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June 18, 1963

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LOVE IN THE PROBLEM PLAYS
OF SHAKESPEARE

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of English
University of Saskatchewan

by
Joan Lyngseth

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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The Faculty of Graduate Studies,
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We, the undersigned members of the Committee appointed by you to examine the Thesis submitted by Lilian Joan Lyngseth, B. A. in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, beg to report that we consider the thesis satisfactory both in form and content.

Subject of Thesis: "Love in the Problem Plays of Shakespeare"

We also report that she has successfully passed an oral examination on the general field of the subject of the thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

In the fifteenth century three love philosophies converged: Platonic love, courtly love, and Christian love. The city of their convergence was Florence, and a Florentine scholar, Marsilio Ficino, was the first to attempt a philosophical synthesis of them all. The fundamental step in his synthesis is the substitution of the Christian God for the Platonic Idea of the Good and Beautiful or the neo-Platonic mystical concept of the All as the Divinity with which man, after spiritual purification through love, might be united. Love, according to Ficino, is the only means of attaining unification with the Divine, and the reason he gives for this is that everything is in God; God loves Himself; therefore everything loves God. But man cannot love God immediately and directly; he must learn to know and love Him by learning to know and love the Good and Beautiful on earth, and to do this he must make use of the medium of the senses. The soul and the body are inseparable and must co-operate to attain the ultimate goal.

In the Christian Platonism of Marsilio Ficino and his disciples can be seen the elemental idea of the

1 Sears Reynold Jayne, Introduction to Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, (Columbia, 1944), pp 13-33.
purity of physical desires, which in transition to the poets and dramatists of France, Germany, and England became an interest in human love, particularly between man and woman. The theme of mutual passion between the sexes had never before been thoroughly exploited in literature. When it came to be adopted, every possible form of such passion was dramatically explored. Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, presented the purity and vulnerability of young love; in *The Taming of the Shrew*, an underlying attraction which appears as "the battle of the sexes"; in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the grandeur and the destructiveness of illicit passion; in *Julius Caesar*, the power of marital affection; and various minor variations on the theme of love appear throughout his other plays.

The problem plays, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Measure for Measure*, appear to me to incorporate Shakespeare's mature consideration of the best which is attainable in human love and the role of such love in society.
1 THE ETHICS OF LOVE

A poet who "holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life" does so through the medium of a mind moulded by his environment. The "manners" which are mirrored belong to a specific time and place from which the poet, be he rebel or conservative, can never entirely detach himself. The "life" which is mirrored, comprising the universal characteristics of mankind, does not belong to any one period, but nevertheless appears in literature qualified by emphases relative to the values held at a particular time and place. The insoluble bond of kinship, for example, has been universally recognized throughout all ages; but it was inherently more dramatic when revenge was acceptable as social justice, and the family acknowledged collective responsibility for an offence received or committed by one of its members. The very "life" of a play, its thematic core, withholds from us some of the richness of connotation which it freely gave to its author's contemporaries unless we make an effort to appreciate the relevant social context. For those who have an awareness of Elizabethan ethics and conventions, Shakespeare's plays are a source of continually richer experience. Is not Rosalind more lovable when her high-spirited teasing is shown as pertinent to what
Elizabethans found irritating in courtly love?

The apprehension of the universal experience of love was qualified by the ideal known as courtly love, a concept which had flourished in England, though not uniformly, since the twelfth century. Courtly love appeared first in Provence at the end of the eleventh century and was brought to England by the troubadours. It flourished in England for the same reason that it flourished in France - it idealized the conditions under which a company of landless knights would live at leisure in the castle of a lord or baron and pay homage to the one lady of the castle, who with her attendants comprised the entire socially significant female menage. The sophisticated ritual of love which the troubadours celebrated required that the lover should be the humble servant of his chosen mistress. He must be qualified by noble blood for the great courtesy which courtly love demanded of him, and his addresses must be made to a lady who knew the obligations of the code. Her prime obligation was to take compassion on her love-tormented, despairing servant, after a suitable interval, and admit him to her bed. The "affair" was not debased, but rather made respectable, by the fact that the lady in question was already married.

In addition to humility, courtesy, and adultery, one more characteristic belonged to the courtly love code, namely the treatment of love as a religion. C. S. Lewis
describes the code as "a rival or parody of the real religion".  
Evidently in its first maturity courtly love was an ethic as well as a social convention. Ethical mores are not always easily distinguishable from social conventions when religion and morals play such an important role as they did in Renaissance England, but a distinction is possible, and I believe desirable in the interests of lucidity. An explanation of the ethics of love in Shakespeare, which this chapter is designed to provide, must involve some reference to the courtly love ethic and its development.  

The most outstanding narrative illustration of courtly love as an ethic is the early twelfth-century Lancelot, by a northern French poet, Chrétien de Troyes. Working with a British Arthurian legend, Troyes describes the ordeals and humiliations which Lancelot undergoes for his mistress Guinevere, held captive in the mythical land of Gorre. When at length he is rewarded by her favour, he kneels in adoration at the shrine of love -- her bed -- and makes a genuflexion before he leaves the room.  

By Elizabethan times courtly love had been severely modified, particularly in respect to its religious and moral implications. The major cause of that modification was the "rivalry" between it and the Church. The Church was its bitter opponent from the beginning, though not especially on the grounds that adulterous relationships were involved.  

To the medieval Church, passionate love of any kind was sinful. It permitted as guiltless only "innocent sexuality," and promoted as an ideal, perfect chastity. The rift between amatory and religious ideals is evident even in the great medieval theoretical exposition of courtly love, De Arte Honeste Amandi by Andreas Capellanus. Written early in the thirteenth century, this work sets out to supply instruction in the art of love, on the assumption that "It is agreed among all men that there is no good thing in the world, and no courtesy, which is not derived from love as from its fountain." ³ Capellanus attributes to love all the powers usually attributed to the Christian religion. Not only does it ennoble the lover on earth, it ensures his reward after death. At length, however, Capellanus resorts to a palinode. He concludes that greater rewards will be earned by those who forego the pleasure of love, adding that "No man through any good deeds can please God so long as he serves in the service of Love."⁴

The apparently incompatible ideals, religious and amatory, were in fact eventually reconciled. Two major factors contributed to the reconciliation, the Protestant Reformation and the decline of feudalism. The Reformation made it possible to be devout without being celibate, so that wilful antagonism to the Church ideal lost ground;

³ De Arte Honeste Amandi, i, 5, p.15, In Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p.34.
⁴ Ibid., in Lewis, p.41.
the decline of feudalism gave rise to a new "middle class,"
knowing no feudal loyalties of vassal to lord, and alien
to those conditions which had given rise to the courtly
love ritual. The new class tended to ridicule sophisticated
formalities which served no purpose in its familiar environ-
ment.

The reconciliation of human love with divine values
was made by the Christian Platonists of Italy, whose teachings
were abroad in England by the sixteenth century. John
Vyvyan, in Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty, points out that
nearly all Renaissance theorizing on love and beauty stemmed
from the two great speeches of Socrates recorded by Plato
in the "Symposium" and the "Phaedrus." According to Plato,
love is the power which emerged from chaos and created the
material universe. Everything created is a material copy
of an eternal, indestructible, spiritual ideal. The soul
of man, belonging as it does to the spiritual world, enables
him to recognize aspects of that world, such as beauty,
wisdom, and goodness, when he sees them on earth. The
divine reality most easily recognized is beauty, but beauty
alone cannot produce spiritual experience in the observer.
Love, the power which created material forms as tangible
expressions of eternal realities, must prompt the soul to
super-sensory perception. In the fifteenth century, in
Italy, Marsilio Ficino led a revival of Platonism which
purposed to harmonize it with Christianity. Ficino's main
contribution to Renaissance thought was the theory that the lover's ascent to God proceeded through various stages of spiritual development. John Vyvyan believes that Shakespeare read Cicero's fifteenth-century interpretive translation of Plato in its Latin form, but whether he did or not, he would have had ample opportunity to become familiar with the portions which chiefly influenced Renaissance England. He would probably have read, for example, Hoby's English translation of Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, made in 1561.

Through one of his characters, Maister Peter Bembo, Castiglione describes the process by which beauty and love lead to virtue. The initial stage in the ascension of the soul from material to immaterial joys is the perception of beauty, involving three human faculties: the senses, the understanding, and the reason. The senses, which human beings have in common with animals, perceive and stimulate a desire of the flesh. The understanding, an intuitive form of knowledge which human beings share with angels, also may perceive and covet, but its coveting is not of the flesh but of the soul. The third faculty, the reason, belongs to man alone. To it is given the responsibility of choice: of deciding whether the desire of the senses or the desire of the understanding shall be satisfied. If the reason chooses to indulge the senses, then it is acting under the misapprehension that the physical beauty of a woman is the
source of the soul's desire, and that such a desire may be slaked by physical union. But satisfaction of the senses cannot satisfy the soul's longing. Sensual lovers "fall again into the raging and most burning thirst of the thing, that they hope in vaine to possessse perfectly," says Bembo. They reap afflictions, griefs, tears and torments instead of quietness and satisfaction.

Having perceived beauty with his senses and having disciplined them to obey his reason, Castiglione's lover is prepared to begin his ascension to spiritual perfection. Dissatisfied because he cannot always be in the presence of his beloved, he "issues... out of this narrow rooms" and perceives universal beauty, though still with his eyes. Such is the second stage. Appreciation of visible universal beauty leads him to the third stage of his development, in which he perceives beauty with the eyes of the mind "when the eyes of sense lose the floure of their sightliness." From mental perception of universal beauty, the lover's mental eyes turn inward, and he discovers that there is divinity within himself. From this moment on, he becomes blind to earthly beauty and is ready for further spiritual progression. Having discovered the reflection of the beam of heavenly beauty in himself, he becomes conscious of the primary beam, the pure spiritual idea from which all material beauty

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takes its form. Castiglione describes this divine spirit in terms of a unity encompassing all the absolutes which make up goodness, and symbolizes it as light. The lover, attracted to the heavenly light, follows it until he arrives at the seventh and final stage of his ascension, when his soul is kindled in the holy fire of heavenly love, his mortal parts are purged, and he becomes an angel.

Without conscious reference to the Italian Platonists, Elizabethan England integrated a good deal of their philosophy into its life and art. Recurring in Shakespeare's love stories are the beliefs -- common Elizabethan precepts -- that beauty is good, and love of it is good and holy. Love of a woman may be only the bottom rung of the ladder of love, but it is one rung nearer to heaven than no love at all. However, passionate love, with its thoughtless delights and raptures, is the prerogative of the young both to Shakespeare and to Castiglione, who writes that passion in a young man is more to be pitied than blamed "because the lustiness of the flesh and of the blood, in that season addeth unto him even so much force, as it withstandeth fro reason."7 Another precept which Elizabethans had no difficulty in adopting was that love must not be a manifestation of uncontrolled passion: reason must restrain the senses.

A convenient culture for the propagation of the idea of the responsibility of reason for the control of

7 Ibid., p. 305
passion was provided by medieval respect for order and degree in all aspects of life. One major instance of it was a concept to which the eighteenth century gave the name the Great Chain of Being. All forms in existence were represented as links in an hierarchically ascending continuity ending in God. Generally speaking, the chain could be divided into four areas of existence: the inanimate, the animal, the human, and the angelic, differing from each other in degree of divinity and power. Between God and any other form of existence the disparity was assumed to be infinite. It is not necessary to discuss the Great Chain here beyond noticing it as the supreme example of the medieval awareness of universal order, inherited by Elizabethans. A divinely ordained order and degree was thought to apply to every aspect of the created universe, even to Hell. In the society of man there were a political hierarchy, a spiritual hierarchy, and a social hierarchy. Accustomed to ritual symbolism, the medieval mind eagerly made analogies, and had no difficulty in assuming that the intangible faculties of man composed an ordained hierarchical structure just as the tangible manifestations of nature composed a chain of being. Castiglione's consideration of the human mind in terms of faculties was derived directly from medieval faculty psychology, although medieval scholars were not unanimously agreed that the reason and the understanding were separate faculties rather than one faculty to which two names had been given. In general,
however, the medieval description of man's psychology was very similar to Casti_ione's. Man's lowest faculty was sense perception, followed by passion, of which the fundamental characteristic was self-interest. In leading man to seek his own good, passion might bring him to salvation, but it might also bring him to damnation by its excesses. The third faculty, in ascending order, was the will, an intermediary between the passion and the higher faculty of reason. To it was assigned the task of controlling passion by conducting it to the decisions of the reason. Reason, thought to have been given to man alone, was designed for the purpose of exercising choice. Man's highest faculty was understanding, an intuitive apprehension of good which he shared with the angels. Any abrogation of the natural order, be it physical, political, social, or spiritual, produced a state of chaos in the sphere in which the abrogation occurred; and, because all spheres of life were interrelated, the ensuing chaos might also pervade any or all of the other spheres. An unnatural murder might cause physical disorders or mental instability. Moreover, such a passion provided a seedbed ground for a worse passion, and so on. Though the wicked may have appeared to prosper, there was some satisfaction for the righteous in the postulation that a man's passions punished him by making him their slave in this world and by damn ing him to eternal torment in the next.
The two religious philosophies, namely the medieval concept of divinely regulated order and the neo-Platonic one which accounted human love as the ticket gate to salvation, together with the pseudo-religious courtly love code, provided only the latent ideas in the love ethic of Elizabethan England. When a philosophy becomes available in the "dime store," it is sometimes modified by the common-sense of "dime store" buyers. Almost any lover, for example, would be likely to forget about the divine beauty of his beloved's soul, if not during the throes of courtship, certainly afterwards. However, the aspects of a philosophy which coincide with human experience are entrenched and illuminated by the coincidence. Using the same example drawn from neo-Platonism, we might expect that, under suspicious circumstances, the lover would retain the feeling that his relationship was "right," "natural," or even divinely ordained.

In this general way the three streams of thought determined Shakespeare's love ethics from Romeo and Juliet to Miranda and Ferdinand. They are not so obvious in the problem plays because there the ritual, beauty, and order of love are defiled. Nevertheless, they provide an organizing system of ethics which any critical appraisal of the plays should take into consideration. The most notable rejection of the system is that of Professor C. Wilson
Knight in his discussion of *Troilus and Cressida.* 8 Professor Knight believes that the Trojan party stands for intuition, human beauty and worth; the Greek party stands for the barren stagnancy of the intellect divorced from action. Troilus, he suggests, is justified within the play in choosing to value what the senses perceive as beautiful and the will elects to serve. "Troilus' love throughout is hallowed by his constancy, his fire, his truth. . . . It is conceived and presented throughout as a thing essentially pure and noble," 9 Professor Knight asserts. He declares that the love interest turns on "the theme of immediate value, killed, or apparently killed, by Time." 10 Troilus's tragedy is that Time destroys values, while his sense of honour demands that he remain constant.

The major fallacy in this interpretation involves the suggested relationship between values, time, and people. The value of finite beauty, in the neo-Platonic concept, is that it leads to love of the soul or spirit in the beloved and ultimately in the universe. Since, unlike finite beauty, that soul or spirit is not subject to time, the love of it is consequently not subject to time. A certain kind of love, spiritual love, is therefore of absolute and unchanging value. In the day-to-day ethics of Elizabethans, spiritual

9 Ibid., p. 66.
10 Ibid., p. 74.
love evoked by a woman was remarkably like the kind of human love which is universally valued. It was consecrated by matrimony, it was constant and of unchanging value, and it recognized the purposes for which marriage was ordained, as they are explicated in the Bible. Troilus's love is quite evidently of another kind. Furthermore, Troilus explicitly denies that there are any ultimate values. "What's sought but as 'tis valued?" (II, ii, 52) he asks. Since his values are born in time and of time, they are subject to time. All he has to keep him constant is honour, which in this play is synonymous with personal pride.

... How may I avoid,
Although my will distaste what it elected,
The wife I chose? There can be no evasion
To blench from this and to stand firm by honour (II, ii, 65-68).

Honour compels Iarids to steal Helen; honour has "launched a thousand ships" and will presently burn "the topless towers of Ilim"; honour destroys Hector.

Professor Knight also under-estimates the value of Ulysses' speech on order. Ulysses is speaking specifically about political degree, of course, but degree in the human faculties was considered analogous. Whether the senses were serving the purposes of the Divine when they first made Troilus's passion respond to Cressida's beauty becomes irrelevant once his passion takes control of all his faculties. His love is then a disease, a perturbation of the blood. Nicino's attitude to such wilful sensuality was a common one. After describing earthly love as a disturbance of the
blood which causes insanity, he says:

How dangerous this adulterous love is to loved ones as well as to lovers, Lysias the Theban, and Socrates, in Plato (in the "Phaedrus") and every one who has loved in this way show. But the worst effect from it is that by this madness, man descends to the nature of a beast.11

Troilus says:

[...]
I tell thee I am mad In Cressid's love ... (I, i, 43-49).

And having lost her, he does "mad and fantastical execution" on the battlefield.

Troilus' search for infinity and his dissatisfaction with the limitations of his love, which impresses Professor Knight, merely emphasizes that his love is of a kind subject to time. He looks for infinite satisfactions from his "ruiner powers."

This is the monstruosity of love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confined, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit. (III, ii, 73-75).

Professor Knight's interpretation of Troilus and Cressida, though emotively powerful, is unconvincing because it fails to take into account the ethical system which gave rise to this particular presentation of the traditional tale.

It should be recognized that social conventions, which may be defined as the common forms of action used by men or classes in their mutual relations, are sometimes quite distinct from social conventions as they appear in literature. Although verisimilitude has been practised throughout literary history, literature has many conventions which, having evolved from the elaboration of an imaginative ideal, bear only an indirect resemblance to "deeds and language such as men do use." The convention of the hero, whose super-human courage, strength, and virtue continually triumph in face of incredible opposition, existed long before the songs of minstrels were written down.

Courtly love was a literary convention, demanding an elaborate code of behaviour which coincided with ordinary human behaviour only in so far as romantic love, upon which it was based, was common human experience, and in so far as knights and ladies in medieval courts might pattern their amorous adventures on the code. The stylized ritual which the literary convention promoted as an ideal is set out in Guillaume de Lorris' The Romance of the Rose (ca. 1230), the most notable love story of medieval times. In the course of the romance, the God of Love instructs a young
men in the art of love. First he must leave "villainy," a word used to denote any lack of generosity in word, thought, or deed. Then he must cultivate the positive qualities of courtesy, humility, personal cleanliness, joyfulness, generosity, and constancy, and fortify himself with hope of happiness against the many afflictions of love. To hide his love sorrows he must remain in solitude and there suffer all discomforts, such as changes of temperature, without awareness of them. Indeed, he must be so utterly self-forgetful as to be dumb and motionless. When absent from his lady he must be restless and ill at ease, and he must constantly long for the sight of her. When an opportunity arises to tell her of his love, he must be too fearful to take advantage of it, an omission for which he must afterwards repeatedly reproach himself. During his sleepless nights he must suffer acutely from love sickness, which in the course of time will make him thin and pale. Should he by any chance fall asleep from exhaustion, he must dream of happiness with his lady and wake in sorrow because the dream is not actuality. Early in the mornings, in all kinds of weather, he must make a pilgrimage to her home. Also, he should linger in that vicinity at every opportunity, but always with the utmost secrecy. The God of Love finally advises the young man to confess his hopes and fears to a wise and faithful friend.

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The lover, according to the courtly love convention, was supposed to be of noble birth, young, though not less than fourteen, and generally attractive physically. He should be athletic and intelligent, virtuous and courageous. He was expected to fall in love with the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. The woman, for her part, must also be young and of high rank. She must be beautiful and chaste, and worthy to be loved for her virtue, courtesy, kindness, refinement, and good sense. She was under an obligation to choose the most worthy of her suitors as her lover. The fact that she might already be married was irrelevant; since marriage served primarily utilitarian purposes in medieval society, a woman was not expected to love her husband. The ideal woman in a courtly love romance was not easily won. She might test the constancy of her "servant" for several years, and in that time be cold and haughty or even capricious. Eventually, however, she was expected to take pity upon his plight and admit him to her favour.

In the sixteenth century, courtly love "cruelty," together with others of the more extreme features of the code, was likely to be ridiculed. Orlando in *As You Like It* perseveres in the role of the courtly lover and, unaware that the "boy" now teasing him is in fact his own beloved Rosalind, he declares "her frown might kill me." The disguised Rosalind comforts him with: "Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (IV, ii, 107-110). But dramatic romances were still
observing the courtly love code in many respects, even when they satirized some aspect of it. Though dramatic convention no longer demanded that the lover must be of noble birth, he should be of good rank. In character and accomplishments he was expected to be a combination of the courtly lover and the Renaissance homme complet. The ideal courtly lover and the ideal neo-Platonic lover were perfectly harmonious in their physical and social attributes. They could be distinguished only by the proposed end and purpose of their love: the courtly love code proposed adultery; the neo-Platonic ideal proposed spiritual perfection. In the literature of Shakespeare's time, lovers were of three kinds: those who were attracted by the divine spirit in beauty and whose desires were not of the flesh; those who were motivated by the prospect of adulterous consummation; and those whose object was matrimony. Since literary conventions and practised social conventions are never entirely distinct, an audience is likely to condone that ideal which has germinated in the social conditions with which it is familiar. Consequently, the first two kinds of lovers were objects of satire for dramatists who wrote with an audience in mind. Lovers of the third kind, representing a compromise between what then appeared to be the extremes of sensuality and spirituality, were usually presented sympathetically. Certainly all Shakespeare's sympathetic lovers intend matrimony. When his lovers are not presented sympathetically, their
deficiencies are measured against the ideal which had cry-
stallized from former literary and current social conventions. We know that the inadequacies of Bertram and Troilus are measured against this ideal because of the many ways in which they satisfy its conditions. Bertram, for instance, is inadequate because he is not prepared to love, except dis-
honourably. A fundamental assumption of the courtly love and neo-Platonic codes was that love was virtuous, and the inability to love reprehensible: an assumption qualified in the sixteenth century so that it applied only to honour-
able love. Bertram is, however, in many ways ideal. We know that he is young, attractive, of good rank, and courageous, in short, fully qualified to be a lover. Troilus fulfils all the important requirements of courtly love, but he falls short of the sixteenth century ideal because he ignores certain obligatory ethical considerations.

The woman's role in the dramatic convention had changed more than the man's, because her role in society had changed. In early medieval society she was either a peasant and of no literary consequence, or a lady of rank who was given and taken in marriage for the advantages in rank and wealth which might accrue from an alliance between families. Even when presented dramatically as the mistress of a humble and devoted "servant," her role was a passive one. She might be "somdel deignous" if she wished, but no effective action was expected of her. Women in medieval
literature were for the most part of two kinds: the passive lady and the shrew. In Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" for example, the Lady Emilie's role is to weep and be woeful at the plight of her adorers, Palamon and Arcite, and to be obedient when Theseus commands

That ye shul of youre grace upon hym [Palamon] rew,  
And taken him for housbonde and for lord.

Chaucer's Wife of Bath is a shrew without compeer in literature.

At the end of the sixteenth century women had a more positive role in society and in literature than they had hitherto enjoyed, in part because the rising middle class came of artisan stock and their women had shared the burden of work. In The Knight of the Burning Pestle the Citizen's wife is thoroughly familiar with her husband's business, and in The Shoemakers' Holiday Largery appears frequently in the shoemakers' shop. Another reason was that after the Reformation the sanctity of marriage was taken more seriously than in the Middle Ages. The church had always preached the sanctity of marriage, of course; but the popularity of medieval romances and fabliaux, a characteristic of which is the adulterous love affair, is an indication of at least public tolerance towards extra-marital relations. In John Heywood's A Merry Play (ca. 1533) John John, the cuckold husband, gets little sympathy. Similarly in Chaucer's tale of January and May told by the pilgrim

merchant, the joke is on January, who is warned before he is married that a young wife will deceive him. The cuckolded carpenter in "The Miller's Tale" fares even worse; everyone concludes that he is mad and laughs at his misfortunes, not the least of which is a broken arm.

The Elizabethans expected that their romantic heroines would experience many human emotions besides compassion, and they might even suffer the heroics formerly reserved to men. Certainly they must take an active part in the plot. Like their courtly predecessors, they must be at least twelve years old, of a rank above the labouring classes, chaste and beautiful, and worthy to be loved for their virtue and intellect. Helen, in All's Well That Ends Well, would have been considered an ideal heroine by Elizabethans, who would not have been as scrupulous about her contrivance of the "bed trick" as some modern critics have been. The "bed trick" was acceptable as a familiar folklore incident (Professor W. W. Lawrence has found similar tales in Italian, Indian, Turkish, Norwegian, and Icelandic literature). 3

The conventionality of the tale, combined with Helena's modest reluctance to confess her love for Bertram and the delicacy with which she makes her public choice of him for her husband, would have fully satisfied an Elizabethan's sense of decorum. Helena is in perfect harmony with the

3 Wm. Witherle Lawrence, _Shakespeare's Problem Comedies_, (New York, 1931), p. 54.
Renaissance extension of the feminine courtly love ideal.

Another modification which the courtly love convention had undergone by the sixteenth century was in the way in which young people were depicted as falling in love. Originally Cupid's arrows were made responsible for a young man's sudden passion, and the lady's pity was won by worth and perseverance. In the course of time, love at first sight was presented as a mutual experience, while prevalent ideas about nature's rule and divine order caused Cupid to be replaced by Providence. Shakespeare's early lovers fell in love mutually at first sight, but he abandoned the device after Twelfth Night and did not make use of it again until The Tempest. Antony, it is true, is captivated by the first sight of Cleopatra, but the event was designed by Cleopatra, and courtly love precludes such calculation. Angelo falls in love with Isabella at their first meeting, but his passion is evidently misplaced; if it were providential, Isabella would reciprocate. Helena's ideal love grew through long association, suggesting that in the period of the problem plays Shakespeare came to regard love at first sight as inauspicious, or at least unrealistic.

Some incidental characteristics of the courtly love convention also appeared in Elizabethan drama. Lovers were permitted one confidant each and one messenger or intermediary between them. The intermediary might also be one of the confidants. Secrecy was still essential, although
a reason for it other than an irate husband had to be worked into the plot. Tokens were received or exchanged to signify acceptance of a love suit. Indeed, the exchange of tokens became part of the Elizabethan betrothal ceremony.

The betrothal and marriage customs of Elizabethan society are important in Shakespeare's plays, particularly in the problem plays, where the sanctity of love and marriage is a major issue. G.E. Howard in his History of Matrimonial Institutions describes two kinds of contracts, the spousal de futuro and the spousal de praesenti, which differed only in that the former was spoken in the future tense and so expressed the intention to marry at a future time, and the latter was spoken in the present tense and constituted an absolute binding marriage vow. When consummated, a de futuro contract automatically became a binding and valid marriage. To prevent the perdition of those who might succumb to the sins of the flesh, the Church made marriage as easy as possible, and it refused to make the validity of marriage depend upon formal ceremonies. It denied that parental consent was needed; it rejected age qualifications, beyond that a couple must have reached puberty if they were to wed on their own authority; it rejected the absolute necessity for a religious ceremony, a written contract, or witnesses. A private, even secret, agreement between a

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4 The chief source of knowledge of Elizabethan laws relating to marriage contracts is Henry Swinburne's Treatise on Spousals, written about 1600 and published in 1686.
betrothed couple was enough to make a valid contract. Illogically, however, while a marriage enacted without ecclesiastical blessing was recognized as valid and binding, it was nevertheless sinful and illegal. Thus, there was a sharp distinction between legality and validity, and the Church might impose severe penalties, even excommunication, on those married illegally. This situation arose because, although the marriage ceremony had always been a civil one in England, yet when it became possible to marry without the consent of parents or guardian, the priest began to take the place of the natural guardian in the ceremony. From the twelfth century on, it was the custom to hold a civil ceremony outside the church followed by a blessing, which in time became an nuptial mass, inside the church. Chaucer refers to this double ceremony when he says of the Wife of Bath, "Housbondes at chirche dare she hadde fyve." The civil ceremony was still the marriage proper in the sixteenth century but, as the efforts of the Church to enforce its rituals became increasingly effective, the emphasis on the civil ceremony was gradually changing to an emphasis on the ecclesiastical ceremony. Thus the "revived" law which Shakespeare made part of his plot in Measure for Measure and which prompts the Duke to accuse Juliet of a "most offenceful act" (II, iii, 26) reflects a developing

5 "General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales, 1. 480.
characteristic of Elizabethan marriage custom. As yet there was no suggestion that a religious ceremony should replace a civil one; the Church insisted only that a marriage should be consecrated before it was consummated. But as D.P. Harding points out in his essay "Elizabethan Betrothals and Measure for Measure," the Church could formulate the ideal but could not dictate the practice.

Human nature and a paradoxical distinction between legality and morality offset its best efforts to secure anything like a general conformity to the ideal. On the contrary, non-conformity was so widespread, particularly at the lower social levels, that only one conclusion is possible. For a high percentage of the English people, the vital moral distinction between a de praesenti contract and the marriage ceremony must have had very little meaning or significance.

It would appear that there was considerable confusion in England in respect to marriage customs, and the confusion is reflected in Measure for Measure. For example, it is impossible to know whether the two contracts in the play were of the de futuro kind or of the de praesenti kind. Wm. G. Meader in Courtship in Shakespeare says that the "true contract" between Claudio and Juliet was a spousal de futuro consummated without the blessing of the Church. However, Claudio's explicit description of his relationship with Juliet suggests that he was probably married in a secret

6 The Council of Trent, held in the middle of the sixteenth century, decreed that all marriages not contracted in the presence of a priest and two or three witnesses should be void. The decree was rejected in England, and clandestine marriages continued to be valid until the middle of the eighteenth century.

He explains to Lucio:

... Upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed;
You know the lady, she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order (I, ii, 134-138).

Reader believes that Angelo and Mariana were also contracted by a spousal de futuro, and Ernest Schanzer in his essay "The Marriage Contracts in Measure for Measure" supports Reader's view. Schanzer points out that there were two kinds of de futuro contracts. One was conditional and could be broken off at will by either party, or might automatically lapse if the conditions under which it was contracted were not fulfilled. If Angelo had contracted to marry Mariana on condition that her dowry met his expectations, the contract would have lapsed when it was lost at sea. But a de futuro contract might also be a sworn spousal which could not be broken without mutual consent unless there were "just cause," for instance if one party committed fornication or contracted some deforming disease such as leprosy. Quite evidently Mariana did not consent to the contract being broken, and equally evidently she had not contracted leprosy. Angelo was able to break it by "pretending in her discoveries of dishonour" (III, i, 236). Because the dishonour was only pretence, the contract was still valid. Harding takes the view that Angelo and Mariana were not married de futuro.

but rather de praesenti because the Duke refers to Angelo as Mariana's "companion husband," affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed (III, i, 221-232). Actually, the question scarcely matters since it is perfectly clear that, whatever the kind of contract, it was one which Angelo could not break without consent, and it was one which was as yet unblessed by the Church and therefore, strictly speaking, should not have been consummated. How, then, are we to account for the fact that the "priest" Duke contrives the consummation of this unblessed contract after forcefully stating the attitude of the Church to such clandestine unions to Juliet? The explanation can be found in Swinburne's Treatise on Spousals, which describes what must happen to those who refuse to honour a sworn spousal contract.

If there be not just cause precedent, then the unwilling Party is to be admonished; and if he yet obstinately refuse, he is to be compelled by the Censures ecclesiastical to Solemnize the Matrimony, by him before promised and sworn.

we might consider this a case of the end justifying the means.

The sin of premature consummation, which in any case the Duke takes care to mitigate by ordering Angelo to officially marry Mariana, becomes the means of defeating Angelo's obstinate refusal to honour a contract. The Duke takes over the prerogative of the Censures Ecclesiastical by the same authority which allows him to hear confessions, namely poetic licence.

The real problem is not the Duke's inconsistency in this respect, but Isabella's. Why does Isabella, the paragon of chastity, condemn Claudio but condone Mariana? Several explanations have been given of this anomaly in logic, beginning with Lawrence's assertion that since the betrothal of Mariana has legal validity, all is indeed well, and including Mary Lascelles' excellent discussion in which she describes Isabella's role as a result of a story-telling convention. In a masculine phase of story-telling, she points out, "the moral obligations of women, at least towards women, will be reduced to something like a formula: the whole duty of women to fellow-woman is fulfilled in helping her to the husband she wants." But the explanation of Isabella's apparent inconsistency is so simple that it passed unnoticed until quite recently. Ernest Schanzer points out in the essay referred to above that Isabella knew about Mariana's contract but did not know about Claudio's. When Lucio first tells her that Juliet is with child by Claudio, Isabella responds with: "O, let him marry her" (I, v, 49). When she condones Mariana's consummation of an unblessed contract, she has the "friar's" assurance that no sin is involved. But even were this not so, before condemning her connivance in the substitution, we should look at the play as a unity. In the first place Mariana is willing, whereas Isabella

has a fear and horror which make the act impossible for her. Secondly, Isabella is doing what anybody else sharing the common moral values of her society would have done. We learn in Act One what the moral sentiment of Vienna is: Claudio should not be condemned to death for that which many others have done and still do. Isabella is forced by Angelo into the discovery that she is as much a thrall to human values as the rest of Vienna.

Angelo: ... 'Tis all as easy,
   Falsey to take away a life true made,
   As to put metal in restrained means
   To make a false one.

Isabella: 'Tis set down so in heaven, but not in earth (II,iv,46-50)
Subject as she is to the frailty of human-kind, she cannot be expected to undertake the distinctly super-human task of weighing Angelo's non-consent to the substitution against the sin of lust. When she cheats Angelo and condones Isabella's "sin," she is doing the most that humanity can do -- choosing the lesser of two evils. And her choice is facilitated by the advice of a "friar."

One of the basic problems of the play is that of finding a bridge between the divine ideal and its human debasement represented as moral sentiment. The bridge proves to be the fact that moral sentiment has the same external appearance as Divine Justice-Mercy. Both lead to forgiveness of human error; only the motivating mind is different.
(The human forgiveness of sexual licence is accompanied by
an element of uneasiness implying acknowledgement that "there but for the Grace of God go I." Measure for Measure contains therefore a recognition of the validity of accepted moral sentiment. Obviously, we are expected to accept Isabella's limitations and to forgive her, not to condemn her as Dame Edith Sitwell does when she describes her as "The cold and repellent Isabella ... who ... acts as a bawd for the very sin for which her brother is to die -- and this, in order to save her own soul!"

Measure for Measure is Shakespeare's only play in which a heroine consummates a marriage before an ecclesiastical ceremony has been performed, and here the "sin" is justified both within the play and by the fact that the "bed-trick" was a literary convention. Shakespeare seems to have regarded ecclesiastical blessing as essential to an ideal marriage. In The Tempest Prospero warns Ferdinand:

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
All sanctimonious ceremonies may
With full and holy rites be minister'd,
No sweet aspersions shall the heavens let fall
To make this contract grow (IV, i, 15-19).

And even Touchstone finds himself a preacher when he wants to give his union with Audrey the gloss of respectability. Helena and Bertram are married de praesenti and presumably with all the sanctimonious ceremonies, since the King orders the marriage.

Trollus and Cressida is significant in this context because the lovers' relationship is both illicit and ill-fated, and a correlation between the two facts may be inferred. Reader points out that Trollus and Cressida make a mockery of the *spousal de prassenti*. The pattern of such a spousal was consent before witnesses, the clasping of hands, a kiss, and an exchange of gifts or tokens. Witnesses serve two purposes: they afford proof of an act should need of proof arise, and they serve as representatives of society, which demands that marriage shall be binding and expects that it will be enacted publicly and unashamedly. The witness at Trollus's and Cressida's mock marriage is Pandarus, an ironical choice since his prime obligation as a courtly love confident is to keep their liaison secret. Pandarus begins the ceremony with a snatch of legal phraseology:

> What, billing again? Here's 'In witness whereof The parties interchangerably' (III, ii, 52-53).

which should have ended, "have set their hands and seals."

He completes his self-appointed task as broker, witness, priest-officiator with:

> Go to, a bargain made; seal it, seal it; I'll be the witness. Here I hold your hand, here my cousin's (III, ii, 163-164)

No consent of parents is needed; they are both of age.

Trollus, we are told, is twenty-two, and the legal age for marriage without consent was fourteen for boys, twelve for girls. No dowry or settlements are required in a mock
ceremony. Cressida's body is her dowry; Troilus's faith is his settlement. The gifts they exchange -- a sleeve from Troilus, a glove from Cressida -- are courtly love symbols connoting adultery and secrecy. In a genuine betrothal, rings were usually exchanged.

It is evident, then, that the lovers of the problem plays act according to the formal literary and social conventions which had grown up around the fundamental human experience of romantic love. The plays concede the reality and value of young love and assert the necessity for its regulation within conventional social forms. And yet the problem plays are not stories of romantic love. The reasons why they are not romantic are the reasons why they are "problem" plays.
There are two distinct approaches to the problem of plays, as A. R. Moesiter has pointed out in *Angel with Horns*. One group of critics, including J. R. Chambers and Dover Wilson, sees them as negative, destructive, bitter, and cynical. Wilson's assessment of the plays summarizes the general attitude of the group:

The note of them all is disillusionment and cynicism, the air is cheerless and often unwholesome, the wit wraithless, the bad characters contemptible or detestable, and the good ones unattractive.¹

To this opinion Wilson adds the explanation that the plays reflect the spiritual biography of Shakespeare, corresponding in time to his disillusionment at the discovery of a faithless friend and an inconstant mistress.

Another group of critics sees positive, constructive qualities in the plays. In 1930, Wilson Knight made a detailed correlation of *Measure for Measure* with the Gospels in an essay² which has stimulated various other critics to review the problem plays from the point of view of the values which they assert. R. W. Chambers' comments in his British Academy paper, "The Jacobean Shakespeare and Measure for

² "Measure for Measure," in *The Wheel of Fire*, pp. 73-96.
"Measure," are illustrative of the "positive" approach. He points out that Shakespeare's sense of evil was no new development in his Jacobean days and that as he grew older he began to depict, together with the evil, "a courage, patience, faith, and love which the evil cannot touch." 3

If we accept that Shakespeare was writing within the context of Elizabethan ethical and social values, there can be no doubt as to which of these two approaches is the more valid. We must consider the plays as an assertion of, at least, the value of love, unless we divorce them from their social context. The plays as a group assert the validity of a love which is the archetypal configuration of sex, fecundity, and the vitality of life; a love which recognizes and accepts the creative principle in the universe and associates it with the absolute virtues of beauty, goodness, truth, and honour. The medieval world order had contributed to this concept a belief in ordained plenitude and in the wholesomeness of fecundity; the courtly love concept had contributed an acceptance of sensuality and an awareness of the beauty of love rituals; the neo-Platonic ideal had contributed the association of love and creativity with spiritual virtue.

The supposition that holy love and divine creation are integral with goodness in the nature of omnipotence

3 From the proceedings of the British Academy, (London, 1937), LXIII, 12.
is, of course, perfectly compatible with Judaic-Christian thought. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good,"¹ says the Book of Genesis. And in the Gospel of St. John it is written that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...."² However, the extension of the idea to involve human love and procreation with goodness is not Christian. According to the Christian faith, the children of men must be brought forth in sorrow because the sin of Adam is the sin of all men.

In the reign of James I, the Synod of Dort condemned Arminius as a heretic for declaring that man was not totally corrupt. Shakespeare's concept of love, which I shall call "creative love,"³ implying both spiritual and physical creativity, is only Christian in that love-charity is one of the virtues which it incorporates.

If the plays express positive values, how can we account for the tragi-comic view of man which they offer? That they are tragi-comic, there can be no doubt. In tragi-comedy, evil is generated by the good as well as the bad characters, although in the finale those who intended well neither suffer themselves nor cause others to suffer. Rossiter lists five attributes⁷ of the tragi-comic view: a refusal

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¹ Genesis, 1, 31.
² Gospel of St. John, 3, 16.
³ John Vyvyan uses a similar phrase in Shakespereian Ethic (London, 1959) p. 59, when he speaks of "perfect conscience" as "the act of creative mercy." The resemblance between the two phrases is purely verbal; Vyvyan implies no sexual connotations in his use of the word "creative."
to credit the dignity of man, an emphasis on human shortcomings, a suggestion that there is "another side" to human affairs (a comic side to the tragic and a tragic side to the comic), a trend towards presenting the causes of dissatisfaction with life as matter of jest ("mirthless laughter"), and a corresponding tendency to insinuate that funny subjects are serious in a way which we generally refuse to recognize. All five can be found in the problem plays.

But such attributes are the expression not the cause of the tragi-comic view. The cause may be deduced from Rossiter's discussion of Greek drama in *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans*. He points out that in Greek myth (and the same applies to folklore generally) the opposing worlds of life and death, creation and destruction, dark and light, are not opposing worlds at all. Primal intuitions are allegorized in rituals conveying the vital unity of nature.

"To us these are allegories of the indestructible vitality of nature, of the course of the dying and new born year: of the seed which goes down alive into the grave, and dies to rise once more: of the whole rhythmic course of vegetation, sex, and all fecundity."8

The sequence of the seasons can be dramatized as the victory of Spring or as the funeral of old John Barleycorn, for implicit in the dying year9 is its rebirth, and "the maltreatment of

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9 In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the word "die" had sexual implications.
the negative symbol is affirmation of the positive, and the two opposites are present at once, Rossiter declares. We find the same unity in Shakespeare's double imagery: blood may be the blood of brotherhood or of the bloody intent; the forest may be the sphere of darkness and secrecy or of youth and romance.

The development in drama of two distinct genres, comedy with its happy ending and tragedy with its unhappy ending, came about because primal intuitions were objectified for the purposes of conscious art as good and evil, life and death, light and darkness; in short, as opposing forces. Ultimately, however, they comprise a unity; a unity which is objectively comic because life goes on despite the destruction of the individual, but which is subjectively tragic because, though total life is renewed, the life of the individual is finite. Any religious faith which includes a belief in the extension of individual consciousness beyond death promotes the view of a subjective comic unity. According to the Christian faith, subjective comic unity, or in other words the joyful resurrection of the individual, is dependent upon the individual's observance of values which are assumed to exist outside time. When writing the problem plays, Shakespeare proposed creative love as the primary "saving"
virtue, so that in addition to the objectively comic view implicit in the tragi-comic form, he was also intimating the subjectively comic view.

Shakespeare's use of folk material (and any tale which uses an archetypal vortex of ideas may be classified as folk material) is not merely coincidence, for it is in folklore that the primal intuition of the vital unity of nature is allegorized. The test of constancy which Cressida fails has pre-literary origins, and the story itself is legendary. The long tradition of "clever wench" stories in which a woman wins her husband's love by employing the "bed-trick" has already been referred to in connection with All's Well. The use of the "bed-trick" in Measure for Measure has provoked more controversy than any other aspect of the play, and yet the implied defeat of an individual in the interests of universal life is perfectly in keeping with the tragi-comic viewpoint.

Symbolic and archetypal explanations of art can, of course, be taken too far. It is no more possible to adequately interpret a play simply in terms of its archetypal significance than it is to interpret it in terms of the known or assumed spiritual and temporal biography of the author, a mode of criticism which has become known as "the biographic fallacy." Innumerable social and ethical forces control the objectification of an unconscious conception, and they are part of the finished product. All we can really
say is that Shakespeare was writing tragi-comedy, and that tragi-comedy, in so far as it involves a combination of constructive and destructive elements in life and does not have a tragic ending, has much in common with the objectively comic view of life portrayed by primitive myth. What we can expect of these plays is, as Rossiter says, "... a kind of drama in which the contemplation of man is on the one hand held back from the 'admiration' and 'commiseration' of tragedy; and on the other, denied the whole-hearted (or heart whole) enjoyments of human irrationality and human sentiment of comedy." In short, we are shown "the other side." In All's Well Helena, idealized though she is, is compelled to exercise deceit. Bertram, despicable though he is, is of good seed and is redeemed from evil. In Measure for Measure there is humanity in Claudio's gaoler, honesty in Pompey, and humanity in Mistress Overdone, while Isabella, "the thing enskyed," has chastity without charity, and the man most worthy in Vienna for "ample grace and honour" viciously abuses power. Even the Duke is not irreproachable. He hands to someone else the unpleasant task of tightening civil discipline and, because he undertakes to test Angelo's "seeming," he may be considered responsible for Angelo's fall. In Troilus and Cressida, the faithless Cressida suffers more from lack of self-knowledge than

12 Rossiter, Angel With Horns, p. 117.
from specific evil; Troilus, too, is deserving of sympathy because he does not reject virtue but only misunderstands its nature. The most disgusting character in the three plays, Thersites, has become unwholesome through a wholesome revulsion from the fashion of wars and lechery. His very cowardice has another side. To what purpose is courage in a soiled and sordid cause?

The "other side," or tragi-comic approach, considerably complicates the treatment of love in the problem plays. Their complexity issues from the fact that they discuss love on two levels, each level having a positive and a negative value. On one level the positive value is romantic love, the stylized manifestations of which were recognized and appreciated by Elizabethans. To Helena her love is "a bright particular star." The negative value at this level is lust, notably exemplified in Angelo. Troilus represents a fusion of these antitheses; he is idealistically in love, but the prospect of consummation is the catalyst to his passion. On the other level, creative sexual love is the positive value, and its opposing negative value is rejection of the creative purposes of love. Helena's vision of a rich life includes being married to Bertram, experiencing physical passion with him and bearing his children. She is a hind who recognizes clearly that her purpose is to be mated. Mariana, too, accepts the progenitive purposes of life, and the Duke does not even bother to go through the motions of courtship with Isabella. She has
been redeemed by a crisis which would, in any case, make superficial conventions appear meaningless. There are many characters who reject creative love, including Bertram in All's Well, Angelo, Pompey, Mistress Overdone, and Lucio in Measure for Measure, and all the major characters in Troilus and Cressida.

It is evident that the negative value (lust) of one level of love is, effectively, no different from the positive value (creativity) of the other level of love, and there is a similar correspondence between the alternative values on the two levels. The only significant difference is the dramatist's attitude towards them, or in other words, the tone. The overall tone of the problem plays is what has caused many critics to find them bitter, cynical, and disillusioned. The savage realism which pervades them is Shakespeare's method of suggesting that romanticism may be frigid and sex may be barren, irrespective of its consequent child-bearing.

... If my lord get a boy of you, you'll give him to me (III, ii, 92-93),
quips Pandarus, underscoring the relegation of the fruit of love to virtual inconsequentiality. However, I repeat, in tragi-comedy "the maltreatment of a negative is affirmation of the positive...."

Such an assertion is borne out by the fact that the plots and settings of the problem plays might well have belonged to romantic comedies. True, we leave Troilus
vowing revenge, but if his revenge had been solely for Hector and not for his personal frustration, the plot would not have been altered, and the end would have been comic in that Troilus would have been redeemed in the conquest of his enervating passion. There can be no re-union finale in Troilus and Cressida because the play has no heroine. All's Well That Ends Well has most of the characteristics of romantic comedy; love as the chief motive, court scenes, an idealized heroine who takes on a disguise, love subjected to difficulties, and the violation of poetic justice in the happy ending. Or compare Angelo in Measure for Measure with Oliver in As You Like It. Angelo breaks an oath that he will save Claudio, and fully intends to murder him. He who has shown no mercy is put into the power of one whom he has offended and who has less reason for exercising mercy. He is forgiven, reconciled, and rewarded with a virtuous woman who loves him. We never find Oliver in an anguish of internal conflict, but the plot, as it affects him, is the same. The fundamental difference is that love has taken on another dimension in Measure for Measure, and in the problem plays as a group by becoming the focus of moral complexities.

F.S. Boas, the first critic to use the term "problem plays" with reference to Shakespeare included Hamlet among them, and more recently Professor Tillyard has also

included Hamlet, despite the fact that murder, madness, and revenge are the material of tragedy. F.R. Leavis does not acknowledge Measure for Measure as a problem play, and Ernest Schanzer will shortly have in print a book which rejects the present grouping and substitutes as "problems" Antony and Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. There is, however, ample justification for regarding the three plays All's Well, Troilus and Cressida, and Measure for Measure as a distinct group, and "problem plays" is a convenient term of reference for them, if only because it is commonly recognized. The plays constitute a group because they were all written within the period 1602 to 1604; because they are tragi-comedies; because they share a common tone; and above all, because they assert the value of creative love.

It has already been suggested that Renaissance attempts to harmonize Christianity and Platonism resulted in a belief that non-carnal human love might lead to salvation. John Ryryky succinctly remarks of neo-Platonic love: "... the fruit of such love is the fullness of virtue."\(^1\)

And the same might be said of the creative love which Shakespeare celebrates in the problem plays. The characters who accept such love are virtuous and those who reject it inevitably fall victims to sin: a thesis which is clearly illustrated in All's Well.

All's Well was not, of course, written as an exemplum; Shakespeare was a dramatist, not a preacher. Yet an assessment of the play only as an experiment in tragi-comedy, for which Shakespeare borrowed a tale familiar to Elizabethans,\(^2\) would also be unsatisfactory; it would explain neither why Shakespeare was attracted to this particular story, nor why he developed the characters and dialogue in the way that he did. The most significant changes made are in the role which Bertram plays, and since I propose to

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\(^2\) The story was first used in Boccaccio's Decameron and translated in William Painter's Palace of Pleasure (1566 - 1567).
discuss **All's Well** in terms of its characters, I will speak of him first.

In *The Decameron*, the Count is treated as a mature young man more sinned against than sinning. Even the healed king thinks that the Count's hand in marriage is an excessive reward for the heroine, Gilette. The Count's only mistake is that he does not give Gilette the opportunity to prove her worth, which being as great as her demand, wins sympathy for her. No criticism is implied of the Count's amorous activities in Florence. When Gilette's constancy and good management are proved, he is sufficiently mature to recognize the qualities which make a good wife. He does not suddenly appreciate the value of love, but simply lays aside his hatred.

**Bertram** in *All's Well* is young and inexperienced. At the opening of the play he has not yet learned what to value in life and does so only by a painful process. Obviously this is a more emphatic way of drawing attention to the value being asserted than simply engineering that virtue shall prevail. What Bertram learns to value is not constancy and good management but love, and he does not merely learn to value it in Helena, but also discovers his own need and ability to love. When Helena chooses him in Act Two, Bertram declares: "I cannot love her, nor will I strive to do't" (II, iii, 141). In the closing scene of the play he commits himself to love her "ever, ever dearly"
Samuel Johnson could not reconcile himself to the fact that "a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who marries Helena as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate" should be "dismissed to happiness," but it is necessary for Shakespeare's theme that the person who refuses love should become entangled in a web of evil and deceit.

In rejecting love, Bertram is rejecting natural order, and what happens to him is exactly what an Elizabethan audience would have expected to happen to him: he succumbs to one sin after another, each more evil than the last. He submits to the King's command, but for the wrong reason -- because the King can create or destroy honour. The King is perfectly aware that he cannot create honour: he can only bestow wealth and title; but Bertram does not understand the distinction. To him honour is something which can be accumulated like wealth. Bertram's capacity for duplicity is still rudimentary when he makes marriage vows which he has no intention of keeping. Having deceived others, he is prone to the infinitely more destructive form of deception -- self-deception. He is warned by Lafeu that Parolles is untrustworthy, but he is glad to believe in one who echoes his opinions and encourages his disobedience to the King. There is no question about the attitude we are expected to take towards his illicit passion, since everyone in the play who knows about it condemns it as degrading.

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3 Works of Samuel Johnson, (London, 1825), V. 161
The First Lord reveals as an unwholesome secret the fact that Bertram

hath perverted a young gentlewoman ... of a most chaste renown, and this night flushes his will in the spoil of her honour. He hath given her his monumental ring, and thinks himself made in the unchaste composition (IV, iii, 15-16). We are also told that Bertram "in this action contrives against his own nobility" (IV, iii, 21-22). At the opening of Act Five, Bertram appears to have degenerated into an unscrupulous opportunist. He excuses his refusal of Helena's love by declaring that his eye was blinded by Lafeu's daughter. The ring, which he can only suppose to have come from the "dishonoured" Diana, he gives as a love token for Lafeu's daughter. His lies about how he came by the ring are elaborate attempts to "whitewash" himself. When confronted with the woman he has so recently sworn to love eternally, he insults her abominably. At this point Bertram has brought himself very near to a felon's death.

The fact that he is not only an unseasoned courtier but also an unseasoned human being, and that one error pushes him towards another and worse error, does not relieve him of responsibility for his actions. When he refuses Helena's proposal, he knows the debilitating effects of disdain. "Disdain/ Rather corrupt me ever" (II, iii, 111-112), he declares. He knows that he is consigning Helena to "her single sorrow" when he goes off to the wars. To Diana he acknowledges that he has "sick" desires and that it would be "the greatest obloquy in the world" to lose his ancestral ring.
At the same time, Elizabethans would not have totally rejected him as a worthy mate for Helena, because Bertram is young and "the lustiness of the flesh and of the blood, in that season addeth unto him even so much force, as it withdraweth from reason." 4

Bertram's youth is not solely responsible for his degeneration, however. His rejection of love stems ultimately from wilful pride. While the concept of virtue had widened since the Middle Ages, faith, hope, and charity being considered as branches on the stem of "the fullness of virtue," pride remained the stem from which all sins branched, including the sin of the rejection of love. Bertram is shown as a young man setting his own will above all other considerations even before Helena arrives at the court. He has already decided to disobey the King by stealing away to the Florentine wars. Since the King is head of the state and God's viceroy on earth, Bertram's disobedience is equivalent to placing his own will before the will of God.

The concept of honour is important in All's Well for several reasons. Primarily, because of the ambiguity of the word, it is a useful device for illustrating the difference between positive and negative values. Bertram uses the word negatively. He sees honour as something which can be acquired or "bought" by courage without virtue.

4 Castiglione, The Courtier, p. 565.
I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,  
Creating my shoes on the plain masonry,  
Till honour be sought up, and no sword worn  
But one to dance with? By heaven, I'll steal away (II, i, 30-33).  

The wars he engages in are not honourable wars, although  
his conduct in battle is satisfactory. The King, governed  
by the "love and wisdom" of the King of Austria, has resolved  
to refuse aid to the Florentines. Appointed general of the  
Florentine cavalry, Bertram makes the point that he places  
war and love at odds.  

Great wars, I put myself into thy files;  
Hate me but like my thoughts, and I shall prove  
A lover of thy drum, better of love (II, i, 3-11).  

His statement is heavily ironic, since love and war were  
not antithetical in the sixteenth century. In the popular  
imagination, the Golden Age of Chivalry, with its welding  
of Christianity, knighthood, and courtly love, was very much  
elusive. In the early 1550's, Spenser was using the literary  
idealization of chivalry for the purposes of religious  
allergy in The Faerie Queene, and in the early seventeenth  
century the ideal was still popular enough to provide in- 
centive to satirists. Don Quixote and The Knight of the  
Burning Lestle were both written at this time. Honour was  
still considered to be a compound of fidelity to God and  
King, valor in a just cause, and truth to one maiden, with  
an additional qualification of chastity outside marriage.  
Bertram ignores the requisites of the code of honour and  
makes a claim to it on the basis of physical courage alone.  

The question of honour also draws attention to
the Elizabethan attitude to courtly love. In rank, youthfulness, and physical characteristics, Bertram has the qualifications of a courtly lover. He addresses Diana as a goddess and promises to "Do thee all rights of service" (IV, ii, 17). "Love is holy," he assures her, and finally he offers her his ring, his house, his life; and most significant of all, his honour. And truly, since he is proposing an "unclouded composition," his honour is at stake. Bertram also has physical courage, one of the important assets of a courtly lover, but his physical courage is treated derisively because it is not combined with moral courage. In a conversation with Parolles immediately after the wedding, Bertram makes a confession of moral cowardice: He will write to the King "That which I durst not speak" (II, iii, 273).

The treatment of honour in the play parallels the treatment of love, but makes the distinction between a transcendent value and a finite value more clearly because the constantly stressed ambiguity of the word "honour" ensures that whenever it is used there will be an ironical implication of "another side." The other side of a finite value is an infinite value, and vice versa. The honour which is important to Bertram is temporal: the King can make it or destroy it; but there is another kind of honour, earned by virtue, fidelity, and truth, which is transcendent. While it may be manifest in human beings, it cannot be destroyed by them. The same may be said of
love. Love which is entirely human is finite like the individual and soiled like human nature, but the transcendent kind, manifest in people as creative love, has eternal life, symbolized by the permanence of vows exchanged and by the generation of children.

The importance of honour in *All's well* and the limitations of its importance are defined by and in the character of the King. As the purveyor of temporal honour, he knows the value of both kinds. When Bertram refuses Helena's proposal, the King points out that

... If she be
All that is virtuous - save what thou dislikeyest,
A poor physician's daughter - thou dislikeyest
Of virtue for the name, but do not so.
From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by th' doer's deed.
Where great additions swell's, and virtue none,
It is a dropsied honour (II, iii, 117-124).

The King continues by saying that true honour scorns one who lays claim to honour because his father was honourable, and yet does not act as his father did. Honours thrive when they are derived from acts rather than from ancestors. The suggestion is that when there is no longer any correlation between an existing fact and the name, the name means nothing. The King points out that it is abused on every tombstone on which it is wrongfully inscribed, while many men who were indeed honourable lie in unmarked graves.

However, there is no danger that we may be misled into believing that honour constitutes the sole theme in the play, for the King is not presented as a character with
whom we are likely to identify or even sympathize particularly. The King himself knows that he does not represent the active principle of good, despite his sufficiency to his rank. He wishes to be quickly "dissolved" "Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home" (I, ii, 65). Apparently it is not enough that the King should "fill a place"; the ideal of perfection is not a static concept. The King's deficiency is evident in the fact that he lives in the past, Bertram's father representing for him a symbol of the past.

... Such a man
Might be a copy to these younger times;
Which, followed well, would demonstrate them now
But goers backward (I, ii, 45-48).

Castiglione's comment on such nostalgia in old men, with which Shakespeare was no doubt familiar, is notable. He says that virtues and vices are necessarily relevant to each other because there is no abstract without its contrary.

Therefore when our olde men prays the courtes of times past because there were not in them so vitious men, as some that are in ours, they do not know that there were not also in them so vertuous men, as some that are in ours.... Therefore, it is not to bee saide, that such as abstained from doing ill, because they knew not how to doe it, deserved in that case any prays: for although they did but a little ill, yet did they the worst they knew.

The King's sickness is not only a physical disease; it is a symbolic disease. His cure is effected by both medicinal and spiritual means. At Helena's request he makes of heaven an experiment. Afterwards, he is always on the side of creative life. It does not, nor cannot, make human

5 The Courtier, p. 90.
judgement perfect, as is shown by his hasty and erroneous assumption that Bertram has probably killed Helena, but it does make it possible for him to expend his failing strength in a creative way. He does not again allow the past to be more important than the present. When Helena is presumed dead and Bertram appears to be repentant, the King assures him that all is now forgiven and forgotten.

Not one word more of the consumed time.

Let's take the instant by the forward top (V, iii, 38-39).

And he promptly promotes a match between Bertram and Lafeu's daughter, Deuslin.

The extent to which one for whom physical propagation is no longer possible can enter into the creative principle of virtue is to be seen in the role played by the Countess, one of the characters which Shakespeare added to the original story. Though she loves Bertram with a deep and abiding maternal devotion, she is not deceived about his inadequacies. Had he already succeeded his father "in manners, as in shape," the Countess would have had no cause to advise him as she does in the opening scene. When she receives word that Helena has become a pilgrim, she commands that a letter be sent informing the "unworthy husband," but his unworthiness does not affect her love. Once she threatens to "wash his name out of my blood," but in the final act, anticipating Bertram's return, she judiciously tries to mitigate any anger the King may feel towards him.

The Countess's love for Helena equals her love for her son;
it is not more because Helena is more worthy than Bertram, nor is it less because Helena is of low birth and loves Bertram. Helena begs:

Let not your hate encounter with my love
For loving where you do (I, iii, 187-188),
but there is no cause for her fear. The Countess is happy to promote a match between the two.

What I can help thee to, though shalt not miss (I, iii, 235). Nevertheless, her role must be a passive one compared to Helena's. When Helena goes to court, she stays at home and prays for God's blessing on her ward's attempt. In fact, the Countess plays little part in the plot. Her main function is to give a reliable account of the relative worth of the characters. Helena's virtue is reflected in the Countess's praise.

Although it might seem obvious that we are expected to accept the Countess's evaluation of Helena, critics are by no means unanimous on this point. Their attitudes towards Helena's role vary from an assumption that she symbolizes Heavenly Grace to one that she symbolizes feminine degradation. "It looks as if Shakespeare made Helena represent grace and Bertram natural, unredeemed man," remarks Tillyard. 6 E. K. Chambers, on the other hand, considers that Helena drives a man into a forced marriage by a trick, and by another trick obtains the consummation which he would otherwise have denied. "Obviously, I think, the issue of the

thing is not Helena's triumph but Helena's degradation," he writes. Professor Chambers sees the play as a complex of irony, but it seems unlikely that irony which is so highly obscure should have been intended. All that is said of Helena within the play depicts her as an ideal character. The critics who find her other than ideal discuss her in the light of her actions, as they are summed up by Professor Chambers. However, we should not evaluate those actions in terms of modern polite convention, or even in terms of Elizabethan polite convention. Rather must we assess dramatic action as it relates to the context of the play. If Helena is a scheming and unscrupulous huntress, we must account for her willingness to "let the rest go" when Bertram refuses her; we must account for the tender, self-sacrificing soliloquy in Act Three in which she determines to steal away like a "poor thief" so that Bertram may leave the wars and return home; above all we must account for the "all's well" ending. If everybody in the play were mistaken in thinking that all was indeed well, and only the audience shared with the playwright the grotesque joke that woman is a huntress and man her legitimate and helpless prey, the irony would be not only too subtle but incredibly unShakespearean. I find it impossible to believe that the man who created Portia in Julius Caesar in 1600 and Desdemona in Othello in 1604, in

addition to Juliet, Viola, Ophelia, and Cordelia all between 1599 and 1605, would have been likely to devote an entire play to a theme so narrow and trivial.

Helena is a character thoroughly consistent with an attitude to women which grew out of Medieval and Renaissance theories about mankind. She is a gentlewoman and has inherited a "gentle" disposition. According to the King, she is young, wise, fair, and virtuous. She recognizes that the sexual passion may contribute to man's salvation or to his damnation, and that its direction is a fundamental biological and spiritual problem. In her conversation with Parolles about virginity, she confesses that "our virginity, though valiant in the defence, yet is weak" (I, i, 109-110). Even the Clown recognizes the problem. "I have been, madam, a wicked creature, as you and all flesh and blood are, and indeed I do marry that I may repent" (I, iii, 29-30), he says, offering a solution which is tantamount to saying that marriage is a licence for lust. Parolles, too, shows a partial understanding of the truth when he says that virginity is against the rule of nature. Nature, in fact, demands much more than a rejection of virginity; it demands creative love. Such love must be condoned by reason, sanctioned by religion, and gained by sacrifice—sacrifice of a lesser benefit for a higher. Helena is determined to retain her virginity, "though therefore I die a virgin," until she has earned the love of Bertram and his marriage vow. She is convinced that
fortune provides the opportunity if men will make the effort to achieve love.

There is, I believe, enough evidence in All's Well to justify regarding Helena as a symbol of the ideal of creative love, as it has been defined in Chapter Three. The healing of the King, for example, is not simply a device for giving Helena the opportunity to win Bertram. If it were, we might question whether she has not more justly won the King himself. The story of a sick king who is healed has its origin in myths related to primitive fertility rites. Nature is sick, and Helena heals it. The ring which she obtains is a sex symbol, and the child which she conceives is a saviour for Bertram. In Boccaccio's tale Gilette produces twin boys, but Shakespeare's story tells of a child conceived, possibly because a pregnant woman is a more forceful symbol of fruitfulness than one who has already been delivered. We know also, by implication, that Helena's love is permanent and therefore of absolute value because it survives rejection; the Clown's love for Isabel does not even survive his visit to the court.

Finally, we may reasonably associate Helena with virtue, and even redemption, because of the various occasions on which supra-natural powers are attributed to her. She herself believes that the formula left to her as a legacy by her father—a formula which is both a medicinal prescription and an ability to love—is sanctified by the
luckiest stars in heaven. She offers the King the help of heaven, and the King responds with:

Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak (II, i, 172). Even the rhymed pentameter couplets in which the exchange between the King and Helena is spoken have an incantatory effect. The final word on the relative positions of Bertram and Helena in the play is spoken by the Countess:

... What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive,
Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
Of greatest justice (III, iv, 25-29).
"There is no one of Shakespeare's plays harder to characterize," Coleridge remarked of Troilus and Cressida, and the variety of explanations of it offered by critics bears out his assessment. Coleridge himself suggested that Shakespeare's object was to point out "the subservience and vassalage of strength and animal courage to intellect and policy." Boas believed that the play illustrated and implicitly condemned "the quixotic sacrifice of great national interests to a fantastic code of exaggerated gallantry," while Staper, a third critic of the nineteenth century and contemporary of Boas, thought of it as "the playful recreation with which a great genius amused himself in his lighter moods...."

"To seek for any deep hidden meaning in this play implies an utter misconception of its character," he wrote.

The major criticism in this century begins with Wilson Knight's essay of 1930, to which reference has already been made. Knight's summary of the theme as the dynamic opposition between intuition (Trojan) and intellect (Greek) is approved by I.C. Knights, although Knights does not agree that the play places positive value on intuition and negative

4 The Wheel of Fire, pp. 51-52.
value on intellect. Wilson Knight and J.C. Knights both refer to Time as a destroyer of values, but the former sees such destruction as an ultimate fact of existence while Knights points out that both Greek and Trojan values are subject to Time because they are flawed. In 1940, E.W. Chambers repeated the conclusion about the theme of Troilus and Cressida which he first published in Shakespeare: A Survey (1935). Chambers sees the play as the product of disillusionment with ancient ideals of heroism and romance, turning on the theme of illusion and reality.

A notable figure among the "disillusionment" group of critics is Una Ellis-Fermor, who believes that Shakespeare failed to find the image of absolute value in the evidence of man's achievement.

The dark night of the soul comes down upon the unilluminated wreckage of the universe of vision. The content of his thought is an implacable assertion of chaos as the ultimate fact of being; the presence of artistic form is a deeper, unconscious testimony to an order which is actually ultimate and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,...

she declares.

Professor Farrow's summary of the theme seems to be a more just comment on the content of the play. He sees it as a criticism of life, vigorous and realistic, "yet never cynical." "It holds up to view the folly of mistaken

5 Paul Stabler also thought that Shakespeare showed a predilection for the Trojans, "while the Greeks find but little favour in his sight." Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity, p. 157.
ideals, particularly the folly of love lavished on an unworthy object and the folly of war pursued for unjust ends," he states. However, "folly" is not really a strong enough word for the problem in this play because it does not adequately describe the wilful self-assertion which is the prevalent "disease."

The theme of the evil effects of the assertion of individual will is indivisible from the attitude to creative love. In All's Well the idea of creative love was limited because it was treated primarily as it affected relations between the sexes. Troilus and Cressida is a subtler and more complex treatment of the concept. It is subtler because the value of creative love is implied without any actual representation of it appearing in the play. Here is clearly a case where "the maltreatment of the negative is affirmation of the positive, and the two opposites are present at once."

Troilus defies all the precepts of creative love: he is governed by passion; he does not recognize love's transcendent value; he is brought into conflict with society instead of into harmony with it; he never considers a lawful, sanctified relationship with Cressida; and he shows no interest in any possible fruits of love other than sensual delights. The treatment of the concept is more complex because Shakespeare is no longer merely concerned with the

good which might accrue to the individual who observes the
precepts of creative love and the evil which might afflict the
individual who rejects it; he shows the inevitable relation-
ship between the spiritual well-being of the individual and
that of society as a whole. Everyone does not have the same
capacity for creative love, as we deduced from All's well,
but those who have the greatest capacity for its joys also
have the greatest responsibility for the welfare of society.
In short, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

A question which must come to mind is why Shakespeare
used sexual passion to illustrate the main theme of the
play — unreined will. The explanation, I believe, demands
the assumption — which Shakespeare makes — that passion is a
flawed value subject to Time. From that assumption a cir-
cular argument arises. Ungoverned passion means the rejection
of creative love, and, as exemplified in Paris's abduction
of Helen and Troilus's desire for Cressida, is destructive
of private relationships; and the destruction of private
relationships is destructive of society. As war is both
the form which social chaos takes and the symbol of it, so
love, its antithesis, is both the form which private well-
being takes and the symbol of it. The well-being of society
is a composite of the well-being of its members. But the
individual will seek to put its own interests before all
others and in so doing ultimately destroys society. The
most destructive form it can take is one which is antipathetic
to private well-being, namely sexual passion. Thus we find Achilles refusing to leave his tent because of a vow to Polyxena:

Even Greeks, fail fame, honor or go or stay (V, i, 40). Paris tells Pandarus, "I would fain have armed today, but my well would not have it so" (III, i, 126-127), and according to Aeneas,

Troilus had rather Troy were borne to Greece
Than Cressida borne from Troy (IV, i, 48-49).

The rejection of creative love is the rejection of the terms of existence, and the result is war. Creative love is therefore more important in this scheme of values than the State because the State cannot exist without it. Coleridge was to make a similar assumption: in 1793 he wrote to his brother George that it was an error to attribute to governments a talismanic influence over our virtues and our happiness, "as if government were not rather effects than causes."10

The spiritual disease of wilfulness was well understood in the medieval world, but in the Renaissance world it assumed immensely larger proportions. The Renaissance problem of the chaotic effect of extreme individualism is described in medieval terms by Ulysses in his "degree" speech. The reason, he says, why Troy has not been defeated is that "The specialty of rule hath been neglected" (I, iii, 76)

or, in other words, the rights of those in authority have been ignored. In the heavens, the planets observe order and degree, and when they do not there is disorder on earth: plagues, storms, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Where degree is not observed in human society,

Then everything include itself in power, power into will, will into appetite, and appetite, an universal wolf, so doubly seconded with will and power, must make perforce an universal prey, and last eat up himself (I, iii, 119-124).

Those who deny that there is any absolute value and claim that only the will creates values, discover an appetite to have their own will fulfilled and must use their strength to fulfil it. The final and logical conclusion, when every man cries "What other judgement can I judge by but my own?" must be chaos. And this is Troilus's cry when he says:

What's sought but as 'tis valued? (II, ii, 52).

The wolf symbol, signifying the individual ego combating the world, is expanded throughout the play by a variety of animal imagery. Achilles and Ajax are two curs which must tame each other.

... pride alone
Must tarre the mastiffs on, as 'twere a bone (I, iii, 390-391).

Thersites is called a "bitch-wolf's son" by Ajax, and Ajax is called a "mongrel beef-witted lord" by Thersites. "Dog," "cur," "camel," "ass," and "owl" all figure in the abuse bandied between the two in an argument which arises because Ajax asks Thersites to enquire about a proclamation. Thersites,
considering the request an indignity, proudly replies, "I serve thee not" (II, i, 87). Thersites makes a large proportion of the references to animals in the play.

As the conference in the Greek camp is the major event in Act One, so the conference in the Trojan camp is the major event in Act Two. The Trojans must decide whether or not to return Helen and end the war without further loss of blood, time, and expense. Hector begins by advocating that she be returned. He reasons that Helen does not belong to them and has already cost immensely more in blood and travail than she is worth. Reason and conscience, mutually supporting faculties, demand her return. Troilus's reply is an appeal to "honour," but the honour he refers to is pride; for what honour can there be in steadfastly possessing what has been stolen? Rebuked for not being governed by reason, Troilus shows a complete misunderstanding of what reason constitutes, confusing it with self-interest. Reason, he says, flies the object of all harm and is opposed to manhood and honour. But reason takes into account obvious facts, and Hector cannot ignore the obvious fact that Helen is not worth what she costs to keep. At this point Hector states the case for absolute values. He declares that the will which dotes on anything which it has itself conceived, without respect to intrinsic value, is diseased. Troilus's reply has already been discussed. In brief, it constitutes
an argument that honour demands that a man should remain constant to the wife he has chosen, and that men should maintain their decisions and actions notwithstanding consequences.

O theft most base,
That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!
But thieves unworthy of a thing so stol'n
That in their country did them that disgrace
We fear to warrant in our native place (II, ii, 92-96).

The fallacy of Troilus's appeal is obvious: the thieves are "unworthy" because they are not prepared to compound their theft. Troilus is calling for honour among thieves, not for thieves to become honourable men. The only support he gets is from Paris, who speaks, says Iriam,

Like one besotted on your sweet delights (II, ii, 113).

Although Hector succumbs to false dignity in a surprising volte face, he is not deceived. He sums up the motivations of Paris and Troilus as pleasure and revenge, respectively. Their wills, he declares, are benumbed, meaning perverted.

He do not, in fact, discover how "benumbed" Troilus's will is until the crisis comes when his eyes show him something he refuses to believe. Together with Ulysses he listens to Cressida's weak and shallow vacillating as she slips into the new relationship of mistress to Diomedes. Troilus responds by trying to divide Cressida into two - his own Cressida and Diomed's Cressida: and if "There be rule in unity itself" (V, ii, 139) or, in other words, if it is a principle that Cressida must be one, then this
Cressida before him is not she, he declares. His heart is in conflict with his eyes, so that his reason rebels against his senses. Reason consequently appears as madness to him because his denial of the evidence of his senses seems to him supremely reasonable. He decides that reason is a "bi-fold authority," comprising the reason which says his senses speak the truth and the reason which says they lie. But the "bi-fold authority" of reason represents, in fact, will, or the desire to disbelieve his senses, in conflict with judgement, which makes a reasonable deduction from the evidence of his senses. At last he must face the fact that Cressida is lost to him, but even then he retains the belief that he and Cressida were tied with "the bonds of heaven," and that "The bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved, and loosed" (V, ii, 154). The bonds of heaven were by no means so fragile, according to Elizabethan ethics.

Hector explains Troilus's unreason in terms of medieval physiology.

... Or is your blood
So madly hot that no discourse of reason,
Nor fear of bad success in a bad cause,
Can qualify the same? (II, ii, 115-8).

Or again:

The reason's you allege do more conduce
To the hot passion of distempered blood
Than to make up a free determination
'Twixt right and wrong... (II, ii, 168-171).

Personal pride and passionate wilfulness were associated, according to medieval physiology, with hot
distempered blood, and the association has persisted. The numerous diseases in the play, actual and symbolic, from the venereal disease which afflicts Pandarus to the boils which the festering mind of Thersites imagines, are all the result of "the hot passion of distempered blood." With the connection between spiritual perversion and disease in mind, we may feel assured that Troilus's love for Cressida is neither magnificent because of its intensity and sincerity nor honourable because of its constancy. Like the war, it is a symptom of distempered blood, and sincerity in an unlovely relationship is no more honourable than constancy in an evil cause. Whenever Troilus makes a speech about love which might engage our sympathies, Pandarus draws attention to the discrepancy between Troilus's idea of his love and the actuality. The satirical intent of the exchange in Act Three between Troilus and Pandarus is unmistakable.

... I stalk about her door.  
Like a strange soul upon the Stygian banks  
Staying for waftage. O, be thou my Charon  
And give me swift transportance to those fields  
Where I may wallow in the lily-beds  
Proposed for the deserver. O gentle Pandar,  
From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,  
And fly with me to Cressid.

But Troilus's passion is reduced to comical histrionics by Pandarus's prosaic reply:

Walk here i' th' orchard. I'll bring her straight(III,ii,8-16).

An Elizabethan audience would have been further convinced that Troilus's love was less than ideal because the object of it was not worthy of devotion. Perhaps few
would have traced their expectation that a lover should have an acute perception of inherent spiritual qualities to the influence of Platonism, but that was its source. Love was only blind while it served no ethical purpose, and blind Cupid does not appear in Elizabethan drama. Spenser was the last major literary figure to employ Cupid without comic intent.

Cressida does not understand the nature of love any more than Troilus and does not have his imaginative sensitivity to offset her triviality. To her, there is nothing constant in love. In her first soliloquy she asserts that a satisfied lover no longer prizes the woman who created desire in him. She is exceedingly self-possessed for a woman on the point of making an important decision about her "honesty," jesting bawdily with Pandarus about her "wards." Yet Cressida is not without charm. Her passion for Troilus has all the sincerity of which she is capable, and her limitations breed foreboding in her. Even before she commits herself, the situation is beyond her control:

*My thoughts were like unbridled children grown*
*Too headstrong for their mother (III, ii, 110-1).*

Fearing more dregs than water in the fountain of their love, she makes a last minute attempt to extricate herself, prompted by a sense of shame. Ironically, she inverts Troilus's vow to be true by pledging her faith in a speech in which "false"

**II** A fencing term for positions of defence.
or "falsehood" appears eight times. Cressida is all the more intriguing because at the time of her hesitation, it is not apparent how much of her reluctance stems from a desire to increase Troilus's appetite and how much stems from genuine apprehension in face of his truth and simplicity. Also, might not she be inexperienced despite her worldly language? That question is answered when on the following morning she blandly chides Troilus:

You men will never tarry.
O foolish Cressid! I might have still held off,
And then you would have tarried (IV, ii, 16-18).

From that point on we are prepared for the scene of her reception among the Greeks as one of the "daughters of the game" and for Diomedes's easy conquest.

Troilus's love is further denigrated by the parallels drawn between the two pairs of lovers in the play. Troilus and Paris stand together at the debate in Act Two and are jointly responsible for the extension of the war. It is important to the theme that Troilus and Paris should have this opportunity to end the chaos, the implication being that they have the opportunity to control their wilful passions. There is also a parallel drawn between Helen and Cressida. Both are beautiful (Cressida more so than Helen, if we are to believe Pandarus) and both are faithless. In consequence, Cressida shares with Helen the odium that men are painting her fair in their blood.

Finally, the love of Troilus and Cressida is not
one which warrants imagery of flowers, fruit and jewels; it is a sickness and an appetite. Troilus's heart is an open ulcer; he is "mad in Cressid's love;" love is a knife which has given him a gash; his heart beats quicker "than a feverous pulse." Cressida is to be Troilus's "cake" for which he must wait, and Pandarus tries to stimulate Cressida's appetite for Troilus by enumerating the "spices" which are his attractions. Troilus waits for his meeting with Cressida with sensual anticipation:

Th' imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense. What will it be
When that the watery palates taste indeed
Love's thrice-repur'd nectar? (III. ii. 18-21).

He is apprehensive because love is food for Fortune's tooth as well as for his own.

And, indeed, he may well be apprehensive, for love which is an appetite is subject to the vicissitudes of Fortune, which means also of Time. Time is not, however, an absolute destroyer, as Ulysses asserts in Act Three.

We must remember that in this speech Ulysses is exercising his wits to persuade Achilles to fight. More significant is the fact that he is discussing not absolutes but absolutes distorted by human pride. No man, he says, is lord of anything:

Though in and of him there be much consisting -
Till he communicate his parts to others (III, iii, 116-117).

Ulysses is not denying that the "parts" exist, irrespective of their communication; he is simply saying that before a man can enjoy the applause of the world, he must benefit
the world in a way in which the world will recognize that it has been benefited. But suppose a man's "parts" are those of a prophet? Does the fact that he finds no honour in his own land deprive him of the worth of his spiritual prowess?

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back, wherein he puts alms for oblivion,

... ...

Perseverance, dear my lord, keeps honour bright; to have done is to hang quite out of fashion... (III, iii, 145-152),

Ulysses says. The honour he speaks of is honour among men, which is its own reward. He continues:

... O, let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was. For beauty, wit, high birth, vigour of bone, desert in service, love, friendship, charity, are subjects all to envious and calumniating time (III, iii, 168-173).

Ulysses casually mixes tangible and therefore temporal attributes with absolutes, but in the sense in which he uses love, friendship, charity, and desert, they may be equated with strength and beauty, for he speaks of virtues which seek "remuneration"; that is, they are manifestations of pride and ambition. The "virtue" absorbs the reward and both are absorbed by Time. To Thersites such "virtue" makes Achilles an "idol of idiot-worshippers" (V, i, 6-7). When Agamemnon ironically praises Ajax's humility, he speaks what would have been generally recognized as the truth about pride.

He that is proud eats up himself. Pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle; and whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise (II, iii, 141-143).
The outcome of Troilus's illicit "affair" is an implied criticism of the courtly love code, but more explicit is Shakespeare's satire of chivalric honour. The Trojan war, waged as it is for possession of a woman, is presented as a war of chivalry. But it is chivalry gone mad. Asked by Paris who best deserved Helen, Diomedes replies that both merit her equally since they ignore her unworthiness and take such pains, in the one case to retain her and in the other to possess her. By eliminating the idea of chivalric honour from the war, Diomedes reduces it to its simple, obvious elements: the woman is false and men are dying needlessly.

For every false drop in her bawdy veins  
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple  
Of her contaminated carrion weight  
A Trojan hath been slain (IV, i, 71-74).

Hector's challenge to the Greeks is in the manner of the chivalric code. He proposes "To rouse a Grecian that is true in love" (I, iii, 279) -- all knights being also lovers according to the code -- and to make good in battle his claim that his lady is wiser, fairer, truer, than any Grecian's lady. Ironically, Hector is not one of the lovers in the play. Furthermore, the challenge is made with an ulterior motive -- to lure Achilles out of his tent and bring the war to a climax. The challenge is divested of its heroics and reduced to comedy by ancient Nestor, who promises if necessary to prove that his lady, now dead, was fairer than Hector's grandmother.
I'll prove this truth with my three drops of blood, he assures Aeneas, the deliverer of the challenge. To which Aeneas promptly replies:

Now heavens forfend such scarcity of youth! (I, iii, 301-302). Hector is the spokesman of chivalry throughout the play. Aeneas sees the glory of Troy dependent on Hector's "single chivalry" (IV, iv, 147), and when he goes out to his death despite the pleas of Andromache, Cassandra, and Priam, it is "i' th' vein of chivalry" (V, iii, 32). Hector's downfall is assured from the time he decides to put chivalric honour before reason at the debate in Act Two.

_Troilus and Cressida_ is a play in which the mood of the Middle Ages and that of the Renaissance come together in conflict. Renaissance individualism is held up as an alternative to order achieved by self-control. There is no hero because all the characters are subject to their own appetites, and as a result it is possible to see the play, as Professor Ellis-Fermor does, as "an implacable assertion of chaos." But how else would it have been possible to show what happens when everyone is his own god? If only one or two characters had acted purely from self-willed egotism and a happy ending had issued because the hero and heroine had acted in the interests of society, the point would not have been made. In any case, the story chosen for dramatization precluded a happy ending. The ending is perfectly logical and consistent: we are shown
that the result of universal individualism is everybody fighting for himself. Hector is destroyed by his ambition for personal honour; Troilus, as Hector recognized, is motivated by desire for revenge, and ironically Hector's death is now included among the affronts to be revenged; Ajax foams and roars to be revenged on Troilus; Achilles loses even the virtue of courage in his revenge on Hector for the death of Patroclus.

But because the play ends in war we should not assume that there is no alternative. It should be kept in mind that the wolf-like appetite which disrupts society

Must make perforce an universal prey
And last eat up himself (I, iii, 123-124).

When the wolf has at last eaten up himself, the temporarily silent Antenors of society, the men of "soundest judgements," will become vocal. Then the general - the martial, social, and spiritual general - will be

... like the hive
To whom the foragers shall all repair (I, iii, 81-82).

The same symbol is used in All's Well by the King who acknowledges his inadequacy,

Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home (I, ii, 65).

The hive is a society in which every individual contributes to the total well-being.
"The greatness of the Elizabethan Age was that it contained so much of the new without bursting the noble form of the old order," comments E.E.W. Tillyard, and in Measure for Measure the "noble form of the old order" finds obvious expression. The point and counterpoint of the old order were the themes of cosmic order and the orthodox Pauline approach to sin and salvation. In the play we see Vienna afflicted in the same way as the Greeks were afflicted in Troilus and Cressida: "The specialty of rule hath been neglected."

And liberty plucks justice by the nose;
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart Goes all decorum (I, iii, 29-31).

The major characters pay every respect to the doctrine of human sin and Divine retribution diverted by Christ's Atonement. Pleading with Angelo for Claudio's life, Isabella says:

Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
And he that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If he, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that;
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new-made (II, ii, 73-79).

Since Wilson Knight's essay appeared in 1931 interpreting Measure for Measure as a dramatic advocation of

the gospel ethic, it has been generally accepted that the play is a disquisition on Justice and Mercy. But the love which the play ultimately prescribes does not belong to the old order. The synonyms of charity and mercy which the medieval Church would have given to ideal love are not applicable to it, nor can it be adequately defined in terms of neo-Platonic love. Both these former ideals are absorbed in the new concept of human love relations which are both physically and spiritually productive.

There are four attitudes to love in the play, only one of which is accepted as satisfactory. The first is that of Angelo, who has earned immunity to sexual temptation by blunting

.... his natural edge
with profits of the mind, study and fast, (I, iv, 60-1).

In the course of his self-discipline he has learned spiritual pride, and at the beginning of the play

...
scarcely confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone (I, iv, 51-53).

Pride comes before a fall, and Angelo falls because he is too dissociated from life to perceive that love is necessarily a reciprocal emotion. He thinks it can be forced. His attitude to love is therefore no more elevated than that of Lucio, Pompey, and Mistress Overdone, who all think that it can be bought and sold. The bawds and Angelo all know some truth, but not the whole truth. Angelo knows that
sexual activity must be controlled, but he does not know how to control it, and tries to make men chaste by legal prohibition; the bawds know that sexual activity is part of life, desirable and necessary, but they do not know that it must be controlled. Pompey is wiser than Angelo when he prophesies that if the law by which Claudio is condemned is maintained for ten years, "I'll rent the fairest house in it after three pence a bay" (II, i, 214-215). "It is impossible to extirp it quite, friar, till eating and drinking be put down" (III, ii, 93-94), Lucio tells the disguised Duke, and Lucio is of course right. The irony of his comment lies in the fact that it is not necessary to extirp such relations; only to control them in the way that eating and drinking should be controlled—and to say grace beforehand. Uncontrolled sexual relations disorder the individual and the society. The individual carries the stigma of his sin in the form of venereal diseases; the city carries it in the stews at its outer precincts.

The third kind of love is that exemplified by Isabella. I referred in a previous chapter to the changed role of women in the society of the sixteenth century, due to a rising middle class deriving its wealth from commerce rather than from land and to the Church's growing insistence on the sanctity of marriage. Drama reflected this changed role in society by depicting women with strong and definite personalities, suffering and enjoying emotions in much the
same way as men. The "New woman," as we might call her, is epitomized in Isabella. The "New Woman" was never, of course, a pure strain, and there is something of the medieval Church's attitude to sex in Isabella's decision to enter the order of St. Clare. "Bet is to be wedded than to brynne," said the Wife of Bath, voicing a common medieval sentiment, but better far was it to be a virgin and win the eternal joy of singing in the choir of virgins around the throne of God. The choice between marriage and chastity was the foremost issue in the decision to become a nun; the preference for a life of contemplation and prayer as a means to salvation was secondary. Theseus, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, tells Hermia that one alternative to marrying Demetrius is to become a nun. He says:

Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness (I, i, 74-78).

As a votary, Isabella must master so her blood, and this is the explanation of Lucio's excessive reverence for her. A sexual profligate himself, Lucio makes it quite clear that it is her renouncement of the activity which is his chief interest in life which makes him hold her "as a thing enskyed, and sainted" (I, iv, 34). His usual manner is to "play the lapwing" with virgins, "Tongue far from heart" (I, iv, 32-33),

but he must be sincere with Isabella because, in his awed eyes, her "renunciation" makes her a saint. He soon discover that, in fact, her renunciation does not make her a saint. The strength to make the renunciation makes her a potentially fine human being, but the medieval attitude to sex and marriage is not endorsed in Measure for Measure. There can be no saints on earth; there can be only good and bad human beings, and the measure of "goodness" involves all human functions, including love and marriage.

But Isabella's preoccupation with chastity is not purely medieval. Indeed, it was modern in the sixteenth century. A medieval nun renounced that which was desirable and which contemporary literature treated with a good deal of jocularity. "Amor Vincit Omnia" is the enigmatic inscription on the brooch of the Friar in The Canterbury Tales, and the Friar herself has the appearance of the heroine in a courtly love romance. Although there is no suggestion that she has violated or is violating the prohibition of her order in respect to human love, she is an attractive woman who would certainly not find the idea abhorrent. Isabella is repulsed and very much frightened by Angelo's suggestion, a reaction which belongs to sixteenth-century not fourteenth-century literature. "There is a vice that most I do abhor" (II, ii, 29), she says. Angelo's proposition involves "abhorred pollution" (II, iv, 103), and she tells Claudio that
This night's the time
That I should do what I abhor to name (III, i, 102).

Isabella is also the "New woman" in her individuality
and in the way she exerts it. Though she and Claudio are
comparable figures, she is the stronger personality. Claudio
fears death; Isabella would throw down her life "as frankly
as a pin" (III, i, 106), but she fears eternal damnation
no less acutely than Claudio fears to "lie in cold obstruction,
and to rot" (III, i, 119). The way in which each responds
to fear illustrates the relative strength of their person-
alities. Claudio is asking no more of Isabella than Isabella
is asking of Claudio. He requires that she will willingly
forfeit that which she values most in life, and Isabella
is asking that Claudio willingly forfeit that which he values
most - life itself. But whereas Claudio pleads "Sweet sister,
let me live " (III, i, 133), Isabella's response to fear
is not to plead for protection and sympathy, as a medieval
maiden might have done, but to turn on Claudio in fury and
defiance.

O you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!

Die, perish! Right out my bending down
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee (III, i, 156-157).

Nor, when Angelo makes his proposition, does he plead for
mercy, but instead scorns and threatens him.

I will proclaim thee, Angelo: look for't.
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,
Or with an outstretched throat I'll tell the world aloud
That man thou art (II, iv, 151-154).
Isabella is also outside the old medieval order in that her beauty is of the kind which neo-Platonists recognized as issuing from a beautiful soul, and as the instrument by which men are led to salvation. The Duke addresses her in Act Three:

The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good.

The goodness that is cheap in beauty makes beauty brief in goodness; but grace, being the soul of your complexion, shall keep the body of it ever fair (Ill, i, 178-181).

He is saying that when goodness is easily attained ("cloistered virtue") by a beautiful woman, it is short lived, but Isabella's beauty is protected by her soul, which is made beautiful by grace. This is not precisely the way in which Marsilio would have discussed the relationship between inner and outer beauty, but the idea that a beautiful soul makes itself evident in a beautiful body is the same.

5 The question of how a beautiful woman may be evil and a virtuous woman may be ugly could not but trouble neo-Platonists. Castiglione discusses it, and Spenser tries to explain it. In An Hymne in Honour of Beautie (Works, London, 1587, p. 591) Spenser says:

For of the soule the bodie forme both take:
For soule is forme, and both the bodie make.

He draws the logical conclusion:
For all that fair is, is by nature good.

Then he tries to account for the "gentle mynd" in a "deformed tabernacle." It happens, he says, by chance or because of the stubbornness of matter which will not yield to the soul's direction. Also, a beautiful woman may be evil because nothing is so good that it may not be corrupted. However, at the same time, the soul must remain untainted because things immortal cannot be corrupted.

Hamlet comes to the conclusion that
... the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox but now the time gives it proof (III, i, 111-114).
Love towards Isabella, then, could be a potent instrument of salvation, being an expression of the soul's search for an eternal ideal.

From this point of view, Angelo is not a villain or a hypocrite by nature. There are no grounds for saying that he "has a greater passion for hypocrisy than for his mistress"; he simply does not get past the first rung on the neo-Platonic ladder to salvation because his reason chooses to satisfy the longing of the senses instead of the longing of his soul. The element of neo-Platonism in his response to Isabella is evident in the fact that he is not merely fascinated by outward beauty. He is attracted to her mind and soul as well.

She speaks, and 'tis such sense, that my sense breeds with it (II, ii, 141-2).

Then he discovers that he desires her for the things which make her good. The grace in her soul which, according to the Duke, is to keep her body fair captivates him, and because it is his first experience of this kind --

... Ever till now
When men were fond, I smiled, and wondered how (II, ii, 185-6) --

the effect is devastating. The blood which was "snow broth" becomes human blood. "Blood, thou art blood," he says, as though recognizing the fact for the first time. And from then on Angelo is constantly aware that his veins carry human blood. When Isabella makes her second visit, and he experiences the sensation of blood rushing to the heart, he describes the feeling and his mental response to

it by metaphorical reference to circumstances in which unwanted crowds throng and offend the subject of their interest or concern.

Such an assessment of Angelo is confirmed by the many references throughout the play to his self-discipline and purity. Iscetus acknowledges that Lord Angelo is fitted to undergo such ample grace and honour (I, i, 53) as being left to rule Venice; the Duke's choice is "leavened and prepared"; and he describes Angelo to Friar Thomas as a man of stricture and firm abstinence (I, i, 12); Lucio speaks of his continual study and fasting; and the final scene provides a clear demonstration of the extent to which Angelo's reputation could have protected him against calumny.

The fourth kind of love depicted in the play is creative love, which is invested in Mariana and learned by Isabella. Mariana has no fear like Isabella's and, when assured by the supposed friar that there is no sin in her action, goes to Angelo's bed without apprehension. Isabella attempts to give her some reassuring advice and Mariana responds with a confident: "Fear me not." (IV, ii, 68). Mariana's love is evidently of the creative kind and of absolute value, since it is unwavering, even though she has been deserted for five years. She has the sympathy, understanding, and generosity which make her know that "best men are moulded out of faults," and that men are refined
by error and repentance. Most men, she says, "become much more the better for being a little bad" (V, i, 130-135).

At Mariana's prompting, Isabella also becomes "much more the better," having been, if not bad, at least unsympathetically harsh. Believing Claudio dead, she nevertheless joins Mariana in pleading for Angelo's life.

Though the ending of the play may have been hurried, and most critics agree that it was, it is nevertheless, as F.R. Leavis comments "... a consummately right and satisfying fulfilment of the essential design." Lucio, the most degenerate character in the play, without sense of sin or shame, is forced to marry the whore he has got with child, and so discipline from without effects that which the promptings of a withered conscience cannot. Angelo's pride has had a severe fall, leaving him prepared to learn what is involved in the Duke's admonition, twice repeated, to love Mariana. Isabella has learned intuitive sympathy, and her new knowledge, added to her already manifold virtues, makes her a fit wife for the man who enabled her to acquire it. There is the union of virtue and continence with knowledge and power.

It is scarcely necessary here to discuss in any detail the role of the Duke, except that, as Leavis remarks, what one makes of the ending of the play depends on what one makes of the Duke. I have avoided discussing him in relation to ideal human love because he appears to be some-

6 Ibid.
thing more than a purely human figure. Whether or not we accept Wilson Knight's estimate of him as representing perfected ethical philosophy joined to supreme authority, it is certain that the Duke, never himself developing into a distinct recognizable personality, manipulates the other characters with more than human adeptness. Of the final scene, J.K. Chambers remarks: "These are the antics of a cat with a mouse, rather than the dispositions of a wise and beneficent ruler."? Perhaps Professor Chambers is right. It should however, be conceded that this particular cat shows these particular mice exactly what would have happened if he had not "like power divine," looked upon Angelo's "passes," and that human justice is in consequence frighteningly fallible. He not only exacts mercy, but he proves that mercy is best. Several objections can be made to the assessment of the Duke as a supra-human force (the Arden introduction makes them all)8 and together they may well produce an interpretation,

8 The Duke hardly seems to be a personage to delight in. It is not merely his didactic platitudes and his somewhat overdone pomposity that get upon one's nerves, but his inner character. He first meet him too timid or too irresolute to enforce his own laws and deputing his duty to another, while he himself plunges into a vortex of scheming and intrigue; concluding by falling in love with a volatary. At III,i, 67 does he not transgress against the confessional? Again, he must have known of Angelo's treatment of Mariana, at least we are left to suppose he did (III,i, 828), and was not his (the Duke's) a very shifty way of bringing him to justice, instead of a straight prosecution? Then the freedom with which he lies (IV, iii, 105-18) is not prepossessing. I imagine Shakespeare was not in love with his Duke. 'A sky fellow was the Duke.' The Arden Shakespeare, ed. F.C. Hart, (London, 1904), XXII, xxii.
such as Rossiter gives,\textsuperscript{9} of the Duke as an inversion figure symbolizing the essential disharmony in the play; everything is other than it seems. The problem of the Duke is that he is neither a human character nor an allegorical Providence, but both, and the explanations given by a human character for the actions of an allegorical Providence prove to be somewhat unsatisfying. For example, the speech on death which the Duke makes to Claudio is difficult to explain except as a temporary comfort given by a pseudo-friar until the same "friar" acting as Providence has effected the prisoner's release.

But whatever difficulties are involved in interpreting the Duke, his proposed marriage to Isabella suggests that marriage is the ideal state for those on the highest spiritual level as well as for those of Mariana's nature; for those on the lowest spiritual level (for example, Lucio) it is the best state to which they can attain.

\textsuperscript{9} Angel with Horns p. 156.
CONCLUSION

"Creative love" is a philosophical concept which proposes an answer to the question which all philosophers have pondered, namely "What is goodness and beauty?" Yet no-one calls Shakespeare a philosopher because he offers nothing new and creates no system of logical deductions; he simply draws together those facts of human existence which are universally recognized as good and beautiful: love, order, and virtue. The words themselves have myriad connotations, and the latitude of meaning given to each one depends upon many factors. The meaning which Shakespeare gave to them, he derived from the three streams of thought with which the Western world was most familiar: courtly love, Christianity, and neo-Platonism. Love was the primary characteristic of all three; virtue and order were secondary.

Love is also the primary characteristic of the philosophy of the problem plays, and virtue and order are secondary. The love which is proposed as an answer to the question "What is good and beautiful?" derives from the courtly love code an acceptance of sexuality, and from neo-Platonism the association of love with beauty and virtue. The virtue involved in creative love is drawn from Christianity and neo-Platonism. In accordance with the teachings of the Church, creative love is only possible within the bonds of matrimony, and incorporates the Christian virtues of humility, self-sacrifice, gentleness, and generosity in thought, word, and deed. Neo-Platonism promoted a spirituality which was not
dependent upon submission and faith, but upon the efforts of the individual towards purification. The order involved in creative love is derived chiefly from medieval Christian thought, which conceived connections between the spiritual health and happiness of the individual and that of the family, the state, and the universe.

Each of the problem plays contributes to a general attitude to love and marriage moulded by the three streams of thought referred to. Indeed, it is possible to see a pattern in the plays: _All's Well_ deals with creative love in the life of the individual; _Troilus and Cressida_, by showing how the absence of creative love affects society, and by implying its essential role in a spiritually healthy and thriving community, comments on the relationship between love and order; _Measure for Measure_ investigates the relationship between love, virtue, and spirituality. If we accept that the Duke has providential powers, regeneration is a result of the combined forces of human good will and Divine Grace.

But the discovery of a pattern or development in the theme of creative love is not so important as the concept itself, which may be summarized in the words of Coleridge:

> From this union arise the paternal, filial, brotherly and sisterly relations of life, and every state is but a family magnified. All the operations of mind, in short, all that distinguishes us from brutes, originate in the more perfect state of domestic life.  

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