades, By George Chapman Gent. London
Imprinted by John Windet ... 1598, Epistle Dedicatorie, Sig.
A.3 verso.

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

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

is already imposing demands of a sophisticated kind. This is the comedy that Jonson and his followers will offer the theatre of the coterie, theatre of satire dear to an in-group which will gain pleasure from recognising its neighbour in the glass thus held up to errant nature.

The chastisement of folly is the particular vocation of the Stoic, whose arrogance and inhumanity draw Thalia's tears, for —

Fine Counterfesance and vnhurtfull Sport,
Delight and Laughter deckt in seemly sort.
All these, and all that els the Comick Stage
With seasoned wit and goodly pleasance graced,
By which 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 Contemp 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 Learned's taske vpon him take. 2

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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, enwrapped in blinde Fables and darke stories, wherein the principles of more excellent Arts and morall precepts ... are contained: ...

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

All Elizabethan literary criticism is based upon the concept of the ethical function of delight, and delight must be raised in the beholder before edification can be accomplished. If scurrilous, biting comedy is to apprise the beholder of his ownfollies, 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 industry, we are at once baffled by their curiously haphazard variety, and the evident polemic reasons for the publication of works which were not at the top of the popularity parade. Even the emergence of the kind, comedy, is strangely obscure, if the descriptions applied to the works by their publishers are anything to go by. Thomas Lupton's All for Money ends with Damnation driving Dives and Judas out before him "and they shall make a pitiefull noyse",

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

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

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2. See titlepage of quarto of 1569 printed by N. How for R. Ihones.

3. See titlepage of quarto of 1565 printed by John Alde.
Common Conditions (1576) is mysteriously called an excellent and pleasant comedy, although it ends with the death of the lovers, and the Prologue confesses the matter to be pitiful and strange. ¹ The title of The Conflict of Conscience is almost absurd in its paradoxicality — An excellent new Commedie, Intituled: The Conflict of Conscience, contayning The most lamentable Hystorie of the desperation of Francis Spere. ²

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


³. *The Glasse of Governement* ... Done by George Gascoigne Esquier, 1575 ... Imprinted at London for C. Barker, t.p (Sig. Aii recto).
is genuine confusion, for it is not a simple matter of understanding the
comic to be the part that deals with rewards and the tragic the part that
deals with punishments. The *Divina Commedia* contains Heaven, Hell and
Purgatory. Not only may punishment furnish material for comedy, but
the reward of the virtuous may be visualised in the most austere terms.
While salvation may bloom in some deeply satisfying way in an allegory
of reviving the dead, bearing children, escaping from enchantment, or
discovering lost kin, it may also be expressed with homiletic sobriety,
as it is in Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentance of Marie Magdalene*
(1566). ¹ All the versions of the prodigal son theme, ending with
repentance and rectification of life follow an archetypal comic pattern.
*Everyman* is a perfect example, for the death and the triumph of the
protagonist are the same.

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

1. Reprinted as No 1 of Series II of the Decennial Publications of the
University of Chicago, ed. F. Carpenter (1904).
like *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 *tragicomedia* for it is almost inexplicable. ² The confusion is not simply the result of insular ignorance, for Arthur Golding does no more than follow his source, the *Abraham Sacrifiant* of Theodore de Beza, when he calls his play of *Abraham's Sacrifice* a tragedy, ³ although the angel of God intervenes and the ending is happy. ⁴ In every case we must understand the description of the work as partly publisher's blurb and partly a genuine attempt to describe it. All that we may safely claim for

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1. The titlepage and running title of *Apius and Virginia* (vide Malone Soc. Reprint of quarto 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.)


4. The inapplicability of the title of *The Tragedy of Frewyl* may also be traced to the source play by Francesco Negri da Bassano.
the concept of comedy as it is revealed by actual usage is that it was broad, living and varied. Within it can be discerned the most fascinating sub-species, like the conceited comedies, themselves as diverse as How a man may choose a good wife from a bad, 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 Rivals 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, nor Tragedie, nor storie nor anie thing".

1. A pleasant conceited Comedie wherein is shewed how a man may chuse a good wife from a bad. As it hath bene sundry times Acted by the Earle of WorcestersServants. London Printed for Mathew Lawe ... 1602. t.p.

2. The Old Wives Tale. A pleasant conceited Comedie ... Written by G. P. Printed at London by John Danter ... 1595. t.p.

3. See titlepages of 1599 quarto of Alphonsus, of 1594 quarto of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, and of the 1594 and 1599 quartos of Orlando Furioso.


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

*  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *  *

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

Our intellect was at this time to moue inward delight, not outward lightnesse, and to breede (if it might bee) soft smiling, not loude laughing: knowing it to the wise to be as great pleasure to heare counsell mixed with witte, as to the foolish to haue sport mingled with rudenesse. 1

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

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

What Creature is in health, eyther yong or olde,  
But som mirth with modestie will be glad to vse  
As we in thys Enterlude shall now vnfolde,  
Wherin all scurilitie we vtterly refuse,  
Avoiding such mirth wherin is abuse:  
Knowing nothing more comèdable for a mas recreation  
Than Mirth which is vsed in an honest fashion:  
For Myrth prolongeth lyfe, and causeth health.  
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 vse, auoodyng all blame.  

This is the mirth of the plays defended by Lodge, in which "the Poet on stages presenteth you a picture of his owne drawing, wherein you may bchold the whole life of man".  

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

1. From the definition of comedy given in The Nomenclator or Remembrancer of Adrianus Ianus Physician ... now in English by John Higins ... Imprinted at London for Ralph Newberie and Henrie Denham. 1585, p.15.


3. Gosson, Plays Confuted (loc. cit.) characterising the staple of Lodge's argument, Sig. D1 recto.
son, reform and rectification of life, or the finding of Gammer Gurton's needle. Comedy affirms the logic of our existence, confirms us in the belief that all is for the best. It induces satisfaction, by exciting desires which it alone can gratify. Time and experience have proved that the most effective way of doing this is to create two people obviously meant for each other, and to bring them together after the pleasurable tension of confusions and delays, Lurewell and Captain Standard, Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy, Caroline Helstone and Mr. Moore. It proves to be one of the most soothing and salutary gratifications fiction has to offer, the vicarious pleasure of watching the triumph of true love, even when it is insipid and especially when it is not. The course of true love does not depend upon preposterous coincidence and ponderous machinery of intrigue outside the scope of the play: it is in the nature of human passion that it can grow complicated of itself, beyond our easy assumption of a solution. Our gratification at the happy outcome of Lovers' broils is selfless and tender, hopeful and humble. It is not after all a critical howler to say that it is the business of comedy to make us feel good: Shakespeare's comedies succeeded so well in making his audience feel good, that much of our popular literature is still based upon his formula.

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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 ¹ they have not survived except perhaps in ballads, whose origins are lost in antiquity. Because the joining of lovers after vicissitudes and confusion is the most common motif in our literature today we tend to think that it has always been so. There may be true grounds for such a feeling, for there has not always been a popular literature which was not of necessity ephemeral.

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

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

1. Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii. 884-5.

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

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

1. Caxton printed the first folio of his own version in 1483 and Wynkyn de Worde the eighth and last in 1527.
The woman is made for the man to be his wife; so that, according to the Hebrew proverbe, *Cui non est vxor, is non est vir* (sic). A man without a wife is not a man. ¹

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

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

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1. *Vitis Palatina*. A sermon appointed to be preached at Whitehall vpon the Tuesday after the mariage of the Ladie Elizabeth her Grace. By the B. of London. London, printed for Iohn Bill. 1614, p. 4.

2. Habington states with false tendentiousness, "And though I appeare to strive against the streame of best wits, in erecting the selfie same Altar, both to chastity & love; I will for once adventure to doe well, without a president". (Castara. The second Edition. Corrected and Augmented. London. Printed by B.A. & T.F. for Will: Cooke ... 1635, Sig. A4 recto.)

3. *The worckes of Thomas Becon*. ... 1564 ... Imprinted at London by Iohn Daye, Vol. I, fol. DCXVIII verso cf. *the golden boke of christen matrimonye*, ... newly set forth in Englysh by Theodore Basille (Col. London ... by Iohn Mayler for Iohn Gough ... Anno Dni 1542), Sig. Biv recto, and *Holsome and Catholyke doctryne concerninge the seuen sacramentes* ... by ... Thomas byshop of Lincolne. Anno 1558 ... Excusum Londini in aedibus Roberti Caly ..., fol. CLXXX verso.
For the lower classes there were none of the pressing questions of wardship, patrimony and security of property which governed dynastic matches. Bride and groom grew up in the same community, and when they mated it was a question of trust and familiarity, for they would have to live together and work together in the same one-roomed cottage for the rest of their days. The ideal wooing, described by Breton's countryman, is like that of Erastus.

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

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

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

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

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We conclude and all agree,
Joanes as good as my Ladye.  

There are some points of resemblance between Joan and Katharine, the burgher's daughter, who is brown and straight as a hazel-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 Plowman's beloved -

Nay by cokkè body I vse no sych lyfe  
For I am content with blak-maud my wyfe  
Trow ye y I care for these nise proude prîmys  
These paîyd popagays that hold vp their chymnè  

* * * * * * * * * * *

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


2. Of Gentyines & Noblyyte. A dyaloge between the marchaût the Kyght & the plowman... (Malone Society Reprint ed. A. C. Partridge and F. P. Wilson, 1950), Sig. C1 verso, 11.935–8.
When we reach the age of Shakespeare, literature and the drama treat mutual love as the proper, but by no means the invariable basis of marriage. The struggle of the children against the parents for matrimonial freedom has got hold of the sympathetic popular imagination and the commonest interest on the Elizabethan stage is the devotion of lovers aiming at marriage, and the adventures of runaway couples like Master Fenton and Anne Page. ¹

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


2. The Merry Wives of Windsor, V.v. 11. 245-255.
novels with unflagging interest. It is important not to assume too much about Shakespeare's interest in marriage, and more important not to assume the wrong things, as Trevelyan does. Shakespeare is interested in love within society, not destructive passion, which must be exercised and ritualised, as it is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In *Romeo and Juliet* an innocent and creative love is turned to death and disaster because of the disrupted society in which it struggles for expression.

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

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Neuer reckened they wedlock anye godly estate of luylg, though it were an onlye ordre instytuted of god in y° begymffg, yea, for his preste also. Comoūly they haue dyswaden both men and womē frō it, as frō a most pernicious euyl, or frō a mischefe of all mischifes, calling it folishnes, fylythes, beastlines, a walking in darkenes, a mayntenāce of lechery, a fulfillig of fleshy 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 Sathā, a snare of y° deuyl & a pōde of perdiciō... 1

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

1. The first two partes of the Acts or vnchast examples of the Englysh votaryes, gathered out of their owne legenades and Chronycles by Iohan Bale (s.d., s.t., Colophon gives date as 1550), Sig. A2 recto. Cf. A very godly defense full of larning, defending the mariage of Preistes gathered by Philip Melancthon ... translated out of Latine into Englishe by Lewes beuchame the yeare of the lorde. M. CCCCC.xl, Sig. A6 recto.
or the *Quinze Joies de Mariage*¹ 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 wyll se that matrymony be had in more reuerence than yt is, and that men for every light cause inuentyd cast not of thyr wyues and lyue in aouotry and foryncaciō."² The married clergys arraigned under Mary were an articulate lot, and their dying words were immortalised in the *Acts and Monuments*.³

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

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1. This misogynist tract must have been known to the Elizabethans for it forms the basis of Dekker's *Bachelor's Banquet*.

2. *A lytle reatise composyd by Johan Stadysshe ... agoist the ptestation of Robert Barnes at the tyme of his death* in aed. R. Redmani, 1540, Sig. F.iii verso.

3. *E.g.* Dr. Rowland Taylor, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes ...* Gathered and collected ... By John Foxe ... Imprinted at London by John Daye ... 1563, p. 1054.
Let other set forth syngle lywynge with so many prayses ... yet wyll I for euermore commend the state of honourable wedlocke, which refuseth no kynde of payne and trouble so that yt may bryngye any profite at all to the publique weal of Christendome ... that state of lywynge whiche accordyng to the order of charite, is redy at all times to bære the burdens of other, and to seke the quietnes of other, no lesse then of it selfe.  

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

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

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 conioyoing of loyall hearts, O dulcet
vniion of our soules togither, O most louely
and nuptial knot, O most chaste, pure and
religious marriage yoake, who art rather a
pleasing easse, and a most welcome delight to
supporte and beare, then any hard weight or
greeuous burthen to sustaine: ...  

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 suretise may be conceiued."  

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:

1. Of Mariage and Wiuing. An excellent, pleasant, and Philosophical
Controuersie, betweenee the two famous Tassi now liuing, the one
Hercules the Philosopher, the other Torquato the Poet. Done into
English, by R(obert) T(ofte) Gentleman. London Printed by
Thomas Creede, ... 1599, Sig. Kii recto.

2. The Arte of English Poesie. Contribued 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.
O sweete conioynge of loyall hearts, O dulcet
vnion of our soules togethier, O most louely
and nuptial knot, O most chaste, pure and
religious marriage yoake, who art rather a
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first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of
Ornament. At London Printed by Richard Field ... 1589, p.40.
The night is passed, & joyfull day appeareth
most cleare on every side,
With pleasant musick we therefore salute you,
good morrow Mistris Bride:
From sleepe and slumber now wake you out of hand
Your bridgroome stayeth at home:
Whose fancy favour, & affection still doth stand
fixed on thee alone:
Dresse you in your best array,
This must be your wedding day,
God almighty send you happy joy:
In health and wealth to keep you still!
And if it be his blessed will,
God keepe you safe from sorrow and annoy.

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

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

Sweet Bridthen may you full well contented stay you,
and in your heart rejoyce:
Sith God was guider both of your heart & fancy
and maker of your choice.
And he that prefered you to this happie state
will not behold you decay,
Nor see you lack reliefe or help in any rate,
if you his precepts obey
To those that ask it faithfully,
The Lord will no good thing deny;
this comfort in the Scriptures may you finde,
Then let no worldly grief and care
Vexe your heart with foule dispaire,
which doth declare the unbelieuing minde,

All things are ready and every whit prepared
to beare you company.
Your friends and parents do give their due attendance
together courtously:
The house is drest and garnisht for your sake,
with flowers gallant and green,
A 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 virgious 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 Teratos is not. Spenser's bride,
like the heroine of the Goodmorrow, is married in the midst of her
community, with her cortege of maidens and brideknights. To the
elements of the popular public celebration, Spenser adds the classical

1. British Museum,Roxburghe i, 15.
chorus to Hymen, and the biblical echoes of the only other Epithalamium sung by the spouse, the Song of Songs. The nuptial bed is shut away from prying eyes in Spenser's poem too, as he invokes the blessing of the old York and Sarum rites, instead of fescennine imagery. The love of Spenser and of the nameless groom of the Goodmorrow is based upon the desert of the party, except that for Spenser, the Protestant Platonist, her beauty is the outward concomitant of her virtue. We may complete this picture of exemplary marriage celebrations by adding the nuptials of the honest shepherds, who are more Protestant and civic-minded than any in the wilderness of Tasso and Sannazaro, in the third eclogues of the Arcadia.

At this stage in historico-sociological studies, it is impossible to give any accurate account of the ideology of marriage and its relation to general practice. The modern family unit, called the nuclear family by the sociologists, developed in Western society as the feudal system 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 arising in his own society. In The Comedy of Errors the disappointed wife is contrasted with the courted maiden and the thoughtless husband with the servile lover. The Taming of the Shrew is concerned with the equilibrium which must be established between man and wife, and the earning of love and loyalty within marriage considered as a fait accompli. We are deprived of marriage as the catastrophe in Love's Labour's Lost, as a lesson in how the winning and wearing of a wife should not be undertaken, and a different scheme of winning love by desert is adumbrated for a future outside the play's compass.
Within the central preoccupation with the relation of man and woman in society, Shakespeare also questions the nature of love, its means of expression, the power of man to determine and control his own development, the question of identity and the allied problems of security and trust, and the artist's dilemma, whether or not to accept criteria not ultimately governed by his artistic instinct, whether or not to accept the heavy responsibilities of the civil poet. His answers to these questions are by no means banal or predictable, and his means of answering may be of use to the man who seeks a way of talking to the audience of today, so much more literate and homogenous than anything Shakespeare could have hoped for. In a body of work as organic as the plays of Shakespeare, it would be too arbitrary a procedure to examine the plays under these headings, and I am anxious not to distort the plays by such blatant question-begging. The literary critic-cum-historian is always liable to the charge of special pleading, which I am at pains to avoid by discussing each of the plays in such a way as to release their inner preoccupations as naturally as they are present. I am aware that the tone of my discussion is solemn, and that I give no very good account of the theatrical charm of the plays. I cannot defend myself beyond saying that there has been no lack of criticism of that kind, and much of it may be found in the playbills of productions that have gingered the plays out of recognition. The ideas developed by Shakespeare are by no means trivial, and in order to express their complexities and the subtleties of their exposition, I am required to be more rigorous than impressionistic. The theatrical
character of each play is proved, and will always be proved more
effectively by a production than by a dissertation. But it did not need
Freud to tell us that laughter, like all other emotional responses, has
motivation. I beg the reader to remember that Shakespeare's inquiry
is prosecuted by delight and laughter, while I laboriously delineate that
inquiry, and gravely marvel at the poise of the artifice that contains it.
CHAPTER ONE:

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

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

(Gascoigne: An Hundred sundrie Flowres.)
THE THEORY OF FRIENDSHIP

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

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

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

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

Some indication of the complexity of Elizabethan thinking about
friendship can be gathered from *Wits Theater of the Little World*. All
of the examples under the heading "Of Friendship" are culled from
classical antiquity, and neither Amis and Amile nor any of their mediaeval
counterparts appears. The spirit of Cicero broods over the whole. They
are not the primitive allegiances of heroes or the misogynist alliances of
saints which constitute the dual tradition of the stories of heroic friends
described by McEdward Leach. The chapter ends with a curious
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. The 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 Loadstone hath to yron, the Empeerald 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 dooth the
roote Aproxes.


2. *Wits Theater of the little World* ... Printed by I.R. for N.L. ...
1599, fol. 66ff.
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2. Wits Theater of the little World ... Printed by I.R. for N.L. ... 1599, fol.66ff.
Such friendship is betwene the male and female Date tree, that when a bough of the one shall touch a bough of the other, they fold themselves into a naturall embracing, & neuer doth the female bring forth fruit without the male.

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

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

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

1. Wits Theater of the little World ... Printed by I. R. for N. L. ... 1599, fol. 69 recto.
J. W. Lever writes misleadingly of the Renaissance theory of friendship -

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

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

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

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

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

It is truth which gives the rose its scent, and woman may equal man as
the subject of amor razionale if she be free of what Shakespeare himself
called "false women's fashion", "shifting change" (Sonnet xx). We
may regard Silvia, the "sweeter friend" as a female version of the noble
friend and patron who returns his vassal's love in the sonnets, excelling
even him in the purity and steadfastness of her faith. The admission of
women into the sacred league of friendship is by no means Shakespeare's
invention. In the ballad, The Bride's Goodmorrow 1 the language of the
classic panegyric of friendship is used for the relationship of man and
wife. Her husband is called a friend, and his duties are the offices of a
friend. The advice to love him as he deserves echoes the words quoted
by Seneca from Hecaton, "if thou wilt be beloued, loue". 2 He will be

1. Vide supra p.27 stanzas 2 and 3.
2. The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, both Morrall and Naturall.
Translated by Tho. Lodge, D. in Physike. London Printed by
the greatest wealth that she will ever own: in Surrey's voluminous rendering of the Senecan precept:

Of all the heauenly giftes, that mortall men commend,
What trusty treasure in the world can counteruail
    a frend?
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
equaltie so bindes,
    That to dissolue, in vayn may fortune sue,
Though malice helpe, which .ii. al glory grides
So strong is frendshyp, as no stormy windes,
    Haue might to moue, nor feare force to subdue ...

The notion that God sends such a friend can also be regarded as having a classical justification:

First we saie 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. 3

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:

1. Songes and sonettes, written by the right honorable Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other. Apud Ricardum Tottel. ... 1557, fol.114 verso.

2. A treatise of Morall phylosophye, contayning the sayinges of the wyse. Gathered and Englished by Wylliam Bauldewin. (Col: Imprinted ... by Edward Whitchurch) (1550?), Sig. Li. recto - Li verso, "The Summe of all", concluding the section "Of friendship".

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

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

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

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

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

¹ The boke of wisdome otherwise called the Flower of Vertue... Translated fyrst out of Italian into French, and out of French into English by John Larke (Col: London, Thomas Col[well]) (1565), Sig. Diii recto.
strictest league of amitie, and no such friendship, as
mariage: I vowe by the Romane Gods, euer to be a
dutifull seruaunt vnto Terentia. ¹

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

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

¹ Ciceronis Amor. Tullies Loue ... Robert Greene ... At London,
printed by J. R. for Nicholas Lyng 1605. Sig. 12 recto.
Aristotle the family is the basis of all social structure, and the reciprocal, tried affection that holds it together is altogether worthy of the name of friendship. In his own version of the Titus and Gisippus story, Philomela (1592), Greene uses the latter part of the story, the part that provides the whole action of the first Italian verse comedy, Nardi's L'Amicitia, giving the part of Titus to the wife of the man accused of murder. Philippo, her husband, prepares a neurotic test of her fidelity by means of his bosom friend Lutesio. Philomela tears up his courting letter, and, like Julia, pieces it together to read it, but her constancy does not waver. Lutesio confesses that he is testing her, without betraying her husband, and abandons his suit, but Philippo is unreasonably convinced that she has cuckolded him, and himself suborns witnesses to swear to her adultery. Philomela's reproach to her husband, who has named Lutesio as correspondent so that he is banished, makes more of this betrayal, than of her own disgrace.

Yet Philippo, hast thou lost more in losing Lutesio, than in forsaking mee, for thou mayest haue many honest wifes, but neuer so faithfull a friend: therefore, though I bee divorced, bee thou and hee 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

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

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

1. Ibid., Sig. 14 recto.

2. Cf. L'amico infedele of Alessandro Cenzio (Macerata, 1617) and Panciatichi's L'Amicizia Costante (Fiorenza, 1600).
like other phenomena of human behaviour and potentiality, was studied
from a variety of viewpoints, moral, historical, philosophical and
psychological, so that we cannot be sure of identifying the view of any
writer in any but a single context at a time. Spenser provides a case in
point; in *The 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 loue (of Colin Cloute and
Hobbinol) is muche to be alowed and liked of, specially so
meant, as Socrates vsed it: who sayth, that in deede he
loued Alcybiades extremely, yet not Alcybiades person,
but hys soule, which is Alcybiades owne selfe. And so is
paederastice much to be praferred before gynestastice,
that is the loue whiche enflameth men with lust toward
woman kind. ¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


2. E.g. The Triall of true Friendship: or perfitt mirror, wherby to
discerne a trustie friend from a flatteringe Parasite ... Soothly
to say: Trie ere you trust: Beleewe no man rashly ... By M.B.
Imprinted at London by Valentine Simmes ... 1596, passim.
and political strength. We can perhaps contrast the two main founts of Renaissance friendship theory, the Roman stoical and the Ciceronian which merges with the Platonic, as we may contrast the earlier and later treatments of the theme by Bacon, although, as always the contrast is not clean. 1 Almost all of the poetry in The Paradyse of daintie Deuises, written by the Earl of Oxford, Lord Vaux, W. Hunis, Jasper Heywood, Francis Kinwelmersh, Saint Barnard, D. Sand, M. Yloop and Barnabe Riche, deals with the desolation of the man deceived by flatterers. All these gentlemen doggedly affirm, with all the weight, decorum and high sentence at their command, that

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

Saint Barnard, whose motto is My lucke is losse, goes so far as to give instructions for the least painful loving and leaving of fickle friends. 3

Thomas Howell and his friends collaborated on the volume, H. his Deuises,


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

3. Ibid., fol. 2 recto. But this my fond advise, may seeme perchaume but vayne, As rather teaching how to lose, then how a friend to gayne. But this is not my intent, to teache to find a friend, But safely how to loue and leaue, is all that I intend.
which is almost entirely concerned with the same stoic maxims. 1 So there would seem to be a solid contemporary precedent for an angry rejection of Proteus by Valentine, and the subsequent adoption of a malcontent attitude, living alone in a world which no longer knows the sun of friendship. The fiction that friendship had perished along with the dissolution of the forces of natural attraction in the Saturnine phase of the world’s decay is by no means rare in Renaissance literature. It is, to quote one example, the stated justification for John Drout’s ludicrous exemplary tale of “two louing Italians, Gaulfrido and Barnardo le vayne”, which he mendaciously claims to have derived from an Italian source. W.W. congratulates him on the purity of his intentions in a commendatory sonnet.

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

The welter of vindictive accident and hysterical suicide caused by the insane determination of the protagonists to prove that their friendship

1. H. his Deuises, for his owne exercise, and his Friends pleasure. (H. Jackson: London, 1581.)
   e.g. No assurance but in Vertue (Sig.Bi recto),
        Once warnde, twice armde (Sig.Bii recto),
        Flattery, the Vayle of Frawde (Sig.Bii verso),
        The best Natures, soonest abused (Sig.Biii verso),
        Vnthankfulnessse of Minde, a monster in Nature (Sig.Di recto),
        Of Friends (Sig.Gii recto - Giii verso),
        They performe not best, that promise most (Sig.Hi verso),
        To a Flatterer (Sig. "Mii" recto) etc.

2. The pittyfull Historie of two louing Italians ... translated out of Italian into Englishe meeter by John Drout ... Anno. 1570, reprinted for private circulation by J. P. Collier (sxd., s.t.), Sig. A2 verso.
is of the highest order, leaves the reader somewhat relieved that such a rampant aberration has disappeared from the face of the earth. Barnardo kills himself for love of Charina, so Gaulfrido kills himself; Charina aghast at the slaughter she has "caused" throws herself from her tower window, so her father cuts his throat and her mother drowns herself, and the mariners on the boat that brought the friends to Greece perish as their ship inexplicably sinks like a stone minutes out of the harbour.

W.W. may be William Walter, another purveyor of irrationally sentimental friendship for the ballad and broadside market. ¹

If Valentine were to reject Proteus as the poets of *The Paradyse of daintie 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)

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

VALENTINE AND PROTEUS

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

¹. Spedding, Bacon, Vol. VI(I), p. 559, "Of Friendship" (1612).
phenomenon. The poetry of The Two Gentlemen of Verona is the expression of the same mind that wrote Hamlet less than ten years later, and was probably already engaged in writing the sonnets. Certainly the play is closer than to both than it is to the hagiographic exaggerations of the stories of Amis and Amile.

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

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

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

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

Elyot quotes Jerome and Ambrose:

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

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

Valentine and Proteus give testimony to the warmth of their affection for each other in their mode of address. In the opening line of the play, Valentine calls Proteus, his "loving Proteus", and demonstrates his friendship by wishing his friend's greater good, as Aristotle would have him do (Rhetoric, II, 4), here conceived as his happiness in love (1.1.9-10). Proteus accepts the idea that he belongs to Valentine, and in asking to be thought of whenever he sees some noteworthy object in his travels, shows that they are

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

In claim[ed] to be a sharer in Valentine's good fortune and in his perils, Proteus names the principal office of a friend, to partake of joys

1. The bankette of sapience, compiled by syr Thomas Eliot knyghte, and newly augmented with dyuerse tytles & sentences. (Col: Londini in aedibus Thomae Bertheleti ... M.DXXXIX), fol. 3 recto.


and thus double them, and of griefs, thus halving them\(^1\), for

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

This description is a commonplace, originally from Cicero, and vulgarised by Elyot, Baldwin, Harkington, Bacon, and all those who sought to define friendship. Amicus alter ipse is one of Erasmus' Apothegmes \(^3\), and John Charlton also treats it in The Casket of Jewels \(^4\).

In attempting to persuade his friend from the besotted pursuit of Julia, Valentine fulfils the function of friend as counsellor, which is the whole

\[\text{References:}\]


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

4. *The Casket of Jewels: Contaynyng a playne description of Morall Philosophie, diligently and after a very easie Methode declared by the well learned and famous Author Cornelius Valerius: Lately turned out of Latin into Englishe, by I.C. Imprinted at London, by VVilliam Hovv, for Richarde Iohnes. 1571, Sig. H1 verso.*
basis of the first book of The Ephemerides of Phialo,¹ for the greatest
good one friend can do another is to offer him good advice, the one gift
that can never be corrupted. Moreover,

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

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

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

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

1. The Ephemerides of Phialo, devided into three Bookes. The first,
A method which he ought to follow that desireth to rebuke his
freend, when he seeth him swarue: without kindling his choler, or
hurting himselfe... by Step(hen) Gosson, Stud. Oxon. Imprinted
2. Bodenham, Politeuphia, op. cit., fol. 66 recto.
3. Vide Lo Scolare del R. P. M. Bartolameo Meduna Conuentale de San
Francisco... In Venetia appresso Pietro Fachinetti, 1588, fol. 100
"... non e maggior amore che quello, che si fa ne gli studi."
5. Contile, La Pescara (Milano, 1550), fol. xiv verso.
gently with Proteus, who does not win the interchange and, left alone, acknowledges Valentine in the right. He makes use of the concept of their friendship once more when he says falsely to his father that he has a letter from Valentine, expressing his wish that Proteus could be with him, "partner in his fortune"; the third property of friendship distinguished by John Larke,

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

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

The summe of friendship is, that of two soules ² One should be made, in will and firme affect.

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

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

2. Belvedere or the Garden of the Muses ... Imprinted at London by F.K. for Hugh Astley ... 1600, p.94.
move it into the realm of the marvellous, but he keeps the idea that there
is an identification between the young men in the actual development of the
situation. Silvia accepts Proteus as a fellow-servant because she judges
him Valentine's peer. After Proteus's treachery the ideal friendship
exists for him as a concept to defy and deny:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.  Elyot, The bankette of sapience, op. cit., fol. 3 recto.
Silvia rejects Proteus as much for his betrayal of Valentine as for his desertion of Julia: her reference to the many that he has deceived (IV. ii. 97) places both treacheries on the same level, as Proteus himself does in the brief argument he has with himself (II. vi. 1-24) before resolving upon a career of dastardliness. He acknowledges that some of the life of both Julia and Valentine resides with him, for when he decides to forget them he represents them both as dead (IV. ii. 105-110).

It is Silvia herself who, like Greene's Philomela, supplies one of the principal justifications for supposing that the play displays the superior claim of friendship, for it is she who upbraids Proteus:

Sil: Thou counterfeit to thy true friend!
Pro: In love
Who respects friend?
Sil: All men but Proteus.

(V. iv. 53-4)

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

... now I dare not say
I have one friend alive; thou wouldst disprove me.
Who would be trusted now, when one's right hand
Is perjured to the bosom? Proteus,
I am sorry I must never trust thee more,
But count the world a stranger for thy sake.
The private wound is deepest: O time most accurst,
'Mongst all foes that a friend should prove the worst.

(V. iv. 65-72)
Poor Valentine is arrested at a point of development rather like that of Bacon (whose relations with women were always rather problematical):

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

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

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

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

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1. Spedding, Bacon, Vol. VI(I), p.449, "Of Friendship" (1625)
5. Baldwin, op. cit., Sig. Li recto.
house shall abyde standyng, 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 his 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. But if the good man does not show magnanimity and clemency beyond all reasonable expectation, the implications may be as grave as the chaos envisaged by Pandulpho in Philotimus:

2. See Bacon's version of Aristotle's argument, which begins the 1625 version of "Of Friendship", Spedding, Vol. VI (I), p. 437.
Friendship which hath bene, or should bee the Sun of all the world, which should glue life and light to all good mindes, is now endarkened, or quite extinguished.

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

that waters should giue heate, and fyre make colde, and euery source and euery riuier runne baccke to his head, and flowe to his wellspringe, and all goe 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 Favio to Amico, when he gives his beloved up to his friend and goes off to die in the wars.

E voi Amico caro mio godeteui la tate 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: & immaginateui pure, che per ricompensa del riscatto, e di tanti altri servitii fattomi, habbiate hauuto da me, quel piu che vi potea dare. E dite a vostra consorte che resti contenta, & che non pensi d'hauer rotta la fede, perche, se ha hauuto voi, ha hauuto vn Leandro istesso.

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

1. Philotimus. The warre betwixt Nature and Fortune. Compiled by Brian Melbancke ... printed at London by Roger Warde, ... 1583, p.182.
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'Amicizia* the friends M. Ruberto and M. Claudio pass the lady back and forth like two punctilious gentlemen decorously disagreeing about passing through a door first. We never discover what might have followed Valentine's masochistic generosity because Julia's swoon turns matters into a different channel, and the friendship theme is never developed into a final statement. We do not ever discover whether Silvia, until now no mere tool of others' will, would have complied with Valentine's award of her to Proteus. The very words in which Valentine celebrates the reunion of Proteus and Julia show up the deepest inconsistency in his own behaviour.

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

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

1. The parallel with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is most tenuous except that Curzio is pursued by Lucio's sister Erminia[dressed as a boy] who had been privily contracted to him six months before.

2. *L'Amicitia Comedia* di Gio. Donato Cucchetti ... In Ferrara, Appresso Vittorio Baldini ... 1587, V.v. *passim*.
THE FRIENDSHIP OF MAN AND WOMAN

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

Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
War with good counsel, set the world at nought;
Made wit with musing weak, heart sick with thought.
(I.i.67-9)

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

I fear my Julia would not deign my lines,
Receiving them from such a worthless post. (I.i.152-3)
As for the lady herself, her first appearance has often been compared to Portia's, but the comparison is misleading unless a fundamental difference is noticed. It is Portia who disposes of her lovers as they are nominated by Nerissa, not Portia who invites her maid's judgment. The scene between Julia and Lucetta is played at fairly low pressure, but the indications are that Julia has more vivacity than wit or dignity. Portia would not lay herself open to her maid's disdainful comment upon her own unguarded mention of her fancy's name,

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

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

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

which is a significant departure from the source, for in the Diana Felisma has already been obstreperously wooed for a considerable time: here the letter comes as Proteus's first overture. It is the same missive as that carried by the worthless emissary, whose name not accidentally is Speed. Alone, Julia reveals in her vexation, the phenomenon of the self divided against itself, or duplicity. She excuses her own inconsistency, if not dishonesty, on the score of the habitual silliness and perversity of virgins, in terms hardly flattering to herself.
She manages to twist the realisation of the guiltiness of her behaviour
into a resolution to continue it, by deciding that she must further demean
herself before Lucetta as a penance.

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

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

O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!
Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey,
And kill the bees that yield it, with your stings.  (I. ii. 106–8)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In II.vii Julia speaks of Proteus in terms more befitting a god than a mortal, as her soul's food, her Viaticum, the Elisium where her soul
will rest, as the exemplar of divine perfection. Unlike other base men
he is gifted with a divine intransigence:

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart;
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.
(II. vii. 75–8)

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

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

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

I grant, sweet love, that I did love a lady;
But she is dead. (IV. ii. 103–4)
As Sebastian, Julia achieves a new kind of relationship with her love. He looks at the same face that had infatuated him before, and chooses its owner for his friend and emissary. Julia may now perform for him the same office that he, feigning loyalty, offered to perform for Valentine. In her face he discerns "good bringing up, fortune, truth"; she is no longer a giddy girl gossiping with her maid, but a person who may be judged and accepted as an ally in her own right (IV.iv.69-76). Once entrusted with the duty of wooing Silvia for her master, Julia reflects sorrowfully upon her own duplicity in deceiving her beloved, recalling the image that he and Speed had quibbled upon.

Alas, poor Proteus! Thou hast entertained
A fox to be the shepherd of thy lambs.  

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

I am my master's true-confirmed love;
But cannot be true servant to my master,
Unless I prove false traitor to myself.  

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

Among frenedes al thynge be comon.  

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 the more pointless by returning his affection in a spontaneous and egalitarian fashion, despite the inequality of rank. As Speed says, Valentine has deformed Silvia by gazing upon her so

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

Silvia gently mocks his faintheartedness and the unthinkingness of his servitude, while Speed comments with comic exasperation upon his master's lack of savoir faire (II.1.110–121). The second ruse that Silvia tries is that of having Valentine write a letter in her name to an unknown lover, and then making him keep it himself: it makes it point
so clearly that Speed can spell it out -

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

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

    To die is to be banished from myself;
    And Silvia is myself: banished from her
    Is self from self: a deadly banishment ...

    She is my essence; and I leave to be,
    If I be not by her fair influence
    Foster'd, illumined, cherish'd, kept alive. (III. i. 171-3, 182-5)

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

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

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

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

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THE ONLY BELOVED

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

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

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

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

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

lest the base earth
Should from her vesture chance to steal a kiss,
And of so great a favour growing proud,
Disdain to root the summer-swelling flower,
And make rough winter everlastingly. (II. iv. 159-62)
He apologises for his rhapsodic hyperbole, explaining that everything he says must fall short of the reality.

She is alone. (II.iv.167)

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

A colei che se stessa rassomiglia & non altrui.

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

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

This pre-eminence is a quality of the soul, which Proteus has no chance to assess, and yet he accepts Valentine's judgment, because friends are "coupled together by a strict alliance, and uniformitie of will in desiring honest things". 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.

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

At first I did adore a twinkling star,  
But now I worship a celestial sun.  

(II.vi.9-10)

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

Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?  

(III.1.156)

The benighted savage must worship the sun, especially he sees it and its power after a lifetime in the darkness, but he cannot hope to clasp it in his arms. Silvia may be considered to exact love, as the sun draws sunflowers' faces to follow it: she is the incarnation of the Platonist-lover's dream, and the ultimate evidence of the folly of the notion understood so literally. If Valentine's hyperbole were fact, she would lay waste all creation. Silvia is a woman, and men have made of her a symbol of ultimate perfection which they are compelled to love in defiance of common sense and morality. Perfect virtue is not a matter of taste:
all who have spiritual discernment must love it. Valentine and Proteus must have similar insights because they have developed together, and now they both love perfect virtue/beauty. The character of Valentine’s love has been conditioned by Silvia’s attempt to destroy wordless adoration and servile effeminacy by wooing him as a woman, but to Proteus she becomes even more lovable as she exercises her heartless chastity and indomitable virtue. For Valentine she becomes a wife, for Proteus she is Laura.

But Silvia is too fair, too true, too holy, To be corrupted with my worthless gifts ...
Yet spaniel-like, the more she spurns my love, The more it grows, and fawneth on her still. (IV.ii.5-6, 14-15)

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

1. See English version edited from Sutherland MS by McEdward Leach, op. cit.
the world, her ancestress manifests the highest form of voluptuous beauty.

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

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

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

1. See the Malone Society reprint from the imperfect quarto at

2. Vide the Introduction to his edition of The Two Gentlemen of Verona
   (Methuen, 1906) in the series the Arden Shakespeare, pp.xxi-ii.
Fiorina to keep both her gentleman callers in Cuccetti's *L'Amicizia* and the grossness of the story of Claribel and Floradin in Wotton's *Courtlie Controversie of Cupids Cautels*. It has been seriously argued that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is indebted for its central action to the latter but in fact the position is untenable, for it is no more than an utterly flippant account of the way that Claribel and Floradin unwittingly cuckold each other, until they meet in the house of a miller's wife, and confess to each other

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

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

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

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

2. A courtlie Controversie of Cupids Cautels ... translated out of French by Hen. Wotton ... At London Imprinted by Francis Coldock and Henry Bynneman. 1578, p. 315.
3. Ibid., p. 319.
The man who allows himself to suffer at their hands, despite his greater magnanimity and firmness of disposition, is a sensual and effeminate fool: for the cultivated mind only the conversation of his equals in virtue and wisdom can be deeply satisfying. Shakespeare tips the balance in the other direction: here it is the man who is called Proteus, and the women who are generous and stable. Where the ladies of the tales "glorifying friendship" seduce by their physical charms or the direct intervention of the blind god, Silvia compels love by her virtue. Proteus's sinful passion may be compared with Angelo's in Measure for Measure, in that he is seduced from virtue by the power of virtue.

Angelo's dilemma is more movingly stated as the awful moral paradox that unregenerate human nature may make of the power of virtue itself the occasion of grave sin: Angelo's sin is clearly one of pride in his own steely virtue, and Proteus also commits a kind of hubris, in his overstated constancy at his parting with Julia (II.ii.9-12). Proteus makes the fullest statement of the divinity of the power that has overthrown him in the song,

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

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

L'alma, ch'e sol da Dio fatta gentile
che gia d'altrui non p'ho venir tal grazia,
simil al suo fattor stato ritiene. (Canzoniere, X1/11)
Love, the consequence of the heaven-sent grace which resides in Silvia, moving towards the eternal object of desire, the good, flies to Silvia and remains enthroned in her look, enslaving all. Like Valentine, Proteus sings the uniqueness of Silvia,

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

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

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

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

For since the substance of your perfect self  
Is else devoted, I am but a shadow;  
And to your shadow will I make true love.  (IV. ii. 134)
Proteus considers himself destroyed by Silvia’s intransigence, but his own mobility has transformed Julia into a wandering shade as well. She comments bitterly on his asking for the portrait,

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

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

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

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

If a question might be asked, what is the ground in deed of reasonable love, whereby the knot is knit of true and perfect frendship, I thinkse those that be wise would answere — deserte: that is, where the party beloved dooth requite us with the like; for otherwise, if the bare shewe of beauttie, or the comlinesse of personage
might bee sufficient to confirm us in our love, those that bee accustomed to goe to faires and markettes might sometymes fall in love with twentie in a daie: desert must then bee (of force) the grounde of reasonable loue; for to love them that hate us, to followe them that flie from us, to faune on them that froune on us, to bee glad to please theim that care not how thei offende us, who will not confesse this to be an erronious love, neither grounded uppon witte nor reason? 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. With this distinction however, that Romeo exchanges Platonic infatuation for a requited and reasonable love, and Proteus does the exact opposite.

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

Conferring with Panthino about sending Proteus to see the world,

Antonio voices the principle which causes Proteus's tragedy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. The Philosophie commonlie called the Morals written by ... Plutarch ... Translated out of Greeke into English,... by Philemon Holland ... At London Printed by Arnold Hatfield. 1603. p. 229, "Of the Pluralitie of Friends".

2. Ibid. Plutarch uses the image of Proteus and of prime matter in the same context, to denote the man with many friends.

3. The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuycburch: Entituled, Amintas Dale ... by Abraham Fraunce ... At London (sic) Printed, for Thomas Woodcoke ... 1592, fol. 23 recto.
soone after, of that condition, in which they remaine in perpetuall eternitie. But ... God gaue vnto man all kinde of seedes and grafts of life (to wit) the vegetatiae life of Plants, the sensuall of beasts, the rationall of man, and the intellectuall of Angels, whereof which soeuer he tooke pleasure to plant and cultiue, the same should futurely grow in him, and bring forth fruit, agreeable to his owne choyce and plantation. This freedome of the first man Adam, and our first Father, was aenigmatically described by Asclepius Atheniensis (saith Mirandula) in the person and fable of Proteus, who was said, as often as hee pleased, to change his shape. 1

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

... nothing under heaven doth aby in steadfast
state remayne.
And next, that nothing perisheth: but that
eache substance takes
Another shape than that it had ... 1

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

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

1. The .xv. Booke of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis
translated ... by Arthur Golding ... 1567 Imprinted at London, by
William Seres, Sig. aii recto.
2. Cf. Shakespeare's Sonnet no. XLV.
4. Golding's Ovid, op. cit., fol. 189
This view of living as dependent upon change and generation is not the recherché monopoly of the Pythagoreans, for it can be found in such unpretentious works as Politeuphia:

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

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

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

(II. vii. 19-20)

¹ Bodenham, Politeuphia, op. cit., fols. 121 recto, verso.
Thus, all these power (the which the ground-work bee
Of all the world, and of all living wights)
To thousand sorts of Change we subject see.
Yet are they chang'd (by other wondrous lights)
Into themselves, and lose their native mights;
The Fire to Aire, and th'Ayre to Water sheere,
And Water into Earth: yet Water fights
With Fire and Aire with Earth approaching neere:
Yet all are in one body, and as one appeare.

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

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

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

1. Smith and de Selincourt, Sponser, p. 402, The Faerie Queene, Canto
VII St. 25.
2. Shakespeare, Sonnet LX.
 leaves behind will have to be sacrificed. Like Leander whose ghost broods over the opening of the play, she may drown, swept into the flood by Proteus's ocean of tears. She wished her name borne upon the whirlwind into the raging sea, and now she has her wish. Proteus used the same image when his lie caused his father to decide to send him to Milan:

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

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

This weak impress of love is as a figure
Trenched in ice, which with an hour's heat
Dissolves to water and doth lose his form.
A little time will melt her frozen thoughts
And Valentine shall be forgot. (III.ii.6-10)

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

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

Write till your ink be dry, and with your tears
Moist it again; and frame some feeling line
That may discover such integrity:
For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews;
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands. (III. ii. 75-81)
The comic poet can convince us of our escape from time into eternity, by a transformation of the accidental into the formal and assured, so that instead of watching the old bird consuming in its flames, we are aware of the eternal pattern of renewal of the same phoenix. Whether it be because he lacked confidence in the poet and eter.niser, or for some reason connected with the sharpness with which he viewed human subjection to the laws of existence, Shakespeare does not manage to convince us of this in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The last scene merely tries to convince us that we may return to the dilapidated *status quo*, and does not take us into a timeless dimension of symmetry and equity. Throughout the play a strong tension pulls against eloquence, from the torn letter which wins Julia so much more easily than the whole would have done, to Valentine's sword, which finally wins Silvia for him. Silvia is a poetical concept, an idea rather than a person: she struggles against this, insisting upon her natural role as a woman, wooing her man for herself like the Duchess of Malfi, until stripped of the hieratical finery of her court garments she follows him into the forest, and like some heretical idol, is finally degraded by Proteus's attempt to rape her. The imagery of the sun which caused the marigold of Valentine's love to flower at the same time as it bred maggots in the carcase of Proteus's perfidy is not used again, and Silvia, silent and unregarded, is given to Valentine by her father, as a reward for courage. He answers coolly,

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

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

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

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

The comic parallels with the main action and their parodic effect have all been noticed by Harold Brooks, who sees their undercutting effect as evidence of immaturity in the playwright, who is sabotaging his own work.
Love in the courtly manner, partly because it is so stylised, is very liable, once we entertain an inadequate, every-day view of it, to arouse mere mockery and impatience. Aware of this, both Chaucer and Shakespeare embody the dangerous attitude within the play or poem itself, so as to control and place it; but they place it somewhat differently. In Chaucer the plebeian view, whatever sympathy he may have with it outside the poem, is introduced chiefly to be rejected …

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


2. See, for example, the figure of Fede nell’amicitia in Ripa’s Iconologia (Padova, 1617), pp. 244, 245.
taking the child upon his knee at the end of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. He glances most shrewdly at the emotional broils of his masters in his muddling of his and the dog's identity.

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

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

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

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

Nay, I'll be sworn, I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stolen, otherwise he had been executed: I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath killed, otherwise he had suffered for it. (IV.iv.67)
The scene gains its whole point from Launce's jubilation at not having been able to give Crab away: as for the dog he never had any intention of being given away. Launce would have sacrificed him out of loyalty to his master, as Valentine would sacrifice Silvia out of loyalty to Proteus; neither wants to succeed, and neither does. It is one more thing to add to our uneasiness about the last scene. For all their rhapsodising, the lovers can do no more, and in fact do a good deal less, than Launce does unthinkingly for his mongrel dog. Well may Proteus cry in a pet,

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

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

The tensions of the main action are real ones, although perhaps not fully developed and interrelated, and the demonstration that there is a life which does not concern itself with them does not dispel them. Launce's simplicity is partly the result of ignorance, and kin to the fatalism of the poor peasant everywhere. Nevertheless, the "everyday view" is more relevant to a playwright's work than a poet's, and the ultimate significance of the play relates to the whole audience and not only to the education of the courtier. The courtly ambient is no more than superficially evoked, by the presence of the olde worlde Eglamour, who presents an insuperable problem of characterisation, and the naively cursory mention of the exercises and recreations of the courtier. Silvia, despite the sovereignty that is attributed to her, lives in her tower without an entourage, serenaded
like any maiden of lesser station, bullied by a father more bourgeois than imperial, burlesquing her own majesty, by calling Valentine, "Servant". There is really less distance between Valentine and Launce than there is between Valentine and the inhabitants of the world of Castiglione, or even the coarser concept of Hoby. Despite his bookishness and introspection, Proteus's dilemma is the dilemma inherent in the dream of platonic love and his own helplessness against change, that of any man. Stanley Wells's arguments establish that we are dealing with an early play¹ and more grounds for the supposition may be adduced from the coyness of some of the staging, as characters marooned on the stage are called off by servants for want of some motivation of their own. It may be that the young playwright was confronting a problem too disturbing for him to resolve the inherent conflict with the requisite assurance. In his next comedy he attacks allied problems, with a firmer formal support, and brings them to the indispensable happy conclusion. John F. Danby has pointed out that the play shares the inscape of the sonnets² while maintaining that it has a great serenity. This would seem to involve a slight contradiction for the victory is not always assured in the battle with negative flux, even as it is waged in the sonnets: it is the stress of this battle within the play which ill prepares us for a facile ending. Under the smoothly mannered surface of this shallow story of deep love, the currents run strongly towards a sea

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of tragic possibilities, and not the artificial pool that the Duke creates by a word in the last scene. The imperfectly developed poetic instrument imposes an undramatic order upon the intellectual questings of the young poet, under which the strain of implications builds up, not to be released, but only denied, in the ending. The situation of the two gentlemen fires a train of associations, which we may trace to later plays, where they have a more successful expression, in *Measure for Measure* in the tragic swerving of Angelo, in *The Comedy of Errors*, in the treatment of the whole problem of the shared self, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in the ladies' rejection of compromised wooing, in *Twelfth Night*, the contrast between Viola, the lover-friend, and Olivia, the beloved mistress. Although we must admit that the promise of one mutual happiness which closes the play draws a line across territory still unwon by the playwright, our very dissatisfaction with the trite comic denial of the issues raised by the play measures the depth to which they have stirred us.
A Comedie, I meane for to present,
No Terence phrase: his tyme and myne are twaine:
The verse that pleasde a Romaine rashe intent,
Myght well offend the godly Preachers vayne.
Deformed shewes were then esteemed muche,
Reformed speche doth now become vs best, ...

(Gascoigne, The Prologue to The Glasse of Gouernement)
THE PLAUTINE TRADITION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Ibid. p. 75.

2. E.g. As well as those discussed in detail, Gl’Ingammati, Gli Errori Incogniti (Pietro Buonfanti), Olimpia (G.-B. della Porta), La Prigione d’Amore (Sforza degli Oddi), L’Ipocrito, L’Anconitana (Ruzzante), and several scenari of the Scala.
apart from Warner's competent translation, and the mention of the Historie of Error (or fferrar) in English. The reasons for its survival have very little to do with its intrinsic merit or interest. The most persuasive is that it is a perfect school play, short, Latin, and makes absolutely no demands upon the actor, for no situation is explored in the more than a cursory way. The action pauses only to clarify itself, and moves on. The structure is a stark example of the five-act norm elicited from the unconscious Terence by Donatus and Evanthis. It obeys the unities to a fault, for the actual depicted incidents happen in too clipped a fashion; not a word is wasted, even for a laugh, except in the voluminous Prologue, which was added by the schoolmen in order that the play might satisfy their classical requirements. The more scrupulous renaissance versions, like William Warner's, omitted it. The little play is as simple, as functional and as basically uninteresting as a barrel vault, and stands in the same relation to the works inspired by it as that Roman invention does to the triumphs of classical architecture. Its function as a school play is not impeded by any scabrous material, but it is not in any sense morally improving, being essentially a tale of opportunism and deceit. Menaechmus Supreptus is a bully and a sensual fool, coarsely enamoured of a courtesan and cruelly abusive to his wife who appears to merit no better treatment, and conspires with the resentful parasite against her lord. Menaechmus Sosicles, notwithstanding his search for his brother, is a cheat and a cynic. The courtesan is so honestly self-seeing that she appears if anything morally superior to the other characters. No judgment is meted out to the malefactors, except the
only one that our putative schoolmasters cannot have condoned.

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

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

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PLAUTUS IN ITALY

There could hardly be a play better adapted to illustrating Professor Coghill's basic distinction, than the Menaechmi, if the practitioners of learned comedy had in fact the slavish and uncreative attitude that they are commonly credited with, but even translators of Plautus allowed themselves a measure of liberty with the original. The adaptors did not hesitate to supply the deficiencies of the original in the most deliberate way. The fact that there are so many more adaptations of Plautus than of Terence may be the direct result of difference in the esteem they
enjoyed. It is Terence who supplies the precedent for combining the single Plautine action with another. The translators counted their allegiance to the pseudo-Ciceronian canon of *speculum vitae* more fundamental than fidelity to their original, and transplanted the Greek tale to their own social setting, replacing ancient properties with more familiar objects, with the result that the starkness and mannerism of the original is quite submerged in the vigour and vividness of the depiction of contemporary society.  

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

E perché la Tragedia imitando la Commedia imitando dilegga le vituperia e vizii, avvenne, che a quest modù l'una, e l'altra ci insegnan la virtù; ...  

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

1. E.g. *Comedia di Plauto novamente tradotta, intitolata Menechini molto piacevole et ridicvosa. M.D. XXVIII.* (Col: ... Venetia per Girolamo pentio da lecco ad instantia de Cristoforo ditto Stampone de Milano e compagni ...)

2. *Comedia del Trissino Intitolata I Simillimi.* (Col: Stampata in Venezia per Twlomew Ianiclw da Bressa Ne l'annw MDXLVIII ...), Sig. Aii verso.
in search of vetus comedia he proceeds much further from Roman example, and departs from contemporary convention as well. His Prologuwl, in propria persona continues,

La wnde havendw tolta una festiva invenziwine de Plautw, vi ho mutatw i nwmi, et aggiuntevi perswne, et in qualche parte cambiatw l'wrdine, et appressw intrwduttwvi il chorw; cosi havendwla al modw miw raccwncia, voljw mandarla cwn questw habitw nuovw in luce. Il chorw veramente vi ho aggiuntw, percio, che ne l'antiqua cwmèdia si usava di intrwduvelw; il quale usw ne la nuova cwmèdia fu lasciatw, forse per fuggir la spesa; ... veggiw che tal cosa a Hwraziw nostrw nwn piacque, il quale ne la pwètica sua dice ... che fu brutta cosa chel chorw tacesse, 2 nwn vi fwsse; ... vi ho anchwra secwndw il cwsutme de l'j'antiqui greci levatw il prolgw, et ho fattw narrare lw arguentw a le prime perswnw, che in essa parlerammw ... ¹

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

The construction follows the basic rule of protasis, epitasis and

¹. Ibid., Sig.Aiii recto.
². Every Man Out of his Humour, Induction, ll. 245-8
catastrophe. As the Prologue does not appear, the retrospective revelation is handled by Simillimo Salvidio, the equivalent of Menaechmus Sosicles, in the first scene, which is actually the beginning of Plautus's second act. Thus Trissino begins his play at the same point as Shakespeare turns to the Plautine material after his animated Prologue, the trial of Egeon. To supply the local specificity that *speculum consuetudinis* requires, the family is from Trieste, the child lost at Lanzano, and the setting of the present events in the wicked city of Palermo. The depiction of manners necessitates the presence of three servants, representing low life. Some attempt is made to treat the marital situation of Simillimo Rubato in depth, as we may gather from the discussion between Simillimo's servant, Folchetto, and the cook, Garofilo; their master is henpecked.

Perche si vede fwrstierw, et ella
E cittadina, altera e intwieranda,
Cwme esser suole ogni dwtata mwije,
Et elji e mansuetw, e liberale,
E scherza vvlenierw, e burla smpre;
E di cwstumi a Lei mwltw diversi. 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

Come e poponi da Chioggia sono tutte le donne.  

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

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

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

2. Ibid., fol. 43 verso.
The licenza points out the absence of a moral in the play, and implies that it will remedy the deficiency, but the suggestion of paying the courtesan is all that is offered. The amorality of the original is affirmed by such an ironic anti-moral. Its cool cynicism is by no means diminished by Firenzuela's last words,

Io uì ricordo che son fanciugli.  

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

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

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

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

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

2. La Dote Comedia di Giovanmaria Cecchi fiorentino In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari. M D L, fol. 3 recto.
like Firenzuela, who content themselves with the simple structure of the Plautine play, and do not use it as a basis for a fantastically complicated edifice of their own devising. The apologetic tone may not be entirely spurious, for it may be that out of the schoolroom Plautus was not invariably greeted with cries of joy: in the learned theatre, the Menaechmi were by now a dismally familiar spectacle.

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

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

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

Even as a finely wrought comedy of intrigue then La Moglie leaves much to be desired. As a picture of Florentine life and manners it compares badly with Firenziuola, for the classical elements are ill-digested, and the atmosphere of the cinquecento city state is simply not there. The didactic duty is performed by lumpish sententiae about the desperate
proclivity of children to deceive their parents, or deceit leading to further confusion, which have lost commonsense and conviction by their willy-nilly transplantation from Terence, and the Terentian commentators. The significance of the situations is totally unexplored. The characters worry rather than suffer, and their release is so mechanically managed that there is never a breath of joy. Any vitality that the piece can be said to have is supplied by the antics of the servi, and their survival in such a dreary work indicates the gradual tendency of the Italian comedy towards the eclipse of the dramatist and the sovereignty of the professional entertainer.

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

De quali se sia chi dica, lo autore essere gran ladro di Plauto, lasciamo stare, che a Plauto staria molto bene l'essere rubbato, tenere il mocciòchone le cose sua senza una chiaue, e senza una custodia al mondo Ma lo Autore giura alla croce di Dio, che non gli ha furato questo (facendo un scoppio con le dita)
& uoule stare a paragone. Et che ciò sia vero dice che se si cerchi quanto ha Plauto, & troverassi che niente gli manca di quello che hauer suole. Et, se così e, a Plauto non e suto rubbato nulla del suo. Pero, non sia chi per ladro imputi lo autore. 1

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

1. Comedia di Bernardo Dvittio da Bibiena intitolata Calandra (Col: Stampata in Roma nellanno M.D.XXIII. fol. Il verso.)
Di grazia, nobilissime donne, se pensate di far
cose a lui e a chi l'ha a recitare, mostrateli loro
(i.e. to their gallants) piu del solito favorevole e
benigne, accio che la commedia quel manco gl'infastidisca.
Che dite? Farete lo? Non bisogna storcersi il viso:
chi di voi non vuol far questo, o li paressi stare a
disagio, se ne puo uscire a suo posta, che l'uscio e
aperto. 1

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

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

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

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

2. The Glasse of Governement, op.cit., Sig.Aiii verso, Prologue
II. 9. 12.
with his servant Fessenio, whose name indicates how knowledge of the
Latin source may be assumed. His sister, Santilla, escaped with the
help of her nurse and Fannio, who have dressed her as a boy for her
greater protection. Lidio is in love with the calandra of the title, the
lusty and imprudent Fulvia, whom he visits disguised as his lost sister,
thus attracting the concupiscent attentions of her senile husband,
Calandro, whose name is evidence of the extent to which the novella has
inspired the old learned form. Lidio uses his sister's identity without
scruple, and only ever thinks of setting out to look for her as a ruse to
trick Fulvia into more extravagant demonstrations of passion. Santilla
arrives in Rome in her boy's disguise, in the train of a Florentine merchant
who has adopted her, and now wishes to marry her to his daughter, Virginia.

The raw materials of the situation, a brother and sister, trans-
vestites, and mutually cuckolded couple, are simple enough, but Bibbiena
builds of them an intricate edifice of mistaking, with a frieze of brawling,
bawdy servants, in five acts, fifty-nine scenes in all. The emphasis is
all on movement, change, rough and tumble. The tendency is for the
scenes to grow shorter and more numerous (La Talanta has eighty odd);
it is easy to see how the new developments even in literary comedy will
soon leave the dramatist without a function, except to plot exits and
entrances, and approximate business. Bibbiena still has some measure
of control and exploits every possibility of the situation that he has invented
(despite red-herring references to Plautus). Fulvia, despairing at Lidio's
sham coldness, instructs a charlatan to bring him to her in any form:
this results in her being visited by Santilla in her woman's weeds, and
Fulvia's discovery, related in detail, that she is indeed a woman.
This is put down to enchantment, and Ruffo, the charlatan who knows
that he is incapable of any enchantment is fooled by the explanation that
Lidio is a hermaphrodite, which he renders with representative humour
as a merdaforito. Meanwhile, of course, Calandro is attempting to
make love to Lidio. In an amazingly tasteless scene, unredeemed by
Santilla's subsequent monologue about how distressing it is, she is
persuaded to go again to the raging Fulvia, and conduct the business as
far as she can, calling in her manservant under cover of darkness at the
crucial moment. Her motives are insubstantial, being principally fear
that she will have to present herself as husband to Virginia, if she does
not keep some safe cover. Before this plan can be carried into effect,
brother and sister confront each other, fairly offhandy because Lidio
is concentrating on getting to his paramour. The last imaginative
possibility is included when Lidio is discovered in bed with Fulvia and
Santilla must take his place to save the life and honour of both, which
she does, and everyone lives happily ever after.

The play satisfies only a very few of the requirements of the old
commedia erudita: the unities are scrupulously observed; the staging
required is clearly that of the three house doors; the characters are
chosen from the middle walks of life, but they have very little social
context at all. In its lack of concern for its personages it hangs close
to the paucity of Plautus's little play. Santilla and Lidio are playing a
dangerous game, but they have no personality and no tender feelings, and so are hardly capable of reacting to their own peril or their own guilt. We are never meant to be concerned for them or about them, and so the play has no genuine protasis, epitasis and catastrophe, no movement from tribulation to joy. For this reason the play cannot partake of the element which, according to Coghill, distinguishes mediaeval comedy from renaissance comedy, the Dantesque metaphor of the dissolving of the travailed flesh and the journey into joy and understanding, but for this reason also it must be considered an imperfect example of learned comedy. It is an unmistakeably renaissance invention, but it is no less unmistakeably an un-classical one. The action is a beautifully fashioned symmetrical frame upon which is hung a tissue of fescennine possibilities. The pseudo-Ciceronian canon of *imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis*, *imago veritatis* can in no way be applied. Bibbiena has defied the learned tradition, and one must agree with Castiglione's Prologue, more apt considered in retrospect that Bibbiena has not stolen from Plautus anything that he is poorer without.

Obviously we are now less than ever likely to find the precedent for *The Comedy of Errors* in this genre. This treatment of the Menaechmi theme is as far removed from Shakespeare's as it is from learned comedy. Departing from a common stock, the Plautine-Terentian canon with its accreted body of theory, the English and Italian forms pursued widely divergent paths: the Italian form became less and less literary, less and less verbal, until the playwright could be replaced by the stage manager.
The English playwright was invariably more or less learned, and sufficiently forceful and imaginative to retain his hold on the theatre, as well as on the printed play, to an extent which to us today seems slight, but in terms of contemporary practice provided occasion for wonder and admiration. 1

The commedia erudita became more and more the faithful depiction of contemporary manners, especially among the lower and more unruly orders of society, crystallising around known types which could provide the professional actor's tour de force. It was very often coarsely and irresistibly funny, sometimes vital and exciting, but never moving. Variety and speed were the motives of the action, which was never deepened to include conflict or development. It is devised to entertain a select but promiscuous urban audience, to divert them from the contemplation of any profound truth, or any criticism of their own lives. It may be the mirror of a certain kind of behaviour, of the latest slang and affectations adopted by the with-it gallants of the sixteenth century affluent society, the incarnation of the salacious tales they told of their own adventures, but it cannot claim to be imago veritatis, for not even the veriest tyro in Renaissance philosophy could pretend that veri-similitude was co-extential with truth. Bibbiens's play may be justified by reference to the banal opportunist world of the original Menaechmi, and it may in fact reflect the greater detachment and sophistication of

classical studies in humanist Italy, but it has little relation to the ideal of
classic comedy developed by the churchmen of the middle ages to which
both Jonson's acid muse and Shakespeare's committed vision are both
more closely related. If we consider all three in relation to the international
body of thought of which Hrotswitha's plays are the expression, Bibbiena
can be seen to have broken with his Christian classic forbears.

Shakespeare's comedy can be compared with the commedia erudita
in its use of the Menaechmi theme, its complication of the plot in the
interest of greater symmetry and complexity, its five-act structure,
considered at the most mechanical level; all these are superficial grounds
for comparison. The Comedy of Errors actually is an imitation of life, a
mirror of human behaviour, and an image of truth, and not just a comedy
of manners, although it reveals much about behaviour at the social level.
The Antipholuses do not have, like the Italian heroes, a specific address;
they belong to Ephesus (and the court of Diana) and Syracuse (and the
court of Dionysus). The Comedy of Errors bears the weight of the full
meaning of the old theories of comedy as naturally and completely as the
human body bears the pressure of the air. Its complexity, sophistication
and gravity are unlooked for and untried for by the best dramatists of Italy.

PLAUTUS IN ENGLAND

English Plautine comedy is represented by a handful of survivals,
Gammer Gurton's Needle, Ralph Roister Doister, Jack Juggler, Mother
Bombe and The Comedy of Errors. There is at least one important
respect in which the latter is more like its fellows than any Italian play.

The wyse Poets long time heretofore,
Vnder merrie Comedies secretes did declare,
Wherein was contained very vertuous lore,
With mysteries and forewarnings very rare.
Such to write neither Plautus nor Terence dyd spare,
Whiche among the learned at this day beares the bell:
These with such other therein dyd excell. 1

Twenty-five years have elapsed since the sophisticated eroticism of low-born Dovizi charmed Leo X, and the fame of his work and numerous editions of it have spread through Europe, but Udall is either unaware of it, or chooses to ignore it. He clings to the belief that literature has an almost sacred function, to body forth secrets or mysteries in allegorical or semi-allegorical form, and, more directly, to prescribe, vertuous lore, and to interpret, forewarnings. 2 For such as he Italian comedy did seem to have declined into amorous toys, bawdry, coarse mirth, and to have lost all stateliness and dignity. 3 In Italy the Christian heresy of finding confirmation of Christian doctrine in the pagan classics was as good as dead, despite the reactionary pressure of traditional aestheticians like Trissino. Terence certainly does have a moral concern, but it is not a Christian concern; his morality is civic, political, practical. The Elizabethans found it necessary to transmogrify the ambiguity and the guardedness of his conclusions so that they could find in him the "mysteries


2. Cf. supra p. 11 ff.

3. Cf. supra p. 6 ff.
and forewarnings very rare" that they sought. No child could have studied Terence in England without absorbing piece by piece an extraordinary matrix of commentary in which the plays were always embedded, so that the delicate penetration which characterises Terence's handling of human situations was transformed into a blunt and rigorous moralism. In Richard Bernard's Terence in English, published as late as 1598, we may clearly observe what I take to be the most representative form of this process, for the author was not long out of school himself, the book appearing while he was still up at Cambridge. First, the dramatis personae have their names interpreted by the fictitious etymology so esteemed as a source of illuminating analogies; one example that is particularly illuminating for The Comedy of Errors is the explanation of the name Antiphila in the Hæautontimouroumenos:

Antiphila, amasía: one that is in loue ... Antiphila, òvτί −φίλα ὅσα: contrà amans. 1

Next they are equated with virtues and vices of which they are to be understood as exemplars, no matter how minor the part that they play in the action; in the Eunuchus, for example, Soprona is to exemplify à castitáte seu probitáte: 2 Then follows the argumentum, chosen from C. Sulpití Apollinaris, who is careful to reduce all moral ambiguities to manageable proportions, unlike the more scrupulous commentators,

1. Terence in English ... Opera ac industria R.B. ... Cantabrigiae Ex officina Johannis Legat. 1598, p. 191.

2. Ibid., p. 107.
Muretus and Ascensius. The argumentum for the Hecyra is perhaps the most obviously misleading, for it underplays Pamphilus's love for Bacchis, and the effect of the withdrawal of her favours, and implies rather too strongly the triumph of his wife's virtue, which is the proper lodestone of love. Of Terence's actual text, each scene is presented separated from the rest by the accreted commentary, so that there is no risk of the play making its impact undistorted. It is presented with the heading of the characters appearing in it, and a formal or moral comment, while rhetorical figures, which include finenesses of psychological insight, are indicated in marginal comments. A Latin Moralis Expositio follows, setting in unambiguous mould the significance of each scene, sometimes quite against the bias of Terence's sensitive apprehension of the issues involved. No scene, however short and burlesque, is allowed to pass without such exposition. The scope of the depicted situation is extended into a general context on the slightest justification. The moral elicited from Andria, IV. ii. is that

In matrimonio est amicitia ex similitudine morū nata, eaq; perpetua. 2

Terence might not have wished to deny this staunch moral, but he can hardly be said to have written this scene to illustrate it. The Moralis Expositio is followed by the text of the scene in English, clumsily translated in prose, and twice as long as the original. From it we can

1. Ibid., p. 335.
2. Ibid., p. 73
discover that Bernard was as muddled about the value of the talent as Shakespeare, and we can assess the measure of preconception that made it quite impossible for any Elizabethan to read exactly what Terence had written. In the *Heautontimouroumenos* the boy exclaims in answer to his father’s proposal that he marry their next-door-neighbour’s daughter, "O father, I cannot find in my heart to love her", for Terence’s *Non possum pater*. 1 The tendency to deepen the dimension of love in all approved relationships, and to call it wenching and whoring in unapproved ones is everywhere evident. With all these precautions taken, Bernard is still not quite assured that the dangerous views which caused Terence to be regarded as strong meat in the middle ages have been rendered innocuous, for he follows the English text by a list of Latin *sententiae* supposedly illustrated by it, sometimes longer than the text itself. They are culled from an amazing variety of sources, all unacknowledged, and none of them appears twice.

If we compare Bernard’s treatment of his text with an Italian translation with commentary, we shall notice a great difference in approach. Bernard, apart from the cursory indication of the presence of tropes, ignores all the aesthetic questions raised by Terence’s work, including none of the critical commentary of Donatus, or Horace, or Melancthon or even Erasmus. A very popular version of Terence’s comedies with Italian translation and commentary appeared in Florence

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in 1548, and was reprinted several times thereafter. Like Bernard's it does not include the Latin grammarians' commentaries, but in no other respect can they be said to be alike. Fabrini's moral interpretation is much less prescriptive than Bernard's and there is much less of it. The translation is elegant and smooth when compared with Bernard's wagon train sentences, for this is Fabrini's chief concern, to write in Italian with all the elegance and sophistication of the original, as a battle in the war to establish the superiority of Tuscan over all other dialects, and to purify it of any taint of coarseness or rusticity. After every scene we are dutifully but perfunctorily told what "la qual cosa ci insegnava", but very often this is no more than an observation that human beings have particular reactions to particular situations: the great bulk of the commentary is devoted to discussion of linguistic matters. Richard Bernard was not writing like Fabrini for the sleekly cultured elite of the urban civilisation that boasted Machiavelli and Aretino: his tome was commissioned for little Christopher Wray and the nephews of Lady Bowes and Lady Sanctpoll. The schoolmasters who produced the first classical comedies in English for their boys to act, shared his preoccupations with moral and even spiritual questions.

Nicholas Udall freely adapted the Plautine theme of the miles gloriosus for his play Ralph Roister Doister, if not actually for his boys at Eton or

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Westminster, then with schoolboy players in mind. Its scope is stringently limited, and on other respects, its portrayal of middle class life, and the vigour of its language, it resembles that other Plautine play for schoolboys, *I Lucidi*. The structure is superficially classical, for Udall divided it into the five acts considered *de rigueur*, but the action is basically too episodic. The resemblance to the Italian genre goes no further. Udall writes in verse, which is not always contemptible, especially when the gossips are clattering. Graceful songs are interpolated, possibly on analogy with the intermezzi which enlivened the academy plays, but nothing could be more English in tone and rhythm.

In the element of lyricism, in the sense of moral commitment which pervades even this simple story of the baiting of a vainglorious boaster, and the profound and questing interest in human problems, *English comedy*, classical or otherwise, found its own distinguishing characteristics. As a satire on vainglory, *Roister Doister* has rather too much to say about marriage, from the little song "Who-so to marry a minion wife" to the courting letter of nuptial promises which Merygreke reads in the negative so that it has to be read again, and its contents doubly emphasised. The themes of false and true wooing, and the protection of the handfast, which are central to Shakespeare's work, attract so much attention that they are in a fair way to undermine the comedy of the baiting of *Roister Doister* altogether.

C. Custâce ... Truly, most deare spouse, nought was done but for pastance.
G. Good. But such kynde of sporting is homely daliance ...
C. Custace. It was none but Roister Doister, that foolishe mome.
Ga. Good. Yea, Custance, better (they say) a badde seuse than none. 1

The play is crude in some ways, and its kind of moral insight is also crude, but it is of the same stuff as the profundity of a great poet, who was once perhaps a schoolmaster, who understood the raw material of comedy, the feature of virtue, the image of scorn, "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure", much better than Udall, and who also understood the classical ideal of comedy better than any single one of his European predecessors or contemporaries. In the profundity and high seriousness of its moral concern, realised in terms of the dramatic image, The Comedy of Errors stands far above the simple solidity of Roister Doister, but this moral commitment relates it fundamentally to the native tradition. Even Trissino, determined to infuse an ethical concern into his version of the Menaechmi cannot see the events in terms of a meta-physical struggle in the way that the clumsiest of the English dramatists could. The superior discretion which theirs Roister Doister is more strikingly developed in the disturbingly rethought incident from the Amphitruo recounted in Jack Juggler. The lewd loves of gods are here transformed into a homely episode of a practical joke played upon an unruly page, who, meeting Jack Juggler masquerading as himself, is forced to deny his own identity. The actual treatment of the incident remains very close to the Latin source, but there is an added dimension, much more seriously

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intended than Plautus's spoofing of the divine powers.

Good lord of heauen where did I my selfe leue?  
Or who did of me my name by the way bereue?  
For I am sure of this in my minde:  
That I did in no place leue my selfe behinde,  
If I had my name played away at Dice  
Or had solde my selfe to any man at a price.  
Or had made a fray and had lost it in fighting:  
Or it had been stolne from me sleeping.  
It had been a matter and I would haue kept  
	patience  
But it spiteth my hart to haue lost it by  

	negligence.  

Although this keeps very close to the Latin, it has none of its burlesque quality in its earnestly supplicatory tone. The last line, wrenched out of the metre, makes it clear that the author is not making a joke of Jenkyn's credulity, as Plautus does of Sosia's, although Sosia has more reason to be disturbed because his identity is being meddled with by a god. Really, Plautus's insight is purely mundane: only Sosia's doltishness could possibly lead him to think that he had lost his identity. Udall's little inelegant play demonstrates the awful power of a certain kind of mental pressure, the power of a reiterated, plausible lie, and the vulnerability of personality. Although he is proud to admit that he is trained in Cato, Plutarch, Socrates, Plato, Cicero and Ovid, the author retains a basic simplicity and audacity of imagination, which transform a prolix adaptation of an incident from Plautus into something moving and impressive in its own right. Poor little Jenkyn Careawaile fights for his

identity with words as crudely graphic as the blows in a boxing match, until he is forced to yield what none has the right to demand. Jack Juggler, the presiding spirit of deception, is the progeny of a fusion of the vice of the moralities, and Peniculus, the conniving servant who fathered the real heroes of the Italian comedy of the sixteenth century, whose machinations were followed with delight and appreciation far from the Latin sources. In this play he is not allowed the last word, and his eclipse is indicative of the fate suffered by the type in the English theatre. Instead his victim turns his stolen face to the audience, and in rough but powerful stanzas makes explicit the issues which have been raised by this single incident.

And as it is dayly seen for fear of further disprofit
He must that man his best freend and maister call:
Of whom he neuer receyued any maner benefite,
And at whose hand he had neuer any good at all.
And must graunt, affirm or deny what so euere he shall.
He must say Crowe is white if he ne so commaunded:
Yea, and that him self into another body is chaunged.

He must say he did amisse, though he did not offend,
He must aske forgiuenes where he did no trespase:
Or els be in trouble, care and misery without end,
And be cast in some arerage without any grace.
And that thing whiche he saw doon befor his face,
He must by compulsion, stifly denie:
And for fear whether he would or nay say tung you lie. 1

Although Shakespeare has utilised the same incident from the Amphitruo in The Comedy of Errors he does not develop it to anything like this extent: Dromio does not see his own likeness as Jenkyn and

1. Ibid., Sig. Eiii verso, 11.1169-1182.
Sosia do, but nevertheless the stringency which can turn a mythological farce into a human struggle, and pass stern judgment upon it, to the utter detriment of the comic mood (for Jenkyn's is an odd *plaudite*) is related to the profound vision of Shakespeare, more closely in fact than it is to the immaculately disguised farce of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, which sports five-act dress, protasis, epitasis and catastrophe, but is never more than rough and tumble farce in Poulter's measure, or Lyly's Italianate *Mother Bombie* which hears unmistakeable traces of the author's knowledge of the contemporary Italian scene, and the same slender connection with the classical tradition, *pace* R. Warwick Bond.  

*Jack Juggler* is the product of the English Protestant genius, born the inheritor of a native dramatic tradition, in which the morality survived with full honours much longer than elsewhere, supplied with the manners and methods of academic classicism, as we might see from a glance at Gascoigne's five-act Latinate cautionary tale for school-boys, *The Glasse of Gouernement*, which shows exemplary understanding of the grammarians' requirements for the orthodox comedy, and a spirit of stolid moralism as far from Plautus and Terence as Machiavelli and Aretino. Italy produced more learned dramatists, but it is this other element which makes the English tradition capable of so much more. It demanded a meaning for every kind of utterance, however frivolous, and that meaning had to be more than a circumstantial truth. This seriousness must not be understood

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as the product of some popular influence working on the dramatist
however, although it can hardly have flourished without some sympathy
from the playgoer. It is a fundamental attribute of English classicism,
of the understanding that could call The Conflict of Conscience a
"pleasant comedy" when it dealt with the story

Of one through loue of worldly wealth and feare of
dearth dismaide,
Because he would his lyfe and goods, haue kept still
as his owne,
From state of grace wherein he stoode, was almost
ouerthrowne:
So that he had no power ar all, in heart firme
fayth to haue,
Till at the last, God chaunged his mynde, his mercies
for to craue. 1

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

The Comedy of Errors is a comprehensive example of the old-
fashioned classical paradigm mocked by Bibbiena in claiming Plautus as
the source of his erotic intrigue play. It contains all the mingled
elements of the tradition, and for this reason it stands as the refutation of
Professor Coghill's distinction. All the formal requirements of the
Terentian theorists are satisfied; the action takes place in a single day,
in a single place signified by the three house doors opening on to a street,
as in the old woodcuts of the staging of Terence; the action is clearly and
easily based upon the rule of protasis (the first two acts), epitasis (the

1. Prologue as printed in the second issue of 1581, Malone Soc.
Reprint, ed. H. Davis and F. P. Wilson (1952), Sig. Aii recto,
ll. 31–5.
next two acts) and catastrophe (the last act), each containing in itself the
germ of the next development 1; thus the events of its day parallel the
career of the human life which for the mediaeval theorists was the
justification of this notion of structure; the versification is regular,
symmetrical and even in tone, except for the lapses into the anapaestic
tetrameters usually called doggerel, in obedience to the Horatian doctrine
that the diction should be varied to fit the character. The most arrant
pedant could find nothing amiss with Shakespeare's play at this superficial
level. Even the alteration of Plautus's beginning is unexceptional, if we
remember Trissino.

On the profoundest level, it stands closer to the spirit of the
classical canon, because it does not follow the superficial notion of
speculum consuetudinis at the expense of imago ventatis out of the realm
of poetic drama. It is doubtful whether the elegant, muscular prose of
the Italian masters resembles the actual speech of men any more closely
than verse does. The Terentian precedent clearly requires verse, and
the Dantesque vision requires poetry, which is distinguished by what Arnold
would call "high seriousness", and a criticism of life. It is
Shakespeare's ability to respond to these more lofty expectations which
makes The Comedy of Errors a more classical play than any of Jonson's:
Jonson is a more informed classicist of the modern type, and therefore

1. The case for the classicism of the structure of The Comedy of
Errors has been exhaustively argued by T. W. Baldwin in
Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure (Urbana, 1947), Cap.
a lesser exponent of the pseudo-classical ideal developed by mediaeval culture. The doubling of the action by Shakespeare is not merely an instance of the Elizabethan love of copy. The synthesising power of his imagination is so great that he manages to create an extraordinary multiple metaphor of life. Even at what is presumed to be a very early point in his career, he contrives to state the most profound and far-reaching truth in terms of the dramatic illusion. The audacity of the conception is such that the literary student of the play can hardly expect to grasp it: it depends upon a kind of metaphysical slide, in which a man is separated from himself, so that he may confront himself as time has changed him, or as he used to be. It depends upon the identity of the image presented by the twin, for only one is ever seen on stage at a time, until the very end, and upon the exact parallelism of the situations, as one Antipholus prepares to repeat the destiny that the other bears with such an ill grace.

The first governing image is that of the symmetrically freighted mast, with husband, twin son and twin slave at one end, and wife, other twin son and other twin slave at the other. They ought to travel together on the main of life, but their mast is split and carried off over the waves in different directions; one travels faster than the other (I.i.109) and it is that which arrives at Ephesus. The Syracusans are left behind for the bark that takes them up is "very slow of sail" (I.i.116). So Egeon is separated from his wife, as from himself, for husband and wife as Hamlet grimly remarks are one flesh, and the twins from each other. Antipholus of Syracuse is still governed by the sea, and his sojourn in Ephesus is subject to the constant necessity of reëmbarkation, to catch up to himself on the
surges of time.

I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
(Unseen, inquisitive) confounds himself.
(II. ii. 35-38)

Drops of water must be kept apart in time-space otherwise they will coalesce and become one drop. Antipholus imagines that he desires this coalescence, but when he achieves it, for he is actually confounded with his brother, he suffers tremendously.

Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
Sleeping or waking, mad, or well advis'd?
Known unto these, and to myself disguis'd,
I'll say as they say, and persever so,
And in this mist at all adventures go. (II. ii. 212-6)

The reason that he suffers so, is that his brother, whom he considers as like to him as one drop of water to another, is changed, by the passage of the same tide that separated them. Much has been written on the clever creation of two contrasting characters for the two brothers, without much respect for Elizabethan psychology. The seven ages of man include two, side by side.

... And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation,
Even in the cannon's mouth.

(As You Like It, II. iv. 147-53)

This is a fairly commonplace Elizabethan view of the human career: for example, in the interlude of Mundus et Infans (1522), the page becomes
Lust and Liking in his teens, and then, at twenty-one, when he is qualified for knight service, Manhood Mighty. Dromio remarks dryly to Antipholus of Syracuse that his character is changing, in their curious discourse of time's revenges:

Syr. Dro. I durst have denied that before you were so choleric.
Syr. Ant. By what rule, sir?
Syr. Dro. Marry, sir, by a rule as plain as the plain bald pate of Father Time himself.

(II. ii. 65-9)

Komisarjewsky was probably right to have centred the decor of his remarkable production around a clock, but it ought to have been an ambiguous clock, for as the twins draw closer to their confrontation time plays strange tricks: Dromio of Syracuse hears it chime the hour before the last one.

The hours come back, that did I never hear. (IV. ii. 55)

Dromio jokes with Adriana, that the bailiff has succeeded in laying hands on time and arresting it, but there is some sad truth in his jesting contention that time is a bankrupt and a thief. What it has stolen from Antipholus of Ephesus is his first naïve adoring passion for Adriana, and the juvenile mildness of his temper. The ambiguity of the name as it is construed in Bernard's Terence is therefore very applicable. Antipholus of Ephesus is Antipholus of Syracuse at a later stage of development, and it is the whole irony of the play that one cannot recognise the other without

the intervention of a *deus ex machina*. Place in the circumstances of his future life, Antipholus rebels in horror, but instantly turns to his unwanted wife's sister and begins to woo her as his brother must have wooed her sister. The two women are apparently contrasted, but more in situation than in character. As Adriana says bitterly to Luciana, cool and sensible in her assessment of her sister's behaviour:

- A wretched soul bruis'd with adversity,
- We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;
- But were we burden'd with like weight of pain,
- As much, or more, we should ourselves complain.

(II.i.34-7)

Luciana speaks theory, but Adriana nags and moans from wasteful experience. Adriana has seen her husband change, as she has changed herself, as they changed each other from their first wooing:

- What ruins are in me that can be found
- By him not ruin'd?

(II.i.96-7)

Luciana defending her absent brother-in-law speaks curious confusion, which the play is concerned to expose.

- A man is master of his liberty;
- Time is their master, and when they see time,
- They'll go or come; ...

(II.i.7-9)

His liberty is the one thing a man cannot master: as we have seen from the bitter experience of Proteus, man cannot stop himself changing, nor can he give this liberty away and melt into the self of another, however much he try. Antipholus rejoices to find that his confusion can be resolved once he (they) is recognised to be two separate people: the image of the separation in time works in two ways; when the two confront,
the time gap is closed and the image coalesces - they speak together, but on the level of their motivation, for the first time they have the chance to recognise themselves as separate. Their metaphysical sameness is recognised by the Duke,

One of these men is genius to the other;
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit? Who deciphers them? (V.1.332-4)

The two Dromios also recognise that the time gap has been closed, as they jostle good-naturedly off the stage.

We came into the world like brother and brother
And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.
(V.1.425-6)

The merging with another self has been painful for Antipholus, but nevertheless he seeks it again in his wooing of Luciana: he will bring the subsequent suffering of Adriana and his brother, upon himself and Luciana, by preferring to worship rather than to understand.

It is thyself, mine own self's better part,
Mine eye's clear eye, my dear heart's dearer heart,
My food, my fortune, and my sweet hope's aim,
My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim.
(III.ii.61-4)

A part of him realises the danger that this passion places him in, and he decides, despite his hot wooing, to fly the "mermaid's song" lest he be guilty of self-wrong, a traitor to himself. He has decided, notwithstanding his former intention to lose himself, to protect his integrity. The relationship that he describes is that which Adriana thinks that she should have with her husband.
For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
And take unminglethence that drop again
Without addition or diminishing,
As take thee from myself, and not me too. (II. ii. 125-9)

The fallacy of her belief is cruelly demonstrated by the fact that she is saying this to the wrong man. This is the simplest irony in the situation, but there is also the deeper one, that this is her husband as he was when he wooed her, faced with the consequences of his wooing and marriage and rejecting them with scorn and incomprehension. Such wooing is what Luciana admits ought to move an honest suit: for all her callow commonsense she almost yields to the same illusion that has brought Adriana so low. The situation is complex, for religious doctrine enforces Adriana's belief that husband and wife are the same flesh: her metaphor of elm and vine is culled from the Psalms and universal in epithalamic convention. What she does not understand is that this identification is spiritual, symbolical: while we are imprisoned in the flesh and the cares of the world, we must content ourselves with separateness and finiteness, with imperfection. The story of the dislocation and confrontation of the two Antipholuses is contained within the frame of another drama, the life pilgrimage of Egeon. The shape of the old man's tribulation, the passage from day to sundown, is the same as that of the human destiny through judgment to salvation, part of the archetypal pattern of Everyman. Everyman must find his Good Deeds; his wife and sons accomplish Egeon's salvation. The Abbess has reproved Adriana for her jealousy, and has secluded her husband from her, to teach her to respect him as an individual,
for she would have coddled him like a baby. Now Emilia ransomes her
husband by her loyalty: they meet like two souls when the walls of the
flesh have dissolved, and they may enjoy the fruits of their mutual
deserving, like Dante at last united with Beatrice. Their lives have
been lived in sad isolation, without the deceitful consolation of caresses
and cohabitation, but their preservation of their sacramental union
despite the ravages of time and distance, untainted by infidelity or
possessiveness, entitles them to the deepest joy and communion, beyond
the passionate dreams of an amorous youth like Antipholus. He is not
wrong to suppose that Luciana is his heaven's claim, but he must not try
to recognise that claim on earth. In later plays marriage may be
presented as a way of overcoming the isolation of the self, as Northrop
Frye claims, but a callower Shakespeare points a shallower truth. His
insight in these early plays is ethical rather than metaphysical; the
plays are triumphs of understanding rather than imagination, but this is
no good ground for supposing them inferior.

How far can such a work be said to be of the same genre as the
cynical comedies which are characteristic of the Plautine tradition in
Italy? The only one among those that I have chosen to discuss which
prompts any sort of comparison is Trissino's, because it does attempt
some sort of seriousness, and it has a self-conscious relation to the
learned tradition, which is not specifically Italian, of course, being the
product of a European Latin culture. It is from this common stock that
The Comedy of Errors is descended, and to that learned tradition that it
belongs. Placing Shakespeare in the context of the English understanding of Terence, it must be admitted that his sense of ethical commitment is a specifically English trait, and that the nature of his Ethic is unmistakably Protestant. The salvation of Egeon by the discovery of his wife and the fruits of their union reflects the logical development of the protestant moralists' theories of marriage as the highest vocation known to man, ordained by God, and celebrated by Him in the time of man's innocency. If we compare Shakespeare with Terence, it is immediately evident how sovereign the action of faith is upon his kind of comedy. Shakespeare is as disabused in his expectations of human nature as Terence is, but for him the happy ending is valid in other terms. At the end of the Hecyra Terence stresses the fact that in real life the catastrophe does not occur, and that ignorance and confusion are the common lot.

... placet non sieri itidem, vt in comediis,
Omnia omnes ubi resciscunt: hi, (sic) quos par fuerat resciscere,
Sciunt: quos non autem scire aequum est, neque resciscens, neque scient. 1

It is implied that the resolution has happened only because of the formal resources available to the dramatist, and the audience's satisfaction is leavened, even by a reservation so slight, to a marked degree. But for Shakespeare it is not the monopoly of the artist to resolve all suffering in a purposeful end, for his function is itself a feeble fleshly parallel of the redemptive power of the almighty, who has designed the comedy that we live. Our joy only has meaning in relation to our

thirty-three years of travail, of "so long grief", and it remains less tangible on stage than the suffering which we have watched for rather longer, and which is the result of causes that we understand rather better. Shakespeare shares Terence's insight and honesty, but he has the advantage of a solace not afforded to the pagan writer, the dimension in which redemption and salvation are real possibilities and not merely artistic fiction. Terence is left with the fact that the old must always lose the struggle to the young, so that the renewal of life is also the affirmation of death. In his world victory is not possible for both sides; the artist may simply deceive us for a brief space. In Shakespeare's universe a greater hope exists and with it the possibility of a greater despair. Against the abstract image of souls married in a former time of joy and peace, restored to their former joy by the omnipotent Duke, are poised the concrete figures of the courting and the wedded couple whose tribulations are far from ended, and cannot be resolved by paradisaical intervention. It would seem a strange omission from the scene, that the spouses are not reconciled, and Luciana not given to Antipholus of Syracuse, if this were not so.

The Comedy of Errors is the most perfect example of the christian classical comedy that has survived in any language. As such, it deserves a more illustrious designation than Plautine, English or Italian. Its kind of vision is realistic in a much more profound sense than that comedy which concerns itself with a critique of manners. It is the exhalation of a culture suffering an upheaval of conscience, which had seen fifty years of martyrdom
and personal anguish as arbitrary and relentless as Solinus's law. In the space of a little day, the English conscience had to find itself, in a forest of equivocation and dispute: the keenness of spiritual insight which results is not Plautine: it is the worthy descendent of the ardour that christianised Terence and informed the *Divina Commedia.*
CHAPTER THREE:

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Ma la commedia nuova e carissima allo stato
de tiranni, de re, & de pochi, perciò che non
rimprovera loro niuna loro operatione, ne
minaccia loro punitione niuna, ne solleva il
minuto popolo, ne il commuove a passione niuna,
essendo l'attioni rappresentate di dispiacere
non grande & mitigato da sopraveggnente
alegrezza.

(Castelvetro, Poetica d'Aristotele)
THE INDUCTION

Although it is clear that there is some puzzle to be solved in the fading out of the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, what we have is developed far beyond the Induction of *A Shrew*, so that, even if it is less fully developed as a frame for the whole action, it is much further developed as a preparation for that action. Both Inductions are probably by Shakespeare: that of *The Shrew* may even represent a style which is later than the rest of the play. 1 The difference between them does not only consist in that the later Induction is more fully motivated and particular, but also in that the images spun out of the verse are richer and more demanding, so that the relation with the play that follows is organic rather than schematic. The first image is that of the lord spurning the sleeping Sly at the same time as he arranges meticulously for the cherishing and tendering of his hounds. The prank that he decides to play on the slumbering drunk is meant to show the extent to which breeding and nurture have separated him from this degraded remnant of humanity, but there are indications that his lordship may not find his own superiority

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1. It has been supposed by Pope, Tieck, W. C. Hazlitt, Fleay and Courthope that Shakespeare's hand was evident in *A Shrew*. It seems likely that the two versions existed simultaneously, to judge from the adaptation of *A Shrew* that Pepys saw in 1667. *A Shrew* is quite competently plotted, but the verse is absolutely undistinguished: a young poet's errors would have been more blatant and his achievements more remarkable: moreover the argument from the good verse and bad staging of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* cannot simply be reversed to argue for good stage craft and bad poetry in *A Shrew*. K. B. Banks in "*A Shrew and The Shrew*", NQ, August, 1955, New Series 11, argues for the concomitant existence of both versions. It is very possible that the Marlovian lapidary set speeches remained in the text, while the language of the by-play was gradually rewritten in performance.
endorsed as effectively as he might wish. He mistakes his own ability to
wipe clean the slate of Sly's brain, for despite the hallucinatory nature of
his experiences, Sly's developed personality exploits them in its own
way. If the lord is to force Sly to accept a new role, he must obliterate
much that is good in his character, as well as much that is indifferent or
bad. We are aware of potential dangers in this situation as we are not
in the Induction of *A Shrew*, where the device works only as a device in
making us aware of the interplay of illusions in role-playing. In *The
Taming of the Shrew* the Induction develops a poetic dimension of its own,
which prepares our sensibility for the perception of profounder themes in
the play that follows. The older Induction interests itself in the
titillatory aspects of the presentation of Sly's "lady", but here the Lord's
instructions are more significant and particular. The page must

... bear himself with honourable action
Such as he hath observed in noble ladies
Unto their lords, by them accomplished:
Such duty to the drunkard let him do
With soft low tongue and lowly courtesy,
And say, "What is't your honour will command,
Wherein your lady and your humble wife
May show her duty and make known her love?"
(Ind. i. 110-7)

In case the servility and ceremony of such a relationship, stressed
to the point of verbosity unusual in Shakespeare, have not made their
point, the Lord's last instruction leaves the matter beyond doubt.

And if the boy have not a woman's gift
To rain a shower of commanded tears,
An onion will do well for such a shift ...
(Ind. i. 124-6)
In the second scene of the Induction to *A Shrew* Sly is won over to supposing that he is a Lord almost at once, but here he resists the proffered homage, and passes an implicit criticism on the lord's way of life. What his minions call a "foul spirit" can hardly strike us as such:

Ne'er ask me what raiment I'll wear; for I have no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet … (Ind. ii, 9-11)

Sly is stating a fact rather than a policy, but his use of the masterful instruction to the servants never to ask him such things implies a rejection of a way of life which does possess more than it can use. His rattling autobiography has no hint of apology, and it needs all the blandishments of music and sweet repose to swerve him. The mention of Semiramis, who made love to animals, in connection with his bed, would have made more sense to his audience than to him, conveying the hint that Sly is in moral danger of a curious kind. Semiramis is listed among Spenser's "Proude wemen, vaine, forgetfull of their yoke", for she exploited her husband's infatuation in order to steal his throne, and once queen her libidinous excesses knew no bounds. ¹ To a man who needs no more than one suit of clothes the strewing of the ground with flowers before he walks on it must have seemed supererogated indeed. The atmosphere of the hunt which pervaded the first scene is evoked again as he is offered his horses, hounds and hawks, as the lord had suggested in

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the first scene, and the wanton pictures, each of which enshrines an emblem which can be related to the theme of the main action.

    Adonis painted by a running brook,
    And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
    Which seem to move and wanton with her breath,
    Even as the waving sedges play with wind.    
    (Ind. ii. 52–5)

The only source for such an odd water-picture is Abraham Fraunce's Amintas Dale, where Cytherea makes love to Adonis's reflection in a stream. In his poem Shakespeare confuses the Venus and Adonis story with the Hermaphrodite story which precedes it in the Metamorphoses, to show Venus as a preying falcon and a starved eagle, driving her love away from her by the fury of her longing, for a man lists to hunt, and to hunt prey worthy of his mettle.

    We'll show thee Io as she was a maid
    And how she was beguiled and surprised,
    As lively painted as the deed was done.    
    (Ind. ii. 56–8)

The aspect that Shakespeare chooses to stress is that of the virgin surrounded by clouds, so that Jove could mate with her, an emblem which has so exact a reference to the wooing of Kate, that there is no need to explain it.

    Or Daphne roaming through a thorny wood,
    Scratching her legs that one shall swear she bleeds,
    And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep,
    So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn.    
    (Ind. ii. 59–62)

The picture is taken direct from Golding, whose Apollo says,

... alas alas how would it grieue my heart,  
To see thee fall among the briers, and that the  
bloud should start  
Out of thy tender legges. 1

However, Shakespeare's interpretation differs from Golding's in that he has chosen to imply that Daphne is hurting herself by her unnecessary flight from the love of a God, stressing the element of Golding's description of her "impacient and without a man", hating "as a heinous crime the bond of bridely bed", and suppressing the notion of the laurel as a fitting crown for virginity preserved. His emphasis may be compared with Spenser's in the Amoretti,

Proud Daphne scorning Phaebus louely fyre,  
on the Thessalian shore from him did flie:  
for which the gods in theyr reuengefull yre 2  
did her transforme into a laurell tree.

So all the emblems have a relevance to the chase of courtship, from Venus's sly importunings in the reeds, to Io helpless in Jove's cloud, to Daphne clinging to her masculine way of life, and fleeing the god of life and beauty. The peculiar sexual tension that characterises the wooing of Kate and Petruchio is present in this confusion of suggestive images. Sly's attitude to his "wife" opens another way into the understanding of the relationship of man and woman. When the Page enters asking for news of "her" lord, Sly does not recognise the relationship in which she stands to him, because of her servility.

Are you my wife, and will not call me husband?  
My men should call me "lord": I am your goodman.  
(Ind. ii. 106-7)

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1. Golding's Ovid, op. cit., fol. 9 recto.
He is speaking verse by now, but it is plain and strong, and makes his point with rigour and clarity. He cannot manage to call his wife Madam, but seeks to know her name: the nearest he can bring himself to utter is "Madam wife".

Among other titles, the ordinary and vsuall title (wife) is a milde and kinde title, and least offensive of all other: if an husbande give any other title to his wife, it must be such an one as manifesteth kindness, familiaritie, loue, and delight. Such are all the titles which Christ giueth to the Church ... but contrary are such titles as on the one side set the wife in too high a place ouer her husband, as Lady, Mistress, Dame, Mother &c. And on the other side, set her in too meane a rancke ...

This point is quite obscured in A Shrew where Sly treats his "wife" as a wench, and the principal entertainment is derived from the inappropriateness of his gross caresses. Here the implications of Sly's attitudes are much more subtle and demanding. In asking his wife's company through the spectacle that follows, Sly again brings the simple ethic of the common folk into the lord's house.

Come, madam wife, sit by my side, and let the world slip: we shall ne'er be younger. (Ind. ii. 143-4)

He has acquired this "wife" as suddenly as ever man could, but he has no difficulty in knowing how to treat her: he is gentle, affectionate and familiar. In his world there is no question of transcendent passion, any more than of dowry or breeding, but only the necessity of getting along together, of constituting a household which will survive the vicissitudes of fortune.

1. Of Domesticall Dvties Eight Treatises ... by William Govge. Printed by John Haviland for William Bladen ... 1622 (Written c.1604), fol. 371 recto.
THE LUCENTIO STORY

The comedy designed to purge through the beneficial action of mirth Sly's melancholic humours begins as any one of dozens of renaissance comedies, with the entrance of the student, Lucentio, newly arrived at his play of study. It is a foregone conclusion that he will be seduced from his studies by the blazing eyes of some local beauty, and involve himself in scrapes to win her. He would probably argue with his tutor about the relative merits of love and learning, and the argument would be resolved by the Pedant's ignominious infatuation for some slattern. Lucentio's opening speech does more than identify him as a sciocco giovane, for his precise remarks about the studies he will undertake have a genuine reference.

And therefore Tranio, for the time I study,
Virtue and that part of philosophy
Will I apply that treats of happiness
By virtue specially to be achieved. (I.i.17-20)

The specific Italianness of the setting is heavily emphasised in this speech, and not even the vagueness of the designation Lombardy will suffice to blur this specificity into the indication of a mere fictitious location. Tranio replies in wrong Italian to emphasise the foreignness.

1. Cf., to quote only a few examples, Antileo in the Vitio Muliebre, the situation in Cecchi's Assiulo and Perrin's Les Escolliers, and Armileo in La Talanta.

2. Shakespeare's use of the term Lombardy to include Padua can be compared with Fynes Moryson's use of the term Lombards on p.75 of his Itinerary... containing his ten yeeres travell... At London Printed by John Beale... 1617. As late as 1695 Dryden called Titian a Lombard painter (Dufresnay's Art of Painting, p.94).
So we have a young student newly arrived in Padua, having come from Pisa, to study ethics. In the last quarter of the sixteenth century Padua had become the stronghold of renaissance Aristotelianism, which developed a characteristic utilitarian ethic, carried to extremes especially in questions of aesthetics.

E non è dubbio che
l'ufficio del giudicioso, & perfetto poeta
non è altro, che render con prudenti artefici
i suoi cittadini virtuosi, & felice la sua repubblica, ... 1

The manifesto of this school is the Discorso intorno a quei principii, cause et accrescimenti che la Comedia, la Tragedia, et il Poema heroico ricevono dalla Philosophia morale, which describes the function of comedy in familiar terms, but with a new rigorous emphasis.

... si dice, la comedia essere una rappresentation della uita, specchio della consuetudine, imagine della verità, per institution de' padri di famiglia, per gouerno delle mogli, delle figluole, de' figloli, de' servitori per ridurgli alla tranquilità della mente & per inanimar i cittadini alla uita priuata, & alla beniuolenza della repubblica popolare. 2

The pseudo-Ciceronian canon has been interpreted in a specific fashion, so that comedy must not simply impart a true impression of how life is actually lived, but must teach the beholder how it ought to be lived. Aristotelian formalism dictated that comedy should not portray anyone so

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1. Discorso di Iason de Nores intorno a que' principii causse, et accrescimenti, che la comedia, la tragedia, et il poema heroico ricevono dalla philosophia morale, ... In Padova, Appresso Paulo Meieto 1587, fol. 42 verso.

2. De Nores, op. cit., fol. 30 verso.
bad that they merited punishment rather than joy at the end, for if they were left unpunished the comedy was immoral, and if they were punished the comedy lost its form and became inchoate. These views, scarcely more Philistine than Tolstoy's, caused great controversy, like the paper war that De Nores conducted with Guarini over the concept of the pastoral tragicomedy, which De Nores rejected both because it was tragicomedy, an inchoate notion, and because, being pastoral, it had no application to the life of the citizen. In fact the exchanges are tedious, and the interesting issues founder in a welter of argumentum ad hominem. The debate was famous enough to have reached English ears, even if Sidney, Spenser and Sir Edwin Sandys had not studied in Northern Italy. 1 Lucentio's account of his projected studies would have met with De Nores's approval, and in leaving the minor Aristotelian school of Pisa to plunge himself into the deeper matters broached in Padua, he is following the lead of many young Italian scholars, who wished to follow the stream of thought initiated in the work of Vincenzo Maggi, Francesco Piccolomini, il Genova and Robortello in the thirties, continued by the brothers Tomitano, Faustino Summo, Giacomo Zabarella, Giovanni Fasolo, and culminating in Riccoboni's Poetica in 1584.

Lucentio's unbelievable serious-mindedness is short-lived, for the words are still resounding when Baptista Minola and his two daughters cross the stage. Lucentio is instantly smitten by Bianca, or rather, by

her silence, which he interprets as "Maid's mild behaviour and sobriety"
(I. i. 71). The only utterance she makes he finds worthy of Minerva, the
goddess of warlike fortitude who "had a manly countenance and fierce,
and glittering and flaming eyes". 1 The justification for such a parallel
is so slight, that the line may well have provoked a laugh. The second
stage in his rake's progress is accomplished when he allows himself to
be overcome by love-in-idleness, the flower that sprang from the blood
of heedless Adonis, whose drops betwitch the lovers in A Midsummer Night's
Dream. The humanists, who for the most part preferred to fly the disease
of love, believed quite seriously that fancy invaded the idle mind, and
corroded its tranquillity irrevocably. Erasmus develops Diogenes's view,
with characteristic acidity.

... this punge or guerie of loue dooeth
especially above all others, invade and possesse
suche persones as been altogether drowned in
idleness. And so cometh it to passe that whyle
theye over the themselves wholly to idleness, they
stumble on a thyng yt filleth their handes as full
of cowneous busynesse, as theye are hable to awaye
withall, and yet in the meane tyme the deviill of the
one chare of good werke theye dooen. 2

1. Fraunce, The third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch, op. cit., fol. 40 recto, cf. The Fountain of Ancient Fiction, wherein
is lively depictured the Images and Statues of the gods of the
Ancients, with their proper and particulare expositions. Done out of
Italian into English, by Richard Linche Gent. London Printed by
Adam Islip. 1599. "Minerva" passim, Sig. Si verso, ff.

2. Erasmus Apophthegmes op. cit., fol. 117 verso.
So Lucentio finds himself in the commonplace situation of Euphues, lost to learning through the pernicious power of love. He sees himself, again laughably, as Dido confiding in Anna, at assuming whose person Tranio may be fairly allowed a double take. The treatment is almost absurdly formal: Lucentio announces the absolute necessity of his having Bianca,

Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio, 
If I achieve not this young modest girl. (I.i.157-8)

Tranio accentuates the formalised nature of the situation with an inappropriate maxim culled from Lyly's Grammar. Lucentio the scholar absurdly congratulates Tranio on the soundness of his counsel and his schoolbook Latin, and reveals that all his high-flown dedication is dissipated. He unconsciously acknowledges the metamorphosis in the next literary parallel that he finds for himself.

O yes, I saw sweet beauty in her face, 
Such as the daughter of Agenor had, 
That made great Jove humble him to her hand, 
When with his knees he kissed the Cretan strand. (I.i.169-72)

Golding moralises all the metamorphoses of the gods as analogues of our fall from grace into bestiality, as "Jove became a Bull ... for his trull". ¹ This particular example is very easily moralised in this way, for example:

Les anciens ... lesquels metamorphosans Jupiter en Taureau, pour contenter ses amoureuses flames, ...

¹. Golding's Ovid, op. cit., The Preface, Sig. Aii recto.
nous ont voulu figurer, combien ceux qui reduits a
porter le oiqg de l'amour, se rendent esclaves des
Dames, sont constraints souffrir d'indignitez, &
ioffer des personnages differens de ce qu'ils sont.

Lucentio is unconscious of the genuine applicability of his image to
his situation: urged on by Tranio he plans his metamorphosis;
abandoning his gentlemanly status to his servant, he will become a slave
to serve Bianca. Tranio's words upon accepting his odd commission
strike a disquieting note.

I am content to be Lucentio,
Because so well I love Lucentio. (I. i. 218-9)

If Lucentio loved himself a little better he would not be so ready to
abandon his ambitions and relinquish his social status and responsibilities
to court a lass he has glimpsed across the piazza. The situation is
thoroughly conventional, but our responses to it have been controlled by
the tone of the writing and an imaginative context which prevents us from
identifying with Lucentio, whose motivation is so exaggeratedly speedy
and simple. In I.Supplesi Ariosto criticises Dulipo's masquerade, and
allows him a considerable measure of suffering but this responsibility on
the part of the author does not survive as long as the character of the
sciocco giovane, who is later permitted to embroil himself and cause
needless suffering to all the other dramatis personae without any hint of
reprobation. Tranio is fully developed as the cunning servant, for the

1. Les Metamorphoses d'Ouide De mouveau traduites en francois Et
enrichies de figures chacune selon son sujet. Avec XV Discours
Contenans l'Explication morale des fables, A Paris Chez la veufue
starring role in their masquerade is his, and all that remain to make up the Italianate recipe are the magnifico and the doctor. Wentersdorff's arguments for the single authorship of both plots on the grounds of the image patterns common to both are persuasive: the difficulty of reconciling the generally inferior quality of the writing of the Lucentio plot disappears if we assume that Shakespeare is adopting a literary, dignified style for the sub-plot, to contrast it more significantly with the native vigour of the main-plot.

In order to secure the loyalty of Biondello, Lucentio explains his masquerade by a self-calamity,

For in a quarrel since I came ashore I kill'd a man and fear I was descried. (I. i. 233-4)

and so their masquerade begins to entail its own consequences.

The amorous old man makes his appearance in Act I, Scene ii. He is quite accurately described by Shakespeare as a pantaloon, and is not, in fact, the doctor of Ariosto's play. The Pantaloon is the mask of the magnifico, Venetian, grave, perhaps a little ridiculous in dress and language. His function is to advise, reprehend, command and persuade. His weak points are amorousness and avarice. The character of the doctor is not clearly defined in Ariosto's play, having little other defining


characteristic than senility: perhaps Shakespeare is working from some popularised version of the play in which the character has crystallised to that of the magnifico. At all events it is difficult to understand how Miss Lea can have made the statement that Gremio "is imported into The Taming of the Shrew from the plot of the Supposes", when Gascoigne does not change the type of the Doctor, the traditional enemy of the Magnifico. The type of the Bolognese Doctor can be found in the Pedant who plays the feigned father, designated by Ariosto as simply the "Sanese". Shakespeare's alterations make the sub-plot more than ever representative of the comedy that developed out of the Ariostan tradition, the decadent comedy against which Castelvetro was already reacting in 1576. Luigi Pasqualigo rejects the whole of the commedia nuova in these terms:

Hora s' alcun di uoi s'e ridotto con opinione di ridere sperando di uedere rappresentare la semplicità d'un vecchio o vero antico Venetiano (i.e. a Pantalone), le sciochezze d'un facchino, ouero le dishonesta d'un parasito, & l'immonditie d'un ebrio, cose a mio giudizio vergognose da rappresentarsi a nobili spiriti, percióche questa Comedia diversa quasi da tutte le altre, e còposta in una sola lingua, & e assai lunga ...

Varchi explains the decadence of contemporary Italian comedy through a cleaving to the example of Plautus instead of Terence, from

2. See the epigraph to this chapter, taken from Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta per Lodovico Castelvetro. Riuscita, & ammendata secondo l'originale, & la mente dell'autore ... Stampata in Basilea ad instanza di Pietro de Sedabonis ... M D LXXVI, p. 61.
3. Luigi Pasqualigo, Il Fedele, op. cit., Sig. A5 recto.
4. La Suocera, Commedia di M. Benedetto Varchi ... In Firenze Appresso Bartolomeo Sermartelli. MDLXIX, dedicatory address to Cosimo de' Medici, Sig. Ali verso.
whose Eunuchus and Captivi Ariosto's play was originally derived.

The amorous old man and the disguised servant confront each other in the next scene but Lucentio's dark purpose in having Tranio present himself as a suitor for Bianca's hand does not become clear until he has to outbid the Pantaloon in Baptist's desperate mart. With equal justification Tranio taunts Gremio with his age, and Gremio Tranio with his youth. Baptist pays no attention to the substance of this debate, revealing enough in itself, and there is great irony in his non sequitur,

'Tis deeds must win the prize; and he, of both,
That can assure my daughter greatest dower
Shall have my Bianca's love. (II.i.336-8)

What Baptist takes for deeds is merely the assurance of a larger dowry. Gremio describes his house in fantastic terms, until it seems the tent of the Grand Cham, but the closing lines of his vaunt are weighty in implication.

Myself am struck in years, I must confess;
And if I die to-morrow, this is hers,
If whilst I live she will be only mine. (II.i.354-6)

Gremio must have stood before his audience already horned, for the marriage of May and December leads to whoredom and misery. Tranio's coarser humour underlines the suggestion.

That "only" came well in. (II.i.357)

Tranio triples all Gremio's offers, especially by the mention of a jointure, usually one-third of the husband's whole estate, which exceeds Gremio's whole land revenue. Likewise he triples the argosy, and throws
in assorted smaller craft. The contest being conducted in purely mercenary terms he wins hands down, except that Baptista is too shrewd a tradesman to forgo an assurance from the real holder of this wealth, Lucentio’s father. Until this point Shakespeare has been inventing upon the scheme of I Suppositi: it is at this point in the intrigue that Ariosto’s play actually begins. As we know, Baptista has made a mistake, abandoning the man whose honour and condition he knows for a stranger whose claims are in fact preposterous, as Gremio points out (II.i.394–6). In fact Baptista commits the paradigm mistake outlined by Barclay in The Ship of Fooles:

If that a man of hye or lowe degree,
Would spouse his daughter vnto a straunge man,
He nought enquireth of his honestie,
Of his behaour, nor if he nurtour can:
But if he be riche in landes and good, then
He shall be prayed his daughter for to haue,

Though he be but a bondeman or a knaue.

Tranio is both a bond man and a knave. It is he who decided the next development in the intrigue,

I see no reason but supposed Lucentio
Must get a father, call’d — supposed Vincentio.

(II.i.401–2)

and off he goes, congratulating himself upon a witty reversal of the natural order.

1. Stultifera Nauis, qua omnium mortalium narratur stultitia, admodum vitilis & necessaria ab omnibus ad suam salutem perlegenda, e Latino sermone in nostrum vulgarem versa, & iam diligenter impressa, An. Do. 1570. The Ship of Fooles, wherein is shewed the folly of all States, with divers other workes adjoyned vnto the same, very profitable and fruitfull for all men. Translated out of Latin into Englishe by Alexander Barclay Priest. (Col.: London, John Cawood), fol. 97.
The first lines of Act III bring us once more into the atmosphere of Lucentio's first entrance, as the feigned tutors wrangle about the merits of their respective disciplines. The serious points of the function of music as a mirror of celestial harmony, and the priority of actual instruction and mental discipline to such delight, ironically recall the aesthetic problems nobly gestured to by heart-whole Lucentio. The two threads of renaissance didacticism are here summarised. On the one hand it was claimed that the mere contemplation of harmonious structures ennobled the soul, the principle of the construction of the fabulous edifices of the Hypnerotomachia, and on the other hand, the more rigorous didacticists would have had all literature instructive and exemplary, as a primary consideration. Lucentio's reference to intellectual discipline chimes from him mechanically, and cannot be brought to bear upon Bianca's unregenerate spirit, for she acts upon Tranio's principle, learning her lessons as she pleases herself. Hortensio's fury at her encouragement of the Pedant's advances doubtless distorts the view that he takes of her, but her pertness in disposing of him (III.1.80-1) provides some justification for his ascription to her of the attributes hitherto applied to Kate.

Yet if thy thoughts, Bianca, be so humble,
To cast thy wandering eyes on every stale,
Seize thee that list: if once I find thee ranging,
Hortensio will be quit with thee by changing. (III.1.89-92)

Lucentio is the lure, disguised, claiming wealth and gentility (for his disguise is not adopted like Aurelius's in A Shrew to test his beloved's disinterestedness) and Bianca is stooping to it, exactly as her father
greedily favours the disguised serving-man, placing him beside Bianca, in
the place of the bride and groom, at Kate’s wedding feast. Hortensio’s
reaction to his disappointment is to make another mistake, which may
have grave consequences,

I will be married to a wealthy widow,
Ere three days pass, which hath as long loved me
As I have loved this proud disdainful haggard...
(III.1.37–9)

The rich wife is more likely to bully her husband than any other,
especially if she is advanced in years. The unfortunate lady who was
lapped in a morell’s skin used to taunt her husband—

A rag on thine (arse) thou shouldest not haue,
Excepte my friendes had geuen it thee;
Therefore I tell thee well, thou drunken knaue,
That arte not he that shall rule me.

and Basille warned those who sought wealthy wives that they are
likely to be “ladylyke and hygh in the ynnestep”. Tranio takes it for

The Supposes material develops further with the representation on
the stage of the reported encounter with the man who is to play Lucentio’s
father, not a Sienese this time, but a Mantuan, and a Pedant. He plays
his part with quiet dignity, so that the uneasiness of the situation is
heightened. Baptista is blundering in the dark, revealing how little he

1. A merry Iest of a Shrewde and curste Wyfe lapped in Morelles Skin
   (Hazlitt, Remains of Early Popular Poetry of England, Vol. IV,
   p. 208.

2. Theodore Basille, the golden boke of christen matrimonye, op. cit.,
   Sig. Bi1i verso.
understands and how much he is deceived by all about him,

Right true it is, your son Lucentio here
Both love my daughter, and she loveth him,
Or both dissemble deeply their affections. (IV. iv. 39–41)

Tranio and Bianca are both dissemblers: they may even mock
Baptista by exchanging mock glances and feigned caresses of love. Now
that the prize is within his grasp, Baptista will make all sure, so the
clandestine marriage is planned, without announcing the banns, so that
Gremio cannot object. Only the fact that there has been an even greater
deception, so that Bianca will not in fact marry the disguised servant,
saves Baptista from disgrace. Tranio’s comment has a strange irony.

The worst is this, that at so slender warning,
You are like to have a thin and slender pittance.
(IV. iv. 59–60)

Biondello’s extraordinary insolence with his disguised master
crystallises the criticism implicit in the scene. He forces Lucentio to
contemplate the matter of his degradation.

Baptista is safe, talking with the deceitful father
of a deceiving son ... (IV. iv. 81–2)

... they are busied about a counterfeit assurance:
take you assurance of her, cum privilegio ad
impremendum solemn: to the church! take the priest,
clerk and some sufficient honest witnesses.
(IV. iv. 90–4)

His vulgar pun probably has the opposite effect of that indicated by
its words, in view of the extent to which printing monopolies were
respected, and Lucentio, left interrogating Biondello monosyllabically is
made to look pretty foolish. Biondello's contemptuous parallel with the
girl who went into the garden for parsley "to stuff a rabbit" and returned
married does not draw a response, and he goes off, referring to Bianca
as Lucentio's appendix, a discourtesy which he does not even think to
reprehend. His last couplet hardly alters the impression he has created,
of bewilderment and malleability.

When the real Vincentio is the subject of Kate's mad mistaking on
the public road, following immediately upon the scene in which his son
cuts such a sorry figure, one feels an immediate anxiety for him. In
case we have forgotten what his real social significance is, Kate has been
forced to define it; he is a "reverend father", and she and Petruchio
respectfully acknowledge their relationship to him. To sharpen the irony
which deepens in the following scenes, they comment happily upon the joy
of seeing his honest son, whom they believe of course, to be the false
Lucentio played by Tranio. The next act places us once more on the
scene of the clapped-up wedding, with the insolent Biondello, who is
defying his master's instructions, shepherding the spouses to the church,
into which Petruchio and Katharine bring the bewildered old man. In the
Supposes Philogano builds up the picture of a father's love by the long
description of the long and difficult voyage he has made from Sicily, and
the letters from Erostrato refusing to come home because he has been
too engrossed in his studies: Vincentio's joy and promises of a merry-
making have the same effect. The difference is that when Philogano
insults the Sienese, and upbraids Dulipo, the culprits simply return insults,
and run away from him, so that he resorts to the doctor to gain his rights. Shakespeare exploits the situation much more disturbingly, for Petruchio turns upon Vincentio with

Why, how now, gentleman! why, this is flat knavery to take upon you another man's name. (V.i.55-6)

and the fact that he is saying it to the wrong man shows just how knavish an act it is. Biondello's cool denial of ever having seen his master puts Vincentio in the position of Jenkyn Carewaile. Kate and Petruchio withdraw from him to observe the way that matters fall out, as he beats Biondello. Surrounded by Tranio, Baptista, the Pedant and the servants, the stranger is really threatened. When he rages at Tranio's finery, Tranio takes advantage of the incomprehensibility of his outcries to call him mad. The forces of this feigning society close menacingly around him, as we learn to our horror, that this is Tranio's gratitude to the man who brought him up. This is the climax of the action engineered by Tranio; he is a specifically and deliberately Italian type, the conspiring, servile, dishonest servant out of whom the Zanne developed, represented perhaps in English by Jack Juggler. He contrasts neatly with the native English fool, Grumio, who is the common man, for he has a fertile imagination and no sense of responsibility or scruple: he must be able to bear the weight of blame that Vincentio will put upon him which no Grumio or Dromio or Launce could possibly do. The disruptive potential of such a character is summed up in Vincentio's agonised cry that his son has been murdered. With appalling audacity Tranio, secure in his adopted character, calls the officers to take the old
man to prison. Not even Gremio can summon up the courage to deny the false Lucentio, and nothing remains to forestall disaster except the shamefaced entrance of Lucentio. Fatherly feeling causes the deflection of Vincentio's wrath to Tranio, but the audience feels that Lucentio is lucky to be let off so lightly, for the element of blame persists, as the fathers withdraw, the servants having fled, to "sound the depth of this knavery" (V.ii.135). In the violence and confusion of a powerful scene, Lucentio's explanation,

Love wrought these miracles. (V.ii.121)

must sound particularly feeble. All these mixed feelings are suddenly rushed off the stage and out of sight, so that Petruchio and Kate can exchange their first kiss, so that both plots are brought to their merry end, and we are prepared for the dramatic epilogue in which they will be specifically evaluated. We have seen enough of Lucentio to identify him with Ingelend's Disobedient Child, the anglicised version of Textor's Juvenis. Like Lucentio he travelled to a strange town to study, but was distracted by the charms of a lady whom he married "incontinent"; his servants discuss the matter hardheadedly:

Mancooke. I thynke she be a shrew, I tell thee playnely,
And full of debate, malyce and stryfe ... 

Maydecocke. What, thoughge she be now so neate and so nyce,
And speketh as gentle as euer I hearde: 
Yet yongmen, whiche be both wyttie and wyse,
Such lookes, and such wordes, shalde not regarde.

Their fears are justified, and the rash young man lives to regret

1. A pretie and mery new Enterlude: called the Disobedient Child. Compiled by Thomas Ingelend ... Imprinted at London ... by Thomas Colwell, Sig. C2 recto.
his precipitate match, like the "new maried studient that plaied fast or lose" in Tottel's Miscellany:

A Studient at his boke so plast:
That welth he might hame womne,
From boke to wife did flete in hast,
From wealth to wo to runne.
Now, who hath plaied a feater cast,
Since iugling first begonne?
In knitting of him self so fast, 1
Him selfe he hath vndonne.

Gascoigne's Glass of Government makes much the same point at
much greater length: Shakespeare's moralism is probably as strenuous,
but his artistry is greater: we come to appreciate Lucentio's mistake in
a fashion as subtle in its own way as the plight of Lydgate in Middlemarch.

Shakespeare's use of the Supposes material is far from extensive
and not at all parasitic. The character of Bianca cannot be explained by
reference to Gascoigne or even to Ariosto: the young man of the Supposes
is not represented in a wooing situation, nor is he married before the
arrival of his father. His dilemma is simply that he has pretended to be
a servant in order to seduce Polinesta, and now, with her projected
marriage to the doctor, the matter is sure to come out. To reveal the
situation is to risk death and disgrace and to stay silent to lose Polinesta
forever. Ariosto's is a beautifully classical treatment of the young man's
efforts to extricate himself from this scrape, when Polinesta's condition
is revealed, he is put in prison and his father is denied by his servants,

1. Songes and sonettes, op.cit., fol. 64.
until Cleandro acts for him, and all ends well. Ariosto does criticise his hero's imprudence, and allows considerable anxiety to creep in, but he is not interested in the relationship of the two lovers as any more than a fait accompli, given at the beginning of the of the play. If, as C. C. Seronsky maintains, "supposes" are to be seen as the unifying theme in Shakespeare's play, it is well to distinguish that they be Ariosto's suppositi rather than Gascoigne's pedestrian understanding of the term, for he obligingly marks out all the places in the play where a mistake occurs in a character's knowledge of the facts. Ariosto is concerned with something much more profound, for self-deception and mistaking one's role in society play the principal roles. Castelvetro's definition of inganni as the second manner of writing comedies, is itself derived from Ariosto, and includes the situations described by him as suppositi. Castelvetro is speaking of the principles of composing comedies however, and not the theme or subject matter: to make of supposings a theme for a comedy would seem to be a fairly navel-regarding activity unless they were collocated to some wider theme: much Italian comedy is of course navel-regarding in just this way, doing nothing but working a symmetrical series of


2. Vide the Prologues to both prose and verse versions of the play.

3. Castelvetro op. cit., p. 93.
mistakings into a pleasing and harmonious whole; but Shakespeare's genius is too genuinely committed to permit such aestheticism.

Certainly Mr. Seronisky is right in considering that the Ariostan Suppositi had deepened Shakespeare's treatment of the shrew theme, but that is tantamount to saying that the comedy is more competent and more conscious of its literary context. Cinzio was aware of the reactionary nature of his claim when in 1553 he wrote that

hoggidi le lodevoli (comedies) sono di una sola maniera, & sono quelle, che imitano quelle dell'Ariosto. 1

As influences on structure Ariosto's comedies are still alive, but the intelligence that marks his treatment of the issues raised by his play is not so easily inherited. Castelvetro and Varchi would both have agreed that the Lucentio plot was like the decadent literary comedy of which Varchi complained:

... la Commedia venne tanto a mutarsi da se stessa a poco a poco, e diventare ogni altra cosa, che Commedia, che le più disoneste, e le più inutili, anzi dannose composizioni, che siano hoggi nella lingua nostra sono le Commedie: ... 2

In adapting the Supposes material, Shakespeare reveals that he understands the issues involved in the original, and how the tradition has declined, and what attitude, as a writer of comedies, he takes to the fashionable form as it exists in his time, all at once. It is not

1. Discorsi di M. Giovanbattista Giraldi Cinthio ... intorno al comporre de i Romanzi, delle Commedie, e delle Tragedie ... In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari et Fratelli, MDLIII, p. 219.

2. Varchi, La Suocera, op. cit., Sig. Aij verso.
surprising then that certain critics have felt the writing of this section to be inferior, because Lucentio speaks the language of artifice, an artifice of which Shakespeare disapproves, and therefore the verse does not operate to involve us in the action, but permits detachment and criticism, without being patronising or wearisome.  

From the injurious masquerade directed by Lucentio and Tranio, we must now turn to the manipulation of illusion for nobler ends by Petruchio.

PETRUCHIO

Lucentio's grandiose reference to the rigorous aesthetic developed by the Studio di Padova is ironically denied by the action in which he chooses to take part, but Petruchio's comedy satisfies their sternest wish.

Even if De Nores had not specifically included the governing of wives among the special topics of comedy, the most cursory study of Aristotle's Politica makes it clear that the nucleus of society is the husband and wife relationship which precedes all others, and upon which all others depend. Torquato Tasso referred specifically to marriage as the first society in his panegyric to marriage, in answer to his brother's diatribe against it,

Thou first didst bring mankind to dwell in a house, enclosing him within a wall, causing him to build

Citties and Townes to inhabit in, where before men liued like sauage beasts in the woods and desarts, dispersersed one from an other ... 1

It constitutes the first society in another sense as well, for all other social duties have this as their headspring. 2 The relationship of man and wife is paralleled with that of the soul and the body, of the head and the members, of reason and the passions, and of Christ and his church. Petrarch uses the parallel between the soul and the body and marriage when he calls the soul "L'errante mia consorte" as Tasso points out; he continues

It is then a vertue in a woman, to know howe to honor and obey her husband, not as a Servant doth his Maister, or the bodye the mind, but ciuilly and in such sort, as we see the Cittizens in wel governed Citties obey the Lawes, and reuerence their Magistrates, or so as in our soules, wherein as wel the well dysposed powers as the orders of the Cittizens within their Citties, compell affections to be subiect vnto reason: ... 3

1. Tasso, Of Marriage and Wiving op. cit., Sig. K3 recto.

2. Cf. Vitis Palatina, op. cit., pp. 4–5: Man and wife are primum par, fundamentum parium, the first originall match of all others. All other couples and paires, as father and sonne, maister and servant, king & subject come out of this paire.

3. The householders Philosophie... First written in Italian by that excellent Oratour and Poet Signior Torquato Tasso, and now translated by T.K. ... At London Printed by J.C. for Thomas Hacket, ... MD.LXXXVIII, fol. 10 verso.
Smith in his *Commonwealth* sees marriage as a microcosm of the state. Knox refers repeatedly to the parallel of the soul and body in the *First Blast of the Trumpet*, and Hermann of Cologne exhorts the husband to be "an heade, and sauiour to the wyfe, as Christe is the heade, and the sauioure of the congregacion", while the wife must be subject to the husband "as the flesh is vnto the spirite". The comparison with the relation of the head and members naturally involves the analogy of the relationship of Christ with his church, and the interpretation can be traced widely, for example, in Carr's *Godly Form of Household Government*. It is this fundamental relationship which will be clarified by the action of Petruchio's comedy, which fulfils the most rigorous canons ever devised for creative writing, in a play so unassuming and lusty, that even the editors of the New Cambridge edition, who are intelligent and honorable men, could say, "it is of its nature

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2. Vide e.g. fol. 20 verso of the edition of 1558.

3. A simple and religious consultation of vs Herman ... Archebishop of Colone ... Imprinted in 1547. I.D., Sig. ii i verso cf. ii iv verso cf. A briefe and plaine declaration of the duety of married folkes ... by Hermon Archbishop of Colaine ... newly translated into the English tongue by Haunce Dekin (Col.: Imprinted at London by I.C. for H.S.), Sig. Av recto.

rough, criad; part of the fun at those fairs at which honest rustics won prizes by grinning through horse-collars. ¹

In The Taming of a Shrew, the coming of Ferando is prepared for as Polidor and Aurelius decide that they need a decoy for the eldest to get at the younger. This device is not altogether satisfactory for it robs Ferando of the initiative, and when he states his intention of wooing Katherine because Alfonso has offered him 6,000 crowns, the effect is to diminish his stature and cloud his integrity. Petruchio bursts on the scene in a curiously tumultuous squabble with his man. Moreover, we see at once that Petruchio, who has expressed himself ambiguously will not explain what should by other criteria be obvious. It is a recognised comic technique, and it also is revealing of his character as an educator. When Hortensio appears Petruchio has no difficulty in changing his demeanour. Grémio's explanation of the situation if it can be called such reveals that Petruchio is no stripling, and that he is not to be trifled with. Moreover, a principle has been stated:

... I should knock you first,
And then I know after who comes by the worst.
(I.ii.13–4)

Would to God I had well-knocked at first,
Then had not Grumio come by the worst.
(I.ii.34–5)

As an old soldier, Petruchio knows very well that the attacker has a moral advantage over the defender. His next words reveal him as a

man arrived at the normal age and condition to take a wife. He is in full possession of his legal powers, regulates his own income and expenditure, and his house stands in need of a mistress. Thirty-two years of age will place him squarely on the norm discerned by Mr. Laslett from parish register statistics, and, more relevantly perhaps, since the statistics for the Tudor period are by and large lacking, identify him as the mature man, fit to marry, of the domestic theorists of the sixteenth century.

Aristotle had defined the ideal age of the husband as thirty-five, and of his wife, eighteen, so that they would coincide in the greatest period of their adult vigour for childbearing. Piccolomini, while acknowledging thirty-five to forty-nine as the age of maturity, which neither is callow and hasty like youth, or rigid and declining in vigour like age, accepts thirty as the proper age for his young friend to marry, so that he shall have the vigour and sagacity to educate his growing sons. Primaudaye is of the same opinion, on the ground of "the shortnes of mans daies", and Bacon expresses the principle more simply, when he claims that the husband must be able to support his wife independently of his family and friends.

Hortensio's offer of a rich, ill-favoured wife is tempered by the fact that we have already seen her, and know she is not ugly, so the rallying

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tone of the next interchange is set. Hortensio is trying Petruchio to see how serious his intention of wiving is, and Petruchio in turn is making it very clear that he does not want to make love, but to find a wife. He overstates his case deliberately, so that the irrelevancies that audiences expect on the stage if not in real life are eliminated. He expects, not to fall in love, but to find a woman whom he can love. His wife is to be his equal in wealth and social status, in obedience to the universal counsel,

But especially let him beware that intendeth to marrie, that these things concurre and meete together, namely, that in theyr states there be an equalitie, for where there is no equalitie of condition, there can be no quietnesse of life, ...  

"... a man should take a wife neither richer nor poorer then himselfe" said Guazzo, and Petruchio, despite his own mock-cynical insistence upon Kate's money, is doing just that. He does not expect blissful transports, but the solid advantages that marriage will confer upon a man of his age and social standing. He will be one of the "best binders in the hedge of the Commonwealth" for he has understood Fuller's terse warning,

Deceive not thy self by overexpecting happinesse 
In the married estate.  3

1. Averall, A Dyall for dainty Darlings, op. cit., Sig. Fiii verso.

2. The ciuile Conversation of M. Stephen Guazzo, written first in Italian, diuided into foure booke, the first three translated out of French by G. pettie ... the fourth ... now translated out of Italian into English by Barth. Young, ... Imprinted at London by Thomas East. 1586, fol. 122 verso.

Grumio, in taking Petruchio's position literally as is his wont, brings in the vulgar but universal parallel of the wife and the horse, which may be found in Aristotle, Socrates, Xenophon, Plutarch and Cato. In the older play, Kate is specifically compared to the Thracian horse; Shakespeare now keeps the image clear of any direct application to Kate except in the use of verbs like "curbed" and "bridled", but it is strongly present in the imaginative background, especially in the great icon of Petruchio on his diseased horse, which this speech of Grumio's prepares for. The image is used in many ways in Renaissance iconography, but perhaps the applicable one for Petruchio's case is that of the unbridled horse of love, which is illustrated in the *Hypnerotomachia*, and is probably derived from that of Barberini's *Documenti d'Amore*. The image is explained and justified at length in Caracciolo's *La Gloria del Cavallo*.

In the Induction, the lord unthinkingly placed horse and hounds before wife; Grumio puts Kate on a level with a horse, and Petruchio significantly advances her. As Lodovico Dolce sharply remarked, men cared more to understand their horses than their women summarising Sir Thomas More's argument in the *Utopia*. Grumio's description of

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1. *Documenti d'amore* di M. Francesco Barberino. (Col.: in Roma Nella Stamperia di Vitale Mascardi. MDCXL), Fig. facing p. 356.

2. *La gloria del cavallo* opera dell'illustre S. Pasquale Carriacolo ... In Vinegia appresso Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari MDLVXI, pp. 50 ff.

3. *De gli ammaestramenti pregiatissimi, Che appartengono alla Educazione, & honoreuole, e virtuosa vita virginale, maritale e vedovile Libri Tre ...* di Lodovico Dolce Vinitiano ... In Vinegia appresso Barezzo Barezzi. MDXII, p. 2.

4. A frutefull pleaunt, & witte worke, of the best state of a publique weale, and of the newe yle, called Vtopia: ... by Sir Thomas More ... and translated into Englishe by Raphe Robinson ... Imprinted at London, by Abraham Vele, ... (1556), fol. 93v–94.
Petruchio's intention in terms of taking an "old trot, a puppet or an aglet baby" makes it clear that he would no more take such to wife than buy fifty-two diseased horses, and finally eliminates the sordid suggestions of greed attributed to Petruchio. Kate has wealth enough, is young and beauteous, and her breeding known to Petruchio as equal to his own. When Hortensio who would not wed Katharine for a mine of gold, flings himself into the arms of a wealthy widow, we have the clearest example of one who misunderstood Petruchio's mode of proceeding. Once he has established her suitability, Petruchio is as importunate as any lover in his desire to confront the maid, not only as future husband, but also as wife-tamer, as Grumio gives us to understand, with peculiar notions of education by rope-tricks, or rhetoric. Grumio, anticipating Petruchio's action with glee, pauses for an acid comment on the action of the sub-plot.

Here's no knavery! See, to beguile the old folks
How the young folks lay their heads together.
(I.ii.139-140)

From the first Petruchio refuses to take Kate's brawling seriously. When other men pale before her ineffectual rages, Petruchio confidently expects to be able to ignore them: in describing them in terms of all the furies of nature, he suggests by contrast the real frailty of the single woman, and makes it clear that the battleground is his element. He speaks of her as of a worthy opponent whom he wishes to grapple with himself.

Sir, sir, the first's for me; let her go by. (I.ii.256)
Our first glimpse of Petruchio's methods is given us when he meets
Baptista: by specifically describing Kate as fair and virtuous, he pretends
that what should be the case is the case, preserving Baptista's and Kate's
honour and not demeaning himself. It is mean of Baptista to deny what he
says, but Baptista thinks he is being mocked; instead Petruchio is obeying
the rule of the psalmist quoted by Carr:

They that seeke after my life, lay snares, and they
that go about to do me euill, talke wicked thinges,
and imagine deceite continually: But I as a deafe
man, heard not and am a dumbe man, which openeth
not his mouth. Thus I am as a man that heareth not,
and in whose mouth are no reproofoes. 1

This is how Carr thought that the husband should maintain his wife's
honour, which is, as De la Primaudaye argues, a part of his own honour.
The contrast with Baptista's indignity in this exchange does Petruchio's work
for him. As well, the attribution to Kate of characteristics which the world
is convinced that she does not have, may give her new heart to claim them,
to strive for them, to escape from the expectations and interpretations of
others to play a freer and juster role. Already Petruchio presents himself
to Kate's father as her ally, while he does not scruple to make it clear that
he has washed his hands of her. The odd thing about Petruchio's asking
about Kate's dowry, which is a necessary formality, is not that he should ask
for it, but that Baptista, who is later so greedy in arranging Bianca's match,
does not think to ask what surety Petruchio is offering on his part. Kate's
fractiousness has succeeded in rendering her unsaleable. What Petruchio

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¹. A godly forme of household gouernement, op. cit., p. 186.
offers is extraordinarily generous, for it was normal to give the widow
the use of one-third of her husband's lands, for use until her death or
remarriage. Other arrangements, such as leaving the whole estate in
the hands of the widow could be made in the church-porch by special
covenant. Petruishio makes clear by this that he is prepared to repose
the greatest trust in his wife. Although Kate has not been auctioned off
like Bianca, her jointure is actually greater than her sister's.

The formalities dealt with Petruishio explains his attraction to such
a match, in terms of the similarity of their natures, another necessary
ground for marriage.

Moreover, let there be a lykenesse in theyr
manners, and a unitie in theyr mindes, least
if there affections be variable, they become
seperable: for where there is no likenesse in
manners, there can be no soundnesse in
freendshippe: ...

In Petruishio's words, there is also suggested a wonderful kind of
sexual compatibility:

I am as preremptory as she proud-minded;
And where tworaging fires meet together
They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.

(II. i. 132-4)

1. Vide the section on tenant in dower in Lytelton's Temures and the
chapter in Smith's Commonwealth, op. cit., pp. 130 ff. "Of wiuies
and mariages".

2. Averell, A Dyall for dainty Darlings, op. cit., Sig. Fii verso.
On the one hand he stresses the basic similarity between them, and on the other the naturalness of their commerce, however turbulent. In the paean to the marriage of James I's daughter and the Palatine, the Bishop of London explained every marital failure as failure to observe the principle of *similitudo mater amoris*.

And the whole infelicity of marriage for the most part, that illiad of evils which accompanieth some matches, is when this *sicut* is wanting, when men choose not *similes* their likes, when matches are made of such as match not; ...

This similarity does not merely consist in that of estate and age, but approaches a notion of psychological compatibility. Petruchio, in distinguishing himself from the babes that woo, implies that he knows his own needs, and that only a Kate will satisfy them. The clash between them will be as natural as the visitation of the winds among the mountains. When he remarks that Kate will make a better soldier than a musician, Hortensio unwittingly underlines the similarity of temperament between them, and we are not surprised when Petruchio carols with anticipatory glee at this manifestation of his adversary's mettle. Alone, he explains his policy to the audience: he will act towards Kate as if she were as he would have her be, while baffling her and forcing her to new shifts. He will treat her well when she patently does not deserve it, so that the violent resentment that poisons her relationships may dissipate in wonderment and, eventually, trust.

When they meet in hand to hand combat, Kate is instantly at a loss, baffled by the use of the affectionate and domestic diminutives of her name, and

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1. *Vitis Palatina op. cit.*, p. 15 of *Dolce, Ammaestramenti op. cit.*, p. 53, who discusses the question in terms redolent of the *Khamasutra*. 
the curious mixture of flattering and unflattering epithets he chooses to apply, so that her resentment must be as incoherent as his offence. She persists in trying to reverse the natural order, so that Petruchio becomes her horse, and she may saddle and bridle him, but Petruchio insists upon *righting* the imagery, and so Kate finds herself cornered in embarassing equivocations, which underline her sexual role. She reacts with childish violence, with blows and insults, but bit by bit, Petruchio gains the upper hand. She tries to sneer, implying that he has cut a sorry figure in what she recognises is a hand-to-hand encounter of a deeply personal and sexual kind,

> No cock of mine; you caw too like a craven. (II.i.226)

> When she attempts to withdraw he detains her with the speech that we have been waiting for, in which he denies that she has comported herself in this offensive way, and describes her as if she had acted in a seemly fashion. In his little song of praise, rejecting all the things that report actually did say of her, he includes one that is never said, so that Kate must pause to look at herself with new eyes.

> Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?  
> O slanderous world! Kate like the hazel-twig
> Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue
> As hazel-nuts and sweeter than the kernels.
> (II.i.247-50)

Kate may not take kindly to being given the attributes of a heroine so vulgar as the nut-brown maid, but the Renaissance physionomists could have added at once, that a brown complexion showed the humours held in
the healthiest balance.  

The thriftles thred which pampered beauty spinne,
In thraldom binds the foolish gazing eyes: ...  

But lo, when eld in toothlesse mouth appeares,
And whoary heares in steed of bauties blaze:
The Had I wist, doth teach repenting yeares,
The tickle tracke of craftie Cupides maze.
Twixt faire and foule therefore, twist great and small,
A louely nutbrowne face is best of all.  

Like a high-mettled colt, Kate is persuaded to walk for Petruchio, for despite her verbal refusal, it is clear from Petruchio’s words that she accedes to his request. He compliments her fierce virginity by ascribing it to Diana, the wild and unkempt, fleeing the society of men but seeking to emulate them by becoming a huntress, and suggest that it is a matter of her choice. She is disarmed, and Petruchio seizes his advantage to explain to Kate what he wants of her. It is not surprising that she listens without protest. From the beginning her attitude has been comprehensible as a rebellion, against being sold, being taught to simper and wheedle, and against being offered as a consolation prize to one of Bianca’s suitors. Her antagonism towards Bianca is also easily understandable, if not forgivable. It is clear that Gremio is rather overstating the case to call her a fiend of hell, but he shows more discrimination when he hints that it is a matter of finding “a fit man to teach her that wherein she delights”,

1. Vide Phisionomia laqual compilo Maestro Michael Scotto ... (Colophon: stampata in Vinegia per Francesco Bindoni & Matteo Pasini Compagni ... 1533), fol. 32 verso. Actually Kate has the characteristics of the woman che sta volontiera con l’huomo (ibid. fol. 10 verso) cf. The X Properties of a woman” described in Fitzherbert’s Boke of Husbandry.

2. Gascoigne, An Hundreth sundrie Flowres ... Gathered partly (by translator) in the fyne autenticall: Gardens of Furipides, Ovid, Petrark, Angelo and others ... At London, impninted for Richard Smith. (1573).
which is not only a sniggering reference, but an indication that Kate's
curtness is a result of some confusion and unhappiness, and does as
much harm to her as to others. Hortensio is less pessimistic, and
guarantees that there be men in the world who can cope with the alarums
of which Kate's extraordinary violence consists. Indeed, she seems
very like the definition of the foolish woman given in Proverbs, and not
the hell-fiend old Gremio keeps trying to make her.

A foolish woman is clamourous: she is simple and
knoweth nothing ...

Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish
plucketh it down with her hands.

(Proverbs, IX, 13; XIV, 1)

What we are to see demonstrated in dealing with this foolish virgin,
is the fourth natural mystery which revelation does not presume to utter.

There be three things which are too wonderful for
me, yea, four which I know not,
The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent
upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the
sea; and the way of a man with a maid. (XXX.19)

Poor Kate's recalcitrant maidhood is repeatedly related to the other
mysteries; she is a storm, a hawk, and Petruchio recognises this realm
as his natural element. In the scene with Bianca, it is not always noted
that Kate is being taunted with her greater age and with Bianca's spurious
submission. She in turn is attempting to throttle a confidence from
Bianca, a proceeding which is not likely to have much result. Bianca
sweetly maddens Kate by affecting to offer her one of her spare suitors.

If you affect him, sister, here I swear
I'll plead for you myself, but you shall have him. (II.i.14-15)
Bianca appears to be unable to conceive of any other motive for Kate's questioning than jealousy or deprivation, and decides that she was jesting when she asks bitterly whether she wants to sell herself to Gremio. Kate in her turn cannot, rightly, believe that her sister's innocent reticence, in refraining from forming a preference, is genuine. Even Portia can make an interesting discourse out of the men she refuses: only Bianca pretends to have no thoughts at all. Exasperated, Kate boxes her ears, and when Baptista rushes in to protect his favourite, with the wounding words worthy of old Capulet, she explains that Bianca's silence has flouted her. The petulance of her reproaches to Baptista speaks for itself. She sees herself as a victim of her society, precisely because she is incapable of the instinctive duplicity of the conventional female character, like Bianca's, or Rosamund's in Middlemarch. There is no reason in her outburst, for she is really revolting against the traditional humiliations for the spinster, dancing barefoot at a younger sister's wedding, and being popularly supposed to be destined to lead apes in hell.

This then is the unregenerate female whom Petruchio must civilise. In this play Kate's character is built up carefully, especially by the Bianca scene, which is not in A Shrew, so that we can understand the nature of the problem. Petruchio's laughter at the ill outcome of Hortensio's masquerade can help us to sympathise with Kate, who doubtless observed that her music master had no eyes but for Bianca. Marriage offered by Petruchio is a challenge, and an emancipation from an intolerable situation. Kate may take it without losing face. Petruchio brings her
like a nervous colt to his side with caresses and cherishings, and then calms her girlish panic with a clear and uncompromising statement of his intentions, to which his wild-cat can find no smart rejoinder.

For I am he am born to tame you Kate. (II.i.270)

rings like the greatest compliment he could pay her, and shows her a way to end her fruitless revolt; Petrucho vaunts like some hero who must ride a horse never before mastered, or draw an enchanted sword out of a rock. He is quite right: it is impossible that he should speed a-miss, for Kate has no opportunity to use her discretion, not that she tries very hard. In her agitation she must turn upon her father, for Petrucho has already made an ally of her, at least to the point that they will connive like two swordsmen to deceive the authorities so that they may have an opportunity to slaughter each other. He reapplies the trick of stating that which is not so that it might be, but with the added dimension that we are now aware that real truth of Kate's character is basically more like Petrucho's fiction than her own mask.

When next we see her, she is scolding Petrucho still, but this time for his absence (III.ii.8-20): her description of what she thinks has happened points to her own insecurity, as if she said that she knew that it could never be true that anyone could really want to marry her. The immense image of Petrucho on his moribund steed dressed in tattered and ill-agreeing clothes is central to the motif of wife-taming. The indication is given in the interchange before Petrucho's entry, which Biondello closes with
O horse and a man
Is more than one,
And yet not many. (III. ii. 85-8)

Just as a horse and a man makes a horseman, man and wife is one flesh, and one unit in the social system. As Petruchio's dignity suffers by the extraordinary mount, so he can be damaged and degraded by a sordid relationship with his wife. As Primaudaye puts it more clearly

euerie one ought to maintaine the dignitie of his wife as he would do the just height of a horse and be skilfull both in the one and the other to use the bridle well as it becommeth him. 1

As a horseman Petruchio provides an emblem of the inchoate marriage being offered him. His insane behaviour at the wedding is another externalisation of the travesty that that marriage must be if Kate is bringing to it all the perversity of her old attitude. Moreover, it indicates to Kate that there is no predicting what Petruchio is capable of, and no way of classifying him with other men of her acquaintance, so that she is forced to contemplate him as a being at least as complicated as she. Petruchio has roped his colt, and taken his hawk; now the training must begin. First of all, neither must be approached by anyone other than his eventual handler, so Petruchio must get Kate away immediately from her family and friends. He indicates contemptuously that there may be yet another justification for removing Kate, when he tells them to

Go to the feast, revel and domineer,
Carouse full measure to her maidenhead.
Be mad and merry, or go hang yourselves. (III. ii. 226-8)

We are reminded of the frequent denunciations by scrupulous clergy of the profane celebrations of marriage, in which the dignity and sacredness of the couple's first congress was sacrificed to bawdry and practical jokery. ¹ He may also be acknowledging that Kate owes very little to friends who served her in such bad stead. At all events marriage has now made him the only friend she may have. His tough speech, which has filled less toughminded critics with misgivings about the nobility of his sentiments, apart from delineating the firmness of his determination not to be interfered with by frivolous objectors, also indicates that Kate is his everything, and in all senses his. He justifies his offensive upon her person as a defence of her before the world, confusing her and forestalling opposition, but stating a truth at the same time. The next stage in their battle occurs on the wintry road from Padua to Petruchio's house, so different from the blandness of Lucentio's courtship, in an imaginative landscape where they might expect to pass greasy Joan's cottage, and to hear the owl chanting his note of comfort to husbands. Winter is the season of endurance, of hunger, when the earth sleeps in a death-like trance and the bastards conceived in summer dalliance are born. Grumio describes the building of a fire as the only way of defeating the coldness

¹ Not only the Puritans criticised the marriage celebrations of Elizabethan England, for Sidney and Spenser imply criticism in their delineation of the ideal in the third eclogues of the Arcadia and the Epithalamium. Basille devotes a part of the golden boke (op. cit., fol. xlviii - xlix) to a graphic description of wedding celebrations, and we might add William Bradshaw's description of "A Marriage Feast" (Two Mariage Sermons: The Former on Prov. 19, 14. By Thomas Gataker ... The Latter on John 2, 1-12 by ... William Bradshaw ... London, Printed by Edward Griffin for Fulke Clifton ... 1620).
without, and we are reminded of the two fires of Petruchio and Kate. The
scene he describes of Kate thrown by her horse is a reversal of the
reappearing image of the horseman, the realisation of the confusion which
Kate had made in it in her first conversation with Petruchio. Grumio
says specifically that her horse was on top of her, and that he, Grumio,
was beaten for it, as Kate would have Petruchio suffer for the distortion
of her life by pressures quite unconnected with him. Grumio reinforces
his own imagery by telling the servant not to touch a hair of his master's
horsetail, as if the horse were an extension of his person, and he were to
ride like a Centaur into the house. When Petruchio arrives railing, he
calls Grumio "a whoreson malthorse drudge", and so the image continues
to revolve about Kate without actually touching her; the ill-bred work-
horse implies his opposite, the fiery noble steed which is a gentleman's
greatest asset. Like the newly-wed husband in Count Lucanor's story,
who hacks a spaniel and a cat to pieces and chops up a horse, to frighten
his wife into submission, Petruchio cuffs his servants for nothing and
orders his spaniel to fetch his cousin. Like Tobit, he declares that they
must fast on their wedding night, for like Tobit, he is in danger of
destruction, if he display eagerness to possess his bride. 1 The servants'
comments help us to understand Petruchio's game in case it is going too
fast for us.

He kills her in her own humour. (IV. i. 180)

1. The story of Tobit is an apocryphal biblical version of the fatal lady
story. It was universally known, being recounted at length in the
Golden Legend as in many another popular repository of
superstitious lore.
A faint echo of the story of Admetus and Alcest in Pettie's *Pallace*
chimes through this line. This will be the peripeteia of Kate's comedy.

This seemeth strange unto you (Gentlewoman)
that a woman should die and then live again,
but the meaning of it is this, that you should
die to your selues and live to your husbands ... 1

Petruchio plays Tobit in grim earnest, for he preaches continency to
poor Kate, who has fallen into a trance, her version of Sly's sleep resembling
death. The speech of Petruchio's which follows establishes the image of
Kate as a falcon, the noblest of the preying birds, Elizabeth I's own impress 2,
and the dearest companion of a gentleman in his chiefest amusement, whose
death has been known to be revenged by kings with terrible massacres.

For all its nobility however, the falcon is of significance only in terms of
its relationship with its owner; it must be brought to obedience without
damaging its spirit, or its body. No such gentlemanly art is needed by the
heroes of old domestic farces, who are not ashamed to beat their
recalcitrant spouses until they lose consciousness and lie on the floor in
their own blood, and then to wrap them in the salted hide of an old mare.

The treatment that a falcon may expect is much different.

The soaring hawk from fist that flies,
her Falconer doth constraine:
Sometime to range the ground vnknown,
to find her out againe:
And if by sight or sound of bell,
his falcone he may see:
Wo ho he cries, with cheerful voice,
the gladdest man is he.

1. Pettie's Palace, op. cit., p. 117

2. "Her highnes device of the falcon" is mentioned in the marriage poems of the daughter
of the Earl of Oxford, Elizabeth de Vere, and William Stanley, Earl of Derby in 1545, now
in the Rosenbach Museum (MS.1083/18) of which a transcript by J.L. Rheaden may be found
By Lure then in Finest sort,  
    he seekes to bring her in.  
But if that she, ful gorged be,  
    he can not so her win:  
Although her becks and benden eies  
    she manie proffers makes:  
Wo ho ho he cries, awaie she flies,  
    and so her leaue she takes.

This wofull man with wearie limmes  
    runnes wandring round about:  
At length by noise of chattering Pies,  
    his hawke againe found out  
His heart was glad his eie had seen,  
    his falcon swift of flight:  
Wo ho ho he cries, she emptie gorgde,  
    vpon his Lure doth light.

How glad was then the Falconer there,  
    no pen nor tongue can tel:  
He swam in blisse that latelie felt  
    like paines of cruel hel.  
His hand somtyme vpon her train,  
    somtyme vpon her brest:  
Wo ho ho he cries, with chearfull voice,  
    his heart was now at rest.

My deer likewise, beholde thy loue,  
    What paines he doth indure:  
And now at length let pitie moue,  
    to stoup vnto his Lure.  
A hood of silk, and silver belles,  
    new gifts I promise thee:  
Wo ho ho, I crie, I come then saie,  
    make me as glad as hee.

Petruochio has chosen the most difficult of birds, the haggard, the  
wild female hawk who has preyed for herself before being taken.  First of  
all he must take secure hold of her:

1. A Handefull of pleasant delites, Containing sundrie new Sonets and  
delectable Histories ... by Clement Robinson, and diuers others.  
At London Printed by Richard Ibones ... 1584, Sig. Eiv recto.
The first true Tearme and Title a Falconer ought to learne, is to holde fast at all times, and especially when she batteth, or striueth to flee avay. It is called batting, in that she batteth with herselfe without cause: 

Just so Petruchio must calm Kate's struggling, so that she may learn "that wherein she delights". Petruchio takes the Tobit parallel to its ultimate when he declares his intention of keeping Kate awake during the night, which is also the way in which the hawk is trained to perch upon her master's wrist at will. No man who recognised all these terms of hawking could be unaware that the hawk is to be rewarded every time that she attempts to cooperate with rejoicing, when she is allowed to preen, or given some delicacy, for very little of her training is accomplished by starving, and newing is only practised in Lent to prepare her for the summer season. (Indeed, the References in The Taming of a Shrew to hawking are rather less informed than those of The Taming of the Shrew)

Every single part of training involves the manipulation of her blindness, however, for as soon as she is taken her eyelids are sewn up over her head, or, preferably, down under her beak, and for some days she is kept completely in the dark. While she still retains the strength and the resentment to beat Grumio when he offers her nothing but the names of the food she might eat, and remains silent when Petruchio brings her food to

1. The Gentlemen Academie, or, The Booke of S. Albans: ... Now reduced into a better method, by G(ervase) M(arkham). London. Printed for Humfrey Lownes ... 1595, fol. 3 recto.

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her, so that he is forced to teach her the rudiments of courtesy, she must remain blindfolded. All her repining at his tormenting her with withdrawing all the handsome clothes he has made for her, which is a figure of her behaviour in rejecting his proffered kindness as a husband, is attributed to the tailor, so that Kate can see what answer it merits without being led astray by her own resentment at correction. At the same time it is hilarious, its hilarity depending largely upon the absolute good-nature with which Petruchio throws the tradesmen into the deepest confusion, and Grumio turns his unflagging propensity for dreary literal-mindedness to torment the tailor, as he torments his master elsewhere. Again the deliberateness of the masquerade is made clear by the instruction to Hortensio to settle the account. Kate falls silent.

Petruchio tests her silence, by proposing to set out for her father's house, but Kate, momentarily unhooded, flies off at a tangent, and corrects her husband in a mistake so palpable, that it is clear that she has not realised how astute he is, and so they return to the house like Mette and her husband in the Danish story. The deference he is exacting from her is the most extreme, but we remember the old man of Don Juan Manuel's story, and how such deference is rewarded. At last Kate seems to have understood, and makes her voluntary act of submission. The shout of joy from Petruchio is genuine.

Well, forward, forward, thus the bowl should run, And not unluckily against the bias. (IV.v.25-5)

The fact that Kate must submit on all questions of observation, even the most simple and the vastest, may seem exaggerated and unlikely, but when we remember Habington's description of the wife's attitude to her husband's intelligence, Shakespeare would seem to be demanding little enough.

She is inquisitive only of new ways to please him, and her wit sails by no other compass than that of his direction. She looks upon him as Conjurors upon the Circle, beyond which there is nothing but Death and Hell; and in him she believes Paradice circumscrib'd. His virtues are her wonder and imitation; and his errors, her credulity thinks no more frayltye, then makes him descend to the title of Man.

The demands of this relationship may estrange the wife from the outside world, and may offend and confuse others with less valid claims upon her courtesy, as Vincentio is startled by Kate's mad mistaking. She demonstrates her ability to play Petruchio's game with a kind of childlike pride, waxing eloquent in expressing a view that she cannot really share. Hortensio's aside reflects the dimension in which they have been playing, and we are momentarily conscious of the danger of Petruchio's undertaking.

A' will make the man mad, to make a woman of him. (IV. v. 35)

Kate must also have the strength to come through her taming process unbroken, to wake up from her trance and live again to her husband. But

her words to the old man indicate her readiness to accept the notion that maids are for marrying, and indirectly her acceptance of her own social role. The real end of beauty and virtue is indicated by whom it makes most happy.

Happier the man, whose favourable stars
Allot thee for his lovely bed-fellow. (IV. v. 40–41)

Petruchio's fear of Kate's madness is voiced when all fear is past. She prettily asks pardon for her mistaking, and refers to the period of her blindness. Like the hawk stooping to the lure indicated by his master, too dazzled by the sudden light to be sure of what it is, or to hunt it for herself, she embraces the old man and brings him to her lord. When they kiss in the street, Petruchio takes Katharine to wife like a non-conformist in facie ecclesiae, and their little ceremony constitutes that dulcet union of hearts, which is real marriage, at last.

EVALUATION

In the last scene we are invited to compare the two methods of marrying, in such a way that there can be no doubt at all as to the judgment that must make. The first to reveal her colours is the widow, who begins by sneering at Petruchio, and Kate is struck by what she says, repeating it after Hortensio has extricated his new wife from the obscene muddle (V. ii. 20–3) into which she has got herself, and asking the widow, gently enough, what she can have meant. The expression is a telling one, for it summarises all Kate's old rebelliousness. The widow
continues to gibe, but Kate, despite the encouragements of the others, hardly rises to the challenge. Suddenly, unsolicited, the mild but Minerva-like Bianca offers for the company's delectation an insult to Gremio, the old man who must wear a willow garland in penance for his ill-suited wooing. Curiously, the insult she chooses would be more befitting a cuckold. She would withdraw from the colloquy so unseemly begun, and speaks of herself as a bird refusing to rise to the fowler's cry. Petruchio comes strongly in at this point and proceeds to incite her to further demonstrations of her delicate wit in an unmistakably aggressive way -

Nay, that you shall not: since you have begun, Have at you for a bitter jest or two! (V. ii. 44-5)

These harsh words correspond very oddly with his usual manner of addressing Kate. Bianca responds by taking up the image of herself as the goal of his hunt, and withdraws, coquettishly inviting him to follow like the fowler aiming at a moving target. Petruchio abandons the pursuit and turns to Tranio

This bird you aim'd at, though you hit her not; Therefore a health to all that shot and missed. (V. ii. 50-1)

If Kate is the falcon whom a man would tame and hunt with, Bianca is the bird he seeks to bring down, the white at which his arrows are aimed. Once brought down, by implication, it is difficult to know what to do with her, for she can only be consumed. Tranio takes up the idea of Bianca as the prey that all had run for, when he calls himself Lucentio's
greyhound, which ran for itself and caught for its master. Petruchio gives the simile the praise he must, for it is exact, but includes a less pleasant observation -

A good swift simile, but something currish. (V.ii.54)

It is against this background of criticism of the hugger-mugger proceedings of Bianca's courtship, that Petruchio makes his wager. As his antagonism to Bianca might have indicated, he is sure that the others have matched with worse shrews than he. The archetypal shrew who reduces her husband to penury, misery and shame, begins as the gay, brave, modest bride of the XV Joies, and her shrewdom emerges as she exercises her will in the marital situation, even using the marriage bed as a pawn in her sordid bargaining with her husband. This shrewishness is a cool prosecution of the battle of the sexes with neither pity nor respect for the opponent. When she refuses her husband his conjugal rights he foolishly rejoices in her coldness and chastity!

Et qu'il ne lui enchaîne, et a l'adventure elle est femme blanche et de petite complexion.  

The white woman, according to the physionomist, plump, fair-haired, phlegmatic and indolent, was unwilling to associate with the male, and of low fertility. 

Certainly Bianca lacks vitality, but not guile; Kate, like Abra, is a born shrew,

1. Les Quinze Joies de Mariage (n.t.p. Biblioteque Nationale, Res. Y2. 150.2) Sig. 5v, the fifth joy.

2. Scotto, op.cit., fol. 11 recto, 31 verso.
As true as any stele: ye may trust her with gold.
Though it were a bushell, and not a peny tolde.
As quicke about her worke that must be quickly spedd
As any wench in twenty mile about her head.
As fine a piece it is as I knowe but a few,
Yet perchaunce her husbande of her may haue a shrew.  

energetic, full of fierce loyalties, and not at all dangerous to the
man who knows how to profit by her extraordinary qualities. She is not
the subject of misogynist literature, for she is not guileful or lecherous.
The white ladies however are deeply and irrevocably self-interested, and
always get their own way, using charms, threats, peevishness and violence
indiscriminately: against this type there is no defence, especially if the
besotted suitor has already given her the mastery.

I wold not counsel ye to mary her, wth whome thou
hast bene in amors withal, whom thou flatterdest,
whome thou didst serue, whom thou calledst thy hart,
thy life, thy maistres, thy light, thy eyes, wth other
suche wordes as foolishe loue doth perswade, vsing
impietie agaynst god, which is ye ende of al desire &
goodnes. Thys submission is & shoulde be the cause,
yt she doth not regard ye, but disdayneth to serue
thee, whose ladye she was as she estemed, & whô
she foûd more obedient vnto her, euyn with ye peril
& daunger of life, thô any other slauyn yt was bought
for monie.  

Montaigne sees the situation in greater depth, seeing the woman's
deavour as naturally entailed by the man's.

1. The character described as a little wench, in A newe mery and
wittie Comedie or Enterlude, newly imprinted, treating vpon the
Historie of Iacob and Esau ... Imprinted at London by Henrie
Bynneman ... 1568, Sig. E3 recto, IV.iv.43-8.

2. The office and dutie of an husband, made by the excellët Philosopher
Lodouicus Vives, and translated into Englyshe by Thomas Paynell,
Imprinted at London ... by John Cawood ... (1550), Sig. K 5 recto.
there is not one of them, but upon the first oath one maketh to serve her, will very easily bee persuadeth to thynke well of her selue. Now this common treason and ordinary protestations of men in these daies must needes produce the effects, experience already discouereth: which is, that either they joine together, and cast away themselves on themselves, to avoyde vs, or on their side allow also the example wee giue them; acting their part of the play, without passion; without care, and without love, lending themselves to this entercourse: Neque affectui suo aut alieno obnoxia: Neither liable to their owne nor other folkes affection. 1

The man who casts himself away for such an infatuation has no choice but to live out the consequences: in Averell's gloomy phrase:

So, who so attempteth marriage without aduisement, running rashlie vpon the rockes of theyr owne ruine, and entring the combersome conflict of cares, where the gun shotte of calamitie shall batter theyr braines, ... must patientlie beare the brunt of theyr owne breeding ... tyll death make a devision of theyr fortunes ... 2

By their deeds we are to know them, and so Petruchio enters on the wager, drawn from the same folk stock as the story of Karen, Hette and Mette, but with new currents animating it. Petruchio increases the stake, because twenty crowns the sum first proposed is what one might wager upon a haw/f or hound (V.ii.70-2), explicitly placing Kate above them in

1. The essayes Or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses of Lo: Michael de Montaigne ... First written by him in French And now done into English by ... Iohn Florio. Printed at London by Val. Sims for Edward Blount ... 1603, p.463.

2. A Dyall for dainty Darlings, rockt in the cradle of Securitie ... compiled by W. Auerell ... Imprinted at London for Thomas Hackett ... 1584, Sig. Ei recto - Ei verso.
the list of his assets, even to the extent of twenty times their value. It is the team that will be tried, the hawk and his handler, the dog and his master, the man and his wife. Lucentio has not trained his wife at all: he has never even thought of the way in which they shall live and work and rejoice together. He wagers blindly on his wife's character, more rashly than he would ever have done for a hawk or a horse, and indeed she turns out to have more Minerva-like qualities than he expected when he rashly applied the epithet, and simply refuses to obey him. Petruchio laughs when Hortensio entreats his widow, for the husband who entreats of his wife is as absurd as the man who entreats his dog or his horse. Kate comes simply and respectfully. Petruchio asks of her another deed which will prove that her spirit is not broken, although she answers to her husband's demands without protest, namely, to bring the defiant wives by force before their husbands. The foolish husbands beg to know what the portent that they have just witnessed might signify, and Petruchio answers with the nearest thing to a didactic justification that Shakespeare could permit himself.

Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life,
An awful rule and right supremacy:
And to be short, what not, that's sweet and happy?
(III, 106–8)

Petruchio is a figure of the just ruler, because he has the power and the discretion to maintain his rule, and the welfare of his subject at heart. The political significance of the play was not lost upon Shakespeare's contemporaries, for Fletcher, whose The Woman's Prize or the Tamer Tamed is much rather a frivolous parody than a serious counterproposition,
seems to be aware of the subtlety of his greater source.

We do intreat that angry men should not
Expect the mazes of a subtle plot,
Set speeches, high Expressions, and what's worse,
In a true Comedy, politque discourse.  

Baptista speaks of the change in Kate as a rebirth and Petruchio demonstrates the extreme of her compliance in the irrational demand to throw her cap underfoot, for her trust will always assume some purpose in his requests, as indeed there is. The widow's response to the situation is no surprise, but Bianca's retort to Lucentio,

The more fool you, for laying on my duty. (V.ii.127)

will not really permit those critics to go on believing that she is a sly but lovable little thing. Kate's speech makes it clear that the just relation between man and wife is a figure of the order which all spheres of activity must hold. The rebellious woman becomes a figure of all revolt against just power and proportion. Her conclusions are moderate compared to those arrived at by the Queen, a lady of considerable sophistication and dignity, in the Decameron.

... Nature hath giuen vs a sufficient demonstration, in creating our bodies more soft and delicate, yea, and our hearts timorous, fearefull, benigne and compassionate, our strength feeble, our voyces pleasing, and the motion of our members sweetly plyant; all which are apparent testimonies that wee

haue neede of others gouvemment ... And therefore it is my preremptory sentence, that all such women as will not be gracious, benigne and pleasing: doe iustly deserue ... rude, rough and harsh handling, as both nature, custome and lawes haue commanded.

The husband is lord, king, governor, life, keeper, head, sovereign, prince, as well as lover, protector and friend. In opposing such rule, Kate sees herself as the foolish, clamorous woman of Proverbs.

I am ashamed that women are so simple, To offer war, where they should kneel for peace. (V.ii.159-60)

She accepts what appeared to be a self-evident doctrine, especially in the days of high mortality of infants and mothers, that women are the weaker sex, and need and want their husband’s aid and protection. This they cannot get, unless they act in a manner calculated to encourage it.

It is useless to resent dependence because women are incapable of attaining or enjoying independence: the extent to which they desire illusory freedom is the index of the extent to which they are incapable of achieving it.

My mind hath been as big as one of yours, My heart as great, my reason haply more, To bandy word for word, and frown for frown; But now I see our lances are but straws, Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare, That seeming to be most, which we indeed least are. (V.ii.168-73)

She understands at last that her passionate pride was really the product

1. The Decameron containing An hundred pleasant Novels ... London, printed by Isaac Jaggard. 1620, The Ninth Day, the Ninth Nouell, fol. 131 verso.
of her fear and sense of inferiority, as we have already decided from an independent assessment of her behaviour.

There is hardly a woman alive who is not deeply attracted to the notion of a husband of the kind extolled by Kate: the difficulty is to find a man capable of assuming all this responsibility and exercising this kind of sexual and domestic dominion. Petruchio is capable of managing his high-mettled champion wife, of wielding this Excalibur of a woman: he is the ninth of the twelve wonders of the world, the man who can say,

Yet court I not my wife, but yeeld obseruance due
Being neither fond, nor crosse, nor iealous, nor vntrue. 1

The battle to subdue Kate is both a romp, with motifs drawn from some obscure folk source of which other representatives have survived, and the eternal battle of the sexes, in which women must realise that they must suffer and accept. Whether the decision is made in terms of Freudian psychology or Hebrew theology, it is substantially the same. As well as cherishing all that is best in the folk tradition of wedding theory, the background of Sly's assumptions, Shakespeare is at least as perceptive as the best of the Renaissance critics of domestic life. The new secular ideal includes the notion that the complete man is able to create the household that mirrors his own culture and humanity.

... the very truth is, that there is no yuel housetwife, but for her faultis ye good man is to be blamed. For I am utterly of this opinion, that the man may make, shape & forme ye womā as he wyl. 

The young man's guides in educating his wife are Aristotle and Zenophon: they are no less present in Petruchio's assumptions about his relations with Kate. The Taming of the Shrew enacts the new principle that a man gets the wife he deserves:

... the husband must seeke diligently to remove the occasion and stone, whereat his wife stumbleth and taketh occasion of grief, ...

The producers of the play who make it a feast of slap and tickle, have misunderstood the whole principle of Petruchio's taming, for nowhere is he required to offer Kate the least violence, for

with what hart can she loue that man that can finde in his heart to beate her?

The rebirth which forms the catastrophe of this comedy is that of Kate, to a tranquil and busy life at Petruchio's side: as she lays her hand under his foot, the ikon is that of an old marriage ceremony in which his shoe would have been laid upon her head; the difference is that she

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2. An Exhortation to yonge men, perswading them to walke in the pathie way that leadeth to honeste and goodnes: ... By Thomas Lupsete London. 1534. (Col.: Londini in aedibus Thomae Berthelet. Anno M.D.XXXV), fol. 23 verso.
she had been persuaded to want to place her hand below his foot. That
Petruchio should do so plausibly and before the eyes of all beholders
constitutes that great and fundamental lesson that lewd comedies of love
and liking failed to teach, so that they became the most pernicious forms
of writing in the commonwealth, and yet the play is so amusing that inept
historians have called it an immature farce. Even if, in such a play,
Shakespeare is only the best artist of his time, and not the best artist of
all time, there is ample cause for praise and interest, rather than the
assumption, like that of the Cambridge Editors, that Shakespeare is like
the little girl who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead.
Surely, in the age that boasts Simone de Beauvoir, Mary McCarthy and
Brigid Brophy, we cannot assume that the lesson of the play is so well-
learned that there is no further need to teach it! In any case, *The Taming
of the Shrew* has an unerring logic, thoroughly dramatic in conception,
which makes use of every confrontation, every image, every juxtaposition.
The basic structural principle is one of revealing contrast, out of which
the ideological issues soon emerge. On the one hand we have a domestic
comedy, the eternal battle between husband and wife, moving, intellectually
and sexually exciting, simplicity itself in all but the postulated background,
and the interplay of ideas. Much has been written about Kate's place in
the shrew tradition, in which she has been compared to any violent or
depraved female character in existence, and too much has been assumed,
but certainly this simple situation belongs to the rustic tradition of farce,
and its accompanying tradition of morality. Rich in moralising and high
jinks, this part of the play roves about, reckless of classical staging
conventions, involving houses, horses and woods and the moon and sun, and the very change of seasons. The contrasted situation involves Bianca, Bianca's suitors and their train, and takes place in the classical Italian street scene with house-doors. The disguisings, wooings and clandestine marriage take place in a social and cosmic vacuum, which Vincentio breaks asunder. Here the characters do everything but confront each other in their true colours. The situations are not weighed, hearts are not seen. Shakespeare took a debased version of the most famous representative of Italian learned comedy in England, debased in a manner typical of its later development, and recast the folk-motif of the three sisters, which survives in The Taming of a Shrew, into a new form of two sisters contrasted, and through them two notions of drama and two contrasting notions of the dramatist's function. The judgment passed upon Bianca's world is unmistakeable. It is useless to repine at the ethics of Katharine's marriage; they are only too straightforward and clean. The unpretentious spicy comedy typified by Kate may justly hale the haggard falsity of its younger sister, so despised in England by the discerning, before its lord, the audience.
CHAPTER FOUR:

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

Whence comes it (as we dayly see by experience) that the rudest and grossest clowes, are more tough-strong, and more desired in amorous executions? And that the love of a Muletier is often more acceptable, then that of a perfumed-quaint courtier. But because in the latter, the agitation of his minde doth so distract, trouble and weary the force of his body; as it also troubleth and wearieth it selfe, who doeth belie, or more commonly cast the same down even into madness, but her own promptitude, her point, her agilitie, and to conclude her proper force? When procedes the subtilest follie, but from the subtilest wisdome.

(Montaigne, An Apologie of Raymond Sebond)
For fifty years now *Love's Labour's Lost* has been steadily gaining
ground with the critics, for its vivacity, its fascinating blend of art and
nature, for its dancing movement and for "landscapes" present in the
verse. Harley Granville Barker implied that anything that could make
it go on stage was permissible by the very nature of its confection.
Charm and brilliance, uproarious witticisms may be allowed but it seems
to be tacitly admitted that the play has not got much guts. C. L. Barber

1. C. L. Barber (*Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, Princeton, 1959) speaks at length of the resemblance of the play's movement to a
dance... "the four lords and the four ladies make up what amounts
to a set in English country dancing", and compares the play to Sir
John Davies *Orchestra*. A more informed and legitimate observation
is probably that of John Long in *Shakespeare's Use of Music*
(Gainville, 1955), pp.69-72, in which he compares the action of the
ladies in feigning to begin to dance with the Muscovites to a galliard.
Marco Mincoff ("Shakespeare and Lyly", *Shakespeare Survey*, No.14,
1961, p.22) speaks of the fugal method of the play's construction,
and Robert Gittings, in *Shakespeare's Rival* (London, 1960) compares
*Love's Labour's Lost* with *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Cosi fan tutte*
(p.46). The comparison with the Mozart opera is also suggested by
John Dover Wilson in *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* (London, 1962),
p.65. On the other hand H. B. Charlton (*Shakespearean Comedy*,
London, 1928, p.45) thinks that is "is made of such stuff as a
Tatler, a Bystander, or a revue maker would offer us".

2. Marco Mincoff (op. cit., p.19) speaks of the "Watteauesque"
picture that the play presents. Bobby *Roessen* writes lyrically of the
"haunting and beautiful kingdom created by the marriage of
reality and illusion" and the "clear loveliness of those landscapes
in the final song" ("Love's Labour's Lost", *Shakespeare Quarterly*,

3. In Vol. II of the *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (London, 1958) he wrote,
"It is all very charming; the mere sound is charming, and a 'set of
wit' describes it well. Get a knowledge of the game and it may be as
attractive to watch as are a few sets of tennis" (p.419) and again,
"Our spontaneous enjoyment will hang upon pleasant sights and sounds
alone, sense and purpose apart. Really it almost amounts to this!
Better face the difficulty at its worst. Is there any surmounting it?"
(p.421).
regards the flimsiness of its structure as a part of Shakespeare's intention to show us the triumph and then the inadequacy of festivity.

The story in *Love's Labour's Lost* is all too obviously designed to provide a resistance which can be triumphantly swept away by festivity.  

He admits that the festivities never actually come off, nevertheless he denies that Shakespeare is guilty of sadism in his relations with the audience which knows "how the conflict will come out before it starts", because he demonstrates the true role of festivity in the affairs of men. It is clear that Barber has treated the play as evidence for a theory of festivity already formed in his own mind. Boas described the play as "asserting the vitality and transforming power of love",

In the mainplot Shakespeare covers with ridicule an attempt to defy the ordinary rules of life.  

Probably no critic would allow himself such a complacent phrase as "the ordinary rules of life" in 1967, but the view has persisted. For Richard David, the play is

the gentle ragging of youthful priggishness and affectation as measured against natural good sense and natural good feeling — and it is a point that time has not dulled. Dons and donnishness are today more popular as butts than they were in the 1590's, and the vivacity controlled by a good heart that Shakespeare praises is a virtue that does not grow stale.

3. Richard David, "Shakespeare's Comedies and the Modern Stage", *Shakespeare Survey*, No. 4, 1951, p. 129. For Boas's admission that he finds the wooing wearisome, see page 166, *op.cit.*
David manages to avoid postulating a vacuum at the centre of the play because unlike Boas he does not find the young men's wooing wearisome; nevertheless it is not very clear just how he regards the abortive love-making which constitutes the major part of the play. Youthful priggishness and donnishness are mild enough faults and comedies of gentle ragging ought not to end with talk of penance.

The hollowness of such descriptions of the play, which are rather less irritating than the sorts which assume that it is a kind of verbal galliard, is usually filled out by the assumption that the play is more or less satirical, in the harsh, cryptic, personal and scurrilous way that the Elizabethans believed appropriate to satire. The target refuses to reveal itself clearly: it seems to be the school of night, if it ever existed, or the school of Ralegh, perhaps involving the Nashe-Harvey quarrel and centring round the figure of Moth. The difficulty about establishing such an occasion for the play is that the vague parallels proliferate, and recorded history does not reveal anything like a clear ranking of one side against another. Notwithstanding, even so recent and conscientious commentator as Richard David is led to say,

All the evidence then goes to show that Love's Labour's Lost was a battle in a private war between court factions. 1

If this were true, the case for the excellence of the play, which eventually depends upon its autonomy as a work of art, would seem to

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stagger, despite David's own poignant praise of its charm and brilliance. Of all socio-political phenomena, private wars between court factions would seem to be the most evanescent and intrinsically unworthy. At all events the traces of such a combat are all but obliterated, while the play has survived, mutilated but full of life, independently of its originating occasion. The statement of the titlepage of the 1631 quarto, that it was still being acted, seems evidence that it made good sense to the Jacobeans when the ephemeral circumstances of its composition were forgotten. 1 We have inherited it as a play, and not just as a literary curiosity, so that it seems proper to undertake to establish its abiding value in some intrinsic significance. I shall virtually ignore the occasion of the criticism that we find within the play, and shall attempt instead to identify the essential truth and applicability of it, beyond any desire to oblige Southampton, or to annoy Ralegh, Northumberland, Eliot, Florio or Harvey. It seems proper to begin with the assumption that Shakespeare created the young dilettantes of Navarre for some purpose which arose out of the integrity of his own developing poetic vision. What ought to concern us is the essential dialectic of the play in terms of its inner coherence; it will have reference to contemporary social and intellectual phenomena, but not the irresponsible gesture of the lampoon. If we were to decide that Ralegh and Sidney and Harriot were recognisable to the Elizabethan audience, we would also have to conclude that the picture given of their activities was highly unjust and inaccurate.

If we concentrate on identifying exactly what it is that is presented for our critical reaction, the question of injustice and inaccuracy will not arise, and we may be able to discern a universal truth of the kind which only a poet can teach us, beyond polemic and propaganda. If it is irrelevant to puzzle about the number of Lady Macbeth's children, it is much more irrelevant to try to understand Berowne by reference to Giordano Bruno or the Duc de Biron. Whereas the literary detective is frustrated to find that Shakespeare's characters have traits in common with persons who have little in common with each other, for my purposes, arguing from intelligible argument within the play to a genuine social commitment, the more widely suggestive the dramatic situation the better.

THE LITTLE ACADEME

We begin with the pastoral scene undividable. The imagery of the play is sober, little of the lush decay of the summer scene is invoked; we encounter no fairies, no wild beast, not a flower except the single rose of the young men's imagery and the painted meads of the last song. Instead there is a strong evocation of the rural community, the constable, the schoolmaster, the curate, and the red-handed lass and her swain. The woodland setting is introduced in matter-of-fact details, with the names of trees, like Boyet's sycamore, and the Princess's tart reference to the wide fields, or Armado's to the curious knotted garden. The countryside is assumed as the context of the action, not a part of the
fiction. The first words spoken in the play are of mortality, of brazen tombs, the disgrace of death, cormorant devouring time and his scythe's keen edge. Life is reduced to this present breath, spent hunting after fame and honour, sole means of cheating time and oblivion. The tone of the King's words is almost Marlovian lofty, and he enforces the effect by calling his followers brave conquerors — he might indeed have been addressing a group of dying heroes, until he explains himself with more than a nuance of incongruity —

— for so you are,
That war against your own affections
And the huge army of the world's desires — (I.1.6-10)

The desire for fame and honour is a worldly desire, superbia vitae and therefore diabolica,

reprooved by Philosophie and Diuinittie, which pronounceth it follie before God: Stultiam fecit Deus sapientiam hujus mundi. 1

The fight against one's own affections and the demands of the world should be undertaken in humility, in hope to achieve virtue and win heaven; it is worse than useless to undertake such a discipline for an earthly motive.

'Who worship Fame, commit idolatry,
'Make men their god, Fortune and Time their worth;
'Forme but reforme not — meer hypocrisie! —
By shadowes, onely shadowes bringing forth.
Which must, as blossoms, fade ere true fruit springs;
 — Like voice and eccho — joyned yet diuers things. 2

1. Of wisdome three bookes written in French by Peter Charrò ... Translated by Samson Lennard. At London Printed For Edward Blount & Will. Aspley, p. 3.

The description of the contemplative life in terms of the active life implies the perpetual debate between arms and letters which had become a set topic in the Academies. The conclusion was always the same, that the virtuous gentleman should be disciplined in both. In practice however, the fusion of the active and the contemplative had decayed. Lord Burghley had replaced Sir Thomas More, the skilful diplomatist ousted the virtuous man in the field of politics, and the ideal of wisdom and virtue active in the community was no longer the centre of school studies, which had declined into grammar and flagellation. The monastic ideal of the contemplative life had been thoroughly discredited, but the Stoics and Platonists made the delineation of virtue their special province, and limited its exercise to the preservation of the noble spirit in a waste of shame by means of isolation for the Stoics, or amor razionale for the Platonists, a love which was not diffused in the community, but passionately dedicated to a friend, an unenjoyed lady, or best of all, donna sapienza.

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1. E.g. The will of wit, Wits Will, or Wils Wit ... Compiled by Nicholas Breton ... London Printed by Thomas Creede, 1599, has a second part, with separate titlepage although paginated as part of the same volume, called "The Scholler and the Souldiour, a Disputation pithily passed betweene them, the one defending Learning, the other Machtall Discipline".

2. Giles Fletcher the elder counsels the reader to take Licia "to be some Diana, at the least chaste, or some Minerva, no Venus, fairer far; it may be shee is Learnings image ... perhaps ... I have shadowed Discipline ... It may be some Colledge; it may be my conceit, ..." (Licia, or Poemes of Love, in honour of the admirable and singular vertues of his lady, ... (s.d., s.t.), Sig. B1 recto.
Such little academies were common enough in the time of the Renaissance. Hundreds of them were set up in the petty Italian courts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. 1

not one of them was actually like this one. The devices of the hundreds of academies that have left records of their existence show emblems of arms and letters intertwined. Frequently, especially in the late sixteenth century, they assumed an active role in civic affairs. They were not at all monastic, but social and cultural centres, where plays and masques were held, dancing, fencing and music taught, and public works of charity undertaken. 2 In England the view of the fit pursuits of a gentleman was probably less intellectually oriented than in Italy or France.

For man being finite both in wit, time, might,  
His days in vanitie may be misspent;  
Vse therefore must stand higher than delight,  
The active hate a fruitlesse instrument:  
   So must the World those busie idle fooles,  
   That serve no other market than the Schooles. 3

Even for a Platonist the King's notion is a rare and wonderful one.

Pierre de la Primaudaye considered his Academie Francaise a platonical institution, but even so most of the discussion centres around the duties of the Academicians in the community, to marry and to rule. To the

1. John Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. 66.
groundlings, the king’s resolution must have seemed the ultimate in intellectual snobbery, and to the educated an absurdity. When the King speaks of the readiness of his spiritual warriors to strike down their own honour if they fail in any article of their oath, we realise that they are armed against themselves, and moral suicide may be the result. Longaville’s triumphant assertion that "the mind shall banquet though the body pine" expresses the aspiration of the young men to purge the dross of their human nature and aspire to the condition of the angels.

... the cause why our God hath created vs of two substâces, the one terrestrial, and the other celestitall, is to this end, that if we begin to swell vp in pride, the vileness of the creation of our bodie, which is but earth and ashes doe retaine and keepe vs back. 1

Shakespeare’s view has not the sourness of Boaistuaus’s Manicheeism, but it is the pride of the young men in supposing that they can so easily escape the human condition which makes us suspect that the Academe is doomed to inglorious failure. A civil war has occurred in the little state of each man, dividing him against himself, so that the rule of right reason is impossible. Dumaine vaunts that he has forsworn the pleasures of love, wealth and pomp, and shall be dead to the world. These are vows taken

1. *Theatrum Mundi, The Theatre or rule of the world ...* written in the French & Latin tongues by Peter Boaistuaus, and translated into English by John Alday. Imprinted at London by H.D. for Thomas Hacket ... (1566?), Sig. Q5 verso.
so that the alteration of their life is a refusall of the populare and open lyfe, where men do liue out of cloysters, in such states and degrees as be appointed by God for the liuing together of mē, as to be subiect vnto parentes and masters, to marry, to get children, to gouerne houses & families, to bear office, &c.  

The intention of a King to cloister himself in monkish fashion is clearly preposterous. Berowne is that giddiest of all men who promises what he knows he cannot perform. De la Primaudeau is very strict on this point.

Neither is there any thing whereby a foole is sooner discerned from a wise man, thā by promises: forasmuch as an undiscreet man lightly promiseth whatsoever you will, & oftentimes more than is required of him: ...

From Berowne we learn that they have covenanted not to see a woman for three years, to fast for one day a week (an unsympathetically papist requirement), to eat only one meal a day, and to sleep only three hours. More than an academy, the king proposes to make of his court a secular monastery. Berowne complaints that this rule of life is barren, and too hard to keep, a position with which no orthodox contemporary would have disagreed, for without grace we cannot fulfil the law, let alone perform works of supererogation. Now, too late, he asks the overwhelming un-Platonic question, "What is the use of all this?". The King's answer is not the right one. The most inattentive schoolboy could have answered correctly,


A wise and courageous spirit ouermastereth his wisdome, enioyeth it, vseth it, and employeth it to his best advantage, enforcing his own judgment, rectifieth his will, helpeth and fortifieth his naturall light, and maketh himselfe more quicke and actiue; ...  

All else is mere pedantry. The King's answer is lame, naıve and dangerous. He assumes certainty in human knowledge, and reveals that apart from the desire for posthumous honour, his only motive is curiosity. De la Primaudaye distrusts the study of natural sciences precisely because such study

... serveth rather to content the curiositie of hawtie spirits, than to make them better, ... 

Curiosity stirred by pride, the sin of Lucifer, caused our first Parents to inherit death, and dimmed the clear faculties of the human race.

The King's vague and presumptuous answer,

Why, that to know which else we should not know. (I.i.56)

leads directly to Berowne's teasing question,

Things hid and barr'd you mean, from common sense. (I.i.57)

Common sense in Elizabethan psychology was the faculty which interpreted sense data to recognise the object characterised by these attributes, and is also called the imagination, that is, the faculty for

1. Charron, op. cit., Sig. A5 recto.

taking and recording images, of which Lipsius speaks in his description of the mind.

In man, the highest and most souereigne facultie of the Soule, is Vnderstanding: being inthroned in the highest place, to guide and conduct all his liues Actions, hath appointed and ordained an vnderfacultie, that we call Imaginatiue, to dispose and judge by the representation of the Sences, the qualitie and condition of things offered, with authoritie to rouse and stirre our affections, for execution of its judgement.  

Things hid and barred from such a sense must be the objects of contemplation, of speculative reason. Berowne believes that the King's contemplative inquiry will lead him into the realms of the occult and forbidden. Beyond the bounds of simple observation illuminated by the god-given light of understanding, which recognises the good and eternal, the natural light of human reason misinforms the will and leads to error and doubt's boundless sea. The King's answer however betrays no misgiving.

Ay, that is study's god-like recompense. (I.i.58)

Cornelius Agrippa undertook to write his famous work De vanitate et incertitudine artis et scientiarum to vanquish just that conviction. To believe that study suffices to perfect human knowledge even of this finite world is to trust oneself first to the evidence of the senses which we know perceive only the semblances of things, and then to speculate upon such

seeming in order to postulate a whole system. Cornelius Agrippa was a learned man, but the advances in the human sciences that he saw in his lifetime served more to convince him of uncertainty than to fire him with enthusiasm for the empirical methods which produced such disquieting results. The humility which scientists show in the twentieth century when theories are conceived, accepted and destroyed within days, did not characterise the first rejectors of the old astronomy. He describes the error of intellectual pride in the beginning of the De vanitate thus:

It is an auncient, and almoste an agreeable and common opinion, of all the Philosophers, by the which they thinke, that every Science doothe bringe vnto man some Diuinitie, according to the capacitie and value of them both, so that oftentimes, beyonde the limits of Humanitie, they may be reckened amonge the felowship of the Goddes.

In the discussion of the relative merits of soldiery and learning in the commonwealth in Romei’s Discorsi, translated by John Kepers as the Courtiers Academye, the soldiers charge the scholars with overweening ambition.

... Philosophers, and wise men, who not content with matters terreine, like the Giants, endeavour to ascende vppe vnto heauen, and make themselues equall with God, as also nourished in idlenesse, and knowing themselves vnapt to action: attaining to Magistracie, or honours, swelling themselves in pride, they retire from euil companie into a solitarie life: and after hauing beeene mewed vppe vpon theyr studies and

1. Henry Cornelius Agrippa, of the Vanitie and Vncertaintie of Artes and Sciences, Englished by Ja. San(ford) ... Imprinted at London, by Henry Wykes. ... Anno 1569, fol. 1 recto.
Bookes, they become leane and macerate, and not able
to determine in what manner the sumne heateth, wholly
confounded, they waste themselves in melancholie
humours. 1

This is the kind of sequence of events that Berowne sees awaiting
the oath-takers, pointing out that the large number of prohibitions will
ensure that much of their intellectual activity will be devoted to finding
ways of circumventing them. Mistresses hidden from common sense
are not only those enjoyed in secret, but also those female simulacra
spun by the sublimating fantasies of Platonists, like Chapman's Mistress
Philosophy. Human nature will always have the last word, bending the
angelic intellect to serve its necessary desires.

If study's gain be this, and this be so
Study knows that which yet it doth not know. (I.1.67-8)

The King's objection that Berowne's argument makes learning the
salve to useless pleasure gives Berowne the upper hand, for he had
been unable to posit an end for learning beyond itself. Berowne hastens
to point out that no ulterior end need be adduced for delight, but that the
way of life proposed by the king is not only likely to bring none but a
painful result, it is painful in its very exercise.

1. The Courtiers Academie: Comprehending seuen seuerall dayes
discourses ... 7 Of precedence of Letters or Armes ...  
Originally written in Italian by Count Haniball Romei, ... and
translated into English by I(ohn) K(epers) ... Printed by
Such force hath worldly glory (though but vaine)
To make men, for her loue, themselves to hate,
Who for desire of her, their strength doe straine
Farre, farre aboue the pitch of mortall state,
And paine in sense, to sense doe captiuate:
Though pains wake sense, yet sense doth waking sleep,
Dreaming on Glory in the lapp of Fate;
   So paine from sense, doth paine with pleasure keepe;
   While sense is mounting Honor's Mountaine steepe.

Berowne may mean the pain of confusion and the rebellion of the body chastised beyond its power to bear it, or he may mean the pain of damnation. The argument that follows is perfectly orthodox, not only in terms of the contemporary religious attitude to the new science, but also in terms of Aristotelian and Platonic theories of truth. The image of light is richly ambiguous. The light which seeks light is the soul which reflects the divine light of God -

   ... the soules of men, louing and fearing God,
   receive influence from that divine light it selue,
   whereof the Sunnes claritie, and that of the Starres is by Plato called but a shadow. 2

The light that it seeks is the natural light of human reasoning, which to discern it must quench its own glow (the illumination of faith and revelation) or else it is an invisible as a glowworm by sunlight. So

   Light seeking light doth light of light beguile. (I.i.77)
Wandering in our own deliberately created darkness, we may find that the soul is dead, and unable even to perceive the lesser light, like Dee who followed his blind faith in experimental science into charlatanry. Berowne suggests a more valid Platonic pastime, of discerning the beauty of the soul through the sovereign and universal action of love. He is not altogether frivolous, as his next point makes clear:

Study is like the Heaven's glorious Sun,  
That will not be deep-search'd with saucy looks;  
(I. i. 84-5)

Berowne's image, the leit-motif of almost all his utterances, may be often found in arguments to the same intent, for example -

The beames of Mars himselfe ... are parched and combust vnder Sol, with the sences are amated, as Philosophers defend, with a subiect that excelleth in predominance, and hee that laboureth to ascend or mount aboue his ordinarie pitche by vncertayne stayes, seeketh not an elevation, but an ouerthrowe ... I would therefore willinglie take paine in perswading these meme to flie beneath the cloudes, for feare of wasting with the foolishie Eagle (which went about to builde her neste, within the cyrcle of the Sunne) in a fruitlesse altitude. For what can it auail a man to conquer all the world, with the peryll of his owne soule ... 1

Fulke Greville's is probably the most powerful expression of the Christian sceptic's point of view, and Berowne's image appears here as well.

1. Henry Howard, Ninth Earl of Northampton, A defensatiue against the poysom of supposed Prophecies ... At London Printed by John Charlewood ... 1583, Sig. *iii verso, cf. Certaine very proper and most profitable Similies ... Collected by Anthonie Fletcher ... 1595. Printed at London, by John Jackson, for Isaac Bing, Simile 38, p. 14.
This Knowledge is the same forbidden Tree,
Which man lusts after to be made his Maker;
For Knowledge is of Power's eternity,
And perfect Glory, the true image-taker;
   So as what doth the infinite containe,
   Must be as infinite as it againe.

No maruell then, if proud desires' reflexion,
   By gazing on this Sunne, doe make vs blinde,
Nor if our lust, our Centaure-like affection,
   In stead of Nature, fadome clouds and winde:
So adding to originall defection,
   As no man knowes his owne vnknowing minde:
   And our AEgyptian darkenesse growes so grosse,
   As we may easily in it, feele our losse.  

The young men do not doubt the infinity of knowledge, but they do
not doubt their capacity to absorb the infinite either: even when Cupid
blindfolds them, dazzled by the after-images burnt on their brains, they
still insist that they are eagles. Berowe's arguments are just and
well-chosen, and would have found support among obscurantists and
intellectuals alike. He chooses the most disreputable of the sciences to
illustrate his argument, the involved and polemical astronomy of his time.
This is the study which divorces the scholar most fully from mundane
affairs and beguiles him with the illusion of conquering celestial

   learning", sts. 3 & 4.

2. Thomas Williams in a congratulatory poem affixed to Ouids
   Banquet of sense. A Coronet for his Mistersse Philosophie, and
   his amourous Zodiacke (At London, printed by I.R. for Richard
   Smith, 1595, Sig. A3 recto) congratulates Chapman for being
   just such an eagle.
   Your eyes can well the dazeling beames behold
   This Pythian lightner freshly doth effuse ...
empires. Berowne's view, and his governing image are explained by Nicholas of Cusa:

It so far surpasses human reason, however, to know the precision of the combinations in material things and how exactly the known has to be adapted to the unknown that Socrates thought he knew nothing save his own ignorance, whilst Solomon, the wise, affirmed that in all things there are difficulties which beggar explanation in words; and we have it from another who was divinely inspired, that wisdom and the locality of the understanding lie hidden from the eyes of all the living... in the presence of such difficulty we may be compared to owls trying to look at the sun.

1. The champions of all other learning not infrequently made an exception of astronomy, for example, Henry Cross in Vertves Common-wealth: or the high-way to honor... London Printed for Iohn Newbery, ... 1603, Sig. N2 verso - N3 recto:
   But forasmuch, as some are diversely affected, they observe not this decorum before noted, but fall into vaime iangling, and so conceited of their owne wits, and haue so many crotchets in their heads, that they publish great volumes of nice and curious questions, ambiguities & doubts, as many of the Asse-stronomers, that are very inquisitiue to knowe if the world were created in the Spring or Autumn, the night before the day, ...

2. Nicholas de Cusa, De Docta Ignorantia, trans. Germain Heron, O. F. M., with an introduction by Dr. D. J. B. Hawkins (London, 1954), p. 8. We may compare this with Raleigh's view:
   Et humanum est errare. And to the end that no man should be proude of himselfe, God hath distributed vtne men such a proportion of knowledge, as the wisest may behold in themselues their owne weakesesse. Nulli vnquam dedit omnia Deus, God neuer gaue the knowledge of all things to any one, (2. Cor. 12. 2) ... Sapientia vbi iuenitur? (saith Iob) but where is wisedome found? And where is the place of vnderstanding? man knoweth not the price thereof, for it is not found in the land of the liuing, And therefore seeing God found follie in his Angels, mens judgements (which inhabite in houses of clay) cannot be without their mistakings ... (The Historie of the World, op. cit., p. 34).
The King implies that there are good authorities for Berowne's views.

How well he's read to reason against reading! (I. i. 94)

No specific source has ever been nominated. The argument may be justified by reference to a number of streams in European thought. The Neo-stoics, like Lipsius, would have supported such an argument on the grounds that the King's notion of the Academe is mainly optimistic, man's life being forever subject to the myriad accidents and perversions of the human condition. 1 The English humanists of the early sixteenth century would have agreed that the pursuit of scientia was foolishness because the real wisdom, sapientia, was an active and ethical ideal. 2

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1. There is a great volume of neo-stoic writing being published in England during Shakespeare's writing life. Evidence for the stoic attitude to the getting of wisdom can be found in Guevara's Dispraise of the life of a Courtier, and a commendacion of the life of the labourynng man, MDXLVIII (col: Excusum Londini, in aedibus Richardi Graftoni) passim; in the fifth book passim of Sir Richard Barckley's Discourse of the Felicitie of Man; or his Summum bonum... London, Printed for VVilliam Ponsonby, 1598; and in Joseph Hall's Heaven vpon Earth, Or Of true Peace and Tranquillitie of Minde... London. Printed by John Windet for Samuel Macham and Matthew Cooke... 1606.

2. Many examples of this view can be cited; e.g. Baldwin's Treatise of Moral Philosophy (loc. cit.) Sig. N3 recto:

    Scyence separate from justice and vertue, is not wysedome but subtilte.

and Sir Thomas Elyot Of the Knowledge (sic) whiche maketh a wise man, Londini in aedibus Thomae Bertheleti, MD.XXXIII, fol. 91. One of the most winning and succinct formulations is that of Cornelius Agrippa (op. cit., f. 9. 3 recto)

    For the true felicite, consisteth not in the knowledge of goodnesse, but in a good life: not in vnderstandinge, but in liuinge, with vnderstanding: For not the good vnderstanding, but the good will, ioygneth men vnto God.
They in turn inherited the mediaeval concept of Christ, logos, the Word, as knowledge. Erasmus develops the idea of Thomas a’Kempis, of the fool in Christ, who realises that his intellectual pretensions are absurd before God, accomplishing his salvation with a light heart through

1. Si Christum bene scis,
    nihil est si cetera nescis:
Si Christum nescis, nihil est
    si cetera discis.

Know Christ aright, know all
    that can be worth the knowing:
But know not Christ, and know
    all knowledge ouerthrowing.

A dialogue full of pithe and pleasure: between three Phylosophers: Antonio, Meandro and Dinarco: Vpon the Dignitie, or Indignitie of Man. Partly Translated out of Italian, and partly set downe by way of observation. By Nicholas Breton, Gentleman. London Printed by T. C. for Iohn Browne ... 1603, Sig. E3 verso. Cf.

Study not Astronomy,
    Least to darknesse turne thy light:
But that high Diuinitie,
    Where the day hath neuer night ...

(A Divine Poeme, diuided into two Partes: The Rauisht Soule, and the Blessed VVeeper. Compiled by Nicholas Breton, Gentle-man. Imprinted at London, for Iohn Browne and Iohn Deane. 1601, Sig. B3 recto.)
humility and trust. The tradition of the encomium morae \(^1\) links with
the Pyrrhonism of Montaigne, who finds tranquillity and detachment in his
view of the world's folly, which does not require such a drastic perversion
of human nature as stoicism. \(^2\) Berowne argues in the fashion developed

1. But now at last I lepe backe againe to sainct Paule, and Gladly
(saieth he) ye dooe beare with vnwise men, (speakynge it by him
selfe) also in an other place, receive you me, as vnwise that I
am: and further, I speake not this precisely as vpon gods precept,
but rather in mine owne vnwisedomne. Than againe, we (saieth he)
are become fooles for Christes sake: Dooe you here now how
great praises of Foly this so great an Autour alleageth, yea and
that more is, he plainejoygheth Folie vnto vs, for a thynge most
necessarie and right, importyng to saluacion. For who so semeth
(saieth he) to be wise amonges you, let him become a foole, to the
ende he be wise in deede.

The praise of Folie. Morae Encomivm a booke made in latine by
that great clerke Erasmus Roterodame. Englisshed by Sir Thomas
Chaloner knight. Anno M.D.DLIX, Sig. Rlv recto.

For a summary of the whole tradition in literature, see Walter
Kaiser, Praisers of Folly: Erasmus, Rabelais, Shakespeare (London,
1964).

2. Erasmus attacks the Stoics with vigour in the Praise of Folly (op. cit)
Sig. Eiv verso - F1 recto.

For whiche of you woulde not lothe, and blisse you from the
company of suche maner a man, as were mortified, and benumbed
in al those sensis and vnderstandynges, that naturally other men
are ledde by? that had no affections reynyng in hym? nor woulde
no more bee sterred with loue, or compassion than if he were a
flint stone? that in nothyng could ouershoote him selfe, but rather
lyke Argus see, and cast all thynges to the vtermost? Forgeue
no man? be onely pleased with hym selfe? esteeme him selfe
onely to be riche? onely to be a kyngle? onely to be a freeman?
briefly, onely all thynges, but in his owne conceite onely? that
cared for no friendes? friend him selfe to no man? Wolde not
sticke to defie the Gods? and what so euere is dooen of other men
in this present life to laugh at it and dispise it, as a verie madnessse?
Yet suche a maner quaynt beaste is this complete wyseman of theirs.

Montaigne’s Apologie of Raymond Sebond is largely conceived as an
attack upon conventional philosophers especially Stoics (Floro’s
Montaigne, op. cit., pp. 252 ff.).
by the supporters of true wisdom and virtue in the combat with proud
knowledge and incipient error, but his motives are libertine, as Longaville
is quick to point out.

He weeds the corn and still lets grow the weeding.  (I. i. 96)

When Berowne caps Longaville's line with a strange reference to
spring as the season of wantonness (for green geese are not only the geese
fattened at Whitsuntide) the young men are puzzled by the apparent non
sequitur, until the King's comment reminds us where we have heard his
kind of argument before.

Berowne is like an envious sneaping frost
That bites the new-born infants of the spring.  (I. i. 100-1)

In Nashe's Summer's Last Will and Testament Winter attacks Spring
because it is the season beloved of scholars.  We have already had a
chance to assess the demeanour of Ver for ourselves, and we know him
for a giddy fop whose great delight is in "giving wenches greene gownes".
Summer says of Winter, as the King remarks of Berowne,

Gainst her owne bowels thou Arts weapons turnst.  1

With the aid of the poor fellows who kept the house and tilled the land,
Nashe taught the lesson of Winter, cheerful endurance and coöperation,
to Whitgift and his little academy.  Unlike the little household sheltering
from the plague in the Archbishop's house at Croydon, Berowne is

1. McKerrow, Nashe, Vol. III, p. 280; Summer's Last Will and
Testament, I. 1487.
invulnerable; the attitude he takes is not a lesson he has learnt in
innocence, but an attitude he adopts in self-indulgence. His rejoinder
to the King shows arrogance as well as orthodoxy.

Well, say I am; why should proud summer boast
Before the birds have any cause to sing?
Why should I joy in any abortive birth?
At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled shows;
But like of each thing that in season grows.
So you, to study now it is too late,
Climb o'er the house to unlock the little gate. (I.i.102-9)

In his famous pioneering work of psychology, Huarte makes the
same comparison of learning and agriculture:

... after he (the good husbandman) hath manured the earth
in due season he looks for comvenient time to sow it, for
it cannot be done at all times of the yeare, and after that
the graine is sprung vp, he clenseth and weeded it, that it
may encrease and grow, guing the fruit which of the seed
is expected. After this sort, it is necessarie that the
science being knowne, which best fitteth with the person,
he begin to studie from his first age, for this (sayth
Aristotle) is the most pliant of all others to learning.
Moreover, mans life is very short, and the arts long and
tolisma, for which it behooues that there be time
sufficient to know them, and space to exercise them, and
therwith to profit the common wealth. 1

This fills out Berowne's argument: the fruit of learning is the
benefit for which it is exercised in the commonwealth in mature age,
which if spent in study is wasted in pointless labour. When Berowne
speaks of abortive birth, he means the monster or the still-born child,

1. Examen de Ingenios. The examination of mens Wities ... By John
HUART. Translated out of the Spanish tongue by M. Camillo
Camilli. Englished out of his Italian by R. C(arew) Esquire.
carried in the womb for so long, and born to no effect but wonder or grief.

So there is nothing so monstrous, and against nature, as the abandoning of this commonaltie, by neglecting the action. 1

Seneca and Cicero can provide authority for the view that effort made contrary to nature's bent is vain, 2 but Shakespeare's view is probably closer to Montaigne's:

Of Philosophies opinions, I more willingly embrace those, which are the most solide: that is to say, such as are most humane and most ours: My discourses are suitable to my manners; lowe and humble... Wee must enter into the nature of things, and througly see what she inwardly requiers. I quest after her tracke; we have confounded her with artificiall traces. And that Academicall and Peripatetical summum bonum or soveraigne felicity, which is, to live according to her rules: by this reason becommeth difficult to be limited, and hard to be expounded. And that of the Stoickes, couzин-german to the other, which is, to yeelde vnto nature. Is it not an errour to esteeme some actions lesse woorthie, forsomuch as they are necessary? Yet shall they never remooe out of my head, that it is not a most convenient marriage, to wedde Pleasure vnto Necessitie... Who will not call it a property of folly to doe sloathfully and frowardly, what is to be done, and one way to drive the body and another way the minde, and himselfe to be distracted into most divers motions? 3

1. AЕgremont Ratcliffe, Politique discourses, op.cit., fol. 52 verso.
2. E.g. ibid., fol. 12, and Huarte, op.cit., p.12.
3. Florio's Montaigne, op.cit., p.663, "Of Experience".
The King acknowledges the force of Berowne's argument and offers to release him from his promise, but perversely Berowne refuses to renege; like the contempters of knowledge themselves, he cannot follow his own advice. (Nicholas of Cusa was an important contributor to the overthrow of Ptolemaic astronomy, and Cornelius Agrippa had all his works, including the De vanitate, on the Index because he was an occultist.) He speaks of his argument as of a mere verbal exercise, a challenge to which the King has failed to respond, a skirmish which he has won, and not a declaration of his real intentions. Ironically, the play will prove the truth of what he argued in sport. He cannot abandon his train of thought, and on the mention of the necessity of parley with the Princess, he reverts to it:

So study evermore is overshot:
While it doth study to have what it would,
It doth forget to do the thing it should;
And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
'Tis won as towns with fire; so won, so lost. (I.i.141-5)

What the academicians would was fame in afterlife, for which they neglected virtue, which consists in fulfilling the duties of one's state in life, and as there is no other way into the temple of honour but through the temple of virtue, in their very striving for honour they have lost it. As Montaigne said,

I finde nothing so humble and mortall in Alexander's life, as his conceipts about his immortalization. 1

1. Ibid, p. 664.
The king, so rudely reminded of the duties of his state in life, contemplates the wiping out of his edict, which is only four days old, on the plea of necessity, and Berowne again pounces on him, with the orthodox argument at his fingertips.

Necessity will make us all forsworn
Three thousand times within this three years' space.
For every man with his affects is born,
Not by might mastered, but by special grace. (I. i. 148-151)

According to Protestant doctrine, the law as revealed by the Bible is sufficient for salvation, and the nature of man after the Fall such that he cannot fulfil the law, let alone undertake anything not positively required by it, the so-called acts of supererogation. The taking of any vow, of poverty, celibacy or obedience, according to Osiander,

... is contrarie to the article of sanctification, which dooth not grant to any man in this life, a perfect & plenarie fulfilling of the lawe; much less anie workes of supererogation. 1

God must have "ye whole honour of mans saluation" is the burden of Cavendish's The Image of Nature and Grace. 2 The vow of continency was regarded as particularly foolhardy, because the sexual impulse was sent us by the will of God, who had provided his own chosen

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1. A Manvell Or briefe volume of Controuersies of Religion betwene the Protestants and the Papists: ... Written in Latine ... by Lycas Osiander, and now Englished with some additions and corrections. At London Printed by Humphrey Lownes. 1606, p. 204.

2. The Image of Nature and Grace, conteynyng the whole course, and condition of mans estate, written by Richard Caundishe ... At London Printed by John Daye. (1571), fol. 122 recto.
way, matrimony, of directing it to His ends, and avoiding the sin of fornication. By Calvin's definition, the young lords are rash and ungrateful.

For hee that voweth that which either is not in his power, or disagreeeth with his vocation, is rash: and he that despiseth the bountifulnesse of God, whereby hee is appointed Lorde of all thinges, is vnthankefull. 1

The affects are the lower powers of the mind which move us to desire the good and flee the bad, but by our Fall which darkened our reason and limited our perception, they continually move towards the bad and away from God. The affections "servants of the Minde,

... too oft disloial proue by kinde,
Who liers and sinne-soothing claw-backes are,
Whereby our judgments eies they (Traitors) blinde, ... 2

"Except preuenting Grace be mixt amonge" the powers of the soul drive us along a perverted path. It is Pride, the sin of the will, that leads the lords along the dizzy path of ambition, and, as Calvin says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". God will revenge Himself, and he will do so through his creation.

But as for man, all the fruites of ye earth, those of the trees, the fishes of the sea, and the Fowles of the aire, doe not suffice him, but in all points turning his nature, he doth disguise, puffe vp, & change the substance into excessse, and the nature into arte, to

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the ende that by such unsatiablenesse, nature be angered, and almost forced to take more than is needful. 1

This is then the background to Berowne's curtly expressed misgiving about the vow to have no commerce with women. Of all the lords he is the most presumptuous, for he has sworn without deluding himself, and expects to keep the impossible rule of life longer than his fellows. The arrogance of his decision is only exceeded by its cynicism, for clearly he does not expect the others to be faithful to their oath for very long. After his vaunting speech he asks languidly if they will be allowed any means of recreation, and the answer is ready: Armado will be the lords' unwitting jester. Well might the laconic lords differentiate themselves from him in that he has a mint of phrases in his brain; events will prove that he will not be alone in allowing his own tongue to ravish him. His preposterous battles may be compared to the discipline which the lords have devised for their own torment, and his motive can hardly be more vain-glorious than theirs, although it maybe more cruelly so. The other half of their entertainment will be Costard, the unlettered swain. The twin natures of man, the man of fire and the child of fancy, and the grosser corporeal nature will be the objects of their ridicule, Armado who aspires to the heroic status of the paladins, and Costard who dreams of a quiet life and one good meal a day.

At the entry of Dull and Costard the King is called upon to administer his own edict, which has turned what ought to be an innocent activity into

1. Boaistuau, op. cit., Sig. B8 recto.
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a crime for which Costard must now suffer, Costard, whose name is only another word for poll, one of the multitude. The fact that Costard's lines are unbidden interjections and so must be delivered to the audience means that the audience builds up complicity with him. He knows, in his peculiar droll resignation spiced with the irrepressibility of his innocence, that the decision will go against him and he is so used to culpability that it never occurs to him to protest. He confesses his transgression freely, in a torrent of words which comes to a halt in the statement, "It is the manner of a man to speak with a woman", which is oddly redolent of the Proverb of the four wonderful things. In his assumption that man is born to desire woman he is perfectly orthodox: he can no more expect to escape the general doom than he can to speak with the tongues of angels, for

... if every man may obtaine by prayer the gift of continencie, why not also the gift of tongues? or, why not the gift of healing also?  

When Berowne sneeringly offers to hear the letter as he would an oracle, Costard replies with an oracular pronouncement of his own:

Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh, (I.i.215)

Meanwhile, after Longaville's rebuke to Berowne (I.i.195) the other lords have been curiously silent. During the reading of Armado's preposterous letter, Costard gives evidence that he has learned that

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hardest fundamental lesson, tirelessly cited by every moral philosopher, to know himself and his own imperfections. Aware of the factitiousness of the law that condemns him, he tries to find a way out by ringing the changes on the phrases of the edict, in a parody of a lawyer's manner, but in this court sophistry is the prerogative of the judges and he is condemned. The sense of his twisting the King's phrase is not so much a bawdiness as a flash of loyalty.

This maid will serve my turn, sir. (I. i. 283)

Berowne continues to divert himself at this spectacle, as if it were a play. He watches Costard condemned to bread and water in the custody of Armado, like the baser nature of the young men mortified by their ambition. Costard's suggestion that he be allowed to eat and pray, instead of fasting, reflects the uselessness of the lords' self-imposed mortification, for, unlike them, he has had experience of hunger, and it can accomplish nothing in regenerating his character or benefiting the commonwealth. The real significance of his suffering lies in the statement he makes as Berowne takes him off the stage.

I suffer for the truth, sir; for true it is, I was taken with Jaquenetta and Jaquenetta is a true girl, and therefore welcome the sour cup of prosperity, affliction may one day smile again, and till then, sit thee down sorrow! (I. i. 294-8)

His muddling of the words for fortune and ill fortune reflects the mingled nature of man's lot upon earth, and his own resignation to it. He is as far from hope and ambition as he is from despair and self-loathing.
He invites sorrow to take her place at his table for he has learned what Montaigne called the great lesson of philosophy, by dint of living with the wind and the rain.

Be it supposed that Learning and Knowledge should worke those effects they speake of, that is, to blunt and abate the sharpnes of those accidents or mischances, that followe and attend vs; doth she any more than what ignorance effecteth, much more evidently and simply? 1

The notion of the value of affliction can be filled out by the most powerful part of Davies Nosce Teipsum -

If ought can teach vs ought, Affliction's lookes,
(Making vs looke vnto ourselues so neere,)
Teach vs to know our selues beyond all bookes,
Or all the learned S(c)hoolest that euer were. 2

Costard invites Affliction to share his board like a valued guest, for her value is not that she be borne with, but that she be received with good-humour. The Stoics learnt to bear the vicissitudes of fortune impassively but the great achievement of the Christian Pyrrhonist is to jest in the face of confusion and uncertainty, and to use misfortune to cement relationships with others.

1. Florio's Montaigne, opcit, p. 283, "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond".

Then though Affliction be no welcome Ghost
Vnto the world (that loues nought but her weale)
Of me, therefore she shalbe loved best,
Because to me shee doth the world reveale,
Which worldly welfare would from me conceal.

Further light may be cast upon the associations raised in the mind of an audience by the opening picture of four young Frenchmen creating their idealist academy in the King's park, by a plate in Civitas Veri, an allegory of the city of truth presented to Henry of Navarre by Bartolommeo Delbene. One of the few pastoral scenes in the book is the Grove of Arrogance and Falsehood, which is formed by a natural arena of trees wreathed in mist and infected with bugs. Falsehood poses in borrowed plumes in the centre, but in the foreground Arrogance, strutting in cothurnoi approaches a group of four young men crowned with laurel. Another bows low before her, but the crown she holds aloft is turned as if in act to crown herself. In the right foreground are enacted the pursuits of 'Chymistae, Spagiritae, circulatores, diuinaculi, mathematici'. Clearly the opening of Love's Labour's Lost cannot be interpreted wholly in terms of this allegory, but it is not to be automatically construed as festivity either. The audience has seen a heavily criticised oath-taking and an unjust trial: Berowne has said that Spring is near, but further suggestions of a May-time frolic are still to come. The longest speeches have been given to the cynic, while the


2. Civitas veri Sive morum Bartholomei Delbene ... Parisiis Apud Ambrosium et Hieronymum Drouart ... M. DC. IX, p. 150, Appendix, fig. 1.
optimists have remained curiously silent, apart from the King's speeches which are full of death, oblivion, and frost. Our laughter is not the happy chuckle of festivity, but something much more ambiguous and troubled.

In the next scene we have the entrance of another critic of the play's proceeding, the apt child, Moth, whom the historians labour to identify with Nashe. While not commenting upon the value of discovering an exact parallel, it might be as well to examine the tendencies of Nashe's writing, which might justify Miss Yates's highly suggestive attribution of the title "villanist" to both Nashe and Shakespeare. 1

Like Berowne, Nashe was well-read to reason against reading, and his position is not simply one of bad-tempered obscurantism.

Young men are not so much delighted with solide substances, as with painted shadowes, following rather those things which are goodly to the viewe, then profitable to the use, naither doo they loue so much those things that are dooing, as those things that are sounding; reioycing more to be strowed with flowers then nourished with frute. How many be there that seake truth, not in truth, but in vanitie, and find that they sought not according to trueth but according to vanitie, and that which is most miserable, in the words of life, they toile for the merchandise of death. 2

In the Anatomie of Absurditie, he mentions Mulcaster and Ascham, the humanists in whose tradition he considers himself to be writing. He condemns speculative studies for the very reason that they have no

demonstrable relation to an active ethical ideal, to the "good Life" and "honest conversation".\footnote{1} Winter's attack on academicism in 
*Summer's Last Will and Testament* might be specifically applied to the four young lords, "word-warriors, lazy star-gazers",

They thought how they might plant a heauë on earth,
Whereof they would be principall lowe gods;
That heauen they called Contemplation,
As much to say as a most pleasant slouth; \ldots \footnote{2}

The conclusion of Winter's bitter diatribe is that they are "vain boasters, liers, makeshifts", and that the truth can only be expected from the lips of simple folk who perform more than they promise.

*Vox populi, vox dei.* In Nashe's play *vox populi* is most clearly represented in the figure of Harvest, the farm hand stitched over with
ears of wheat from Goodman *Yeoman's* unpaid wheetssheaf, who, despite the recentness of the harvest, is already in debt at the alehouse. The figure of the fool by choice, who never loses sight of his human frailty and the fragility of his fortunes, is Will Summer, who remains, like all those who would be saved, as a little child. As he takes the tongue-tied imp upon his knee to provide the great closing image of Nashe's pageant, he protests childishly —

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
As sure as this coate is too short for me, all the
Points of your house are for this condemned to my pocket if you and I e're play at spanne Counter more. 1

In the first scene Costard provided the counterpoise to the academicians: his role in the second is taken by the child who acts as father to the man Armado, and counters his extravagances with sharply expressed commonsense. As audience to Armado's posturing he is identified with the actual audience, which shares his scorn for the Spanish popinjay. We discover that Armado has sworn to three years of fasting and study along with the other lords, so that he too is a member of the little academe. Moth presents to him in a cryptic form arguments like those that Berowne offered the covenanters: he understands the three years to be a word, a concept merely, which might be quite adequately studied by arithmetical computation alone. The Braggart is impressed by his reasoning, exclaiming wittily,

A most fine figure. (I. ii. 52)

To which Moth replies in disgust,

To prove you a cipher. (I. ii. 53)

Heedless of the criticism, Armado makes his confession of love. Like the other lords, he considers himself a soldier, and for all his massive vain-glory he is the first to fall from his self-ordained eminence. He admits himself incapable of warring against this affection of his own.

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1. Ibid., p. 294-5, ll. 1948-50.
providing a grotesque parallel of the lord’s pretensions, and a hint of what
is to come.

If drawing my sword against the humour of affection
would deliver me from the reprobate thought of it,
I would take desire prisoner, and ransome him to any
French courtier for a new devis’d courtesy. (I. ii. 56–60)

His useless sword is the fantastic parallel of the oath of the lords,
and his power to wield it as much an illusion as their power to surmount
their own nature by an oath. Moth offers him as a precedent, Hercules,
the first of the many appearances of the Titan in the play: Hercules was
a figure beloved of Renaissance humanism, significant of the superhuman
struggle of the triumphant intellect against doubt, confusion and
obscurantism, even to the point of heresy and damnation; in the older
mediaeval concept he was a simpler figure of the power of the human soul
aided by grace to conquer the powers of darkness. ¹ Shakespeare begins
with Hercules the lover, but the concept evolves in the course of the play
and it is Moth who takes the role of the Titan at the last. The audience’s
complicity with Moth builds as they consistently understand more of what
he says than Armado does: Armado pretends to a Platónical passion for
Jaquenetta, admiring her wit, but Moth interprets her greenness in quite
another fashion. He reminds Armado that red and white cannot be
immaculate for they are the colours of flesh and blood, of shame and fear.
He knows that Jaquenetta is the object of this transmogrified lust, and he

is sorry for her. As Armado says, "She deserves well", he replies,

To be whipp'd: and yet a better love than my master.
(I. ii. 114)

The rational hind and his wench break into Armado's lofty passioning at this point. Armado is Costard's gaoler, as well as Jaquenetta's suitor, so he may feast while Costard pines. The consequences constitute the only practical results of the King's legislation. Jaquenetta replies to Armado's advances without coquetry or simpering, finding nothing in his magnificence but oddity, and his protestations nothing but words. Costard prays that he will not be mewed up: "I will fast being loose" (I. ii. 146) makes clear the supererogated nature of his punishment. If Armado can relax his meanness to feed him on the other four days of the week that will constitute the change in his fortunes. Moth is made his custodian for the nonce, but their relationship, despite the page's hauteur, seems to change before they leave the stage.

Costard: Well if ever I do see the merry days of desolation that I have seen, some shall see —

Moth: What shall some see?

Costard: Nothing master Moth, but what they look upon. It is not for prisoners to be too silent in their words, and therefore I will say nothing. I thank God I have as little patience as any man, therefore I can be quiet.
(I. ii. 149-156)

For the moment the clown is the teacher of the boy, whose quickness of wit does not prevent him from discerning a difference between the absurdity of his master and the muddle of this poor soul. Costard begins in a high fantastical vein of his own, attempting to compose a jeremiad
in his biblical fashion, but the child's question restores him to self-
possessio, so that contradictory elements in his vision of the world
partially resolve themselves into a statement of Costard's peculiar
wisdom. Watching the childlike man and the witty child conversing
gravely while Armado heaves his phony sighs, it is not hard to believe
what Boaistuau says about the day of judgment:

Beholde these the whiche in times past we had in derision,
in infamie and reproch, esteeming them as foolishe, and
their life to be without honor, behold they are mounted
among the children of God, and their porcion is among the
Sainctes. It is (sayth S. Jerome) the houre wherein many
foolishe and dumbe persons, shall be more happier than
the wise and eloquent, manye Shepherdes and Carters shall
be preferred before Philosophers, manye poore beggars
before ryche Princes and Monarches, many simple and
ignorant, before the wittie and subtil, the which being
deeply waved and considered by Sainct Augustine, saide
that foolis and simple witted men rauished the heauens,
and the wise with their wisedome were sunke downe to Hell. 1

Armado's love ravings close the act. His attempts to justify himself
are so perfunctory, so much an extension of his own vain-glory that we are
in no danger of supposing that he is being rescued from a wrong way of
life for the virtuous and fruitful path of love. The epitasis is in sight.

Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme! for
I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise wit;
write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio. (I. ii. 173-5)

The last word on Armado's character could well be Nashe's: in the
definition of an Upstart, from Pierce Pennilesse his Supplication to the
Divell:

1. Boaistuau, op. cit., Sig. Q2 recto - verso.
Hee will bee humorous, forsoth, and haue a broode of fashions by himselfe. Sometimes (because Loue commonly weares the liuerey of Wit) hee will bee an Inamorato Poeta, & sonnet a whole quire of paper in praise of Lady Swins-snout, his yeolow fac'd Mistress, & weare a feather of her rainbeaten fan for a fauor, like a foxt-horse. ¹

This then is the protasis as far as it has been revealed by the first act. Furness laments that the characters of low life are not "more intimately connected with the more important business of the piece":² the comment is odd for various reasons; first, because it is difficult to decide what the important business of the piece is, it is so much a play of non-happening, and second, because they are obviously closely connected to the themes of the play, which are much more exposed than in plays with a stronger line of narrative development. The natural society of Jaquenetta and Costard is harmed by the antics of the academical ruler who chooses to subject their ordinary actions to his extraordinary aims, and at the end of the play it is this fact which we are obliged to confront. Armado is a grosser example of the self-deception practised by the lords, because he is a grotesque fake in everything, but they are deceived in a subtler fashion; the counterbalance is the unwinking stare of the yokels, walking unimpressed in and out of the gentles' game. The audience knows that love will revenge itself on the young men, and they may even guess, if they have read their Petrarch, that it will be the arrow of unrequited love that will transfix these scorners of their own humanity, but in a

fashion far less lyrical and lovely than we might be led to expect, in order that they may learn the greatest lesson, to know themselves.

The other datum in our experiment is provided in the next scene, the ladies. They are preceded by Boyet, playing his dual role of officer to the crown and weaver of fantastic compliment with perfect sang froid. The Princess's slight acerbity in begging him to diminish the vastness of his flattery shows us that she has a fairly shrewd estimate of herself, and of how glibly the compliments roll off her councillor's tongue.

I am less proud to hear you tell my worth,  
Than you much willing to be accounted wise  
In spending your wit in the praise of mine. (II. i. 17-9)

The glance is a shrewd one, for doubtless Boyet is fairly smug about his ability in the courtesy department, but hardly so effete as to rely upon it. The Princess astutely mixes the commission to seek an interview with the King with praise, knowing what effect it will have upon him.

Proud of employment, willingly I go. (II. i. 35)

The Princess's comment reveals her shrewdness, and the orthodoxy of her psychological insights:

All pride is willing pride, and yours is so. (II. i. 36)

(Will holds the royall septer in the soule  
And on the passions of the heart doth raigne.)

Vives describes the mind as divided between Mens, or understanding, which is the part made in the image of God, and Will, "voyde of reson, brute, fierse, cruell, more lyker a beast, than a man, wherin dwelleth these motions, whiche be named either affections, or perturbations, arrogancy, enuie, malyce, ire, feare, sorowe, desire neuer satisfied, and vayne ioye". The proper regime to be established within the soul between wit and will is described by John Davies of Hereford, with specific reference to the sin of the young lords.

For our Will's Baiard blind, yet bold, and free, And, had she way made in her maine Carreere, Sh' would runne into that Light that none can see Saue light of Lights to feele the secrets there, Which Angells wonder at, yet come not neere: But Reas'n's conduct is nothing safe herein, Therefore the Will hath too iust cause of feare Lest shee should runne into presumptuous sinne, For which diuines Angells damn'd haue bin.

The young men have overthrown the supremacy of right reason in their souls by the sin of pride, and now they are enslaved to the will, which, lacking the control of the understanding, is swayed hither and thither by the affections, while the intelligence itself can no longer co-operate in the mind's commonwealth, but must perform for the gratification of the will, like a prisoner dancing to please his gaolers: the Princess's comment prepares us for her judgment of the scholar lords. Each lady has a flatteringly clear recollection of one of them, but all the

1. An Introduction to VVysedome made by Ludouicus Vues and translated into Englyshe by R. Morysine. (Col.: Londini in aedibus Thomae Bertheleti ... M.D.XLII), Sig. Dii recto - verso.

descriptions contain a current of criticism, which is subtly and seriously
expressed.

The only soil of his virtues' fair gloss...
Is a sharp wit match'd with too blunt a will;
Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills
It should none spare that come within his power.

(II.1.47-52)

Longaville's will has lost its special virtue of integrity and indulges
itself by allowing wit to coruscate in wanton disregard of the harm that it
can do. The sovereignty of the angelic faculty is destroyed and the man's
intelligence has become the tool of his malice. The inherent fault was
explained by Petrarch, and his version given new currency by Thomas
Twyne.

Joy. My wit is very sharpe. Reason: It is not the
sharpeness, but the vprightnesse and stalednesse of
the wit, that deserue the true and perpetual
commendation. The sharpnesse of some wittes is
rebat ed with smal force, and wil faile at the first
encounter, and the most strongest thinges if they be
stretched foorth to the vtermost, become feeble,
and so likewise weakenesse ouercommeth all strength.
Joy. I haue a most sharpe wit. Reason. There is
nothing more odious vnto wisdom then to much
sharpnes: Nothing more greenous vnto a Philosopher
then a sophist: ...

Katherine describes the young Dumaine in words that might have
described Shakespeare's beloved, the lily of Sonnet XCIV, whose beauty

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1. Phisike against Fortune aswell prosperous as adverse ... written
in Latine by Francisis Petrarch ... and now first Englished by
fol. 4 verso - 5 recto, quoted as a gloss on the passage in the
Arden edition.
and wit may not be matched with power to act virtuously, so that he has
"most power to do most harm". The Princess's reference to the
withering of quick-springing plants brings even nearer the image of the
fruitless, luxuriant flower, perishing in proud isolation in the stench of
promise unfulfilled. Winter says of Sol, called in the marginal note,

imberbis Apollo and, Will Summer assumes, a figure of pride,

Let him not talke for he hath words at will,
And wit to make the baddest matter good.

Summer snaps,
Bad words, bad wit. 1

Rosaline does not lay beauty to Berowe's credit, but makes up for
it in celebrating the versatility of his eloquence, which is not a part of

The Knowledeg (sic) whiche maketh a wise man, according to Sir Thomas
Elyot, for Plato asks Aristippus,

... what supposest thou them to be, which in every mater,
that is meued, came raison fetely, makyn men that do
here them/ wonder at their conueyance, thoughg it be
somtyme ferre from the purpose? be not they wise men?
And that thing that they haue, is it not the very knowlege,
that maketh wisedome? Ari: No, but it is a good parte
of inuention, which commmeth of witte. All be it bycause
that which they do rayson is neuer certayne, it is rather
opinion than wisedome, and also that manner prompte
raysonynge hapneth more of nature than study, and
therefor it is more commended of vulgare persones or
ignoraunte: than of them which be of a ripe and perfect
jugement. 2

1. McKerrow, Nashe, Vol. III, p.249, Summer's Last Will and
Testament, II.494-9.

2. Elyot, Of the Knowledeg that maketh a wise man, op.cit., fol. 16
verso - 17 recto.
Our picture of the young men is now complete, and our misgivings about their behaviour in the first act are now justified. Boyet's return presents the Princess with the King's intention to "lodge her in the field" rather than "seek a dispensation for his oath", a reference which indicates the solemnness of oath-taking in Elizabethan England. The Princess has barely time to digest the unpalatable information when the King himself arrives and must himself hear her rebuke.

Fair I give you back again; and welcome I have not yet: the roof of this court is too high to be yours, and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine. (II.i.91-4)

There is now no doubt that the neglect of the sacred duties of hospitality was a grave sin in the Elizabethan ethic, but the Princess first rebukes the King's pride. She gives him no quarter, and he fails signally to equal the sharpness and readiness of her tongue. She snatches at the word will and makes the point of her remarks about Boyet again in a different way, implying that the oath was wilful, and its setting aside will be equally so.

Why, will shall break it will, and nothing else. (II.i.100)

When the King mistakenly protests that she does not know what they have sworn to, she replies with true knowledge's criticism of his proud knowledge —

Where my lord so, his ignorance were wise,
Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance. (II.i.102-3)
Her comment condenses all the point of Berowne's criticism of their aim of study, and she follows it with a description of their *summum bonum* as inevitably sinful. While the King peruses her letter, Berowne, regardless of his oath, attempts to converse with one of the ladies.

There is considerable confusion about this scene: the ladies may or may not be masked, and Berowne's first conversation may or may not be with Katherine. In any case, it seems clear that the lords have no firm idea of what they are doing: none remembers who the lady is who takes his fancy, as the ladies remember them. When the acrimonious discussion between the King and the Princess ends in stalemate, there is a furtive interchange oddly curtailed by the dimeters, between Rosaline and Berowne, which is very amusing because of Berowne's attempts to evade detection, while Rosaline answers clearly and gaily. Berowne is already forsworn: not only is he conversing with a lady, he has already begun to woo her. The ladies, in reverence to the oath which is so little regarded, withdraw discreetly, while the ascetic lords hang about to get information from Boyet, who is slightly acid because he too must lodge in the open field with his lady, in respect of an oath which the lords themselves hardly seem to take seriously. Berowne who boasted so coolly that he would be the last to keep his oath, has so far lost his self-possession that he inquires if Rosaline be married or not, drawing a particularly unpromising reply from the courtier, so that he leaves in some ill-humour. Maria's wry comment refers to the sorry figure he cuts, while Rosaline supplies the criticism she left out of her earlier eulogy.
And every jest but a word. (II.1.216)

In their high spirits the girls skirmish with their professional flatterer, exchanging as ladies might with one advanced in years and pure of intention, kisses and mock favours, so that some control is applied to the predominant vision of them so far, as rather aggressive and thorny. The Princess curbs their mock battle however, with a more serious suggestion:

This civil war of wits were much better us'd
On Navarre and his book-men, for here 'tis abus'd.

(II.1.226-7)

Clearly the ladies have the intention of teaching the arrogant gentlemen a lesson, but it will not be easy to find the lesson to make an imprint upon such volatile matter, which has already ignited, unbidden, with the flame of love.

THE ACADEMICAL LOVERS: EPITASIS

The new development in the play begins with Boyet's anapaestic poem, delivered purely as a tour de force among much skirmishing in that odd metre. The quality of the performance is not high, for part of the joke is that the metre wrests some lines rather extravagantly wide of the rhetorical stress (e.g. l.248). The general sense hops along from couplet to couplet, following the rapid but uneven flow of Boyet's invention, and subject always to the controlling conceit of the King's senses all gathered in his sight, which mutely supplicates and feasts upon the image of the Princess. The
conceits he spins, of the court of his eye, of the image of her in his eyeball being actually the presence of his heart impressed with her image (one of the better ones) and his tongue stumbling with haste to be in his eye (one of the worse), of the crystal full of jewels, are all far-fetched and nimble, even if they are too shallow to permit of development beyond the individual couplets. As the poetic flow dwindles to the banal the Princess seizes the opportunity to leave, but unabashed Boyet converts her line to the first of another couplet, crowning it with a repetition of his own worst conceit,

I only have made a mouth of his eye
By adding a tongue which I know will not lie. (II.i.252-3)

so extravagant compliment and pseudo-amorous *jeu d'esprit* are part of the Princess’s milieu, a gay diversion which she understands as requiring the same kind of suspension of disbelief as a sport.

The next scene parallels the entertainment situation presented here, as Moth beguiles his languid master with a traditional air. Boyet exercised the courtiers' skill without ulterior motive or pretention, but to the inept courtier who seeks to make love by such means, the comment is sharply applicable.

These are compliments, these are humours, these betray nice wenches, that would be betrayed without these; and make them men of note (do you note, men?) that most are affected to these. (III.i.20-4)

Moth's words are ambiguous: he is not as the Arden editor appears to think, merely describing how a man may have success in love, for his
words are weighted with disapproval. The trappings of the conventional lover are worn either to amuse those who play love, or to seduce the vain and credulous. Moth claims that such refinements, like all smart accomplishments, are practised for praise and prestige. His attitude can be compared to that expressed by Philautus in Euphues and his England.

... in tymes past they vsed to wooe in playne tearmes, not in piked sentences, and hee speedeth best that speaketh wisest: every one following the newest waye, which is not ever the nearest waye: some going over the stile when the gate is open, and other keeping the right beaten path, when hee maye crosse ouer better by the fieldes. Every one followeth his owne fancie, which maketh duers leape shorte for want of good rysinge, and many shoote ouer for lack of true ayme.

And to that passe it is come, that they make an arto of that, which was woont to be thought naturall.

Extravagant wooing which climbs over the stile when the gate is open, may be compared to the study that the lords attempted which climbed over the house to get in at the little gate. Moth means Costard by the hobby-horse, but Armado betrays his unspoken attitudes by understanding it as Jaquenetta. The child takes the opportunity to utter a positive recommendation.

Negligent student! learn her by heart. (III.1.34)

which shows that he sees learning and loving as a continuum.

Costard and Jaquenetta, horse and probably hackney, are both equine, but Armado is an ass, that proverbially lecherous of beasts.

If we compare the words of Cornelius Agrippa about the Spanish lover, we may understand Armado's extraordinary character a little sooner.

The vnaduised Spaniarde is vnpatient in burning loue, verye madde, with troubled lasciuiousnes he renneth furiously, and with pitieful complaintes bewayling his ferueut (sic) desire, doth cal vpon his ladie and woorshippeth her, at length being waxen iealous doth either kill her, or hurting her, makes her common for every man for meede: ... 1

When Moth, Armado's bullet, brings his wounded quarry to his master, they imitate the cultivated, expounding foolish riddles, in which Costard shows himself as apt, if a little literal-minded, as anyone else. When he is told that Armado means to enfranchise him, he is aghast, having used his own system of etymology to construe it as marriage with a whore, the punishment worse than death. It ought to be clear from this reaction that Costard does not think of Jaquenetta as a drab, and that Moth does not either. Costard's literalness can be seen as his wonder at the magic of words, their quidditas: word and signification are for him multiple and coexistent, palpable to the imagination. He is the raw material upon which rhetoric may work sad wonders, deluding him and

teasing his innocence with the discrepancy between word and fact. For him words are tokens to be held in the mouth, savoured and remembered: like Caliban, he is the real connoisseur of the poet's art, of sounds and sweet airs, and the poet must never forget his moral obligation to edify and safeguard him, or, like Prospero, he must drown his book.

Costard is of the same stock as the country folk dazzled by Autolycus's tawdry ware in The Winter's Tale, the genuine peasant folk whom Shakespeare observed with a loyal but often dismayed eye. Although he is not educated, he is apt and puts on his new word, remuneration, like a new coat and preens in it until Berowne appears. Berowne's action in giving letter and guerdon, though more graceful, is a clear parallel to Armado's. His subsequent behaviour tallies with Moth's description: he might well cross his arms across his doublet, and tip his hat over his eyes, leaning against a tree like the gentleman in the Nicholas Hillier miniature. His peculiar kind of arrogance emerges here in the image of the dominie tyrannising over the snivelling boy-child "than whom no mortal so magnificent!", which parallels Armado's fixed image of himself as a Titan. Whatever public role he may assume as lover, soliloquising he expresses his disdain for his present servitude in terms that would have served Bruno for his attack on the love of woman in the Preface to the Heroici Furori.

1. Bruno begins by deriding poetry written to "quelle guance, quel busto" and finishes with "qual schito, quel puzzo, quel sepolcro, quel cesso, quel mestruo, quella carogna, quella febre quartana, quella estrema ingiuria et torto di natura: che con una superficie, vn ombra, vn fantasma, vn sogn, vn Circeo incantesimo ordinato al serviggio della generatione inganna in specie di bellezza; ..." (De gl'heroici furori. Al molto eccellente Casalliero, Signor Phillippo Sidneo. Parigi, Appresso Antnoio Baio, l'Anno. 1585, Sig. (*5) recto.)
A woman that is like a German clock,
Still repairing, ever out of frame,
And never going aright being a watch,
But being watched that it may still go right! (III. i. 187-190)

He is despite his vaunt the first to fall in love, and it is no heavenly
version that is afforded him. He sees Cupid as a bawd and extortioner
thriving on the guilty lusts of foolish men. This is the extension of his
cynicism about everything, because he desires the idealised nature
which he is convinced that he can never attain to. He now cannot accept
the fact that his love for Rosaline is sexual in its origins, when he would
like to think that he could express the noblest desires of the human spirit
by contemplating the summum bonum in a lady's lineaments. His
description of the beauty which has seduced him gains its point from
the unspoken comparison with the conventional beauty who blushed white
and red, whose eyes were grey as glass or made blackness bright, whose
hair was a golden net woven by the Gods to entrap the wandering
imagination. Rosaline does not coincide at any point with his notions of
beauty: he cannot even claim that her beauty has drawn him from the
search for the good, to show him a closer analogue to the divine source
of things. He is in love in the normal human fashion, and in his arrogance
he cannot bear it.

And among three, to love the worst of all;
A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes;
Ay and by heaven, one that will do the deed
Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard:
And I to sigh for her, to watch for her! (III. i. 192-197)
The whitely quality joins with a suggestion of disease to suggest wantonness, and Berowne specifically develops the suggestion in the parallel with Io. It is plain that Berowne regards his love in itself as an aberration, a pestilence, not principally because he is perjured, a fact which he acknowledges in one line. He may not be serious, because Berowne almost never is, but he is not laughing either. The fault is not in his love, which is natural and innocent enough, but in his own sophisticated and guilty attitude towards it. His oath, symbol of the great mistaking at the centre of the Ficinian system, distorts his love from the beginning, and the immediate expression of it is his pride smarting under the unlooked fall into humanity. The difference between "my lady" and "Joan" is the difference between Beatrice or Mistress Philosophy and a real unpredictable imperfect woman.

Well, I will love, write, pray and sue and groan:
Some men must love my lady and some Joan. (III. i. 201-2)

Berowne's ambiguous phrasing suggests that there may be more in common between Jaquenetta and the ladies than we might otherwise have suspected. The division in Berowne's attitudes as confessed in soliloquy and in his wooing poems might perhaps be more readily understandable if we remember the way in which Sidney struggles to reconcile his idealist conception of love and the precise nature of the passion that Astrophil feels for Stella.

Desire, though thou mine olde companion art,
And oft so clinges to my pure Loue, that I
One from the other scarcely can discry:
While each doth blowe the fier of my hart:
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part.
   Venus is taught with Dians wings to flye,
   I must no more in thy sweete passions lie,
Vertues golde now, must head my Cupids dart,
Serulce and honour wonder with delight,
Feare to offend, well worthie to appeare:
   Care shining in my eyes, faith in my spright,
   These things are left me by my onely deare.
   But thou Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
   Now banish art, yet alas how shall?  1

The dual concept of love divine and love human is neatly described by Bodenham in Politeuphuia:

Loue is the most excellent effect of the soule, whereby mans hart hath no fancie to esteeme, value, or ponder any thing in this world, but the care and study to know GOD; neyther is it idle, but worketh to serue him whom it loueth, and this loue is heauenlie. There is also a loue natural, & that is a poison which spreadeth through every vaine, it is a hearbe, that being sowne in the inraille, mortifieth all the mebers, a pestilence that through melancholy killeth the hart, and an end of all vertues.  2

Sidney differs from Berowne in that he recognises the conflict, and alternately exalts one side or the other, at times vaunting the virtuousness and rationality of his love for Stella, and at other times expressing his infatuation and physical dependence upon her.  3 In his depiction of Berowne Shakespeare exaggerates the division to show that it is

3. Compare for example Sonnets IX, XL, XLII, XLVIII with IV, V, X, XVIII, XXI.
fundamentally wrong. The ladies are not paragons of virtue or beauty, but the objects of human love, amore vicendevole, which is both sexual and idealistic. The champions of wedded love naturally sought to integrate the sexual and the ideal: the Song of Solomon, with its great controlling images of fruitfulness and varied adumbrations of sexual intercourse, became a lovesong once more, and wives bore children and mirrored heavenly beauty at the same time.

Her goodly eyes like Saphyres shining bright,  
Her forehead ivory white,  
Her cheekes lyk apples which the sun hath rudded,  
Her lips like cherries charming men to byte,  
Her brest like to a bowl of cream uncruddled,  
Her paps like lylies budded,  
Her snowy neck lyke to a marble tower,  
And all her body like a pallace fayre,  
Ascending vppe with many a stately stayre,  
To Honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.  

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1. The term, amore vicendevole, is coined by Tasso, who, influenced by Flaminio Nobili's Trattato dell'Amore Umano, wrote his own treatise of human love in Il Cavalier Amante. In England, the reformers were gradually recognising the sexual impulse as good and innocent:

... so soone as God had married and coupled man and woman together: man being enflamed with the loue of his wife and burning with a feruent, singular and moste harty good wyll toward her, brast out into these wordes ... So sone as hee behelde her, he was rauished streight wayes with the loue of her, delighted in her as in him selfe, called her his owne bone and hys owne fleshe, ...

(Becon, Worckes, op.cit., fol. CCCCLIX verso.)

Cf. The commendation of Matrimony, made by Cornelius Agrrippa, & translated into englishe by David Clapam, 1534. (Col.: Londini in aedibus Thomae Bertheleti ... Anno. M.D.XLV), Sig. B8 recto.

There is no mistaking the sexual quality of this imagery, with its emphasis on use and fruitfulness as well as beauty, but nevertheless Spenser uses it as a stairway to the statement of his love as the embodiment of chastity and Honour. For Shakespeare humanity is always enough, provided it be fully and generously realised. Romeo, the anguishing Petrarchan lover, leaves loitering in orchards at dawn, lamenting disdainful Rosaline, for Juliet's innocence and generosity which preclude the necessity for grovelling and weeping.

Why, is not this better than groaning for love?
now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now are thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature;
for this drivelling love is like a great natural,
that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in hole. (II. iv. 95-100)

However, Berowne's pride does not entitle him to such an extraordinary grace from God. Following blindly his own unleashed affections, now the only counsellors of his will because reason has been usurped by pride of wit, Berowne is, like the lately distressed ladies of the entertainment included in The Phoenix Nest, punished with inconstancy of his wits. Be it love divine or natural, plague or blessing, and his mistress country wench or virtue incarnate, Berowne is determined that he, at least, will be a lover of the first water.

... some vse discourses of Loue, to kindle affection, some ditties to allure the minde, some letters to stirre the appetite, diuers fighting to proue their manhoode, sundry sighing to shew their maladyes, many attempt with showes to please their Ladyes eyes, not few with

1. "An excellent Dialogue between Constance and Inconstance, as it was by speech, presented to her Maisters, in the last Progress at sir Henrie Leighes house (The Phoenix Nest... set forth by R.S. of the Inner Temple. Impnated at London by John Lacken. 1598, p.16.)"
Musicke to entice the eare: Insomuch that there is more strife now, who shall be the finest Louer, then who is the faithfulllest. 1

All the labourers of love are fine, without regard to their ladies' wishes: Jaquenetta cannot even read her literary homage and does not realise when it is read that it is addressed to her.

Act IV begins with a very curious image, which has no apparent connection with the development of the intrigue of the play, that of the horseman spurring up the hill, which the Princess herself interprets as a figure of pride, "Who e'er a' was, a' show'd a mounting mind" (IV.i.4). The mood of the scene is light and easy, but the echoes of another reality are persistent. Apart from the unknown horseman, there is the Princess's curious attitude to the sport that she is to play.

... where is the bush
That we are to stand and play the murderer in? (IV.i.7-8)

The figure of the deer set upon by hounds and torn to pieces frequently used for the man who has not managed to establish the sovereignty of reason among his affections and is ravaged by his own headstrong desires, the outcome of unruly will.

Whilst youth and error led my wandring minde,
And set my thoughts in heedlesse wayes to range:
All unawares a Goddesse chaste I finde,
(Diana-like) to worke my sudden change.
For her no sooner had mine eyes bewraid,
But with disdain to see me in that place;
With fairest hand, the sweet vnkindest Maid,
Cast water-cold Disdaigne vpon my face.

Which turn'd my sport into a Harts dispaire,
Which still is chac'd, while I haue any breath,
By mine owne thoughts, set on me by my Faire:
My thoughts (like Houndes) pursue me to my death.
Those that I fostred of mine owne accord,
Are made by her to murther thus their lord.  

The Princess shot at her pricket, but it was pulled down by the hounds.  As for Delia, the arrow-glance of her eyes causes the King to fall in love with her against her will: the real reason for his love is as for Daniel's persona, his own wandering in youth and error. The Princess lets fly her arrows in obedience to the convention and in courtesy to him who has offered her this entertainment. In her teasing of the forester, unskilled in compliment, the Princess shows that her mind has been running on the sin of the young men.

See, see! my beauty will be saved by merit.
O heresy in fair, fit for these days!
A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.
(IV.i.21-3)

The heresy that one may by good works merit heaven is a denial of the sovereign action of grace, the free gift of God. Her thoughtless compliance

with the convention she sees as part of the first human sin. 2

And out of question so it is sometimes,
Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,
When for fame’s sake, for praise, an outward part,
We bend to that the working of the heart;
As I for praise alone now seek to spill
The poor deer’s blood, that my heart means no ill.

(IV. i. 30–35)

Her reference to the contemporaneity of such heterodoxy applies more directly to the King’s presumptuous monasticism than to Henri of Navarre’s "abominable act", and thence to the contrast between English Protestantism and Italian Platonism. Faith, the most potent engine of salvation in the Protestant doctrine, involves an act of intellectual

1. Anthonie Flecthor (Certaine very proper and most profitable Similies op. cit.) shows a figure of sin (woodcut, Sig. A1ii verso, Appendix, fig. 2) as a tree, with the seven deadly sins as its trunk, rooted in Pride and culminating in Self-Love, who, like Pride in the Faerie Queene, is regarding her sun-like countenance in a mirror. On one side Justice strains to bring down the tree with a rope, and on the other Verity chops at the trunk. The branches are covered with caterpillars called Usury, Extortion, Blasphemy, Perjury, Ambition, Contempt, Disobedience, Infidelity, Simony, A false Prophet, Ignorance, Vainglory, Excess, Feigned Friendship, Curiosity, Idolatry, Erroneous Doctrine, Hypocrisy and Dissimulation. All these arise from the master sin of Lucifer, who also tempted our first parents to the sin of pride which remains the first and deadliest of the seven. The most remarkable aspect about this concept of sin to a twentieth century intelligence, is that it is basically intellectual, acts of violence like robbery, rape and murder, which are about the only sins that we recognise today simply do not figure. To a society accustomed to think in this way of sin, as an affair of principle and scruple, even when it has almost no repercussion upon society, the young men’s spiritual condition must have been quite unambiguous.
submission which the young men have clearly eschewed, seeking a more impressive *scientia*. In the name of honour and fame the King has taken the pernicious vow, and treated the Princess with shameful discourtesy. His rejection of real sovereignty as God's anointed, for illusory triumph over knowledge is as wrongheaded and ultimately hurtful as that described by Boyet as a complement to the Princess's line of thought.

Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty
Only for praise sake when they strive to be
Lords o'er their lords? (IV.i.36-8)

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the narrow context of one case of wilfulness as a disruptive factor in the commonwealth, explored in *The Taming of the Shrew*, is widened and deepened to examine the metaphysical heart of the question, the differing views of man's fitness for happiness here and hereafter which derive from different concepts of his nature and capability. Costard, "a member of the commonwealth", is the only character who ever manages to nonplus the Princess by revealing her own unconscious vanity (for her sin before was to assume that her magnanimity precluded such a feminine weakness). Armado's letter is the first of the love missives that we hear, keeping up the undermining effect of the burlesque action preceding the main action. He speaks of enjoying Jaquenetta's favour, as of something that he can command and enforce, but has the goodness to entreat. The intentions expressed by implication in the letter are insulting and frightening, but they do not emerge in full flower until the astonishing poem with which he concludes.
Thus dost thou hear the Nemean lion roar
'Gainst thee thou lamb, that standest as his prey:
Submissive fall his princely feet before,
And he from forage will incline to play.
But if thou strive, poor soul, what art thou then?
Food for his rage, repasture for his den.

(IV.i.97-102)

The Princess comments on the writer's arrogance coupling it with infirmity of will suggested in the image of the weathercock. The Princess having gone to her stand the ladies play word games with Boyet on the theme of archery, in which they, Diana-like, take the role of Cupid for themselves, and keep resolute hold of the bow. The songs they sing are old as Arthurian legend and even Costard understands the gist of this game and manages to outmanoeuvre Boyet so that he and ladies carry the day. Boyet withdrawing from the game outfaced by Costard's cheerful and apt obscenity calls him his "good owl", the bird whose song ends the play. We learn that the Princess has carried out her venery from the arrival of two new characters, the curate and the schoolmaster. Bush has maintained that the decay of English humanism and its replacement by learned Puritanism and the Cambridge Platonism had two principal causes:

1. The Nemean lion is not Hercules, but his opponent, usually moralised as some vice that he had to overcome to attain to his patrimony as the exiled son of Zeus. The lamb, on the other hand, is Christ's chosen symbol as the Saving Victim, and has the attribute of innocence, especially silly innocence. Erasmus speaks of Christ's partiality for the image of Himself as a shepherd, and the faithful as sheep. (The praise of Folie, op.cit., Sig. S1 recto et seq.).
In the first place, Christian humanism which depended so much upon the personality of its exponents might suffer from internal decay and dry rot. There was then, as always, the danger that the official custodians of litterae humaniores might forget the spirit for the letter, might allow a gospel of life to become a class-room routine, that the study of virtue and literature might give way to grammar and flagellation. 1

Because the fundamentals have not been inculcated the young men have been seduced by Platonic extravagances and the new science. At the point where the argument of the play connects with its society, its point can only be illustrated by introducing the pedant, who is the personification of the decay of the English humanist tradition. Grammar is his specialty; he expounds and expatiates, treating all intellectual activity as debate, more concerned with the congruity of his epithets than the truth of his contentions. Dull is probably right about the beast shot by the Princess, but his false Latin is all that Holofernes will allow him, besides the title, "monster ignorance". Nathaniel's attempt to gratify the pedant by listing the advantages that Dull has not had, evokes instead the deadness and uselessness of such pedantic disciplines.

Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book.
He hath not eat paper as it were; he hath not drunk ink: his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal , ... IV.i.ii.24-7)

In Nathaniel's attitude there is a deep contradiction: he believes that it is learning that sets a man above the beasts, and yet that there are

some who have a right to this elevation, and some who have not. His heresy is similar to that discerned by the Princess, for what really constitutes the difference is the rational soul and the free will of man, and the possibility of inheriting heaven by God's infinite mercy and grace. Dull is not abashed by the Curate's scorn, but asks a homely riddle which puts us in mind of the era before the pedants, when Adam delved and Eve span and none was a gentleman.

The Pedant of course may turn his hand to poetry and we have a unique opportunity to observe both the wretched stuff he is capable of, and the theory of poetry he has developed to justify it: he believes despite the absolute mundanity of his imagination in the sovereign mystery of inspiration. The poetic genius is

... a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, Ideas, apprehensions, notions, revolutions: these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of pia mater, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. (IV. ii. 66-8)

Shakespeare may have subscribed to some such conventional notion of furor poeticus (Vide Midsummer Night's Dream, V. i. 4-17), but he sees that the poet's great gift turns to his reproach if it is not harnessed to communicate an active ideal. The responsibility was one which Shakespeare found, as it must be found, crippling, especially when his own convictions wavered in the face of disappointment, the approach of old age, and the evidence of decadence in his society and its tastes. At this stage in his development, his idea of the poet's role is clarifying itself, here
by disposing of the concept of poetry as a gentleman's accomplishment, a way of decorating and embellishing banal and flippant experience. The poet must sing that all may hear, delight, understand and profit, and if ever that aim is perverted, as it is by Chapman, who can say,

The prophane multitude I hate, & onelie consecrate my strange Poems to these serching spirits, who learning hath made noble, and nobilitie sacred ... But that Poesie should be as peruiall as Oratorie, and plainnes her special ornamrnt (sic), were the plaine way to barbarisme: ... 1

the poet has defied God, the author of his Gift, just as the scholar king defies morality and the duty of his station in life, to involve himself in painful confusion. Unwittingly, Nathaniel refers to the controlling idea of the poet's duty to the commonwealth in the inapplicable compliment he pays to Holofernes,

... you are a good member of the commonwealth. (IV.ii.76)

They are suddenly joined by the basic unit of the commonwealth, the man and the woman, Costard and Jaquenetta, who in their silly innocence have brought the letter along to the Parson to read. Berowne's poetic offering, far from seeming too grand and intellectual for this group of learned and unlearned simpletons, seems to grow sillier and sillier as as it is read out to the uncomprehending. His sonnet in hexameters reveals that love has not humbled him to realise and repent his first

mistake: he is wilfully setting it aside, transferring the sumnum bonum from the idea of knowledge to the person of Rosaline, but only in the poem, for just as he was not really interested in the aim of knowledge pursued by the others, we have heard him expatiate on his love for Rosaline. The argument of the poem, is not an actual argument, for the objection is only imitated and not actually made. Within the framework of mock argument he praises her as the strength that bowed his oaken thoughts, the book wherein knowledge may be studied and then as the divinity of Jove. The poet is still an eagle, bravely importuning the godhead, and he modestly admits that his love in the cynosure only of learned and intrepid eyes. The eagle regarding the sun is Berowne's favourite, if not his only, emblem, for he adapts it and uses it in every context. Of course, it is not his own invention, for a history of the neo-platonic influence in European poetry could be written from the evidence of the use and re-use of this image. One of the earliest examples is Serafino's —

L'aquila dil suo sguardo affissa al Sole
Tutti suoi figli anchor proua alla spera,
E quel fissar non puo, sdegnosa, e fiera
Morto lo tra del nido, e non lo uole.
Simile spesso far mia mente suole
De suoi pensier, poi che son nati a schiera,
Che qual non alla mia donna altiera
Presto l'uccide e mai non se ne duole.
questo è quel Sol, ch'ogni altra uista abbaglia.
Che sel uedesse ognium, com'il uedo io,
Diria, che al mio nissun stato si aguaglia.
Perche la mente, a ciascun pensier mio
Spesso conuien per lei tanto alto saglia,
Che conoscere mi fa che cosa è Dio.

The image reappears in de Billy's *Sonnets Spirituels*, Claude de Pontoux's *L'Idée* (1594), and Sonnet XCIX of the *Hecatompethia* is merely a *rifacimento* of Serafino's with the blasphemy omitted and the ending twisted into a rejection of love. More examples can be found in the sonnets of Molza and Tasso. The interactions between Berowne's intellectual pride, and the fictitious brilliance of the lady are what undermine the poem from the very beginning. Its most conspicuous fault is the lack of *enargia* for the lines halt from conceit to conceit, ever failing, despite the ballooning hyperbole to rise off the ground and figure forth the volatility of a lover's passion. Holofernes's principal interest is in the metre, which he approves, but he laments the lack of *elegancy, facility and golden cadence*, missing the point entirely, for Berowne has deliberately chastened his style and imitated the meticulous movement of logic in order to disguise his own sophistry. Nathaniel's criticism of the poem is passed in the same key, and with the same basic play on words as Rosaline's will be. Ironically he utters another truth, which the lords have denied:

Society, saith the text, is the happiness of life. (IV.ii.160)

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The third scene of the act brings us back to the gentles' game.

Berowne wanders on, in his melancholy mood, praying upon himself, toiling in a pitch, like the human intelligence according to Montaigne:

She doth but quest and firret, and vncessantly goeth turning, winding, building and entangling her selfe in hir owne worke; as doe our silkewormes, and therein stiflleth hir selfe. Mus in pice. A Mouse in pitch. 1

Berowne cannot conquer the notion that it is pitch that defiles, that Rosaline's pitch-ball eyes have corrupted him. For a brief instant it might appear that he has learnt his lesson, for he quotes from Costard —

Well, set thee down, sorrow! for so they say the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool; ... (IV.iii.4-5)

(But since the Wisedome of the world I finde, Before Heauens Wisdome, Foolishnesse indeede, While such Illusions doe the spirit blinde, As onely growe upon vngratious seede: Which wicked Humours in the heart doe breede, While truest Wisdome liues aboue the Sunne: 2 Let me but play the Foole, and I have done.)

but even this is only a glancing blow at the truth, and Berowne's mind spins on, as self-conscious as ever,

Well proved, Wit! (IV.iii.5-6)

1. Florio's Montaigne, op.cit., p.635, "Of Experience".

He chafes against his love, speaking of it as a carnal infatuation ("but for her eye, I would not love her"), correcting himself wryly to a more acceptable position, only to call himself a liar. He is enamoured of the notion of Cupid's blunt arrow, which he is glad to see had thumped the King.

So sweet a kiss the golden sun gives not,
To those fresh morning drops upon the rose,
As thy eye-beams when their rays have smote
The night of dew that on my cheeks down flows:

(IV. iii. 25-8)

The King's Petrarchism is almost pure: he makes his comparison with the sun, the commonest analogue of the form of the good, and he embodies it in a particular manifestation, so that the beauty of his lady is actually confounded with the beauty of a spring morning. The vagueness of the conceit of the night of dew can probably be explained by the Petrarchist tendency to identify states of mind with meteorological phenomena, but the inadvertent associations of the King's face with the morning rose warn us that the jerks of the King's invention may topple him into the absurd.

Nor shines the silver moon one half so bright
Through the transparent bosom of the deep,
As does thy face through tears of mine give light
Thou shinst in every tear that I do weep:

(IV. iii. 29-32)

The night of dew has turned into the ocean: even if the imagination succeeds in reducing the King's brine to tear size, the impression is still that of a deluge. The imaginative difficulties are not reduced by the next lines,
No drop but as a coach doth carry thee;
So ridest thou triumphing in my woe.
(IV, iii, 33–4)

The conceit is staggering: Holofernes would have loved it, because certainly imitari is here of no consequence — the mirror is not held up to theoretical possibility, let alone to nature. The King's sonnet is of course, very modish, for in its audacity, its deliberate incredibility it resembles the newfangle Marino. Such a poem is not a communication, but an object of wonder. Out of the phenomenon of the reflection in miniature on drops of water the King manufactures prodigious correspondences, deliberately stressing the preposterousness of his invention. A comparable poem in English is Alabaster's sonnet, "A Morning Meditation" which also explores the imaginative possibilities of light reflected off tear-drops.

The sun begins upon my heart to shine,
Now let a cloud of thoughts in order train
As dewy spangles wont, and entertain
In many drops his Passion divine,
That on them, as a rainbow may recline
The white of innocence, the black of pain,
The blue of stripes, the yellow of disdain,
The purpose which his blood doth well resign;
And let these thousand thoughts pour on mine eyes
A thousand tears as glasses to behold him
And thousand tears, thousand sweet words devise
Vpon my lips as pictures to unfold him:
So shall reflect three rainbows from one sun,
Thoughts, tears and words, yet acting all as one.  

Boyet would envy the King his facility, elegance and impudence, for it far outstrips his own effort to write about the same eyes which so abundantly furnish optic marvels.

Do but behold the tears that swell in me,
And they thy glory through my grief will show:
But do not love thyself; then thou will keep
My tears for glasses and still make me weep. (IV.iii.35-8)

It follows naturally from his demand that she regard his tears that he fear that she will respond to her own reflected beauty and not to his passion. The image conveys egotistic heartlessness with considerable force, but the King ruins his one legitimate effect with the unnecessary and bathetical last couplet.

Longaville, the taciturn, who has so far spoken no more than seventeen lines, many of them curt, devisor of the penance of tongue removal, is worried about the persuasive effect of his lines. Berowne reassures him sotto voce from his tree that poetry aids the blind god in matters of seduction.

O! rhymes are guards on wanton Cupid’s hose;
Disfigure not his shop. (IV.iii.58-9)

The connection between poetry and wantonness is not a freak of Berowne’s imagination. Not only the rank philistines among the Elizabethans sounded the alarm about the power of songs and flattering poems to undermine virtue. The garment of style was assumed like fine clothes, to attract attention and to impress. Barclay confuses the two deliberately in his description of disordered love and venerious:
Ye counterfaitled Courtiers come with your fleing braine,  
Expressed by these variable garmentes that ye finde,  
To tempt chaste damosels, and turn them to your mind.  

Montaigne argued seriously:  

... who shall debarre Cupid the seruice and  
conversation of Poesie, shall weaken him of his  
best weapons.  

Lodge characterises Fornication as a poet:  

... put him to a sonnet, Du Portes cannot equall him;  
nay in ye nice tearmes of lechery he exceeds him: ...  

Longaville uses a syllogistic form: I vow to have nothing to do  
with women; you being a goddess are not a woman; therefore I did not  
vow to have nothing to do with you; but from the beginning the casuistry  
is admitted. Heavenly rhetoric persuaded him to a false perjury; what  
follows is an attempt to persuade us that black is white. The thesis that  
Katharine is a goddess, upon which the whole argument depends, is  
carried to the point of blasphemy, for he credits her with power to redeem  
him and to absolve his sin. Again a collapse in the last couplet implies  
the correct comment upon what goes before, for it is cold and cynical.  
Berowne's comment is justified, if only he had not forgotten that his  
beloved was given the attribute of Jove and the epiphet celestial.

1. Barclay, Stultifera Navis, op. cit., fol. 8 verso.  
2. Florio's Montaigne, op. cit., p. 495, "Vpon some verses of Virgill".  
3. Wits Miserie, and the Worlds Madnesse: Discovering the Deuils  
Incarnat of this Age. London, Printed by Adam Islip, ... 1596,  
p. 47.
This is the liver vein, which makes flesh a deity;
A green goose, a goddess;
Pure, pure idolatry.
God amend us, God amend!
We are much out o' the way. (IV. iii. 72-4)

The Celestina was copuesta in reprehension & los loros enamorados:
& vecidos en su desordenado apetito a sus amigas llamá & dize ser su dios. This is one thing Rastell did not alter. ¹ Berowne sits above his companions in folly, "in the sky", commenting upon their behaviour like Puck upon the Athenian lovers. His muttered interjections reveal how far he is from reason, as he seeks not merely to disagree with Dumaine's hyperbolic description of his mistress but to denigrate her in a manner that is equally absurd.

Of all the poems Dumaine's is the most sensual and the most cryptic. It speaks of sexual desire in terms of delicate but unmistakeable suggestiveness.

On a day, alack the day! -
Love, whose month is ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair
Playing in the wanton air. (IV. iii. 99-102)

1. C. A woma Nay a god of goddesses. S. beleuyst yt thā C.
ye and as a goddes I here confesse ... S. peas peas
A woman a god nay to god a vyllayn
Of your sayeng ye may be sory.

The Interlude of Calisto and Melebea, Malone Society Reprint (1908), ll. 158-163.
The lyric movement suggests actual singing, and the theme is sweet ravishment, the governing image the culling of a blossom. Time is suspended by the action of love in a perpetual springtime, like the time of the amorous shepherd in Marlowe's poem, implying the motif of carpe diem by contradicting it. In the next couplet the image of the wanton air is developed into a sensuous conceit of the breeze penetrating the flower's velvet leaves and enjoying her hidden beauties.

Through the velvet leaves the wind
All unseen can passage find; ... (IV. iii. 103–4)

The image of clandestine enjoyment is obviously appropriate to seduction and not Platonical wooing. In the next lines the poet makes explicit the parallel between the flower penetrated by the wind, and the lady. 1 The image of the lover sick to death stresses the physical nature of his passion. He loses control of the mechanism of seduction with the introduction of his own personal situation, which is crudely presumptuous:

Air, would I might triumph so!
But alack! my hand is sworn
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn. (IV. iii. 108-110)

The exquisite sensuousness of the poems opening fades away, leaving nothing but the residue of Dumaine's arrogance. His love is the natural result of the exuberance of his young blood, so that the lady is virtually warned to expect nothing but the instability of youthful ardour:

1. Boyet uses the same image (V. ii. 293) and is sharply checked by the Princess.
Youth so apt to pluck a sweet. (IV. iii. 112)

In the last quatrain he compares himself to Jove drawn from the side of the Juno of knowledge by the wonder in Katharine's mortal eye!

The four lovers then present four types of courtly wooing: Berowne is the type who makes of his love a continuation of his exaltation of his own reason, and identifies his lady with the knowledge that he has decided to seek at the cost of wisdom and charity; the King is an intellectual wooer of a different kind, whose love stimulates his invention to quaint intricacies of conceit, which exercise his mind but leave his heart and the lady untouched; Longaville is the idolator, who extends the concept of the power of the good reflected in the lady into an affirmation of her godhead, confusing the mediating power of Beatrice with redemption; Dumaine is the exquisite sensualist, closer to the flesh, if not the spirit, of love than his peers, but nevertheless corroded with youthful presumption. Thus each one of them, because of the particular cast of his mind, distorts the passion and purpose of love, creating a maze of his own fancy and losing himself in it. Like God's grace lavished on the sinner bent on his own will, love now turns to their reproach. Not one lord but thinks to condemn the inconstancy of the others in round terms until he has been revealed as partaking of the common fault. Each is prepared to claim a superiority to the others because he perceives their fault clearly and is blind to his own. Berowne is seduced by the role of the scourge of God into forgetting his own guilt so far that he prepares for his own utter discomfiture (which, the audience knows, is coming upon
him apace). He uses the term of Alexander, who was above the infatuation of mere mortals\(^1\), calling the three discovered lovers "worms". The image he uses, of the beam and the mote, is itself a parable of the blindness of the conscience where one's own sins are involved. From their former heroic aspirations to emulate Hercules (in their labours), Nestor, Solomon (in their wisdom) and Timon (in their self-imposed isolation), he argues, they have declined to childish games, and it is the decline from a serious pursuit to a trivial one which Berowne makes the central point of his argument. It is almost as if he is inwardly convinced of the lightness of a love so easily conceived in despite of the laws of probity and constancy. But Nemesis, alias Jaquenetta is at hand. With sharply contrasting simplicity, she presents her condemnation.

Our person misdoubts it; 'twas treason he said.  
(IV. iii. 192)

The priest's judgment has called the argument of Berowne a treason, ergo, the King has committed treason upon himself too, reducing the little state of man in him to a chaos. Berowne, sneakily trying to destroy the letter blames Costard for his disgrace.

Ah! you whoreson loggerhead, you were born to do me shame.  
(IV. iii. 202)

Proteus fumed that his servant shamed him, not realising how true it was. Costard has suffered for an edict which he never consented to,

while Berowne, who did consent to it, has sought to break it with impunity, while punishing those who were known to break it. He smarts before the bumpkins' unwinking gaze, and begs the King to send them away, so that he may confess without shame, calling them turtles, the figures of true love. For all his unlettered ignorance, Costard's judgment is not to be scorned.

Walk aside the true folk, and let the traitors stay.
(IV.iii.210)

Of course Berowne sings a new tune, talking as fast as he can for the right of young blood to rebel, arguing the natural mutability of flesh and blood, the debt of nature, urging with a swift tumble of words the acceptance of their mutual failing. He calls their vow, quite unwarrantedly, an "old decree". In his wild hyperbole he trots out his well-worn figure of the sun, no longer knowledge, but as in his poem, Rosaline, whom he has the discernment and the temerity to admire. The King calls his attitude a "zeal" and a fury, but in himself the same phenomenon becomes something different. Berowne sails on undaunted into further massive comparisons, until he adopts the sure-fire rhetorical technique of eschewing rhetoric: his words recall the Princess's, but it is the different effect of their application in this case, which we notice.

Fie, painted rhetoric! O! she needs it not:
To things of sale a seller's praise belongs. (IV.iii.236-7)

His solar imagery is adopted only to give the King access to no image of more grandeur, so that he can only retaliate by literally denigrating Rosaline. Berowne is forced to posit a kind of black sun,
making blackness the index of beauty, for

Be shee all sootie-blacke, or bery-browne,
Shees white as morrows milk or flaks new blowne.
And tho she be some dunghill drudge at home,
Yet can he resigne her some refise roome,
Amids the well-knowne stars: or, if not there,
Sure will he Saint her in his Calendere. 1

keeping all his speech in alternately rhyming quatrains, until there
is no alternative left, but jeering in his turn, at the Princess. The
absent ladies are only the occasion of their game, the ball that they play
with, so that Berowne can say,

I'll prove her fair, or talk till doomsday here. (IV.iii. 271 )

His next effect, the conceit of a street paved with eyes, apart from
being painful and preposterous, leads to a dead end in a dirty joke.
Tired of this, and disquieted by the unexamined nature of their moral
predicament, they commission Berowne to prove that they may pursue
their inclinations and woo the ladies with an easy conscience, to supply
"some flattery for this evil", some "tricks, some quillets", thinking to
gloss their sin out of existence. What Saint Julian, patron of Hospitallers,
could not do, has been accomplished by Dan Cupid, without a struggle.
We might apply the cry of Summer, at the intellectual acrobatics of Ver:

Virgedemiarum, ii.21-26.
O vanitie it selfe! O wit ill spent!
So studie thousands not to mend their liues,
But to maintayne the sinne they most affect,
To be hels aduocates against their own soules.

Berowne glosses the situation with a posed peroration in which he makes again the point of his undelivered sonnet, that women are the source of the true Promethean fire. It has been noticed that the lines,

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They are the ground, the books, the academes,
From whence doth spring the true Promethean fire.
(IV, iii. 299-301)

resemble Southwell's Saint Peter's Complaint, although the similarity has usually been regarded as a meaningless coincidence because Southwell must have published after the play was written. The poem is actually a version of Tansillo's L'agrimo di San Pietro, newly in vogue with the revival of interest in the quattrocento-secentisti. Tansillo applies the image of the eyes as a book wherein knowledge may be read in a traditional mediaeval manner, but perhaps rather too sentimentally and erotically for post-counter-Reformation taste, to Christ, whose eyes are

Sweet volumes stoad with learning fit for Saints,
VVere blissf ul quires imparadize their minds,
VVherein eternall studie neuer faints,
Still finding all, yet seeking all it finds,
How endlesse is your laborinth of blisse,
Where to be lost the sweetest finding is? 2


The parallel between Berowne's argument and Tansillo's use of the mediaeval notion of Christ as wisdom, if it is significant at all, underlines the delinquency of the lords. No audience, let alone one trained in oratory and debate, could overlook the circumstances of Berowne's encomium on love. It is conditioned by its function to convince the hero of an untruth, as Berowne argued that he could prove black Rosaline as fair as the sun. Again he is prepared to talk until doomsday. He uses his eagle image again, as he proves that the love of woman is psychedelic. His argument is genuinely eloquent and seductive: the famous lines in praise of love, have long been recognised for their compelling beauty, although it is clear that beyond fulfilling the function of exquisitely competent panegyric, they mean very little. There would be no point in Shakespeare's argument if the young men were simply incompetent practitioners of erroneous arts; we must be sensible of the power and persuasiveness of their views, so that when the ladies hold up the satirist's glass at the end of the play, we also feel implicated. As John Vyvyan has remarked, lines 354-9 are either nonsense or philosophy, and he proves very ably that they are philosophy, which is to miss Shakespeare's point, that they are both nonsense and philosophy. Berowne speaks of the folly of their oath, but still postulates wisdom as their chief aim, but the knowledge of the self that is real wisdom is as far from them as ever, as Berowne realises in his glancing way.

Let us once lose our oath to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.  (IV. iii. 358-9)

His last lines are almost blasphemous, for he includes in his argument Christ's one commandment:

It is religion to be thus forsworn;
For charity itself fulfils the law;
And who can sever love from charity?  (IV. iii. 360-2)

Any infant in the audience could have answered him, for the distinction between Caritas and Amor, Agape and Eros was perfectly well understood.  Costard was condemned contrary to the law of charity; the ladies were lodged in the field contrary to the law of charity, and their wooing will be no less so.  The old image of warfare which the King had used in the first scene, revives, sustained by Berowne's reference to corporals, and affection's men-at-arms, as the King responds with enthusiasm to Berowne's creation, all persuasion and no justice, declaring his loyalty to the new standard of Saint Cupid and inciting his turncoat soldiers to instant attack on the new front.  But Berowne, for all his glibness, cannot refrain from acting as the impotent conscience once more: like all sophisters he has succeeded in persuading everyone but himself, lingering on stage to say sourly:

Allons! allons! Sow'd cockle reap'd no corn;
And justice always whirls in equal measure:
Light wenches may prove plagues to men forsworn;
If so, our copper buys no better treasure.

(IV. iii. 380-3)

As the editor of the Arden edition notices, this comes in inharmoniously after his address of loyalty to love, nevertheless the lightness of
the convention does not prepare us for the process of judgment indicated
by Berowne's image of reaping. We must learn the same lesson that
they do, the lesson of Ralegh's poem.

What is our life, a play of passion,
Our mirth the music of division
Our mothers wombces the tyring houses be
Where we are drest for this short Comedy,
Heauen the ludicrous sharpe spectator is,
That sits and markes still who doth act amisse,
Our graves that hide vs from the searching Sun,
Are like drawne curtaynes when the play is done,
Thus march we playing to our latest rest
Onely we dye in earnest, that's no Iest.

For the young men nothing is really serious; three of them are
imaginative and unreflecting, one of them is discerning but impotent and
cynical.

The ladies are unimpressed by the lords' literary and other love
offerings. The King's love is for the Princess nothing but what might be
"cram'd up into a sheet of paper" (V.ii.7). Katharine, mourning a
sister dead for love, is too bitter, calling Dumaine's favours,

Some thousand verses of a faithful lover;
A huge translation of hypocrisy,
Vilely compiled, profound simplicity. (IV.ii.50-2)

In commenting upon her love-offerings, Rosaline shows more self-
knowledge in a line, than the men do in the whole play. She knows that
she is not fair, and Berowne's letters amuse her all the more in trying to

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prove that she is. Maria is indolent and serene; for her Longaville's letter is simply a bore. They declare war on the young men. Rosaline's unholy glee at the prospect is qualified by her assessment of her lover's infirmity of character —

> O! that I knew he were but in by the week. (IV. ii. 61)

The Princess reflects sagely upon the particular quality of this foolishness in "wise" men. She sees that there is a continuity between the brashness of their initial quest and their present behaviour. Maria's comment illuminates the way in which wit is now being misapplied.

> Folly in fools bears not so strong a note,  
> As foolery in the wise, when wit doth dote;  
> Since all the power thereof it doth apply  
> To prove by wit, worth in simplicity. (IV. ii. 75-8)

Now the intelligence of these learned fools, instead of being futilely spent gratifying their curiosity about the world, is wasted manufacturing justifications for their own folly. Where the lords imagine a battle of flowers, the sweet strivings of amorous intertwining, the ladies are preparing something different. Boyet calls them to arms for the first skirmish is at hand, and sorarying their ranks the ladies await, disguised and armed cap à pie, for the Princess intends to pay mockery with mockery. She, while showing no trace of Katharine's paranoia, simply does not believe that the passion of the lords is love. She treats their coming as a play, a matter of their penned speeches, and decides to confound the whole performance, as merciless with the lords as she is merciful to Holofernes's actors. Bit by bit the play of the ladies and gentlemen is
being revealed as shallow attitudinising, life treated as a play: the ladies keep another reality firmly in sight, but the lords strut their hour on the stage with no awareness that it will ever have to come to an end.

Moth, the Prologue of the lords' play, although he understands in a crude and workmanlike way what play-acting is, cannot handle the play-acting of compliment. The lines he is to say seem nonsense, because they have no relation to facts that he can observe, and there is no established convention or fiction that he can exploit or understand. Unlike the actor, he is talking to an audience that will not listen: he has not the necessary cooperation which gives a character life. The authors of his piece are self-regarding aesthetes, and deservedly they perish in the public theatre. Native ingenuity is defeated by the barren artifice of the courtly wooers and retires willingly.

Rosaline now takes over the play, and questions the fictions of compliment in her own way. She acts her role well: the Princess's sonnet is probably known to her, for her references border close upon it, giving the King illusory hope,

My face is but a moon, and clouded too. (V. ii. 203)

The King replies in the convention of his poem, begging her to unmask so that she may shine upon their watery eyne, unleashing the optic wonders listed in his sonnet, and Rosaline replies with the genuine wit which the King so sadly lacks:
Thou now requests but moonshine in the water. (V.ii.208)

The image is often used for the illusory claims of worldly learning, for example, in Erasmus's words —

... these Sophistrers and Logicians, byng a race of men more kackeling than a meny of dawes; ech of whome in bablyng male compare with temne women chosen for the none, and farre more Happie shoulde be, in case they were onely bablers, and not skoldy also: in sorte that oftentymes for the moone shyne in the water, they striue whole daies together, and with to muche arguynge, lette the truethe of the mattier slippe by them. ¹

He has called her attendant ladies stars, so that by now the ladies have been all or severally identified with all the heavenly bodies. They adopt the character of the moon which they have learned from the lords themselves, enacting the preliminaries of the dance and then withdrawing. The meeting then breaks up and the four couples converse apart. This is the only direct wooing that the lords accomplish within the play, and it is directed to the wrong persons. The ladies are rigorous, remorselessly snaring the gentlemen in their own mental toils, sometimes with a sinister touch, like Katharine's volley with Longaville, when, having proved him conclusively to be a calf, she counsels him darkly,

Bleat softly then; the butcher hears you cry. (V.ii.255)

Rosaline calls an end to their skirmishing, reassembles her army, and the gentlemen ride off. The victors gloat over the way in which they

1. The praise of Folie, op. cit., Sig. Liii verso.
turned aside all the point of the gentlemen's wit, and reveal what we have waited to hear, that they have taken another blind oath. In the return parley, they offer nothing but rigour. The King, chastened, invites the Princess to his court, but she replies as we expect her to, in terms which the King has allowed himself to forget.

Nor God, nor I, delights in perjur'd men. (V. ii. 346)

The King ripostes with a lame and condensed form of the Promethean fire argument:

The virtue of your eye must break my oath. (V. ii. 348)

but the Princess replies with perfect orthodoxy,

You nickname virtue: vice you should have spoke; For virtue's office never breaks men's troth. (V. ii. 349-50)

She swears upon her virginity that she will not condone his fault by accepting his hospitality. In case we have forgotten how the King's oath was visited on the Princess, he admits himself,

O! you have lived in desolation here, Unseen, unvisited, much to our shame. (V. ii. 357-8)

She must deny it, in good manners, and mentions the Muscovites. Rosaline will not abate the rigour of her wit and speaks to the point,

My lady in the manner of the days, In courtesy gives undeserving praise. (V. ii. 365-6)

Berowne, having had a breathing space, trots out his well-worn figure of the sun —
Your wit makes wise things foolish; when we greet
With your eyes best seeing, heaven's fiery eye,
By light we lose light. (V.ii.374-6)

But his stale paradox proves him a fool, as Rosaline demonstrates.
Discovering that their disguise was pierced, the lords fall into
amazement and look sick. Berowne incorrigibly seizes upon the new
situation, and with high eloquence, announces his rejection of the arts of
painted rhetoric, in alternately rhyming quatrains, with carefully ranked
parallel phrases, ending with his famous heaping figure of the
affectations of language,

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-pil'd hyperboles, spruce affection,
Figures pedantical; these summer flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation. (V.ii.406-9)

The plenty of their wit is allied with the imposthume of disease
bred by the ease and bounty of the summer, which must be purged by the
winter. Renouncing eloquence is pretty much like renouncing pleasure
and comfort; Berowne undertakes it — for the present. He utters his
first villainist statement like a new rhetoric that he has discovered ...

And, to begin! Wench, — so God help me, law! —
My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw. (V.ii.414-5)

His oath is from the law-courts: this bluntness is not simplicity,
for Rosaline darts at the affected terms sans and begs for its removal.
Still speaking in his new low vein, Berowne pleads for his fellows in love,
but the imagery he uses strikes us strangely.
Write "Lord have mercy on us" in those three;  
They are infected; in their hearts it lies;  
They have the plague and caught it of your eyes:  
The lords are visited; you are not free,  
For the Lord's tokens on you do I see. (V.ii.419-23)

Why should the language of plain-speaking bring this terrible image  
into the language of dalliance? Apart from what it reveals about  
Berowne's attitudes to love, it may be that in the real world so rigorously  
excluded from the King's academe, the real world of the audience as well  
as that of the play, the plague was already raging. Plainspeaking also  
reveals that they have falsely bound themselves again, and the situation  
becomes painfully revealing, as Berowne's urbanity dissolves, and he  
turns vituperatively upon the professional courtier, who listens with  
enforced good humour as Berowne curses him in the impotence of his  
disappointment.

Die when you will, a smock shall be your shroud,  
You leer upon me, do you? there's an eye  
Wounds like a leaden sword. (V.ii.479-481)

The battleground of love has developed in an unpleasant fashion when  
Costard, whom Berowne calls "pure wit" with less irony than he intends,  
announces the catastrophe of this extraordinary action.

THE CATASTROPHE

In what sense is Love's Labour's Lost a comedy? No very trouble-
some matter has been created so that it may turn into joy. We have not  
dealt with characters in the low and middle states of life, neither is it in  
low style. It is not a tragicomedy, nor is it satire, for the behaviour of
Berowne, the satirist within the play, is shown to be absurd because his criticism arises from his own arrogance and intolerance, and his greater discernment is never applied to his own behaviour. But if it is not Aristophanic or Jonsonian, the play is no less un-Terentian and un-romantic. It is not brought to a triumphant conclusion in an escape or a birth, for Berowne admits that it is an abortion, applying the Princess's description of the great things that "labouring perish in their birth",

A right description of our sport my lord. (V. ii. 517)

He had used the same image himself for the misbegotten academy that proved stillborn. The frail artifice foaming off the young men's brains is viable for a few hours, like cuckoospit or sea-foam, and Shakespeare allows us to enjoy its charm, for the impact of the play depends upon our participation in the catastrophe, when the frost of truth kills this untimely blossom. The play is, as T. W. Baldwin argues, 1 constructed on an idea, and the form may be regarded as reversed, not to form a tragedy, but an anti-comedy, in which the metaphor of salvation does not function as an escape from reality, but reality rescues man from the mazes of his own ceaselessly labouring mind. To figure forth such an extraordinary vision an extraordinary form was required, of wit so sharp that it cut itself. The play resembles, in its embassages and counsels of war, occasional skirmishes and incursions into the world of the commons for an insight into the repercussions of the policies of the

ruling class, a Shakespearean history. The similarity may be justified by reference to the analogy of the intellectual state of man and the commonwealth, in this case disrupted by the defection of the king, or right reason. The levels of meaning interpenetrate, for the King's defection is not merely an analogue of the eclipse of right reason, it is itself the failure of right reason to occupy its rightful place in the King's soul. By creating this brittle world of compliment and populating it with smart courtiers enacting their own vanities, Shakespeare managed to free his imagination from the lure of Platonism on the one hand, and elegant satire on the other, so that he could draw freely upon the fountains of popular story. He cannot find the spiritual strength to write great comedy in the sophisticated tradition as it existed, and the attempts of Nashe and Peele to confront traditional material had resulted in creations of great pith and beauty, but did not indicate any clear path to a successor. In the street-theatre tradition of dramatic pageant and morality, there was plenty of commitment to the duties of oratory to edify and instruct, but little to delight the poor souls who stood on the lumpy cobbles and looked on. Shakespeare brings the two streams into a confrontation, as he plays off differing political ideologies in the Histories, allowing them to grapple freely until both evaporate before the stark evocation of reality. The self-conscious entertainment offered so dutifully by the citizens is contrasted with the vain-glorious muddle of art and life with which the lords have supplanted all action and assumption of responsibility. The lords' performance is the indulgence by extraordinary talents of their own inclinations, while Holofernes and his actors labour to overcome their
deficiencies in order to please their patroness and edify the general.

The pageant of the Nine Worthies is a traditional form of entertainment. The characters were usually Duke Josua, Hector, David, Alexander, Judas Machabeus, Julius Caesar, Arthur, Charlemagne and Guy of Warwick or Bevis of Hampton. They were presented as chivalric figures, with their arms emblazoned on a device, for they are regarded as the ancient champions of heraldry and representatives of the nine chivalric virtues, also denoted by the nine precious stones and the nine commandments of chivalry, namely,

You shall holde, with the sacrifice of the greate God of heauen.
You shall honour, your father and mother.
You shalbe mercifull, to all people.
You shall doe no harme, to the poore.
You shall not turne your backe to your enemies.
You shall hold promise, as well to frend as foe.
You shall kepe hospitalitie, especially to strangers.
You shall vpholde maydens right.
You shall not see, the wydowes wronged. 1

While the choice of characters may vary to include Colbrande, Sampson or Sir Lancelot du Lac, the significance of the pageant is always the same. The King may well complain that Holofernes and his actors come to do him shame, for their entertainment with its close connection with the chivalric ideal acts as a reproach to him for his abandonment of all the duties of chivalry.

The show begins in an atmosphere of confusion, with Costard's version of Pompey, a most unusual inclusion in the number of worthies, being usually a figure of pride. This Pompey is however the embodiment of humility for he takes Dumaine's correction with simplicity and in four lines prostrates himself before the "sweet lass of France", stressing his utter dependence upon her mercy and cooperation.

If your ladyship would say, thanks Pompey, I had done.  
(V.ii.551)

To such ingenuousness the Princess can only reply:

Great thanks, great Pompey.  
(V.ii.552)

Boyet and the lords have greeted this lowborn spectacle with loud derision, using it as a vehicle for performances of their own. Except for the Princess, who every now and then addresses a mild and encouraging word to the actors, the ladies, who so gleefully destroyed the lords' mummery, remain mute. The Princess knows the truth of the lesson that Theseus sought to teach Hippolyta, chafing at the homespun entertainment offered at her nuptials, that

... never anything can be amiss,  
When simplicity and duty tender it.  
(Midsummer Night's Dream V.1.82-3)

The effect that the play within a play is having on the surrounding play is very subtle. The lords' behaviour is irritating because we wish that the pageant could get along. The play in A Midsummer Night's Dream is not held up by the comments of the spectators, and the whole spectacle is got through in an atmosphere of speed and light-heartedness. Here the actors
stand helpless like Aunt Sallies, bombarded by the strutting lords. The audience, which must now accept the lords as an extension of itself, does not find them expressing its own views, as Theseus and the Athenians do, because it has no opportunity to form any. When they join the world of the audience the lords invite judgment as real people, and they come off badly. When the hapless curate is completely outfaced by the mockery of the genties, Costard is called on to cover his flight, and he speaks to us of the life that they live together, of the virtues which help men to bear with each other.

... a foolish mild man; an honest man, look you, and soon dash'd! He is a marvellous good neighbour, faith, and a very good bowler, but for Alisaunder, - alas you see how it is, a little o'er parted.

(V. ii. 574-8)

Renaissance poets have always understood the persuasive value of halting expression. In their most moving poems Sidney and Ralegh ostensibly eschew eloquence for the subtler persuasive implications of the inability to express themselves. For Shakespeare the having of "that within which passeth show" was often depicted by the failure of

1. Our passions are most like to Floods and streames,
The shallow murmur; but the Deepe are Dumb.
So when affections yeeld Discourse it seems
The bottom is but shallow whence they come.
They that are rich in words must needs discouer
That they are poore in that which makes a Louer.
(Raleigh, Poems, ed. Latham, No. xviii, p.18)

Dumbe Swans, not chattering Pyes doe Louers prowe,
They loue indeede, who dare not say they loue.
(Feuillerat, Sidney, Vol. II, p.264, Astrophel and Stella, liv.)

Relative slowness of speech is also connected with sagesness, e.g. The tongue of a wiseman is in his heart, but the heart of a foole in hys tong.
(Baldwin, op.cit., Sig. N7 recto.)
Costard's plea cannot fail, for Nathaniel profits by our growing impatience with the lords, who are never dashed by anything!

The next emblem has no place in a pageant of the Nine Worthies: the Titan who has haunted the play is at last before our eyes in the person of Moth, strangling a snake. Moth himself had offered Armado the precedent of Hercules as a justification for his love (I. ii. 63) and Armado had repeated it (I. ii. 166). He also likens himself to the Nemean lion, the first of Hercules's labours (IV. i. 97). Berowne uses the image of Hercules when speaking of the defection of the academicians (IV. iii. 165) and then identifies love with Hercules "still climbing trees in the Hesperides" (IV. iii. 337-8). The image of the infant Hercules is first proposed in V. i., and now here it is. The old tradition of Hercules expressed in the Livres du fort Hercule culminates in the study by Coluccio Salutati, written between 1378 and 1383. The labours have manifold significance, as analogues of the conquest of sin or the acquisition of wisdom. Usually Hercules's strength is considered a figure of intellectual power, while the story of the twelve labours undertaken to regain his

1. Vide Sonnet. XXIII, for example.

2. In the chivalric tradition Hercules was supposed to be the ancestor of the Kings of Navarre (Seznec, La Survivance des Dieux Antiques (London, 1940), p. 22.) The Charterhouse of Pavia shows an "étrange série de portraits apocryphes où l'enfant Hercule étrangle les serpents, où Judas Machabée apparaît avec le chapeau de Mercure ... (ibid., p. 31).

divine inheritance has a clear practical application to the struggle of man to regain heaven. 1 It is the older tradition which applies in this play, not the superhuman hero based on the Furens, which is the creation of the Renaissance. Shakespeare's ikon shows us the Titan, the perfect man, as a child, strangling a serpent, the emblem of sin, particularly of pride and deceit, the first tempter. 2 The figure cut by Moth is lamentably funny, but its main point is to render even sillier the Herculean pretensions of the lords and Armado. As if taking the point, the gentlemen are more than ever determined to destroy the schoolmaster's production. They drive him from the stage, calling him an ass, and he

1. Erasmus often uses the illustration of Hercules, e.g. in the Enchiridion Militis Christiani/ Whiche may be called in englysshe, the hansom weapon of a christen Knyght/ replenysshed with many goodly & godly precepts: ... newly corrected and imprinted ... Johan Bydell (n.d., 1544), Sig. H7 recto., "the labours of Hercules putteth the in remembrance that heuen must be opteyned with honest labours and enforcements infatygable". cf. Bacon, "Hercules followers in Learning (sic), that is, the more seuer, and laborious sort of Enquirers into truth". (The Advancement of Learning, op. cit., fol. 18 recto.) In The phoenix nest ... set forth by R.S. of the Inner Temple ... Imprinted at London by John Jackson. 1593, p. 14, Hercules shows "what deeds by vertues strentch are don".

2. For example, in the emblematic costumes designed by Henrik Niclas for his Comoedia. A worke in Ryme, contayning an Enterlude of Myndes, witnessing the Mans Fall from God and Christ. Set forth by H.N. ... Translated out of Base-almayne into English. (s.d., s.t.) (1574?), the figure of the Searcher is "a Man Personage, clothed like a Serpent, beneath the knees, with a slyding Tayle comming out behynde; hauing in his Hande an Image of a Serpent: ther-vpon written/ SUBTILTEE. (fol. 8 recto).
upbraids them sadly, without hope of moving them:

This is not generous, not gentle, not humble.
(V.ii.621)

The Princess is moved for him, but she cannot defend him, and he retires vanquished. The lords have scented fresh prey in Armado, who keeps his head despite their interjections, even daring to ask Longaville to keep quiet, and speaking of the right of the character he represents, Hector, to honour, because "when he breathed, he was a man" (V.ii.653), until Costard suddenly breaks in with an interruption that is not at all frivolous. The news is a shock. Apart from Armado's curious love language of the lion to the lamb, we have only seen her associating freely with Costard, and Berowne himself, who may have put Costard up to making this accusation at this moment, called the couple "turtles". Perhaps Berowne expects to unmask Armado, but he can hardly be prepared for the seriousness of the scene as it develops. The foolish lords continue to applaud this real life drama, as if it were enacted for no other purpose than their gratification. Berowne may be satisfied that Costard's challenge reveals the fact that Armado has no shirt, but the birth of a bastard is hardly a subject for comic gratification. The ladies remain silent. Armado may be a hollow sham but he is still the sire of the child that leaps in Jaquenetta's womb, and unless he help her, "the poor wench is cast away" (V.ii.666). The announcement of the birth does not provide a comic catastrophe, for the child is already bowed with the sins of its begetting. Life has invaded artifice and destroyed the play of the worthies, but life is not only birth, it is also death. In the
midst of the lords' extravagant merriment, death enters, in the person of Marcade, in the same way that Nemesis enters in Respublica, Adversity in Magnificence, God's Visitation in the Triall of Treasure, Correction in The Tide tarrieth no Man and Horror in The Conflict of Conscience. The lords are frozen in the positions that they assumed to watch the pageant, and it becomes clear that they will never again regain the centre of the stage. The symmetry refuses to reestablish itself and the play of the unworthies dissolves before our eyes. Berowne sends away the masquers, but Armado seizes the opportunity to show us that he has learned the first lesson of wisdom.

I have seen the day of wrong through the little hole of discretion, and I will right myself like a soldier. (V. ii. 714-5)

The Princess sets about leaving, grave and composed, while the King follows her about trying to extend belated and unwanted hospitality, and even to propose. Berowne lends his eloquence, but the Princess cuts his slick tortuousness short. The King urges,

Now at the latest minute of the hour, Grant us your loves.

But the Princess replies,

A time, methinks too short To make a world-without-end bargain in. (V. ii. 776-9)

As a preparation for the solemn vows of a husband, she enjoins him to a year's penance, in a hermitage "remote from all the pleasure of the world". One third of what he vowed in vain-glory he must now fulfil in
expiation. The Princess uses a revealing similitude in explaining her idea:

If frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds,
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
But that it bear this trial and last love; ... 
I will be thine. (V.ii.791-7)

Only some such winter can prove if the promise of the young men's gifts will have fruit. The King accepts the challenge with enough bombast in his tone to show that no miracle has happened. Katharine gives Dumaine a year's penance also, but with a meaner promise of requital at the end,

Then, if I have much love, I'll give you some. (V.ii.820)

Maria too says that she will accept a faithful friend proved by a year's waiting. Rosaline adds a new dimension to the penance she devises for Berowne.

You shall this twelve-month term from day to day,
Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be
With all the fierce endavour of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile. (V.ii.840-4)

Berowne is appalled. He has never submitted the profuse productions of wit to the approval of anyone, much less those whose perceptions are dulled by suffering and despair. But Rosaline is adamant in her demand that he use his gift to benefit the commonwealth. He will have to develop a new skill, of beguiling pain, not inflicting it, of inspiring hope instead of indulging cynicism. The audience is the judge.
... if sickly ears,
Deaf'd with the clamour of their own dear groans
Will hear your idle scorns, continue them,
And I will have you and that fault withal;
But if they will not, throw away that spirit ...  
(V. ii. 853-7)

The ladies have usurped the function of the audience for the present,
for they judge the lords' performance, and so we know that it is over.
It is Berowne who acknowledges that their summing up has ended the play,
ruefully and with some surprise.

Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill: these ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.  (V. ii. 864-6)

The King takes the view of most of the commentators, that love's labour is not lost, because they must simply wait a year, 1 but in the
play-world in which all that the playwright wills is possible, Shakespeare has deliberately posited a resolution outside the scope of a play. He has not allowed a happy ending, and that for a purpose connected with the
whole structure of the play. The lords might as well begin stripping themselves of their finery, for Jaquenetta's pregnancy and the King's death have caused their images to fade away. When Armado enters, he is an
ordinary fellow, all the pomp of heraldic Hector laid aside. He has accepted the consequence of his action and bound himself to serve
Jaquenetta for three years. Fundamentally his punishment resembles the

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1. E.g. John Vyvyan, Shakespeare and the Rose of Love (London, 1960), p.24. "After some vicissitudes, the lovers are accepted by their ladies; but a preliminary sentence is imposed on each. These penances are in fact a deeper sort of learning; so neither side has really lost".
lords', as his passion did, although his mistress was only a country girl, and his love lust cruelly disguised, and not lust intellectualised. The reduction of the lords to the level of an audience of the new action is made most clear in the staging of the debate which replaces them on the stage. An age-old theme in fresh and simple poetry fills the void left by the civil war of wits, and makes explicit the themes that have underlain their chimeric action.

The song "in praise of the owl and the cuckoo" develops the Princess's image of the blossoms of the King's love surviving a harsh winter, into a fuller statement of the theme of affliction as the mother of virtue and self-knowledge. Armado speaks as if the owl will sing before the cuckoo, which is what we might expect of comedy, which reënacts the miracle of the thawing of winter in the burgeoning of new life: twice he mentions Hiems and Ver in that order, but he makes the Spring sing first, so that the song, like the play and human life, ends in winter. Spring's song suggests a basic misgiving about all the glories of the springtime, which serve as a frame for the harsh song of the cuckoo, which

... then, on every tree
Mocked married men; for thus sings he,
    Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo; O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear.

Cuckoo and cuckold, whether semantically connected or not, have always been connected in the popular imagination. Apart from the obvious fact that the cuckoo lays its eggs in other birds' bests, there is actual
evidence of the confusion of the two expressions, in "giving the cuckoo" to one's friend, and getting the "cuckoo's note". Dekker speaks of the "horned sun a golden cuckold, — the cuckoo and no owl to be heard". Richard Niccols based a whole poem on the connection of the cuckoo with adultery, supplying a mock explanation of the fearfulness of his cry to the married ear.

Dan Cuckow was a bird hatcht in that houre
When Mars did sport in Cythearas bowre
Whereby the note, which his hoarse voice doth beare,
Is harsh and fatall to the wedded eare! ... 2

In classical iconography the cuckoo was construed as a figure of the cuckold; Valeriano quotes Horace to illustrate the connection:

Vnde cōücia illa, siue quempiam adulterae
vxoris maritum dicere volumus, siue ignaum,
siue stupidum, aut nullo animo praeditum
hominem notare, Cuculum appellamus, ut apud
Horatium sermonibus:
Tum Praenestinus salso multum φluenti
Expressa arbusto regerit conuicia, durus
Vindematur, & invictus cui saepe viator.
Cessisset, magna compellens voce Cucullum. 3

In spring lust is diffused in the air like a potion; all creation sings the joys of the flesh. Green geese like Jaquenetta fall a-breeding. We


2. The Cuckow. Ricardus Niccols, in Artibus Bac. Oxon. ... At London printed by F.K. and are to be sold by W.C. 1607, p.2.

3. Hieroglyphica sive de sacris aegyptiorum litteris commentariorii, Ioannis Pierii Valeriani Bolzani Bellunensis Bellunensis ... Basileae, 1556 (s.t.), p.181.
are familiar with folly and wantonness as attributes of the spring, but there is a subtler connection of the springtime of man's life with the fullest blossoming of his intellectual powers: in speaking of the artifice of spring Shakespeare connects it specifically with the may-minds of the young men, proud in the fulness of their transitory and illusory human powers. 1 *Summer's Last Will and Testament* also ends with the preparation to face a winter of hardship, with humility and faith in God rather than in oneself, and Nashe portrays spring as an intellectual prodigal, squandering his plenty in galliards and giving wenches green gowns. Nashe's picture is crueller than Shakespeare's for Ver is a bore and a fool, and the cuckoo's song charming, if fragile and deceptive. As Finette remarked in the old farce, of the song of her *cocu*.

Autour Noel en la saison,  
Chantant soubz la cheminée,  
C'est une chose épurouvé.

The bastards conceived a consequence of Spring dalliance make their presence obvious in the winter when the hearth becomes the centre of a social grouping which is permanent, unlike the easy commerce of the spring. We leave the trees in which the cuckoo roves restless, and follow the owl home to her nest beneath a man-made roof. Maidens and

1. *Cf. Mans May or a Moneths Minde: Wherein the Libertie of mans minde is compared to the Moneth of May.* by Peter Smalle. ... London, Printed by George Purslowe for Samuel Rand. 1615.

shepherds are replaced by Tom, Dick, Joan and Marion, persons, known to each other and to us. The logs and the milk must be brought by someone's freezing hand; smocks may not be bleached and the immaculate red and white disappears beneath the grease and smuts of the kitchen. The owl that sings now is not the screech-owl, "death's dreadful messenger", but the wise owl who shunned the trees for fear of birdlime, a fear which proved to be justified so that all the other birds flocked to her for counsel, 1 a brisk and sympathetic bird like the heroine of Drayton's The Owl. The life led in this winterbound cottage is the life of Costard and Dull. Their taciturn and goodnatured endurance is what we must lay against the young men's wordy exuberance. The art which this community has need of is oratory, the parson's saw. Mercury, whose words end the play according to the comment of V.ii.920, is the figure of efficax sermo, represented by the opposite of Boyet's figure, a mouth with an eye in it. Mercury and Hercules are often confused; especially in the emblems of just eloquence. The Gallic Hercules is represented winged at head and foot like Mercury and leading men of all conditions by a gold chain attached to his tongue and their ears. In an English version of Hercules at the cross-roads, he stands between an old man with a book and the caduceus, and a figure of pleasure, who offers him the lute, often

1. The story is told in A schole of wyse Conceytes. Wherein as every Conceyte hath wit, so the most hate much mirth; Set forth in common places by order of the Alphabet. Translated out of diuers Greeke and Latine Wryters, by Thomas Blage. ... Printed at London, by Henrie Binneman. Anno.1572, fol. 47 verso.
confused with the lyre in the imagery of Apollo.  

Thus we can take the line

The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.
(V. ii. 920)

as summing up the whole conflict adumbrated in the play, between the plainspeaking God of information and the inspirer of the divine afflatus of poetry. The owl is associated with Mercury in an emblem from Wither’s collection, which shows Mercury and Minerva hand in hand, with her owl perched on the caduceus. The emblem is meant to demonstrate the way in which we ought to avoid rash action, by scanning the soul in recollection and humility, a moral which has an obvious application to the action of the play. The opposition of Mercury and Apollo is one that must readily have occurred to poets, although they would not always have been so ready to give the last word to Mercury. In fact intellectual endeavours should be characterised by the astuteness, plainness and eloquence of Mercury, and the genius and inspiration of Apollo as well: many academies and academicians used both upon their imprese. Shakespeare, the intellectual poet, has a fling at witty sophistication and obscurity, but the committed playwright undercuts and criticises it, and from its ruins

1. A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne: Quickened with Metrical Illustrations, ... by George Wither ... London, Printed by A.M. for Robert Millbourne ... MDCXXXV, p. 22, Appendix, fig. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 17, Appendix, fig. 4.

3. See, e.g., the titlepage of Dionysii Lebei-Batillii ... Emblemata. Emblemata a J. J. Boissardo ... delineata sunt et a T. de Bry. Sculpta, et nunc receus in lucem edita. Francofurti ad Moenum. A. c. 1578 xcvi, Appendix, fig. 5.
allows the song which contains the germ of his great romantic comedies to sprout.

The Promethean fire stolen from the wheels of Apollo's chariot does not shine in the eyes of greasy Joan, scouring her pot in her sooty kitchen, but Shakespeare is that she deserves as much love as my lady, and that it will not be measured by the artifice that celebrates it, but by the degree of committal and fidelity that characterises it. Love's Labour's Lost is Shakespeare's fiat he is prepared to accept the dual responsibility of the playwright, as poet and orator. He demonstrates this by spinning an elegant and trifling story of flirtatious love, which glimmers with the cool fire of artifice, and then shining a stronger and clearer beam through its transparent fabric so that it fades away. What is left is the kernel of our human society, laid as bare in this little song as Armado would have been without his doublet. Through all the vicissitudes of his career, Shakespeare never forgot his duty to Tom, Dick, Joan and Marion, although he may have chafed at it, as Prospero fretted at his guardianship of Caliban, and ultimately he may have felt defeated in it. He wrote his own pure poem, The Phoenix and the Turtle, and we can only speculate how far he might have wanted to follow Ariel's free flight further into the mysteries of creative contemplation. As a playwright, he disciplined his imagination and sang for all men to hear, but especially for the Grumios, Launces, and Costards of the world, whose language was their only patrimony, and their songs their only riches.
APPENDIX
An idle tree that beareth no fruit, neither a bad tree, that bringeth forth evil fruit, is tolerable.
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