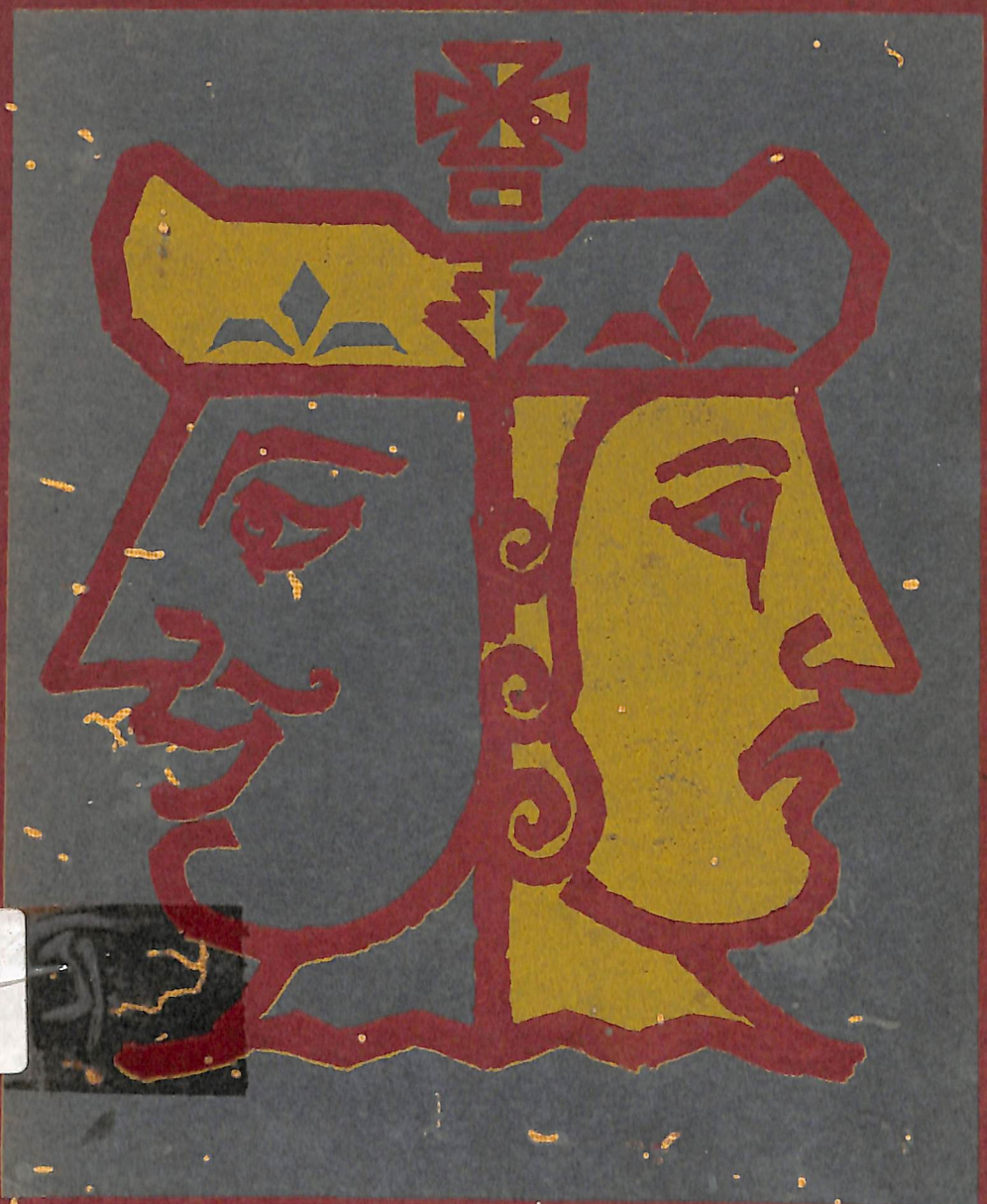
ESPEARE'S MINGLED DRAMA

P. C. GHOSH



WORLD PRESS

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This book is a critical investigation into Shakespeare's works as mingled drama from a fresh point of view which brings out clearly some of the main problems of Shakespeare criticism.

It is also a study in the objective correlative, an examination of the relation between content and form, in Shakespearean drama.

It contains detailed studies of *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens* and *The Tempest*.

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SHAKESPEARE'S
MINGLED DRAMA

PRABODH CHANDRA GHOSH
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PREFACE

This book has grown out of my teaching in the postgraduate department of English in the University College of Arts, Calcutta University. Some of its chapters and sections appeared as articles in the *Bulletin* of our department of English and in *Calcutta Essays on Shakespeare,* published by our University.

This book is a critical investigation into Shakespeare's works as mingled drama from a rather fresh point of view which has enabled me to examine closely some of the main problems of Shakespeare criticism.

My aim is to show that Shakespeare's mingled drama is a natural and characteristic product of his genius and age. It grew out of the life of Elizabethan-Jacobean England, and was guided by the tastes of Shakespeare's audience and by the practices of his predecessors and contemporaries.

This mingled drama, more comprehensive than a mixture of the tragic and the comic, gives us some significant glimpses of Shakespeare's vision of life. But it also gives rise to certain problems of dramatic art which I have discussed and characterized as problems of 'the objective correlative' (by extending the scope of Eliot's term) in my attempt to explain the relation between content and form in Shakespearean drama.

For my use of extracts from various works I record here my gratitude to the authors,

publishers and other appropriate persons concerned.

My thanks are due to Dr N. R. Ray, M.A., D. Lett. & Phil. (Leyden), Dip. Lib. (Lond.), F.R.A.S. (Gr. Br.), F.L.I.A.L. (Zurich), Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Simla), Professor A. C. Banerjee, M. A., Ph. D., Dean of the Faculties of Arts and Education and Professor A. Bose, M.A., D. Phil. (Oxon), F.I.A.L., Head of the department of English, Calcutta University, Professor S. C. Sen, M.A., Ph.D., M. Litt. (Cantab), Head of the department of English, Visva-Bharati University, Sri P. N. Bisi, M.A., Tagore Professor, Calcutta University, and Dr R. K. Dasgupta, M.A., D. Phil. (Cal.), D. Phil. (Oxon), Tagore Professor, Delhi University, for the help and encouragement which I have received from them.

Ashutosh Building : Calcutta
July : 1966

P. C. G.

CONTENTS

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.

—*Shakespeare*

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an objective correlative ; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion . . .

—*T. S. Eliot*

1 THE WEB OF LIFE

I

The great formative period, in fact, the larger part, of Shakespeare's life was spent in the reign of Elizabeth, and the queen herself is the clue to the understanding of her age.

> I have ever used to set the last judgement day before mine eyes, and so to rule as I shall be judged to answer before a Higher Judge. To whose Judgement Seat I do appeal, that never thought was cherished in my heart that tended not to my people's good.[1]

This bond between the queen and her people is emphasized by Dekker[2] who describes Elizabeth as having 'brought up (even under her wing) a nation that was almost begotten and born under her.' Probably this imagery worked in the mind of Strachey[3] when he wrote :

> The fierce old hen sat brooding over the English nation, whose pullulating energies were coming swiftly to ripeness and unity under her wings. She sat still ; but every feather bristled ; she was tremendously alive.

But Strachey is struck by the contradictions of her age that baffle our imagination and

[1] S. D'Ewes : *Journal of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.*
[2] T. Dekker : *The Wonderful Year* (1603).
[3] L. Strachey : *Elizabeth and Essex.*

confuse our intelligence. It was for this reason that Linklater[4] called the Elizabethan-Jacobean period 'an age of velvet and open drains.' Strachey remarks :

> It was the age of *baroque* . . . certainly no more *baroque* figure ever trod this earth than the supreme phenomenon of Elizabethanism —Elizabeth herself . . . The great Queen of its imagination . . . no more resembles the Queen of fact than the clothed Elizabeth the naked one.

A more integrated picture is, however, presented by Shaw in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets.*

The shrewd Queen Bess was cruel, coarse, accomplished and moody[5]—a Cleopatra without the poetry of her passion. She was greedy and frequently reckless, and she inspired men like Drake and Hawkins, Frobisher and Howard with an aggressive patriotism which was hardly distinguishable from piracy. Belloc[6] points out :

> From her father Elizabeth inherited her capricious and violent angers, especially aroused in brief passionate protests against restraint, her singular incapacity for affection, and her taste for erudition (in which she excelled him). From her mother Elizabeth got at least her capacity for intrigue.

Elizabeth was advised not to marry, and she amused herself with a series of amours which started with Seymour and probably

[4] E. Linklater : *Ben Jonson and King James.*

[5] Strachey writes : 'She swore ; she spat ; she struck with her fist when she was angry ; she roared with laughter when she was amused.'

[6] H. Belloc : *Elizabethan Commentary.*

ended with Essex. The list includes also a few more prominent names like Leicester, Heneage, De Vere and Blount. Strachey writes :

> Bounding into her room in the early morning, he (the Lord Admiral Seymour) would fall upon her, while she was in her bed or just out of it, with peals of laughter, would seize her in his arms and tickle her, and slap her buttocks, and crack a ribald joke.

When Seymour was involved in a plot, and Elizabeth, a fifteen-year-old girl, was herself in danger, she wrote to Somerset the Protector that the rumour that she was 'with child by my Lord Admiral' was a shameful slander and that she begged to be allowed to go to Court, where 'all would see that it was so'. The Protector could do nothing to Elizabeth, in spite of the scandal, but the Admiral was beheaded.

Her Catholic adversaries spread the rumour that she was Leicester's mistress, and that she had had by him a child who was sent out of London. Strachey writes :

> Ben Jonson told Drummond, at Hawthornden, after dinner, that 'she had a membrana on her, which made her uncapable of man, though for her delight she tryed many' . . . Feria (the Spanish ambassador) had come to the conclusion, he told King Philip, that Elizabeth would have no children : 'entiendo que ella no terna hijos' were his words . . . 'I hate the idea of marriage', she told Lord Sussex, 'for reasons that I would not divulge to a twin soul.'

And then in his characteristic manner Strachey remarks :

For years she made her mysterious organism the pivot upon which the fate of Europe turned.

II

The two great facts central to the achievement of the Elizabethan age were the defeat of the Armada and the English expansion overseas. In both there was plenty of adventure along with great courage and enterprise and infinite endurance. Rowse[7] observes :

> The Elizabethan age was so much the most intense and electric experience of a young people suddenly coming to maturity, with new worlds opening out before them not only across the seas but in the mind.

Throughout the age the emphasis was on secular life, and there were some competent courtiers and statesmen to help the queen in building up the age—men like Burghley and Cecil, Raleigh and Bacon, Leicester and Sidney. But a very different group of men, scholars and thinkers, discovered England for the Elizabethans, and among them must be mentioned Hall[8] and Holinshed[9], Norden[10] and Hakluyt[11], Leland[12] and Camden[13].

The fullest expression of the spirit of the age was perhaps given by poets and dramatists who lived and died leaving 'great verse unto a little clan'. Rowse observes :

[7] A. L. Rowse : *The England of Elizabeth.*
[8] E. Hall : *The Union.*
[9] R. Holinshed : *Chronicles.*
[10] J. Norden : *Speculum Britanniae.*
[11] R. Hakluyt : *Voyages.*
[12] J. Leland : *Collectanea.*
[13] W. Camden : *Britannia.*
Annals of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth.

> Equally continuing and vital in our inheritance is the Elizabethan drama : something unique, that is at the same time comparable to the drama of Athens, which similarly expressed a great period of tension, of struggle and triumph in a small people's history.

The truly English spirit that developed in the Elizabethan age is thus expressed by Shakespeare in *Henry V* :

> Every subject's duty is the King's ; but every subject's soul is his own. [IV : 1]

Byrne[14] sums up :

> It is not given to a nation in every age to see visions ; but in Elizabeth's time we were in the youth of our realization of ourselves as a nation, and able to imagine its future on the grand scale . . . In its capacity to conceive greatly of the end and aim of life for the individual, in the unanimity with which the individual was able to identify his personal aim with the national aim . . . lies the secret of the Elizabethan strength.

III

After the accession of James it seemed unlikely that the change would have any immediate effect upon social and political life. The Tudor tradition continued. But the feeling of danger and uncertainty also grew, especially as standards in the Court went down. Due to the loss of dignity and discipline there was a peculiar sense of unstableness.

At first James seemed to have all the qualities and equipments necessary for a

[14] M. St. Clare Byrne : *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country.*

monarch : he was learned and sociable and had experience of the art of kingship. But Welden, James's Clerk of the Kitchen, thought that the main drawback of the King was that he was inclined to peace 'more out of fear than conscience'. Morpurgo[15] writes :

> Even James's coarse personal habits made him a gross caricature of that caricature of grossness, Henry VIII, and, had he inherited something of Henry's bluff ability, might have been so tempered as to make him the heir to Henry's popularity. But James would not temper his nature or conceit.

Of kingship James[16] wrote :

> The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth ; for kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods . . . For if you will consider the attributes of God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a King.

Such was James's illusion of power, and it certainly tended to destroy something of what Elizabeth had built up. The king became unpopular : plots against him broke out almost at once. In Cobham's plot (1603) Raleigh was involved, and had the Gunpowder Plot (1605) succeeded, it would have destroyed nearly all the leading figures of the country. But even after its failure the intrigues of the Jesuits continued.

Personally, James was in favour of supporting the Calvinist tradition which was handed down from an earlier age. As a mark

[15] J. E. Morpurgo : 'Introduction' (*Life under the Stuarts*).
[16] King James : *Tracts* (Somers).

of his faith he sent four Anglican delegates to the Synod of Dort which met to examine certain disputes between Calvinists and Arminians in matters of theology, especially in relation to the doctrines of grace and predestination. The position was by no means satisfactory. Sykes[17] writes :

> In matters of religion the legacy of the sixteenth century was not peace but a sword. Despite the strengthening of the position of the Church of England, the serious problem for which Elizabeth could find no solution was its failure to win all citizens to its allegiance.

IV

The halcyon days and spacious times which are so often associated with the Elizabethan period do not, however, give us the complete truth about the age. As Johnson[18] points out, the English nation in the time of Shakespeare 'was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity'. Even Hazlitt[19], in spite of his idolatry, admits the 'barbarisms' of the Elizabethan age.

The age was narrow, dogmatic and bigoted in its outlook, and in religious and political spheres plottings and persecutions went hand in hand. Supernaturalism in drama had its valid basis in the superstitions of the age : even in the seventeenth century men like Browne[20], pious and liberal, were in favour of burning 'witches' !

[17] N. Sykes : 'Religion' (*Life under the Stuarts*).
[18] S. Johnson : *Preface to Shakespeare*.
[19] W. Hazlitt : *Lectures*.
[20] T. Browne : *Religio Medici*.

Culture was certainly at a low ebb. The number of literates was very small. Tastes were crude, violent and cruel. Camden informs that even pregnant women used to watch with relish horrible and obscene sights of criminals' mutilation in public. At night the narrow streets of London were noisy with brawls in which ears and noses were frequently the main objects of attack, and Ben Jonson was responsible for the removal of his opponent's ear. Marlowe died in a tavern-brawl.

There were many diseases. Elizabeth herself was a prey to nervous disorder and rheumatism. Edward Alleyn, one of the foremost actors in the days of Shakespeare, wrote to his wife in 1593 when the plague was raging in London :

> Emanell,
>
> My good sweete mouse, I commend me hartely to you . . . hopinge in god, though the sicknes be round about you, yett by his mercy itt may escape your house . . . kepe your house fayre and clean . . . and every evening throwe water before your dore . . .
>
> Your loving husband
>
> E. Alleyn[21]

William Clowes, surgeon to the queen, informs that a prevalent disease known as 'scrofula' was called the King's or Queen's Evil because it was believed that it could be cured only by the touch of the reigning monarch's hand. Syphilis (which Shakespeare repeatedly mentions in his plays) was common. Belloc writes :

[21] From a letter quoted in A. B. Allen's *The Spacious Days of Elizabeth.*

> The huge and hopelessly diseased body of Henry Tudor . . . was in such a condition that his corrupted carcase burst before burial.
>
> Henry the King was by this time already rotten with syphilis . . . Henry's physical disaster was a general accident befalling many princes in the early sixteenth century.
>
> Elizabeth Tudor seems to have inherited . . . the awful legacy of this loathsome disease. She suffered continually, like Henry, from a running ulcer in the leg.

England certainly showed under Elizabeth signs of external prosperity and breathed freely for some time after many years of troubles. But the age had its worries in the Irish problem, plots against the queen, threats of foreign invasion, claims of Mary, problems of succession—and the rise and fall of Essex. The queen, in spite of all her boldness, had to submit to some of the forces of history over which she could exercise no control, and the sense of misgiving and insecurity never really disappeared. Shakespeare was both Elizabethan and Jacobean, and neither the Elizabethan age was altogether gay nor was the Jacobean age altogether gloomy. The Elizabethan-Jacobean period was a mingled age of gloom and glory, in which Shakespeare found for his mingled drama the mingled yarn of good and evil, hope and despair, joy and sorrow.

V

Michelet defined the Renaissance as the discovery of man and the world, and Shakespeare is the product of the English

Renaissance. The Renaissance, however, brought a cleavage between 'the body and the soul'. It gave a new impetus to man but it also narrowed man's outlook in certain ways. It tended to make man individualistic. Medieval Christianity was largely replaced by materialism and pagan aesthetics. But the change was not a synthesis. In England it had hardly any adequate cultural background and contact with a continuous tradition, and was therefore lacking in balance, depth and philosophy, in spite of its brilliance. Shakespeare's response to it was obviously restricted by the limitations of his mind, but then the limitations of the English Renaissance were also partly responsible for his own limitations.

The age of Elizabeth opened with a crude and poor literary inheritance. Native resources were not satisfactory, and much of the Renaissance culture, which was imported from the Continent, could not be assimilated. The feverish stuff of Seneca and the passionate imagination of Italy cast a spell on the tastes of the Elizabethans. To meet the political turmoil of the age was needed fox-like cunning, and the queen herself was a vixen and yet a very lioness in her wrath ! Besides, she had her circle of astute diplomats. So the Machiavellian conception of a prince, armed with the courage of a lion and the cunning of a fox, vividly appealed to the imagination of the age. To it was added the Senecan vision of a disintegrating society full of horrors and violences and yet guided by the stern doctrine of crime and revenge.

The age in which Shakespeare wrote was concerned with some great issues of politics,

and the whole of Europe was in tumult, turmoil and transition. England was in a changing world, and the closing years of the reign of Elizabeth and the opening years of the reign of James show a marked change : a certain mood of transition which serves as a contrast to the spirit of the earlier period. A similar mood appeared also in later ages. Dryden wrote the epitaph of his century in his *Secular Masque* in the year of his death :

> Thy wars brought nothing about.
> Thy lovers were all untrue.
> 'Tis well an old age is out,
> And time to begin a new.

The marked change meant loss of faith as well as hope for the future, but as the disposition of the time came to be confused, there was a tendency towards feverish restlessness and frustration.

In 1831 Mill wrote *The Spirit of the Age* in which he explained the character of an age of transition :

> In all other conditions of mankind the uninstructed have faith in the instructed. In an age of transition the divisions among the instructed nullify their authority, and the uninstructed lose their faith in them.

An age of transition thus tends to develop into an age of chaos and anarchy. Shakespeare gives expression to this idea, especially in his English historical plays. He traced in the individual the psychosis of a world in crisis but practically left out the individual's influence on society, for which was required a sharp change in the climate of social thought.

Shakespeare presents in his plays fragments of his visions of life—visions between the polar limits of beauty and terror. In Rilke's *Duino Elegies* beauty is not the absolute end : the search is for man :

> Beauty is nothing
> But the beginning of terror.

Heller[22] explains :

> The Terror which begins with Beauty is in the wholeness and integrity of being : and it terrifies us because we have betrayed it. In betraying it we have corrupted not only ourselves, but all things around us. They fall apart and away, and their place is taken by *ein Tun ohne Bild*, deeds without words or images.

To present a fully unified vision of life by combining Beauty with Terror was a difficult task for a dramatist working under the conditions of the Elizabethan-Jacobean age. But Shakespeare feels, even as Baudelaire[23] feels, that the deeper level of life is revealed only through poetry and that through poetry alone the soul sees glories beyond the grave. The key to the Shakespearean enigma lies in poetry, and in his mingled drama Shakespeare comes close to success, even when his vision of life or art of mingling is at fault, because of his poetry.

VI

In Shakespeare's mingled universe of appearance and reality, good and evil, beauty and terror, there is, however, a certain emphasis

[22] E. Heller : *The Hazard of Modern Poetry.*
[23] C. Baudelaire : *L'Art Romantique.*

on sensuality and lust. It appears even in his poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*—a woman's lust for a man, a man's lust for a woman—and the episode of the horse of Adonis is calculated to work like a sub-plot to strengthen the main plot. Virginity and chastity seem to have unusual power in provoking the sensual imagination of Shakespeare. Lavinia, Helena, Isabella, Mariana, Marina, Imogen and even Miranda are in some way or other victims of this imagination. Lavinia is the extreme case. Isabella is a veritable tower of flame when in the dark prison cell Claudio drops his shameful hint.

> Is't not a kind of incest, to take life
> From thine own sister's shame ? [III : 1]

She is Miltonic—pure but rather cold and a little dull—and there is a touch of irony in her career : she is dragged out of the nunnery to face Angelo and then to be thrown into the arms of the Duke.

Consider what Parolles says to Helena in *All's Well that Ends Well* :

> It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity. Loss of virginity is rational increase and there was never virgin got till virginity was first lost . . . To speak on the part of virginity is to accuse your mothers . . . Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not . . . the longer kept, the less worth. [I : 1]

The emphasis on sensuality or lust in a play like *King Lear* is hardly normal. The words with which Gloucester introduces his bastard son to Kent are shocking indeed.

There is lust in Edmund, Goneril, Regan and in Lear himself. All this is certainly not necessary for dramatic purposes : a bias is certainly indicated :

> Adultery ? . . .
> The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
> Does lecher in my sight.
> Let copulation thrive. [IV : 6]

Goneril's complaint against her father :

> epicurism and lust
> Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
> Than a graced palace. [I : 4]

And Lear's curse on her :

> Into her womb convey sterility !
> Dry up in her the organs of increase ; [I : 4]

Here is Edmund's defence of bastards :

> Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
> Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops,
> Got 'tween asleep and wake ? [I : 2]

Legouis in his Shakespeare Society Lecture discusses the Bacchic element in Shakespeare in a rather light vein. But the Bacchus in Shakespeare has all the coarseness and sensuality of that pagan god. Consider the Bacchic universe of Shakespeare : bastards, pimps, bawds and harlots ; rape and adultery, drinking and swearing ; a son chastising his mother for the mutiny of her middle-aged flesh ; a fat old man joking on venereal diseases with a pregnant tavern-girl seated on his knees. Lucio, Abhorson, Barnardine and Mrs Overdone ; Alexas and Thersites ; Aaron, Iago and

Iachimo ; Pandarus, Caliban, Doll Tearsheet and Goneril ; and a hundred other characters caught in the whirl and lurid glow of a hell-world, sordid and lust-stained. The pretty girls and pious wishes of the gay comedies and dramatic romances are obscured by the pictures of animal passions in men and women, so powerfully drawn.

VII

The Bacchic world of Shakespeare is a corrupt and decadent world, the world of Seneca and *Volpone, Sejanus* and *Catiline.* But while Seneca has his philosophy and Jonson his satire, we have in Shakespeare, in nearly all the major issues of life, an attitude of compromise and acceptance. It is, however, quite in character with his mingled drama which is, again, in a sense, compromise on the plane of dramatic art. While the strain of sensuality is accompanied by a note of conventional morality, there is also frequently an escape into poetry. But consider the boldness of Sophocles in *Oedipus the King* :

> Why fear this wedlock with your mother, why ?
>
> How oft it chances that in dreams a man
> Has wedded his mother !

Even then Oedipus cannot comprehend. Then comes the terrifying tension of the discovery that the woman who is his mother is also the mother of his children. But in Shakespeare a situation tends to fade into poetry, which is evasion and compromise, peace and relief. The soul, weary of itself, escapes into poetry :

For in that sleep of death what dreams may
come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil.[24]

Thou hast nor youth nor age
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both.[25]

Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill
thee,
And love thee after.[26]

I have lived long enough : my way of life
Is faln into the sear, the yellow leaf ;[27]

Thou art a soul in bliss ; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.[28]

Glorious poetry, imperious poetry. But dramatic poetry, as poetry, tends to become fragmentary, unless it is prompted by an integrated and co-ordinated vision of life. The weakness of Shakespeare lies here. Besides, instead of carefully developing the objective correlative of his drama, he depends sometimes too much upon his poetry, even when his fragmentary vision comes to be confused. Santayana[29] remarks :

> These poets (Homer and Dante) live in a cosmos. In their minds, as in the mind of their age, the fragments of experience have fallen together into a perfect picture . . . Their universe is a total . . . Shakespeare's

[24] *Hamlet* : II : 1.
[25] *Measure for Measure* : III : 1.
[26] *Othello* : V : 2.
[27] *Macbeth* : V : 3.
[28] *King Lear* : IV : ...
[29] G. Santayana : *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion.*

> world, on the contrary, is only the world of human society. The cosmos eludes him.

Shakespeare's interest lay primarily in the richness and variety of human life, and in its mingled yarn he found its infinite range, and in the mingled drama of a distinct kind he sought to develop his peculiar medium of expression.

2 MINGLED DRAMA

I

There are two main trends in the history of dramatic development : to classify drama into well-marked kinds, mainly tragic and comic, and to mingle elements for presenting fresh experiments. According to the classical doctrine of 'kinds', there are some distinct and independent literary forms or types which are not to be changed or transformed and should never be mixed or confused with one another. Lope de Vega[1] was not willing to 'mingle tragic style with the humbleness of mean comedy.' Addison[2] called tragi-comedy ('a motley piece of mirth and sorrow') 'one of the most monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poet's thoughts.'

The Aristotelian theory of poetry as imitation makes poetry almost synonymous with drama or even tragedy. It is for this reason that in *Poetics* there is an unmistakable stress on the art or form of poetry. The division of Greek drama into tragic and comic represents a certain tension of conflict between elements in life as also in literature. But this dichotomy is by no means conclusive or final, and a certain union of the conflicting elements is regarded by many as necessary for a move towards the universal in life and literature.

[1] Lope de Vega : *The New Art of Writing Plays* (1609).
[2] J. Addison : *The Spectator* (40).

Tragedy and comedy grew out of conditions peculiar to the Greek stage and society, and came to develop certain special features. But the importance of a play does not lie in its generic name. Fletcher[3] certainly felt this very strongly when he wrote :

> I dare not call it comedy or tragedy ; it is perfectly neither ; a play it is.

The history of the development of drama shows that the craving for classification by kinds is by no means strong today. The indeterminate term 'play' is now quite popular, and there is an increasing mixture of various elements.

II

The formal division of drama into several distinct types like tragedy, comedy, etc. is sometimes rather arbitrary because there is marginal or mingled drama in which overlapping is bound to occur. Plays like *Agamemnon* and *Oedipus the King* are pure tragedy but *Hamlet* offers something of mixed drama by presenting the effects of high comedy, melodrama and even farce in a tragedy. Again, it is not at all easy to classify some of the plays of Eliot and Synge, Yeats and O' Neill. A play may be 'serious drama', even when it is neither tragedy nor comedy, in the ordinary sense : it may quite reasonably be mixed drama. Plato[4] points out :

> ... tragedy and comedy alike afford pleasure and pain ; a mixture of pleasure and pain is also evoked by the drama of life which is at once tragic and comic.

[3] J. Fletcher : Prologue to *The Woman-Hater.*
[4] Plato : *Philebus.*

One of the masters of mingled drama is Chekhov. Even in his one-act plays the mixture of farce, melodrama and tragedy is complete. Bentley[5] writes :

> ... the notion of addition is itself misleading, for, in a fully realized masterpiece, nothing is merely stuck on ; all is, finally, of a piece. At any rate . . . we see that the role of farce in certain non-farcical masterpieces . . . is a large and reputable one.

In Ionesco's plays the farcical element is often used to intensify the tragic feeling. But Chekhov's drama is not tragi-comedy in the ordinary sense. It is, like Pirandello's *Six Characters,* as Bentley points out,

> ... a kind of drama in which tragic and comic elements lose their separate identities in a new, if nameless, unity.

III

Nicoll[6] draws our attention to an interesting fact. He writes :

> Up to the close of the nineteenth century, almost all the dramatic compositions were classified by their authors in categories . . . When, however, we move on past the year 1900, the majority of such works are simply labelled 'plays' or 'dramas.'

This is, no doubt, a move towards freedom—freedom from the time-honoured classification of drama, especially into tragedy and comedy. This freedom is supported by Styan[7] who says :

[5] E. Bentley : Preface to *The Brute and Other Farces* by A. Chekov.
[6] A. Nicoll : *The Theatre and the Dramatic Theory.*
[7] J. L. Styan : *The Elements of Drama.*

> A classification of plays by types is today supremely unhelpful ; to stamp a play as a tragedy or comedy, a melodrama or farce, is to bind it by rules external to itself and illegitimately borrowed.

At the same time it must be admitted that the mixing or mingling of elements very often produces in the mind of the reader or spectator a certain uneasiness because he does not know how to 'place' the drama. In explaining the success of O' Neill, Anderson and Behrman a critic[8] writes :

> ... they are, first of all, a writer of tragedies, a poetic dramatist and a creator of comedies, respectively. That means that each has thought his way through his material with such thoroughness that he has been able to give it one of the forms eternally appropriate to the drama. It also suggests that such a process is necessary before any play can achieve permanent interest . . .

Similarly, Peacock[9] thinks that the 'persistent forms of drama' like tragedy and comedy are 'natural and organic,' and Kerr[10] believes that Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is, because of its mingling of elements, 'susceptible to various, and seriously divergent, interpretations.' Gassner[11] explains how a director who wants to present *The Merchant of Venice* 'as a tragedy of social injustice' should

> take precaution to create a tragic instead of romantic atmosphere . . . The casting would have to select a dignified and intense Shylock contrasted with actors who might convey an

[8] J. W. Krutch : *The American Drama since* 1918.
[9] R. Peacock : *The Art of Drama.*
[10] W. Kerr : *How not to Write a Play.*
[11] [illegible] : *Producing the Play.*

impression of frivolity, wanton cruelty, and arrogance ; Portia might even become an ultra-sophisticated minx, and the Prince a Machiavellian figure.

That such a presentation is just possible is due simply to the fact that there is a certain mingling of elements in this play.

IV

The main problems of mixed or mingled drama are : to present an integrated vision of life, which means the unity of conception ; to achieve the unity of impression or what Freytag[12] calls 'the unifying idea' ; and to find out the right form or what Eliot[13] calls 'the objective correlative' for this purpose.

Much has been written on the importance of the unities of time, place and action, which constitute a very large part of the problem of the objective correlative. But the fourth unity—a deeper unity—of impression, which is closely related to the unity of conception, is the main consideration in drama. Sarcey[14] writes :

> To be strong and durable, an impression must be single. All dramatists have felt this instinctively ; and it is for this reason that the distinction between the comic and the tragic is as old as art itself. It would seem that when drama came into being the writers of ancient times would have been led to mingle laughter with tears, since drama represents life, and in life joy goes hand in hand with grief, the grotesque always accompanying the sublime. And yet the line of

[12] G. Freytag : *Die Technik des Dramas.*
[13] T. S. Eliot : *The Sacred Wood.*
[14] F. Sarcey : *A Theory of the Theatre.*

> demarcation has been drawn from the beginning.

This is hardly convincing because Sarcey has not made it clear why mingled drama cannot produce the unity of impression. The same difficulty appears in what Nicoll[15] says :

> ... an audience, gathered for a short space in the theatre, needs to know or to sense the dramatist's fundamental attitude . . . The thing that is important is that the attitude should be unmistakable.

Nicoll then explains what he thinks of the 'mingled' plays of Shakespeare :

> *All's Well that Ends Well* provides a good example . . . on its revivals audiences habitually exhibit a considerable amount of uneasiness . . . The author has not given us a clear lead . . . A similar unease prevails in performances of *Measure for Measure* ; its values are obscured.

Dryden's[16] Neander has a liberal attitude ; he believes that mixture means relief :

> I must therefore have stronger arguments ere I am convinced that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other, and in the mean time, cannot but conclude . . . that we have invented . . . and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage, than was ever known to the ancients or moderns of any nation, which is tragi-comedy.

The neo-classic attitude is a move towards liberalness which we notice again in Johnson's[17] remark on mingled drama :

[15] A. Nicoll : *The Theatre and the Dramatic Theory.*
[16] J. Dryden : *An Essay of Dramatic Poesie.*
[17] S. Johnson : *The Rambler* (156).

> For what is there in mingled drama which impartial reason can condemn ? . . . Is it not certain that the tragic and comic affections have been moved alternately with equal force, and that no plays have oftener filled the eye with tears, and the breast with palpitation, than those which are variegated with interludes of mirth ?

It is wrongly supposed that this mixture is based on the idea that drama is only a 'mirror' of nature. It has a deeper conviction and basis in the mysterious forces of life. The romanticists, despite the flaws of their art, were, however, right in their perception :

> Like Christianity, the modern muse sees things in a fashion higher and broader. It recognizes that not everything in creation is humanely beautiful, that the ugly is there alongside the beautiful, the deformed near the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, shadow with light.[18]

The truth of the whole matter is to be sought in the final impression which is produced by the fusion of various elements. Nicoll[19] rightly observes :

> If the comic and the tragic elements be fused harmoniously one with the other, then the result will be justified by the general impression so obtained. It will be found that between certain forms of comedy and certain forms of serious drama there can be no such communion, and that, on the other hand, there are certain types of tragedy which undoubtedly betray an emotional affinity to corresponding types of comedy.

[18] V. Hugo : Preface to *Cromwell*.
[19] A. Nicoll : *The Theory of Drama*.

Shelley[20] shows his just observation in an appropriate remark in this connexion :

> The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle ; but the comedy should be, as in *King Lear*, universal, ideal, and sublime.

This idea, in a different way, works in the mind of Diderot[21] who believes that comedy and tragedy are not the only possible dramatic kinds. Between the two there are many gradations and modes of mingling. He mentions 'serious drama' or *drame* as one such form which is different from both tragedy and comedy and 'philosophizes' on the ideas of social living.

Mingled drama does not, however, necessarily mean drama with a mixture of the tragic and the comic only. It may bring about a combination of different kinds of seriousness or lightness or both. In *Volpone* comedy moves towards tragedy and satire. In *The Changeling* Middleton presents a strange mixture of powerful tragedy with dismally comic and indeterminate moments of dramatic experience.

Mingling, again, does not rule out any opposition of interests. In fact, there is something dialectical in the best process of mixing —the conflict and synthesis of elements—as in *Macbeth, King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

V

In *Poetics*[22] Aristotle refers to three main 'kinds'—tragedy, comedy and epic—which are,

[20] P. B. Shelley : *A Defence of Poetry*.
[21] D. Diderot : *Discours sur la poésie dramatique*.
[22] The extracts are from Butcher's translation of *Poetics*.

according to him, inter-related and have more than one point of contact. Some of his remarks should be carefully examined in this connexion. Regarding tragedy he says :

> Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped.

What he really means by 'natural form' is not, however, made sufficiently clear. Besides, did the development of tragedy really stop ? Again :

> Whether tragedy has as yet perfected its proper types or not ; and whether it is to be judged in itself, or in relation also to the audience—this raises another question.

But this matter has not been discussed by Aristotle. Is the perfection of proper types the same thing as the discovery of the natural form ? Again, how can we judge drama in itself without considering its relation to the audience for whom it is meant ?

This is very significant, especially because Aristotle repeatedly emphasizes the importance of what he calls the imitation of action. He also writes :

> . . . some say the name of 'drama' is given to such poems, as representing action.

Action, performance and the audience are inter-related. But Aristotle writes :

> For the power of tragedy . . . is felt even apart from representation and actors.
>
> For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity . . . But to produce this effect by the mere spectacle is a less artistic method.

> Again, tragedy like epic poetry produces its effect even without action ; it reveals its power by mere reading.

Thus it is clear that Aristotle does not think that performance is essential. Yet here lies the main difference between tragedy and the epic.

> Again, Aristotle writes :
>
> Hence they are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is, as we have said, the right ending.

This means that an unhappy ending is the right ending for tragedy, although there are tragedies which do not end unhappily. Sophocles's *Electra* has a happy ending. Again :

> In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first . . . it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad . . . The pleasure, however, thence derived is not the true tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to comedy.

Here is certainly mixed or mingled drama which Aristotle places only in the second rank of tragedy. But he also admits that it is accounted the best by many because its mixed ending, which is by no means unhappy, is pleasing to the audience. Once again it is made clear that an unhappy ending is not essential to the plot of a tragedy. We may, then, conclude that a tragedy may be permitted to end happily, if there is sorrow or suffering followed by catharsis in course of dramatic action.

Some important facts emerge from an examination of the above extracts from *Poetics*.

(1) Aristotle's theory is not to be identified with the view of drama generally accepted by his contemporaries. (2) Drama in Aristotle's age was developing along lines which are neither fully examined nor supported and encouraged in *Poetics*. (3) Mixed or mingled drama was not only well-established but also quite popular. An unhappy ending is not an essential requirement of tragedy. (4) A tragedy need not be performed : here is the basis of the later medieval theory of tragedy as non-dramatic literature. The influence of this view has not yet been critically examined in all its details. The influence of the non-dramatic forms of tragic narration on Greek and Shakespearean drama, especially in relation to mingled drama, is certainly an interesting point, and some of the boldest experiments in modern drama have grown out of it.

VI

The ancient satyr-play, which is mixed drama, is often regarded as the beginning of tragi-comedy. In fact, there is a passage in Horace's *Ars Poetica* which explains its nature and art :

> He who contended in tragic poetry for the paltry prize of a goat soon afterwards disclosed wild satyrs ; and, uncouth, attempted jest, without sacrificing the dignity of his subject ; because in this way, the spectator, having performed the rites of Bacchus, and drunken and lawless, had to be detained by allurements and agreeable novelty.

But we are indebted to Plautus for the term 'tragi-comedy' which appears in the Prologue to his *Amphitruo* :

> From a tragedy, if you like, I will make this a comedy . . . I will make it be mixed ; let it be a tragi-comedy.

Ristine[23] traces the origin of terms to indicate mixed drama to an earlier age—to some Greek comic poets whose plays survive in fragments and references. He writes :

> These early accounts indicate that a certain Anaxandrides, one of the most highly esteemed writers of the so-called Middle Comedy, wrote a play entitled *Comoedotragoedia*, and that a lost play by a later Athenian comic poet, Alcaeus, likewise bore the title of *Comoedotragoedia* . . . Their main interest here lies in the fact that from them really dates the origin of a name to denote a play compounded of tragedy and comedy, although it was the variant form used by Plautus that ultimately survived . . . There is probably no connexion between the *Comoedotragoedia* of these lost dramatists and the later *Hilaro-tragoedia* of Rhinthon.

VII

Characterizing medieval drama and theatre Nicoll[24] writes :

> The gargoyles will always be peering out from behind the soaring windows and the intricate traceries of stonework. The devils with their squibs will ever be pressing among the actors of more serious roles. The medieval theatre is obviously a thing of the 'Gothic imagination' . . . Where the Greeks endeavoured to secure an harmonious unity of effect, the medieval playwrights huddled serious and comic together. The shepherds

[23] F. H. Ristine : *The English Tragi-comedy.*
[24] A. Nicoll : *The Development of the Theatre.*

> crack their rustic jokes ere viewing Christ's manger ; Noah and his wife have their comic tussle as the Deluge sweeps over the world. No one can say which is higher—the Greek or the Gothic.

Drama in the Middle Ages was thus largely and almost necessarily mixed.

This strange Gothic manner of mingling was a living force in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama—even in a grim play like *Doctor Faustus*. The religion of the Middle Ages, in spite of its many restrictions, was liberal : it had its mysticism and fun. In spite of seriousness and devoutness there were ways of escape in the license and coarseness of *fabliaux* and interludes and in comic ceremonials. Nicoll[25] writes :

> The gargoyles in the medieval cathedrals which grin down cynically on the worshippers are but another expression of this mood of abandon . . . The gargoyles are but little outbursts of freakishness and gaiety in the midst of the mysterious grandeur of the vaulted nave and the solemn choir . . . drunkenness is found with the most mystic adoration, debauchery with the most lofty moral idealism, cynical ridicule with passionate worship, laughter with the solemnity of sacred thoughts.

Here is the world of mingled drama from which Shakespeare and his contemporaries certainly drew much of their inspiration.

VIII

In *An Apology for Poetry* Sidney criticizes the clumsiness and formlessness of the mingled drama of his age. He says :

[25] A. Nicoll : *British Drama.*

> . . . their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns . . . with neither decency nor discretion . . . so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained.

But this does not mean that Sidney was altogether opposed to mingled drama. In fact, he seems to suggest that a certain form of mixture as tragi-comedy was acceptable :

> . . . some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragi-comical . . . some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral. But that cometh all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful.

Again, in his observations on 'delight' and 'laughter' Sidney says : 'Yet deny I not but that they may go well together.' What he wanted was a well-organized and balanced tragi-comedy, a middle mode of dramatic composition guided by intelligence and good taste.

Commenting on the decay of comedy which came to be corrupted by personal satire and pictures of rascality Vives preferred the later development of *tragi-comoedia,* as in *Celestina.* But More raises in *Utopia* a point of dramatic technique and objects to the mingling of comic and tragic elements. To him a 'tragical comedy' is 'mere gallimaufry.' But it will be wrong to suppose that the mixed drama known as tragi-comedy was generally disliked. In the 'Dedicatory Epistle' of *Christus Redivivus,* a tragi-comedy in five acts, Grimald observes that here

> great things had been interwoven with the small, joyous with sad . . . incredible with probable . . . in order that variety might be opposed to satiety.

In fact, the mingling of elements was quite common. It is true that the farcical element in serious drama was sometimes unsatisfactory, as in *Appius and Virginia, Damon and Pythias,* and *Cambyses* which are called 'tragical comedies' by their authors. Edwardes in his Prologue to *Damon and Pythias* seeks to mingle tragedy and comedy because, as he believes, 'matter mixed with mirth and care' can surely provide both instruction and delight, as demanded by Horace, instead of instruction alone.

Similarly, in the Prologue to *Like will to Like* (1568) Fulwell proposes to supply a mixture of 'mirth and gravity' because 'mirth for sadness (i.e. seriousness) is a sauce most sweet.' But Whetstone in his 'Dedication' in *Promos and Cassandra* criticizes the unseemly and inartistic mingling of comic and tragic materials, which is so common in the drama of his age. He is not, however, opposed to mingled drama : he warmly approves of a judicious mixture.

IX

Although the medieval and romantic tradition persists, after 1590 a change takes place. Mingled drama does not, however, lose its popularity. Characterizing dramatic criticism Atkins[26] writes :

[26] J. W. H. Atkins : *English Literary Criticism* (The Renascence).

> . . . a growing consciousness of dramatic values becomes perceptible, so that this closing decade of the century marks a transition from an uncritical to a more critical phase where the drama was concerned.

In *Virgidemiarum* Hall harshly criticizes the Marlowesque tradition in tragedy and points out how to soften the terror of a tragic situation the clown, self-deformed, comes leaping in to the great delight of the vulgar sections of the audience.

Perhaps the most significant observations are made by Lyly[27] who refuses to accept as final the orthodox dramatic 'kinds'. In spite of the indiscriminate and incongruous mixture of comedy, tragedy, history and the pastoral which spoils the drama of his age, Lyly seeks to justify mingling. First, he thinks that the mixed audiences are to be taken into account : in fact, Lyly is one of the first few critics to point out that the nature of the audience is an important factor in dramatic creation. He writes :

> What heretofore hath been served on several dishes . . . is now minced on a charger for a gallimaufry.

Again, he is not in favour of classifying his plays as 'comedies or tragedies or mere tales.'

That mingling was a popular practice is quite clear from Shakespeare's well-known passage in *Hamlet* (II : 2) :

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited : Seneca cannot be too hevy, nor Plautus too light.

[27] J. Lyly : Prologue to *Midas*.

But the main dramatic 'kinds' recognized by the Elizabethans were comedy, tragedy and history. In response to their changing tastes, especially towards the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century, Beaumont and Fletcher sought to develop a dramatic design which was not altogether unknown to classical or Italian drama.

In Jonson's *Volpone* mingling is of a rather unusual kind. The purely comic element is blended with moral teaching, while there is an equally pronounced mixture of satirical and tragic elements. In fact, in its conclusion *Volpone* hardly differs from *Sejanus,* and in the 'Dedicatory Epistle' of the play Jonson points out that the ending of *Volpone* is a deviation from 'the strict rigour of comic law,' although ancient comedies do not always end joyfully.

X

The mixture of comic and tragic elements was the most common form of mingling out of which came what is known as tragi-comedy. Fletcher in his 'Address to the Reader' in *The Faithful Shepherdess* points out that tragi-comedy

> is not so called in respect of mirth and killings, but in respect it wanteth deaths (i.e. lacks a tragic catastrophe) which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy.

In Greece the earliest examples of tragi-comedy are found in satyric drama like *Cyclops* and pro-satyric drama like *Alcestis.* Similar examples are *Amphitruo* (Latin) and *Damon and Pythias* or *Appius and Virginia* (English).

According to Guarini[28] tragi-comedy is not a mixture of tragedy and comedy but a blend of such elements of each as can stand together. It is sometimes wrongly called 'averted tragedy'. A true tragedy produces a sense of inevitableness : it cannot be averted. In a tragi-comedy a tragic turn (which is sudden and unexpected) is weakly motivated so that a happy turn (which is equally sudden and unexpected) is not really very improbable. Tragi-comedy seeks to present a middle mood between tragedy and comedy through a serious plot which is, however, lacking in the sense of inevitability. There is an emphasis on sudden and unexpected development of situations, while both incidents and characters are rather inadequately motivated. In a tragi-comedy there is treatment of serious matter but the tragic ending is carefully avoided. An analysis of the tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher shows that while we have here some very effective dramatic situations and a clever manipulation of melodramatic elements, the unity of impression is never fully achieved.

XI

In *All's Well that Ends Well* (IV : 3) the following remark is made by a Lord :

> The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.

Here is the basis of Shakespeare's mingled drama which is of a distinct kind—neither comedy nor tragedy. Eliot[29] writes :

[28] B. Guarini : *Il compendio della poesia tragicomica.*
[29] T. S. Eliot : *The Sacred Wood.*

> But the classification of tragedy and comedy, while it may be sufficient to mark the distinction in a dramatic literature of more rigid form and treatment—it may distinguish Aristophanes from Euripides—is not adequate to a drama of such variations as the Elizabethan.

We have, however, already noticed that such classification was not sufficient in the age of Aristotle.

In spite of many variations there were three main 'kinds' of drama in the Elizabethan-Jacobean period : tragedy, comedy and history. But Rowe[30] observes :

> His (Shakespeare's) plays are properly to be distinguished only into comedies and tragedies. Those which are called histories, and even some of his comedies, are really tragedies, with a run or mixture of comedy amongst them. That way of tragi-comedy was the common mistake of that age . . . *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* are all pure comedy ; the rest, however they are called, have something of both kinds.

Although Rowe divides the plays of Shakespeare 'only into comedies and tragedies', he admits that 'something of both kinds' appears in a large body of mingled drama. He is in favour of keeping comedy and tragedy in isolation, as two distinct kinds, but he also mentions that tragi-comedy or mingled drama was quite popular. Referring to Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies he remarks :

[30] N. Rowe : *Some Account of the Life of Mr. William Shakespeare.*

> It is not easy to determine which way of writing he was most excellent in.

Johnson[31] is, however, quite definite :

> In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity ; but in his comic scenes, he seems to produce without labour what no labour can improve . . . His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

In the First Folio (1623) Heminge and Condell divided their friend's plays into comedies, histories and tragedies. This division, although convenient for their purpose, is not based on any definite principle. In explaining the three principal 'kinds' of drama in the Elizabethan-Jacobean period Johnson writes :

> An action which ended happily to the principal persons, however serious or distressful through its intermediate incidents, . . . constituted a comedy . . . Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or elevation than comedy ; it required only a calamitous conclusion . . . whatever lighter pleasure it afforded in its progress . . . History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological succession . . . without any tendency to introduce or regulate the conclusion.

The conditions of drama and the tastes of the audience are to be considered in relation to the age concerned. In explaining how Shakespearean drama developed into a distinct 'kind' Johnson remarks :

> Every man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state

[31] S. Johnson : *Preface to Shakespeare.*

> of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities . . . The English nation, in the time of Shakespeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity . . . The public was gross and dark . . . Whatever is remote from common appearances is always welcome to vulgar, as to childish credulity.

In the age of Shakespeare much of the creative effort was lacking in discipline. The stage was crude, and tastes were coarse. There were no well-established principles of criticism. Shakespearean drama fully expresses the romantic genius of the English Renaissance, its strength and weakness. Here is drama as 'the mirror of life', and life is a 'chaos of mingled purposes and casualties'. But as art is selective, ancient writers concentrated on crimes or follies, keeping the two strictly in isolation, and developed the two modes of imitation as tragedy and comedy. Shakespeare, however, develops a mode which is very different. In explaining this mode Johnson points out :

> Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind . . .

According to Johnson, then, Shakespeare's plays are not only 'mingled drama' but also drama of a *distinct kind,* 'exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil'. What is particularly important in this drama is the blend or mixture which is not a mingling merely of the tragic and the comic : it is far more comprehensive in its scope. This mingled drama of a distinct kind is perhaps fully illustrated in Shakespeare's

English historical plays. As Johnson points out again :

> His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws.

The factors which are particularly important in their bearing on the development of the drama peculiar to Shakespeare are : the medieval tradition of mingled drama with its classical background, the mixed drama of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, the tastes of his audience who clamoured for variety, and his romantic genius inspired by the web of the English Renaissance life which is 'a mingled yarn, good and ill together'.

XII

Tragedy or comedy has certain well-marked lines of movement and are generally guided by certain principles and ideas. Mixed drama is more explorative and experimental, and more comprehensive in its scope. By mixing elements it produces sudden surprises and unexpected subtleties, especially through its treatment of the great marginal and indeterminate moments of life. The art of mingling or the objective correlative, in a sense, is therefore the most important problem in a mingled drama.

Even the plain admixture of tragedy and comedy is guided by certain purposes. Sometimes the comic element in tragedy appears as relief, as in the grave-diggers' scene in *Hamlet.* But there is a touch of sadness in it, a certain philosophy of life, which makes the comic essentially and peculiarly poetic with the result

that it becomes at once an integral part of the tragic effect.

The Porter Scene in *Macbeth* is different : it is hardly comic, in the ordinary sense. De Quincey turns it into a nightmare-fugue of his drugged imagination :

> The murderers and the murder must be insulated . . . we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested . . . Hence it is, that when the deed is done . . . the knocking at the gate is heard . . . and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

But as we move away from the terror of the preceding scene, we do not come back to the normal world. We are placed on another plane of terror which is intensified by the grim symbolism of the comic in the Porter Scene. In spite of his grotesquerie the Porter has his poetry even in his unintentioned irony and serves as a link between what is past and what is yet to come. The Porter Scene is an interpretation and revelation of the reality of the horror. The Porter is the one-man chorus in this situation, and his strange sub-terranean connexion with another chorus—the Witches as the Three Fates—is a wonder of dramatic art.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* we have a contrast between the tragic and the comic. But the mixture and the clash here are conceived and designed in poetry which gives the drama a peculiar singleness of purpose and impression.

One of the finest examples of mingling appears in *King Lear*. The comic element in

the Fool is not merely choric : it is part of the full tragic effect. There are situations in which the king ceases to exist if he is separated from his clown. Again, Shakespeare has given the Fool poetry—poetry that enables us to see passion through deep waters. The comic in *King Lear* is both lyrical and strictly dramatic : it is contrast, relief and intensification. Turnbull[32] writes :

> The Fool is the leader, the Fool is right—follow the Fool . . . While they crouch side by side . . . let us consider King and Fool. Which now is the wise man ? Surely not he who, asking too much, received nothing, but rather he whom no niggardliness could surprise . . . I have a feeling it was own brother to King Lear who sat beside him in the hovel. Once very like him in longing, in capacity, in desire ; now far apart, infinitely wise, infinitely careless. He shows that he has lost the art of weeping. Again and again the Fool opens his mouth as if to utter comfort, and it is only a jest he can bring forth.[32a]

In classical drama the sub-plot is regarded as violation of the unity of action, and is not therefore permitted to work. But the structural mingling of the sub-plot and the main plot produces certain effects which strengthen the central unity of impression. Yeats[33] points out :

> The Shakespearean Drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the subplot which copies

[32] M. P. Turnbull : *Essays.*

[32a] 'It was the custom in ancient times for the king or queen to keep a court fool, or court jester, whose work it was to make the sovereign laugh . . . and often a jester could tell the sovereign some unpleasant truth . . . Henry VIII's jester, Will Somers, was perhaps the most famous of all times. Queen Elizabeth's jester was Tarleton, whom she honoured'.—A. B. Allen : *The Spacious Days of Queen Elizabeth.*

[33] W. B. Yeats : *Ideas of Good and Evil.*

> the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight. We think of *King Lear* less as the history of one man and his sorrows than as the history of a whole evil time. Lear's shadow is in Gloster, who also has ungrateful children, and the mind goes on imagining other shadows, shadow beyond shadow, till it has pictured the world. In *Hamlet*, one hardly notices, so subtly is the web woven, that the murder of Hamlet's father and the sorrow of Hamlet are shadowed in the lives of Fortinbras and Ophelia and Laertes, whose fathers too have been killed.

In both these plays, again, the excellence of Shakespeare's art of mingling is proved by the way in which the sub-plot and the main plot are interwoven by the characters who appear in both the plots.

XIII

Mingling sometimes changes the nature of a play. In *Love's Labour's Lost* the news of the French king's death introduces a 'new-sad' temper which gives the play a peculiar kind of seriousness. There is a glimpse of the harder realities of life, and love's labour seems to be lost. There is nothing really unpleasant, but the mood changes, and the play ceases to be a comedy, in the ordinary sense, because of its sudden seriousness and novel conclusion.

Mingling, again, may mean the blend of realism and romance, a combination of two planes of dramatic thought and action. This mingling makes Shakespearean comedy so different from purely romantic or realistic comedies.

That we find it difficult sometimes to 'place' a Shakespearean play is due to the fact that it is mingled drama. *All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure* and *Troilus* and *Cressida* are all good examples, but each has its own difference. There is a mixture of the tragic and the comic in *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale,* and yet they are different from an ordinary tragi-comedy. In their raw materials they show a strong affinity with Shakespeare's happy comedies, but as the mood of seriousness deepens, they move towards a different plane, and then the poetry of their pastoralism brings about another change. The main problem of Shakespeare's mingled drama lies, however, in the objective correlative, in the relation between *form* and *matter.* Whenever the artist fails to find out a suitable medium or structure of expression, there are improbabilities and inconsistencies, confused intentions and unbalanced designs.

XIV

The plays we have selected for detailed examination are : *Richard III, Romeo and Juliet, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, Timon of Athens* and *The Tempest.* Shakespeare's English historical plays are an epic body of mingled drama but the position of *Richard III* is rather peculiar. It is both Machiavellian and religious : a tragedy of Richard and a comedy of England. *Romeo and Juliet* is an exceptional kind of mingled drama : it is the reverse of a tragi-comedy. In *Measure for Measure* mingled drama appears as a dark comedy but its affinity with tragedy makes it perhaps darker than an ordinary tragi-

comedy. In both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens* the comic element is completely subdued by the spirit of satire and tragedy. *Troilus and Cressida* is also perhaps the only thesis play of Shakespeare. In *The Tempest* Shakespeare turns a marriage masque into a dramatic romance which is different from the tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher. Each of these plays of Shakespeare is not only 'mingled' but also experimental in both mood and form, and in each of them the objective correlative is the main problem.

3 THE GREAT OCTOLOGY

I

The ten English historical plays of Shakespeare may be thus divided conveniently : two sequences, each of four plays, and two isolated plays. The first sequence, a tetralogy composed of the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III,* deals with the later part of the 15th century. It is followed by *King John* which is a completely isolated play. The second sequence, another tetralogy composed of *Richard II,* the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V,* deals with the closing years of the 14th century and the earlier part of the 15th century. It is followed by *Henry VIII,* which, though not altogether unrelated to *Richard III,* is, for all practical purposes, an independent play. Thus the main body of Shakespeare's English history plays is an epic octology, and the period of historical and dramatic action is from 1397 to 1485.

Usually the eight plays are considered as two tetralogies and the tetralogies are considered in the order of Shakespeare's composition. But we shall follow historical chronology, and shall consider the two tetralogies as a massive octology of mingled drama opening with *Richard II* and concluding with *Richard III.* This method has its advantages. It helps us in understanding the course of history and the idea of history as it emerges from an almost confusing pattern of men and incidents.

II

It is not only interesting but also necessary to study the relation between the age that produced Shakespeare and the age that produced the English kings who appear in his octology—Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III and Richmond as Henry VII. Dean Inge[1] wrote :

> There are ages of sowing and ages of reaping : the brilliant epochs may be those in which spiritual wealth may be squandered ; the epochs of apparent decline may be those in which the race is recuperating after an exhausting effort.

The fifteenth century in English history was not what Inge called a brilliant epoch ; it was not even an age of recuperation. It was a tense age of sowing and seed-time that produced those silent but powerful forces of history which made the sixteenth century in England possible and so memorable. This relation between the two ages may serve as a key to the understanding of the octology of which *Richard III* is the culmination and conclusion. Chambers[2] rightly points out :

> Shakespeare began his career with a tetralogy based on recent history, grim, archaic, crude, yet nevertheless such as, for scope, power, patriotism, and sense of doom, had probably had no parallel since Aeschylus wrote the trilogy of which the *Persians* is the surviving fragment. One idea runs through the whole—the sufferings of England from its self-centred 'Machiavellian' nobles, beginning with Cardinal Beaufort, and culminating in the tremendous Crookback.

[1] D. Inge : *Outspoken Essays.*
[2] R. W. Chambers : *Man's Unconquerable Mind.*

III

The English chronicle play in the Elizabethan age was hardly dramatic. In its presentation of a large number of characters and incidents it was more like the epic and the pageant. Yeats[3] points out :

> The . . . plays, that are but one play, have, when played one after another, something extravagant and superhuman, something almost mythological. These nobles with their indifference to death and their immense energy seem at times no nearer the common stature of men than do the gods and the heroes of Greek plays.

This impression of an epic is noticed also by Schlegel[4] who calls these plays a dramatic epopee tracing the course of English national life through the disturbances of the later Middle Ages to the prosperity of the Renaissance. Coleridge[5] points out that 'the transitional link between the epic poem and the drama is the historic drama'. It is this transitional link, again, that makes it easy for Shakespeare to turn the chronicle play into mingled drama.

As this epic mass of mingled drama—mingled, because of its blend of the epic and the drama, and of the tragic and the comic—moves slowly presenting countless designs of affinity and contrast, harmony and discord, in characters and incidents, the great emerging figure that comes to dominate the gigantic pattern is England, and gradually all other

[3] W. B. Yeats : *Ideas of Good and Evil.*
[4] A. W. Schlegel : *Lectures.*
[5] S. T. Coleridge : *Notes on Shakespeare.*

figures seem to fade. But they build up the structure of Shakespeare's vision of history.

Shakespeare's dramatic art in these plays lies mainly in the grouping of characters in relation to the grouping of incidents. This grouping is an extremely complex pattern, although both incidents and characters are lacking in the subtlety and complexity which we notice in Shakespeare's tragedies. Dowden[5a] rightly points out that his heroes in the chronicle plays are conceived 'chiefly with reference to action' and are to be measured by 'positive achievements and results'. These kings are fairly ordinary men (excepting Richard III) belonging to normal human types, who appear in exceptional circumstances, are pitted against the adverse forces of history, and are weighed, measured and found wanting—each in his own way. Even Henry V is not a full exception.

If the central theme of these plays is what Pater[5b] calls the irony of kingship, the pity of kingship is also part of it, and the simultaneous working of pity and irony makes the chronicle play the mingled drama of English history :

> God knows, my son,
> By what by-paths and indirect crookt ways
> I met this crown ; and I myself know well
> How troublesome it sat upon my head.
> [*2 H IV* : IV : 4]

> Princes have but their titles for their glories,
> An outward honour for an inward toil ;
> And, for unfelt imaginations,
> They often feel a world of restless cares :
> So that, betwixt their titles and low names,
> There's nothing differs but the outward fame.
> [*R III* : I : 4]

[5a] E. Dowden : *Shakspere.*
[5b] W. Pater : *Appreciations.*

IV

The octology presents a remarkable body of plays, germinal and powerful, each projecting in its own way quickly-changing visions of life through the countless inter-relations between the fate of a country and the destiny of its leaders and people. The total impression of this mixed drama of epic dimensions is more tragic than comic. Masefield[6] writes :

> Life was never so brooded on, since man learned to think, as in this cycle of tragedies.

Masefield called the octology a 'cycle of tragedies' probably because he had in his mind not only the tragic sense of pity and irony in kingship as the central mood of these plays but also the sorrows and sufferings of the people, especially indicated in *3 Henry VI* : II : 5 and *Richard III* : II : 3.

This epic drama moves slowly and steadily, and before the gigantic movement of evil nearly all its good characters stand as stunned and ineffective figures, at least temporarily suspended and paralysed in their activities. They remind us of what Father Martindale[7] wrote in one of his sermons :

> The greatest mystery of all is not Evil as such : it is the terrible inadequacy of Good.

Yet when Richard, the 'poisonous bunch-backed toad' and 'bottled spider', the fascinating flower of evil, is crushed underneath the wheel of God, the final impression is only a focal concentration of the great underlying motifs—love of England, faith in England and hope for England. With

[6] J. Masefield : *Shakespeare.*
[7] Father Martindale : *The Terminal*, No. 7, 1937.

the emergence of Good the epic vision of a century of English history, a long and crowded vista of England's life, is over, and in the vibrant ecstasy of Richmond's thanks-giving the great octology has a 'religious' conclusion.

V

The octology not only expresses the horror of civil wars but also advocates the policy of order, degree, legitimacy and unity. The drama of disaster began when Richard II was thrown out and Carlisle warned :

> O, if you raise this house against this house
> It will the woefullest division prove
> That ever fell upon this cursed earth.
> Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so,
> Lest child, child's children, cry against you 'woe'. [*R II* : IV : 1]

But the forces of evil worked, and England became 'the field of Golgotha, and dead men's skulls'. With Henry V the position improved but Shakespeare never thought of the so-called idealized hero-king of the late medieval English history as a complete answer to the question and need of the age. After Henry V the sky became darker. The plays dealing with the later period are the final stage of the national saga based on an idea of history which had a long development, first indicated in More's *History of Richard III*. The solution came not in any person—Henry V or Richmond as Henry VII—but in the policy and principle of union : the union of the two Houses, the union of the White Rose and the Red Rose :

> Smile Heaven upon this fair conjunction,
> That long have frown'd upon their enmity !

> What traitor hears me and says not 'Amen' ? . . .
> Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord . . .
> Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again ;
> That she may long live here, God say 'Amen'!
> [*R III* : V : 5]

The great Shakespearean octology is not only a sixteenth-century testament of English history but also an interpretation of God's ways to Englishmen.

VI

The central design of the octology is derived from Hall who strikes the keynote of the whole series in the very title-page of his work :

> The union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and York, being long in continual dissension for the crown of this noble realm, with all the acts done in both the times of the princes, both of the one lineage and of the other, beginning at the time of King Henry the Fourth, the first author of this division, so successively proceeding to the reign of the high and prudent prince King Henry VIII, the indubitable flower and very heir of the said lineages.

Referring to the marriage of Henry VII (Richmond in *Richard III*) with Elizabeth the daughter of Edward IV Hall writes in the preface to his work :

> . . . for as King Henry the Fourth was the beginning and root of the great discord and division, so was the godly matrimony the final end of all dissensions, titles and debates.

There are eight chapters in Hall's work and even the titles show his design of the presenta-

tion of history from Henry IV to Henry VIII. He not only brings out a sharp contrast between Henry V and Richard III but also carefully presents their history in a strikingly dramatic manner. That Shakespeare closely followed the design of Hall is quite clear not only from the central idea of his chronicle plays but also from the divisions of his octology—the earlier tetralogy ending with Henry V, and the later tetralogy ending with Richard III. Tillyard[8] writes :

> The specific pattern in which Polydore sees English history concerns the period from Richard II to Henry VIII. That stretch is seen in a solemn moral light ; it shows the justice of God punishing and working out the effects of a crime, till prosperity is re-established in the Tudor monarchy. How far this pattern was Polydore's idea, how far it was inspired officially by Henry VII, I do not know . . . Polydore had indeed stated the Tudor myth but he was far from dramatising and hallowing it. Here in Hall we get the full transfer of historical drama from the sacred to the secular, while what is lost from sheer worship of God is used to make sterner the pious morality governing profane events.

As a member of Parliament, Hall supported the diplomacy and religious policy of Henry VIII, and his Chronicle was intended to be a glorification of the Tudor reign. The fall of Richard II, the disturbances in the reign of Henry IV, the triumph of his son, the long struggle of Lancaster and York and then the happy union of the rival houses (celebrated in the pageant in *Henry VIII*)—here is the scheme

[8] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's History Plays.*

which Shakespeare adopted from Hall and used in the cycle of his 'Histories'.

VII

The earlier period beginning with *Richard II* (with its poetry of the pity and irony of kingship) and ending with *Henry V* (with its desperate idealization of the medieval hero-king) has a certain character of its own. Then comes the breakdown. In Tudor opinion Henry VI was accepted as a gentle, mild and virtuous prince, a saint, against whom arose Joan, the Pucelle de Dieu, as a false witch emerging from the crude and hateful narrative of the Burgundian Monstrelet. The transition or further movement of history is indicated in the contrast between the saintly Henry and the crookbacked Richard.

The later period beginning with *1 Henry VI* and ending with *Richard III* shows the breakdown of medievalism and transition to the modern world through violence and disorder, the forces of disintegration culminating in the product of the long and cruel civil war, Richard, the strange and hideous flower of evil. Kingsford[9] rightly points out :

> Underneath it all there went on silently that steady growth of national consciousness which is the real quality of fifteenth-century England. The destruction of the old monarchy and the feudal nobility was only the crudest instance of a transformation which extended throughout the whole sphere of the national life. The political change which it helped to bring to pass was in truth no more than the instrument through which the

[9] C. J. Kingsford : *Prejudice and Promise in 15th Century England.*

greater intellectual and social forces were set to work.

VIII

Shakespeare presents *Richard II* so carefully that it is, in a sense, the best dramatic history of the reign, while *Henry IV* in its idealization of the hero-king marks not only the climax of medievalism but also the culmination of the forces of history which develop throughout the earlier part of the octology.

Shakespeare has laid stress on the dramatic pattern of contrast : between Richard II and Henry V, and between Henry VI and Richard III. In the full series of his English historical plays many characters in similar patterns appear. It is wrong to think that Shakespeare deliberately idealizes Henry V as the hero-king of the Middle Ages. What he wanted to show was that Henry V satisfied temporarily the need of a particular period of English history and that consequently there was a pause in the series of disasters. But he also showed that history was coursing through new channels under the pressure of new forces and problems. The solution of the problem of transition is presented in *Richard III*.

It is also in *Richard III*, the concluding play of the octology, that Shakespeare lays deliberate and distinct emphasis on the working of God's will in English history. The octology is, as Danby[10] calls it, 'the Divine Comedy of God's revenges'. Richard at times strikes us as a simple enough force of evil, even attracting our sympathy in spite of villainy. But as

[10] J. F. Danby : *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature.*

gradually the play moves on towards the great reversal, the role of Richard seems to change. Even as God's tool, he comes to develop a certain independence of personality opposed to the divine scheme. With the ironical change of his role and an awakening of conscience Richard shows a deviation from his 'nature' and becomes a complex character. Ribner[11] points out :

> God uses his own instrument, Henry of Richmond, an agent of divine grace, who cleanses the social order, vindicates divine justice, and with the evil force of Richard destroyed, effects a rebirth of the good . . . Richard's career from the very first . . . is part of a great providential scheme . . . Richard's very challenging of God's order is, like Satan's, a furthering of God's purposes.

But it is difficult to agree with Ribner when he says that until the final act 'Richard is the symbol of England, and she suffers the degradation which her King's devotion to evil entails.' In fact, under God's guidance Richmond is England fighting against the power of Evil that Richard is. Here is Good trying to re-assert itself—Good that lay stunned and ineffective temporarily, though long enough, but refused to be subverted and to identify itself with Evil. Richard is a violent deviation from 'nature' and is in isolation so that he ceases to corrupt. Tillyard[12] rightly points out :

> Whereas the sins of other men had merely bred more sins, Richard's are so vast that they are absorptive, not contagious. He is the great ulcer of the body politic into which all its impurity is drained and against which

[11] I. Ribner : *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy.*
[12] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's History Plays.*

all the members of the body politic are united.

IX

Traces of Shakespeare's 'feudal' conception of honour are clear in his treatment of the Trojan War in *Troilus and Cressida* : Helen herself becomes 'a theme of honour and renown'. Similarly, in *Henry IV* he makes use of honour as the unifying motif, especially in his presentation of three characters—Hotspur, Prince Henry and Falstaff. But the flaw lies in the lack of the sense of balance and proportion, in the excessive importance given to Falstaff and the full comic circle. Thus the main purpose of the chronicle play comes to be obscured by the comic underworld.

The contrast between Richard II and Henry V is emphasized by Yeats[13] :

> He saw indeed . . . in Richard II the defeat that awaits all, whether they be artists or saints who find themselves where men ask of them a rough energy and have nothing to give but some contemplative virtue . . .

Henry V who is a plotter even when he is in the tavern and in his ironical soliloquy comments on his associates, 'I know you all', is very different. Yeats writes :

> He has the gross vices, the coarse nerves, of one who is to rule among violent people . . . He is as remorseless and undistinguished as some natural force . . . His purposes are so intelligible to everybody that everybody tells of him as if he succeeded, although he fails in

[13] W. B. Yeats : *Ideas of Good and Evil.*

> the end, as all men great and little fail in Shakespeare. His conquests abroad are made nothing by a woman turned warrior . . . Shakespeare watched Henry V not indeed as he watched the greater souls in the visionary procession . . . and he spoke his tale, as he spoke all tales, with tragic irony.

Taken as a full series, the octology presents some really striking patterns, and one cannot but praise Shakespeare's art of dramatic cohesion and construction. There are vivid and patterned contrasts in mood and personality. Fortune rises and falls almost regularly, as the vast scheme of history works and moves. Characters group and re-group themselves, sometimes in mad whirls, as in dances, moving quickly from one situation to another. Danby points out :

> Shakespeare consciously pursues a principle of emergence. Each play ends with a group destined to grow in importance, to become dominant, and then decline. The whole movement reaches its climax in Richard III . . . Richard is the last, the most formidable, the wickedest, and the greatest of the unsatisfactory kings. Around him is arranged the phalanx of sorrowing queens—the debris of the preceding plays, kept alive only by the desire to see the completion of God's pattern : His revenge and His justification.

The characters who are thus left alive have all suffered. They are only 'beholders of this tragic play', as Shakespeare calls them, assembled and kept waiting on the threshold of a great happening : a tremendous ritual and sacrifice for the redemption and purification of England.

X

There is in *3 Henry VI* : V : 6 a passage which explains the character of Richard. It comes when he kills Henry :

> I that have neither pity, love, nor fear . . .
> Then since the heavens have shaped my body so
> Let hell make crookt my mind to answer it...
> And this word 'love', which greybeards call divine,
> Be resident in men like one another,
> And not in me : I am myself alone.[14]

Extreme individualism, and the malformed body as the outward sign of a malignant soul—with these marks Richard steps into the scheme of the great octology. Symbolically, the killing of the King was a ritual which isolated Richard from the rest of the corrupt body of nobles. At once the great dichotomy between the spiritual and social realities becomes clear, and as the full significance of the cleavage is revealed, all that happens comes to be transfigured under the light of this revelation. Richard is found to be not merely the full consciousness of the York-Lancaster conflict : he turns the average godlessness of his environment into a principle of action which seeks to destroy the basis and structure of a stable and traditional society—the world of Henry VI. There is in Richard a Machiavellian loneliness in planning which the soliloquies repeatedly bring out, a diabolic intellect and a demonic will in deadly isolation. But as Danby rightly points out :

[14] In *The Spanish Tragedy* Lorenzo says: 'I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend'. (III : 2)

> In the scheme of God's revenge—a masterly irony—the Machiavel himself is only God's tool.

The fissure comes later when the questioning note appears nearly at the last moment on Bosworth Field, as Richard starts out of his dream in his tent :

> Give me another horse—bind up my wounds—
> Have mercy, Jesu ! Soft, I did but dream.
> O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me ! . . .
> What do I fear ? Myself ? There's none else by :
> Richard loves Richard ; that is I am I.
> Is there a murderer here ? No—yes, I am :
> Then fly. What, from myself ? Great reason why :
> Lest I revenge. What myself upon myself ?
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore ? for any good
> That I myself have done unto myself ?
> O, no ! alas, I rather hate myself
> For hateful deeds committed by myself . . .
> I shall despair.[15] There is no creature loves me ;
> And if I die,[15] no soul shall pity me :
> Nay, wherefore should they—since that I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself ?[16] [V : 3]

Richard who had 'neither pity, love, nor fear' is changing, and, as he changes, his world crumbles. In his death the evil force of Machiavellian isolation disappears. As he becomes unlike himself, the regenerated world of

[15] Eight times in this scene the ghosts of Richard's victims curse him : '...despair and die.'

[16] There are 35 references to Richard's 'self' in the full speech—a remarkable example of ego-consciousness and self-analysis.

normality asserts itself in the resurgence of pity, love and fear.

Hall supplies the main principle of the secular theme but in applying 'the prevalent belief that God had guided England into her haven of Tudor prosperity'[17] Shakespeare turns a chronicle play into a religious drama. The bare framework of *Richard III* (if it is considered as secular drama) comes from the current Machiavellian revenge tragedy of the Elizabethan age. But because Shakespeare wanted to give the play a pronounced religious temper he employs the ritual technique and style regularly and brings it so close to the Morality play.[18] Both Rossiter and Tillyard have noticed traces of the ritual technique and the Morality in the three parts of *Henry VI*. The method, far more elaborate in *Richard III*, is peculiarly effective not only by itself but also in the contrast which it affords.

XI

Considered as the last play of the octology, *Richard III* has its special importance. In a sense, it is not a tragedy. The tragedy of Richard is a purely personal one ; on the plane of national issues it is the end of tragedy, an end to national disasters. *Richard III* grows out of what Tillyard calls Shakespeare's 'grim and long fidelity to Hall's pattern of cause and

[17] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's Historical Plays.*

[18] Shakespeare makes use of various devices to produce the atmosphere of ritual and the Morality—characters like Margaret and Anne, the choric element, dream supernaturalism of various kinds, incantatory stichomythia, ritualistic invocation, etc. The ritual element is particularly strong in the following scenes: I : 3 ; II : 2 ; IV : 1 ; IV : 4 ; V : 3.

effect.' But the pattern is both biblical and political. Danby rightly points out :

> This pattern might ultimately be based on the biblical text concerning 'the sins of the fathers.' Developed in the late-medieval theme of the falls of princes, it was adjusted by the Tudor historians to a Tudor-propaganda purpose.

The biblical-political idea works as the spine of the octology, and in *Richard III* the religious note becomes dominant. The repeated references to God are not merely formal or mechanical ; they are an integral part and insistent rhythm of dramatic thought.

Richard III is a chronicle play to be studied as religious drama. The theme is, in a sense, almost grossly secular but its patriotic interest brings it close to the religious plane. As horror piles upon horror, and all sufferings multiply,[19] one feels the need for religion, the need for the sign of the Father in heaven. In no other Shakesperean play is this need for divine guidance and intervention so much emphasized. Here is truly religious treatment of a secular theme. All the important characters pray to God, each in his or her own way, and there is at times a grim sense of irony in the conflict between their interests, till all interests converge and become unified against the evil force of

[19] Shakespeare gives us a glimpse of the people and their sufferings in II : 3. The following passage is interesting :

> Before the days of change still is it so :
> By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust
> Ensuing danger, as, by proof, we see
> The waters swell before a boisterous storm.
> But leave it all to God.

Richard. Fatalism, pagan or Christian, which is so strong in Shakespearean tragedy, is replaced by the religious sense and the piety of the Middle Ages, and the play ends as an act of worship (like *Murder in the Cathedral*) with 'God say Amen !'[20]

[20] Shaw finds in Richard III a 'mixed' character, and in his preface to *Man and Superman* he remarks : 'Richard III, too, is delightful as the whimsical comedian who stops a funeral to make love to the corpse's son's window.'

4 PLAYS UNPLEASANT

I

In a play like *Measure for Measure* the 'mingled drama' may be called 'dark comedy' but is the dark light enough ? Is the play closer to tragedy ? Again, does the play, even as a 'dark comedy', present any problem or thesis ? These are only some of the questions which arise in our mind when we approach *Measure for Measure* which, according to Coleridge[1], shows the most painful and the least pleasant part of Shakespeare's genius.

In dramatic literature an interpretation is very often problematic because, unless the dramatist explains (like Shaw) all the details in his preface and stage directions, one can never be quite sure of his intention. Besides, no drama is complete by itself because it depends on performance, and the actor and the director can make it quite different from what it was meant to be by the dramatist himself. There are situations and speeches in which an actor by his voice or gesture can give to significant marginal moments a meaning which comes as a surprise (sometimes quite pleasant) to the dramatist or critic.

II

The social background of *All's Well that Ends Well* is very different from that of

[1] S. T. Coleridge : *Notes on Shakespeare.*

Measure for Measure. In the former play the problem, if any, remains confined to a group of individuals. In the latter play the picture of society, which is rather important, is one of evil. The Duke himself admits :

> And liberty plucks justice by the nose ;
> The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
> Goes all decorum . . . [I : 3]

The problems of Claudio and Angelo are related to the condition of Vienna where, as the Duke admits again :

> I have seen corruption boil and bubble
> Till it o'errun the stew . . . [V : 1]

The Duke wants to remove this corruption, and yet inconsistently enough, the Christian ethic is almost unduly emphasized in the context of social evils. Besides, there is hardly any indication that this ethic makes any effective change in the social pattern at the end of the play. The play opens with a social problem that ends in a very different manner, the dramatic interest being shifted from the social plane to a complex design of individuals and incidents. The dramatist plays the part of a good neighbour who hushes up a scandal without solving any problem. The problem which is, in a sense, also the thesis of the play is : authority should be so exercised that justice and mercy may be combined for the effective removal of corruption from society. But neither the problem nor the thesis receives a fair and convincing treatment in the play. *Measure for Measure* is an awkward comedy of unconvincing compromise, and neither here nor in *All's Well that Ends Well* do we find any real integration, dramatic or moral. Both the plays stress, at

certain moments, the ethical implications of the relation between apperance and reality. But the vision of life which is presented is not clear enough. Rightly does Eliot[2] remark : 'Humankind cannot bear very much reality'.

III

Potts[3] defines a problem play as a drama that

> . . . treats the situations that arise in society simply as moral or political problems in the abstract and without reference to the idiosyncrasies of human nature.

But this is not what we find in *Measure for Measure*. *Troilus and Cressida* which is a much deeper and wider exploration of evil comes closer to Potts's description. In a true problem play the problem as such is the centre of interest. Tillyard[4] remarks :

> When sheer explication . . . takes first place, then we leave the realm of tragedy for that of the problem play. Here it is the problems themselves, their richness, their interest, and their diversity, and not their solution or significant arrangement that come first.

But when we think of *Measure for Measure* do we think of the richness of its problems, their interest and their diversity ? In fact, we find here complications in situations and characters, problems of action rather than thought. It is therefore difficult to agree with Charlton[5] when he says : 'Intellect rather than imagination is forcing the issue.'

[2] T. S. Eliot : *Murder in the Cathedral.*
[3] L. J. Potts : *Comedy.*
[4] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's Problem Plays.*
[5] H. B. Charlton : *Shakespearian Comedy.*

Measure for Measure is generally known as a 'dark comedy.' Charlton explains :

> That epithet is generally taken to mean, not only that in these plays the seamier, indeed the nastiest, side of life obtrudes more persistently than elsewhere in Shakespeare, but that their underlying mood is one of bitter cynicism.

But Grierson[6] rightly points out :

> Even in those plays, again, in which one detects an alloy of bitterness, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, there is no criticism of accepted moral standards and no arraignment of Providence.

In fact, the critical element is not strong enough. It exposes what is evil but it allows the play to drift towards an awkward compromise.

Critics like Knight,[7] Chambers,[8] Leavis[9] and Battenhouse[10] contend that *Measure for Measure* is a Christian play. Knight says :

> . . . the plot is so arranged that each person receives his deserts in the light of the Duke's —which is really the Gospel—ethic . . . The Duke, like Jesus, is the prophet of a new order of ethics . . . The Duke's ethical attitude is exactly correspondent with Jesus' : the play must be read in the light of the Gospel teaching, if its full significance is to be apparent.

Knight goes even so far as to emphasize the similarity between the language of Shakespeare

[6] H. J. C. Grierson : *Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century.*
[7] G. W. Knight : *The Wheel of Fire.*
[8] R W. Chambers : *Man's Unconquerable Mind.*
[9] F. R. Leavis : *The Common Pursuit.*
[10] R. W. Battenhouse : '*Measure for Measure* and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement' (*PMLA*, December, 1946).

and that of the Gospels of John and Matthew. But all this, although quite interesting, is also rather confusing because *Measure for Measure* was composed in 1604, while the Authorized Version appeared in 1611.

IV

What is the vision of man in the dark comedies of Shakespeare ? Hamlet, even when he says, 'man delights not me', gives us the Renaissance conception of man :

> What a piece of work is man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! . . . in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! [II : 2]

In spite of the revelation of evil in *Hamlet* this faith in man, which is central to tragedy, remains unshaken. But a play like *Measure for Measure* or *All's Well that Ends Well* leaves a very different impression, even though there are some really good and honest men and women in these plays. They are the daylight of these plays but the light is not strong enough to dispel darkness :

> man, proud man
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep : [*M.f.M.* II : 2]

> Thou hast neither youth nor age
> But as it were, an after-dinner's sleep
> Dreaming on both. [*M.f.M.* III : 1]

In *All's Well that Ends Well* a French lord says : '. . . as we are ourselves, what things are we !' (IV : 3). Again, in the same scene Parolles whines : '. . . let me live, sir, in a dungeon, i' the stocks, or anywhere, so I may live'. And Claudio says in *Measure for Measure* : 'Sweet sister, let me live'. (III : 1). When Hamlet speculates on death, the motif is, in reality, the sense of mystery in life. In *Measure for Measure* it is arrant cowardice, a complete collapse, when Claudio says :

> Ay, but to die, and we know not where ;
> To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot. [III : 1]

Leavis rightly draws our attention to what he calls 'the assortment of attitudes towards death'. In fact, *Measure for Measure,* is, in a sense, a dramatization of progress towards self-knowledge under the shadow of death, or rather, more precisely, the fear of death. The Duke who, according to Escalus, 'contended to know himself' (III : 2) emphasizes this fear of death (III : 1) :

> Thy best of rest is sleep,
> And that thou oft provok'st ; yet grossly fear'st
> Thy death, which is no more . . .
> Yet in this life
> Lie hid moe thousand deaths ; yet death we fear.

In the same scene Isabella says :

> The sense of death is most in apprehension.

And Claudio in his break-down pleads :

> The weariest and most loathed worldly life
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.

Barnardine alone is 'insensible of mortality'. (IV : 2).

V

Measure for Measure has its moments of the tragic mood and its poetry—great poetry—of despair and dejection. But it differs essentially from a Shakespearean tragedy : it has neither a truly tragic issue nor the depth of *Macbeth* or *King Lear.* Chambers writes :

> *Measure for Measure,* whilst it is akin to the tragedies with which it is contemporary, has also a likeness to those 'Romances' with which Shakespeare crowned his work.

But in spite of all the emphasis that Chambers, Knight and Leavis lay on its so-called Christian ethics, *Measure for Measure* is fundamentally different from the last plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest,* in which also wrongs are faced and wrongs are forgiven. Finally, in spite of certain romantic elements, and even though formally it is a comedy, *Measure for Measure* is completely different from Shakespeare's happy romantic comedies—*As You Like It,* for instance.

The romantic stuff is, however, emphasized by Chambers :

> Disguise and impersonation and misunderstanding are the very life of romantic comedy. The disguised monarch, who can learn the private affairs of his humblest subject, becomes a sort of earthly Providence, combining omniscience and omnipotence.

Leavis goes further :

> He, his delegation of authority and his disguise (themselves familiar romantic conventions) are the means by which Shakespeare transforms a comedy into a completely and profoundly serious 'criticism of life'.

Nothing of the kind. We shall see that *Measure for Measure* is very different indeed from the kinds of drama suggested above.

VI

The happy romantic comedies of Shakespeare are instinct with the spirit of the Renaissance—the spirit which Hamlet so eloquently expresses (II : 2) in spite of his melancholy. Here, again, life is presented as an adventure, and love as the motive force of action. Here is enjoyment rather than criticism. The centre of drama is, however, character—especially the romantic heroine, a harmonious blend of will, emotion and intelligence : one who has an instinctive control over the art of winning happiness and success in life. In a sense, character is destiny in Shakespearean comedy—even as in tragedy.

In all these respects the dark comedies of Shakespeare are very different. The vision of life and man is different. Instead of love we have a very different relation between man and woman—sordid and unwholesome. Women like Isabella and Helena suffer in comparison with the bright heroines like Rosalind and Portia or the tender figures in romances—Perdita and Miranda. Isabella is a somewhat Miltonic character with what Chambers calls 'the ferocity of the martyr'. She changes again and

again in course of dramatic action till Shakespeare brings her down to the average level, and she cries : 'O, I will to him and pluck out his eyes !' (IV : 3). In the dark comedy men and women are different : the stuff and vision of life are different. *Measure for Measure* is a comedy only by courtesy.

VII

But *Measure for Measure* is powerful drama. Its painfulness or unpleasantness is part of life and part of the power of the play. Its power, however, lies in dramatic moments, not in the structure. In trying to bring about dramatic cohesion Shakespeare employs various devices. On the plane of action substitution is employed as a device—Angelo for the Duke, Mariana for Isabella, Ragozine for Claudio. Shakespeare shows also some skill in combining Claudio-Julia, Angelo-Isabella and Angelo-Mariana episodes. On a deeper level we notice the operation of two forces—what Leavis calls 'the assortment of attitudes towards death', and the problem of the relation between appearance and reality.

It is difficult to agree with Tillyard when he says that the second half of the play is inferior to its first half. In fact, the most defective part is the opening. Scenes 2 and 3 in Act IV offer an extremely interesting situation—very nearly dominated by Barnardine. It will be seen that much of the interest of the situation is bound up with Barnardine who is not, however, essential to the plot. In *All's Well that Ends Well* Parolles says : 'Simply the thing I am shall make me live.' (IV : 3). Here is the secret of the spell of

Barnardine, the loathsome and fascinating flower of evil :

> A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep ; careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come ; insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal. [IV : 2]

The situation (IV : 2) is tense enough but the tension of suspense becomes unbearable when Angelo sends his message : '. . . let Claudio be executed by four of the clock . . .' The Duke suggests a substitute as a counter-measure : 'Let this Barnardine be this morning executed, and his head borne to Angelo.' Standing under the dim light of the prison, when 'it is almost clear dawn' and 'the unfolding star calls up the shepherd', the worried Friar shows 'the hand and seal', as the great decision is made : 'the return of the duke.' And the Friar chooses to be the Duke in the afternoon.

Then there is a sudden change (IV : 3), and the taut moment relaxes to cause a surprise and to offer even grim fun in spite of suspense : Barnardine firmly refuses to die ! He is at first only a growl. Then Pompey whispers : 'He is coming, sir, he is coming ; I hear his straw rustle.' And as his straw rustles, like a huge animal in a cage, Barnardine appears—a Barabbas in prison !

Barnardine : I will not consent to die this day, that's certain.

Duke : O, sir, you must : and therefore I beseech you . . .

Barnardine : I swear I will not die today for any man's persuasion.

Duke : But hear you—

Barnardine : Not a word : if you have anything to say to me, come to my ward ; from thence will not I today. [Exit]

Barnardine is the lost soul, 'unfit to live or die', a symbol of corruption and animality—perfect of his kind and therefore fascinating in art. 'Simply the thing I am shall make me live.' Shakespeare likes Barnardine and allows him to live. Barnardine comes and goes and produces a memorable dramatic moment. But he is not the solution of the problem of the situation. The solution comes in another substitute : Ragozine.

VIII

Aristotle calls a plot 'epeisodic' in which episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. The plot of *Measure for Measure* is almost 'epeisodic' because of certain very serious deficiencies. The play suffers from a certain lack of the clarity of the design. Charlton admits :

> This is not to claim that dramatically Shakespeare's solution is better or even as good as Cinthio's.

But Leavis who tries to justify the dramatic art of *Measure for Measure* thinks that its 'complexity of attitudes' is not the same thing as 'conflict or contradiction'. He adds :

> . . . the resolution of the plot of *Measure for Measure* is a consummately right and satisfactory fulfilment of the essential design.

The two really important points in which Shakespeare differs from Cinthio are : the

social and moral background, and the Duke. The socio-moral emphasis and the invention of the Duke are closely related. Shakespeare had no intention to write a problem play. The socio-moral circumstances were necessary for the creation of the Duke and for providing the scope of his activity. The Duke, again, is necessary for all that is made to happen in the play.

The real problem in *Measure for Measure* is neither moral nor social. It is the problem which every artist has to face—finding the right form for his matter : in a sense, broadly speaking, the problem of what Eliot calls 'the objective correlative'.

The socio-moral context gives the play a certain seriousness but it also serves as the pool out of which emerge the Claudio-Julia, Angelo-Isabella and even Angelo-Mariana episodes. By planting the Duke in the social context under normal circumstances Shakespeare could not have the opportunity to present the full series of dramatic moments and intriguing situations. What he wanted was a disguised Duke—a Duke-Friar. This led to the delegation of authority which made it possible for the Duke to watch, while in disguise.

The Duke is the pivot of the play but neither his character nor his action is clear enough. With his departure the play really begins, and we are kept waiting for the solution of the problem. But there is no change in the social set-up when he returns, and the city of Vienna does not in any way promise to be a better place. Shakespeare has not been able to present the Duke as a convincing and consistent

character. The Duke who is called 'a scholar, a statesman and a soldier' (III : 2), and yet has 'ever loved life removed' (I : 3) and 'contended especially to know himself' (III : 2) cannot explain convincingly why he allowed corruption to grow and why he delegated authority and yet wanted to watch the trusted man. But did he really trust Angelo ? If not, why did he delegate authority to him ? Why did he not select Escalus whom he praises so much ? One must be fair to Angelo. Authority was thrust upon him. Angelo himself says : 'Let there be some more test made of my metal' (I : 1). The Duke himself calls Angelo 'a man of stricture and firm abstinence' (I : 3). Escalus says :

> If any in Vienna be of worth
> To undergo such ample grace and honour,
> It is Lord Angelo. [I : 1]

Even Isabella remarks : 'A due sincerity governed his deeds.' (I : 1) And yet the Duke comments :

> Hence shall we see
> If power change purpose, what our seemers be. [I : 3]

The Duke is a Prospero-like figure, and in him we notice something like an identification of the plot with his character. He moves like Providence and characterizes himself by providing a series of intriguing situations. But he also takes away much of the interest of the plot because we know that he will direct the action to his desired end. Leavis says :

> His attitude, nothing could be plainer, is meant to be ours—his total attitude, which is the total attitude of the play.

But one of the real problems of the play lies in its failure to establish this identification. Is the Duke's attitude our attitude to what happens in the play ? Is not dramatic motivation in Scenes 1 and 3 in the First Act weak, inadequate and unsatisfactory ? The character of the Duke, who is the centre of the play, suffers from a lack of the clarity of intention. Consequently, the weak centre fails to hold together the incidents and characters of the play in a credible and convincing sequence.

IX

Commenting on Elizabethan drama Virginia Woolf[11] speaks of :

> . . . the greatest infliction that Elizabethan drama puts upon us—the plot ; the incessant, improbable, almost unintelligible convolutions which presumably gratified the spirit of an excitable and unlettered public . . .

This is largely true. What the Elizabethans or Jacobeans (dramatists or their audience) primarily cared for was a succession of theatrical moments for a large number of characters. But the links between situations or between a situation and a character were in most cases left to take care of themselves. Inadequate motivation or lack of motivation led to all kinds of inconsistency and improbability.

Measure for Measure is neither a problem play nor a thesis play, in the ordinary sense ; its socio-moral problem or thesis has been given undue importance. It is a dark comedy because of its gloomy background and grim materials, and a dark comedy can be darker than a

[11] V. Woolf : *The Common Reader.*

tragedy. When Shakespeare read Cinthio's story he at once noticed its dramatic possibilities —in terms of characters and situations. Dramatic exigency explains what happens in the play as a work of art, and if there is any problem in the play, it is one of matter seeking expression in art-form, the problem of the objective correlative. Shakespeare composed hastily, and was probably aware of his weakness, but he knew his audience who never minded motivation so long as they had a quick succession of theatrical moments and characters. In *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare is not a real master of the dramatic art, even though he shows uncommon mastery of dramatic moments.

Measure for Measure is to be studied as mingled drama. Its ending, which, as Spencer[12] points out, is 'awkwardly manoeuvred', makes it a comedy. But, in a sense, it is also an averted tragedy, even as *Romeo and Juliet* is an averted comedy. No true tragedy can be averted : in *Measure for Measure* there is no inevitableness in the sequence of events. Here, again, the weakness of motivation is clearly noticed. *Measure for Measure* provides, like *Hamlet,* materials for a study in the problem of the objective correlative in drama.

X

Shakespearean criticism generally agrees that *Troilus and Cressida* is 'the most difficult of all Shakespeare's plays to deal with'. (Dr. Furnivall). One of the main difficulties

[12] T. Spencer : *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man.*

is : how to place or class it ? Probably this is the reason why the First Folio (1623) put it between the histories and the tragedies, suggesting that it had the character of both. The Quarto epistle (1609) pleads that the play is a comedy and seeks to emphasize the comic genius of the author. But the epistle sounds more like special pleading with a motive, a defensive interpretation, than a precise description of the nature of the play. Probably the play caused some displeasure, and the publisher hastened to assure the reading public that it was a comedy not to be taken too seriously. *Troilus and Cressida* is not, however, a comedy, dark or otherwise, though there is something of the comic spirit in both Pandarus (I : 1 and 2) and Thersites (V : 4 and 7). The note of satire is too strong to permit the play to develop as a comedy, and both the themes of love and war end in disasters which can never be associated with a comedy.

The attempt to explain it as a problem play is equally unconvincing and unsatisfactory. In the theme of love in *Troilus and Cressida* there is hardly any problem, while the theme of war presents a picture of war-weary camps seeking strength in the sense of honour. The Trojan conference is a debate which brings out what Danby[13] calls 'the unity of Reason and Resolve', in which the problem that is Helen is forgotten. She becomes, on the other hand, 'a theme of honour and renown'. In the Greek conference the pedantry of Ulysses simply urges that there is need for discipline and that the insolence of Achilles must be checked and that he must be forced to fight against Troy in the interest of

[13] J. F. Danby : *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature.*

the Greeks. There is no specific problem which has been systematically worked out to give *Troilus and Cressida* the character of a true problem play.[14]

A thesis play has something positive to say, as a discussion or comment or solution, usually on a problem which is explicit or implicit in the play. The difference becomes clear when the dramatist indicates the emphasis that he seeks to lay on the problem or the thesis. In *Troilus and Cressida* there is hardly any emphasis on any problem as such. The intransigence of Achilles is not a problem : he is actually roused and does his job in his own way. The real interest of the play lies in war and what Shakespeare thinks of it. In this sense *Troilus and Cressida* is a thesis play, but only in the Shakespearean manner, which means that it is not a propaganda play.

Troilus and Cressida, which is not primarily a work of imagination, has its own poetic and dramatic methods. Treachery and falsehood, in love or war—here is the real theme of the play which certainly stresses the seamy side of life revealed by a long-drawn war. But though the note of satire is bitter enough, all is not lost. Something really good is still left in life, although it is temporarily upset or overwhelmed. There is Troilus who is wiser. There is Ulysses who subordinates the individual to the state and tries to discover the mystery of the soul of a state which has lost its soul.

Troilus and Cressida is Shakespeare's Shavian play, but far more bitter than anything that Shaw has written. It is certainly one of

[14] Vide Potts's remark on the problem play (p. 65).

Shakespeare's plays unpleasant. In a very broad sense, it is a thesis play on war, with love woven into its texture. The Prologue says :

> Like or find fault, do as your pleasures are,
> Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.

The title of the play is based on the love episode but it is possible to interpret the 'falsehood' of Cressida as an intimate part of the corruption which is war. It is possible, again, to think of it as weakness rather than evil, for there is a ring of sincerity in Cressida's love in the earlier part of the play, which has a faint echo even in the betrayal scene :

> 'Twas one that loved me better than you will.
> [V : 2]

But then it is difficult to ignore the comment of Ulysses :

> There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip ;
> Nay, her foot speaks, her wanton spirits look out
> At every joint, and motive of her body :
> [IV : 5]

A change in 'character-conception', especially to suit a particular situation, is not at all rare in Shakespearean drama.

Only a very small part of the thesis of *Troilus and Cressida* is indicated by Shaw[15] :

> Homer presented Achilles and Ajax as heroes . . . In due time came Shakespeare who said virtually : I really cannot accept this spoilt child and this brawny fool as great

[15] G. B. Shaw : Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans.*

> men . . . Consequently we have in *Troilus and Cressida* the verdict of Shakespeare's epoch (our own) on the pair.

There is, again, an interesting passage in the Quarto epistle (1609) : '. . . were but the vain names of comedies chang'd for the titles of commodities or of plays for pleas . . .' The passage is rather obscure. What is really meant by 'plays for pleas' ? Is the phrase in any way related to the plan of a thesis play ?

In *Troilus and Cressida* the notes of satire and tragedy are almost equally pronounced. In a sense, *Troilus and Cressida* is the tragedy of Troy. In the love theme the tragedy of separation becomes the tragedy of betrayed love. In the war theme Hector is killed. It is the Greeks who win, and the Trojans who lose. Diomedes is in the love theme what Achilles is in the theme of war. The tragedy of Troilus is his loss of Cressida ; the tragedy of Hector is his loss of life ; and both Diomedes and Achilles are false to honour, which is Shakespeare's satire. But there is a touch of sympathy in the relation between Troilus and Ulysses, the leading figures in the two camps, as they come to like and respect each other. The range of Elizabethan drama is wide enough to permit the inclusion of *Troilus and Cressida* as a satiric thesis play in the form of a tragedy—a mingled drama, remarkably powerful in its effect.

The thesis of the play is the ravage of war, a merciless delineation of disorder and corruption, selfishness and vanity, treachery and falsehood, debasement of man. Helen is a strumpet, Patroclus a 'masculine whore'.

Pandarus is a lewd bawd, and Thersites a snarling cur. Ajax is an insolent fool. Achilles is a treacherous coward. Ulysses is at times only a mean plotter. Even Hector has his frailty, his weakness for the armour which costs him his life. The general sense of confusion appears in the voice of Achilles :

> My mind is troubled like a fountain stirr'd,
> And I myself see not the bottom of it.
> [III : 3]

There is an unnerving tension of misgiving and insecurity, fear and suspicion, all throughout the play. Gone are all the illusions of romance, and the poetry of the Trojan war has been defeated by its prose. Rightly does Fluchère[16] remark : 'A whole world is breaking up on the windy plains of Troy'.

XI

But there is a deeper level of the thesis, which is Time in its relation to Appearance and Reality. Knights[17] points out :

> Why, Shakespeare seems to be asking, has time its apparently overwhelming power ? The answer towards which the play seems to tend is that time is an ultimate reality to those who live in a world of appearance.

The time theme comes probably from Norden's *Vicissitudo* (according to Harrison[18]) and

[16] H. Fluchère : *Shakespeare and the Elizabethans.*
[17] L. C. Knights : *Some Shakespearean Themes.*
[18] G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare at Work.*

Hawes's *Pastime of Pleasure* (according to Tillyard[19]). In IV : 5 Hector says :

> There they stand yet : and modestly I think,
> The fall of every Phrygian stone will cost
> A drop of Grecian blood : the end crowns all,
> And that old common arbitrator, Time,
> Will one day end it.

It seems to be an echo of Hawes's passage :

> Do not I, Tyme, cause nature to decay . . .
> In tyme Troye the cyte was edyfied ;
> By tyme also was the destruccyon.

Time appears again and again in *Troilus and Cressida* on the planes of love and war. Even Pandarus says : 'Well, the gods are above ; time must friend or end.' (I : 2.) Again, Ulysses to Nestor :

> I have a young conception in my brain,
> Be you my time to bring it to some shape.
> [I : 3]

In a passage central to the play, for which Shakespeare carefully prepares the ground, Ulysses says :

> Time hath, my Lord, a wallet at his back,
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion :
> A great siz'd monster of ingratitudes . . .
> For time is like a fashionable host,
> That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand
> And with his arms out-stretch'd, as he would fly,
> Grasps in the comer . . .
> . . . for beauty, wit,
> Love, friendship, charity are subjects all
> To envious and calumniating time. [III : 3]

[19] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's Problem Plays.*

When Diomedes comes to take Cressida, Paris says :

> There is no help :
> The bitter disposition of the time will have it so. [IV : 1]

Troilus to Cressida :

> Injurious time now with a robber's haste
> Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how. [IV : 4]

Thus throughout the play oblivion, ingratitude, destruction, envy, power to give shape to events, interference in human life, etc. are associated with time in respect of the course of both love and war. Knight[20] says :

> Throughout this play . . . we have a philosophy of love which regards it as essentially un-at-home in time . . . The love-interest turns on this theme : the theme of immediate value, killed or apparently killed by time.

Traversi[21] comments :

> The tragedy consists less in the personal suffering of Troilus than in the overriding influence exercised by time upon human relationship and feelings.

Though there is not a single passage in *Troilus and Cressida* in which Shakespeare tells us what time is, we may interpret time[22] as a

[20] G. W. Knight : *The Wheel of Fire.*
[21] D. A. Traversi in *Srutiny* (December, 1938).
[22] The reference to *time* appears in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (IV:1) and sonnets 12, 16, 19, etc. Kyd also makes use of *time* in *The Spanish Tragedy* :

> Time is the author both of truth and right,
> And time will bring this treachery to light. [II : 5].

The conception of *time* (*kāla* or *mahākāla*) as *fate* is quite common in Sanskrit or Bengali literature.

mysterious force beyond the control of man, operating in an inexplicable and incalculable way, and nearly always baffling the aims and intentions of man. By rousing Achilles it certainly serves the aim of Ulysses but it also mocks his policy which, as Thersites says, 'grows into an ill-opinion.' Time succeeds where the policy fails. But Achilles was partly roused by the stratagem of Ulysses. Time's work did the rest.

But Shakespeare uses other terms like *accident, chance, destiny, fate, fortune* and *luck* in the play, sometimes in the very context in which *time* appears. It is thus possible to interpret *time* as only a facet or an aspect or agent of the force of *fate* against which is pitted the force of the human *will.*[23] There is enough evidence in the play to prove the conflict between these two forces, which is not really very different from the traditional pattern of the conflict between character and fate in a tragedy. The will-motif has been ignored, while the time-motif has been over-emphasized by the interpreters of *Troilus and Cressida.*

The importance of the role of will is recognized by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida.* In the Greek council Agamemnon says :

> Sith every action that hath gone before,
> Whereof we have record, trial did draw

[23] In *The Wheel of Fire* Knight points out that *will* is often to be equated with *passion* in Shakespeare's writings, and he refers to *Antony and Cleopatra* (III : 11) and *Othello* (III : 3). But in *Troilus and Cressida* and elsewhere *will* does not clearly indicate what Knight calls 'the emotional quality': it means often, on the other hand, the volitional quality. Whatever may be the significance of *will*—emotion, impulse or volition, the difference being not at all clear in most passages—the will-motif is certainly meant to emphasize *character* in *Troilus and Cressida.*

Bias and thwart, not answering the aim . . .
. . . which are indeed nought else
But the protractive trials of great Jove,
To find persistive constancy in men :
The fineness of which metal is not found
In fortune's love : [I : 3]

Nestor holds the same view :

In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of man . . .
Even so
Doth valour's show and valour's worth divide
In storms of fortune. [I : 3]

But Ulysses detects the malady :

The specialty of rule hath been neglected . . .
The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place . . .
[I : 3]

What Ulysses means is that when the discipline of will is impaired, 'The enterprise is sick.'

Then every thing includes 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 . . .
Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength. [I : 3]

It is a long preparation but it does lead to what Ulyssses calls 'policy' which is planned action issuing from will :

No, make a lottery
And by device let blockish Ajax draw
The sort to fight with Hector. [I : 3]

But it is not lottery, for Ulysses leaves nothing to chance. It is true that Ulysses lectures on

'envious and calumniating time' but the speech is really meant to be a spur to will :

. . . preseverance, dear my Lord,
Keeps honour bright. [III : 3]

Again in the Trojan council the subject of discussion is will :

Troilus : What's aught but as 'tis valued ?
Hector : But value dwells not in particular will . . .
. . . 'Tis mad idolatry,
To make the service greater than the god,
And the will dotes that is inclinable
To what infectiously itself affects . . .
Troilus : I take today a wife, and my election
Is led on in the conduct of my will ;
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,
Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores
Of will and judgment. How may I avoid,
Although my will distaste what it elected,
The wife I chose . . . [II : 2]

Finally, Hector allows his will to be subordinated to that of Troilus :

I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still. [II : 2]

In the councils where we have various manifestations of will the dominant figures are Ulysses and Troilus, and they seem to follow the same course of action. Ulysses wants to rouse Achilles who refuses to fight. Troilus similarly tries to rouse Hector who does not want to continue the fight against the Greeks. So Helen is made 'a theme of honour and renown', a spur to 'valiant and magnanimous deeds'. Even the challenge of Hector is meant to 'wake' Achilles. It is interesting to note how both Ulysses and Troilus work on the lines which

bring about the encounter between Hector and Achilles. Like Troilus, again, Ulysses tries to rouse Achilles by tempting him with the prospects of fame and honour. The will in action is given its full value when Agamemnon prefers 'a stirring dwarf' to 'a sleeping giant.' Ulysses repeats the idea :

> Since things in motion sooner catch the eye
> Than what not stirs. [III : 3]

The manifestation of will is, however, naturally different on the plane of love, when Troilus addresses Cressida :

> 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 : 2]

The painful irony of *true* and *false*, in II: 3, and IV: 4, is again an indication of the conflict between the working of will and the operation of fate. The betrayal scene is a further study in will, and again the main figures are Ulysses and Troilus. Diomedes and Cressida are like figures in a play-within-the-play, and the reaction of Troilus is far more important than what happens between Diomedes and Cressida. The betrayal scene is a bitter trial of will and a cruel award of wisdom :

> There is between my will, and all offences,
> A guard of patience ; stay a little while.
> [V : 2]

There is also a discipline of thought :

> Think we had mothers . . .
> Nothing at all, unless that this were she.
> [V : 2]

But the shock is also a release of will, and the rest of the play is vibrant with quick action.

XII

Spencer[24] deals with the motif of appearance and reality in Shakespearean drama as a metaphysical problem, and its social implication is pointed out by Knights. But this motif is peculiar neither to *Troilus and Cressida* nor to Shakespeare, and drama from *Everyman* to *Murder in the Cathedral* is instinct with the sense of appearance and reality which constitutes the core of life. In Shakespeare this motif is less metaphysical and social but more dramatic. It is very often part of the dramatic device of the irony which Shakespeare systematically employs in *Troilus and Cressida.*

In the Greek council Nestor shows the distinction between 'valour's show' and 'valour's worth' as an affirmation of faith in will without which further moves in the fight cease to have any motivation. The only important item on the agenda of the Trojan council is Nestor's offer :

> Deliver Helen, and all damages else . . .
> Shall be struck off. [II : 2]

Naturally the question of Helen's 'worth' arises. The irony of the situation is that Hector who is right yields to Troilus who is wrong, and both are ruined. That Troilus does not know what 'worth' is only shows his lack of wisdom which, in course of the dramatic transaction, becomes his costly purchase. There

[24] T. Spencer : *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man.*

is irony when Shakespeare makes Troilus use the pearl-image for Cressida and Helen, both of whom are 'worthless.'

> Her bed is India, there she lies, a pearl . . .
> Ourself the merchant . . . [I : 1]
>
> Why, she is a pearl,
> Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,
> And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.
> [II : 2]

But this is what Diomedes says of Helen :

> 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 : 1]

And yet Helen is to Troilus 'a theme of honour and renown.' There is irony in the contrast between the two rivals in love, for when Troilus says, 'I charge thee use her well, even for my charge', the reply from Diomedes is :

> I'll nothing do on charge : to her own worth
> She shall be prized : [IV : 4]

And the irony becomes an agony when in the great betrayal scene which reminds us of *Othello* : IV : I—a study of the similarity and contrast between the two is a lesson in dramatic art—Troilus comes to know the 'worth' of Cressida. The dramatic irony of the apearance-and-reality motif is too strong in III : 3, IV : 4 and V : 2, especially in the verbal pattern of *true* and *false,* to require explanation. The three scenes are the three courses in irony developing into the following climax :

> *This is, and is not Cressid* :
> Within my soul, there doth conduce a fight

> Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate
> Divides more wider than the sky and earth :
> And yet the spacious breadth of this division,
> Admits no orifex for a point as subtle,
> As Ariachne's broken woof to enter.
> [V : 2]

Here is a fugitive moment that leaves a permanent experience, and the discovery by Troilus that to him Cressida is both appearance and reality is a great dichotomy as both pity and irony in the mingled drama of *Troilus and Cressida* which may be called a satiric thesis-tragedy.

XIII

Timon, first published in the Folio of 1623, is certainly the worst-printed of the plays included in that volume. It was composed probably in the period between 1600 and 1608, and was included with the tragedies as an after-thought. It was placed between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* in the space (which it does not fill by nine pages) left by the withdrawal of *Troilus and Cressida* which was held up for some unknown reason.

The text of *Timon* is disfigured and confusing. There is much mislineation, and verse is at times printed as prose, and prose as verse. There is no marking of Acts and Scenes. But at the beginning is mentioned *Actus Primus, Scoena Prima,* and at the end there is an incomplete list of persons under the heading, *The Actors' Names.* In 1623 the play was registered as one of 'the plays not formerly entered to other men.'

The story of Timon the Misanthrope was quite familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. There is an allusion to Timon in *Love's Labour's Lost* (IV : 3). *Skialetheia,* a collection of epigrams and satires, published in 1598, mentions Timon : 'Like hate-man Timon in his cell he sits.' A play on Timon, composed between 1585 and 1600, and meant, according to Dyce[25], for 'an academic audience', has come down to our time in manuscript. In the first volume of Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure* 'the strange and beastly nature of Timon of Athens, with his death, burial, and epitaph' is briefly presented. The matter is evidently derived from Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius* and *Life of Alcibiades,* which are the main sources of Shakespeare. Another probable source is Lucian's dialogue of *Timon or the Man-hater.*

All these facts are to be carefully considered in any estimate of *Timon of Athens,* even if we study the play *as it is.*

XIV

We emphasize the importance of two aproaches to Shakespearean drama, especially in connection with our study of *Timon* : consideration of the nature of the play and examination of the relation between its form and matter. Most of the critics of Shakespeare who have studied *Timon* from these points of view have found it unsatisfactory. They also think that it is an 'unfinished' play. Ellis-Fermor[26], however, goes further :

[25] *Shakespeare's Works* ed. (1857) A. Dyce.
[26] U. Ellis-Fermor : *Shakespeare the Dramatist.*

> *Timon* is an unfinished play in a far deeper sense than that which is implied by saying that Shakespeare let off writing before he had set down all that was in his mind. It is unfinished in this way also, it is true. But what matters more, it is unfinished in conception.

This 'incompleteness', according to her, lies mainly in the character of Timon which is 'inadequate to the theme.'

Several questions arise in our mind as we approach *Timon.* Is it an unfinished play ? What is the nature of this play ? How does it affect the form of this play ? Is its form an experiment ?

Those who call *Timon* an 'unfinished' play think of its discrepancies and inadequacies, mainly in characterization and action. But there are discrepancies in even the best 'finished' plays of Shakespeare. These 'inadequacies' strike us only when we compare *Timon* with the other plays of Shakespeare, but such inadequacies do not seem to be unusual when we compare *Timon* with a play like *Doctor Faustus.* In fact, *Timon* is so different from the other plays of Shakespeare in certain respects that one is tempted to call it an un-Shakespearean play.

But *Timon,* in spite of its irregularities, is not an unfinished play in the sense in which *Christabel* or *Kubla Khan* is an unfinished poem. There is no evidence that *Timon* was performed on the pre-Restoration stage. But there is nothing in the play to indicate that the play, even as we find it, was not meant for performance. A play takes its final shape and form only when it is rehearsed and performed, and sometimes changes do take place

even after several performances. It may be mentioned in this connexion that Eliot made changes in the text of *Murder in the Cathedral* even in the fourth edition—changes 'which have been found advisable by experiment in the course of production.' The conditions of dramatic composition and production in Shakespeare's time indicate that no play, unless it was performed several times, could be called a 'finished' product. Thus *Timon* is an 'unfinished' play in a very different sense : it is Shakespeare's *unperformed play*.

XV

There is no doubt that Shakespeare wanted *Timon* to be different from his other plays. Harrison[27] writes :

> It could hardly be called comedy....Neither was it a tragedy,[28] however loosely the word might de defined, nor even a mongrel tragi-comedy. It belongs rather to a kind of drama for which enough specimens remain to justify a new category—Misanthropy. Misanthropies are plays designed mainly to display the rottenness of human nature. They always include scenes of sordid meanness and one or more persons who rail on humanity at considerable length and with great satisfaction to themselves. Plays of this kind were particularly fashionable in the decade 1598 to 1608 when Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* and its successors popularized the mode.

[27] G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare's Tragedies.*

[28] Why does, then, Harrison discuss *Timon* in detail in his *Shakespeare's Tragedies* ?

But this explanation is not satisfactory for more than one reason. 'Misanthropy' is not an accepted category of plays, and Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* is not a 'Misanthropy'; it is a critical but highly enjoyable comedy. Again, *Timon* cannot be called a 'Misanthropy' (which is 'designed mainly to display the rottenness of human nature') because there is enough evidence in Shakespeare's play to prove that society is by no means altogether evil.

It is true that placing *Timon* is a problem. There are moments when its satirical tone is almost overwhelming. It repeatedly reminds us of plays like Jonson's *Volpone* and Marston's *What You Will*. Hazlitt's[29] remark on *Timon* is :

> It is as much a satire as a play : and contains some of the finest pieces of invective possible to be conceived, both in the snarling, captious answers of the cynic Apemantus, and in the impassioned and more terrible imprecations of Timon. The latter remind the classical reader of the force and swelling impetuosity of the moral declamations in Juvenal, while the former have all the keenness and caustic severity of the old Stoic philosophers. The soul of Diogenes appears to have been seated on the lips of Apemantus . . . The moral sententiousness of this play equals that of Lord Bacon's 'Treatise on the Wisdom of the Ancients,' and is indeed seasoned with greater variety.

XVI

There are moments, again, when *Timon* strikes us as a thesis play. It sounds like a voice

[29] W. Hazlitt : *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*

of protest against ingratitude, and the dramatic invectives become litanies of hatred. From the throwing of warm water and dishes in the banquet hall (III : 6) to the carving of the epitaph on the tomb in the woods, near the cave and on 'the beached verge of the salt flood' all the action of Timon is a long ritual of damnation. The spell of poetry works in its subtlety in a series of incantatory curses and tirades :

> That nature, being sick of man's unkindness,
> Should yet be hungry ! Common mother, thou,
> Whose womb unmeasurable, and infinite breast,
> Teems, and feeds all ; whose self-same mettle,
> Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puft,
> Engenders the black toad and adder blue,
> The gilded newt and eyeless venom'd worm,
> With all th' abhorred births below crisp heaven
> Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire both shine ;
> Yield him, who all thy human sons doth hate,
> From forth thy plenteous bosom, one poor root !
> Ensear thy fertile and conceptious womb,
> Let it no more bring out ingrateful man !
> Go great with tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears ; [IV : 3]
>
> Behold, the earth hath roots ;
> Within this mile break forth a hundred springs ;
> The oaks bear mast, the briers scarlet hips ;
> The bounteous housewife, nature, on each bush
> Lays her full mess before you. What !. . . .
> Do villainy, do, since you protest to do't,

> Like workmen. I'll example you with thievery :
> The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
> Robs the vast sea : the moon's an arrant thief,
> And her pale fire she snatches from the sun :
> The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
> The moon into salt tears : the earth's a thief,
> That feeds and breeds by a composure stoln
> From general excrement : each thing's a thief. [IV : 3]

But the first bandit knows what Timon means, and he says : 'Tis in the malice of mankind that he thus advises us.' (IV : 3)

Timon is not a tragedy in the sense in which *King Lear* or *Macbeth* is a tragedy, but the tragic strain is emphasized. Surely the category of tragedy, even in Shakespeare's time, was large enough to permit the inclusion of *Timon*. But even as a tragedy, *Timon* is mingled drama : a mixture of several strains drawn from tragedy, satire and the Morality play. The combination, in spite of the weaknesses of the play, is remarkably effective at times. Danby is hardly fair when he calls it 'an unnatural fantasy, a *King Lear* without Cordelia'.

Here is indeed a case of what man has made of man, and we notice something symbolic in Timon's departure[29a] and cave-dwelling in the woods. The city and its dwellers have done their worst, and Timon who has lost his faith in Man turns to Nature—to the sea with what

[29a] Such symbolism we notice in plays like *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*.

Keats calls its 'priest-like task' of 'pure ablution round earth's human shores' :

> Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat
> Thy gravestone daily ; [IV : 3]

> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
> Who once a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover.[29b] [V : 1]

Here alone Timon will find peace.

Timon is certainly, in some respects, a study of a mind diseased—a study in the melancholy humour of a particular kind. He is different from Jaques and Hamlet, and, in many ways, from Lear. Here is a highly civilized and useful citizen who moves away from society in disgust to live in isolation as an anti-social being. In the sources from which Shakespeare derived his materials Timon and Apemantus appear as cynics and misanthropes, and there is hardly any difference between the two. But Shakespeare makes substantial changes. His Timon, loving and generous, becomes a hater of mankind. The motif of ingratitude is introduced, and there is fall from prosperity. It is only at a later stage that Apemantus complains : 'Thou dost affect my manners and dost use them.' (IV : 3) Another very important change made by Shakespeare is the sympathetic presentation of Timon.

In both *Troilus* and *Timon* there is a certain stress on the rottenness of society, and though *Timon* is not what Wilson[30] calls the 'still-born twin of *Lear*', it is like *Lear* a very powerful

[29b] Cf. *Titus Andronicus* : III : 1 : 94-98.
[30] J. D. Wilson : *The Essential Shakespeare.*

presentation of the theme of ingratitude, but in a very different manner. Society, in spite of all that is said against it by Timon, is not presented by Shakespeare as entirely evil. This is proved by the loyalty of Timon's steward and servants, and by Alcibiades who, as a more balanced character, serves as a contrast to Timon in a similar context of ingratitude.

There is some truth in what Shaw[31] says of Shakespeare's tragic heroes : 'their actions are forced on them from without' and they are guided by 'a passion born of their inability to bear the burden of life'. This is true as much of Timon as of the other tragic heroes of Shakespeare. Like a truly Shakespearean tragedy *Timon* is a tragedy of disillusion—the disillusion which results from the recognition of the tragic blunder. Timon's disillusion maddens him, and his madness appears as misanthropy. Here we have a sensitive study of the extreme melancholy of a mind diseased. Yet *Timon* is not really an introspective drama because there is hardly any attempt to analyze or reveal the subtle working in the inner universe of the mind of the hero. We know of him mainly from the structure of incidents and from his own invectives. There is pity for Timon, but its limit is a certain regret beyond which our feelings do not go, and the depths are not stirred. One cannot doubt the nobleness or generosity of Timon, but one also feels that his extreme reaction is rather unexpected and very unfortunate, and that the unhappy conclusion is hardly inevitable.

[31] G. B. Shaw : Preface to *Man and Superman.*

XVII

Without being a truly introspective drama —*Hamlet* has greater claims—*Timon* is an unusually powerful study of a man who has an unbalanced mind—unbalanced in both prosperity and distress. The isolation of Timon is very different from the loneliness of Lear in his madness and sorrow. In the woods Timon ceases to be a character and becomes a personification, and the poetry of his aberration, by releasing him from all moorings and bonds, gives him a loneliness which Lear never has. *Timon* is Shakespeare's Greek play which has the spirit of Roman satire. Like *Troilus,* a Graeco-Trojan drama, it is, again, one of his plays unpleasant. The growing awareness of the contrast between appearance and reality results in misanthropy and madness. But the dramatist's sense of balance is not affected. The play does not show any loss of faith in life. There are greedy parasites, but then there are loyal men like the steward and servants of Timon. In fact, society in *Troilus* shows stronger evidence of disintegration than in *Timon.* Fluchère remarks :

> Between the ideal world which Timon took for real, and the world of corruption which, failing the other, was to his mind the only possible one, it is the normal world that comes to life again, that Alcibiades will rule with the olive-branch and the sword . . . Released from the finite in evil, the Shakespearian experiment can be pursued beyond the absolute nothingness which is for Timon the sovereign good. One could not remain in this appalling emptiness after a complete repudiation of Creation and of one-self without losing one's whole sense of substantial existence . . . Timon's metaphysical position is untenable, but it had to be adopted so that Alcibiades could be given the victory.

The play, however un-Shakespearean it may seem to be in certain respects, ends in a truly Shakespearean manner, with words of 'funeral' praise, even as in *Hamlet*—the words of Alcibiades being reminiscent of the last speeches of Horatio and Fortinbras.

XVIII

Had *Timon* been performed in Shakespeare's time, there would certainly have been some changes in the text, but not many. It is, however, quite clear that Shakespeare wanted *Timon* to be different from his other plays. Ellis-Fermor writes :

> I think also that he was experimenting with the structure . . . What was the experiment in this case and what the consequent form, it may be hard to discover.

But we shall find that it is not at all 'hard to discover' the form and that *Timon* is not 'in every way an unsatisfactory play.'[32]

The design of *Timon* is quite clear from Shakespeare's use of sources. The main source is Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius* :

> This Timon was a citizen of Athens, that lived about the war of Peloponnesus, as appeareth by Plato and Aristophanes' comedies : in the which they mocked him, calling him a viper and malicious man unto mankind, to shun all other men's companies but the company of

[32] G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare's Tragedies.*

> young Alcibiades, a bold and insolent youth . . . Apemantus . . . asked him the cause what he meant to make so much of that young man alone . . . Timon answered him, 'I do it', said he, 'because I know that one day he shall do great mischief unto the Athenians'. This Timon sometimes would have Apemantus in his company, because he was much like of his nature and conditions, and also followed him in manner of life . . . He died in the city of Hales, and was buried upon the sea-side. Now it chanced so, that the sea getting in, it compassed his tomb round about that no man could come to it : and upon the same was written this epitaph :
>
> Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft.
> Seek not my name : a plague consume you wicked wretches left !

It is reported that Timon himself, when he lived, made the epitaph.

The play may be divided into three parts : how Timon, by generous prodigality, lost his wealth ; how he was deserted in his need ; how the ingratitude of man turned him into a mad misanthrope. Shakespeare derives his materials from Plutarch only for the third part. By inventing the first two parts he not only develops the plot but also brings about a substantial change in the character of Timon and motivates his misanthropy. There is nothing like his sympathetic portraiture of Timon in the sources. Apemantus, who is a slightly refined version of Thersites (a choric cur of the war-camp in *Troilus*), grew out of Plutarch's narrative. But in Shakespeare's play there is always a difference between Timon and Apemantus.

XIX

In commenting on the use of the subplot Yeats[33] writes :

> The Shakespearean Drama gets the emotion of multitude out of the subplot which copies the main plot, much as a shadow upon the wall copies one's body in the firelight.

But the subplot of *Timon* is different. It does not seek to produce what Yeats calls 'the emotion of multitude.' Here is another instance of ingratitude, no doubt, but the reaction in Alcibiades is very different from that in Timon. The subplot is not merely a contrast and comment ; it also gives an effective conclusion to the play. Ribner[34] rightly observes :

> Timon himself has become a symbol of death, as his invitation to the Athenians to hang themselves from his tree may attest. He dies in total negation of the goodness of life which in the opening scenes of the play he had represented . . . The second senator reminds the audience that all humanity is not debased by the evil which is but a part of it . . . This theme is repeated in a series of speeches, one following the other in a kind of choral ritual . . . Alcibiades brings not only retribution but forgiveness . . . Athens is saved by a man who, like Timon, has suffered through man's inhumanity but has come to see that there is nobility in God's creation in spite of evil. This evil he will oppose as every new generation must, and he will do so by the exercise of justice . . . This is Shakespeare's attempt at tragic reconcilia-

[33] W. B. Yeats : *Ideas of Good and Evil.*
[34] I. Ribner : *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy.*

tion. If it is not entirely successful, it may be because the regeneration of Alcibiades is not so fully developed as the degeneration of Timon.

It is here also that the difference[34a] between *King Lear* and *Timon* becomes clear. Timon dies without Lear's redemption.

XX

The mock banquet (III : 6) and the faithful steward (Flavius) are found only in the manuscript play. From Lucian's dialogue Shakespeare derived important materials :

> While Timon is dwelling in solitary exile, and working hard with his spade . . . he overhauls a mass of treasure, whereupon he breaks forth as follows : 'It is, it must be, gold, fine, yellow, noble gold . . . From this time forth I will despise acquaintance, friendship, compassion . . . But hush ! whence all this noise and hurry ? What crowds are here, all covered with dust, and out of breath ! They have smelt out the gold ! . . . I will stay and receive them ! He is then approached by . . . 'a whole heap of scoundrels'.[35]

Timon's solitary exile in the woods is symbolic, even as the mock banquet is, in its own way. The discovery of gold is made a subtle dramatic device. Underlying the three parts of the play there are two important stages in dramatic action and thought. In the First Act Timon's help was charity, generous prodigality. Subsequently, with the discovery of gold, the motive

[34a] Ingratitude in *King Lear* is confined to family life ; in *Timon* it appears as a social evil.

[35] Quoted from the abstract of Lucian's dialogue in H. N. Hudson's edition of *Timon*.

force, the intention, changes : Timon seeks the corruption of society, as he distributes gold.

XXI

There is a strong choric element in the play. Except Timon, Alcibiades, Apemantus and Flavius the characters here appear in groups, and as choric groups they serve the dramatic interest by making a certain chain of episodes possible. Instead of developing a strong 'organic' plot in which an episode grows out of another, Shakespeare presents a rather loose series of situations to depict the prosperity and fall of Timon. Knight rightly points out : 'The first acts convey the impression of riches, ease, sensuous appeal, and brilliant display'. The contrast comes in the woods. The choric character of the play is at times emphasized by the abundant use of certain refrain-like keywords like 'fortune', 'nature', 'beast' and 'dog', and Shakespeare makes full use of his poetic power. Fluchère points out :

> The major themes to which Shakespeare gave poetic life in the preceding plays marked by the same spirit are here developed with the same abundance of images, the same imperious rhythms, the same tone of grave, profound conviction. The diptych of good and evil, the multiple significance of gold, the themes of death and ingratitude, the cosmic symbols of the stars, the tempest and the sea, stand out here with amazing prominence.

XXII

The Morality play which appeared towards the end of the Middle Ages was an active influence even in the days of Shakespeare.

Most plays of his age were quite unlike the Morality but the features of this rather archaic drama were often suitably adapted for various purposes. There is no doubt that *Timon* has more of the Morality than the other plays of Shakespeare. Here is hardly any attempt to make action or characters complex. A certain sense of symmetry and balance is maintained throughout the play. Most of the characters are abstractions without any individual traits : they are like Virtues and Vices. The plot is very simple : a quick fall from prosperity, with the lure of gold spread all over action. Johnson[36] moralizes :

> The catastrophe affords a very powerful warning against that ostentatious liberality, which scatters bounty, but confers no benefits, and buys flattery, but not friendship.

The main characters are designed according to the fashion of the Morality. Timon is at first Reckless Prodigality and then changes into a sneering voice of protest. Apemantus is the Railer, while Flavius is Loyalty or Faithful Service. Even Alcibiades is not designed to be a really dramatic character. We have figures here instead of characters. The form or design of *Timon* is very different indeed, and its effect can be felt very strongly if it is presented as a mask-play.[37]

Timon should be seriously considered. It is not an 'unfinished' or 'unsatisfactory' play : it is Shakespeare's boldest experiment : a mingled drama of tremendous power.

[36] S. Johnson : *Preface to Shakespeare.*

[37] Vide Eugene O'Neill's notes on the use of masks in certain types of plays—'Memoranda on Masks', 'Second Thoughts' and 'A Dramatist's Notebook' (*Playwrights on Playwriting* ed. T. Cole).

XXIII

Shakespeare's 'unpleasant' plays (which are also mingled drama) are *All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens.* Of these works the least unpleasant is *All's Well that Ends Well,* a mingled drama as a dark comedy with a touch of adventure which is rather romantic. In the other three plays the degrees of unpleasantness are fairly balanced.

Shaw[38] calls some of his plays 'unpleasant' because, as he explains,

> their dramatic power is used to force the spectator to face unpleasant facts. No doubt all plays which deal sincerely with humanity must wound the monstrous conceit which it is the business of romance to flatter. But here we are confronted not only with the comedy and tragedy of individual character and destiny, but with . . . social horrors . . .

This explanation is not, however, fully satisfactory. The unpleasantness of a play does not lie in its facts alone. The bare facts of life presented in the great tragedies of Shakespeare are by no means pleasant but the plays cannot be called unpleasant. A play may be called unpleasant only when its dramatic power is used to produce an unpleasant impression, especially for a certain purpose. In Shakespeare's plays unplesant not only are the facts of life (individual as well as social) unpleasant but the final impression is also made unpleasant enough, and much of their power lies in this unpleasantness.

[38] G. B. Shaw : Preface to *Plays Unpleasant.*

Troilus and Cressida which is a mixture of comic[39], satiric and tragic elements is the most unpleasant of Shakespeare's 'mingled' plays, while *Titus Andronicus* which is a crude and rather 'repulsive' tragedy is his most painful drama.

[39] Some of the situations in which Pandarus and Thersites appear are meant to be comic, although the comic effect is not always convincing.

5 ROMANTIC MINGLING

I

Romeo and Juliet is one of the most popular plays of Shakespeare, but it has not received the critical attention which it deserves. Its position is rather interesting because, though it is preceded and followed mainly by comedies, it is Shakespeare's first full experiment in tragedy.

The Prologue is not a common device in Shakespearean drama. It is used only when Shakespeare has some special purpose, and *Romeo and Juliet* is the first play in which he uses it[1]. It appears in the Quarto (1599), but it is omitted in the Folio (1623), which probably means that while Shakespeare himself thought it important, after his death it was dropped because the actors had found it unnecessary.

Charlton[2] thinks that it is 'a sort of programme-prologue to prompt the audience to see the play from the right point of view'. But he does not explain why Shakespeare thought it necessary to prompt the audience. Besides, what is 'the right point of view' ? Commenting on the emphasis on fate Charlton says :

> The intent of this emphasis is clear . . . He disowns responsibility and throws it on

[1] The other plays are : *2 Henry IV, Henry V, Troilus and Cressida, Pericles* and *Henry VIII*.
[2] H. B. Charlton : *Shakespearian Tragedy*.

> Destiny, Fate. The device is well warranted in the tragic tradition, and especially in its Senecan models.

But this is hardly convincing. The Prologue tries to create a bias, to obscure 'the right point of view.' It seeks to divert the spectators' attention from the weakness of the play by directing and restricting their attention to what the dramatist wants them to notice in the rush of incidents and characters on the stage. In fact, it tries to conceal the confusion and failings of the artist. The Prologue stresses the role of fate because the dramatist fails to provide tragic inevitability, and it underscores feud which is so unsubstantial in the play. However, the Prologue was withdrawn when the reputation of the play was firmly established.

II

At the time when Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet*, the general standard of tragedy was by no means very high. He thought of tragedy primarily as a play with an unhappy ending, deaths and violences as its main features. In *Romeo and Juliet* he tries to show the working of fate and feud in the sad story of two young lovers, but the general impression is that of a drama of suspense and excitement, poetry and wit, humour and pathos. It is, however, difficult to agree with Charlton when he says : 'Even Shakespeare appears to have felt that, as an experiment, it had disappointed him.' Shakespeare was probably aware of some deficiencies, but there is no reason to suppose that he was disappointed. In fact, *Romeo and Juliet* is much better than most of the tragedies

which were popular when he made his first experiment.

Harrison[3] says :

> As it is, at every critical moment something goes wrong by unlucky accident ; and it is mainly for this reason that *Romeo and Juliet* never achieves deep tragedy.

He further remarks :

> . . . if Friar Lawrence had reached the tomb five minutes earlier, then all would have been well.

It is true that the play is lacking in the sense of tragic inevitability and that the tragic disaster is made to depend on mere chance. But it is wrong to say that the play fails to be 'deep tragedy' *mainly* for this reason. The same weakness appears in *King Lear* :

> I pant for life : some good I mean to do,
> Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—
> Be brief in it—to the castle ; for my writ
> Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia :—
> Nay, send in time. [V : 3]

Had Edmund said all this a little earlier, 'all would have been well', and *King Lear* would not have been a tragedy !

III

The plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is derived from Brooke's story.[4] In the preface Brooke explains the moral purpose :

> And to this end, good Reader, is this tragical matter written, to describe unto thee a couple of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to unhonest desire ; neglecting the authority

[3] G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare's Tragedies.*
[4] A. Brooke : *Romeus and Juliet* (1562) ed. J. J. Monro.

> and advice of parents and friends . . . for th' attaining of their wicked lust . . . abusing the honourable name of lawful marriage to cloak the shame of stolen contracts ; finally by all means of unhonest life hasting to most unhappy death.

But Shakespeare shows no such ethical intention in his mingled drama of *Romeo and Juliet*.

In preparing the layout of *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare depended largely on the working of fate and feud. But it is wrong to think with Charlton that the dramatist left the plot to fate and feud alone for planning the ruin of the young lovers. Shakespeare surely felt that neither fate nor feud was adequate to give him a convincing tragedy. Something else was required, and it was character. To provide full tragic experience character must enter into action even though the action is prompted by fate, and must shoulder its due share of responsibility. So he tried to establish a relation between his tragic characters and tragic action. There is in both Romeo and Juliet a certain rashness, an unwise excess, of which they are conscious, and which is noticed by others, as they are drawn to each other :

> I have no joy of this contract to-night :
> It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden.
> [II : 1]

> These violent delights have violent ends . . .
> Therefore, love moderately ; [II : 5]

Ten years later Shakespeare dramatized Othello as 'one that loved not wisely, but too well.' However, the role of character has not been adequately developed in *Romeo and Juliet*. The

Friar's plan (to provide room for the operation of fate, in the interest of a long series of theatrical situations) is made dramatically more important, more central to the disaster. Besides, Shakespeare could not give the young lovers the maturity, depth and stature which are the marks of truly tragic characters.

Something else is also lacking. Only a certain pattern of incidents and characters, however skilful, does not produce a tragedy. There must be a plane of tragic feeling and thought, an imaginative realization of the forces and mysteries of life, a tragic vision of life. *Romeo and Juliet* is without this vision and vista. To organize the right relation between fate and character for presenting a tragic vision was beyond the capacity of the dramatist. So while the tragic conception of character remains undeveloped, fate remains external to feeling and thought. It appears only in action as a dramatic device for giving suitable turns to situations ; it is never integrated into the universe of tragic experience. The deeper levels of tragic experience remain unexplored, and the play is simply packed with incidents and characters in a setting of quick action and compressed time. *Romeo and Juliet* is good theatre : it is not a good tragedy.

IV

It is not 'the right point of view' to think of *Romeo and Juliet* only as a tragedy. In a sense, it is comedy made to move towards tragedy. Here is a transition producing a play which is the reverse of a tragi-comedy. Brooke's story has certainly a tragic design, but Shakespeare's treatment shows his interest in it

also as the theme of a comedy. In fact, he seems to have experienced much delight in presenting the comic scenes which justify Johnson's remark: 'His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.' There is nothing like sustained tragic suspense in the play; there is always some hope for a happy ending. The lovers are by no means doomed characters, as in Racine's tragedies, and there is no necessary relation between the feud and the disaster. On the other hand, there are clear traces of comedy in the play, and had Shakespeare allowed his art to work freely, *Romeo and Juliet* would certainly have been one of his best romantic comedies, a thrilling drama of love and adventure.

Most of the characters here qualify for appearance in a comedy, and nearly every unhappy situation could be given a happy turn. In the dance episode (which is a key situation) the feud is much less substantial than in *The Eve of St Agnes*. There is a comic emphasis in spite of Tybalt's threat. Capulet seems to enjoy the dance, and, what is more, he likes Romeo:

> And, to say truth, Verona brags of him
> To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth:
> [I: 5]

It seems as if he is quite willing to consider favourably a proposal from Romeo. It is not improbable that, even after a couple of deaths, had the secret marriage been made known to him, 'all would have been well.' In fact, there is nothing in the play to justify the strong bias which the Chorus seeks to create in the Prologue:

> And the continuance of their parents' rage
> Which, but their children's end, naught could remove.

On the other hand, there are situations and characters to indicate the possibilities of the play as a romantic comedy. Lawrence and the Nurse could be made excellent 'accomplices', and the escape of a disguised Juliet could be made a thrilling episode. The elaborate plan (IV: 1) of the Friar miscarried mainly because it was too elaborate, and Juliet rashly agreed because she was desperate. But a much easier plan was to send her away immediately in disguise with Friar John to Mantua where she could join Romeo and be happy. Surely, the odds were much heavier against Keats's Porphyro and Madeline than against Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. As Shakespeare worked on Brooke's story, he found that his heart was not in tragedy; he was still under the spell of comedy. *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy only by courtesy.

King Lear was found so painful that Tate boldly gave it a happy ending. In *Romeo and Juliet* the traces of comedy are so strong that a tragic end seems to be a forced one. The stage history of the play gives us at least one instance of bold alteration—Davenant's production of a version by James Howard who converted the play into a tragi-comedy[6]. Genest[6a] mentions that it was

> altered by James Howard so as to preserve Romeo alive and to end happily—it was played alternately as a Tragedy one day, and

[6] *Romeo and Juliet* is a 'comi-tragedy' or a kind of 'comoedotragoedia'. See p. 29.

[6a] J. Genest: *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830.*

as a Tragi-comedy another, for several times together.

V

Harrison[7] writes : 'He took great pains in the construction and worked out his play . . . with peculiar care.' But an examination of the play shows that Shakespeare was not more than ordinarily careful. *Romeo and Juliet* has a comic opening quickly followed by the feud which, however, does not seem to be serious, especially after the Prince's warning. The spirit of romantic comedy appears with Romeo's ailment and Benvolio's remedy :

> Be ruled by me, forget to think of her . . .
> By giving liberty unto thine eyes ;
> Examine other beauties. [I : 1]

When Benvolio urges Romeo to attend the dance in Capulet's house, we know that the feud is not a real threat. The third and fourth scenes are pure comedy, dominated by the Nurse and Mercutio respectively. The fifth scene is both comic and romantic, and once again the feud is found to be unsubstantial. It seems as if Shakespeare, like Capulet, enjoys the dance so much that he does not want it to be disturbed by the feud. So he effects a compromise between the feud and the love-interest. But it would have been better for the play, had Tybalt kept his knowledge of the presence of Romeo a secret to himself and planned his move in a soliloquy. The First Act closes without any effective tragic hint, and the comic emphasis is clear.

[7] G. B. Harrison : *Shakespeare's Tragedies.*

The Prologue in the Second Act gives us the romantic pattern of love and opposition. The Act closes with the hasty and secret marriage of the lovers, and except for a few moments of uneasiness it is pure romantic comedy, with the Friar emerging as the controlling figure. The interest of the audience is kept alive, and once again the feud is kept in abeyance. There is even hope for reconciliation :

> For this alliance may so happy prove,
> To turn your households' rancour to pure love. [II : 2]

As the Third Act opens, Mercutio is once again his brilliant self, but for the last time. There is a note of warning : 'For now, these hot days, mad blood is stirring.' Then in quick succession come deaths and banishment. Scenes 2 and 3 are pathetic, but again the Friar gives us hope :

> Go, get thee to thy love, as was decreed . . .
> But look thou stay not till the watch be set,
> For then thou canst not pass to Mantua ;
> Where thou shalt live, till we can find a time
> To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
> Beg pardon of the prince, and call thee back. [III : 3]

The fourth scene with its arrangement for a hasty marriage of Juliet with Paris heightens suspense because it places her in a desperate situation. Such an arrangement immediately after the death of Tybalt, Capulet's 'brother's son', is, however, highly improbable, and a very weak explanation, as an afterthought, is offered in IV : I :

> And, in his wisdom, hastes our marriage,
> To stop the inundation of her tears ;

But the arrangement, though weakly motivated, is essential to the plot because it forces the Friar to suggest a desperate remedy which is the lay-out of the concluding part of the play. The fifth scene drags romantic drama down to the domestic level, and Capulet is given the role of a tyrannical father. The situation is now taut with suspense, but the first scene of the Fourth Act strikes a note of hope, when the Friar says : 'Hold, daughter : I do spy a kind of hope.' Then comes the elaborate plan, the weakness of which has been already pointed out. In the next scene Capulet goes back to his comic role, and in the third scene Juliet drinks the 'distilled liquor.' The long speech is carefully prepared because the pattern of premonitions is made rather deceptive :

> What if it be a poison, which the friar
> Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead . . .
> How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
> I wake *before* the time that Romeo
> Comes to redeem me ?

The third premonition comes nearer to the truth with its touch of revenge supernaturalism :

> O, look ! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
> Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
> Upon a rapier's point :—stay, Tybalt, stay !

The fourth scene is pure domestic comedy, while the pathos of the fifth scene has no effect because we know that Juliet is not dead. The humour of the musicians is completely out of place.

In spite of Romeo's decision to commit suicide and Friar John's failure to deliver the important message the situation in the Fifth

Act is not altogether hopeless because Friar Lawrence says : 'Now must I to the monument alone.' Then comes the last scene. Paris should have been spared ; his appearance was not a necessity. It should be noticed how Shakespeare withdraws Lawrence for a moment to give Juliet an opportunity to stab herself. As the sad story is fully revealed, the play ends on a note of reconciliation.

Benvolio, Mercutio, Nurse, Capulet and Lawrence are all figures meant for a comedy, and there is nothing really tragic in or about either Romeo or Juliet. Again, the art of maintaining suspense and deceiving the audience for the last surprise is peculiarly suited to comedy. In fact, Shakespeare employs the art and materials of comedy to produce a tragedy. For the tragic effect he depends only on pathos, and he feels more at home in the world of comedy. But the comic element is at odds with the pathetic, and the result is a certain confusion in the aim of the dramatist. Tragedy has an art of its own, but the art of *Romeo and Juliet* is that of the romantic comedy of love and adventure ; it is not the art of tragedy.

VI

Romeo and Juliet shows clear marks of improvement in both characterization and construction—positive gains, no doubt. But equally remarkable is Shakespeare's handling of its verse, the verse of mingled drama. Rhyming and traces of sonneteering are at times quite effective, but it is the blank verse which deserves special attention. It is not merely poetic ; it is verse which is not to be only

recited ; it is to be acted. It is also business-like and efficient, making at times the use of prose quite unnecessary.

There is the poetry of romance in Juliet's verse when she says :

> Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Towards Phoebus' lodging : such a wagoner
> As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
> And bring in cloudy night immediately.
> Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo
> Leap to these arms untalkt-of and unseen.
> [III : 2]

But listen to what the Nurse says :

> Even or odd, of all days in the year,
> Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.
> Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls !—
> Were of an age : well Susan is with God ;
> She was too good for me :—but, as I said,
> On Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen ; . . .
> 'Yea', quoth he, 'dost thou fall upon thy face ?
> Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit ;
> Wilt thou not, Jule ?' and by my holidame,
> The pretty wretch left crying, and said 'Ay'.
> [I : 3]

The change here shows the flexibility of the verse. The use of speech-rhythm and the approximation of verse to prose not only produce humour but also make comic characterization possible. The efficiency of this verse passage will be clear when we compare it with

Shallow's reminiscences in prose in *2 Henry IV* : III : 2.

For fluency and tension on a different plane here is Capulet's outburst :

> God's bread ! it makes me mad : day, night, late, early,
> At home, abroad, alone, in company,
> Waking, or sleeping, still my care hath been
> To have her matcht . . .
> And then to have a wretched puling fool,
> A whining mammet, in her fortune's tender,
> To answer—'I will not wed,—I cannot love,
> I am too young : I pray you, pardon me'.
> Graze where you will, you shall not house with me. [III : 5]

VII

Goethe thought of drama primarily as poetry, and he wrote :

> Shakespeare belongs by right to the history of poetry ; in the history of the theatre he appears only casually.[8]

A similar approach is noticed in Goethe's well-known poem on Kalidāsa's *Abhijnāna-Shakuntalam*. The poem was written on Forster's German translation of William Jones's English rendering of the Sanskrit play, and appears in Goethe's *Antiker Form sich näherend* ('Approaching the Antique Form') :

> Will ich die Blumen des frühen, die Früchte des
> spätern Jaheres,
> Will ich, was reizt und entzückt, will ich,
> was sättigt und nährt,
> Will ich den Himmel, die Erde mit Einem
> Namen begreifen,

[8] Quoted by E. C. Craig in *On the Art of the Theatre.*

Nenn ich Sakontala, dich und so ist alles gesagt.[9]

Instead of critically analyzing Kalidāsa's work as a drama Goethe has given us in the poem his summing-up of the poetry of the play.

VIII

The poem of Goethe is the starting point in Tagore's essay, *Shakuntalā*,[10] one of his studies in ancient Indian literature, collected in *Prāchin Sāhitya* (*Ancient Literature*). In his elaboration and interpretation of Goethe's remark Tagore compares *The Tempest* with *Shakuntalā*.[11] His comments on *The Tempest*, though naturally rather fragmentary, deserve to be carefully considered. He notices certain similarities between the two plays but also points out that they differ very significantly. He writes :

> There is some affinity between the plots but the poetic impressions are completely different . . . The difference between the two is more pronounced than the similarity, but a discussion of this difference will help us in understanding the two plays more clearly

[9] Cited in *Weimarer Ausgabe*, I, 4.

Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms
and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured,
feasted, fed,
Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself
in one sole name combine ?
I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said.

[10] It was read as a paper in 1902 at a meeting of a study circle, 'Alochana Samiti,' and was first published in 1907 in a Bengali journal, 'Bangadarshana.'

[11] It is the name of the heroine as well as an abbreviation of the title of the play.

> . . . We notice in *The Tempest* oppression and outrage, in *Shakuntalā* peace and good will . . . In *The Tempest* man has not achieved greatness through good, by cultivating love ; he has tried to be the lord of the universe by dominating it. In fact, the struggle for power is the central theme of the work. Prospero, though driven out of his kingdom, controls Nature by magic, and in the island itself there are intrigues and treachery . . . The very title of the play explains its stuff . . . its conflict between Man and Nature, between man and man, and power at the root of these conflicts . . . But to oppose force by force cannot be a final solution. Our sense of spiritual values goes deeper, and we want sin and evil to be removed by love, beauty and good . . . It is power in *The Tempest*, peace in *Shakuntalā* ; victory by force in *The Tempes* but fulfilment through good in *Shakuntalā*.

IX

Thus *The Tempest*, as its title signifies, deals with the tempest of human life. It is a play of conflict rather than reconciliation, for the element of evil is only temporarily suspended and subdued ; it is neither totally removed nor spiritually resolved. Here is, again, a calculated display of power, the source of which is magic, without any moral source or sanction. Ariel and Caliban are only the unwilling slaves of Prospero. When Ariel yearns for freedom, he is promptly and severely rebuked by his master who calls him a 'malignant thing' for all his services. But Prospero finds it more difficult to manage Caliban and threatens him :

I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar.
[I : 2]

Caliban is, however, desperately malicious and plots against Prospero and Miranda, whenever he gets an opportunity. The evil remains ; there is no moral persuasion or conquest. *The Tempest* is called a Christian play for its stress on service and forgiveness. But what we find here is unwilling service. Forgiveness comes only when Prospero has had a full taste of power, the source of which is magic, not his personality.

Prospero wants revenge, and his enemies, as they reach the island, start a conspiracy which serves hardly any dramatic purpose. We know that they are powerless under his spell. But his triumph is only physical ; it hardly rises to a spiritual level.

X

What is the role of Nature in *The Tempest*? We have here Ariel (*Air*) and Caliban (*Earth*) and the strange beautiful island :

The fresh spring, brine-pits, barren place
and fertile : [I : 2]

I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs
grow ;
And I with my long nails will dig thee
pig-nuts ;
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare thee a nimble marmoset ; [II : 2]

Be not afear'd ; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and
hurt not. [III : 2]

Here are the eyes and ears of an explorer, the detailed and delightful Renaissance images of voyages and discoveries. But, Tagore points out, we do not find in *The Tempest* anything like the spiritual intimacy between Man and Nature which is one of the loveliest things in Kalidāsa's play. In a sense, there is something really hard and cold in both Prospero and Miranda ; it is their lack of feeling towards their island environments, a spiritual deficiency which makes them aliens in spite of their long residence. One feels that Prospero has, therefore, no moral right to rule, and, as he and his daughter leave the place without any regret and feeling, the island also breathes a sigh of relief. The island setting is decorative ; it is a picturesque background which, according to Tagore, is necessary for the plot, but not essentially related to the characters. To Shakespeare the full significance and possibilities of the relation between Man and Nature were not revealed.

XI

Miranda is simple and innocent, but she is placed in unusual circumstances. Her virtues are, therefore, more circumstantial than natural. Her innocence is ignorance, lack of experience, lack of contact with society. She has never faced life and its trial ; she is in an unreal nonage. Tagore says :

> Miranda grew up only in the company of her father, and so her character never had an opportunity to develop naturally . . . Besides we see her only in the first stage of her life . . .

There is something else in Shakespeare's characterization of Miranda which Tagore has

not noticed. It is a kind of inconsistency or improbability which is fairly frequent in Shakespearean drama. Prospero proudly says:

> Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
> Than other princesses can, that have more time
> For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful.
> [I : 2]

And such is the success of Prospero the careful tutor and father that when Ferdinand appears, Miranda asks :

> What is't ? a spirit ?
> Lord, how it looks about ! Believe me, sir,
> It carries a brave form : but 'tis a spirit.
> [I : 2]

Prospero explains :

> No, wench ; it eats, and sleeps, and hath such senses
> As we have, such.[12] [I : 2]

And yet in course of three hours this 'wench' falls in love, announces her intention to marry[13] Ferdinand, and, as she plays at chess, she says : 'Sweet lord, you play me false.' In the presence of this innocent maiden who calls the young man 'a spirit', Prospero instructs Ferdinand not to 'break her virgin-knot' before marriage.

[12] In the same scene Miranda says :
> This
> Is the third man that e'er I saw ;

[13]
> Hence bashful cunning !
> And prompt me, plain and holy innocence !
> I am your wife, if you will marry me ;
> If not, I'll die your maid :
> [III : 1]

XII

Let us consider another inconsistency. By magic Prospero brings his enemies under his control.

> If by your art, my dearest father, you have
> Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
> The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
> But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
> Dashes the fire out. [I : 2]

But why didn't he exercise his power when he was banished and lay helpless in a boat ? As he says :

> In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
> Bore us some leagues to sea ; where they prepared
> A rotten carcass of a butt, not rigg'd,
> Nor tackle, sail nor mast ; the very rats
> Instinctively have quit it : [I : 2]

But when he reached the island he rescued Ariel by magic from 'a cloven pine' where the spirit had been kept confined for twelve years by Sycorax, a 'damn'd witch' and 'blue-eyed hag', the mother of Caliban. The son he later punished—also by magic. For twelve years Prospero remained in the island but tried neither to go back nor to take revenge. Magic is one of the most important elements in the plot but its use shows an inconsistency which weakens the plot and affects the moral value of the pattern.[14] As Prospero's magic controls

[14] Caliban says :
> First to possess his books ; for without them
> He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
> One spirit to command : they all do hate him
> As rootedly as I : burn but his books.
> [III : 2]

every event and every character, it strikes one as a necessary dramatic device. But it also affects the spirit behind the reconciliation which is hardly a necessity.

Let us consider, again, the buffoonery of the Trinculo-Stephano-Caliban episode. It is coarse fun which does not befit a serious play. There is, however, more serious coarseness elsewhere, which is an unnecessary emphasis on Caliban's lecherous attempts. Even the dignity of Prospero the master is very seriously affected :

Prospero : . . . thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.
Caliban : O ho, O ho : would't had been done !
Thou didst prevent ; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans. [I : 2]

When Caliban meets Stephano he does not forget to excite the new-comer :

Ay, lord ; she will become thy bed, I warrant,
And bring thee forth brave brood. [III : 2]

This sensuality in connection with virginity or defloration appears in several plays of Shakespeare.

XIII

Grierson[15] calls *The Tempest* the last play of a Greek trilogy. In fact, each of the last plays of Shakespeare—*The Tempest, Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*—may be quite appropriately called a compressed trilogy. Tillyard[16] finds in each of them a tragic pattern with a happy and peaceful ending. This is true especially of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*,

[15] H. J. C. Grierson : *Cross Currents in the Literature of the Seventeenth Century.*
[16] E. M. W. Tillyard : *Shakespeare's Last Plays.*

both of which reveal full patterns of sorrows and sufferings which, in spite of gross improbabilities, add dignity to these plays. *The Tempest* is different ; it has no pronounced tragic pattern because there is sorrow only at moments of recollection :

What see'st thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time ? . . .
Twelve years since, Miranda, twelve years since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and
A prince of power. [I : 2]

XIV

There are certain points in Tagore's estimate of *The Tempest* which are to be carefully noted. One of the main objects of his essay was to explain the difference between two cultural traditions, the difference between the East and the West. *The Tempest* and *Shakuntalā* are, as he considers them, representative works. The following passage is significant in this connexion :

> Such restraint[17] we have not noticed in any other play. The poets of Europe become excited whenever they have an opportunity to express the urgency of the senses . . . Such examples are in plenty in Shakespeare's plays like *Romeo and Juliet*. There is not a single play of Shakespeare which can be compared with *Shakuntalā* in depth, sublimity and discipline.

The difference between the cultural traditions of India and Europe is the subject-matter of many of the social essays which Tagore wrote in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

[17] Tagore refers to *Shakuntalā*.

These essays sought to interpret the civilization and greatness of India and to recover and restore the lost prestige of a nation which was fighting against a foreign power.

To Tagore *Shakuntalā* is the legacy of India's ancient philosophy ; it is inspired by the meditations of countless sages. It came as the mature projection of an entire civilization that had developed through great historical forces and experiences and had always emphasized the spiritual element in man. Goethe's eulogy is not, according to Tagore, an idle remark, for the work of Kalidāsa is instinct with a refinement much above what Johnson calls the 'barbarity' of the Elizabethans.

XV

The 'catharsis' of the Sanskrit drama does not lie in pity and fear, but in a profound harmony of reconciliation. Here is chastening through sorrows and sufferings in course of dramatic action, but here is no unhappy ending : art here in its final impression transcends all bitterness.[18]

The Tempest is Renaissance drama. The Elizabethans were lawless in life, and they certainly produced a powerful and dynamic literature. The new Patriotism and the Renaissance intoxicated them, worked like magic, and made them conscious of their power and possibilities, but failed to give them within a short span of time a synthesis of spiritual, social and aesthetic values. The age of Elizabeth was very different from that of Kalidāsa. The Elizabethans saw the sudden dawn of a new era,

[18] See p. 27.

the vista of a new civilization. But the spiritual quality or discipline which Tagore notices in *Shakuntalā* is not the result of the restless activity of a rather reckless generation ; it is a slow, steady and patient achievement. The Elizabethans did not cultivate it in their age, and they could not produce it in their literature. Their work is essentially romantic ; it is lacking in the balance, depth and finish of classical literature.

XVI

In a sense, however, the estimate of Tagore is hardly fair. It is difficult to believe that Shakespeare wanted *The Tempest* to be taken as seriously as it is taken by Tagore and others. Again, a study of the differences between the two plays which belong to different types has its limitations.

Shakespeare was a practical and successful playwright. He knew what Beaumont and Fletcher were doing in their new drama. Like others of his age he had a journalistic flair, and in *The Tempest* he made use of the contemporary accounts of adventure in Bermudas in the form of a dramatic romance which has much of 'the new seas and lands' discovered in the age of the Renaissance. *The Tempest* is very good entertainment, probably offered on the occasion of a marriage, and has snatches of the purest poetry. But the planes of reality and fancy are hardly integrated. The pattern of ideas is feeble and unstable, giving rise to some gross inconsistencies and improbabilities. The strength of *The Tempest* is its poetry ; its weakness lies in the dramatic pattern of incidents, characters and ideas.

As mingled drama, *The Tempest* has its problem of the objective correlative. Shakespeare uses here the materials of his happy romantic comedies but here is also a difference which makes *The Tempest* a very different kind of drama. Its art of mingling is certainly at fault but its poetry (which is rare even in Shakespeare) very nearly succeeds in giving it a certain unity of conception and impression.

XVII

The romantic art of mingling has produced in *Romeo and Juliet* a drama which offers the full suggestion of a comedy and yet ends as a tragedy. The same art, however, produces a very different kind of drama in *The Winter's Tale, Cymbeline, The Tempest* and *Pericles,* in each of which there is a tragic strain, although they all end happily. These plays have some of the main features of comedy, and yet they are in many ways unlike a mature Shakespearean comedy like *Much Ado About Nothing* or *As You Like It.*

Technically, there is not probably much to be said against calling them comedies but they seem to be guided by a middle mood which hesitates between tragi-comedy and dramatic romance. Boas[19] writes :

> Miranda and Perdita, Elorizel, Ferdinand, and the boys of Cymbeline . . . breathe the air of poetic wonderlands . . . They are torn in infancy from home and (except Miranda) from parents . . . and only after years of parting are they restored to their kindred . . . Such material is suited to the romantic novel

[19] F. S. Boas : *Shakspere and his Predecessors.*

> or the romantic epic . . . and we shall be truer to the spirit of these last products of the Shakespearean muse if we call them dramatic romances rather than dramas.

XVIII

There is in the mature comedies of Shakespeare a certain sense of triumph—youth's victory and life's triumph—which we miss in the romances. This does not mean that these plays are altogether unrelated to the comedies. The connexion between the two groups becomes clear even from the very raw material of their plots. The difference, on the other hand, lies mainly in treatment and becomes clear from the principal characters and from Shakespeare's view and interpretation of life. The heroines of Shakespeare's comedies are capable and competent. But Miranda, Marina and Perdita are more tender. They are the 'daughters' of Shakespeare, and there is a touch of affection and even protection in his treatment of these characters.[20]

These last plays are a separate group, distinct from the other plays of Shakespeare, and each has its own art of romantic mingling. In these plays we notice a certain sense of regret and sorrow, of great patience and restraint, a mood of reminiscence and a touch of wistfulness, a serenity and stillness, and a kind of poetry which has a strange music and a stranger magic of its own. There is, again, in each of these plays a certain sense of fulfilment —fulfilment of a pattern which seems to develop

[20] The relation between parents and children repeatedly appears in Shakespearean drama but it receives a dramatic emphasis in plays like *Hamlet, King Lear* and the dramatic romances.

through the different groups of Shakespearean drama. In spite of suffering there is hardly any bitterness in the final note which is one of reconciliation and forgiveness. There is, besides, a certain stress on moral values and on the need for detachment and remoteness. Again, peace here is 'pathetic yet august serenity',[21] and craving for peace becomes an intense dramatic experience. Here we find at times also something which we do not find elsewhere in Shakespeare, a ritualistic relation between Nature and Man.[22] Finally, there are in these plays some rare moments of action as ritual and poetry as incantation.

XIX

But nearly all this is on the plane of planning and intention. Charlton[23] points out :

> There can scarcely be a shadow of doubt that, in the romances, Shakespeare the dramatist is declining in dramatic power.

It is true that what appears to be decline in dramatic power is, in reality, in some cases, but employment of a new dramatic art—an experiment, especially in the increasing use of narration, description and the lyrical element for dramatic purposes.

The execution is, however, faulty. The plots suffer from improbability and inconsistency, and the motives are inadequate. The mingling of the different dramatic planes and interests is never quite convincing, and intentions are never quite successfully presented in

[21] E. Dowden : *Shakspere.*
[22] Vide M. Murry's remarks in *Shakespeare.* But this relation is not necessarily one of intimacy, as Tagore points out in his essay.
[23] H. B. Charlton : *Shakespearian Comedy.*

terms of action. Even the 'unities' in *The Tempest* bring hardly any real strength to its structure. These plays of Shakespeare offer interesting materials not only for the study of the problem of the objective correlative but also for an examination of the relation between drama and poetry. In the earlier plays poetry appears as drama ; in these last plays we have at times drama almost primarily as poetry.

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INDEX

ERRATA

Only the major errors of printing are indicated below :

page	*incorrect*	*correct*
16 (f.n. 28)	*King Lear* : *IV* ...	*King Lear* : *IV* : 7
62 (f.n. 20)	window	widow
64 (l. 21)	that	but